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BLAKE SHELTON

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You Gotta Laugh

Blake Shelton opens up about drinkin', his high school escapades and good times with girlfriend Miranda Lambert.

Story by **David Scarlett**

WHEN BLAKE SHELTON said he was “no choir-boy” before leading a group of his fellow Oklahoma singers to participate in NBC’s recent *Clash of the Choirs* competition in New York, he wasn’t kidding. Not only did he have no choir training or experience of any kind, Blake didn’t know if his Ada, Okla., high school even *had* a choir when he was there! Plus, he’s always had a very un-choirboylike good-time streak that’s resulted in some serious laughs.



Need proof?

How about the time he and a buddy found a road-kill deer and propped it up behind the steering wheel of a friend's truck in the high school parking lot? Or the time Blake helped "relocate" some outdoor holiday decorations from the yard of one home to the yard of another—across town? He's quick to say with a chuckle, "We didn't actually *steal* anything, we just *moved* it."

When he was in school, Blake says if he didn't get his backside in gear and move it home when he was supposed to be on the receiving end of a little corporal punishment. And he freely admits that he's punished *himself* a few times acting like the *if I have one, I'll have thirteen* character in his "The More I Drink" video. "You gotta laugh at yourself, because alcohol makes you do funny things," he chuckles.

But, whether he likes it or not—and truck-driving deer notwithstanding—the third-place finish of his choir in the New York competition, and the sweat and anxiety he put into directing his fellow Okies, have



(Above) Blake and host Maria Menounos with the Oklahoma choir, which went up against groups led by Patti LaBelle and Nick Lachey (shown here with Blake and Maria).

forever linked him with the world of choirs. Bring on the choirboy jokes if you must, Blake's proud of what his singers achieved—and grateful to the many voting country fans who helped.

"You are nervous, excited and proud, and it was a different type of emotion than I've ever felt about music before," he declares. "But I also felt a lot of confidence because I knew how great those Okie choir

members were and I knew as long as they were together, they'd keep their confidence up and they wouldn't be getting nervous.

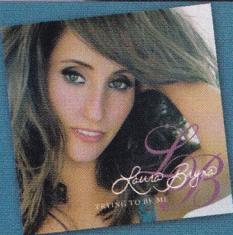
"And that's exactly what happened. A couple of singers in that group stepped out there like they've been doing it for 20 years on television. I was thrilled about that. And I think we had the entire country music fan base at least paying attention and a good many of them voting as many times as

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Blake and Miranda
at the CMA Awards
in November

BLAKE SHELTON

they could." And it's a safe bet that while he was in New York shooting *Clash*, his support team—girlfriend Miranda Lambert and her mother, along with Blake's mother and sister—did their share of voting, too. "Miranda didn't give me any particular pointers or suggestions," reveals Blake, "but she got as wrapped up in the thing as I did."

Seems some other television execs have done the same. "Since I've done the *Clash*, we've had a few other offers come in," he explains. "And it definitely has opened my eyes up to what all is out there—like a lot of other television and things outside of the country music world, things I may want to do in the future. It's got the wheels turning in my head on what else might be out there for me."

But for now, the most important thing on Blake's career plate is his new single, "Home," a song written and previously recorded by pop artist Michael Bublé. "Miranda is always putting music on my iPod for me," reveals Blake. "And I listened to it and fell in love with it. The next thing I knew I was walking around singing it all the time and I ended up learning it and performing it a few times."

Blake eventually decided to record the song, and he and his label are so excited about it they've decided to relaunch his latest CD, *Pure BS*, in May—with "Home" as a cut on the album.

While it might appear that Blake has been pretty single-minded about his career lately, he's built in some R&R time



BLAKE'S 2 HOMES

He's got two songs with the same title!

It's not often an artist is associated with two totally different songs with the same title, but that's the position Blake is in. One of the tunes his choir performed on *Clash of the Choirs* is a very soulful song called "Home," by Marc Broussard.

Which means when Blake, who's still doing some work with his choir, refers to the song "Home" when talking to his management team and others, he's got to specify whether it's the choir's song or his new single.

for himself and Miranda—who's now the owner of a farm a mere six miles away from Blake's in Tishomingo. Which, of course, makes Miranda, a lifelong Texan, an Okie! At least for now. "My dad bought Miranda a T-shirt for Christmas that says *OU SOONERS* on the front and he had her last name printed on the back," laughs Blake. "We all got a kick out of that."

It's obvious Blake's and Miranda's families get along great together. In fact, they all recently took a trip to Mexico, just to relax and recharge the batteries for 2008. "Even though I live near them now, there's just always too much going on for me to spend much time with my family," confesses Blake.



"People have ways of finding you and getting in touch with you. So, we decided to get the hell out of town and tell everybody our cellphones don't work in Mexico and let it all go for a few days and just hang out with the family. It was pretty cool."

But was it as cool as hearing Miranda wail on a karaoke Britney Spears tune?

"Right before Christmas, we went to a party in Nashville," Blake recalls with a grin, "and she blew me away singing '... Baby One More Time'—

it was unbelievable.

"If you ever see Miranda in a karaoke bar, put in Britney Spears for her—she'll nail it!" **CW**

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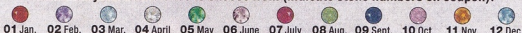


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