



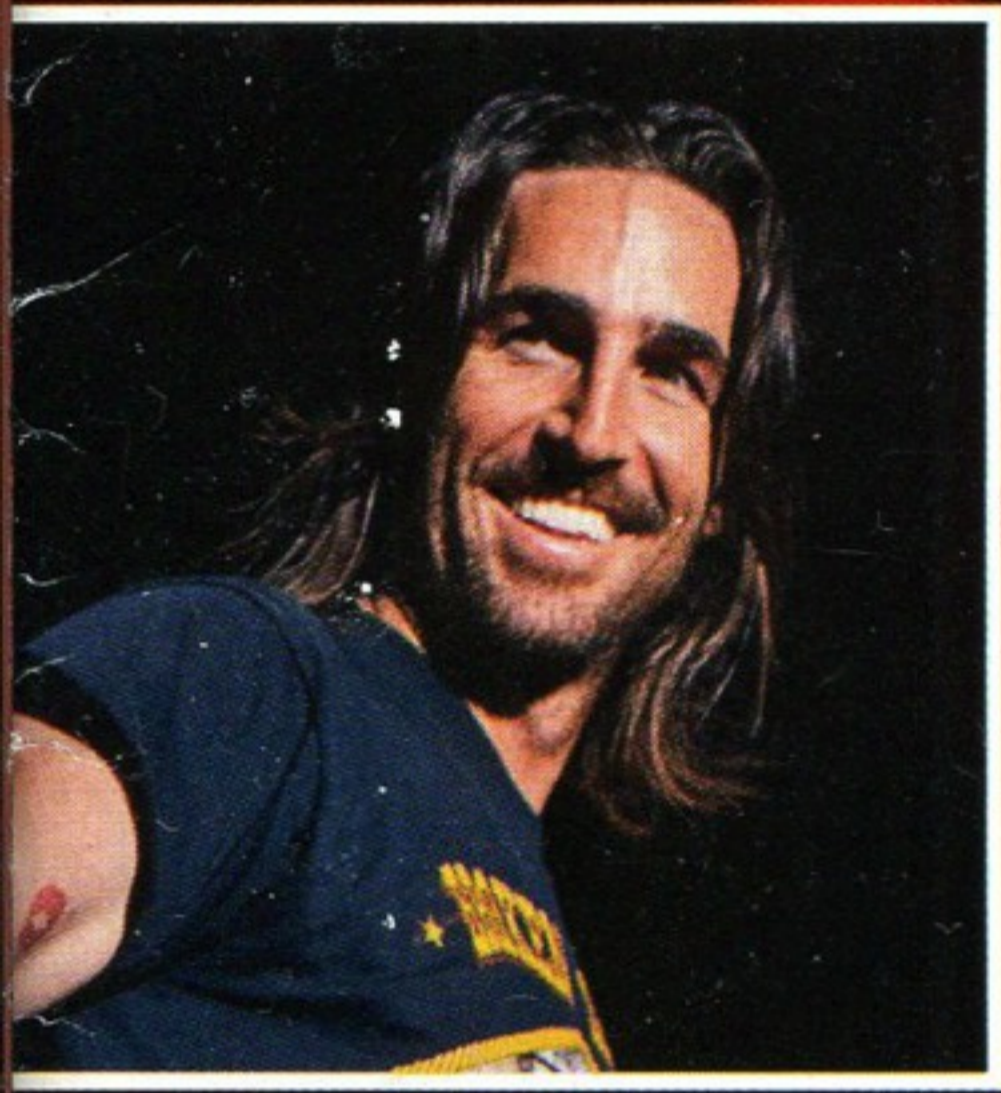
**CARRIE UNDERWOOD**  
What makes her happy?



