


# PAPARADE



 **LADIES &  
GENTLEMEN.**

## BLAKE SHELTON

THE COUNTRY SUPERSTAR  
OPENS UP ABOUT  
WEDDED BLISS, HIS LATEST  
HIT ALBUM, AND THE  
GIG ON *THE VOICE* THAT'S  
BROUGHT HIM MILLIONS  
OF NEW FANS 

---

**MITCH  
ALBOM**  
ON WHY KIDS  
NEED THE  
SUMMER OFF

---





◆ **BRIGHT STAR: BIG CITY**  
Shelton photographed in July in New York City's Central Park. For behind-the-scenes video of the shoot, go to [Parade.com/shelton](http://Parade.com/shelton).





---

BLAKE  
SHELTON'S  
WILD  
RIDE

WITH A TOP-RATED TV GIG, A BIG SUMMER HIT, AND A BRAND-NEW BRIDE, THIS COUNTRY STAR IS GOING PLACES

By Leah Rozen / Cover and inside photograph by Brian Doben

---

**B**lake Shelton is sweet on tweeting. Almost daily, no matter how busy he is, he whips out his iPhone, punches in messages of 140 characters or less, and—bam!—his close to 600,000 Twitter followers know exactly what's on his mind.

Mostly, the Oklahoma-born country star makes jokes. "I'm so drunk right now I just tried to change the channel on my aquarium ..." reads one of the more printable entries. He taps out an "I'm so drunk ..." missive nearly every day, or its equally sozzled cousin, "I'm so hungover. ..." Shelton has said that execs at his record label have expressed concern about some of his tweets, but they're meant to amuse. "It's just a way to say something ridiculous. Yeah, I drink a lot," says the singer, whose beverage of choice is Bacardi rum mixed with Crystal Light, "but I'm not drunk every night."

These days, it's not just his Twitter followers who appreciate Shelton and his irreverent sense of humor. The country singer gained millions of new fans while coaching on NBC's hit musical competition *The Voice* this past spring. His wedding in May to singer Miranda Lambert cemented their status as the latest in a long line of country-music royal couples and landed them on the covers of *Us Weekly* and *People Country*. His summer smash,





◆ **THANK GOD HE'S A COUNTRY BOY** Shelton as a youngster, and onstage with Miranda Lambert, showing off her engagement ring in June 2010. At their May wedding, they served meat from deer they'd hunted. "That's who we are," he says.

"Honey Bee," is his fourth consecutive No. 1 single, and his new album, *Red River Blue*, rocketed to No. 1 on *Billboard's* country and top 200 album charts in its first week of release.

It's been a big year for Shelton, but then so was 2010, when he was named the Country Music Association's male vocalist of the year and inducted into Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. "Ten years into my career, it's starting to bust wide open," says the 35-year-old, who found success in 2001 with his first album but saw sales dip later in the decade. "I'm glad it's happening this way, because if it had happened earlier, I don't know that I would appreciate it like I do now."

**S**helton is discussing his good fortune while lazing on a couch backstage at NBC's *Today* show in New York, where he has just wowed the crowd in an outdoor mini-concert. His long legs—he's between 6-4 and 6-5 even without his alligator-skin cowboy boots—are stretched out in front of him, and he's sipping from a bottle of water. He is loose-limbed, loose of tongue, and lacking pretensions. "My life has been an open book, for better or for worse," he says.

A few pages in that book have gotten him into trouble. In May, he apologized, and meant it, after a mock-macho joke he tweeted was criticized as endorsing anti-gay violence. "Shoot, man, I love everybody! I don't have time to hate," he says today. Still, joking comes naturally to him: When New York State made same-sex marriage legal in June and someone tweeted to get his reaction, he shot back in Sheltonese fashion, "I'm very gay about it!" All kidding aside, he sincerely favors the right of same-sex couples to wed. "I have a life," he says, "and I want everyone else to have one, too."

His life is now legally entwined with Lambert's. The two met in 2005 when they sang "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma" for a Country Music Television special. On a YouTube clip of their duet, Shelton (who was not yet divorced from his first wife, Kaynette Williams) wears a besotted grin on his face as he looks at Lambert. He was in no rush to remarry,

however. Of his divorce in 2006, Shelton says, "It was the worst experience of my life. Nothing was worth risking that again. I wanted to be really sure this time, and I wanted Miranda to be really sure."

His foot-dragging at times frustrated Lambert, 27. "It took me a while to realize, why push him to get married if he doesn't want to?" she says. "When I finally told myself I'm just going to love him and see what happens, that's when he bought the ring."

Shelton recalls the pivotal moment for him: They'd had a doozy of a fight, and he was driving in his truck thinking maybe it was over for good. A contemporary Christian song, "God Gave Me You," came on the radio. As he listened, his doubts eased. He proposed soon after and refashioned "God Gave Me You" into a heartfelt love song on his new album. "For me, that's like our song," he says. "I don't just love Miranda—I'm in love with her."

Thanks to *The Voice*, Lambert says, others are learning what she has long known: "Blake is a very funny guy, but there's a side to him that's very sweet and caring." Shelton is one of the show's four celebrity coaches, along with Christina Aguilera, Cee Lo Green, and Adam Levine. "I knew it was critical for *The Voice* to have a country music representative," says executive producer Mark Burnett, "so it became a question of, who has a big career and looks great on television?"

**I**nitially, Shelton wasn't convinced he was the answer to that question. Then he watched the original Dutch version of the show, and learned who else would be coaching. "I said, I'd be stupid not to do this." The deciding factor? The chance to enconce himself in one of the show's distinctive revolving chairs. "They're goofy, but I thought that would be fun, sitting in those big red chairs like you're the king of the mountain," he says.

*The Voice's* format calls for each coach to select a team of singers from among the contestants and guide them during the competition. Shelton took his duties seriously, inviting his squad to his rented house in Los Angeles for dinner and organizing a visit to a karaoke bar. His job, he says, was not so much teaching them to sing as giving them the confidence to be themselves onstage. "To me, what makes an artist is a unique personality that they're not afraid to let show," he says.

What Shelton is most looking forward to now—after promoting his album and before season two of *The Voice* starts—is spending time with Lambert in Tishomingo, Okla. That's the small town where he settled in 2006 after about a dozen years in Nashville. Shelton believes that being

"back in the heartland" around old friends and family helped him kick his career into high gear. "Now when I think about the songs I might record," he says, "I ask myself, 'Can I picture anybody I know back home sitting in their truck cranking this up?'"

He and Lambert live on 1,200 acres in Tishomingo, in a former hunting lodge they share with seven dogs, all rescue mutts. In a few years, when their schedules calm down, the couple plan to build a home on a nearby site. Ditto for starting a family, though Shelton says Lambert talks about it more than he does. When told about his remark, she laughs. "The dogs are a good training ground," she says, "but every time we get a new puppy, I think maybe we're not ready yet."

When they are ready, you can bet that Shelton will tweet the happy news. **E**

## TOP 10 SONGS OF SUMMER

"Honey Bee" is just the latest tune to bring good vibrations. Here's our list of the hottest hits from summers past.

- 10. "MARGARITAVILLE"**  
Jimmy Buffett (1977)
- 9. "DANCING IN THE STREET"** Martha and the Vandellas (1964)
- 8. "SUMMER IN THE CITY"**  
The Lovin' Spoonful (1966)
- 7. "CALIFORNIA GURLS"**  
Katy Perry (2010)
- 6. "NO SHOES, NO SHIRT, NO PROBLEMS"**  
Kenny Chesney (2003)

For our top five picks, plus free samples, go to [Parade.com/summer](http://Parade.com/summer)