THE COLLEGE OF

Mass Communication

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



Freedom Sings at the Bluebird

MTSU students once again lend expertise to Nashville's music community. *See page 10.*

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



Good **Display**

Professor Harold Baldwin started the photography program at MTSU in 1959 and established a photo gallery five years later to help expose students, as well as the surrounding community, to the work of leading photographers from around the world. In the process, the professor began to build a permanent collection from gallery exhibits by artists such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Minor White.

The Photographic Gallery, which was renamed to honor Baldwin in 1996, was located in a hallway of the Learning Resources Center until building renovations displaced it. Now a professor emeritus of mass communication, Baldwin donated $100,000 in 2012 to find and renovate a new location on campus.

The Baldwin Photographic Gallery's new home is in a bright, airy space on the second-floor atrium of Bragg Mass Communication Building. The former student newspaper office has been turned into a 1,300-square-foot gallery featuring 200 feet of pristine wall display space and museum-quality lighting to showcase the permanent Baldwin collection, traveling exhibits, and student work.



Photo: J. Intintoli

Table of Contents

2 **Dean's Note: A Look Ahead**

3 **A Legend's Legacy**
The family of country music icon George Jones creates a scholarship fund at MTSU

4 **Triple-threat Icon**
Barry Gibb receives honor, wows crowd during MTSU visit

5 **Mass Comments**
A look at awards, events, and accomplishments involving the MTSU mass comm community

10 **Freedom Sings at the Bluebird**
MTSU students lend behind-the-scenes expertise to Mass Communication dean Ken Paulson's "Freedom Sings"

12 **Street Cred**
MTSU students help a Nashville record label entertain thousands of music lovers

16 **Not Fiddling Around**
A past director of MTSU's Center for Popular Music proves not all research occurs in a laboratory

19 **Days in the Sun**
MTSU graduate Jackie Johnson makes her mark

20 **A Communications Convergence**
MTSU's new Center for Innovation in Media goes mainstream

22 **Preservation Required**
The Center for Popular Music serves as a portal to the popular consciousness of past generations

24 **Survey Says**
MTSU's statewide poll is second to none in reading the minds of Tennesseans

25 **A Fourth "R"**
An MTSU professor has written the book on reggae

27 **The Leading Edge**
Excerpts from the blog of the College of Mass Communication

30 **In Your Corner**
Alum Jeffery Reid extends a helping hand to current students with an eye on his industry

32 **Class Notes**
Distinguished alumni of the College of Mass Communication

Dean's Note: A Look Ahead

by Ken Paulson



In 1993, I had a glimpse of the future and had absolutely no idea what to do about it.

For years, I had been dabbling in online networks, including playing primitive trivia games on an AOL precursor called Quantum Link. By the early '90s, media companies were beginning to explore ways to put news content online. As editor of a newspaper called *Florida Today*, I didn't want to be left behind.

I pitched my boss on starting an online service that would report local news. You might describe it as a primitive website, with this qualifier: there was no way to access the World Wide Web yet.

In 1993, I struck a deal with CompuServe, a then-prominent online service, to post our content. The only advice I received from my publisher was to not lose money.

I did my best. I didn't lose money but didn't make much either. There were too many obstacles. The software was buggy, the downloads were slow, and readers had to join the service to access our content. Somebody had to come up with a better way.

And of course, in that very same year of 1993, the Mosaic browser was invented, giving us the means to navigate the brand-new Web.

That bit of history has everything to do with why I'm so pleased I joined the College of Mass Communication at this moment in media history. It's been two decades since the Web changed virtually everything, and babies born during those pivotal years of technological change—the Web generation—are now seeking an education in the very fields the Internet disrupted.

Where once our college's obligation was largely to prepare young people for employment in the recording industry, broadcast business, and news and entertainment media, we now have a responsibility to help this generation reinvent these industries in the digital era.

That's no small task. It means we have to be digitally agile, recognizing emerging trends and giving students the tools they need to succeed.

But that's just a start. It's important that we also instill in our students critical thinking skills, receptivity to change, and a dedication to lifelong learning.

Our college embraces the freshest of ideas and the oldest of values. Our graduates need to have solid skills and professional preparation but must also be thoroughly versed in ethics—with a firm understanding of the role of media in a democracy and a deep, abiding respect for First Amendment principles.

The College of Mass Communication at MTSU is remarkably positioned to prepare students for a new era in mass communication. An accomplished faculty and staff, the Center for Innovation in Media, the Center for Popular Music, the Seigenthaler Chair of Excellence in First Amendment Studies, WMOT, and vibrant student media combine to create a collaborative and synergistic environment perfectly suited to educate, inform, and inspire.

Twenty years ago, I had a sense of the future. I now see it in the faces of the men and women who attend MTSU's College of Mass Communication.

The future looks bright from here.

THE COLLEGE OF
Mass Communication

University Editor
Drew Ruble

Contributing Editors
Bill Fisher

Contributing Writers
Mike Browning, Suma Clark, Gina E. Fann, Sharon Fitzgerald, Jimmy Hart, Gina K. Logue, Randy Weiler

Art Director
Kara Hooper

Designer
Brian Evans

University Photographers
J. Intintoli, Andy Heidt

University President
Sidney A. McPhee

University Provost
Brad Bartel

Vice President, Marketing and Communications
Andrew Oppmann

Cover photo by Andy Heidt

1,000 copies printed at Printing Services at MTSU. Designed by MTSU Creative and Visual Services.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

0414-0884 - Middle Tennessee State University is an AA/EEO employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Executive Director of Institutional Equity and Compliance, 1301 E. Main Street, CAB 220, Murfreesboro, TN 37132, 615-898-2185. The MTSU Title IX coordinator, designated to monitor and oversee Title IX complaints, may be contacted at Sam Ingram Building, 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN 37132, 615-898-5133, or via this webpage: www.mtsu.edu/titleix/.

A *Legend's* Legacy

The family of country music icon George Jones creates a scholarship fund at MTSU

by Andrew Oppmann



Nancy Jones and Sidney A. McPhee at the unveiling of the George Jones monument in Nashville



The widow of country music icon George Jones announced in April that the scholarship fund her family established at Middle Tennessee State University had already raised more than $171,000. Nancy Jones announced the creation of the fund, a living memorial to the late singer, as part of a Nashville ceremony to unveil a monument to her husband of 30 years. The Country Music Hall of Fame member died April 26, 2013, at age 81.

"George would have liked the fact that MTSU attracts so many first-generation college students, as well as students who face financial challenges," Jones said. "Like George, they are hardworking folks who are determined to make their dreams a reality."

Nancy Jones made the first donation to the fund. President Sidney A. McPhee, who attended the announcement of the creation of the fund at Woodlawn Roesch-Patton Funeral Home and Memorial Park, thanked Jones for choosing the University to honor the memory of her husband.

"MTSU is a very appropriate place to honor George Jones because of its nationally known recording industry program," McPhee said. "We have educated many of the leaders of the country music industry, and we are dedicated to teaching students about the important contributions of country music."

The College of Mass Communication, which houses the Recording Industry Department and the Center for Popular Music, is working to preserve and promote Jones's legacy. The singer charted number-one country songs across several decades, from the 1950s through the '80s. Jones won two Grammy Awards, the first in 1980 for his classic hit "He Stopped Loving Her Today" and the second in 1999 for "Choices." He won a Recording Academy Lifetime Achievement Award in February 2012.

"George Jones had an extraordinary life and career on so many levels, and we are grateful that his legacy will inspire and benefit a new generation through education," said Dean Ken Paulson of the College of Mass Communication.

Paulson said the college will add to its collection of research material and artifacts surrounding Jones's career. Beverly Keel, chair of the Recording Industry Department, said her department is developing a course on Jones's life and music and will "create opportunities for scholars to offer their analyses and interpretations of his music that can then be shared with scholars internationally."

"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 his traditional country music," said Keel.

Nancy Jones said her husband would have been pleased to have students benefit from this effort in his name.

"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. "I know he would have loved this."

Gifts can be made online at www.mtsu.edu/georgejones, or by calling (615) 898-5595 or emailing devofc@mtsu.edu.

Triple-threat **Icon**

Barry Gibb receives honor, wows crowd during MTSU visit

by Gina E. Fann



Legendary singer-songwriter-producer Barry Gibb easily traced the genealogy of the Bee Gees classic "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart?" for more than 900 fans and friends at MTSU's Tucker Theatre during a visit last October.

Poignantly recalling his and his late brothers' love for country music from their Australian childhood, the music icon gently began picking out a Hank Locklin country classic on his acoustic guitar while talking with Beverly Keel, chair of the Department of Recording Industry.

"The first country song I ever recall hearing was Johnny Tillotson's [cover of] 'Send Me the Pillow That You Dream On,'" Gibb said. "We only got the one radio station in Australia, and the people we heard classified as rock 'n' roll were Roy Orbison and Johnny Cash.

"'Crying' was the first record I ever bought. . . . We love country. It all comes from the pathos. We always loved a sad story," he continued as he began playing and singing "How Can You Mend," the Bee Gees' first U.S. number-one single.

The audience rose and gave Gibb one of several standing ovations he received throughout the evening.

"What a fantastic, happy crowd!" Gibb said with a wide smile.

One of the world's most successful songwriters, Gibb's career spans more than 50 years. He and his brothers began topping the charts in the 1960s and became the only group in pop history to write, produce, and record six straight U.S. number-one hits. The Bee Gees had 16 Grammy nominations and nine wins. Gibb has had number-one songs in the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s, and 2000s and is the only songwriter in history to write four successive U.S. number-one hits. He recently concluded the European leg of his first solo tour, "Mythology," which commemorates his late brothers Robin and Maurice and features performances by the next generation of Gibb musicians: his son, Steve, and Maurice's daughter, Samantha.

Gibb's visit was part of the Department of Recording Industry Chair's Speakers Series and was the first time he had ever engaged in a public conversation and solo performance. John Merchant, a Recording Industry assistant professor who toured with Gibb for years as part of his concert sound production team, invited his former boss to MTSU.

Before the Tucker Theatre event, Merchant's department colleagues Michael Fleming and Matthew O'Brien (both associate professors) introduced Gibb to several students who work with the student label, Match Records. Fleming also showed Gibb's son Steve and musical director Doug Emery one of the University's state-of-the-art recording studios in Bragg Mass Communication Building.

Gibb and his party also toured the Center for Popular Music before the show, paying special attention to a colorful display of Bee Gees and Gibb memorabilia prepared by librarian Rachel Morris.

"That is great!" exclaimed Gibb as he peered into the display case, grinning. "There are lots of memories right there for me. Oh, yeah!"

In a surprise announcement at the Tucker Theatre event, the University recognized Gibb as the Inaugural Fellow of the Center for Popular Music.

"Barry Gibb's career has been characterized by its breadth, depth, and consistently high quality, embracing shifts in popular music with intuitive ease and emerging at the top of the charts in five different decades," said Mass Comm dean Ken Paulson.

"We are pleased to honor his singular achievements in popular music."

Mass **Comments**

A look at **awards**, **events**, and **accomplishments** involving the **MTSU mass comm** community

Going for the Grammys

Three former students were nominated for Grammys this year. Michael Knox produced Jason Aldean's *Night Train*, which was in the running for best country album. Luke Laird coproduced Kacey Musgraves' album *Same Trailer, Different Park*, which won this year's Grammy for best country album. He also cowrote many of the tracks on the album. Jessi Alexander co-wrote two best country song nominees: Lee Brice's "I Drive Your Truck" and Blake Shelton's "Mine Would Be You." More than a dozen MTSU alumni and faculty have been nominated for Grammy Awards in the last three years, and seven have been winners. The College of Mass Communication hosted a party for people connected to its Recording Industry program at the legendary Troubadour nightclub in Hollywood before this year's Grammy ceremonies. Dean Ken Paulson, President Sidney A. McPhee, and Beverly Keel, met with MTSU alumni and friends at the event in an effort to increase the visibility of the department, long regarded as one of the best in the nation. The college also partnered with the Franklin-based Americana Music Association at the event to honor the late Phil Everly of the Everly Brothers, who died in early January. Copresented by Vector Management and Nissan, the event highlighted Grammy-winning artist Bonnie Raitt. Katy Bishop, Recording Industry student and member of the band Maybe April, also had a showcase at the event. MTSU was also among the presenting sponsors of a Leadership Music alumni reunion. The Nashville-based nonprofit conducts an eight-month industry training program each year.