**WILLIE NELSON**  
duets with country's ladies

# COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST  
OCTOBER 7, 2013

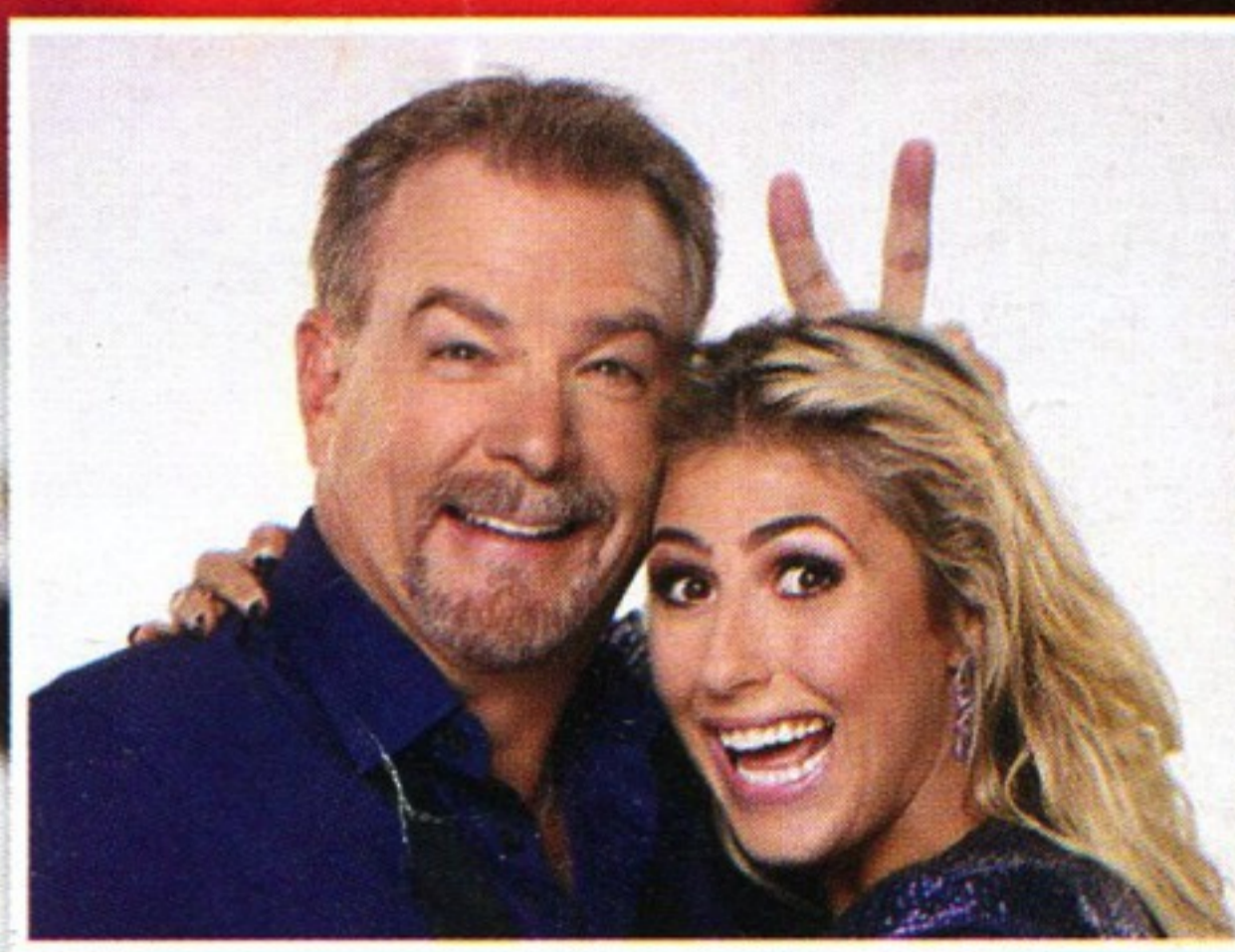


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WITH A THREE-SEASON WINNING STREAK OF *THE VOICE* UNDER HIS BELT AND A FIFTH SEASON ALREADY IN PROGRESS, **BLAKE SHELTON** IS . . .

# THE PEOPLE'S COACH

STORY BY JON FREEMAN

**SO MUCH CAN HAPPEN IN A YEAR.** A mere 11 months ago, a genuinely shocked Blake Shelton was standing onstage at a rare loss for words after his name was announced as the new CMA Entertainer of the Year. Things only sped up from there: His latest album, *Based on a True Story . . .*, spawned hit singles like “Sure Be Cool If You Did” and “Boys ’Round Here,” before being certified platinum and nominated for Album of the Year at the upcoming CMA Awards. That’s just the tip of this sharp, Oklahoma-born iceberg.

