

COUNTRY BY KEN TUCKER

'HOME' IS WHERE THE HIT IS

Shelton On The Move With Bublé Cover

Country star Blake Shelton owes his latest hit to two fellow stars: girlfriend Miranda Lambert and pop star Michael Bublé. Shelton's version of "Home," a song Bublé took to No. 1 on Billboard's Hot AC chart in 2005, jumps 20-16 this week on Hot Country Songs.

Shelton says he found the song "quite accidentally." "Miranda loads my iPod for me and she slipped it in with a group of other songs. When I heard it I was like, 'What is this? I didn't give her this one.' Then I looked to see who was singing it and kept listening," he recalls. "I loved it, started singing it around, added it to my live show and here we are—it's now on my album."

Carol Hughes, assistant PD/music director for country KFDI Wichita, Kan., says she first heard Shelton's version of the song at a Warner Bros. luncheon during Country Music Assn. Awards week last November in Nashville. "He played it acoustically and I was absolutely blown away," she says. "I did know the original version, but there was something in the way Blake sang it that just gave me goose bumps."

After getting similar reactions from other programmers, Warner Bros. decided to have Shelton record the song and ship it to radio, even though the label was two singles into his most recent album, "Pure BS," which was released in March 2007 and has sold 270,000 copies in the United States, according to Nielsen SoundScan. ("Don't Make Me" peaked at No. 12

on Hot Country Songs in June 2007, and "The More I Drink" stopped at No. 19 in December.)

When the song became available for airplay, KFDI and other stations immediately jumped onboard. "It's a great song and our listeners love it," Hughes says, noting that Lambert adds harmony vocals to the song. "I think Miranda's voice blends so well with Blake's. She really adds a lot to the song."

"Home" was released commercially as part of the Wal-Mart exclusive "Blake Shelton Collector's Edition," a set that also includes the hits "Austin," "Ol' Red," "Nobody but Me" and "Some Beach." On May 6, Warner Bros. will release "Pure BS Deluxe Edition," which in addition to last year's album's original tracks will also include "Home" and two bonus cuts.

Shelton says he can relate to the song for the same reason Bublé wrote it. "I travel a lot—and I'm fortunate as a singer to get to do what I do—but sometimes I just want to go home," he says. "I get to missing my house, my land, my family, everything that makes home 'home.'"

Despite his traditional country lean, Shelton says he wasn't concerned about covering a pop song. "The first time I



BLAKE SHELTON has a burgeoning country hit with a **MICHAEL BUBLÉ** cover, which the pair performed together (inset) in March.

heard 'Home' I felt it was more country than pop and I think it fits well in the country format," he says.

Shelton had never met the Canadian-

born singer before, but during a visit backstage at Bublé's March 13 Nashville concert, he invited Shelton to perform the song with him onstage. ●●●