Music U

Gary Overton ('84), above right, chair and CEO of Sony Music Nashville, home of country music superstars Kenny Chesney, Miranda Lambert, Brad Paisley, and Carrie Underwood (above left), was the first speaker in the Recording Industry Department's new Chair's Speakers Series last fall. Before Sony and a 15-year stint running EMI Publishing, Overton was Alan Jackson's personal manager. At the event, Overton was named an honorary professor in the Department of Recording Industry. Barry Gibb also spoke as part of the series. Gibb, one of the founding members of the Bee Gees, is the world's most successful songwriter after Paul McCartney, according to *Guinness World Records*, and has a career spanning more than 50 years. During his visit, Gibb was named the inaugural fellow of the Center for Popular Music. Other speakers included Sarah Trahern, recently named CEO of the Country Music Association; Grammy-nominated R&B singer Kenny Lattimore; artist manager Michelle Tafoya (who handled projects during the height of the success of Tupac Shakur); and Grammy-nominated producer Nathan Chapman (best known for producing Taylor Swift). Singer/songwriter Kip Moore (who last year had three consecutive number-one country radio hits) gave a lecture sponsored by Grammy U, the college networking arm of the Recording Academy.

Bringing the Row to the 'Boro



Music and technology entrepreneur Mark Montgomery, who launched one of the first five U.S. companies to sell music directly to consumers on the Internet, began teaching a new class in the Department of Recording Industry focusing on new business models in the music industry. Student business plans created in the class that show the most potential may be mentored and developed at the Nashville Entrepreneur Center. Also a cofounder of Echo, which managed the digital businesses of some of the biggest entertainers in the world (and was purchased by IAC/Ticketmaster in 2007), Montgomery's clients through the years have included Kanye West, Keith Urban, and Best Buy, among others. Montgomery is now tackling projects for Google and YouTube and also founded FLO {thinkery}, a cutting-edge think tank and investment firm. Still a songwriter and musician, Montgomery also serves as CEO of country star Kenny Chesney's spirits company, FishBowl Spirits.



Ken Paulson at the Newseum

Making News

Editors, media executives, educators, and alumni gathered last summer at the Newseum, the interactive museum of news and journalism in the nation's capital, to welcome the new dean of the College of Mass Communication, Ken Paulson, and hear about his plans for the college. "We intend to be the most innovative college of mass communication in America," Paulson said. Attendees included executives and alumni from major news and journalism organizations such as the Gannett Co., the McClatchy Co., CNN, the Travel Channel, and *USA Today*, as well as journalism educators from universities attending the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) conference. The event highlighted the partnership between MTSU and the Freedom Forum, which operates the Newseum, and the First Amendment Center in Nashville. Paulson was also recognized by the AEJMC for advocacy work he and others conduct through the First Amendment Center.

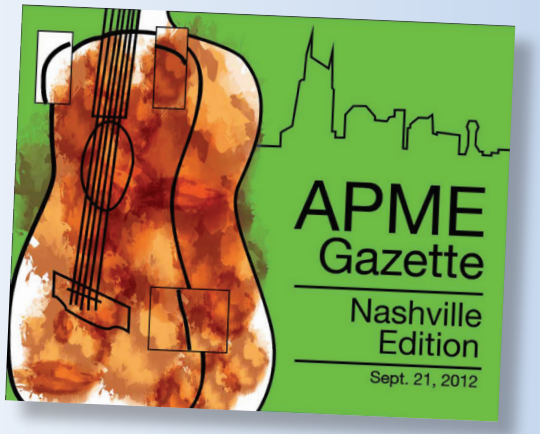
Expert Commentary

Internationally recognized First Amendment scholar Ken Paulson, dean of the College of Mass Communication, was among panelists discussing the free speech rights of student fans on an edition of ESPN's award-winning *Outside the Lines* investigative news program. Hosted by veteran sports broadcaster Bob Ley, the program was called "The Art of Noise." The topic was rude and crude chants and language by student fans and whether public universities can limit student speech in an arena or stadium. Student fan groups such as the Missouri Antlers from the University of Missouri are increasingly drawing criticism for creative taunts against opposing teams that some observers say have gone too far. Paulson, president and CEO of the First Amendment Center and former editor of *USA Today*, was joined by ESPN college basketball analyst Jay Williams, a former Duke University and professional basketball player, and Darren Hellwege, sports director at KBIA-FM radio who covers University of Missouri Tigers basketball. "I pointed out that while the remarks are often distasteful and deplorable, the First Amendment provides that government bodies, including public universities, can't set rules on what Americans can or can't say," Paulson said. "We can disagree with that from a policy perspective, but it's the law." Paulson went on to suggest that universities be creative in their approach to dealing with the issue, including limiting the location and size of signs, but not their content, and not allowing groups of 40 or 50 people to sit together.



Read All About It

Students covered the news about the people who cover the news in fall 2012 when they provided exclusive stories, photos, audio, and video for the Associated Press Media Editors (APME) national conference in Nashville in September. Student journalists from the College of Mass Communication generated news content for the APME blog and produced a daily video report and a special 24-page tabloid summing up the conference. Becca Andrews of Bells, Tenn., then editor-in-chief of MTSU's independent student newspaper, *Sidelines*, coordinated all news coverage for APME. Michelle Potts of Franklin, Tenn., then news director of the student-run TV station, MT10-HD, led video coverage. All content flowed through the new Center for Innovation in Media. The APME has recognized the center for its ability to merge student media and foster collaboration across communication platforms. Also during the conference, MTSU unveiled an innovative federal judicial system reporting project, that allows students to be immersed in daily coverage on federal law enforcement operations in Nashville. Students supply coverage of the U.S. District Courts and other federal entities for publication by the *Tennessean* in print and on its website. The effort is known as the Seigenthaler News Service, named in honor of journalism icon John Seigenthaler, who worked closely with the University, federal court officials, and *Tennessean* executives to create the hands-on learning opportunity. MTSU also announced the creation of a Tennessee Journalism Hall of Fame. The first class of inductees was announced in April 2013.





Off the Row

Beverly Keel ('88), an award-winning music journalist and former recording industry executive, is chair of the Department of Recording Industry. A longtime MTSU professor, Keel returned to the University after serving as senior vice president of media and artist relations for Universal Music Group Nashville, where she developed extensive media campaigns for a chart-topping roster including Lionel Richie, Scotty McCreery, Sugarland, Jamey Johnson, Josh Turner, Kip Moore, and many more.

Country Boy Connection

President Sidney A. McPhee surprised country music legend Charlie Daniels on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry in May 2013 when he helped announce that the International Entertainment Buyers Association had established a scholarship in honor of Daniels with a $25,000 endowment. The IEBA is a Nashville-based, nonprofit trade organization for live entertainment industry professionals. Starting in fall 2014, a $1,000 scholarship will be awarded each year. Students studying recording industry, songwriting, audio engineering, and music business are eligible.



A Match Made in Manchester

MTSU's College of Mass Communication and the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival entered into a partnership allowing students to better understand the dynamics of one of the world's most successful entertainment events. Students from the college will participate in behind-the-scenes activities at the festival June 12–15 in Manchester, Tenn. "MTSU and Bonnaroo are neighbors, so it makes sense to work together," said Rick Farman, cofounder of Superfly Presents, who teamed up with Ashley Capps, owner of AC Entertainment, in 2002 to create Bonnaroo, acclaimed by *Rolling Stone* magazine as one of the 50 moments that changed the history of rock 'n' roll. "While creating Bonnaroo, we learned lots of lessons we can share with students studying business, communications, and the music industry," said Farman. The partnership also includes a symposium that MTSU will host in fall 2014 called "Anatomy of a Music Festival: The Bonnaroo Story and the Future of Festivals."



Mass Appeal

Middle Tennessee State University's College of Mass Communication got national attention, as one of the top 20 colleges of its kind in the U.S., according to a survey by TV Week's *NewsPro* magazine in its December 2013 issue, listing the nation's top Mass Communication and Journalism colleges. The University of Missouri had the top-ranked program. The survey was distributed to members of the Radio Television Digital News Association, with 1,321 respondents participating. MTSU was the only Tennessee university in the rankings.



Shure Thing

A student team from the Department of Recording Industry accepted the grand prize in May in the annual "Fantastic Scholastic Recording Competition," sponsored by Shure Inc. (An MTSU team also took top honors in the 2012 competition.) The 2014 group comprised of Sam Hillman, Frank Gerdts, Charlie Garcia, and Jimmy Mansfield defeated 10 teams from across the country by producing an original composition that had to be tracked and mixed using a special set of equipment provided by Shure. As the winners, the Recording Industry Department got to keep the "microphone locker" of Shure equipment, valued at more than $11,000.



Into the Ring of Honor

The College of Mass Communication celebrated students past and present with a recent Wall of Fame alumni induction ceremony and presentation of student scholarships and awards in March. Journalism alumna Angie Boyd-Chambers, Electronic Media Communication grad Margaret Comeaux, and Recording Industry alumnus Michael Knox joined 75 fellow mass communication leaders on the college's Wall of Fame, and more than 100 students were recognized for their scholastic accomplishments. The Wall of Fame began in 2000 as a way to honor successful graduates and inspire current students to continue working toward their goals. Each year, the college's departments solicit nominees from faculty, chooses an honoree, and submits his or her name to the dean. Boyd-Chambers is managing director of communications for Saint Thomas Health in Nashville, which employs more than 6,500 associates in nine hospitals. The 2001 graduate previously served as public relations director for Saint Thomas Rutherford Hospital and was responsible for marketing and communications for the 286 room facility. Comeaux, senior director of music and events production for CMT, oversees the creation, development, and production of music and live-event specials for the network. The 1995 grad serves as executive producer in charge of the annual *CMT Music Awards*, the critically acclaimed "CMT Crossroads" series and "CMT Artists of the Year." Music producer Knox has worked with some of the biggest names in country music but is perhaps best known for his production work with superstar Jason Aldean. Along with forming a production management company, Music Knox, with three of his clients, the 2001 graduate also serves as senior creative director for peermusic Group in Nashville.







(Clockwise from top left)
Angie Boyd-Chambers
Margaret Comeaux
Michael Knox

Success Starts with You.

MTSU's College of Mass Communication is the only college in the United States with a recording industry program, a journalism program, and an electronic media Program under one roof. That academic blend lends itself to exceptional opportunities that well prepare students to work in the media professions of the future. Help us to build on our proud past with your gift.

www.mtsu.edu/supportmasscomm

I AM *true* BLUE

Freedom Sings at the Bluebird

A Red, White, and Blue Raider Experience

MTSU electronic media communication students once again lend behind-the-scenes expertise to Nashville's music community—this time for Mass Communication dean Ken Paulson's "Freedom Sings"



Freedom Sings, the signature program of the Newseum Institute's First Amendment Center, is a celebration of free speech and music that tours college campuses across the nation. Two sold-out concerts at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe in October 2013 commemorated the organization's 15th anniversary. If the event had a positively Blue Raider feel, that's because MTSU Electronic Media Communication (EMC) faculty, staff, and students were front and center organizing and orchestrating the whole thing.

Freedom Sings features prominent recording artists playing music that has been banned or censored or has called for social change. Launched in 1999, the program has toured the United States under the direction of Ken Paulson, president of the First Amendment Center and dean of MTSU's College of Mass Communication, and Gene Policinski, the institute's chief operating officer and senior vice president of the center.

