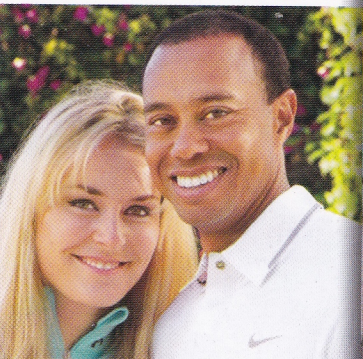


People



BLAKE SHELTON

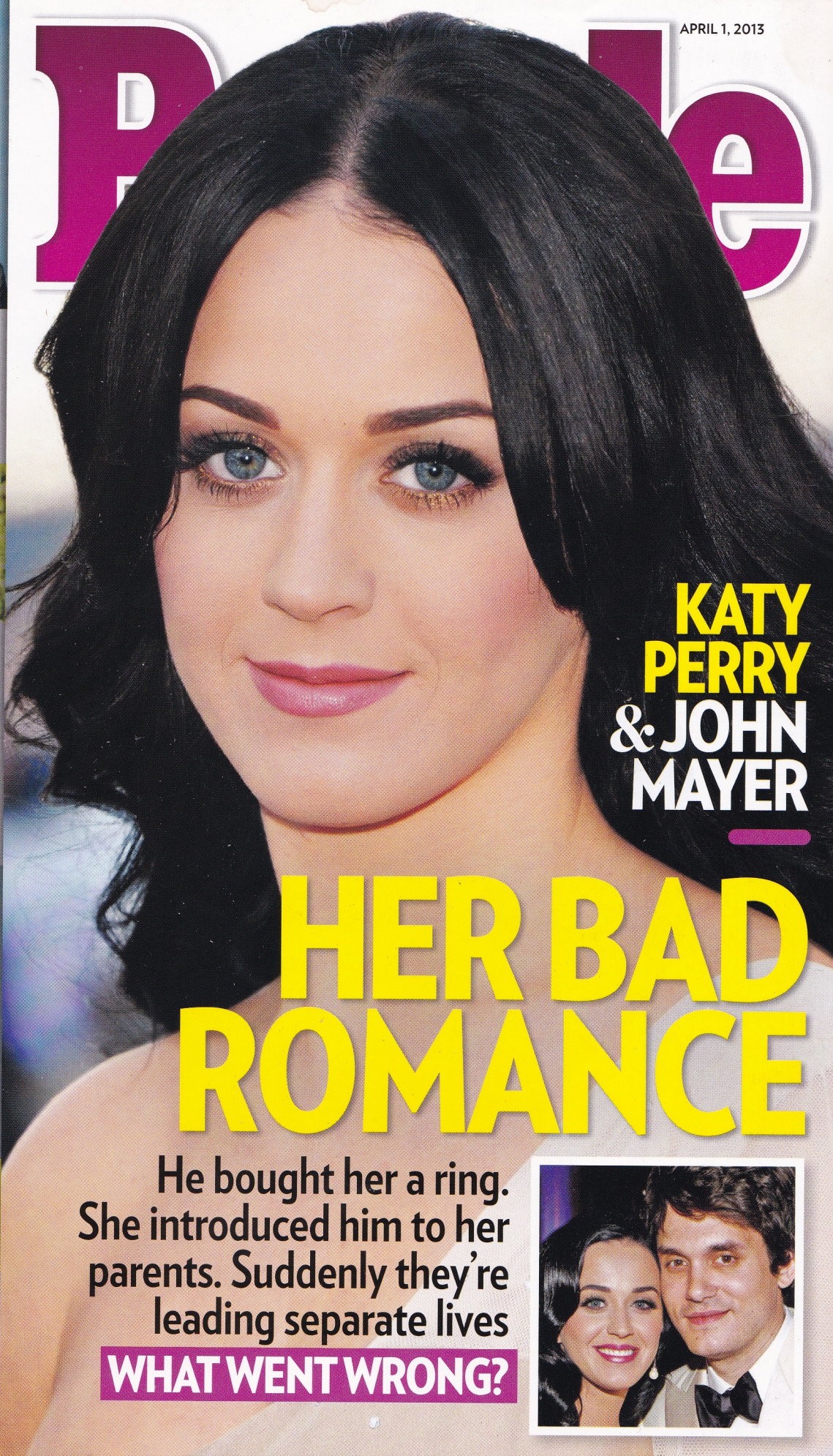
**On Miranda,
Marriage
& *The Voice***



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Blake **IN THE** HOT SEAT

WITH A NEW ALBUM AND THE RETURN OF *THE VOICE*, THE SINGER TALKS MARRIAGE TO MIRANDA LAMBERT, HIS CHANGING PRIORITIES AND HEALING AFTER A TOUGH YEAR. PLUS: THE OTHER *VOICE* COACHES SPILL SECRETS FROM THE SET!



Even in his fourth season as a coach on *The Voice*, Blake Shelton gets pretty nervous sitting in that big red chair. With the intense competition, “I feel like my blood pressure is going to blow my head off,” says the country star, adding with a laugh, “so I keep some vodka and Bacardi handy.”

He may need it this season more than ever: In addition to his gig as *The Voice*’s two-time reigning coaching champ, he is gearing up for the release of his revealing new album, *Based on a True Story*, which drops the day after



"The blind-audition stuff is pretty cutthroat," Shelton says of the show's early rounds. "Usher [inset] is taking this thing very seriously. He wants to win."

**BACKSTAGE
AT
THE VOICE**

“We’re finding our groove,” Levine (left, with Shakira, Shelton and Usher) says of the new lineup. “We’re getting to know each other.”

“
The fight will be every bit as good as it was before. There are a lot of jabs that get thrown around”

—SHELTON

