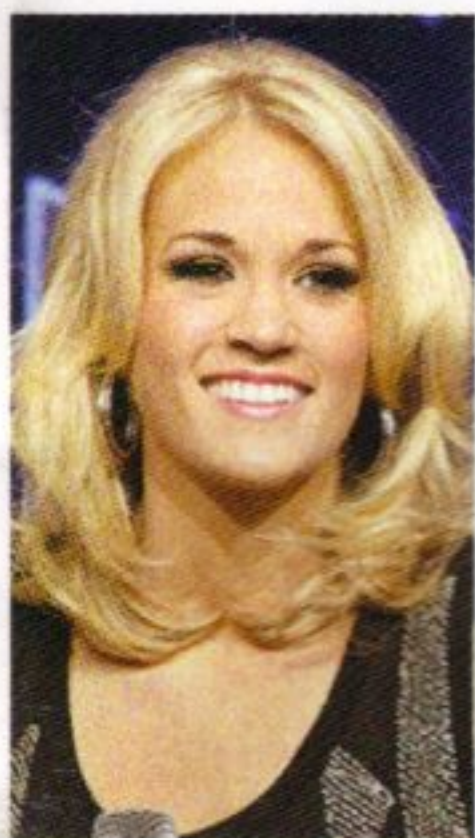




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COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS
MARCH 8, 2010



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parties with the Queen in Miami

RASCAL FLATTS
celebrates

10

years of success

WIN
BLAKE'S
NEW ALBUM

see details inside

THE JUDDS

THEY'RE BACK!