Now country fans and Americans of all stripes can rejoice over the return of one of the highest-profile side gigs in the entertainment business. Blake is settling back in his chair as a coach on the fifth season of NBC’s eminently watchable singing competition *The Voice*. Along with his frenemy Adam Levine, original coaches Cee Lo Green and Christina Aguilera make their return after a fourth season hiatus. While Blake and Adam are undoubtedly the show’s quip-ready alpha dogs, Blake has also enjoyed a great rapport with the zany Cee Lo and glamorous Christina. “They helped make the show what it is,” Blake tells *Country Weekly*. “We are a family and I’m glad to have us all back together.”

But the big question on everyone’s minds, of course, is can Blake guide his team to victory and clinch a remarkable fourth consecutive win? “My prediction for Season 5 is Team Blake dominating once again,” says Blake. It must be a daunting task for his fellow coaches.

Danielle Bradbery, the Team Blake member who emerged from the fourth season as the show’s youngest champion, chalks up part of Blake’s success to his gentle approach. “He knew I was shy and I think his goal with me was just getting me out of my shell and just going onstage and having fun,” explains Danielle, whose single “Heart of

For the win: Blake with Season 4 champion Danielle Bradbery





## BLAKE SHELTON CONTINUED

Dixie" is out now. "He always told me, 'Try to connect with the audience. Just have fun, and if you need to focus on [some]body and you can't find anybody, look at me when you're singing.' I actually used that advice when I was singing a couple of songs. He believed in me and that was a big part of it."

That belief, says Danielle, was instrumental in giving her the confidence she needed to win. "I thought to myself, 'Well, Blake Shelton [is] telling me this, so it must mean something,'" she recalls. "It just makes me want to go out there and make him proud." Danielle says the show was a learning experience and introduced her to many new friends. "Being the youngest, I looked up to everybody like brothers and sisters by the end of the competition," she notes.

Teenager Savannah Berry was a member of Team Blake in Season 4 with Danielle and agrees that his relaxed manner helped contestants feel at ease. "He was just always really laid-back and I really appreciated that he was so down-to-earth with everyone," she recalls. "He was never really uptight, and just wanted you to be comfortable. It's easier to be who you are as an artist when you're with someone like that."

Season 3 champ Cassadee Pope initially started out as

Chair fight: Blake (far right) and fellow coaches (from left) Adam Levine, Cee Lo Green and Christina Aguilera spin their seats during the blind auditions.



a rocker with Team Blake, but crossed the gulf to country during her run. Though it's out of his hands now, Blake still checks in on Cassadee. "He's great. He keeps in touch and makes sure everything is running smoothly," praises Cassadee. "He's a good friend and he helps out any way he can." For Blake, it's like being a happy big brother. "It makes me incredibly proud to see how well all the previous team members are doing," he notes, "but to watch Gwen Sebastian, Cassadee and Danielle with music and albums out right now makes it especially gratifying to me personally."

Blake recently brought Cassadee onstage at his Indianapolis concert to perform her single "Wasting All These Tears." "It was so funny the way he introduced me," she says. "He was talking about me and the band started the song and he started singing it, and he stopped himself and said, 'You know what? I think it would be cooler if Cas-







# Gettin' Crazy

**Blake treats fans to a party experience on his latest concert tour.**

NOT LONG AFTER Blake Shelton announced his Ten Times Crazier Tour, reporters asked the always witty singer what might be different about this particular road show. Blake answered that his shows have always been pretty crazy, before adding with a smile, "This one will be 10 times crazier."