"For 15 years, we've been privileged to tell the vibrant story of the First Amendment with the help of extraordinary musicians," Paulson said. The event featured Janis Ian, Ashley Cleveland, and Don Henry (all Grammy winners) and Bill Lloyd, Kim Richey, Gretchen Peters, Webb Wilder, Will Kimbrough, Jonell Mosser, Lari White, Joseph Wooten, Dez Dickerson, and others. (The backing band included Dave Pomeroy, Craig Krampf, Danny Flowers, E-Street Band bassist Garry Tallent, and Lloyd.) "It's a hallmark of our program that our students learn very quickly to work at a professional level," Paulson said.

Nashville mayor Karl Dean attended the event and honored Freedom Sings with a city proclamation, calling the program a "critically acclaimed multimedia experience" that invites audiences "to experience the First Amendment in a new way."

Getting a preprofessional experience that few, if any, of their peers nationwide could possibly obtain, Mass Comm students worked behind the scenes at the Bluebird for both events. The Bluebird Cafe is known worldwide as an epicenter for the best in songwriting. Students used the college's $1.7 million mobile video production lab, managed social media content, helped with public relations, and covered the event for student media outlets.

MTSU crews work regularly with ESPN3 and Sinclair Broadcasting Corp. to produce sports broadcasts and other events and have gained a strong reputation for their work on projects with PBS affiliates. Dozens of EMC students have worked the Capitol Records street party in Nashville—modulating audio, operating high-definition cameras, conducting interviews, and recording concerts for the label.



Editorial contributions by Gina E. Fann

Event poster art created by Kelsey Greer





Are You Experienced?

Students with shirts emblazoned "MT MASS COMMUNICATION CREW" scurried behind the scenes to set up and operate audio and video equipment at Freedom Sings. As unconcerned about working alongside a multi-Grammy winner as they'd be next to a professor or fellow student, they traded technical talk with industry pros.



Nashville mayor Karl Dean, appearing onstage at the Bluebird Cafe with performers of Freedom Sings, presented a proclamation honoring the program's 15th anniversary.









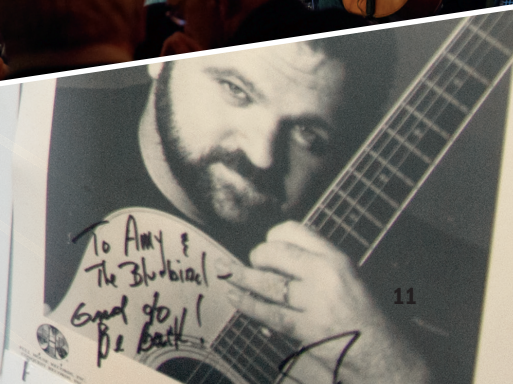














photos: Andy Heidt

by Gina K. Logue and Drew Ruble

STE

As an estimated 14,000 fans on Nashville's Lower Broadway enjoyed the music of Capitol Records artists Luke Bryan, Jon Pardi, and Kelleigh Bannen in October 2012 53 MTSU students were modulating audio, operating HD cameras, conducting interviews, and recording the show for the label. Students later postproduced music videos for three songs, produced a promotional video for the Department of Electronic Media Communication, and produced a "sizzle reel," which Capitol used in social media and other marketing efforts.

"Usually, colleges don't get to do projects of this magnitude," says Bob Gordon, an assistant professor who oversaw the student-led effort at the event.

Department chair Billy Pittard, winner of five Emmys, a Golden Lamp Award, and hundreds of other industry honors, says MTSU's program, paired with its proximity to Nashville's entertainment business, has a perfect formula for delivering extraordinary college learning experiences like these.

"What we did at the Capitol Records street party is, as far as I know, completely unique," Pittard says. "Imagine: our students are going to graduate with portfolio materials that are professional quality."

Students from the College of Mass Communication got an experience that October day and night that few media professionals will ever realize. Zack Eagles, a TV production student from Alvaton, Ky., directed the production from MTSU's 40-foot, $1.7 million HD mobile production laboratory parked a block away from the stage on 3rd Avenue. "The Truck," is routinely used by students to cover sports, concerts, and events for local broadcast, cable stations, and national cable networks. From its onboard audio recording capability to its cameras and state-of-the-art switchers, the equipment on the truck is the same used by professionals at Titans and Predator games or local TV news channels. Long before they graduate, MTSU students get exposure to the same kinds of equipment they'll use as paid professionals.

Colby Graham, a TV production student from Auburndale, Fla., was producer at the party. His job was to make sure all crew members were on the same page and executed their separate responsibilities well.

"We learn how to do it the way the big boys do it," he says. "We try to mimic that as much as we can, and that's a lot easier to mimic with a $1.7 million truck. It's a great opportunity for us to gain real-world experience, so when we walk away, we can pretty much walk right into a job right out of college."

Before the Capitol street party, Graham had experience with short films, music videos, concerts, and volleyball games, but he admits that didn't necessarily drive away the jitters.

"I always get butterflies," Graham says. "Even if it's just a class news show, I want everything I do to be good. There were so many eyes on this, but I felt prepared."

continued on page 15

MTSU students
help a Nashville record label entertain thousands of music lovers



Three's a Charm

MTSU's College of Mass Communication, the fifth largest in the nation, has three departments—Electronic Media Communication, Journalism, and Recording Industry—and the Center for Popular Music and Center for Innovation in Media.

"Other universities close to us don't have anything like we do," says assistant professor Bob Gordon. "They may have a great recording program, for instance, but nothing else. We have recording, film, animation, graphics, photography, journalism, new media, and remote TV recording. Students have an opportunity to have a well-rounded academic experience, and [the Capitol Records event] is a powerful example of that."

According to Professor Dennis Oneal, parents of prospective students "could go a long way and spend a lot of money and not get anything better" than the education they'll get at MTSU.

"There are very few programs like this," he says. "On multi-cam, I don't know of a school anywhere internationally that has anything better than what we have. And our single-cam, new media center, and digital animation programs housed within the College of Mass Communication are also on high par. In digital animation, for instance, we've had kids share in Academy Awards for being on the team for *Golden Compass*."

"We do not limit the students' ability," he adds. "We provide experiences where they can enhance what they've got and go as far as they want to go."

EMC chair Billy Pittard, whose body of work spans over 200 television network brands, adds, "The magic that comes from our unique program at MTSU is we have an array of disciplines that come together. They all influence and inspire each other."







Making the Team

Athletic departments have varsity basketball and football teams. The players are the top performers and don't get credit or grades. They have to compete for positions on the team. They have to practice on their own time. They can lose their positions if they don't perform well.

EMC professor Dennis Oneal also serves as executive producer of EMC Productions, an elite noncredit squad of students hand-selected and used to produce MTSU games for ESPN3.

"We essentially have a professional production crew—a varsity squad," he says. "I'll put my people up against any professional crew."

In national competition, the EMC program has finished in the top five for sports production.

"What a great thing for a résumé," Oneal says. "We'll produce four football games and 10 basketball games for ESPN plus the Raiders Choice Awards, a big sports banquet broadcast on local television."

Being on the team is extracurricular. No academic credits or grades are given. Students can be replaced if they don't perform. EMC chair Billy Pittard describes it as "an excellent experience to prepare team members for employment—and a great portfolio-building opportunity. The people on this team are serious about their futures."

Oneal says he is not aware of any other such varsity electronic production squad at a university in America.

REET CRED

continued from page 12









Those butterflies are key to the experiential learning MTSU is providing through savvy partnerships with Capitol Records, says Dr. Dennis Oneal, who primarily teaches electronic media management.

"In all my years in teaching, I have never been able to duplicate in a classroom the feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when the recording is live and being broadcast to a network like ESPN," Oneal says. "It's a feeling students need to get used to as a step to becoming a professional. This is all about learning environment."

Gordon agrees.

"The collegiate world, usually, is not real, not really," he says. "You are in a classroom for 15 weeks, an hour and a half each class. But to do a project like this where you are here 18 hours straight and there is no rehearsal, there is only one pass—well, it makes everybody more intense than normal. These students are managing to enjoy both the thrill of that and the fear of that, both of which are good for professional development."

Pittard calls real-world experience like the Capitol event the key to postgraduation success in the field.

"In this industry, it is all about showing you know how to do the work. And there is no substitute for doing the work," Pittard says. "This is essentially no different from what will happen at the professional level. These students are already very seasoned."

It's no surprise the faculty would crow about the program they administer and the quality of students it produces. Mike Dungan, president and CEO of Universal Music Nashville, which at the time of the event was in the process of merging with Capitol Records, provides a validating industry view.

"The most frustrating thing is when people are only book smart," Dungan says. "They know the theories but don't know how to do it. That's why this is great. It's terrific that the students can come in and produce this and put this on their written or spoken résumés. Right away, we know what they've done."

These experienced students will one day be seeking jobs in the growing field of live TV production, which has a significant presence across Tennessee. Three cable networks— CMT, GAC, and RFD-TV—operate in Nashville, as do significant television and movie production outfits. Knoxville has Scripps Network products including HGTV, DIY, and the Food Channel.

"Plus, in addition to Music City and the recording world, the tour industry is based out of Nashville," Gordon says. "There are probably more TV jobs in tour support than TV right now. Because every act that goes out on the road these days takes with it LED screens and animation and cameras. So many students may not go the traditional TV route after they graduate but rather go out on the road with acts like Rascal Flatts. It is still doing TV, just slightly different. And here at MTSU, they have much more opportunity to learn real-world skills than most places."

Dungan, one of the most powerful persons working on Music Row, praised MTSU for its commitment to getting students ready to work in the real world.

"It's a big investment for the University to be here," he says. "It shows how important this program is for MTSU. It's world class."

photos: Andy Heidt

Not Fiddling Around

A past director of MTSU's Center for Popular Music proves not all research and discoveries occur in a laboratory setting

by Drew Ruble

Musicologist Dale Cockrell is a scholar. He's not used to the bright lights of a major television production. Nor is he used to being surrounded by musical legends like Ronnie Milsap and Randy Travis thanking him for the academic work he did to shed light on the old-time fiddle music ingrained in the American frontier experience.

No, Dale Cockrell is more comfortable digging through volumes of great American music or presenting a paper at a conference. But he couldn't escape the bright lights and celebrity attention he received at the Loveless Café and Loveless Barn in Nashville, site of a PBS concert taping, the roots of which were watered by Cockrell's scholarly sweat.

Cockrell, former director of MTSU's world-renowned Center for Popular Music, is the man behind the Pa's Fiddle Project, an effort to reconnect generations of readers with the rich musical legacy woven into the *Little House* books written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Cockrell says his idea had a quite innocent beginning—reading at bedtime to his then-eight-year-old son, Sam.

"We read along, and there were songs embedded in the books. We would sing the songs, and if we didn't know one, we would make up a song. Sam and I enjoyed that," Cockrell says. "But after a while, the scholar in me started to crawl into bed with us, and I started thinking about how there was an amazing amount of music in these books."

Inspired, Cockrell sat down one Christmas break and started going through all the books and listing the songs. He then began looking for existing recordings. What he found was that little had been done to chronicle or showcase these song references. Thus was born Pa's Fiddle Project, dedicated to resurrecting and voicing the 127 songs found in the *Little House* books and making some great American music commercially available once again.

Cockrell established a record label, Pa's Fiddle Recordings, to record the music referenced in the books. The label has issued three CDs (out of a projected 10-CD series). The first was picked up by the National Endowment for the Humanities and sent to libraries nationwide as a sample of music making in 19th century American style.

The collections at the Center for Popular Music formed the foundation of the research that led to the music's production. In all, Cockrell has spent 14 years on the project.

"Sometimes, it's felt like we've been pushing that boulder up that hill every day," he reflects. "Now we're finally at the top and get to share this music with everyone."

