

THE COLLEGE OF Media and Entertainment

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ONE OF A KIND
10 WAYS
MTSU'S COLLEGE OF MEDIA
AND ENTERTAINMENT IS
TRULY
UNIQUE



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STATE UNIVERSITY.

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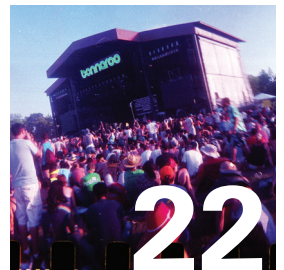
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The media world isn't driven by mass communication anymore; it's now all about targeted audiences, tailored content, and strategic audience-building.

Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment

PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

A New Model

by Ken Paulson

As dean of the newly re-named College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU, I frequently get the chance to visit with incoming freshmen interested in careers in the media. I always emphasize that the fields they hope to enter are vibrant, marked by almost constant change.

I often share a photo of a manual typewriter and joke that "this is how we texted in the '60s." I'll then share a photo of a circa-1965 television and explain that it received just four channels. In those days, if you missed *The Tonight Show*, you missed *The Tonight Show*. There were no video recording devices or YouTube to capture the most talked-about clips.

The parents in attendance often laugh about the media of a half-century ago, but the students don't. I might as well be showing them cave paintings. And yet, there will come a time when they tell their own children that they once had to type messages into their phones and wear goggles at 3D movies.

Change is inevitable, and it's our job as educators to prepare students for an ever-evolving future. That's why the college formerly known as the College of Mass Communication at MTSU was recently renamed the College of Media and Entertainment. It's overdue. The media world isn't driven by mass communication anymore; it's now all about targeted audiences, tailored content, and strategic audience-building.

Though traditional media have been buffeted by digital technology, there's more media being consumed around the world today than at any other time in history. Those four channels

on a TV have been replaced by tens of thousands of content providers.

The rebooted College of Media and Entertainment strives to give students the skills and insights they'll need to engage, inform, and entertain audiences on multiple platforms. That means learning to communicate effectively through words, audio, and video.

It also means coming to grips with change. The most important trait we can instill in our students is a receptivity to change and a comfort level with technology.

While earlier generations left college with a pretty good sense of how their careers would unfold, today's college students need to be able to say, "Bring it on." That will take confidence. And preparation. And a well-rounded education that prepares every student for both a profession and a rewarding life.

Every college—regardless of subject and focus—has the obligation to ensure that it's teaching for the future. The same digital disruption that has rocked the news media, music industry, retailers, and travel agencies is headed their way.

There are traditional values that must be protected on America's campuses, including academic freedom, a commitment to research, respect for diversity, and an insistence upon integrity. But there's also ample opportunity to question tradition and take a fresh look at what we do and how we do it.

Over the past half-century of media, we've seen the rise and fall of 8-tracks, laserdiscs, mini-discs, VCRs, pagers, and Pong. But if we're to embrace and outrace change, colleges need to be as contemporary as possible, incorporating the latest technology, encouraging innovation, and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit.

Change is challenging educators as never before. Bring it on. ■

ONE OF A KIND

10 WAYS

MTSU'S COLLEGE OF MEDIA
★ AND ENTERTAINMENT IS ★

TRULY

UNIQUE

Any writer worth their salt knows to use the word “unique” sparingly. One of the most inappropriately used and overused words in the English lexicon, the word very specifically means one of a kind.

That's why it is all the more impressive that MTSU can unabashedly fashion a top 10 list of ways its newly rebooted (and renamed) College of Media and Entertainment is unique or one of a kind on the national (and even international) academic landscape.

The nation's fifth-largest communication program, MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment offers degree concentrations in 14 major areas ranging from the recording industry to journalism to filmmaking and animation.

Lofty aspirations are realized through a remarkable array of offerings within the College, from stellar programs, to unmatched facilities, to out-of-the-box experiential learning opportunities for students, many of which are not available at any other similar college program nationwide.

The following list, then, offers quick glimpses of the ways MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment sets itself apart from the field. Larger feature articles about many of the items listed here appear elsewhere in this publication. **True Blue!**



The widest range of media education and instruction in the world. No other college in America offers recording industry, journalism, electronic media, public relations, broadcasting, filmmaking, and animation under the same academic roof. Such size and scope of multimedia offerings simply do not exist at another college. What makes the college even more special? The rebooted college provides instruction seamlessly across media to prepare and produce students ready to engage, inform, and entertain the world (and make a living doing it!)

2 Studio M— which stands for media, mobile, millennials, and MTSU— allowing students to be immersed in tracking millennials and issues that affect them, especially in the lead-up to the November 2016 election.

Issues such as employment, health care, the economy, education, student-loan debt, gender pay gap, religion, race, and diversity are reported, recorded, produced, and written in partnership with Nashville's daily newspaper, *The Tennessean*, and other news organizations. It's essentially a “teaching hospital” approach to journalism that focuses on mobile storytelling and young journalists reporting about their own generation through multiple media and on multiple platforms. The Studio M project is made possible through generous grants and donations from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, *The Tennessean*, and BlueCross/BlueShield of Tennessee. Studio M launched in conjunction with MT Now, an app developed by MTSU's Center for Innovation in Media that is key to innovation given that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and SnapChat have become the default mobile experience for millennials, who are more accustomed to “bumping into news” on mobile devices.





The Center for Popular Music, a singular archive encompassing the history of popular music.

Established in 1985 as one of 16 Centers of Excellence statewide, the CPM today represents the largest and oldest research institution for popular music in the world, boasting a collection of more than a million items, including more than 110,000 pieces of sheet music, 2,200 rare periodicals, nearly 250,000 sound recordings, and many important manuscript collections. Short of the Library of Congress, no other music archives match the CPM's combined size and scope. Through the years, more than 40,000 scholars from all over the world have logged research hours at the center [see page 26].



A \$1.7 million mobile production lab that gives students the chance to cover more than 60 live events a year.

MTSU Electronic Media Communication students do mobile productions in a custom 40-foot truck outfitted with the latest technology in digital and high definition. As but one example, in October 2012, while an estimated 14,000 fans on Lower Broadway in Nashville enjoyed the music of Capitol Records artists Luke Bryan, Jon Pardi, and Kelleigh Bannen, 53 MTSU students were modulating audio, staffing HD cameras, conducting interviews, and recording the concerts for the label. Similar, more recent opportunities have included producing shows at Nashville's iconic Bluebird Cafe, broadcasting live collegiate sporting events on ESPN3, and operating massive video boards at an Icona Pop concert on campus. Usually, college students don't get to do projects of this magnitude in concert with major record labels, major broadcast outfits, or major recording artists, nor do students have such professional credentials on their portfolio even before graduating.

5 The Baldwin Gallery, a newly opened photo gallery space featuring exhibits from legendary photographers and emerging talents.

Professor Harold Baldwin started the photography program at MTSU in 1959 and established the photo gallery five years later. Since then, Baldwin amassed a permanent collection by artists such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Minor White. While a full appraisal has never been conducted on the collection, Baldwin recently funded an independent assessment that values it "easily in excess of a million dollars." In fact, the value could be quite a bit more. One piece of the collection alone—a print of Adams' most famous photo, "Moon Rise, Hernandez, New Mexico"—is considered quite valuable.



Harold Baldwin, program founder, with Tom Jimison, gallery curator, and visiting world-class photographic artists, Jerry Uelsmann and Maggie Taylor.



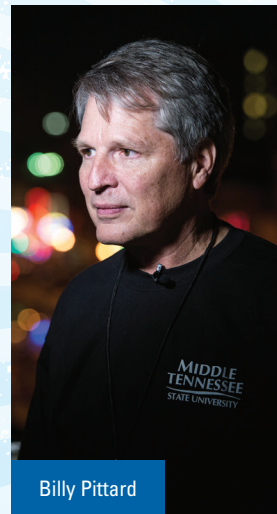
A documentary filmmaking program that brings students to an international location each summer.

For instance, 11 students invited the public to see their cinematic work from summer travels in Paris during a September 2014 screening in Nashville. The students traveled to France in May 2014 as part of the MTSU Signature Documentary Program Abroad to create stories about artists who live and work in Paris (photo at left). Led by Documentary Channel founder and MTSU associate professor Tom Neff, the students made films about up-and-coming fashion designers and musicians. Their three short films—*Fighter*, *A Designer's Canvas*, and *Le Debut*—premiered at Nashville's historic Belcourt Theatre. "These students went to a foreign city, worked with new artists for only three weeks, and produced three documentaries of the highest caliber, comparable to any films coming out of any film school, bar none," Neff said.



Hands-on learning opportunities at the Center for Innovation in Media, including work on NPR-affiliate WMOT and student TV, radio, digital, and newspaper operations.

It wasn't so long ago that mainstream media—print, television, and radio—were separate. It was also true that universities reflected the divisions between journalism and broadcast media schools in their academic departments. Technology has changed all that, blurring those divisions and changing the way journalists and students across the disciplines conduct business. MTSU began to reflect this new world of media convergence programmatically with its new \$700,000 Center for Innovation in Media, which combines the newsrooms for *Sidelines*, the student newspaper; WMTS-FM, the student-run radio station; Match Records, the student-run record label; MTTV, the student-operated cable television station; and WMOT-FM, the 100,000-watt public radio station at MTSU. MTSU was nationally recognized by the Associated Press Media Editors in the Innovator of the Year for College Students category soon after the center opened [see page 30].



Billy Pittard



John Hill

A faculty rich in academic excellence and professional recognition, including Grammy and Emmy award winners.

Electronic Media Communication Department chair Billy Pittard (an MTSU grad) is a multiple Emmy award-winner. Recording Industry professor John Hill is a double Grammy-winning recording engineer, who won a Grammy for Best Engineered Album, Classical, in 2011. Very few if any universities have two such credentialed professionals on faculty!

9



Keynote speaker Bernard Lafayette Jr. giving remarks at the Undergraduate Symposium moderated by Pat Embry

The John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies, a leading public policy center focusing on America's most fundamental freedoms.

Seigenthaler, who died July 11, 2014, at age 86, was a reporter, editor, publisher, and CEO of *The Tennessean*. After serving as founding editorial director for *USA Today*, he established the First Amendment Center in Nashville in 1991. MTSU established the chair in his name in 1986 to honor the iconic journalist's lifelong commitment to free expression. The Seigenthaler Chair supports activities related to free speech, free press, and other topics of concern for contemporary journalism. Pat Embry, a former editor at both the *Nashville Banner* and *The Tennessean*, was the most recent director of the Seigenthaler Chair. Noting that journalists in Ferguson, Missouri, were handcuffed for recharging their laptops and cellphones in fast-food restaurants, Embry said, "If the events of Ferguson and its aftermath . . . have shown us anything, it's that the First Amendment remains a strong but fragile foot soldier on the front lines of American justice" [see page 10].

10



Ambitious professional partnerships with the Bonnaroo Music Festival, the Americana Music Association, the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, and other local and national media.

The Americana Music Festival and Conference annually marks a unique educational partnership between the festival's organizer, the Americana Music Association, which is based in nearby Franklin, and MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment. Under the partnership, prominent artists participate in special

lectures at the University. Students also gain work experience and networking opportunities at the conference held annually in Nashville. In addition, 2015 was the second year of a partnership brokered between MTSU and the organizers of the annual four-day Bonnaroo music celebration, held in Manchester. The international festival served as the ultimate classroom for MTSU students, who received hands-on training in journalism and video production—all for class credit [see page 22]. ■



COMING OF AGE

MTSU's multifaceted and innovative media offerings anticipate the future . . . and the present

by Allison Gorman and Drew Ruble

When *USA Today* launched in 1982, the journalism establishment was startled by its bold colors and condensed stories. The new national newspaper was quickly derided as "fast-food journalism."