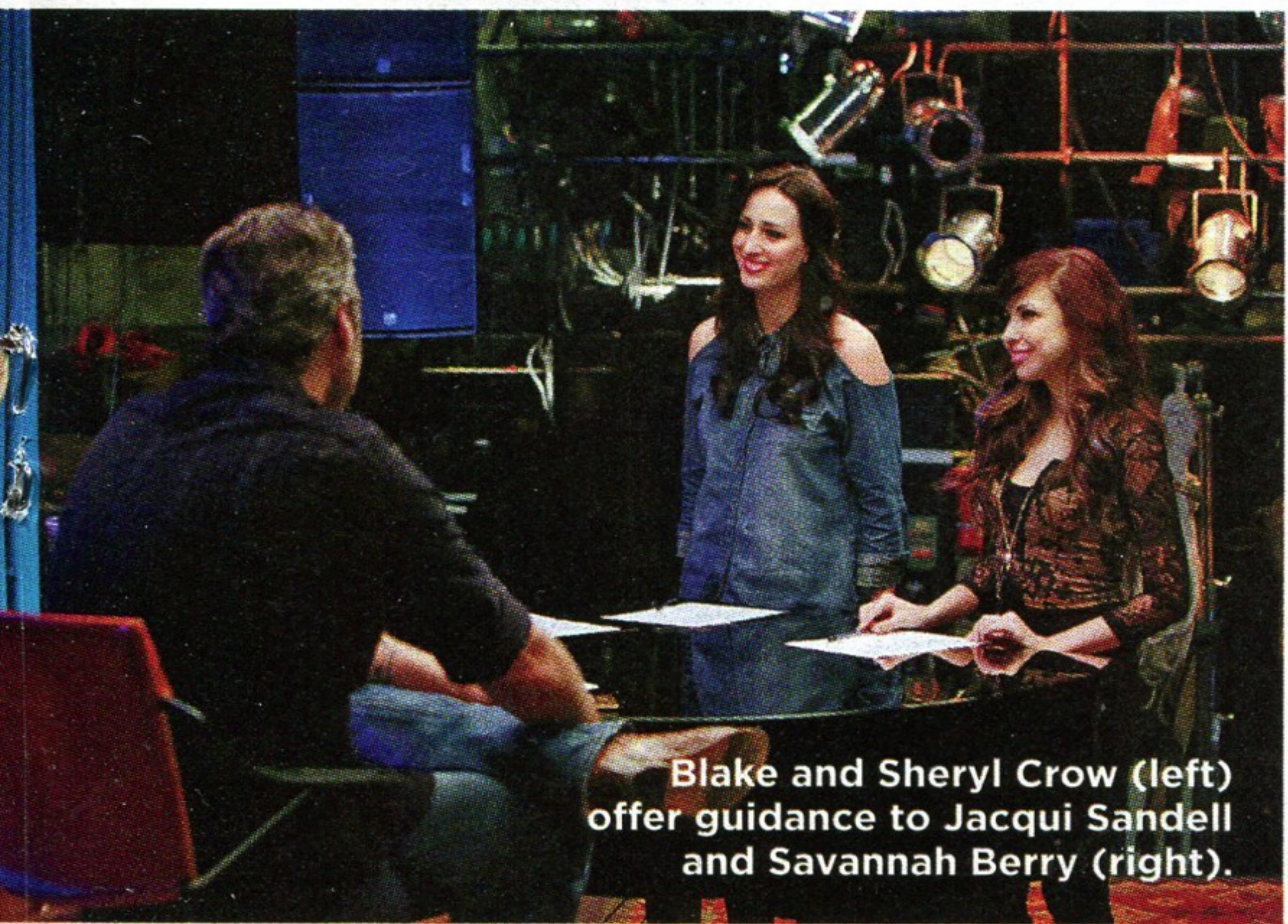
That seemed the obvious retort, but the tour has proven that Blake wasn't kidding or exaggerating. At his recent stop at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, Blake regaled the audience with funny anecdotes about his career and the TV series that brought him to nationwide attention, *The Voice*. He also poked a little self-deprecating fun at his earlier image, mainly the long mullet he sported for years. As he started to perform "Some Beach," Blake donned a cowboy hat with a waterfall of hair attached to the back, which had the audience rolling. Another crowd-pleasing moment came when Blake brought out the inimitable Trace Adkins to reprise their hit duet, "Hillbilly Bone."

The good times kept on rocking with Blake's recent hit "Boys 'Round Here," the second single from his album *Based on a True Story . . .*, but Blake also demonstrated a serious, plaintive side on "Over You," a song he co-wrote about the death of his older brother. Blake told the crowd that he asked his wife, Miranda Lambert, to record the song because he did not think he could sing it night after night in concert. He made it through on this special evening, though.

