

# He's No Choirboy!

Blake Shelton leads 20 singin' Okies against four other celebrity choirs in NBC's live *Clash of the Choirs* competition

Story by **David Scarlett**

**I**N HIGH SCHOOL, I DON'T REMEMBER IF WE even had a choir," chuckles Blake Shelton of his days as an Ada High cougar in his native Oklahoma. "That's how foreign it is to me. I've never been called a choirboy.

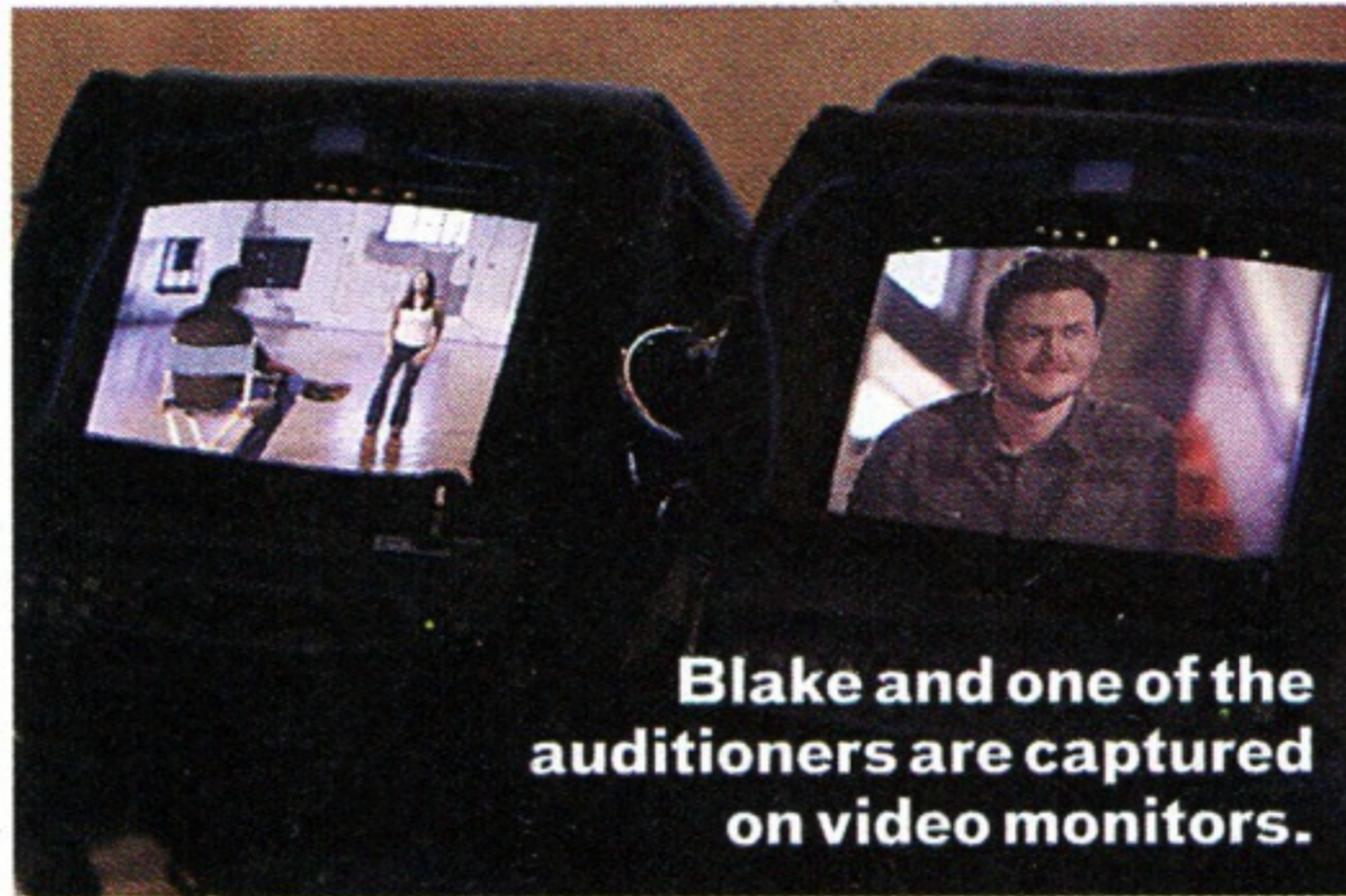
"I was always just a guy people invited to their parties in high school 'cause I could play the guitar and sing a little bit. But, outside of that, choir's really not my area."

Well, as of early November, choir *became* Blake's area since he signed on to form and direct an amateur choir of Oklahomans to compete against the choirs of other celebrities—Michael Bolton, Patti LaBelle, Nick Lachey and Kelly Rowland—in a *Clash of the Choirs* airing live Dec. 17–20 on NBC-TV from New York City.

The show's two-hour premiere is

Monday, Dec. 17, 8–10 p.m. ET, and will be followed by an 8–9 p.m. broadcast on Dec. 18, an 8–10 p.m. episode on Dec. 19 and the final competition and naming of the "greatest choir" on Thursday, Dec. 20, 8–9 p.m.