Blake Shelton

Breaking Tradition

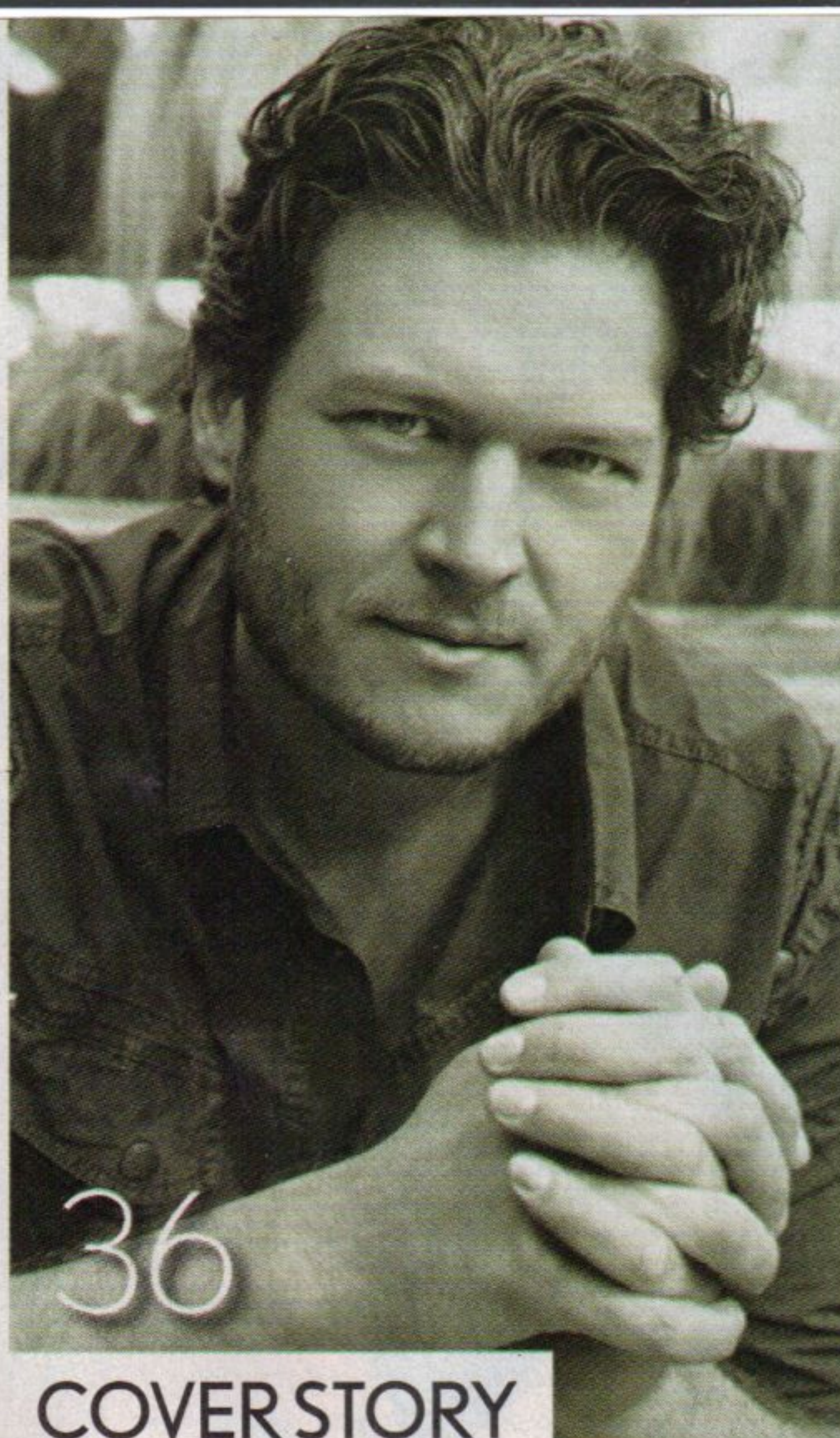
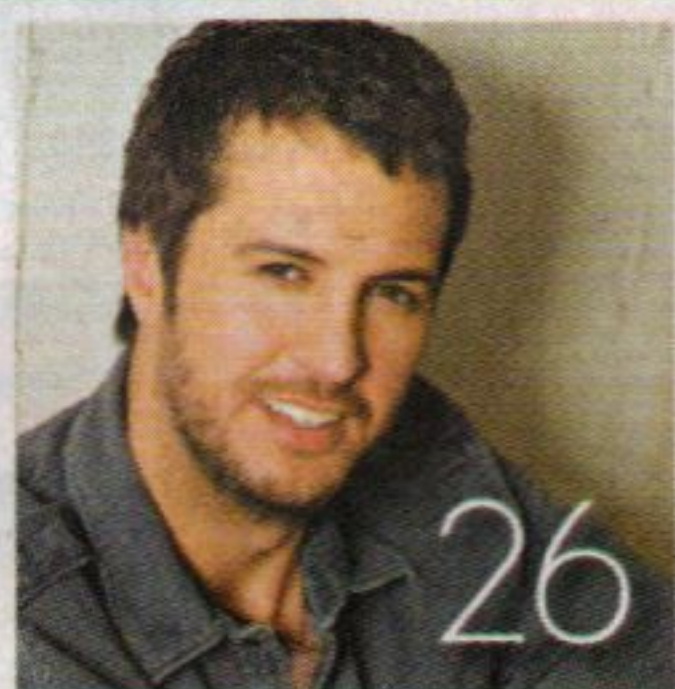
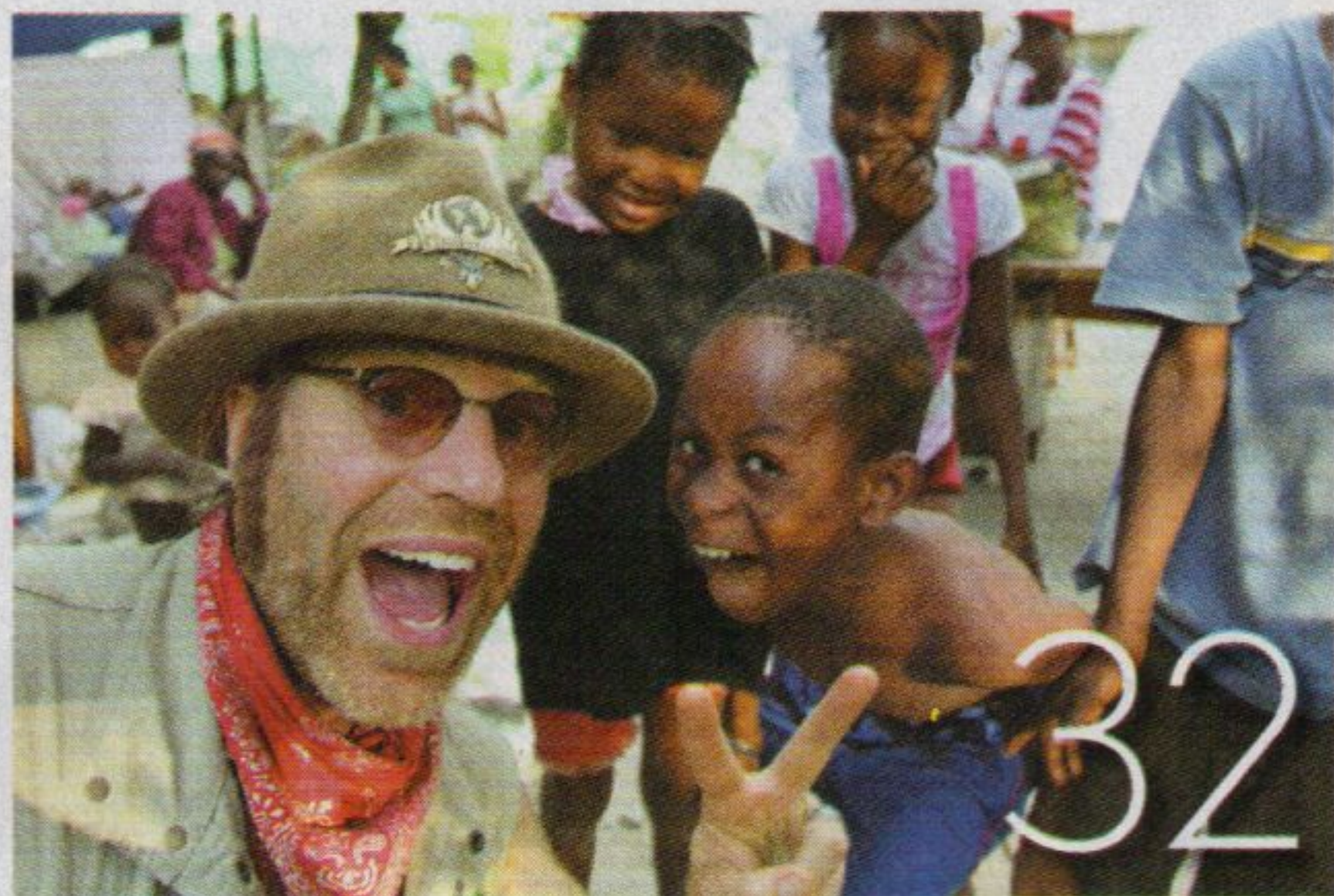
- How Miranda influences his life
- The real story behind "Hillbilly Bone"
- Why he is offending some fans