But how could Cockrell share the music with a broader audience? In June 2010, he attended a conference in Minneapolis called "LauraPalooza," which was dedicated

photos:

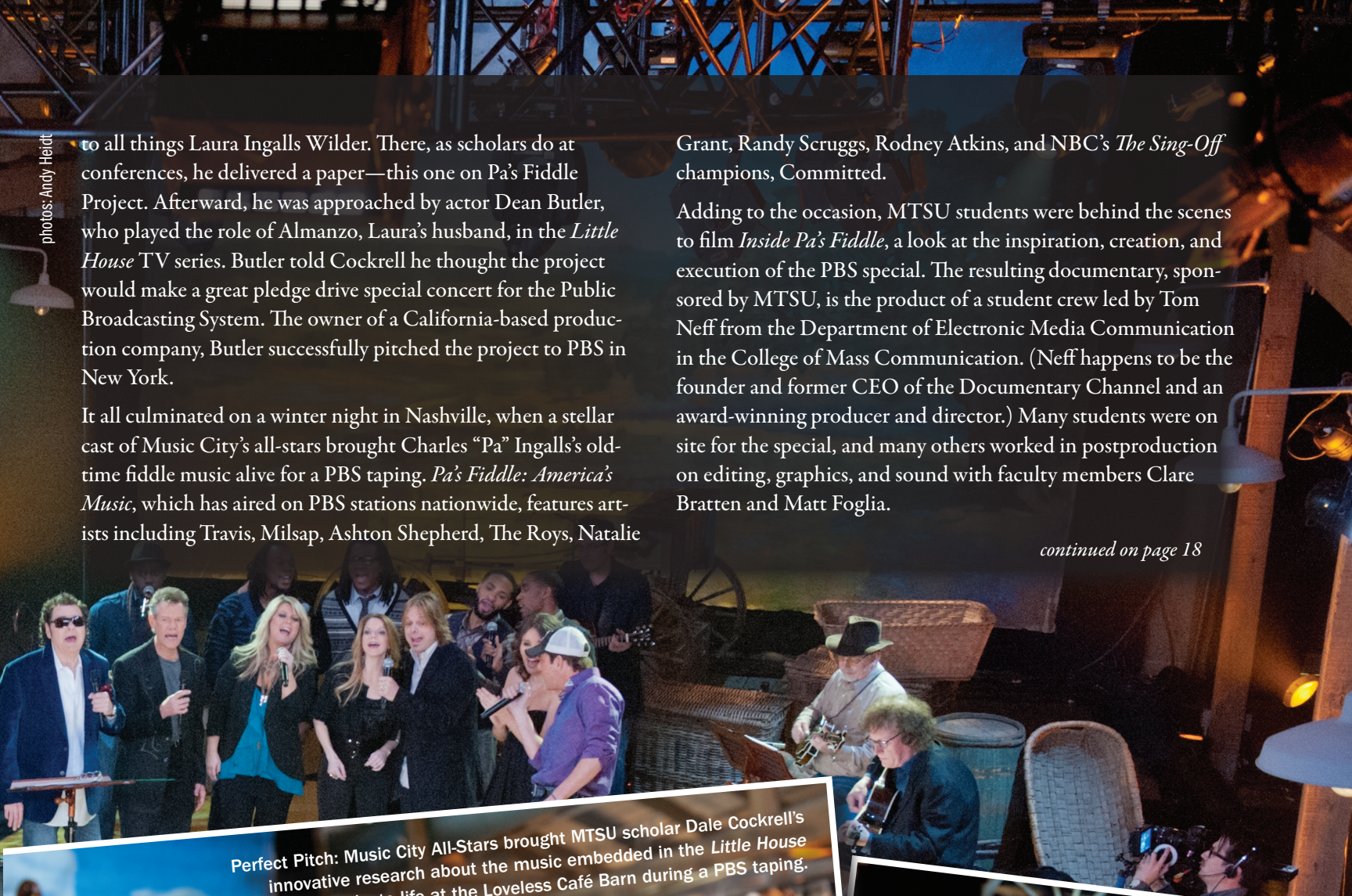
photos: Andy Heidt

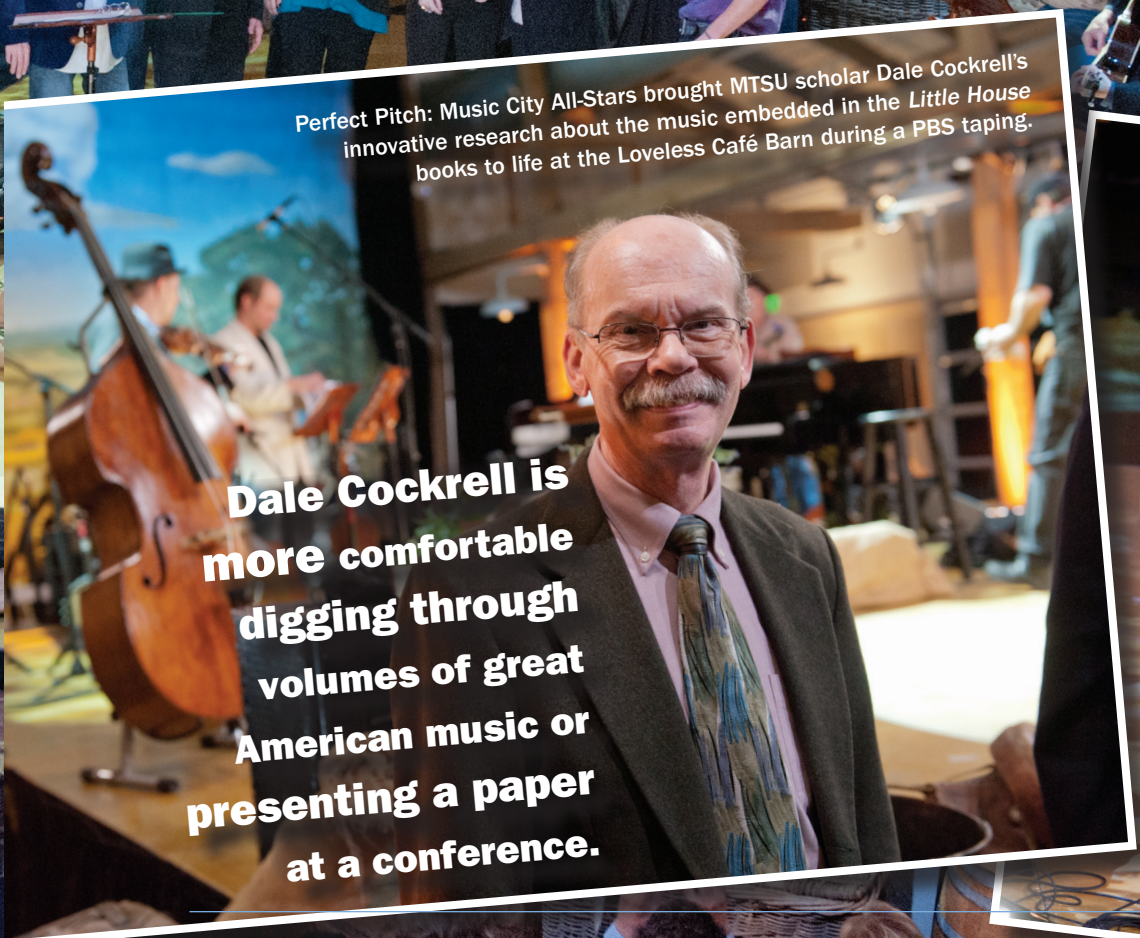
to all things Laura Ingalls Wilder. There, as scholars do at conferences, he delivered a paper—this one on Pa's Fiddle Project. Afterward, he was approached by actor Dean Butler, who played the role of Almanzo, Laura's husband, in the *Little House* TV series. Butler told Cockrell he thought the project would make a great pledge drive special concert for the Public Broadcasting System. The owner of a California-based production company, Butler successfully pitched the project to PBS in New York.

It all culminated on a winter night in Nashville, when a stellar cast of Music City's all-stars brought Charles "Pa" Ingalls's old-time fiddle music alive for a PBS taping. *Pa's Fiddle: America's Music*, which has aired on PBS stations nationwide, features artists including Travis, Milsap, Ashton Shepherd, The Roys, Natalie Grant, Randy Scruggs, Rodney Atkins, and NBC's *The Sing-Off* champions, Committed.

Adding to the occasion, MTSU students were behind the scenes to film *Inside Pa's Fiddle*, a look at the inspiration, creation, and execution of the PBS special. The resulting documentary, sponsored by MTSU, is the product of a student crew led by Tom Neff from the Department of Electronic Media Communication in the College of Mass Communication. (Neff happens to be the founder and former CEO of the Documentary Channel and an award-winning producer and director.) Many students were on site for the special, and many others worked in postproduction on editing, graphics, and sound with faculty members Clare Bratten and Matt Foglia.

continued on page 18





Perfect Pitch: Music City All-Stars brought MTSU scholar Dale Cockrell's innovative research about the music embedded in the *Little House* books to life at the Loveless Café Barn during a PBS taping.

Dale Cockrell is more comfortable digging through volumes of great American music or presenting a paper at a conference.





continued from page 17

That the national PBS network would show such interest in Cockrell's project indicates the ongoing, high level of fascination with the *Little House* world. Cockrell believes the stories retain their popularity because they are based on real-life experiences and events—not fiction— of a family that homesteaded on the American frontier in the 1860s, '70s, and '80s.

"None of the people in the Ingalls family were superheroes," Cockrell adds. "It goes against the grain of much children's literature today. In fact, the books are pretty dark. Babies die, grasshoppers come and eat the crops, people get kicked off their land, houses burn down—they're not books that are unremittingly cheerful. They are books about real life."

Cockrell argues that the popularity of the books (and the TV series) might never have happened if it hadn't been for the music references.

"To be in a family where you heard live music every day, for probably a couple of hours every day, printed itself upon Laura Ingalls Wilders's brain in a way that's difficult for us to understand today," Cockrell says. "Based on research by neuroscience and cognitive psychologists, my theory is that by remembering the songs that her father played and that she sang along to, it enabled her to unpeel the memories in which those songs [were] embedded. In doing so, she could start to write the stories that are about the memories of her family. Without the music, there may have been no *Little House* books."

> Without the music, there may have been no *Little House* books."

Though he's admittedly a little uneasy about all the public attention he's getting for his project, Cockrell is thankful for what's happened.

"It's enormously gratifying but also daunting, frankly," he says. "As a musicologist, I'm not trained to get up on a stage in front of a PBS audience and communicate what I do as a scholar. I'm being stretched and challenged in ways that I never expected. But I find it terribly exciting."

Where does his project go from here? Cockrell's goal is to take Pa's Fiddle to grade schools nationwide, where he hopes the impact on kids will serve his even loftier expectations.

"I like to say that my goal is to change the music consciousness of the nation," he says. "It's kind of grand, but if 3rd- and 4th-grade students who come up against these books also learn the music that's embedded in the books—Wilder expected that you'd know the music—then, in fact, you've inculcated a regard for [an] American musical legacy that's not currently present in the consciousness of the nation."

Cockrell is already at work on lesson plans for 3rd- and 4th-grade teachers. It's just the next ripple of the scholarship he hopes will be felt far beyond the comfortable confines of his academic roost.

[Editor's note: The third director of the Center for Popular Music, Gregory N. Reish, joined MTSU in summer 2014.]



Days in the Sun

by Jennifer Stone

In cities and towns big and small, all across America, local meteorologists are celebrities. That's true even in Hollywood, the land of stars, where one MTSU graduate is making her mark.

Jackie Johnson, an immensely popular meteorologist at KCBS-TV in Los Angeles, often appears on both the red carpet and celebrity blogs in Hollywood. But several steps led Johnson there, including a time at MTSU that she credits with helping her get where she is today.

I was terrible. It made me want to practice and get better.