In retrospect, the newspaper was actually pretty traditional. Like two centuries of papers before it,

it printed the most important news of the day, shared its views on an editorial page, and tried to be as timely as the medium would permit. It also adopted strong policies on accuracy, attribution, and ethics. But those core values were also complemented by groundbreaking design, tighter editing, and a Technicolor weather map.

Ken Paulson was a young editor on the team that launched *USA Today* in 1982. He returned there as editor-in-chief in 2004 after a scandal cost the paper its hard-won credibility. Paulson later left *USA Today* to head the Freedom Forum and Newseum in Washington, D.C., and then the First Amendment Center in Nashville. That's where a search

committee contacted the nationally recognized First Amendment expert about the opening for dean of MTSU's combined journalism school and recording industry program—the fifth-largest such communications college in the nation.

Paulson immediately saw possibilities, starting with a *USA Today*-like melding of old values and new approaches as the key to the college's future.

"This is a college in which I truly saw unprecedented potential," he said. "I believed that it could position itself as the most multifaceted and innovative program of its kind in the country—and for a variety of reasons."

Those reasons include a Department of Recording Industry (RI) that's the largest and, arguably, one of the best in the country—not to mention one located a short drive from Nashville, a cradle of the music business; a Department of Electronic Media Communication (EMC), whose students, state-of-the-art facilities, and hands-on opportunities such as filming the Bonnaroo Music and Arts festival have attracted national recognition; and a tradition-rich School of Journalism that houses the John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies.

For the college to fulfill its potential, though, Paulson knew it also needed retooling.

"All traditional media have been buffeted by digital technology, and that, in turn, has led to cutbacks and job losses," Paulson said. "But there will always be news. There will always be music. And film. And commercial art. And communication. Our challenge is to prepare our students for the new era of opportunities."

According to Paulson, preparing students to succeed despite those realities isn't just about having tech-savvy faculty and cutting-edge tools. It's about reinforcing traditional communication skills (research, writing, ethics, critical thinking) while breaking down traditional academic barriers, thinking beyond traditional media platforms, and finding nontraditional ways to communicate.

"It's not enough for us to just teach journalism, media, and production skills; we need to anticipate the future and help reinvent these industries," Paulson said. "What better place to thoughtfully explore the future of media than a forward-looking college like MTSU's that now also boasts

a Center for Innovation in Media?" (The center enables students from all media disciplines to hone their skills while working under one roof in a state-of-the-art facility.)

In July 2013, Paulson accepted the position as dean of the college. He also embraced the challenge to make the college as contemporary, innovative, and prominent as possible.

Building on its strengths of teaching and research with an infusion of innovation and hands-on experiences, several meaningful changes to the college's working model have already been accomplished under Paulson's stewardship. They include: the consolidation of all of MTSU's journalism education into a single department; establishing a rich, multimedia learning environment; the

convergence of student media into a single multimedia app; the launch of Studio M, a bold new project from the Center for Innovation in Media focusing on millennials and mobile content; and the rollout of J-Lab, a training and recruiting tool providing high school students with their first experiences in digital journalism, just to name a few.

Such an expanded mission geared toward preparing a new generation of students for opportunities in an ever-changing media environment culminated in another major change—

the very name of the college. In the summer of 2015, the college known for four decades as the College of Mass Communication became the newly named College of Media and Entertainment.

Paulson said the updated name better reflects the 24-hour media cycle and the growing demand for content that informs, engages, and entertains.

"It's a clear and contemporary name that reflects the way media work today," the dean said.

Paulson said that the college—first established as a department in 1972, then elevated to school and finally college status by 1989—has always focused on preparing students to perform every facet of communicating news and information within their specialties: journalism, electronic media, and the recording industry. This rebranding, he said, reflects the college's goal of giving students skills across multiple media to ready them for their futures as well as providing a solid, broad-based education. ■

Though traditional media have been buffeted by digital technology, there's more media being consumed around the world today than at any other time in history.

John Seigenthaler Chair
in First Amendment

freedom fighters

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion,
or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of
peaceably assembling to discuss government, or to petition for the redress of grievances.

Pat Embry in the new Seigenthaler
Chair of Excellence conference room

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

Chair of Excellence First Amendment Studies

The John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies honors a champion of civil rights and free expression—and so much more.

by Pat Embry

No journalist embodied the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment more than John Seigenthaler.

He championed the underdog and provided a voice to the voiceless. He battled the powerful for an open and responsible government. He heralded women's rights and admonished religious intolerance.

His legacy lives on thanks to the John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies at MTSU, which I held from 2014–16.

The year 2016 marks the 30th anniversary of the chair, instituted in 1986 to honor Seigenthaler's lifelong commitment to civil rights and free expression values. The longtime president, editor, and publisher of *The Tennessean* in Nashville remained chair emeritus of that newspaper until his death in 2014 at age 86. He also was the first editorial director of *USA Today* and founded the Newseum Institute's First Amendment Center in Nashville.

"John never played it safe, taking on new challenges throughout his career," said Ken Paulson, dean of MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment and president of the First Amendment Center. Paulson and Seigenthaler were colleagues at the First Amendment Center and at the Newseum in Washington D.C. Their interactive presentation on the need to protect First Amendment freedoms was shared with thousands of students, educators, and media professionals over a 10-year span.

"He never rested on his reputation," Paulson said. "He just built on it."

The man fondly known as "Seig" seemed to personally know everyone worth knowing in the fields of journalism, politics, government, and entertainment. Testament to his stature: Virtually every major newspaper and news magazine in the country chronicled his career upon his death.

It's fitting that a journalist's lifework dedicated to educating and enlightening citizens young and old about the First Amendment continues at a public institution of higher education such as MTSU. There's no better time or place to learn about the First Amendment than on a campus, and Seigenthaler loved MTSU.

Giving the keynote speech at MTSU's Fall 2003 commencement, he called it "the most progressive institution of higher learning in our state."

Continuing racial issues on many U.S. campuses including the University of Missouri have prompted public debate—as well as skirmishes between protestors and the media—about what kind of public speech should be tolerated and how it should be reported. MTSU, via the Seigenthaler Chair, remains dedicated to furthering and intensifying education about the First Amendment.

“He never rested on his reputation,” Paulson said. “He just built on it.”

It’s needed. In a recent analysis of Pew Research Center survey data on free speech and media across the globe, American Millennials (ages 18–34) are far more likely than older generations

to say the government should be able to prevent people from saying offensive statements about minority groups.

According to *The State of the First Amendment 2015*, an annual report by the First Amendment Center in partnership with *USA Today*, one-third of Americans can’t name any of the five freedoms the First Amendment guarantees: speech, press, religion, assembly, and petition.

A case can be made that the First Amendment remains as solid as granite yet fragile as a feather. It’s consistently threatened by the courts and politicians, and consistently maligned and misunderstood.

There’s a lot of work to be done educating the public. While director of MTSU’s Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence, I started the workday by asking myself WWJD: What Would John Do.

Here’s what MTSU is doing, specifically in four areas: electronic and social media, campus programming, the MTSU Seigenthaler News Service, and educational and professional outreach.

Electronic and social media

For the first time, the Seigenthaler Chair now has a website (mtpress.mtsu.edu/firstamendment/), one dedicated to curating and compiling the latest news and views about the First Amendment. Paulson, journalism professor Larry Burriss, and Honors College dean John Vile are among the featured columnists—First Amendment scholars all.

Also, the Seigenthaler Chair now has an active and increasingly robust Twitter account, @FreeSpeechMTSU, which keeps followers up to date on the latest news about the First Amendment, civil rights, and free expression.

The account’s avatar features John Seigenthaler’s likeness. Although Seig never learned to text, much less tweet, something tells me he would love this.

Campus Programming

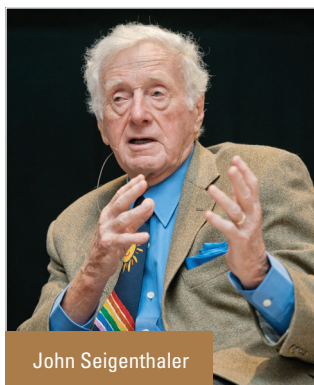
The Seigenthaler Chair sponsored or co-sponsored seven programs, lectures, and symposia on campus during the 2015 calendar year. With the Seigenthaler Chair working in conjunction with several other campus colleges and departments, the programs included a trio of civil rights movement legends still very much involved in social activism: the Rev. James Lawson, C.T. Vivian, and Bernard Lafayette.

They all were close friends of Seigenthaler’s since their days participating in the Freedom Rides of the early 1960s, during Seigenthaler’s years as a close aide and Southern negotiator for U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

Bringing the civil rights movement from the 1950s and ‘60s to today’s headlines, the Seigenthaler Chair sponsored a February 2015 program titled “From the Front Lines of Ferguson” that featured journalists David Carson and Yamiche Alcindor as well as St. Louis alderman and activist Antonio French.

Carson later won a Pulitzer Prize, journalism’s highest honor, as part of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s* photography team for its coverage of the Ferguson, Missouri, protests. Alcindor, one of the country’s up-and-coming young journalists, recently was hired by *The New York Times* after a stint as national reporter for *USA Today*.

Other programming highlights included nationally syndicated cartoonist Daryl Cagle’s presentation titled “First Amendment and Beyond: An Editorial Cartoonist’s Life” in October 2015.



Seigenthaler News Service

Under direction of the chair, the Seigenthaler News Service, which debuted in the 2012–13 school year, continues to serve the needs of area media outlets as well as giving MTSU students hands-on, practical experience in

newsgathering and reporting, emphasizing high professional standards throughout. *The Tennessean*, *Daily News Journal*, *Murfreesboro Pulse*, *Nashville Scene*, and the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corp. were among the past academic year’s media partners.

The Tennessean, Seigenthaler’s longtime newspaper home, benefited from scores of music-related news stories, features, and photos from the Seigenthaler News Service in the calendar year 2015. A 10-student team at the four-day Bonnaroo Arts and Music Festival in



Journalism icon John Seigenthaler, speaking on campus for the announcement of an innovative federal judicial system reporting project, the Seigenthaler News Service, allowing students to be immersed in daily coverage on federal law-enforcement operations in Nashville.

PHOTO BY DARBY CAMPBELL

June produced 13 stories with 28 separate bylines, as well as 87 photographs that appeared in the newspaper's digital and traditional print offerings.

Each summer, under the auspices of the Seigenthaler News Service and continued sponsorship by the Seigenthaler Chair, MTSU associate professor Leon Allgood's feature-writing class goes on the road for three weeks. The team of journalists spends one week working in each of the state's three regions—east, middle, and west Tennessee.

In the summer of 2015, the class visited McKenzie in west Tennessee, Hartsville and Lebanon in middle Tennessee, and Gatlinburg in east Tennessee. The class had partnerships with local newspapers in the west (the *McKenzie Banner*) and middle regions (the *Hartsville Vidette* and the *Lebanon Democrat*). In Gatlinburg, the class continued work on a documentary journalism project called "Working the 'Burg" that began with The Road Trip class of 2013. The Gatlinburg project, a website, was released at the end of the Fall 2015 semester.

Educational and Professional outreach

The Seigenthaler Chair sponsors and helps judge the John Seigenthaler Award of Excellence in investigative journalism, part of the Tennessee AP News Excellence Awards for broadcasters and newspapers. Kevin Hardy of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* won the inaugural award in 2015.

