

PERFECT MATCH

"She just wants to hang out and be together, and I do too," says Mattson (with his wife in 2008). "I believe, it's man's for Miranda, I'll be around."



*Blake
& Miranda*

CRAZY IN LOVE!

AFTER 18 MONTHS OF MARRIAGE, THE WORK-HARD, PLAY-HARD COUPLE OPEN UP ABOUT LONG-DISTANCE LOVE, OKLAHOMA VS. HOLLYWOOD AND WHY THEY'RE WAITING TO START A FAMILY

Blake Shelton makes his wife after several days apart—he's in L.A., shooting *The Voice* while she's at home in Oklahoma after wrapping a nine-month tour—Miranda Lambert is on her way to California. "Finally get to see my wife today!!!!!! Happy happy joy joy!!!" Shelton tweeted Oct. 28. Lambert's response? "Should we celebrate with beverages?" she wrote back, "or 101?"

A year and a half into their marriage, country music's wildest couple have plenty to toast. It's the breakout star of this show,



WEDDING BLESSED
 The couple's wedding was the most intimate they could have, with only 10 guests. "It was just the two of us and the officiant," says Lambert. "I was like, 'I'm not getting married until I have a million dollars.'"

they're the Academy of Country Music's reigning male and female royalty of the year, and they were each nominated for four CMA awards (banded out Nov. 1)—including another song they wrote together. In a world where celebrity marriages routinely go down in flames, distance and competing careers, Shelton, 36, and Lambert, 28, aren't taking anything for granted. "What are the odds of two people being married and at the height of their careers at the same time and in the same field? And of making a relationship work with that spotlight on us?" Shelton marvels. "It should seem more difficult, but somehow it's just not. We don't feel any different. We try to be as normal about our relationship as we possibly can be."

That isn't always easy. At the moment, he's shooting *The Halo*'s third and fourth seasons simultaneously and promoting his new holiday album, *Cheers, It's Christmas*, while she's preparing to record a new album with her trio *Planet Amber* (and her solo career isn't enough). According to Shelton, they wouldn't still be together if it weren't for his wife, whom he met in 2008 when they sang duet for a CMT special. "I'm telling you, she's kept me strong," he says. "Especially in the early days when it was easy to give up and say, 'This is

too hard.' She's the one that always found a way." For her part, Lambert says her husband is "very caring and loyal," traits she saw in play earlier this year when his father, Dick, passed away. "All he did was make sure everyone else was okay before he would even worry about himself. Watching that made me love him that much more."

Lambert is so devoted to her husband that she routinely travels across the country to spend even a few hours with him. "She does that for me way more than I've ever done that for her, but I'll be the first one to admit that, because I'm old and I'm more apt to give up and sit the year," says

Shelton. (Lambert also sings on his Christmas album, will appear on his December TV special, has mentioned his Halo team and often drops by the set—red Solo-cup in hand.) "I'm just a guy about it, I guess," he says. "She's always been the one to go through hell to make sure we spend time together."

But how much? Since exchanging vows beneath an arch of antlers in her home state of Texas in May 2011, Lambert recently estimated, their "us time" has totaled only about 100 days. To even make that happen, they've followed



Sometimes it's great to be romantic, but sometimes just having a good friendship will help you to be apart
 —LAMBERT



NOT CAREFUL

"We constantly [think] 'Gimme the five minutes and taking for my opinion,'" Lambert [contemplates] May's eyes of Shelton for *The Halo*. "I'm not sure if you're that passionate."



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY MAYER



LUKE LAMBERT
 sings the loveable folk
 number, "Shelton
 performs with his wife
 in their home."

ON THE ROAD

They're in 2011 about
 the L.A. lifestyle and
 wedding reception.



The Couple That Tweets Together ...

I can't wait to get home and watch my DVR of *Here Comes Honey Bee Bob!*... another show I am hooked on! —LAMBERT

Just watched *Here Comes Honey Bee Bob!* And now here comes
www.fox.com... —SHESTAKOFF

While the man sips, the wife does play... I may or may not be rearranging the
 house & painting things girl color. #topofthetwittergate —LAMBERT

"@MissKathleen: Thank you Miranda for my breakfast sandwich this morning!"
 FYI: Bacon is the Hollywood Hills! #countrycomestotown —LAMBERT

one rule: "We won't go more than two weeks without seeing each other," she says. (They're so used to the schedule that last spring, Sheri told *People* that if they see each other too much, "we'll kill each other!") The couple met when they tried to speak to each other more a day, but both admit they're not fans of Skype or long phone calls. As Lambert recently told *Good Morning*, keeping "I think it's good to have a bit of time to miss the person and to save up time for when you get home."

These days that's a rented house in the Hollywood Hills, where the proud southerners are content relaxing with a French cocktail (for her) or a vodka drink (for him). Sheri's only half-joking when he says his worst habit is

that he drinks too much. "That at least I share that habit with my wife," he says with a grin. "There's never been a time when she's sat me down and said, 'Wig, you're drinking too much.' She has sat me down and said, 'I just don't know why you won't have a drink with me.'"

Well, there's more to their marriage than raising a glass. "We really just hang at our house and spend time together just as if we're at home in Oklahoma," says Lambert, who will burn country music in the mornings while she cooks bacon and eggs. And at night "we literally have laughs on the couch with our dogs and watch a movie," always.

Lambert says that avoiding the L.A. party scene "keeps us sane," yet they

both indulge in typically L.A. pastimes: "I love to sleep and lie out [in the sun] and get my nails done," says Lambert, who is opening a boutique in Tolonago, Ohio. Meanwhile, Sheri is now carmin' her brows with coconut water to tip from his Tiger brand and pal Adam Levine. (Just her still misses "simple things" about life in Oklahoma: driving back roads listening to the radio, hunting rattlesnakes in the woods for minutes from the front door, he cracks, "peeing off my porch.") On L.A., he's said, he goes into the canyon by their house. Says Lambert: "We're just both really country people. We love the woods and climbing pine, and L.A. is pretty much the opposite of that."

Eventually the couple will settle down on their sprawling ranch, where they are currently erecting a new barn for Lambert's animals (which include chickens, horses, goats, a cat and six rescue dogs) and clearing land to build a new house. It will be the perfect place to raise a family—just not right now. "That's the one thing I really want to plan the right way, because I don't want to have children and raise them on a plane or a bus," says Lambert, who kicked off a tour with Darin Zariwsky in January. The couple has agreed to discuss a time line for having kids when she turns 30 next year. "Right now," she says, "we're both at our position having a blast, and I don't think either one of us are thinking about changing things."

By Maria Lapanza. Reported by Danielle Anderson, Julia Jordan and Matt Kelly