Said Blake in closing the emotional Music City show: "I'll never forget this night for the rest of my life."



(From far left) Blake and Adam's bromance still smolders; Blake gets a little support from Christina, with whom he recorded the duet "Just a Fool"; hugging it out with Cee Lo; with Season 3 winner Cassadee, whose debut album, *Frame by Frame*, is out now.



Blake and Sheryl Crow (left) offer guidance to Jacquie Sandell and Savannah Berry (right).

PHOTOS ON THE VOICE SET BY TRAE PATTON/NBC; BLAKE & CHRISTINA BY NORMAN SCOTT/STARTRAKSPHOTO.COM; BLAKE & CEE LO BY FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES



# THE ENTERTAINER

BLAKE'S  
TOP 5 VOICE  
COLLABORATIONS

While Blake Shelton's one-liners on *The Voice* may get the lion's share of the attention, it's his performances, both with his fellow coaches and his team members, where he truly shines. Here are five of our favorites.



**"JUST A FOOL"**  
with **CHRISTINA AGUILERA**

Blake made good on his promise to sing with the pop princess on Christina's *Lotus* album, and the pair performed their duet live during Season 3.



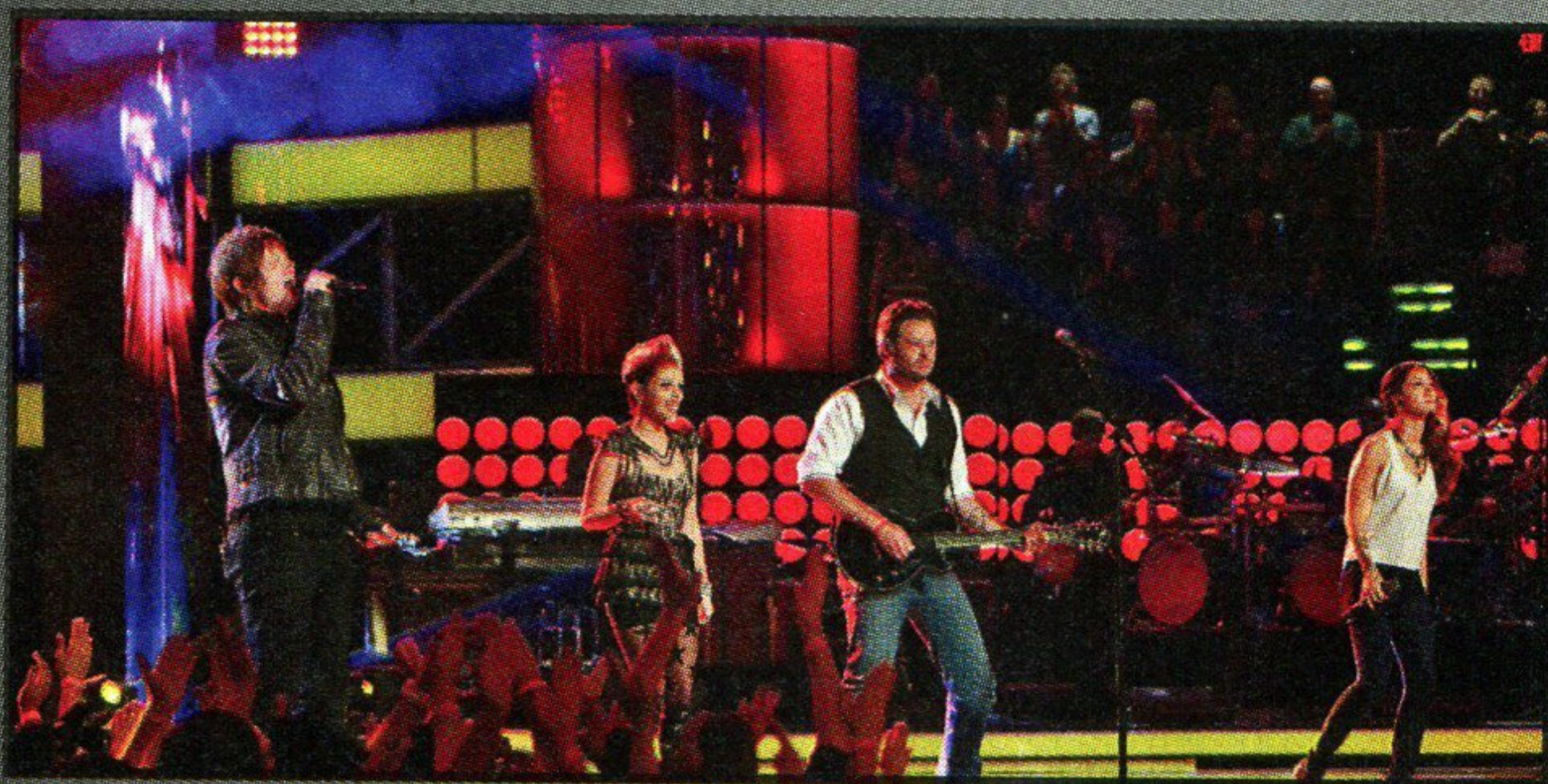
**"OVER YOU"** with **MIRANDA LAMBERT**

Keep the tissues handy. Husband and wife paid tribute to the victims of the Oklahoma tornadoes with this Season 4 tearjerker.



**"SOUL MAN"**  
with **JERMAINE PAUL**

The country boy showed off his soulful side on this barnburner collaboration with Season 2 winner Jermaine. Smokin'!



**"LIFE IS A HIGHWAY"**  
with **TEAM BLAKE, SEASON 4**

Ever the leader, Blake started this 1992 song by one-hit wonder Tom Cochrane, and his Team Blake singers duly followed.



**"TIMBER, I'M FALLING IN LOVE"**  
with **DANIELLE BRADBERRY**

Patty Loveless would be proud of this towering take on her hit, which Blake owned with Season 4 champ Danielle.