Also, 25 students each were awarded \$1,000 scholarships in 2015 for sharing original photos and artwork on social media as part of a national contest celebrating the five freedoms of the First Amendment.

The contest, organized by the national nonpartisan educational program 1 for All, was co-sponsored by the Seigenthaler Chair with funding provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Indeed, it has been a busy couple of years for the Seigenthaler Chair. But then, John Seigenthaler remained a busy man until the day he died.

Seigenthaler's widow, Dolores, as well his brother and two of his sisters, attended the "From the Front Lines of Ferguson" program and were there for the dedication of the new John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence Conference Room, its gleaming glass wall overlooking the spacious second floor of the College of Media and Entertainment's Bragg building.

"John would have loved this," Dolores told me afterward at a crowded Tucker Theatre. "But you wouldn't have been the moderator."

"You couldn't have kept him from being up on that stage."

There could be no finer compliment, nor call to action.



[About the author: Veteran Nashville journalist Pat Embry served as the first full-time director of the John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies at MTSU from August 2014 to March 2016. He previously was a reporter, columnist, and editor at the Nashville Banner and The Tennessean for more than 25 years.] ■





The **POP** Candy Pioneer

by Allison Gorman

As a journalist for USA Today.com, Whitney Matheson had the kind of fervent following that could seem kind of creepy. Her readers didn't just follow her online. They followed her.


And she was fine with that.

Drawn by Matheson's lively observations of pop culture and their shared love of the same, those who made up the national audience of her *USA Today* blog, Pop Candy, coalesced into a virtual community and at times a physical one, gathering (at her invitation) in New York, San Diego, Austin, or wherever she happened to be on assignment.

"I was always surprised by how many people showed up and super-surprised when readers started holding their own meet-ups across the country without me," she said.

By the time she hit her 30s, Matheson had the kind of passionate readership few journalists cultivate in a lifetime. What began as a personal column and a sideline from her official job with what was then the paper's new dot-com side had grown into an extraordinary collaboration between writer and readers.

"Readers illustrated a comic book we distributed at Comic-Con," Matheson said. "They created logos and promotional material for the blog. They stayed up all night to analyze



How journalist
Whitney Matheson
found herself at
the forefront of
New Media

episodes of “Lost” on our message boards. Heck, when I went on maternity leave, Pop Candy readers even filled in for me to ensure the blog kept going.”

When downsizing at *USA Today* ended Pop Candy’s 15-year run last year, Ken Paulson, the paper’s former editor and senior vice president of news who is now dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, hired Matheson as MTSU’s professional journalist-in-residence. For her students, she represents the new face of journalism and how to succeed outside traditional print media.

“She’s still a young woman but was indisputably a pioneer in establishing a new kind of relationship with her audience,” Paulson said. “Her readers were also her sources, collaborators, and friends. It’s a model that builds loyalty, quality, and reach, and it needs to be shared with our students.”

Opportunity Pings

That model, which is still evolving, was in its infancy in 1999, when Matheson earned her journalism degree from the University of Tennessee.

Newspapers weren’t sure where the dot-com train was going, but they knew they’d better jump on or be left behind. So Matheson—who as editor of the University of Tennessee *Daily Beacon* had taken the path of top journalism students, spending far more time in the newsroom than in the classroom—graduated into an opportunity-rich environment. She went to *USA Today* right out of college.

Matheson was charged with updating the paper’s website every night (a task now obsolete, she notes) and writing online news stories and some for print. But her passion was writing about pop culture, so she pitched the idea for a weekly online entertainment column based on a popular one she’d written for the *Beacon*. Her editor said yes, and she ran with it.

“From my perspective, I was just writing about things that I loved that I didn’t see getting a lot of coverage,” she said, “and luckily I had the freedom to experiment with formats and different ways of delivering that.”

Her weekly column led to a daily, less conventional one that ultimately subsumed the original. It kept growing until writing and updating it became her full-time job.

“I called it a blog, but nobody was hyperaware of that term,” she said. “I worked without blogging software at the time. So I started *USA Today*’s first blog, but

it was also one of the first blogs on any major publication’s website.”

The New Mainstream

Whether or not they knew what to call it, readers responded to Pop Candy in discussions of entertainment not considered mainstream or thought to be too pedestrian or edgy for coverage by traditional media. The job took her to events across the country, from South by Southwest to Lebowski Fest to moustache competitions, with her readers enthusiastically (and sometimes literally) following along.



“I’m not teaching them how to be journalists 10 years from now. They should consider themselves journalists right now.”

By the time Matheson had cultivated what would be her groundbreaking readership—Paulson says she was his “top blogger” at *USA Today*—the platform she’d used to achieve success was on the lips of every naysayer predicting the death of journalism. The lament went something like this: “Now everyone with a blog thinks they’re journalists.”

Now Matheson offers an updated, and decidedly positive, spin on that theme to her students at MTSU.

“The great thing about being a journalist right now is that you can go out and make work tonight,” she said. “You can make a podcast and put it on iTunes. You can make a web series. You can do it on your own—it’s very easy—and you can distribute it. What I try to tell my students is that I’m not teaching them how to be journalists 10 years from now. They should consider themselves journalists right now.”



Voice Work

That's not to say that journalism students don't need to learn the core skills of the trade. One of Paulson's challenges as dean of the College of Media and Entertainment has been to restructure its curriculum, and the college itself, to better integrate training in various digital platforms while doubling down on traditional, pen-and-paper values such as responsible, effective writing and thorough research.

New hires like Matheson and multimedia specialist Val Hoepfner, Matheson's predecessor as journalist-in-residence who now heads the Center for Innovation in Media, are helping build on Paulson's vision of the college as a forward-looking source of journalism education.

"We have to give our students not just a fundamentally sound education but also instill perceptivity to technology, new ideas, and lifelong learning," Paulson said.

So in the editing class she taught last spring, Matheson plowed some familiar ground (plenty of reps with the AP Stylebook), while in her Reporting on Popular Culture class, she spent a long time discussing voice—a subject verboten in the old-school world of journalism's "five W's."

"That's something that's changed dramatically in the last five years, and certainly in the last 15," Matheson said. "It used to be that you had to take your voice out of your writing and be as objective as possible. . . . Publications used to say, 'We're looking for a music writer.' Now they say, 'We're looking for a fresh voice.' It's because of voice that I was able to build a community [with Pop Candy], and it's the reason I was fine after I got laid off from my job."

A New Career Paradigm

Matheson is the model for what her students can expect from a career in modern journalism if they do it right. When Pop Candy ended, she landed on her feet because she'd established a strong online presence and professional relationships that led to the chance to freelance for editors she'd wanted to work with for years.

Fairly or not, "I'm a freelancer" used to be considered journalism-speak for "I can't find a real job." Now, freelancing is just another viable career route Matheson discusses with her students.

"It's a very good market for freelancers," she said. Not only are opportunities for contract journalists abundant, but the ability to work remotely means their potential client base is almost unlimited.

As journalist-in-residence, Matheson continues to freelance for various websites not just to stay professionally relevant, she said, but also to understand the job market her students hope to enter.

"I feel like those things feed into each other," she said. "I have to stay very active in my field in order to relate to my students and be helpful to them."

The New Hiring Grounds

The first thing Matheson tells students is to look for jobs outside the old business model. While there are still opportunities in "legacy media organizations," she said, they are becoming fewer (as she can attest). Meanwhile, web-based organizations from Facebook, Google, and Twitter to Vox, Mashable, and BuzzFeed are growing exponentially and are hiring journalists.

"I tell my students there are jobs everywhere, they're just not in the same places where I was told jobs were 16 years ago," she said. "I guess you can look in traditional, print-based publications, but the truth is you're going to find more experimentation and openness, and probably more money, in some other, less-traditional places."

Just as opportunities have increased for journalists, so has the skill set they are expected to have, she added. Writers must now have basic proficiency in digital video and audio media, subjects now being integrated into the School of Journalism's curriculum.

But the most powerful tool an aspiring journalist can have is initiative, Matheson said.

"One lesson I'm constantly trying to get across is that it's important not only to make your own work but also to take risks," she said. "Every success I've had has been me going out and just doing something on my own."

To borrow from another notable writer and risk-taker, reports of the death of journalism have been greatly exaggerated. For proof, look at Whitney Matheson, who continues to show students what is possible—and profitable—in the new world of mass communication. ■





FOR A

PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

One of MTSU's newest professors aims to keep the memory of a country music legend alive and help students build careers

by Stephanie Stewart-Howard

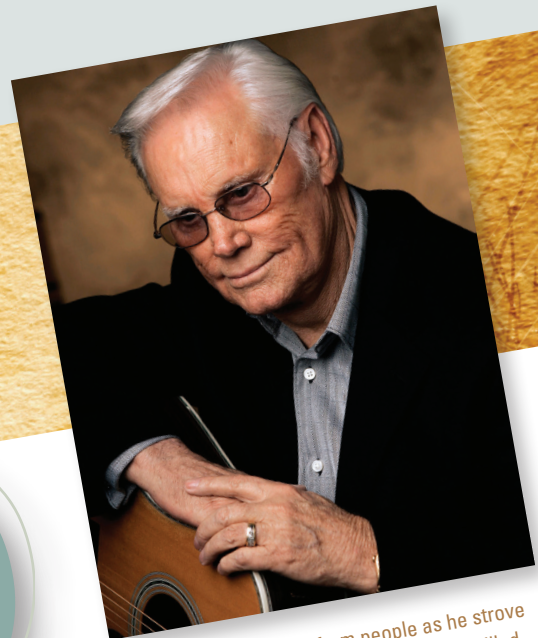
Charles "Odie" Blackmon ('96), coordinator for MTSU's Commercial Songwriting concentration, has thrived as a Nashville songwriter.

A Grammy nominee for Lee Ann Womack's "I May Hate Myself in the Morning" (CMA Single of the Year in 2005), Blackmon has also written hits for country music superstars including George Strait ("She'll Leave You with a Smile") and Gary Allan ("Nothing on but the Radio"), among others. His songs have graced albums that have sold more than 20 million copies.

It should come as no surprise that a top Nashville songsmith like Blackmon treasures

the music of the late George Jones and also understands the contributions the man nicknamed "Possum" made to Nashville and the country music industry.

Blackmon says he's honored that his return to his alma mater led to a project that's burnishing Jones' legacy. With the blessing of Jones' widow, Nancy, Blackmon has partnered with John Allen, CEO at New West Records, an Americana record label in Nashville, to create a George Jones tribute album. And he is making sure MTSU students will be part of the experience.



"George received help from people as he strove to have a country music career, so I am thrilled that we will be able to help young people in the name of George Jones."
—Nancy Jones

Planting the Seed

Jones died in 2013 after a six-decade career of songwriting and performing that helped define country music. Shortly thereafter, Nancy Jones funded a scholarship for the Recording Industry Department as a way to keep her late husband's legacy alive and help others.

"George received help from people as he strove to have a country music career, so I am thrilled that we will be able to help young people in the name of George Jones," she said at the time the scholarship was established. "I know he would have loved this."

Jones' donation has been followed by contributions that have increased the George Jones Scholarship Fund to more than \$170,000. The first scholarship recipient was Ashley Doris, one of Blackmon's best students.

The Center for Popular Music has added to its collection of research material and artifacts surrounding Jones' career, and the Recording Industry Department has developed a first-of-its-kind college course on Jones' life and music. Beverly Keel, department chair, said the course will "create opportunities for scholars to offer their analyses and interpretations of his music that can then be shared with scholars internationally."