Johnson's fascination with weather started when she was very young. Growing up in Michigan, severe storms, tornadoes, and snow made her want to know how the weather works. She won an elementary school contest when she built a weather station in her backyard. She says it was just a natural step to meteorology from there.

Her passion for weather led her first to the University of South Alabama, where she honed her skills for predicting storms in the meteorology program's hurricane center. But it was her lack of on-air proficiency that made MTSU the next step on her career path. While interning at WKRG in Mobile, Johnson got her chance to go on air and deliver a weathercast.

"I was terrible," she says. "It made me want to practice and get better."

There is arguably no better place to hone one's on-air skills than MTSU's nationally recognized College of Mass Communication.

"There were amazing classes being taught by experienced professors in the business," Johnson says. "And [there was the] college news station on top of it all."

Less than a month after starting classes, she was a reporter for the on-campus station and soon moved to working as the weathercaster. A professor later helped her get an internship at WKRN-TV in Nashville. She credits those experiences with helping her land in her first job, in Tallahassee, after graduation.

"I never could have survived that first job without the journalism classes I had at MTSU," she says.

Johnson was the weekend weathercaster and a weekday reporter for a mere six months in Tallahassee before offers started rolling in from larger markets, including Nashville and Miami. Johnson calls herself "very lucky" to be able to move to such big media markets so quickly—she spent only a year in Miami before getting offers from New York and Los Angeles.

These days, the "Jackie Johnson Factor," a phrase coined by celebrity blog TMZ, follows Johnson wherever she goes.



MTSU's new Center for **Innovation in Media** goes mainstream

A Communications CONVERGENCE

by Mike Browning

It wasn't so long ago that mainstream media—print, television, and radio—were separated. It was also true that universities reflected the divisions between journalism and radio-television 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. In this new world, content is converging into one electronic location—the Internet—where news consumers demand both visual and in-depth content from one location. Case in point: In 2011, ABC News and the online media company Yahoo! announced a partnership to share news content, including resources and original videos.

"Convergence" is defined in the communications industry as the moment when different forms of media, formerly in competition, start to cooperate and work together for mutual benefit. As a result, it is not uncommon these days to see television stations hiring newspaper reporters and newspapers hiring TV reporters and video journalists. As media converges, professionals in the field are forced to adjust to a new business model. They must be as comfortable writing a breaking news story or Sunday feature article as they are shooting video, producing a podcast, or broadcasting on radio. In other words, they must be comfortable creating content on multiple platforms.

In 2012, the College of Mass Communication began to reflect this new world of media convergence both visually and programmatically as students and campus professionals began moving into the $700,000 Center for Innovation in Media. On the first floor of John Bragg Mass Communication Building, the center 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

photos: Andy Heidt



100,000-watt public radio station at MTSU. (*Sidelines* had previously operated on Mass Comm's second floor, and the student-run radio station moved from McWherter Learning Resources Center.) The center enables students from all media disciplines to hone their skills while working under one roof in a state-of-the-art facility.

The new facility is a direct response to the seismic shift in the world of mass communication. It wasn't so long ago that a qualified student could graduate with more or less a specialization in print, television, or radio; find a job in one of those areas; and have a reasonable expectation of a long and fruitful career. That is no longer the case. In today's highly competitive digital environment, a graduate must have a working knowledge of Web and print writing, video and still photography, nonlinear editing, podcasting, graphics, and social media. Those well-trained and diversified students are the job applicants that are being hired.

Visitors to the Mass Communication Building can peer through glass windows to see media students at work. Most recognizable is the convergence room, also known as the "egg room" for its shape, featuring a CNN-type newsroom displaying 25 computers for writing and producing content.

"The center is going to put our students front and center and our faculty into the world of media convergence," says Leon Alligood, assistant professor of journalism. "In many ways, we're trailblazing, and that's exciting."

Alligood, a longtime, highly respected journalist for *The Tennessean*, says there is no blueprint to follow. "There no doubt will be hills, if not mountains, to climb, but I'm very optimistic we can pull it off."

MTSU's reputation as a top school for journalism is well established. The Center for Innovation in Media is attracting the best and brightest students from Tennessee and the region, reinforcing the University's commitment to maintaining its strong national reputation and supplying media professionals trained to excel in a multiplatform industry.

Built by Association

The Tennessee Association of Broadcasters' support of the Center for Innovation in Media is an investment in the future.



A 2011 study by Woods & Poole Economics of Washington, D.C., found that $1.17 trillion of U.S. annual GDP (gross domestic product) originates in the commercial industry. The study also found that 2.52 million jobs are attributable to the local radio and television industry annually. Direct employment is estimated at more than 300,000 jobs nationwide.

"That's why MTSU's new Center for Innovation in Media—and its students and graduates—have such a bright future ahead," says **Whit Adamson** ('71), president of the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters (TAB).

From its beginnings, TAB has also been a focal point for learning and teaching for the industry, a commitment evidenced once again through its generous Cornerstone donation to the media center project.

According to Adamson, students will benefit greatly from working in the center, given the ever-increasing demand for fluency across the digital broadcasting spectrum.

"The technology and consumer choices that are being created today, from multicasting to mobile TV to other high-quality programming, will be well served by these MTSU graduates," Adamson says. "This center will provide the education and content development opportunities graduates will find necessary to serve America's news innovations."

Adamson also believes the new center, which houses television and radio enterprises under one roof, puts MTSU in a leadership role in the multidirectional broadcast news industry in Tennessee.

"MTSU students are educated in a real-world environment, employing all facets of electronic media and utilizing a skilled mix of professional and academic resources," he says. "The cosmopolitan vibe of a major TV market like Nashville also exposes them to everything they are likely to encounter in their careers. It's a perfect match."



PHOTO KEY

Though it might seem **humorous** to imagine **Lady Gaga** or **U2** recorded on a **cylinder**, it's really no laughing matter.

1 Songster, a lyrics-only songbook, *Harrigan & Hart's Mulcahey Twins* Songster, 1872

2 Songbook, *Slave Songs of the United States*, the earliest published songbook of African American spirituals, 1867

3 Edison Cylinder, precursor to recorded discs, "Casey Jones," artist Billy Murray, 1910

4 Sheet music, "Hound Dog," written by Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller, performed by Elvis Presley, 1956

5 Handwritten music, "The Treble to Pilgrims Farwell," Luzon Nichols, 1820

6 Song broadside, "The Captain of the Provost" with panorama of Nashville, 1863

7 Cabinet card of String Trio, unknown musicians, ca. 1880

8 Gospel songbook, *Singers Glory*, publisher James D. Vaughan, Lawrenceburg, Tenn., 1951

9 Reel-to-reel stereo tape (3"), "Lullaby of Birdland," *Ella and Duke at the Cote D'Azur*, composer George Shearing, performer Ella Fitzgerald, 1967

10 Transcription disc of a recorded radio program (not sold commercially), 1940

11 Sheet music, "Flag of the South," C. D. Bensen & Co., a Confederate imprint, Nashville, Tenn., 1862

12 Music for the Silent Movies, "Agitated Apassionato; For agitated themes of commotion of emotional and dramatically pathetic character," Robbins Music Corp., 1927

13 Flute and violin tune book, *The Musical Miscellany*, the oldest item in the center's collection, 1729

by Drew Ruble

Preservation REQUIRED



The **Center** for **Popular Music** houses a **world-renowned archive**—and direct portal to the **popular consciousness** of **past generations.**

It's the largest and oldest research center for popular music in the world. A part of the College of Mass Communication, it's a real jewel in MTSU's crown.

Despite nearly 30 years of existence, it's fair to say the Center for Popular Music at MTSU is better known around the world than in its own backyard.

Established in 1985 as one of 16 Centers of Excellence statewide, the center today boasts a collection of more than 300,000 cataloged items. That includes 75,000 pieces of sheet music, 2,200 rare periodicals, and about 175,000 recordings.

Those recordings come in many forms, from Edison cylinders (they still work like a charm) to modern-day mp3s. A laboratory filled with Victrolas, functioning 8-track players, turntables, and the like enable center archivists to digitize and preserve the popular music of any recorded age.

From a text-only perspective, the center possesses the largest collection of "broadsides" outside of the Library of Congress. Smallish, art-filled lyric sheets, these penny items were the 19th-century equivalent of a 99-cent mp3 download and were key to the dissemination of popular music in prerecording America. Many publishers bound these texts into little, cheap books called "songsters." (Think of a songster as a centuries-old ancestor of the iPod.) Next to the Bible, the songster was the form of literature carried most often by soldiers in the Civil War.

As large as it is, the center's collection is still growing. Recent acquisitions will make it a hotspot for the collection and study of sheet music written for silent films. Titles include "terror music" or "party music"—captioned to capture the essence of a scene.

Other centers like MTSU's exist—but none are so prominent. 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?

Preserving sound and archiving music in a digital age punctuated by the proliferation of music distributed through independent channels makes the work of the center a tall task indeed. Might preservationists reverse course and begin to convert mp3s to vinyl and cylinders to ensure their shelf life? Though it might seem humorous to imagine Lady Gaga or U2 recorded on a cylinder, it's really no laughing matter. Center officials themselves don't rule out the possibility that older technology may play a role in preserving modern music.

Items courtesy of the Center for Popular Music: http://popmusic.mtsu.edu.

SURVEY Says

MTSU POLL

MTSU's statewide poll is second to none in reading the minds of Tennesseans

by Suma Clark and Drew Ruble

NOT EVERY STATE IS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE A MIRROR IN THE FORM of a University-led, independent statewide poll that can reliably inform the population—especially on a regular basis. Starting in fall 1998, MTSU's Survey Group has collected public opinion data every spring and fall on major social, political, and ethical issues affecting Tennessee.

Jason Reineke, associate director, whose decision to join the MTSU faculty was swayed by the opportunity to be involved in the poll, says, "I really believe that, after educating residents of Tennessee, the poll is one of the most important services that Middle Tennessee State University provides to the state."

Planning and executing the polls is a year-round process that Reineke and poll director Ken Blake fit in around classes and research. Hundreds of students participate each year. Blake says he hopes the students "come away with the sense that they did something important." The availability of data over more than a decade also fosters considerable research among faculty and graduate students.

Among many other findings, the latest MTSU Poll in 2014 showed that Tennesseans oppose legalizing marijuana generally but appear willing to allow medical marijuana use (see column at right). Conducted Jan. 23–26, the scientifically valid poll of 600 randomly selected Tennessee adults has an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points at a 95 percent level of confidence.

In 2014, the poll also revealed the following:

- Sixty-four percent of state residents oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally.
- Fifty-two percent support forbidding the enforcement in Tennessee of federal-level firearms laws and having firearms regulated solely by state and local laws.
- Tennesseans give their schools C's on performance.

Just as the queen in *Snow White* was not happy with the truth-telling "mirror on the wall," not everyone is happy with the poll mirror. "Sometimes it's pleasing; sometimes it's not," Blake says. But that doesn't decrease the value of the reflection provided by the MTSU Poll to the citizens of Tennessee.

The *Marijuana* Question

Tennesseeans were asked:

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal?



