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46TH ACM AWARDS
SUNDAY, APRIL 3RD
8 PM ET/PT CBS

BEAUTY & THE BLAKE

Reba brings Blake Shelton
along as co-host for the
46th ACM Awards

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BEAUTY & THE BLAKE

Country's unpredictable Blake Shelton joins ACM leading lady Reba McEntire to host the *46th ACM Awards*

by Craig Shelburne

Reba McEntire is an undisputed queen of country music, but this year in Las Vegas, she's been dealt a wild card. That's because Blake Shelton is on deck to co-host the *46th Annual Academy of Country Music Awards* with McEntire, who has served as the master of ceremonies for 13 years. In his new role, Shelton will make history as the 50th host of the ACM Awards.

"I've been hearing more about it on the radio, with people talking about the co-hosting gig, and it wasn't until then that I started getting nervous," Shelton admits. "It's one thing to be funny when you're sitting in a restaurant with somebody, but it's another thing whenever people expect it and you end up getting a gig because of it. I guess the biggest preparation for me, believe it or not, is getting plenty of rest and trying not to wake up at the bottom of a bottle of Bacardi from the night before, like I have for the last 10 years!"

"We play Vegas during the year doing concerts but Vegas during the ACMs is different," says McEntire.

"Everyone is there, looking for their buddies to hang with, to go out to eat with after the rehearsals, to party with until the wee hours of the mornings. It doesn't happen at other awards shows like it does in Vegas. It's special."

McEntire earned her first pair of ACM nominations in the early 1980s as Top New Female Vocalist. She claimed her first of seven awards as Top Female Vocalist for her 1984 achievements – and on the strength of her fiery No. 1 hit, "Turn on the Radio," she landed in the category this year as well. In addition to claiming the 1994 Entertainer of the Year award, McEntire was also the first recipient of the



Cliff Lipson





BLAKE SHELTON AND
MIRANDA LAMBERT

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—Blake Shelton

Academy of Country Music/The Home Depot Humanitarian Award for her outstanding philanthropic work. Two of her videos – “Whoever’s in New England” and “Is There Life Out There” – have also been recognized with ACM awards. In addition, she is one of the stellar honorees at this year’s ACM television special, *Girl’s Night Out: Superstar Women of Country*.

Yet with so much experience, McEntire reveals that, just before she steps in front of the camera, her thoughts go something like this: “Lord, please let me get to the microphone stand in one piece....”

Asked what goes through his mind prior a live TV appearance, Shelton replies, “Everything. Hell, man, everything. ‘Do I look stupid? Am I on key? Am I singing the right words? I wonder what my hair’s doing.’ Every stupid thought I could have, they rush through my head. It hasn’t been until the last two or three times I’ve been on television that I’ve felt confident. The biggest thing that I used to worry about was how many people were going, ‘Man, he don’t deserve to be on television.’ So lately, I’ve relaxed a little bit more to be comfortable with myself – basically to be myself – when I get on television. That’s been the hardest thing for me, but I think I’m getting better at that.”



“I told Blake not to worry about a thing, that I’ll handle everything,” says McEntire, who issued a new album, *All the Women I Am*, in 2010. “That’ll drive him crazy. He’ll be writing up a storm, thinking up things to do and say. It’ll be a blast!”

This year’s leading nominee, Miranda Lambert, gives high praise to McEntire’s skill as a host. “I think she brings a great personality and some comic relief, definitely. She’s very, very poised,” Lambert says. “She knows how to handle herself on stage. If anything goes wrong with the prompter, she’s such a pro about ad-libbing and going with it. She’s co-hosting with my fiancé this year, so good luck to her!”

“She’s super woman, she really is,” says Shelton, who released his first career compilation, *Loaded: The Best of Blake Shelton*, in 2010. “I mean, whether you’re sitting down eating dinner with her, or if she’s hosting an awards show for 15 million viewers at home, she is just Reba, all the time. I’ve

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—REBA

been around her enough to know there are not two different Rebas. There's one Reba and she's the same one you see and hear on the radio and see on TV, and she's the same one you sit and have a conversation with when it's just the two of you. She's amazing, she brings charisma, she's funny, she's beautiful, she's everything. Everything that I'm not!”

Along with having a comic foil, McEntire says that Shelton will offer “personality, good looks and off-the-cuff statements that'll make me give him that look that I give him a lot.” She also notes that she hopes to bring “patience, experience and to be a good partner to Blake as co-host.”

Of course, Shelton is already a proven team player. Although he was a two-time nominee as top new male vocalist early in his career, Shelton won his first ACM Award in the vocal event category for “Hillbilly Bone,” a colorful collaboration with Trace Adkins. In addition, Shelton's chemistry with McEntire was evident when the two Oklahoma natives revealed the ACM nominees on CBS' *The Early Show* in 2010. Their camaraderie quickly attracted attention.

“Last year Reba and Blake read our nominations and they were just magic together, incredibly funny,” says Bob Romeo, CEO of the Academy. “When Reba suggested inviting Blake to join her, the Academy could not have been more pleased. We know the viewers will be blown away by their comic chemistry.”

Shelton, who also will compete for Top Male Vocalist and Video of the Year, says, “I think they want to 'edge it up' a little bit and walk that line and maybe almost offend people, just to get people to pay attention. I think they realized that I'm the one guy in country music who is completely willing to make an ass of himself and never look back, you know?” Laughing, he adds, “I think when they looked around the business, they said, 'This guy is willing to go down in flames and laugh about it. So let's bring him in and see what happens.'”

Asked what he hopes fans will take away from his first time as a host, Shelton pauses a moment, then replies, “I think I'm looking forward to the end, when somebody walks up and tells me I did a good job. Hopefully that will happen!”

Watch Reba and Blake at the 46th ACM Awards April 3rd at 8PM live ET/delayed PT on CBS Television Network