George Jones had No. 1 hits from the 1950s through the 1980s including the Grammy-winning "He Stopped Loving Her Today." He received the Recording Academy's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012.

"We want to make sure that students 100 years from now will fall in love with 'He Stopped Loving Her Today,' just as we did, no matter what future technology they may use to listen to traditional country music," Keel said.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Right Place, Right Time

While the George Jones–MTSU connection was being made, Odie Blackmon was interviewing for a position at the University. He thought it would be a dream come true to teach the George Jones class that Keel intended to create. When he came to the job interview, he already had a third of the curriculum planned and told Keel if she hadn't assigned it to any faculty member yet, he'd love to do it. (Blackmon already had teaching experience at Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music.)

Blackmon's lesson plan was a thorough exploration of Jones' life and music, from his birth during the Great

Depression to the influence of that period's music and culture on who he became and what he achieved.

"It gives you a sense of who George was, what he came from, and why he felt the way he did and had the demons he did, and it brings into focus the real golden era of his recording," Blackmon said.

Blackmon wanted to do even more to tell the whole George Jones story. He fashioned the idea of a tribute album, and he wanted the project to be something other than contemporary country. He imagined recording Americana artists like Jim Lauderdale, Kacey Musgraves, the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Buddy Miller, Mike Farris, Nikki Lane, Old Crow Medicine Show, and others.

He shared his notion with Stacy Merida, who spearheads MTSU's student-run Match Records. She encouraged him to go to Keel with the idea. The project was greenlighted by Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, and then pitched to Allen at New West Records. Allen loved the idea, and a deal was hammered out that leaves room for MTSU to benefit from the proceeds of the eventual record.

The project will be a collection of styles interpreting Jones with an Americana flair. Keel and Nancy Jones wrote letters to prospective artists. "We're in the process of actually finding out who among our wish list of potential artists will participate right now," Blackmon said.

The project should give students a chance to help with publicity and solicit Grammy votes when the time comes. It will also be a teaching tool for accounting and music business classes.

"I have known Odie for a long time from my publishing and A&R background," Allen said. "We have similar sensibilities when it comes to artists and songwriting, so he felt comfortable sharing this idea. We both felt that this can't be a knee-jerk tribute record. The production and arranging must be done right so that it moves George's music forward with an interesting juxtaposition of established artists and rising stars that 'get' the heritage of the catalog but still make the songs their own."

Asked how he feels Jones' music will appeal to audiences today, especially reinterpreted through the Americana genre, Allen said, "George Jones was a master craftsman. His music is timeless, and no matter what genre someone likes, everyone can appreciate his songwriting and talent. George poured his heart and soul into his songs, and his raw emotion and authenticity resonate in an era when these attributes aren't as common as they used to be. I hope this album will act as a fitting tribute to George's music and serve as a reminder of what a force of nature he was."

The project should give students a chance to help with publicity and solicit Grammy votes when the time comes. It will also be a teaching tool for accounting and music business classes.

Daily Grind

Ramping up MTSU's involvement in all things George Jones isn't the only work Blackmon has been doing.

The winner of Blackmon's Advanced Commercial Songwriting class competition got the chance to trade ideas with hit songwriter Erin Enderlin ('04), a friend of Blackmon's. Opportunities for students to pitch original songs directly to publishers have been created, and the relationship with performing rights organization ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) has been deepened and expanded.

Concerts headlined by alums including Eric Paslay have raised money to hire new adjunct faculty members who will focus on students interested in genres outside the commercial country realm. Along the way, Blackmon published a textbook: *Music Theory and the Nashville Number System: For Songwriters and Performers*.

His boss, Paulson, who calls MTSU's songwriting program "one of the best in the country" and "a source of great pride for us," likes Blackmon's work. "Odie has taken it to new levels," Paulson said. "His passion for songwriting translates into an extraordinary learning experience for our students."

Blackmon merely said he's always been a creative person, only half joking when he said he could have been a jingle writer or an advertising copywriter. He's added a jingle-writing class to this fall's curriculum. "You can make money in any market if you can write jingles for radio and TV," he said.

Blackmon is a natural mentor for aspiring student songwriters. Who better to look up to than a songwriter who had his first cut on MCA Records and who negotiated his first publishing deal while enrolled at MTSU?

These days, Blackmon's efforts, whether directed toward MTSU students or George Jones' legacy, are bringing the University's songwriting program even more welcome attention. ■

Donations to the George Jones Scholarship Fund can be made online at MTSU.edu/georgejones or by calling 615-898-5595.



PHOTO BY ANDY HEIDT

Partners in Craft

ASCAP President and songwriter Paul Williams, seated right, and founding Songwriting concentration coordinator Hal Newman, seated left, listen to a question from Senior Stephen West during a taping of *Songspeak*.

A partnership between the Nashville office of ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) and the Department of Recording Industry routinely pairs students in MTSU's Commercial Songwriting concentration with veteran songwriting and publishing mentors. The experience can lead to networking and training opportunities for burgeoning student songwriters even before graduation. Early each semester, industry mentors begin meeting with enrollees in beginning and advanced songwriting classes.

Also, ASCAP hosts a private showcase each semester, *Hot on the Row*, featuring MTSU student songwriters and attended by music industry publishers. At a recent 2015 event, publishing companies Sony/ATV, Warner/Chappell, BMG, Sea Gayle Music, Creative Nation, and Round Hill Music were on hand to listen to performances by students Nick Carpenter, Zach Russell, Kyle Crownover, and the group *Maybe April*, which includes MTSU's Katy Bishop and Kristen Castro along with Alaina Stacy.

The Commercial Songwriting concentration is led by successful songwriter Odie Blackmon, an MTSU alumnus himself, who works to give students real-world experiences.

The Department of Recording Industry, part of the newly renamed College of Media and Entertainment, also houses the only college chapter of Nashville Songwriters Association International (NSAI). ■

summer school

College of Media and Entertainment students
turn one of the world's most famous music
festivals into a hands-on classroom

by Gina Fann and Drew Ruble



It's not every college that can offer its undergraduate students the opportunity to work in a multimedia production capacity at arguably the most famous music festival in the world.

But not every college is MTSU.

About 40 students, faculty, and staff from the newly rebranded College of Media and Entertainment braved the heat and rain for the opportunity to promote 24/7 coverage of the 2015 Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival last June. It marked the second year of a partnership brokered between MTSU and the organizers of the annual four-day music celebration held in nearby Manchester.





Students and instructors mount a center-stage camera at Bonnaroo's Who Stage June 11.

PHOTO BY ANDREW OPPMANN

inside the ropes

The festival served as the ultimate classroom for MTSU students, who received hands-on training in journalism and video production—all for class credit.

The majority of students worked the cameras and control boards for MTSU's \$1.7 million Mobile Production Lab, capturing performances on the festival's Who Stage. The rest were hands-on multimedia journalists, filing reports and videos for area news media outlets including Nashville-based *The Tennessean*.

Students shot 16 different acts—all non-rehearsed and in one take using eight cameras just like the professionals do. Senior Amanda Pierce, production manager for the truck shoot, said the experience helped her learn to stay organized and to problem-solve quickly.

"We are making a promotional video for Bonnaroo," she said. "That's a crazy thought to spend four days at Bonnaroo instead of in a traditional classroom."

On day one of the festival, Pat Embry, now former director of the John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies, joined Associate Professor Leon Alligood to make coverage assignments for journalism students right in front of Bonnaroo's press tent. The budding journalists, reporting for MTSU's Seigenthaler News Service, interviewed artists and

covered performances for exclusive quotes and footage. The students contributed a number of advance and breaking feature stories, mini-reviews, and photographs for media client *The Tennessean* as well as the *Murfreesboro Pulse* and MTSU's student newspaper, *Sidelines*.

Students also set up and conducted their own advance phone interviews with Nashville-based rock bands playing at Bonnaroo, Embry said. They worked each day from midmorning until late at night, filing stories, taking photos, and shooting video.

"From a student standpoint, the experience in building a portfolio is unparalleled," he said. "Having so many editors and veteran writers and reporters on-site to help the students with their work is invaluable."

right place. right time

One such student, John Connor Coulston, found himself the sole media person in the comedy tent Saturday evening as the audience was treated to a surprise performance from *Hangover* star Zach Galifianakis during comedian Chris Hardwick's set. Another unexpected cameo came when *Mad Men* star Jon Hamm joined Galifianakis on stage for a non-sequitur bit during which Galifianakis was a dog, and Hamm was his owner, feeding him treats.

Coulston immediately captured images and wrote an article about the appearances of Hamm and Galifianakis, which were featured in *The Tennessean's* coverage.

For Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, this is exactly the type of experience he hopes his students will embrace.

"It's important that we extend our teaching beyond the walls of our college to the places where contemporary media and entertainment are at their best," Paulson said. "I graduated law school and walked out the door of law school and wasn't sure if I could be a lawyer. But these students walk out the door knowing they can shoot rock concerts."

the festival factory

In addition to MTSU students working the four-day festival on-site in Manchester, the founders and operators of Bonnaroo also have visited the MTSU campus to share their expertise with students as a part of the collaboration.

Staffers from every facet of the event joined Bonnaroo co-founders Ashley Capps, Jonathan Mayers, and Rick Farman at a daylong symposium on campus to explain how they create, promote, maintain, and safely operate a city of 80,000-plus people that emerges for four days every year in middle Tennessee. The festival launched in 2002 with little traditional advertising and sold out its 70,000 tickets in 11 days. Since then, organizers have continued to expand both the festival's entertainment offerings and its 700-acre site to grow into an event that *Rolling Stone* magazine has called one of the "50 moments that changed the history of rock 'n' roll."

"MTSU and Bonnaroo are neighbors, so it makes sense to work together," Farman said. "While creating Bonnaroo, we learned lots of lessons we can share with students studying business, communications, and the music industry."

The daylong MTSU seminar discussed all aspects of the internationally acclaimed festival from its business model, planning, marketing, and media to its community spirit, volunteerism, music, and programming.

"It's an extraordinary opportunity for a college of media and music to host a group of professionals so adept at both," Paulson said. "It's simply unprecedented for the full management team of a world-class music festival to take a full day to engage and educate the next generation of music and media professionals."

Paulson concluded by saying that Bonnaroo "has always given back to the community" and is now offering "a new generation of aspiring music industry professionals a real understanding of what goes into a world-class, live music event." That's true, so long as members of that new generation of aspiring music industry professionals are enrolled at MTSU. ■



MTSU students listen to Bonnaroo organizers discuss the festival's music and programming at a special Oct. 8 business seminar at the University.

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI



MTSU journalism student Kimi Thompson captures video of the crowd at Bonnaroo.

PHOTO BY ANDREW OPPMANN



Pat Embry, left, director of MTSU's Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies from 2014 to 2016, briefs student journalists preparing to cover opening day at Bonnaroo.

PHOTO BY ANDREW OPPMANN

Getting in Tune



Motown music icon Lamont Dozier, left, expresses his thanks for recognition as the second Fellow of the Center for Popular Music as CPM director Dr. Greg Reish looks on.

PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

The Center for Popular Music—a direct portal to the popular consciousness of past generations—now boasts a Fellows program honoring living musical icons

by Gina Fann and Drew Ruble

Lamont Dozier, the man who co-created “Baby Love,” “Heat Wave,” and “Can’t Help Myself” among more than 50 No. 1 hits, took an enthusiastic, multigenerational crowd on a joyful trip through musical history—his own and much of America’s—during a recent visit to MTSU’s College of Media and Entertainment.