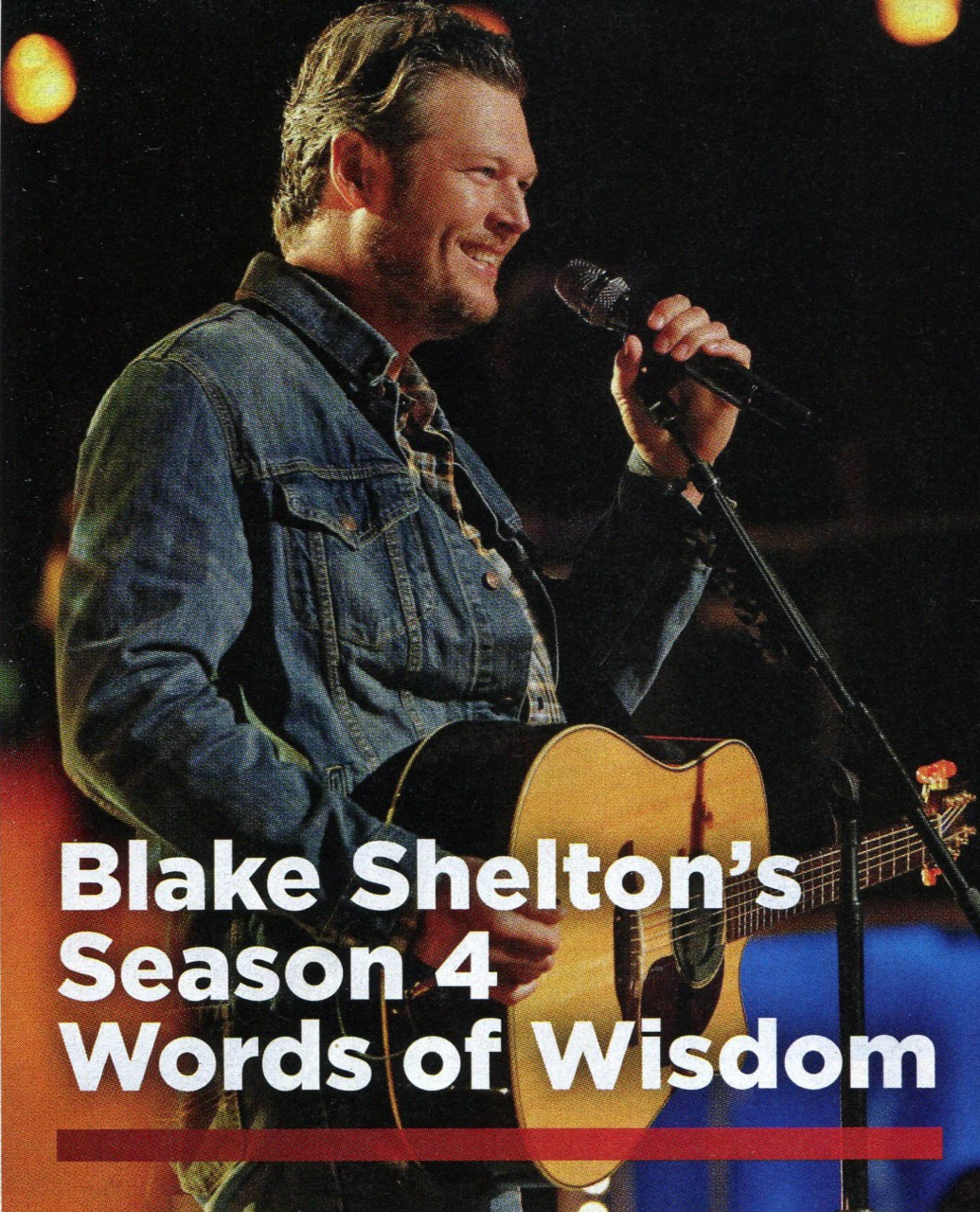


**HONORABLE MENTION**

**"TIME OF YOUR LIFE"**  
with **CHRISTINA, CEE LO AND ADAM**

The original four marked the exit (albeit a temporary one) of Christina and Cee Lo with this sweet performance of the Green Day ballad.





# Blake Shelton's Season 4 Words of Wisdom

- ▶ “Every year I learn more and more from these kids on the show.”
- ▶ “Oh, I’m screwed.”
- ▶ “This is the best season of *The Voice* that we’ve had so far.”
- ▶ “I know Usher really wants to win but . . . I don’t think he’s going to do it.”
- ▶ “You don’t have any weaknesses in your singing. How is that possible?”
- ▶ “Kiss my ass, Adam.”
- ▶ “When I hit that button, it’s the same as when I crank up the volume in my truck.”
- ▶ “Let me get my little thing in here, because I’m screwed.”
- ▶ “By the way, I love your dimples. I have those, too. I think I do.”
- ▶ “My hips don’t lie.”
- ▶ “People are going to buy the crap out of what you just did.”

## BLAKE SHELTON CONTINUED

sadee sang this herself? And then they had me walk onstage. I didn’t expect the crowd reaction!”

Like the other contestants, just being on the show helped Cassadee feel comfortable in the spotlight. “It gave me a big boost of confidence, and I have my fair share of insecurities like everybody,” she says, “but that show helped me feel a little more secure about myself and my voice. It made me feel like I didn’t need to be something I’m not to be successful—it’s working out just by being myself.”

Then, sometimes, joining Team Blake yields excellent future opportunities, as is the case with singer Gwen Sebastian. Gwen originally worked with Blake in Season 2, and though she didn’t win, she now serves as a backing vocalist in his touring band in addition to her solo career. She marvels at his ability to juggle so much at once and still keep his cool. “Now that he’s got so much going on, I look up to him even more,” she says. “Because he’s gotta be so tired but you would never know it. He’s still a down-to-earth guy—truly loves what he does, truly loves country music. His band is one big happy family. That all boils down to the boss. He wants to make sure everybody is taken care of.”



Gwen Sebastian and Blake

even if he couldn’t quite express it at the time. He may be similarly tongue-tied this year, as he’s nominated again in the prestigious category for the Nov. 6 CMA Awards.

“It means a lot to me, because everything I do I try to represent country,” Blake told *Country Weekly* after last year’s win. “Country music is what I live and die by. *The Voice* will come and go and a lot of things will come and go, but country music will always be the thing that I center my life and career around.” **CW**

Additional reporting by Bob Paxman and Joseph Hudak