

# Growing Pains

Blake Shelton  
reflects on  
lessons learned  
about the  
cost of fame

In the past year Blake Shelton has learned plenty about the music business and stardom. The Oklahoma native – whose first hit, “Austin,” stayed atop the charts for five weeks – realized he’s no expert at picking hit songs. “Believe it or not, I thought ‘Austin’ was just a pretty good song,” admits Blake with a laugh. “I had no idea it’d be that big of a record. I thought the biggest hit on that album was ‘All Over Me,’ ” he says of his second hit, which only made it to the Top 20. “How wrong can you be?”

With a No. 1 mega-hit and two Top 20s under his belt, Blake clearly hasn’t been all *that* wrong. And he hopes to further that success with the release of his new single, “The Baby.”

But while learning to select hit tunes has been relatively painless, other lessons haven’t been so easy. After hitting it big, the price of fame and the rigors of the business threw Blake for a loop.

During a whirlwind of shows, interviews and thousands of road miles – with barely enough time to breathe – Blake admits he lost sight of the people and things that mattered.

“I was just so excited and overwhelmed,” he recalls. “I never wanted to go to sleep and I didn’t want to go home. All you want to do is watch CMT or listen to the radio and see if

**Story by Wendy Newcomer**









# Blake Shelton

they're saying anything about you. It's an odd state to be in all of a sudden. I still feel like I pushed away the people who were closest to me."

One of those people was his girlfriend of five years, Kaynette. The couple split last year just as Blake's star began to rise. Though they later reconciled, Blake admits the turmoil was a wake-up call.

"You go from pushing somebody out of your life, to coming to a screaming halt, saying, 'This is crazy. This is the person I love and had

been planning to spend the rest of my life with. And now suddenly I don't speak to her anymore.' That took some rebuilding – and some hard work on my behalf to ever get her to trust me again.

"I think I've just now gotten back to the person I was before," he continues. "That's a guy who, at 26, is still trying to figure out who he is in life. I look at the last year and a half as a blank spot in my life span, where I didn't accomplish *anything* personally. Now I feel like I know what my priorities are and who I want to surround myself with."

Kaynette is one of his priorities – and she now travels with Blake and organizes his "meet and greets" with radio stations and fans, as well as his in-store appearances.

"That has saved our relationship," declares Blake. "If you go from not seeing somebody for three weeks to seeing them every day, you don't forget what it is about that person that made you want to be with them to begin

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with. I'm not going to lie to you – there's a lot of temptation out there on the road. When you haven't seen somebody for a month, or you're lonely, you start thinking 'Man, why am I holding out for this person?'

"Spending time with each other saves it because you never lose sight of why you're with them. I know that sounds pretty matter-of-fact, but that's just how I am. I need Kaynette with me all the time – because I love to be around her. She's my best friend."

Are there wedding plans in their future? "That's certainly going to happen," he confirms, "but I guess there's not a race to make sure it gets done. As far as I know, it's not something she's in a race to do either ... but," he quickly adds with a laugh, "I could be *way* wrong about that. You might have to ask her!"

For now, Blake's focusing on his new



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**Family – mom Dorothy, dad Dick and sister Endy (above) – remains a big priority in Blake's life.**

album, due in February. "Music is still my priority," he says. "I'm proud of my first album, but I really think we've beat it with this one. And that's hard for me to say because I was so close to that first record."

What *won't* you hear on Blake's new album? "Two-and-a-half-minute up-tempo love songs," he declares with a smile. "You're going to hear more story and lifestyle songs than ones about relationships. There'll be songs about heartache and hardworking country people."

Blake has a personal connection with "The Baby" – an emotional tune about the bond between a mother and the youngest child in the family.

"I am the baby of my family," he explains. "My mom was always babying me. I can remember my sister getting mad because she'd do something and then I'd do the same thing but wouldn't get in nearly as much trouble for it. I always had plenty of attention – I guess it made me want more and more. Maybe that's what edged me on into being an entertainer."

As "The Baby" begins to climb the charts, Blake is happily adjusting to life as a star – and appreciating the people who really matter.

"The other priority in my life is my family," he says softly. "Just staying in touch with them and calling them every day – or trying to find ways to get them to Nashville to see me, or me going to Oklahoma to see them. I don't ever want to feel like I didn't spend enough time with them."

"I would hate to think that I was too busy. And I'd never want to say, 'I have a good offer and I'm going to make X amount of dollars, so I'm not coming home for Thanksgiving, Mom.'"

After all, the baby of the family would *never* say that.



**Someday, he says, he'll start a family of his own with girlfriend Kaynette.**

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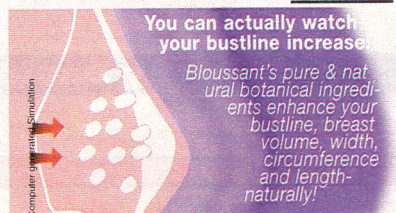
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