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EXCLUSIVE
AT-HOME INTERVIEW

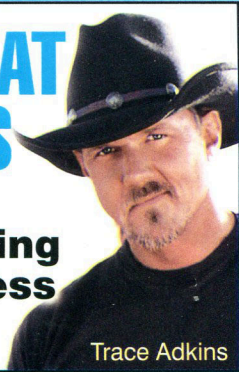
Blake Shelton LIFE, LOSS & LOVE

The young star on:

- His brother's death
- His traumatic divorce
- Loving Miranda Lambert

HOW I BEAT THE ODDS

13 Stars On Overcoming Poverty, Illness & Tragedy



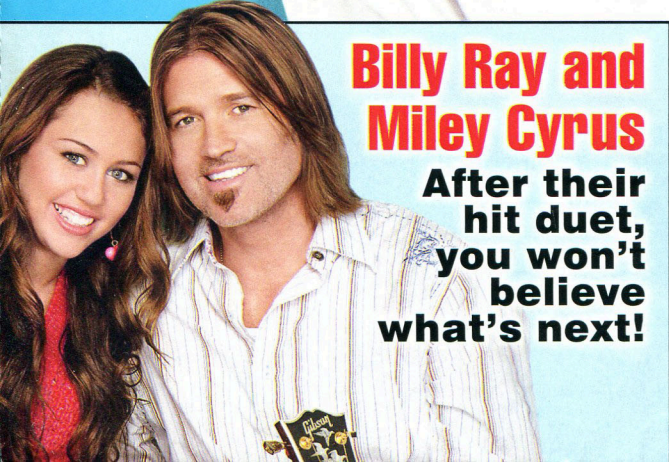
Trace Adkins

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Billy Ray and Miley Cyrus

After their hit duet, you won't believe what's next!

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AT HOME

Blake Shelton



IT'S ALL ABOUT HOME

Blake Shelton opens up about family, hard times, his new hit, life on his Oklahoma ranch . . . *and* girlfriend Miranda Lambert.

Story by **David Scarlett** Photos by **Chris Hollo**

IT'S FUNNY," DECLARES BLAKE SHELTON AS HE RELAXES ON A stool in the kitchen of his secluded house—an unpretentious, comfortable former hunting lodge—on his 1,200-acre spread outside Tishomingo, Okla. "I have these in-depth conversations on the bus every night after a show with my manager and road manager. And we were talkin' the other night about datin' and bein' married and careers and travelin' and all that stuff. And I told 'em—and I mean it—I'm in my favorite spot that I've been in in my life.

"It's real easy to lose yourself and lose focus in this music industry thing. I just feel like, all of a sudden, bein' back here in Oklahoma and four albums into this thing and kinda able to take control of my own destiny a little bit . . . I just love how my life is at the moment."

And for 31-year-old Blake, things are close to perfect on all fronts. The multiplatinum-selling star's powerful current single, "Home" (featuring Blake's girlfriend, Miranda Lambert, on harmony vocals), is among his fastest-rising ever, which is saying something for a guy who's had a string of memorable hits in the past seven years, including No. 1s "Austin," "The Baby" and "Some Beach," among other strong releases like "Ol' Red," "Goodbye Time," "Nobody Like Me," "Don't Make Me" and "The More I Drink." The latter two are from his acclaimed fourth record, *Pure BS*, which is

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Can you say "captive audience?" Surrounded by his trophies, Blake tunes up in his former hunting lodge, which features (inset) a granite table and Blake's own jukebox. Girlfriend Miranda Lambert (with Blake at right) has a farm just six miles away.



BLAKE SHELTON

being repackaged as *Pure BS Deluxe Edition* and rereleased with “Home” and a couple of new songs May 6. “Home” is also on *Blake Shelton: Collector’s Edition*, released March 4 and available only at Wal-Mart.