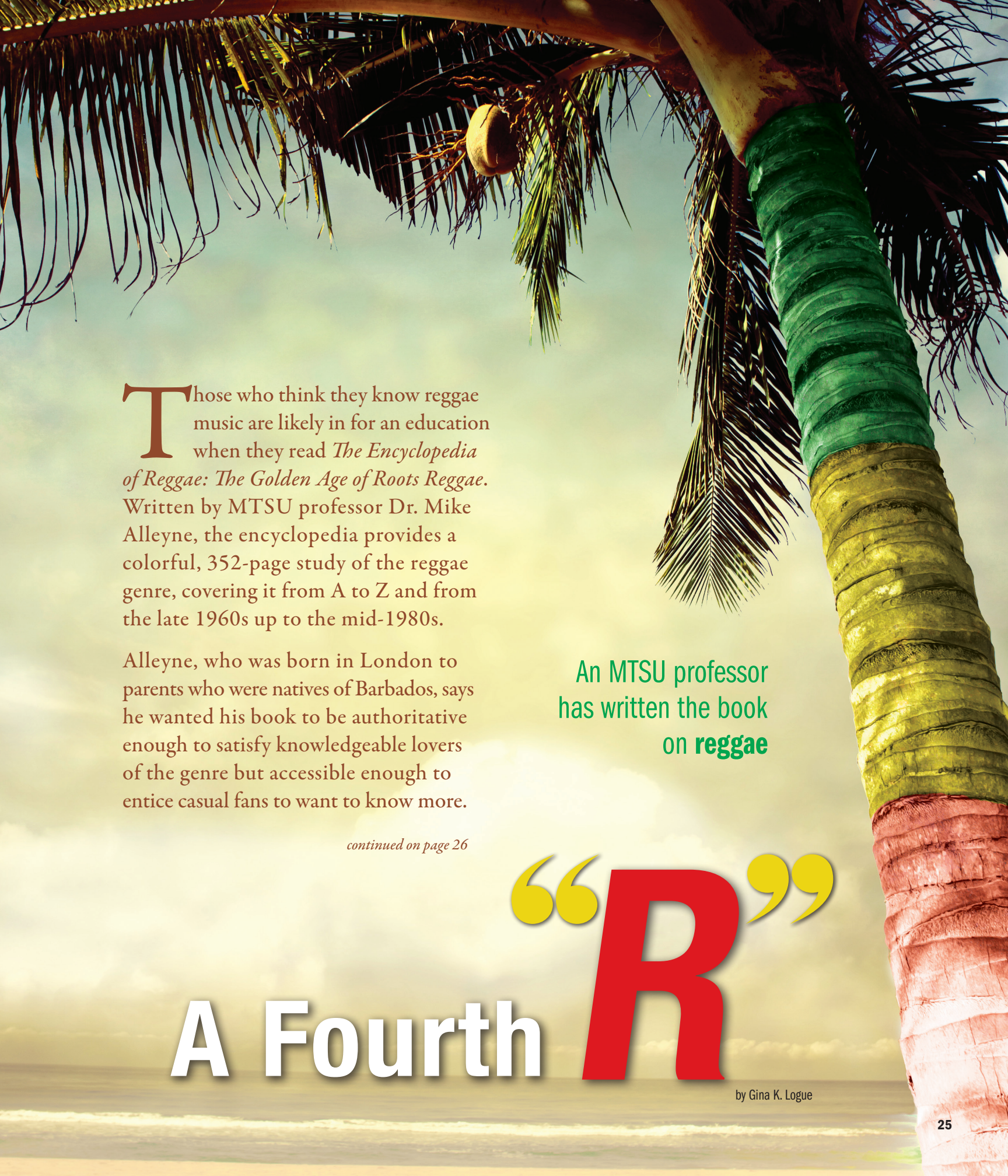
Should adults be allowed to use doctor-prescribed marijuana for medical purposes?



Conclusion

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal?

- Only for **medical purposes** 36%
- Yes, **legal** 33%
- **No**, not even for medical purposes 18%
- **Undecided** 7%
- **Undecided** about general legality but approval for medical purposes 6%



A Fourth "R"

An MTSU professor has written the book on **reggae**

by Gina K. Logue

Those who think they know reggae music are likely in for an education when they read *The Encyclopedia of Reggae: The Golden Age of Roots Reggae*. Written by MTSU professor Dr. Mike Alleyne, the encyclopedia provides a colorful, 352-page study of the reggae genre, covering it from A to Z and from the late 1960s up to the mid-1980s.

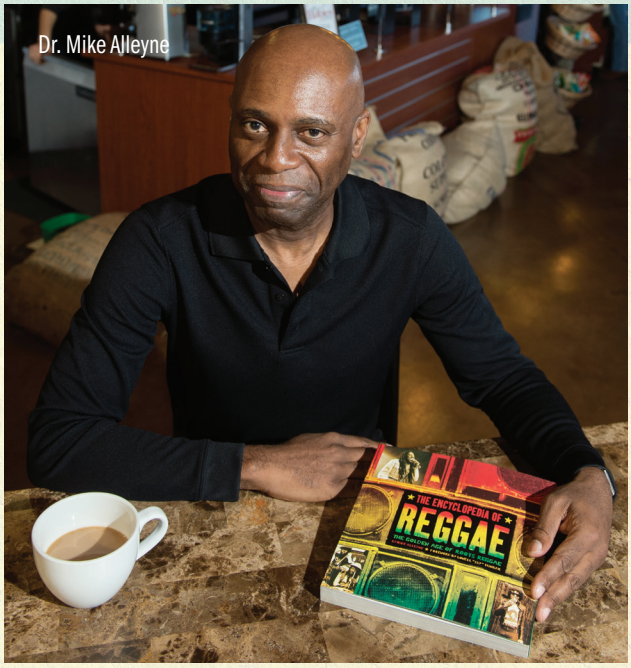
Alleyne, who was born in London to parents who were natives of Barbados, says he wanted his book to be authoritative enough to satisfy knowledgeable lovers of the genre but accessible enough to entice casual fans to want to know more.

continued on page 26

continued from page 25

"It's very difficult to get most audiences to look beyond Bob Marley," Alleyne says. His compilation, though, is designed to help readers do just that. The work includes a timeline, best-of lists, and essays on artists, labels, and producers, along with other aspects of the genre's influence, including Rastafarianism and marijuana. It's not a coffee-table book in the traditional sense, but how can it be when the subject—a style of music that incorporates politics and spirituality in every beat—can hardly be called traditional?

Asked to define reggae, Alleyne says, "It has many different facets, but it's something that is spiritual in many ways, very rhythmically motivating, and very ideologically powerful as well."



Reggae, Alleyne says, is the first music from people considered "Third World" to penetrate major Western commercial markets. The 1970s seemed to be a halcyon era for reggae influence on Western pop hits, including Paul Simon's "Mother and Child Reunion," Johnny Nash's "Stir It Up," and Eric Clapton's cover of Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff." Eddy Grant's "Electric Avenue" from 1982 is something of an anomaly because, while the hit is more of a rock track with a reggae beat, Grant had established his reggae credibility with straight reggae hits in Europe, Alleyne says.

According to Alleyne, reggae's influence in American music is as strong now as it was then, but its visibility is not as great. He says the musical influence actually works both ways, with American music sometimes influencing reggae style, but the profitability of the music is more one-sided. "It's interesting to see how a rock group can integrate reggae elements and achieve this incredible commercial success, but reggae groups who will integrate rock are never able to do that," he says.

A case in point is a series of tribute albums to the Police's 1997–2008 catalog that features notable reggae performers. "The artists were willing to participate in that because they welcomed the opportunity to reinterpret the interpretation of reggae that the Police had come up with," Alleyne says.

While insisting he is not a reggae purist (he also teaches an occasional course on Jimi Hendrix), Alleyne says he would like to see more reggae artists become as well known and widely respected as the rock artists who appreciate reggae enough to appropriate it for their own music. The ethnocentrism behind that lack of renown is irksome but not surprising to Alleyne. After all, reggae is an art form firmly planted in the anticolonial politics that led to Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962.

Alleyne points out that many musicians had been harassed for their Rastafarian religion and were not part of the political or economic establishment anyway. They understood the average Jamaican. Men were chased down in the street and tackled, and their dreadlocks were cut off, as much a sign of racist intimidation as cutting a Chinese man's queue, thus putting him in bad stead with the ancestors he worships. Reggae has always been political, he explains, but the industrialized nations to which the music is exported don't necessarily absorb its political import.

"Reggae has this aura of exoticism that isn't always clearly connected by sectors of the audience to a harsh political and economic reality," Alleyne says.

And yet, musicians in Jamaica seem to find a way around their economic circumstances to produce the music they love. Some of Alleyne's encyclopedia's most compelling photographs are of Ampex reel-to-reel machines under spartan, tin-roofed buildings.

"It's actually quite remarkable that the music has had such great historical resonance, because it was done with the bare minimum of equipment," Alleyne says, noting that some of reggae's best music was made with two-track or four-track machines while recordings in wealthier nations were made with 16-track or 24-track machines.

Thanks to Alleyne, majors in the University's Recording Industry program can now add a fourth "R" to their college education—reggae.

THE Leading Edge

Excerpts from the blog of the College of Mass Communication 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.

mtsumasscomments.wordpress.com

A Southern Sun Rises

Dr. Joseph Akins, an associate professor in the Department of Recording Industry, introduced his new solo piano album, *A Southern Sun*, in January with a streaming concert viewable on computer, tablet, or smartphone. His *A Piano Christmas* was nominated as Best Holiday Album of the Year at SoloPiano.com, and *Spirit Touch* was included in the Top 40 Solo Piano Albums of the Decade for 2000–2009 at MainlyPiano.com. Akins teaches courses in MIDI, musicianship, and new media.

New Course from Burriss Tackles National Security

With former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden continuing to expose government secrets piecemeal, a spring course taught by Dr. Larry Burriss (professor, School of Journalism), Mass Media and National Security, was more timely than ever. The course explores the historic tension between media and government, dating back to when Common Sense pamphleteer Thomas Paine was fired from his job with the Continental Congress for leaking secret documents to the press. Burriss was a public affairs officer in the U.S. Air Force and Tennessee Air National Guard and had a long career as a journalist.

Bob Pondillo Publishes New Introductory Media Textbook

Dr. Bob Pondillo, formerly of the Electronic Media Department, recently published *American Media and Social Institutions* (Cognella Academic Publishing), a textbook examining the culture of journalism, recording and popular music, and radio. Pondillo is an Emmy-winning writer and producer who has worked in media for more than 30 years. He was an MTSU faculty member for 14 years before his retirement this summer.

Student Journalists Cover Obama Visit

Four *Sidelines* journalists and a staff member of MT10 News covered President Barack Obama's visit to McGavock High School on Jan. 30, 2014, in Nashville. Sam Brown, Chris Davis, Sam Hearn, Quint Qualls, and Emily West reported on the President's speech about job creation and the state of economy. The team also produced a multimedia package with video, stills, and stories.

John Hill Records Nashville Opera Again

Professor John Hill (Recording Industry) recorded the Nashville Opera's performances of Rossini's classic comedy *The Barber of Seville* Jan. 30 and Feb. 1, 2014, at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center's Andrew Jackson Hall. Hill has been recording the Nashville Opera for radio broadcast since 2004. He joined the Department of Recording Industry in 1992. Hill won a Best Engineered Album, Classical Grammy in February 2011 for his audio engineering work on the CD *Daugherty: Metropolis Symphony, Deus Ex Machina*. music inspired by the 50th anniversary of the comic book debut of Superman.

continued on page 28

continued from page 27

Justin Reed Show Finalist for Golden Microphone Award

WMTS's *Justin Reed Show* was a finalist for the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System Golden Microphone Awards in the Best Live Music category. The show features classic country and bluegrass music, interviews, and live performances from some of country music's biggest celebrities, including Rhonda Vincent and Pete Fisher, among others.

Tennessee Press Featured Four from Mass Comm

Dean Ken Paulson, Associate Professor Leslie Haines, Assistant Professor Phil Loubere, and Assistant Professor Jason Reineke represented the College of Mass Communication at the Tennessee Press Association Winter Convention and Press Institute in Nashville on Feb. 7, 2014. Paulson, keynote speaker at the luncheon, delivered "The Real Value of Newspapers: Digital, Dollars, and Democracy," which examined new models and old values and reminded the audience why America needs newspapers now more than ever.

CPM Exhibit Honors the Legacy of George Jones

George Jones, who died last April, was honored by the Center for Popular Music with a new exhibit of albums, sheet music, and news articles featuring the country music icon. MTSU's connection with Jones's legacy was established in November 2013 when Nancy Jones, his widow, announced her family's creation of a scholarship fund for the University.