Winners in the four-night sing-off will be determined as America watches and judges from home. And the winning choir gets \$250,000 for the art-



Blake and one of the auditioners are captured on video monitors.

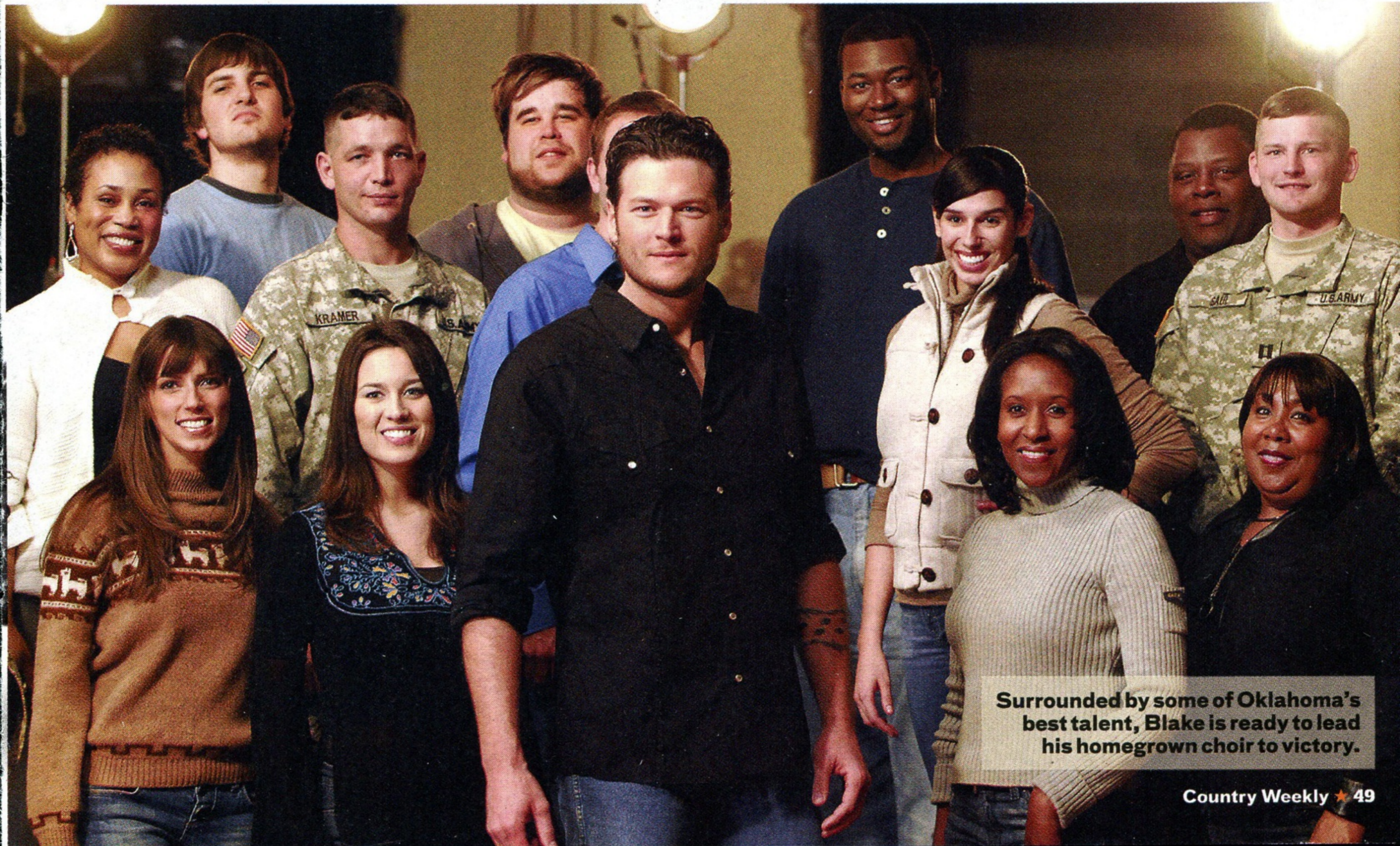
ist's home-state charity of choice. In Blake's case, that's Oklahoma's military and Project Rebuild, which helps rebuild homes after Oklahoma disasters.

To get down to his 20-person choir, Blake chose from 50 auditioners who'd been part of an original pool of some 400. "I had a lot of people thinkin' they could sing one of my songs—'Nobody but Me' and 'Austin' mostly—and that would be a shoo-in. And it worked on some people," he grins. "But a lot of people came in and sang opera music.

"There were several singers I didn't select," he declares. "But they were great singers and I even told 'em, 'You don't belong in front of a choir. You belong in front of a band somewhere. Your voice is too unique for my choir, but it's so unique that you should be a solo artist. You should pursue that.'"

Blake is nothing but confident in the choir he did select. "My choir is gonna win because we're from Oklahoma, one of the largest pools of talent in the United States," he proclaims. "Look how many great singers have come from this state—from Vince Gill to Toby Keith, Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, Ronnie Dunn and Carrie Underwood. Seriously, it'll blow your mind."

The name of one Blake Shelton should be added to that list. **CW**



Surrounded by some of Oklahoma's best talent, Blake is ready to lead his homegrown choir to victory.