“I’m really looking forward to seeing how ‘Home’ does,” admits Blake, of the song previously recorded by pop star Michael Bublé. “I’ve got a song that was a pretty big pop record. But with my voice on it, it sounds as country as it can be. I’m interested in seeing how people accept that from me.”

How someone with Blake’s voice and track record has managed to avoid being nominated for major industry awards on a regular basis is

one of the great mysteries of modern times. And, touring this year with a new high-tech set, his live show is better than ever.

Blake’s also settled in on the sprawling ranch he bought about a year and a half ago near Tishomingo—population just over 3,000—about 30 minutes south of Ada, his hometown, where most of his family still lives. He loves spending time working the land with his tractor and dozer, occasionally attempting his own equipment repairs—often, he admits with a grin, resulting in more costly repairs than if he’d hired someone in the first place. And the mounted trophies—all Blake’s—that adorn the walls are a pretty good indicator why country boy Blake, an

avid hunter, was drawn to the four-bedroom house.

“This kinda turned into the place where all the family holidays happen,” he explains. “That’s what attracted me to this particular place. It was built as a huntin’ lodge; it was built to tear it up. That’s why it’s got concrete floors. I’m gonna walk in with muddy boots, go from the front door to the refrigerator and get a beer and back out. You can watch every track.”

These days, as often as not, there’ll be two sets of tracks. Blake and Miranda—also an avid hunter—are not only still together more than a year after confirming their romantic relationship in 2007, the lifelong Texas girl recently bought a 700-acre farm



Blake doesn't display gold records and other industry "stuff" because it "takes up room for my deer heads." (Upper right) His "shelf of shame" features some very small trophies—and an autographed arrow from hunting buddy Ted Nugent. (Right) Blake's mom, Dorothy, decorated her own guest room.

For more on Blake Shelton, go to countryweekly.com

about six miles from Blake's place.

"Her property is completely different than mine," he declares as Miranda walks into the room, looking radiant, even in a T-shirt with hair pulled up. "I've got more of a woodland-type area, and she's got more of an open, classic Oklahoma-lookin' prairie farm."

As Blake chats in the kitchen, Miranda gets a drink of water before heading over to her place to do a little painting. "Blake never helps!" she kids, and the affection between the two is obvious and endearing.

But just because things are going great in Blake's world now, it doesn't mean he hasn't had his share of rough

moments, some long ago and some more recent—like his 2006 divorce after just under three years of marriage. Blake said not long afterwards that it "was horrible" and described 2006 as "the toughest year of my life. No question. There's no contest." The divorce played the biggest part in that, but Blake also changed managers and record producers, so the year was turbulent, to say the least, in several respects.

He's also endured the September 2007 death of his uncle Dempsey Byrd, who was struck by a van as he was walking along a street in Ada. And Blake's dad, Dick, had triple-bypass surgery about a week later.

"Dempsey was my mother's old-

est brother," declares Blake. "He was a guy everybody in town knew and loved, and he walked everywhere. It's strange that he ended up gettin' hit by a car, because it was something people always worried about with him. My mom still has a pretty tough time with it."

Fortunately, Blake had already moved back from Nashville to Oklahoma by then. "I was here," he recalls. "It wasn't the deal where before I'd be in Nashville and I'd be the last one to hear about it. All the sudden, I'm already here with my family. All I gotta do is hop in the truck and in 30 minutes, I was at my mom's house with her."

"Then my dad had bypass surgery and I was able to get in the truck in

BLAKE SHELTON

the mornin' and drive up and see him for two or three hours during the middle of the day and come back here. I just realized that *that* is why I wanted to be here. For things like that."

As difficult as parts of the past two years were, an earlier family crisis when Blake was 14 was by far the hardest thing he's been through. "The toughest time of my life was when my brother Richie got killed in a wreck," declares Blake quietly. "I still haven't gone through anything that really compares to that. These things that I go through as I get older, with Dad and my uncle and different things that have happened in the family and even my divorce . . . that thing that happened with my brother when he was 24 . . . that helped me be able to deal with these other things."