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CONTENTS



COVER STORY

Blake Shelton

Blake Shelton's big ol' Oklahoma country-boy image is authentic, but that doesn't mean there isn't another side to him. Blake recently sat down with CW to talk Twitter, Miranda Lambert and six-packs... and, of course, music.

DEPARTMENTS

Hot Shots	2
Letters	7
Scoop	8
The Hot List	12
The Buzz	14
Kix's Corner	16
Story Behind the Song	17
Star Style	20
Questions With...	22
What's Online	52
Reviews	54
Stars Up Close	56
Flashback	58
Charts	60
Puzzle	62
The Last Word	64

FEATURES

- 26 Luke Bryan**
Luke's recent No. 1 single marked a career milestone—so he and a host of music-biz buddies celebrated in style.
- 28 Rascal Flatts**
The megapopular trio honors the writers whose words and melodies have formed the foundation of the Rascal Flatts sound.
- 31 Carrie Underwood**
Here's how Carrie spent Super Bowl Sunday.
- 32 Big Kenny Alphin**
Kenny opens up about his recent relief efforts in Haiti and the song he wrote that inspired his mission of mercy.
- 42 Stars and Their Stuff**
We get nosy with some of your favorite country artists about the stuff they're passionate about collecting—not counting awards, that is.
- 46 Reba McEntire**
Fun moments from Reba's career are captured in photographs.
- 48 Birdhouse Benefit**
Stars including Brad Paisley and Rascal Flatts let their imaginations take flight as they designed birdhouses that will raise funds to help music students in Nashville.

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SAME AS HE EVER WAS

Blake Shelton hasn't changed, but he has become more comfortable with who he is and where he's going.

STORY BY KEN TUCKER

You might not peg good ol' Oklahoma boy Blake Shelton as an agent of change, but he is. Not only has he become one of country music's most prolific (and some might say controversial) Twitter users—he has 75,000-plus followers—he has just broken from tradition and released a value-priced six-song album, *Hillbilly Bone*.