The Voice returns to NBC on March 25. But the biggest challenge just might be juggling his two-superstar marriage to fellow singer Miranda Lambert, 29. They’ll celebrate their second wedding anniversary on May 14—right in the middle of *The Voice*’s live shows and Lambert’s touring schedule. How do they balance it all? “Early on in my career I wouldn’t say no to anything, because any little opportunity I got I thought might be the last one,” says Shelton, 36. “These days it’s just weighing what really is important. I got a wife now. I say no to the things that might not matter as much.”

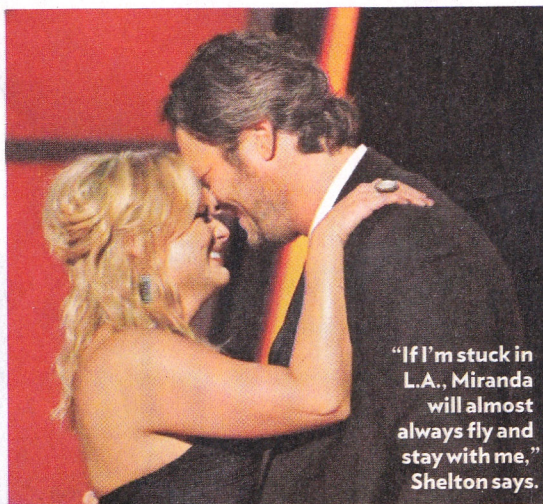
Still, he acknowledges that busy careers and nonstop travel can be challenging. “You come up with all these different ideas: ‘We’re going to make sure we

have this many days together,’” he recently told *PEOPLE COUNTRY*. “But the truth is that you’ve got to take advantage of every window of time that you have.”

For the next few months he’ll be seated firmly in his kingly *Voice* perch—

and ready to tangle with the show’s new coaches, Usher and Shakira, who replace Christina Aguilera and Cee Lo Green. The newbies “came out swinging,” reports Shelton, adding with a laugh, “I’m looking forward to any performance Shakira may do, for normal guy reasons.” As for his friendly rivalry with returning coach Adam Levine: “We give each other just the right amount of crap.”

Mostly, though, Shelton is grateful to be heading into the season in a good place. “Losing my dad last year depressed me for a long time,” he says. “When I’m in the public eye and doing my job, you don’t see that. [But] this year I’m just so happy and I feel really good. I’ve never been so relaxed about my spot in my career and my personal life.” (For more on *The Voice*, turn to page 95.)



“If I’m stuck in L.A., Miranda will almost always fly and stay with me,” Shelton says.