Dozier was on campus in October 2015 to be honored as the second-ever Fellow of the Center for Popular Music, an honor reserved for people described by center director Dr. Greg Reish as “a rare few people whose legacy and influence is so vast and so deep as to be inestimable.” In introducing Dozier at the event, Reish described the man

behind the string of Motown hits as “someone without whom our music and our lives would be different.”

Iconic songwriter and BeeGees front man Barry Gibb was the inaugural Fellow of the Center for Popular Music in 2013. Gibb was honored, like Dozier, for his extraordinary accomplishments in music.

Motown Icon

The Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Dozier had audience members on their feet at the Fall 2015 event, singing along with him and surprise guest Nicole C. Mullen to “How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved by You).”



Barry Gibb

“You have to have a great work ethic, seven days a week. You’ve got to apply yourself. You have to believe that you can make it,” Dozier advised a student.

The living legend was the middle third of Motown's iconic Holland-Dozier-Holland songwriting and music producing team.

"Don't listen to people telling you the business is this way or that way. You might be that one guy that breaks it wide open again playing some stuff that blows everybody's mind," Dozier told the crowd.

Dozier helped create the music of an era, alongside brothers Brian and Eddie Holland, with songs like the Four Tops' "Baby I Need Your Loving," the Supremes' "Stop! In the Name of Love," Martha and the Vandellas' "Nowhere to Run," and Marvin Gaye's "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved by You)," among many others.

"I'm still giving my expertise in the art of songwriting as well as being able to encourage people not to give up. If it's their true love and destiny, they can make it," Dozier responded in expressing his gratitude for the fellowship.

"If a poor guy from Detroit, Michigan, can do it, anybody can do it. Thank you for this. This is wonderful and so much appreciated."

Dozier, raised on his uncle's boogie-woogie and his aunt's Chopin, kept the MTSU audience laughing as he shared tales from his ongoing career.

His days as the teenage doo-wop leader of The Romeos, the raucous five years at the cinderblock home-turned-record label called Motown, his leadership at his own record label, and million-selling record production work with American and British artists all were fair game for Dozier's conversation with Fred Cannon. Cannon is a Recording Industry professor at MTSU and Dozier's former label manager.

"I used to come in every morning and sit down at the piano and get warmed up playing 'Heat Wave,'" Dozier recalled of those heady years when he made \$25 a week—"which amounted to about bus fare, plus they gave us lunch in the room upstairs"—for 18-hour days composing and producing hits for Berry Gordy's stable of artists.

He had the MTSU crowd in gales of laughter with his inside story of the "fussing and crying" chaos that ultimately led to "Where Did Our Love Go," the first in a string of No. 1 hits for the poor, neglected "no-hit Supremes."

Dozier and his partners left Motown and continued working together until the mid-'70s, when Dozier resumed his solo recording career. He has continued as a successful solo artist and producer, working with artists like Phil Collins, Eric Clapton, and Simply Red, and served as a songwriting instructor at the University of Southern California as well as a leading advocate for copyright protections.



THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC PRESENTS
LEGENDARY SONGWRITER, ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE AND

Motown Legend LAMONT DOZIER

JOIN US FOR AN INTERVIEW, AWARDS CEREMONY AND PERFORMANCE AS
WE NAME MR. DOZIER A FELLOW OF THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC.

October 21, 2015

KEATHLEY UNIVERSITY CENTER THEATER, 7:00 P.M.

THIS EVENT IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Jewel in MTSU's Crown

Honoring legends like Dozier and Gibb with a prestigious new annual award is just one of many activities performed by the world-renowned Center for Popular Music (CPM). Housed within MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment, the CPM for 30 years has been a worldwide scholarly resource for all things related to American vernacular music—from country and folk to gospel, blues, jazz, and rock.

Established in 1985 as one of 16 Centers of Excellence statewide, the CPM today represents the largest and oldest research institution for popular music in the world, boasting a collection of more than a million items, including more than 110,000 pieces of sheet music, 2,200 rare periodicals, nearly 250,000 sound recordings, and many important manuscript collections. Short of the Library of Congress, no other music archives match the CPM's combined size and scope. Through the years, more than 40,000 scholars from all over the world have logged research hours at the center.

From a scholarly perspective, the center's profile is waxing as historians increasingly realize how poorly popular music history has been chronicled and preserved through the years. After all, what better than the music of the day—something that matters to people, that defines who they are, and positions them in society and culture—to tap into the consciousness of the past?

A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss

As the new director, Reish is bolstering the CPM's role as a place where music and ideas about music are made—for instance, by producing (with students' help) new reissues of historic Americana music for Spring Fed Records, the Grammy-winning label Reish helped the center acquire, and by launching the *Journal of the Center for Popular Music* as a new outlet for groundbreaking scholarly research.

Founded in 2002, and acquired by the CPM in 2014, Spring Fed Records is devoted to issuing historically



Dozier, left, signs an autograph for MTSU songwriting major Kayla Dunbar.
PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

significant recordings of traditional Southern music. Among its titles are music by Uncle Dave Macon, Sam and Kirk McGee, the Fairfield Four, Frazier Moss, and Mississippi John Hurt. Spring Fed's compilation of field recordings by pioneering African American folklorist John Work III won a Grammy in 2008 for its liner notes by former CPM staffer Bruce Nemerov.

More recently, Spring Fed Records announced the release of *Home Made Sugar and a Puncheon Floor*, a set of home recordings made by John Hartford and fiddling legend Howdy Forrester. This recording preserves a repertoire of many rare, old tunes that Howdy had learned as a boy from his Great Uncle Bob Cates in Hickman County, Tennessee. Hartford plays banjo, Forrester fiddles, and the two share informal discussion about the tunes and their sources.

The center also recently completed a groundbreaking digitization project to launch its new American Vernacular Music Manuscripts (AVMM) website. Built as part of a three-year project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and undertaken in partnership with the American Antiquarian Society, the AVMM site has made hundreds of American music manuscripts from the 1730s to 1910 available online for the first time.

Reish said the project "reveals what kinds of music Americans enjoyed at home before the advent of radio and recordings. . . . Furthermore, the cataloging of these manuscripts was uncharted territory in the library and archival fields. What the project team accomplished will be of inestimable value not just to musicians and musical researchers but also to other institutions who hold similar items and never knew how to deal with them."

Joshua Sternfeld, senior program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities, said the organization is "pleased" at the success of the digitization project.



"Such a rich collection of early American materials, collaboratively produced, will not only reveal new insight into music-making but also shed light on the social and cultural fabric of communities, including ethnic traditions, social networks, religious practices, family life, and class," Sternfeld said.

Those Who Can, Teach

Reish, who was most recently associate professor of music history at Roosevelt University in Chicago, is also a professor of musicology in the MTSU School of Music. As a scholar, Reish specializes in historical guitar styles of American vernacular music and in the evolution of the country string band. He has collaborated with the late Mike Seeger and conducted research



PHOTO BY J. INTINTOLI

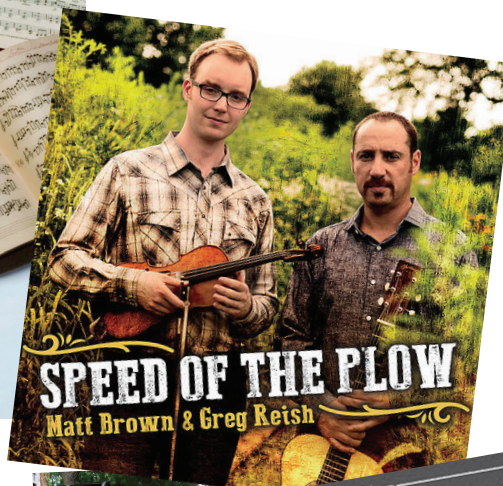
hillbilly (early country), country blues, ragtime, and bluegrass. He is a guitarist first and foremost, but also adept on banjo, fiddle, mandolin, ukulele, and dulcimer.

Having performed across the U.S. and overseas, Reish has some noteworthy gigs like opening for Roger McGuinn and playing for Japanese dignitaries at the American Embassy in Tokyo. In 2007 he undertook a week-long solo tour of Japan, performing in six cities.

Reish studied jazz guitar at the University of Miami, worked as a freelance musician in Nashville, and earned master's and doctoral degrees in historical musicology from the University of Georgia. He received a Fulbright grant to study the music of Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi in Rome.

It's Alive!

From the Fellows program, to new releases, to scholarly research and archiving, the Center for Popular Music continues to be a vibrant place filled with high levels of activity and production. After all, what comes out of the CPM, Reish said, should be just as important as what goes into it. ■



SPRING FED Records



center for
popular music

in the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress. He currently is writing a book on the history of old-time guitar styles and is a contributing author to the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Country Music*.

Reish further distinguishes himself as an academic, though, by the fact that he is a recording artist who, with renowned old-time musician Matt Brown, has recently released a new album of traditional fiddle and guitar duets called *Speed of the Plow*. An "old-time" musician, Reish's performance and study of traditional American music concentrate on the rural, mostly Southern music of the 1920s through the 1940s, encompassing such styles as old time,



CENTER for INNOVATI



a communications CONVER

The Center for Innovation in Media places MTSU's journalism program back in the national limelight

written by Dylan Skye Aycock
photos by Andy Heidt

For those walking to class or just passing through the John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building, it's difficult to miss the glowing "ON-AIR" signs hanging over frosted windows or the towering glass doors opening to a state-of-the-art facility.

MTSU's Center for Innovation in Media is the first step into a cutting-edge, fast-paced newsroom environment for most of the University's future media professionals.

Inside, there's a continuous flow of media students rushing in and out between classes. They work on rows of iMacs equipped with the latest video, audio, and design software, produce quality content while honing their crafts, and meet real-world deadlines.

The front section is home to the center's two radio studios, both of which feature modern



recording-industry technology. The left door opens to WMOT-FM, Murfreesboro's 100,000-watt NPR affiliate, and the other side, Studio A, is home to student-run radio station WMTS-FM.

The rest of the facility houses *Sidelines*, the student news outlet; MT10, the student-operated cable TV station; and Match Records, MTSU's student-run record label. Branching off from the center are the virtual newsroom, a floor-to-ceiling production lab for MT10-HD's newscasts, and the "smart classroom," a room

equipped with robotics technology and flat-screen monitors used to enhance learning.

Each morning, members of student media meet in the center conference room along with its director, Val Hoepfner, and Mike Osborne, WMOT's director of news and public affairs, to discuss the latest news both on campus and in the community. They also share ideas for upcoming stories, projects, and resources.

"The reason we have a morning meeting is so we learn to build synergy with one another and our content,"



Val Hoepfner, director of the Center for Innovation in Media, with students.

Hoepfner said. "In journalism now, it doesn't matter if you get a job at a newspaper or a television station, the expectation is that you can write well, speak well, and produce multiple kinds of content because writing, video, and even radio all go hand-in-hand now."

Recent MTSU alumnus Justin Beasley ('14), a former MT10 and WMTS member, knows firsthand the demands and inner workings of a modern newsroom structure. Now a TV sports reporter at WPSD-Channel 6 in Paducah, Kentucky, Beasley said he graduated with an industry-level resume reel, and that the Center's "team-centric" work environment played an essential role in his preparedness.

"What the Center for Innovation in Media has created for students is the closest thing to an actual newsroom I think any college has to offer," Beasley said. "[Students] should strive to get to the point where everything is ready to air for a station . . . Don't just cover a story for the assignment and grade, but treat everything as if you were publishing it for plenty of eyes to see."

To be well prepared for internships and post-graduation endeavors, students are encouraged to get involved early during their college careers to find their passion



Student journalists filming a live television program in the University's production facility.



Student journalists preparing for a live radio broadcast.

and begin building a portfolio. The center is available for all University students to utilize.