The album includes his current duet with Trace Adkins, also titled "Hillbilly Bone," and five other tracks that you'll likely never hear on the radio. Why? Because when the

Trace duet runs its course sometime in the next few months, there will be yet another "Six Pak" release from Blake this summer. And if things go as planned, there will be another before year's end. Huh?

"People may have trouble paying \$16 or whatever it is at Walmart for an album when they can go home and hop on the Internet and buy the song they wanted anyway [for less]," Blake explains. "But maybe if they walk down that aisle and see an album for six dollars and they've got five dollars and change in their pocket, maybe they'll go ahead and grab that."

Blake is optimistic about this way of doing things because it will put more music in the hands of his fans more quickly. "If this works and we time it right, we might put three of these out a year," he says. "That's 18 new songs. That's why it's appealing to me. It's easy to lose interest in an artist when he only puts out an album every two

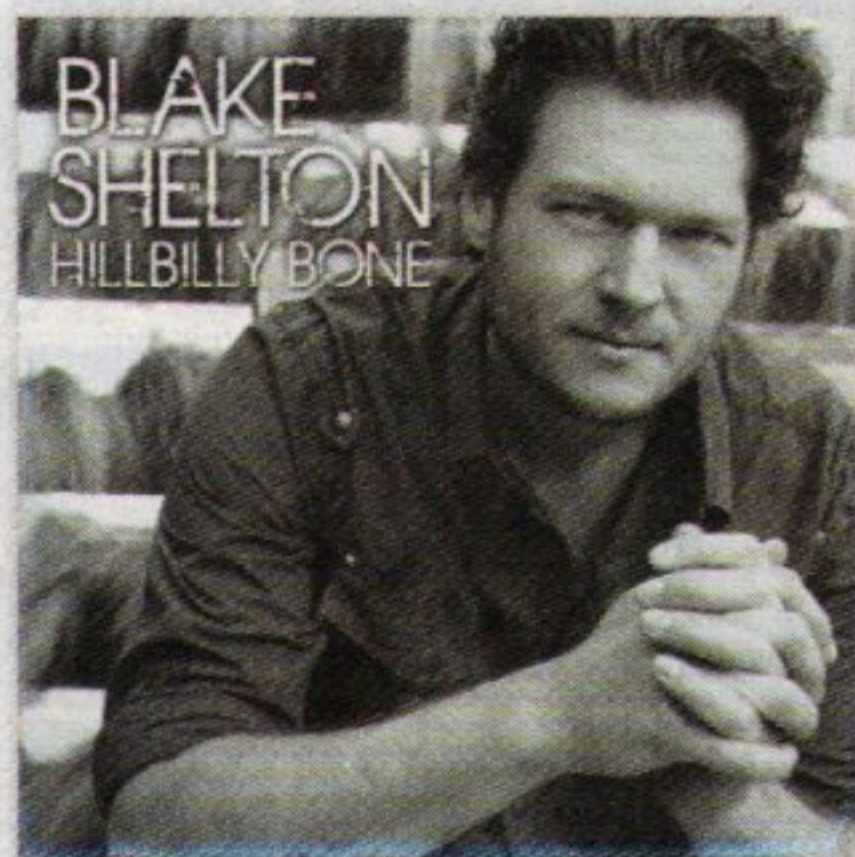
years. This keeps my fans excited and they're getting the albums for a bargain price and we're constantly able to give them something new."

But what about the traditional way of doing things? Surely a dyed-in-the-wool country boy doesn't want to break

from the way his predecessors did things. "I would probably still like to do an album of 12 songs, but I'd also like to do an album of Earl Thomas Conley covers and I'm probably never going to be able to do that," Blake says. "It's just the reality of a changing industry and looking for ways to make this thing work."

"And I don't know if this is going to work or not, but it's time we start trying some things," he continues. "I hope some other artists have some ideas and try some things, because if this doesn't work, I want to know what does. I'll do whatever the hell they do."

"Maybe the answer is that people





Blake and hillbilly buddy Trace Adkins are proud of their redneck roots.



BLAKE SHELTON CONTINUED

will buy what they want off the Internet and there won't be any albums at retail in a couple of years," he says. "That's probably what's going to happen."