"Don't let it devastate you, because you have people around you who are already devastated and they need a stronger person to be around. A

shoulder, somebody who can still stay focused a little bit.

"Man, I tell you, goin' through that at a young age was the quickest growth spurt of my life. Because I went from being a kid to somebody who looked at life a different way. I still look at life a different way because of that."

Blake candidly admits he's done some



Blake's buddies gave him this piece after a youthful trespassing incident.

praying after those tough times, but maybe a little less than he might have during good times. "I'm the world's worst for waitin' 'til a tragedy's happened before prayin' would cross my mind," he confesses. "And that's the type of thing, when Dempsey got hit by a car,

lookin' back, that was the time you'd want to hit your knees and pray and wish that didn't happen, you know?"

One thing Blake's obviously glad *did* happen is his relationship with Miranda. And one of the big reasons—apart from the total honesty they give each other, personally and musically—is he sees a side of her others don't.

"My favorite thing about our relationship is everybody looks at Miranda as the badass, shoot-'em-up girl who don't take no crap from anybody," he declares. "I feel like I'm the only one who gets to see the other Miranda, the one I feel like is the real Miranda."

"That's when she gets to the house and the door shuts behind her and I'm the only one that gets to know that person . . . and I *love* that. That means everything to me. 'Cause I get to see Miranda basically be a 24-year-old girl who still wants just to be *that* most of the time, and the business has taken a





Whether hunting with a shotgun or a bow (below), Blake is an excellent marksman. He's got a freezer full of venison to prove it.



A Big Night in Tishomingo!

So, you're new in Tishomingo and don't know where the party crowd hangs out? Here's Blake's advice on what it'll take to have a real, pull-out-all-the-stops great time in this southern Oklahoma metropolis.

DINNER

"Last night I went to the only Mexican restaurant here in Tishomingo," recalls Blake. "I bought dinner for eight people, and it was \$72. And everybody had everything they wanted. That included beers, and dinner, appetizers and everything."



NIGHT ON THE TOWN

"If you want to have a night out on the town in Tishomingo," laughs Blake, "you can pretty much count on havin' a night at *your* house and invitin' some people over. Plan on



getting' some hamburger meat and a case of beer and doin' it at your house."

lot of that away from her.

"But Miranda likes Valentine's Day. And Miranda likes presents. She's 150 percent girl. And I think a lot of people probably wouldn't think that about her, because of the songs that she writes and the image she has. But she also loves baby chickens and baby goats and the color pink and everything you could imagine about a girl."

So, have Blake and Miranda looked far enough down the road to decide if they'd like to go beyond baby chickens and baby goats to one day having a baby or two of their own?

"I'm 31 now," he proclaims, "and the thought of havin' children just never

even crosses my mind. We don't ever seriously talk about it. I mean it's definitely been something that we've joked about a couple of times. But she's also joked about *stranglin'* me or smotherin' me to death with a pillow while I'm asleep! So it's just not somethin' I think is realistic

"Miranda just seems like somebody I'm meant to be with. . . . I can't imagine her not being part of my life."

right now to even talk about."

The same can be said of possible matrimony.

"I'm definitely gun-shy about it," admits Blake. "And she knows that. I'm not in any hurry to get married again. She says she's not in a hurry to get mar-

ried. For once I just want to enjoy bein' comfortable with where things are in my life and how they're flowin' along right now. I don't want to treat this as a step. I want to treat it for what it is. That means I want to just *be* that for a while."

But just because marriage isn't in the cards any time soon, that doesn't mean Blake doesn't love Miranda. He obviously does.

"Miranda just seems like somebody I'm meant to be with," he proclaims. "And I guess because I'm that comfortable with it, I don't sit around and think about what's gonna happen 30 years from now. I just know I can't imagine her not being part of my life." **CW**