Sophomore Patty Greer's involvement with WMTS radio during her first semester readily prepared her for the station's promotions director position. There are several benefits for early involvement, she said, but being recognized as a professional is by far the most rewarding.

"I can reach out to labels and people higher up [whom] I've always admired, and now that I have this title, they take me more seriously," Greer said. "I can't wait to see where I go with this, because it's already impacted my life so much."

While the center is designed to simulate an industry newsroom, it also allows students to grow from their mistakes. In the process, students strengthen their field reporting skills, learn to accept criticism, and adjust to working on strict deadlines.

Senior journalism major and former *Sidelines* editor-in-chief Maranda Farris said that the center not only provides a realistic training ground, but also the connections made within will strengthen job opportunities prior to or soon after graduation.

Now a part-time crime reporter for the *Jackson Sun*, Farris is balancing her responsibilities as a student and reporter until she graduates in May. She improved her skills working in close proximity to journalism professionals at the center, plus it helped her secure internships with the *Daily News Journal* in Murfreesboro and *The Tennessean* in Nashville.

"In the Center for Innovation in Media, we had very realistic deadlines that prepared me for working at the *Jackson Sun*," Farris said. "The most important thing I learned working with the outlets in the center was building relationships with people in your own newsroom, as well as with other organizations."

During her tenure, Hoepfner hopes to see an even more converged newsroom so there is no longer repetition in stories. She said she'd like to see *Sidelines* reporters working with MT10 videographers to produce two aspects of the story that deepen the understanding as a whole.

While each organization operates on individual platforms, Hoepfner has worked to develop an annex destination, a converged app, for all student-run media to help oversee and contribute content.

"We have a huge emphasis on digital [content] now, and that's what's happening in newsrooms across the country," Hoepfner said. "I think that anybody who works in the center now, no matter what entity they're under, they are light years ahead of other students because they're working in this environment every day."



[About the author: Dylan Skye Aycock is a journalism student and editor-in-chief of Sidelines, MTSU's editorially independent, student-run media. Aycock is also a member of the Seigenthaler News Service, a journalism program that partners

students with The Tennessean and other local outlets, and is an editorial intern at American Songwriter Magazine.] ■

National Recognition

The Center for Innovation in Media at MTSU has been nationally recognized by the Associated Press Media Editors for its efforts to converge the University's student media and foster collaboration across platforms.

MTSU received an honorable mention in the Innovator of the Year for College Students category in the APME Journalism Excellence Awards in 2012—the year the center opened. The University was lauded for "reforming and reshaping its student media." The judges called the MTSU student-media converged newsroom "a model for journalism schools and professional news organizations."

APME is an association of editors at newspapers and broadcast outlets, journalism educators, and student leaders in the United States and Canada. APME works closely with the Associated Press to foster journalism excellence. The APME board added two contests this year—one recognizing innovation in radio and television and the other for innovations by college students.

Funding support for the center included the Cornerstone Donors, with former School of Journalism director Dr. Richard Campbell among the group; Gannett media operations in Murfreesboro, Nashville, and Clarksville; the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters; the Tennessee Press Association; former Knight-Ridder vice president Virginia Dodge Fielder; music journalist and current Recording Industry chair Beverly Keel; CNN executive producer Jeffery Reid; First Amendment defender John Seigenthaler; and Verizon Wireless.



Format Revamp

As the editor of *Sidelines*, Dylan Skye Aycock closely monitored how the

MTSU student newspaper's web views were rising while pickup rate of the print product remained flat. In May 2014, the *Sidelines* editorial board decided to ditch the weekly print edition and embrace the digital era by switching to a primarily online platform. Although the paper still publishes monthly and has been redesigned as well, the operation's main focus is to generate daily digital content for the MTSU community.

Sidelines relaunched as a WordPress-hosted site in August 2014. The result is that the students are now publishing at a much higher rate than ever before.

"We're now 24/7, which means if breaking news happens on campus, there's no reason we shouldn't have a story published and on social media within minutes," Aycock said.

Since that time, the accolades have been rolling in. For example, the redesigned site was recently awarded first place in the Best College Website category of the 2016 Southeast Journalism Conference against entries from 35 universities and colleges across the south. Members of *Sidelines* winning individual awards included: Meagan White, first place, Best Opinion/Editorial Writer; John Connor Coulston, first place, Best Arts and Entertainment Writer; Erin Thomas, first place, Best Radio Feature Reporter; Sarah Taylor second place, Best News Writer, third place, Best Multimedia Reporter, and 10th place, College Journalist of the Year; Greg French, sixth place Best Press Photographer. ■

mtsu
SIDELINES

THE LEADING EDGE

Excerpts from the blog of the College of Media and Entertainment at MTSU. Bookmark [The Leading Edge](#) for news about college happenings and features on faculty, students, and alumni.

To submit stories or ideas, email Sharon.Fitzgerald@mtsu.edu or visit: theleadingedgemtsu.com



Matthew O'Brien, Recording Industry professor, helmed an informational booth at the Americana conference, as well as supervised 30 students in a variety of volunteer roles.

Good Partners

Students and faculty from MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment contributed in a number of ways to the success of the 16th annual Americana Music Festival and Conference in Nashville.

Joining the media fray, students from the MTSU Seigenthaler News Service contributed five advance features that appeared both in the digital version of Nashville's daily, *The Tennessean*, as well as the MTSU student newspaper, *Sidelines*. Two of the stories also were picked up in the print version of *The Tennessean*.

At the awards show, Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Media and Entertainment, joined rock great John Kay of Steppenwolf to present singer Buffy Saint-Marie with the annual Spirit of Americana/Free Speech in Music Award. The award is co-presented by the Americana Music Association and the First Amendment Center.



A Solid Experience

"Les Paul's Big Sound Experience," a 53-foot-long interactive exhibit, visited MTSU March 30–31, 2016 as part of its nationwide tour celebrating the 100th birthday of the man regarded as the father of the solid-body electric guitar. The stop allowed students and visitors to immerse themselves in displays on music exploration, sound and technology innovations, and hands-on, interactive entertainment. In conjunction with the Les Paul tour visit, internationally known music industry leaders, including renowned guitarist Harold Bradley, producer Chuck Ainlay, and musician Arielle Peri gave lectures on campus. These visits were part of a yearlong series of special events celebrating the launch of the renamed College of Media and Entertainment.



Taking the Helm

Greg Pitts, Ph.D., joined the School of Journalism as its new director on Aug. 1, 2015. He was the former chair of the Department of Communications at the University of North Alabama in Florence, Alabama.

While at UNA, Pitts guided the department to accreditation through the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and paved the way for creation of a student-run radio station.

"In real estate, they say 'location, location, location,'" Pitts said. "Well, in journalism, it's 'get the facts right, get the facts right,

get the facts right.' And, ethically, you've got to make sure that you're not outrunning your headlights in trying to get the story distributed before you know that you've got it right."

Pitts earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Auburn University in 1982 and 1983, respectively, and his doctorate from the University of Tennessee–Knoxville in 1992.

His research and teaching fields include advertising sales, international media, media management, and radio-television programming.

Pitts replaces Dr. Dwight Brooks, who is the new vice dean of Hofstra University's Lawrence Herbert School of Communication in Hempstead, New York.

Legends of the Trade

The Tennessee Journalism Hall of Fame honored nine pioneering print and broadcast journalists during Aug. 11, 2015 ceremonies at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Murfreesboro.

The Tennessee Journalism Hall of Fame is an independent partner with MTSU's College of Media and Entertainment, which houses the hall in its Center for Innovation in Media.

The induction was held in conjunction with the 67th annual Tennessee Association of Broadcasters conference.

The 2015 class included:

- Former Murfreesboro Mayor Tommy Bragg, center, is pictured here accepting the induction award on behalf of his late father, state Rep. **John Bragg**, and late grandfather, **Minor E. Bragg**. Pictured with Bragg is his son, John Bragg III, far left, and Dr. Larry Burriss, Hall of Fame president and MTSU journalism professor. (photo by Jimmy Hart)
- **Kent Flanagan**, a native Texan and veteran Associated Press executive who practiced journalism on various platforms.
- **Jack Knox**, a nationally recognized editorial cartoonist, who practiced his wit and biting commentary in three of the state's four largest cities.
- **Roy McDonald**, whose publishing career traces back to an advertising sheet he started to promote his grocery business in Chattanooga.
- **Bob Parkins**, a small-town dairyman who grew his rural West Tennessee newspaper from scratch through merger.
- **John N. Popham III**, a native Virginian who landed in Tennessee to cover the South and civil rights for *The New York Times*.
- **Henry Grantland Rice**, a nationally syndicated sports columnist from Murfreesboro, whose contributions to sports resonate decades after his death.
- **Drue Smith**, a trailblazing female journalist who became a respected and colorful broadcast political reporter.



A Conference Gone Mad

Convened by both the College of Media and Entertainment and the College of Liberal Arts, and in partnership with The School of Arts and Media at the University of Salford, UK, MTSU hosted a conference May 26–28, 2016 on the television drama series, *Mad Men*.

Responding to the series' conclusion in 2015, the event explored *Mad Men* in its entirety via a range of academic approaches, assessing *Mad Men's* key creative accomplishments but also using the series as a means to consider wider aspects of contemporary television culture, as well as broader societal issues.



Changing the Conversation

Recording Industry department chair Beverly Keel wants to change the conversation about women in country music, and her recent public sit-down with country music powerhouse Reba McEntire is evidence that she is helping to do just that.

A music business veteran, Keel co-founded the Change the

Conversation advocacy group in 2014 with Leslie Fram, CMT senior vice president, and Tracy Gershon, a Rounder Records Group vice president. The group is made up of largely Nashville-based women from various music backgrounds who are working together to improve the environment for women in country music, including mentoring aspiring female artists.

Keel's efforts to address gender inequity in the country music industry took off in spring 2015 following the "Tomato-gate" incident. A country music radio executive told a trade publication at the time that he advised radio stations not to play too many songs by female artists, using the analogy of a salad in which the male artists were the lettuce of country music radio and female artists were "the tomatoes of our salad."

In March, 2016, Keel's group launched "Change the Conversation Presents: Rising Young Artists Mentoring Sessions," with Keel doing a Q&A with special guest mentor and music legend Reba McEntire at the famous Bluebird Café in Nashville. During the session, as reported by musicrow.com and billboard.com, McEntire announced that she was forming her own management company, Reba's Business Inc., to direct her career and that she would serve as president.



Picture This

What do Jerry Lee Lewis and one of the leading civil rights organizations in the South have in common? The answer is Chris Harris, professor of photography in MTSU's Department of Electronic Media.

When Rick Bragg wrote the new Jerry Lee Lewis biography, *Jerry Lee Lewis: His Own Story*, he needed a photograph showing Jerry Lee with his two famous cousins, Mickey Gilley and Jimmy Swaggart. After searching through thousands of photographs of the famous rock 'n' roller, it was Harris who had the exclusive pictures. Harris had spent several days for *People Magazine* following "The Killer" around Baton Rouge and the local environs in the early '80s.

Harris teaches Photojournalism, Visual Journalism Production, Photoshop, and Ethics and Law for Visual Communicators.

Music Matters

Did you know that the song "Yankee Doodle" was originally a taunt by British soldiers mocking the dress of colonial Americans? That forgotten fragment of American history is just one of dozens of revelations in *Music Matters*, a multimedia stage show exploring how popular songs have shaped America. The show, written and narrated by College of Media and Entertainment Dean Ken Paulson, and performed by current and former MTSU students in tandem with some of Nashville's finest musicians, is in residence at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville.