Edmonson's Documentary Tops BEA Awards

When Jaclyn Edmonson traveled to Italy for study abroad in May 2013, her assignment was to document working artists. Her work resulted in an award-winning documentary called *Sbocciare* (Italian for "blossom"). The video was submitted last year to the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) Festival of Media Arts, an international exhibition of award-winning student works competing in audio, documentary, and interactive multimedia. Sbocciare won Best of Festival and was showcased during BEA's annual convention in Las Vegas in April.

Briley's *American Idol* Journey Ends at No. 11

Mass Communication alumnus Ben Briley almost made it to the *American Idol* Top 10 in 2014. The 2013 graduate (who studied public relations) is now back in Nashville pursuing his musical career.

Sidelines' West Tops Features Competition

Sidelines editor-in-chief Emily West won the Best Feature Writing competition Feb. 21 at the 2014 Southeast Journalism Conference in Lafayette, La. In addition, the *Sidelines* website finished in seventh place in the Best Website category.

Mass Comm Students Shoot Live

Two advanced College of Mass Communication classes recently shot *Music City Roots: Live from the Loveless Café* in Nashville. The Feb. 26, 2014, production brought together students from an audio course taught by Professor Dan Pfeifer (Recording Industry) and an advanced video production course taught by Professor Mary Nichols (Electronic Media Communication). Student engineers from Mike Forbes's engineering class helped with the shoot. *Music City Roots* was the second such production this year—students also recorded the Nashville Symphony's Young People's Concert at Schermerhorn Symphony Center on Feb. 12. For the episode of *Music City Roots*, students also had a chance to use a digital audio truck on loan from Tennessee Digital Video, a company owned by Mass Comm alum Nic Dugger.

Digital Song Marketing According to Jay Frank

Jay Frank, a forward-thinking leader on streaming music, marketing with data, and new business models, shared his perspectives during a March 25, 2014, lecture called "Hit Songs for the Digital Era." Frank is owner and CEO of DigSin, a singles-focused music company that allows subscribers to get free music. Before DigSin, Frank was senior vice president of music strategy for Country Music Television.

Leila Cobo, Latin Music Guru, Shares Journalism Insights

Leila Cobo, executive editor for Latin content and programming for *Billboard*, was a featured Recording Industry Department

guest March 24, 2014, with a Q&A led by Chair Beverly Keel. Cobo was brought to MTSU as part of the College of Mass Communication's Brian Williams SunTrust Lecture Series, which is named for the late charter member of the college's Board of Visitors who was known as Music Row's "banker to the stars."

PR vs. Journalism: Rematch Draws a Crowd

Meg Downey, recently retired managing editor of *The Tennessean*, and Andrew Maraniss, partner in McNeely, Pigott and Fox, shared the podium for the second annual PR vs. Journalism debate on Tuesday, April 8, 2014. The event was a lighthearted conversation designed to help improve relationships between journalists and public relations people.

Mass Comm Students Rock the Tennessee AP Awards

Students and faculty from the School of Journalism and Department of Electronic Media Communication raked in honors at the Tennessee Associated Press College Awards banquet held in March in Nashville. *Sidelines* staffers won five awards. Sam Brown won second place for Best Sports Story; Christine Craft won second place for Best News Graphics; Matt Masters received both second and third place in the Photography category; and Bailey Robbins won third place in Best Feature. In the broadcast awards, students took home first place in all but one category. The combined work of MT10's Chris Davis, assistant news director; Matt Parker, senior producer; and Kelsey Lebechuck, news director, won Best News Story, Best Ongoing Coverage, Best Reporter, Best Multimedia Package, and Best of Show Broadcast for their coverage of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro. *Sidelines* editor-in-chief Emily West's online work for the Bragg Innovative News Network (BINN) won for Best College Media website. Sports Coverage nominees were all Visual Communication students: Justin Beasley won for his Kevin Byard story, MT10 sports director Lena Cline's Ebony Rowe story took second place, and Rafferty Cleary and Jordan Taylor's BINN profile of former MTSU athletic director and football coach James "Boots" Donnelly took third. Davis, Lebechuck, and West won Best Multimedia Journalist for cross-platform coverage by MT10 TV and *Sidelines* on last fall's Keathley University Center bomb threat. Parker, Lebechuck, and Davis's coverage of the Woodbury downtown fire won honors for Best Spot Coverage and Best Television Reporter. MT10 News also won for Best Newscast, and Jordan Powell won for Best Videographer. Davis came in second for Best Feature Story, and Jordan Hall, Lebechuck, and Davis's entry placed third. In radio entries, Justin Beasley won the Best Feature category and took second place in Best Sports Coverage.

Asthana Publishes Book Chapter on Indian TV

Associate Professor Sanjay Asthana (School of Journalism) recently published "Television, Narrative Identity, and Social Imaginaries: A Hermeneutic Approach" in Oxford University Press's *Channeling Cultures: Television Studies from India*. The chapter demonstrates that embodied subjectivity and social imaginaries provide a better grasp in examining the articulations of class, caste, gender, and religious identities on Indian television.

O'Brien Found Her Voice on Diversity Issues

Award-winning broadcaster Soledad O'Brien delivered the keynote address in March 2014 for MTSU's National Women's History Month celebration. Best known for her documentary work with CNN, she presented "Diversity: On TV, Behind the Scenes, and In Our Lives." She explained that being the child of a white Australian father and a black Cuban mother (who married when interracial unions were illegal) gave her an appreciation for standing her ground when challenged. In 2011, O'Brien hosted and produced the acclaimed documentary *Unwelcome: The Muslims Next Door*, which looked at the controversy surrounding the construction of the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro.



Good Exchange

MTSU signed an agreement in May 2014 allowing select juniors from China's top communication university to complete their bachelor's degree studies in Murfreesboro — and earn a master's degree from MTSU—in one year. The pact aligns MTSU's acclaimed College of Mass Communication with Communication University of China, known as "the cradle of China's broadcasting and televisions talents" as many of its graduates are in prominent reporting and management roles. The Chinese Ministry of Education in 2012 ranked it as the country's No. 1 university for media education.



Alum Jeffery Reid **extends** a **helping hand** to current students and recent grads with an **eye on his industry**

IN *your* CORNER

by Katie Porterfield

When Jeffery Reid ('81) ventured to MTSU from the small, rural town of Whitwell, Tenn., he never imagined he'd be an executive producer at CNN. In fact, a career in television wasn't even on his radar.

"I always enjoyed watching television, and I always wondered how they put a newscast together," Reid says. "I just never really thought I'd be doing it one day."

But when a junior-year course in radio production gave him the opportunity to work at the campus radio station, he discovered a passion for broadcast journalism. By his senior year, he'd decided to pursue the more lucrative television route, and after sending 100 résumés to small television markets around the country, he got a bite at a station in Chattanooga. He accepted a paid internship that eventually led to a full-time news producer position there and, with his foot in the door, he worked his way from Chattanooga to stations in Indianapolis and Atlanta and finally to CNN in 1996, where he oversaw editorial content for the network's long-form programming, including *CNN Presents* and *CNN: Special Investigations Unit*. Faced with a restructuring in the CNN department he managed, Reid took a new job with Gannett-owned WXIA in Atlanta leading special projects for the station.

In short, he's the epitome of a College of Mass Communication success story, and he'd like nothing more than to see others from MTSU follow in his footsteps. "I'm doing everything I can to help prepare students for a very competitive field," Reid says.



photo: Andy Heidt

For starters, he's one of nine cornerstone donors who contributed a minimum of $10,000 to the Center for Innovation in Media—the state-of-the-art facility that houses the University's student media outlets under one roof. The center encourages collaboration and gives students the opportunity to build a working knowledge of multiple media disciplines.

When Reid heard the center was in the works, he "knew immediately" that he needed to support it.

"The more hands-on experience kids have in college, the better job applicants they are going to be," Reid says. "They have to have more than a college degree in their hands. They've got to have a résumé of skills. It's not so much 'Here is what I have learned' as 'Here is what I've done.'"

When it comes to helping students get that hands-on experience, Reid does more than pull out his checkbook. Reid encourages students to apply for media internships and even offers to serve as a reference.

Though Reid makes it clear that students succeed mainly on their own merits, he's also the first to admit that who you know can open doors in his business and others.

"Contacts may not be able to get you the job or keep you there, but at least they can help you get your foot in the door," he says.

Reid says he's happy to talk to students and graduates looking for advice on breaking into or advancing in the field of television news. Throughout his career, he moved successfully from station to station by keeping in touch with colleagues who made the jump before he did, but he says he also could have benefited from a mentor.

> "The more **hands-on** *experience* kids have in college, the *better* **job** *applicants* they are going to be," Reid says.

"As I look back on my career, maybe it wasn't smart to stay in Indianapolis for nine years," he says. "If I'd had a mentor-type person that I could call and bounce some ideas off of, maybe I wouldn't have stayed as long."

He keeps in touch with the College of Mass Communication:

The MTSU Career Development Center has a program that allows students to network with alumni as they search for jobs. It's called the **Raider Professional Network.** Alumni agree to serve as volunteer career advisors, and students interested in particular fields will be able to contact them for informational interviews—not asking for a job but for advice on how to break into the field, what a typical day is like, and similar topics. The Raider Professional Network is not meant to be a long-term mentorship; it's set up to be a resource for student jobseekers. To register, visit https://mtsu-csm.symplicity.com/mentors.



he's on campus frequently, and he's always just a phone call away. The bottom line is that Reid feels obligated to reach out and help others at the institution that introduced him to his field and started him down a successful career path. He thinks other MTSU alums should do the same.

"You should give money, too, but I know how difficult it is these days. The economy isn't like it used to be," he says, adding that he has a daughter in college and twins (a son and daughter) who'll be heading to college next year. "To take care of them and still give back to the University is going to be tight, but I'll do it as long as I can, and if for some reason I'm not able to keep on giving, then at least I can give my time and my knowledge."

As Ellis and other graduates trying to get into the highly competitive field can attest, time and knowledge from a broadcast journalist with 30 years of experience are valuable and welcome contributions. And there's no doubt that graduates seeking jobs in other industries would be more than thrilled to have the ear of a fellow Blue Raider already in the business.

Class Notes

Distinguished alumni of the College of Mass Communication



Ken Strickland

Ken Strickland ('89) is vice president and bureau chief at NBC News in Washington, D.C. Strickland joined NBC in 1995 and served as an associate producer for *Dateline*. Two years later, he was named White House producer, then moved to helping cover Capitol Hill. "My experience at MTSU—and I was there long before digital journalism crept in—put me far ahead of my competitors," Strickland told MTSUNews.com. "I really think the foundation I got at MTSU was what made the difference."



Brian Tipton

Who are your favorite country music artists? Chances are **Brian Tipton ('98)** knows them personally. As photo manager for CMT.com, Tipton handles all photo content for the website and shoots for its editorial coverage including concerts, CD release parties, and in-house media days. His primary job is to work with labels, publicists, and Getty Images to meet all of CMT.com's photo needs. The former BMI media relations specialist also does freelance work, in and out of the music business.



Lewis Harkness

Lewis Harkness ('93) started his broadcast career as an intern at WKRN in Nashville in August 1993. For most of the next 18 years, Harkness served as production supervisor working on newscasts, parades, live music, and Tennessee Titans preseason football games. A highlight of his 18 years at WKRN? "I particularly enjoyed working with and giving students their first broadcast jobs," he says. But after WKRN, Harkness felt he needed a challenge, which presented itself as an opportunity to work at the network level with ESPN in Bristol, Conn. "If I had to sum up my experience at ESPN thus far in one word, I would say 'surprise,'" Harkness says. "I'm surprised I don't walk around in awe more than I do; I'm surprised at the number of people who are involved with every broadcast; and I'm surprised at how quickly I was able to start directing *SportsCenter.*"



Chris **Young**

Country music star **Chris Young**, a Murfreesboro native, credits much of his success as a chart-topping artist to his time spent at MTSU. "My time there was just really, really important to me," Young says. "I enjoyed the recording industry program there, and it did a lot for me. It's just a big part of who I am."