Blake is realistic, if not nostalgic. "People from my generation would go to the store and buy the album and read the liner notes and see who wrote which songs; that's just not how it is anymore," he says.

Blake's new six-song album, *Hillbilly Bone*, may be an experiment but it's also a solid set of songs.

The first and only single, "Hillbilly Bone," is a rollicking celebration of the redneck way—a song that took some time for Blake to warm up to. "I was driving around Tishomingo, [*Okla., where he and Miranda Lambert live*] and listening to some demos and it was the first song on the CD," he recalls. "The first time I heard it I thought, 'That's not me.' I skipped over it and listened to the rest of the CD. I started daydreaming and

the CD started over again and 'Hillbilly Bone' came on again and it hit me way better that time. Every time I heard it I liked it more and more. I kept saying to myself, 'It sure sounds like something Trace Adkins would cut.'"

When he decided to record the song, Blake and producer Scott Hendricks agreed that they would invite Trace to



Win Blake's new "Six Pak," *Hillbilly Bone*. Five lucky readers have a chance to win their own copy of Blake's latest album. All you have to do is go to countryweekly.com between March 1 and March 14 to enter and view complete list of rules.

Winners will be chosen at random and void where prohibited.

add his distinctive voice to the track. "Two buddies singing about being hillbillies," is how Blake describes it. The collaboration worked and the rest, as they say, is history. "Now I can't imagine that song without him on it," Blake says of Trace. "He just brings so much more to the table with his whole attitude."

The album also includes "Delilah," a

song inspired by Miranda's dog of the same name. In Nashville on business, Miranda asked Blake if he would watch her dog, Delilah, while she ran some errands. "I said, 'Sure,'" Blake recalls. "So she took her purse and left and Delilah jumped up on the front seat of the bus and watched her walk away, get in the truck and drive down the hill. You could

see that the dog couldn't believe she'd been left behind. She was devastated."

The song, which Blake began writing on the spot, speaks to the human tendency to look for love in all but the most obvious places. "I tried to call her over to me, but she wouldn't even turn her head and look at me," Blake says of the real-life Delilah. "She completely

Twitter TALK

For the uninitiated, Twitter is a social network/instant messaging forum that allows users to communicate individual messages in 140 characters or less, which is an art in itself. Blake, who has quickly mastered the digital diary, is not hesitant to offend fans and non-fans (including activist organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) alike. "I'll say, 'I shot a deer last night and got drunk because I was so excited,'" he admits. "Something like that can rub someone the wrong way and to me I can't imagine that rubbing someone the wrong way because that's how I grew up, that's what I do."

Blake tells it like it is on Twitter. Here is a sample of some of his most recent tweets:

Dear Mother Nature... For the love of all that's holy... Even fish are getting tired of it!!!! Turn off the faucet!!!!

Setting on the plane thinking by Blake Shelton... Awe That baby would be soooo much more cute with a MUZZLE!!!!

My hair has truly become something that's fun for the whole family.

Things I don't like... My tour manager asked "are we staying on the bus for the rest of the night?" After I said yes he took his pants off.

Quewl... I just made that word up!! I'm not sure what it means yet but it sounds gross. And I may still be drunk!!!

The good news IS the bad news... Well I just found the tack I dropped on the floor earlier... Son of a @\$!!!!

Just realized that if my imagination and genetic engineering could have a child it would look like Kellie Pickler.

That's it!!! I'm not looking anymore!!! I can't find "Kocomo" anywhere on a map... Those Beach Boys are full of s@#\$!!! So is John Denver!

Airport restroom thinkin' by Blake Shelton... You know how seeing somebody yawn makes you need to? Vomiting has that same effect on me.



BLAKE SHELTON CONTINUED

"Someone will say, 'You're not that guy. There's no way this is really Blake Shelton.'" Those who know Blake know the despite his sometime image as a country crooner, he's multidimensional.

"Kiss My Country Ass" had been previously recorded by and was co-written by country artist Rhett Akins ("That Ain't My Truck"). "How can you attack somebody for living their life the way they want to live it?" Blake wondered before he came up with a solution. "I thought, I'm going to cut Rhett's song because that's pretty much how I feel about that."

Even though the album is just out, there's already a buzz about the song, which conjures Hank Williams Jr. and honky-tonks. "It's amazing to me how many people want it just based on my doing it in my shows live," Blake says. "It's probably one of those songs that's going to stay in the live show for the next 10 years."