Music Matters tracks the civil rights, women's rights, and environmental movements through songs and also illustrates how all American popular music is made possible by the First Amendment. Designed for younger audiences, it's a version of the seminal show *Freedom Sings* a critically acclaimed multimedia experience that Paulson co-created and which is now in its 11th year of touring the country. *Music Matters* also introduces students to the rich mix of journalism and music in MTSU's curriculum.

Student Katy Bishop, a *Music Matters* intern, stated that she was honored to be a part of the project. "It is so important for the upcoming generations to understand music of the past and how it's affected the music of today," she said.

Survey Says . . .

Not every state is fortunate enough to have a university-led, independent statewide poll that can reliably and regularly inform its population about prevailing public opinion. Starting in fall 1998, the MTSU Poll, a product of the College of Media and Entertainment, has collected public opinion data every spring and fall on major social, political, and ethical issues affecting Tennessee.

The latest MTSU Poll surveyed Tennesseans on many topics, including gun control. Although strongly protective of gun rights in general, most Tennessee voters favor requiring background checks for gun sales among private individuals and at gun shows, the poll found.

The poll randomly surveyed 603 registered voters statewide by telephone Oct. 25–27, 2015 and had an error margin of four percentage points.



Safety First

MTSU helped create an emergency communications center that will provide live, high-definition satellite uplinks that government agencies and TV stations can use to broadcast information during tornadoes, floods, and other public health emergencies. The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) unveiled the Multi-Agency Joint Information Center (MAJIC) in October 2014. Staff from the College of Education's Center for Educational Media and the College of Media and Entertainment's Department of Electronic Media Communication shared technical expertise to properly equip the information center. TEMA director David Purkey said the partnership could lead to valuable experience for MTSU student interns at his agency.



Writer in Development

Abby White joined MTSU as development director for the College of Media and Entertainment. Previously, she was staff editor with Nashville-based media company SouthComm Inc., where she split editorial duties between the *Nashville Scene*, *nFocus* magazine and the *Nashville Post*.

White served on the Americana Music Association’s board of directors from 2006–08. She was project manager for the installation of the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame digital archive, a project spearheaded by Ken Paulson, dean of MTSU’s College of Media and Entertainment, which is housed in the Music City Center in downtown Nashville. Her first book, *100 Things To Do In Nashville Before You Die*, was published in 2014.

White can be reached at abby.white@mtsu.edu.

Read All About It

Journalism educators and students have long benefited from partnerships with news organizations. MTSU’s School of Journalism is pleased to give back to print and broadcast news organizations and journalists across Tennessee as a presenting partner at the annual Tennessee Associated Press Broadcast and Media Editors journalism awards. The Tennessee AP Awards were presented on April 9 in Nashville. Every plaque presented to the state’s top journalists included the MTSU School of Journalism’s imprint.

The School of Journalism previously established the John Seigenthaler Award of Excellence for public affairs reporting.



School of Journalism director Greg Pitts, with recent graduate Maranda Faris, who was recognized at the recent AP awards ceremony for her work at *The Jackson Sun*.

Beyond Industry Standard

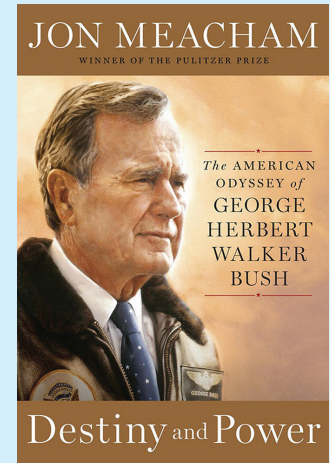
In September 2014, *Billboard* magazine reinforced the Department of Recording Industry’s well-established reputation when it named MTSU one of the nation’s five top universities for learning about the music industry. More recently, *The Hollywood Reporter* listed MTSU’s music business program among its Top 25 Music Schools in both 2014 and 2015, ranking it ahead of nearby Belmont University’s Curb College of Entertainment and Music Business.

Head of the Class

MTSU’s College of Media and Entertainment was recently named one of the top 30 programs of its kind in the U.S. via a survey by popular news industry trade publication *NewsPro* magazine. MTSU was the only Tennessee university included on the list.

The Gift of Good Advice

MTSU songwriting students will have more opportunities to learn from visiting professionals in the first phase of a new Music Row in Murfreesboro project funded by a \$10,000 grant from the philanthropic arm of the Academy of Country Music. The ACM’s Lifting Lives Foundation made the donation to support regular visits by music business professionals to MTSU recording industry classes on campus, where they offer advice, share war stories, and even critique student projects.



Pulitzer Presence

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jon Meacham spoke about his latest biography, *The New York Times* No. 1 best-seller *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush*, in front of more than a hundred people in a ballroom at MTSU’s Student Union Building in February 2016. The Chattanooga native, executive editor at Random House and former editor-in-chief of *Newsweek*, interviewed Bush repeatedly over a nine-year period and had access to the diaries of the 41st president and his wife, Barbara. The event kicked off The Pulitzer Prize Centennial Series at MTSU commemorating the 100th anniversary of The Pulitzer Prizes, which have honored excellence in journalism and the arts annually since 1917. The event is presented by the John Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies, the Tom T. Hall Writers Series, and MTSU College of Media and Entertainment.

CLASS NOTES

So many successful graduates . . . so few pages! The College of Media and Entertainment simply could not print enough pages to adequately spotlight the far-ranging stories of professional success enjoyed by our graduates. As such, we offer up here just a sampling of stories that reveal the depth and breadth of the talent produced by the college and MTSU. **True Blue!**



Luke Laird with President Sidney A. McPhee

PHOTO BY ANDREW OPPMANN

Painting the Grammys True Blue

Almost 20 MTSU alumni or former students and faculty from around the University have been nominated for Grammy Awards in the past seven years. Seven have won Grammys so far, including some repeat recipients, in categories from classical to gospel to bluegrass. Few universities in America can boast such high-brow musical success.

In 2016, MTSU alumnus **Luke Laird** ('01) was again nominated for a Grammy award in the Best Country Song category for his song "Diamond Rings and Old Barstools," written with Barry Dean and Jonathan Singleton and performed by artist Tim McGraw. Laird was nominated in 2015 for co-writing both Kenny Chesney's "American Kids" and Eric Church's "Give Me Back My Hometown." Laird was also nominated that year for Best Country Album, as producer of Kasey Musgraves' album, "Pageant Material." Laird won the Grammy for Best Country Album in 2014 for co-producing Musgraves' "Same Trailer, Different Park."



Other Grammy nominees with MTSU ties in 2016 included Sam Hunt, who was up for Best Country Album for "Montevallo" and Best New Artist, and Eric Pasley, who was nominated for Best Country Duo/Group Performance for "The Driver," along with Charles Kelley and Dierks Bentley. In 2015, "Messengers," co-written by 2003 music business graduate **Torrance Esmond**—known professionally as Street Symphony—and former MTSU student Lecrae Moore for Moore's latest album, won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Christian Music Performance/Song. Esmond later established the Street Symphony Scholarship, a \$750-per-semester award for MTSU recording industry students. Former student Jaren Johnston was also nominated in the Best Country Song category in 2015 as a co-writer on "Meanwhile, Back at Mama's," performed by McGraw.

It All Begins With a Song

Laird earned his MTSU music business degree in 2001 and has had more than 14 No. 1 singles since he signed his first publishing deal in 2002. He's written 20 Billboard No. 1 hits and was recently named BMI's Songwriter of the Year and the Academy of Country Music's songwriter of the year. MTSU honored him at a special reception in Los Angeles held the day before this year's Grammys event. President Sidney A. McPhee, Media and Entertainment college dean Ken Paulson and Beverly Keel, chair of the Recording Industry department (who taught Laird while a student) were in attendance.

Laird, in thanking MTSU for the recognition, talked about the encouragement and support he received from the faculty while he was a student. "The people there encouraged me, still to this day," Laird said. "My time at MTSU is a time I look back on very fondly."



MTSU and Americana Music Association leaders attend a pre-Grammy tribute to the late Glenn Frey at the legendary Troubadour nightclub. From left are Keel, McPhee, event headliner Lee Ann Womack, Paulson, and Jed Hilly, executive director of the Americana Music Association.

PHOTO BY ANDREW OPPMANN

concert. The day before that event, McPhee, Paulson, and Keel held a reunion with alumni, supporters and friends of the college—including Nashville Mayor Megan Barry—at Rock'N Fish Restaurant.

"MTSU's increasing presence at the Grammys has been noticed and appreciated, not only by our alumni but others in the recording industry," McPhee said. "We've planted the True Blue flag in a very visible location."

Even the actual Grammy telecast had a True Blue connection, as MTSU alumnus Garry Hood ('77) once again served as the head stage manager for the Grammy ceremony.

School of Rock

For three consecutive years from 2014 through 2016, MTSU has been among the only universities represented at the Grammy event. For the past two years, MTSU has been a presenting sponsor of a Leadership Music alumni reunion held at the legendary Troubadour nightclub near the site of the Grammy telecast. This year, MTSU joined Nashville's Americana Music Association in paying tribute at that event to late Eagles co-founder Glenn Frey. Bonnie Raitt and Lee Ann Womack were among the artists on the bill for the pre-Grammy



The Big Screen

Bobby Bosko Grubic ('99) and **Robert Rowles** ('99) produced an award-winning short film, *The Parting Shot*, which was one of 10 semifinalists out of 500 entries in the 2014 Producers Guild of America Make Your Mark competition. The awards ceremony was held at the AT&T Theater in Los Angeles. Entries were judged by a panel including Kathy Bates, Danny DeVito, and Michael Douglas.

The Parting Shot is an action-drama about a government undercover agent who struggles to keep his family safe. Grubic is known for his corporate production and TV commercials, and he won Emmy Awards in 1999, 2006, and 2007. Rowles, a visual effects compositor, has worked films including *The Hobbit*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Incredible Hulk*, and *Day After Tomorrow*. He also worked on the team that won the 2007 Academy Award for Best Visual Effects (*The Golden Compass*.)



Hollywood Success

A Disney Channel program your kids wore out day after day has an MTSU connection. **Betsy Sullenger** ('88) was executive producer of the hit show *Liv and Maddie*. She is pictured here with the star of the show, Dove Cameron.



Dual Threat

Mike Kopp, ('81) has spent more than 30 years helping celebrities, public figures, executives, companies, and organizations create new opportunities for success. The former deputy commissioner of economic and community development for the state of Tennessee and former partner in the Nashville PR firm the Ingram Group, Kopp

was also press secretary for Congressman Al Gore. He is co-founder and senior vice president of digital marketing for MMA Creative in Nashville.

In 2012, Kopp joined Music Row veteran Sharon Corbitt-House to launch House Kopp, an artist management company whose primary client is singer-songwriter/producer Ben Folds. Kopp is Folds' representative on all fronts: from contracts to bookings and branding to studio work.

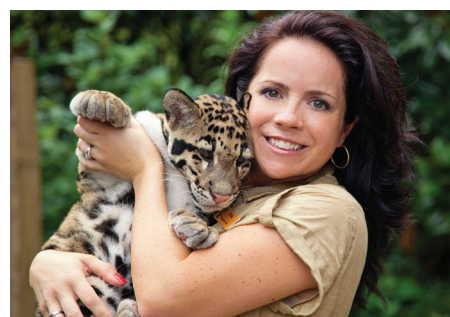


Did it Himself

Adam Rector ('99) is getting noticed in Nashville business media circles with his new online camera rental system, RENTaCAMERA.com, which he launched in recent years.