Young's career took flight in 2006 when he won on *Nashville Star*, a singing competition that aired on the USA Network. He later signed with RCA Records Nashville and has since released four studio albums, including his latest effort, *A.M.*, last September.

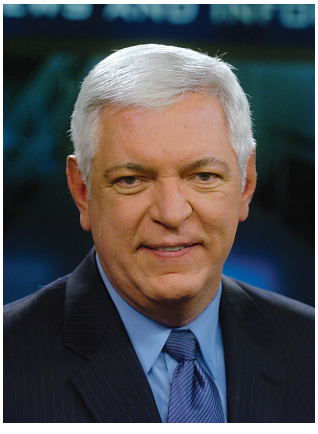
Young recently gave a significant amount of his surplus musical equipment to MTSU—soundboards, cables, lighting, video, and staging—for use on- and off-campus. "The payback for me is that somebody is going to get to use some equipment that maybe he or she otherwise wouldn't have been able to obtain," Young says.

George S. **Clinton**

Film composer **George S. Clinton ('69)**, the man behind the music of *Mortal Kombat*, *The Santa Clause 2* and the *Austin Powers* film series, shared his expertise with students while serving as the Department of Recording Industry Artist-in-Residence. During his visit, the Grammy- and Emmy-nominated Clinton presented two free public events and several master classes for recording industry students.



Phil **Williams**



BusinessTN magazine, on its list of the "100 Most Powerful People in Tennessee" in 2005, said that when NewsChannel5 investigative reporter **Phil Williams ('85)** walks into Legislative Plaza, "doors slam, lawmakers duck into offices, and emails start circulating throughout the building announcing his arrival. Not another journalist in the state is feared in that way on Capitol Hill." Williams leads WTVF-NewsChannel5 Nashville's investigative news team and recently received his third George Foster Peabody Award, the oldest in electronic media. Williams is also the recipient of three Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Awards for excellence in reporting (which he won alongside such media stalwarts as Al Jazeera English, HBO, and the *New York Times*), as well as multiple regional Emmy awards and a national Emmy.

Garry W. **Hood**

Garry W. Hood ('77) worked as a basketball manager doing video for Coach Jimmy Earle during his years at MTSU. That experience led to a 10-year stint with the classic variety show *Hee Haw*, first doing cue cards and later as stage manager. Since those halcyon days, Hood has risen to the top of his field. He has served as stage manager for every major awards show on television including the Oscars, Grammys, Emmys, Tonys, and CMAs (to name just a few). He's worked both the Democratic and the Republican national political conventions since 1988 and has been lead stage manager for the Kennedy Center Honors for over 20 years. The 2004 Distinguished Alumnus is the son of former state lawmaker turned MTSU senior official **John Hood** ('54, '74).



L. to R. Garry Hood, Jim Free, Dolly Parton and John Hood at the Kennedy Center Awards in 2006



Pat **Duke**

Voiceover talent **Pat Duke ('81)**, of Los Angeles, has voiced more than 10,000 national TV commercials (Napa, Coors, Mercedes Benz), has appeared in movies including *Talladega Nights*, and recently narrated *Swamp People* for the History Channel. He's also performed character voices for the Cartoon Network. He's provided several superhero voices for Marvel Comics and for a video game called *Arcania*. In that one, Duke plays a huge, dumb ogre. "Typecasting?" he asks. "Kinda." And, oh by the way, have you heard of the blockbuster video game *Halo: Reach*, which sold three million copies its first day on the market? Duke plays Colonel Holland. (Ask your kid what he thinks of that.)



Eric **Paslay**

Songwriter/artist **Eric Paslay ('05)** records for EMI Records Nashville. His first album, for which he wrote or cowrote every song, debuted in the Top Ten of the *Billboard* Country Albums chart and shot as high as no. 2 on iTunes. In demand as a songwriter, Paslay has already written number-one country hits for Jake Owen, the Eli Young Band, and Love and Theft. As a student, Paslay was president of the Nashville Songwriters Association International chapter and also interned with Cal4 Entertainment, which led to a publishing deal.

Skye **Medley**

You might say **Skye Medley ('06, '09)** travels with a fast crowd. Medley is a production manager assistant for ESPN's NASCAR coverage team that travels from race to race doing logistical planning, coordinating interview times with other networks, and seeing that producers and announcers have what they need for the broadcasts. A Mass Communication major who concentrated in Electronic Media Communication, Medley has also worked the Liberty Bowl, the Music City Bowl, the Winter X Games, and NFL Monday Night Football.





Lucas Johnson

A journalist for the AP and a member of the College of Mass Communication Wall of Fame, and the School of Journalism's professional advisory board, **Lucas L. Johnson II ('91)** is the journalist who broke the story of Chattanoogan Stephon Tull finding a never-before-heard audio recording of Martin Luther King Jr. from 1960 in an old box in his father's attic. In the audio, which Tull's father had captured for a book project that was never completed, King discusses the importance of the civil rights movement four years before the Civil Rights Act became law, and eight years before his assassination. Johnson later broke the story that magician David Copperfield purchased the audiotape and planned to donate it to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis to help promote King's message of nonviolence.



David Chandler

David Chandler ('89), known as "Big Dave" on the afternoon drive time show *Big Dave and Chelsie* on WUBE, Cincinnati's Country B-105 FM, was honored with the Academy of Country Music (ACM) Large Market Personality of the Year award at the ACM Awards show in Las Vegas in 2012. Chandler is the son of the late Dr. Clay M. Chandler, who was an MTSU biology professor.

Martha Earls and Mike Molinar



Veteran music publishers **Martha Earls ('98)** and **Mike Molinar ('98)** are responsible for overseeing songwriter signings, artist/writer development, and catalog growth at Nashville's Big Machine Music, an expansion and rebranding of the Big Machine Label Group's publishing company, Super 98 Music. The label is home to music superstars such as Taylor Swift, Tim McGraw, and Rascal Flatts. Molinar and Earls had most recently been partners in Effusion Entertainment, a boutique music publishing and writer/artist management company. Before Effusion, they were partners in Elevation Music Publishing, which had the hit song "Easy," recorded by Rascal Flatts with Natasha Bedingfield. At Elevation, the pair also placed songs with Brantley Gilbert, Jewel, Brad Paisley, Blake Shelton, Trace Adkins, Rodney Atkins, Montgomery Gentry, and Easton Corbin, among others.





Woody **Bomar**

Woody Bomar ('67) is president of Green Hills Music Group, a Music Row publishing enterprise whose songs have been recorded by George Strait, Hunter Hayes, Luke Bryan, and Jake Owen, among others. A Vietnam veteran, Bomar began his music career as a songwriter, penning hits for the likes of Conway Twitty, Loretta Lynn, Hank Williams Jr., and Lee Greenwood. He later served as general manager at Combine Music, where he promoted the music of staff writers including Kris Kristofferson, Larry Gatlin, and Dolly Parton and placed notable hits including the first single by the Judds. He left Combine in 1987 to start Little Big Town Music, which produced 15 number-one country singles over the next decade. In 1998, Bomar sold Little Big Town Music to Sony/ATV and was simultaneously named the company's senior vice president and general manager. Over the course of his eight-year tenure at the helm of Sony/ATV, the company released 46 number-one singles. Bomar also signed artist/writers including Dierks Bentley, Rascal Flatts, Josh Turner, and Blake Shelton. In 2006, Bomar parted ways with Sony/ATV to return to independent publishing with the creation of Green Hills Music Group.



Luke **Laird**

Pennsylvania-born **Luke Laird ('01)**, started writing music as a kid. But it wasn't until after graduating from MTSU and landing his first job as an assistant tour manager for Brooks and Dunn that Laird began to truly pursue a career as a songwriter.

In 2007, Laird went to the head of the class of Nashville songwriters with three songs on Carrie Underwood's album *Carnival Ride*, including number-one *Billboard* singles "So Small" and "Last Name." Most recently, Laird won a Grammy for best country album, Kacey Musgraves' *Same Trailer, Different Park*, which he co-produced.

The hit songwriter—by anyone's measure among the hottest cowriters on Music Row today—is a staff writer for Universal Music Publishing Group in Nashville. If you ever see him perform live, be sure to request his unpublished (and hilarious) rap song—a crowd pleaser every time.



Jerome **Hruska**

While working in college radio as a Mass Comm major, **Jerome Hruska ('01)** heard that Blue Raider athletics officials were searching for a public address announcer for baseball games. He jumped at the chance, and a passion was born. In 2005, when Washington, D.C., was awarded a Major League Baseball franchise (the Washington Nationals), Hruska submitted his résumé to join the PA team—30 times.

He wasn't selected the first year, but he got a call in year two of the franchise and joined the team as a spotter. A year later, when the PA announcer for the Nationals resigned, Hruska stepped up to the plate, becoming the youngest PA announcer in Major League Baseball at age 29.

BEHIND **THE MUSIC**

Four MTSU alums fuel the fame of one of country music's biggest acts

Not all MTSU graduates who have become hit commercial songwriters have come out of the University's lauded Department of Recording Industry. **Josh Kear ('96, cum laude)**, a history major, wrote the 2011 Grammy song of the year and country song of the year, "Need You Now," with members of the smash country music act Lady Antebellum. The awards were Kear's second and third Grammys. (He previously won for country song of the year in 2007 for Carrie Underwood's "Before He Cheats.") Kear, who got his first publishing deal at the age of 21 with BMG Publishing, has been working with powerhouse independent Big Yellow Dog Publishing since 2002.


Josh Kear


Hillary Scott


B. J. Hill

It's hard to believe that at one time, before the mega-stardom they've experienced as a band over the past few years, Lady Antebellum was considered a risky act to sign. MTSU graduate **B. J. Hill ('00)**, senior director of artists and repertoire (A&R) at Warner/Chappell Music (where he interned while an MTSU student) is well known on Music Row for his dogged pursuit of the trio. He signed Lady Antebellum members and songwriters Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley to Warner/Chappell and continues to oversee their publishing. (Hill's other clients include one of Music Row's hottest songwriters, Wendell Mobley, whose songs have been recorded by the likes of Carrie Underwood, Rascal Flatts, and Reba McEntire.)

Clarke Schleicher (B.S. '80) was on stage with Lady Antebellum at the 2011 Grammy Awards in Los Angeles to receive his award for audio engineering work on the song "Need You Now," which won record of the year. Schleicher also won a Grammy for the album of the same name, which won best country album of the year. Schleicher manages the Nashville recording studios of Warner Bros. Records and also works as an independent recording engineer. His professional credits include projects with Neil Young, Joan Baez, Marie Osmond, Martina McBride, Travis Tritt, the Dixie Chicks, Amy Grant, and Taylor Swift.


Lady Antebellum: Dave Haywood, Hillary Scott, and Charles Kelley

Wonder what the band is like in person? **Daniel Miller ('00)** would know. He's vice president of artist management at Borman Entertainment and the day-to-day point person for the group.

[*Editor's Note: **Hillary Scott**, the singer/songwriter who makes up one-third of Lady Antebellum and who left the 53rd annual Grammys with five awards, including song of the year and record of the year, attended MTSU but did not graduate. Hillary, our adult degree completion program is the nation's best! We can help you get that degree! Call us!*]

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY
1301 East Main Street
Murfreesboro TN 37132

I AM *true*BLUE™ Learn more at www.mtsu.edu.





The University Honors College challenges students to excel in their listening, writing, and critical thinking skills. The Honors College is home to the Buchanan Fellowship program, named in honor of MTSU's Nobel Prize winning alumnus, Dr. James M. Buchanan. The Buchanan Fellowship, limited to 20 students per year, is the highest award given to entering freshmen.