As for his career, which has seen consistent if not overwhelming success, Blake is optimistic. "It's just now been 10 years," he says. "My career never has exploded, but it's been a slow-but-sure, chugging along, climbing career. I don't know anybody's career to compare it to. I don't know what it

means, but it's definitely not what I had envisioned when I started out.

"It's actually better than what I had envisioned," he continues. "I don't feel like I've hit my high point yet. That's exciting when you feel like it's still out there and you're still going for it."

While he won't necessarily be hitting

ASK BLAKE!

Do you have a question you've always wanted to ask Blake Shelton? Well, this is your chance. Send us a letter with your questions for Blake to:



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You can also submit questions online at countryweekly.com. We'll select questions at random and reprint Blake's answers in the May 10 issue of *Country Weekly*, on stands May 3.

any stadiums, Blake says he will give headlining shows a try after he finishes a run with Martina McBride this spring. "I'm going to do my own headlining dates this fall just to see what happens," he says. "We'll see if we can make it work." **CW**

ignored the fact that I was even in the room. It hit me that if I wasn't in control of the food and water, she wouldn't give a crap if I was even there or not. It hit me kind of funny."

Blake bursts out laughing when he hears that Miranda recently shared that he has the ability to write from the perspective of a 20-something woman. "It's easy to put myself in her shoes because I know her so well and we're together so much," he says. "I could probably also write a song from my dad's point of view."

"That's what you're supposed to do as a writer and country singer, if you ask me—sing about things you know about and that you experience and that you see," he says.

Blake also credits Miranda for convincing him to record his 2008 hit "Home," on which she sang background vocals. She also recorded and co-wrote a duet with him, "Bare Skin Rug," for his album *Startin' Fires*. Meanwhile, Blake co-wrote three songs on her *Revolution* album and provided background vocals on "Maintain the Pain."

But figuring out the extent to which Miranda has had an impact on Blake's music is perhaps more difficult to define, and he admits as much. "She's definitely had an impact, but how much is hard to say," he says. "The biggest thing is that I write more, like I used to. When I first hit Nashville, that's what I did; I was a writer. But I kind of got away from that once I started having hits and touring. Miranda has encouraged me and I write with her and she's definitely bringing that side of me out again."

Another song on the album, "Kiss My Country Ass," is closely tied to Blake's Twitter philosophy of telling it like he sees it, which doesn't always jibe with the image fans think he should have. "People had a completely different idea of who I am," he says. "If you're the guy that sang 'Austin' or 'The Baby,' they think this guy's a romantic guy and he's a family guy, but really I'm a guy that's sarcastic and always cracking jokes. I like to drink and play my guitar and hang out. People are just finding that out about me and it's sure pissin' some people off. It blows my mind."

(From left) Blake, Miranda, Charles, Dave and Ashley



THE NEW RAT PACK

Blake, Lady Antebellum's Charles Kelley and Dave Haywood, Miranda Lambert and Ashley Monroe—call them "The New Rat Pack." In some respects, they are not entirely unlike Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop, who in the early 1960s were dubbed "the Rat Pack" and who were friends onstage and off.

"In the time that I've been doing this I've made a lot of friends, but there's definitely a different feel about this little circle of friends that I have now," says Blake. "It is kind of a Rat Pack type of thing. I've had artist friends who are drinking buddies that I'd go party with, but not so much sticking together and writing songs for each other and helping. This is definitely a different thing."

"These people have been to my house and Miranda's house and [we get together] out on the road and we write together," he adds.

The creative convergence reminds Blake of another famous group of friends. "I sat at the BMI awards last fall and watched the presentation that they did for Kris

Kristofferson and there was definitely a circle of friends," he says of the group that included Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings, among others. "They were all artists, and some of them were writers, and it reminded me of this little group that we have now."

Like its namesake, the New Rat Pack is a force to be reckoned with. "I looked at the charts last week and saw me and Miranda and Lady Antebellum and Ashley Monroe, who co-wrote Jason Aldean's current single ["The Truth"], and everybody's all up there fighting for Top 10 positions and No. 1," says Blake. "This is as cool as it gets, because there's not one person that you're saying 'I wish so and so could get it going.' Everybody at that moment was kicking ass."