Rector bought the equipment department of the Electric Picture Co., a well-known Nashville-based production

retailer, in 2005. He then started The Video Co., which loans its stock of 70 cameras, hundreds of lenses, and other production equipment to "do-it-yourself" operators. *The Nashville Business Journal* reported that the company has averaged 30 percent revenue growth through the years and now has more than \$1 million in equipment.



Making a Name

Amiee Stubbs ('12) is the official photographer for the Nashville Zoo and garnered national attention when *USA Today* published her photojournalism work with the Animal Rescue Corps. The owner of Amiee Stubbs Photography and UltraViolet Gallery in Nashville, Stubbs was also voted Best Photographer according to the *Nashville Scene* in both 2014 and 2015.

True Blue Lady

Former MTSU student and current Lady Antebellum lead singer **Hillary Scott** gave back to her alma mater by establishing a scholarship for aspiring recording industry students within the University's recently renamed College of Media and Entertainment.



"This scholarship is something I'm extremely excited about," said Scott, a former MTSU Recording Industry major turned Grammy-winning artist. "There are so many amazing people who have supported, encouraged, and challenged me to become who I am today, and many of those were from my time at MTSU."

Lady Antebellum manager and MTSU alumnus Daniel Miller announced the scholarship on Scott's behalf at an event at music rights organization BMI in Nashville last September.



True Blue Cross

Roy Vaughn ('82) is vice president of corporate communications at BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. In this role, Vaughn is responsible for public affairs, media relations, and employee communications for the

company, which employs 5,200 workers across Tennessee.

Before joining BlueCross in 2007, Vaughn was a partner in the Nashville public relations firm Katcher Vaughn & Bailey Public Relations (KVBPR). He helped found KVBPR in 1996 and led the client service team on the BlueCross account for nine years. The Nashville chapter of PRSA honored him in 2002 with its Hercules Award for career achievement and service to the public relations profession.

WALL OF FAME

Three prominent alumni were added to the college's Wall of Fame in 2015



Lacy Privette, a 1997 Recording Industry graduate, has spent most of his career with Yamaha Corp. of America, where he's moved up the ranks from an award-winning district sales manager in the Pro Audio and Combo Division to serve as director of the company's Steinberg North America department. At Steinberg, Privette markets music production software, including Cubase 4, VST instruments, Nuendo and WaveLab, used in digital audio workstations and software synthesizers to clients in the United States and Canada from Yamaha's Yorba Linda, California, offices.



Jim Ridley, who earned his MTSU journalism degree in 1989, was writing movie and book reviews for local newspapers even before he graduated high school. His talent led to a freelance film-reviewing job for the fledgling alternative weekly *Nashville Scene* and regular contributions to *The Village Voice*, *L.A. Weekly*, *Variety* and other publications. *The Scene* soon brought Ridley on full time, where he rose to the positions of senior editor and managing editor before the publishers named him editor in 2009. Sadly, Ridley died suddenly in 2016.



Electronic Media Communication alumnus **Lewis Harkness** ('93), currently a director for ESPN, began his broadcasting career during his senior year at MTSU in 1993, when he began working as an intern for WKRN-TV in Nashville. Since then, he's won five Emmy Awards for his news, special events and technical direction. His ESPN credits include *Sport Center*, *Mike and Mike*, *NBA Tonight*, *The Herd* and *SVP & Rusillo*. In 2014, he directed the launch for ESPN's new SEC Network in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he continues today.



True Blue Leader

New York-based public relations firm Finn Partners bought and merged two veteran Nashville communications agencies, DVL

Public Relations & Advertising and Seigenthaler Public Relations Inc., forming the city's largest public relations group. DVL CEO **Ronald Roberts** ('84) was named to lead the 80-person company as CEO. The combined local company is named DVL Seigenthaler. The acquisition allowed Finn Partners, a global firm, to enter the quickly growing Nashville market and tap into the relationships established locally and nationally by the two agencies that together bring in close to \$11 million.

I AM *true*
BLUE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



Country Diva

The Country Music Association (CMA) presented the 2015 CMA Media Achievement Award to *Tennessean* reporter **Cindy Watts** ('01) during a Nov. 4 backstage ceremony. RCA Nashville artist and former MTSU student **Chris Young** presented the award to Watts on the red carpet prior to the start of the televised *49th Annual CMA Awards*. Watts has been covering music in the Nashville area for 15 years, having started her career at the *Daily News Journal* in Murfreesboro.



Hometown Hero

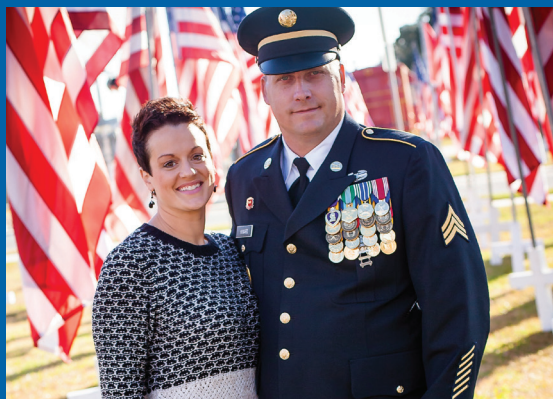
In fall 2015, Grammy-nominated **Chris Young's** smash single "I'm Comin' Over" became the fastest-selling single of his career. The title track led off his fifth studio album, released Nov. 13. Both went to No. 1 on *Billboard's* album and airplay charts.



Grade A Grads

From 1960 to present, the MTSU Alumni Association has recognized accomplished alumni in various categories. Among the 2015–2016 honorees who graduated from the College of Media and Entertainment were: Young Alumni Achievement Award recipient **Eric Paslay** ('05) and Service to the Community recipient **Britnee Kinard** ('05).

Paslay has helped shape the current sound of country radio. Jake Owen's "Barefoot Blue Jean Night," which Paslay wrote with Dylan Altman and Terry Sawchuk, was named ASCAP's 2012 Country Song of the Year. The Eli Young Band's "Even If It Breaks Your Heart," written by Paslay and Will Hoge, was nominated for both a 2013 Grammy for Best Country Song and CMA Song of the Year in 2012. Amy Grant recruited Paslay to join her and Sheryl Crow when she covered his song "Deep As It Is Wide" on her latest album.



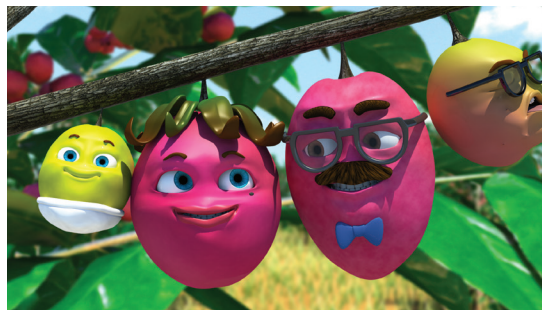
Kinard founded the SD Gunner Fund, which assists veterans and disabled children with the financial expenses associated with owning service animals. The organization was inspired by her own 15-month struggle to obtain a service dog for her military-wounded husband. She expects to assist 3,000 military families in the coming year. Kinard is the recipient of the inaugural Lincoln Award, which was presented to her in Washington, D.C., by the Friars Club Foundation.



The Big Hoss

Eddie Gossage ('82), pictured here with race car driver Carl Edwards, is president of Texas Motor Speedway (TMS), where in 2014 he introduced the Big Hoss, a huge video screen along the backstretch. It's the largest HD screen in the world and was used at races last year.

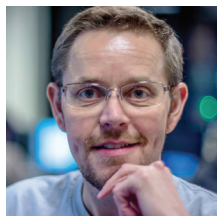
In 2012, *d* magazine credited Gossage with turning the 1,500-acre, \$250 million TMS into one of Dallas-Fort Worth's "most underrated sports success stories, annually making millions of dollars for its owner." A legendary promoter, Gossage is well known for using creative, even outrageous, methods to promote the track and NASCAR. In 2010, he offered a Dallas-area radio personality \$100,000 to change his name to TexasMotorSpeedway.com and get a tattoo with the new name. The prank got international attention.



AN ANIMATED APPROACH

Students work on award-winning short film with EMC professor

by Darby Campbell



Kevin McNulty, an assistant professor in the Department of Electronic Media Communication, led a team of students in creating an award-winning animated short film.

"I applied for the Undergraduate Research Experience and Creative Activity (URECA)

Summer Teams Grant in Spring 2014 and basically said, 'Anybody want to make a film with me?'" Andie Ayotte, Derek Barnes, Chris Dyer, Simon Idiare Jr., Kelsey Richards, Erin Thompson, and Raphael Williams volunteered their time Monday through Friday 9–5 to make the film. "The dedication was amazing," the professor said. "Some students had jobs at night to go to after working on the film during the day."

From picking the coffee beans to a conveyor belt of crushing, scorching, and grinding, *Coffee* is a 4.5-minute thrill ride of screams complete with a death-metal score from local band Hell Forged. Beyond being highly entertaining, the short is a commentary on consumerism and what McNulty calls the "don't care where it comes from as long as it's cheap, works, and/or tastes good" mentality. *Coffee* has been accepted into nearly 30 film festivals including Mike's Sick and Twisted Festival of Animation. It won Best Innovative Film in Nashville's ARTLightenment Art and Film Festival, Best Animation in the Boomtown Film and Music Festival, and Best Animation at the

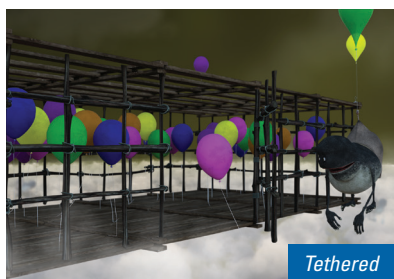


McNulty with the MTSU ACM Student Chapter of SIGGRAPH at the organization's 2015 conference in Los Angeles

NOFI World Festival of Student and Non-Commercial Films, all of which are international festivals.

McNulty earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from New York's Rochester Institute of Technology and focuses on digital animation, motion graphics, stop-motion, and traditional animation. Currently an adviser for the ACM

SIGGRAPH Student Chapter, McNulty also teaches Intermediate Digital Animation 3310, Advanced Digital Animation I and II, and Animation Seminar I and II classes, where students create a



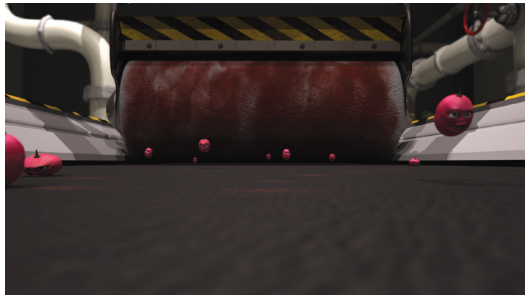
Tethered

30-second short film over the course of two semesters.

Also competing in these prestigious film festivals is McNulty's solo project. Starting in 2009, McNulty spent five years single-handedly animating

Tethered, the story of a red balloon that stands up to injustice.

"It's about bullying and oppression as seen through the eyes of one balloon," McNulty said. "It's about how it can psychologically beat you down. The red balloon sees the atrocities going on, and it does something about it." *Tethered* won second place in BoomTown and NOFI, after *Coffee*. ■





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The college gives students a sound and well-rounded education, embracing the oldest values and newest technology, and giving them a running start in the media and entertainment industries.

Gifts from our alumni and friends help us to provide students with the understanding, insights, and tools they need to be successful in their careers—and in life.

To support the college, visit mtsu.edu/supportmedia or contact Abby White at abby.white@mtsu.edu or 615-898-5756.