

MAY 2013



Grandstands Lined Up

The top 10 fair acts to watch this summer

by MARY WADE BURNSIDE

Carly Rae Jepsen, Austin Mahone, Tyler Hubbard of Florida Georgia Line, Gary Allan and Brian Kelley of Florida Georgia Line.

From youngsters such as Carly Rae Jepsen and Austin Mahone to more seasoned artists like Gary Allan and Toby Keith, major musical acts will be hitting fair stages again this season. Here's who is expected to be filling the grandstands in 2013.

1. TOBY KEITH

North Dakota State Fair, Minot, July 26; Cheyenne (Wyo.) Frontier Days, July 27; Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Aug. 14; Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Aug. 15; Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, Aug. 16; Great Allentown (Pa.) Fair, Aug. 31; Champlain Valley Expo, Essex Junction, Vt., Sept. 1

Country artist Toby Keith, whose hits include "Red Solo Cup" and "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue," started his fair season early at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo and plays all the way to the Kansas State Fair as part of his Hope On the Rocks tour. In between, he will be hitting sheds and music festivals to round out his summer.

"He's always maintained a relationship with the fairs even when he hit the stratospheric level," said booking agent Curt Motley of Paradigm Talent Agency. "In his mind, they were there putting food on his table when he needed it. And some of these fairs are in areas that service people that don't have other options for entertainment."

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2. FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

Rock County 4-H Fair, Janesville, Wis., July 23; Clarke County Fair, Berryville, Va., Aug. 17; Darke County Fair, Greenville, Ohio, Aug. 18 (opening for Montgomery Gentry); Appalachian Fair, Gray, Tenn., Aug. 22; Great Allentown (Pa.) Fair, Aug. 30, (opening for Luke Bryan)

Fairs that booked the country act last fall made a good investment now that they are keeping their commitments to play smaller fairs after taking both the Top New Vocal Duo or Group and Top New Artist awards at the April Academy of Country Music ceremony in Las Vegas. Members Brian Kelley and Tyler Hubbard are out on the road in support of their new album, "Here's to the Good Times," often opening up for another fast-rising newcomer, Luke Bryan, the ACM's Entertainer of the Year for 2013.

"They're on fire," said Kevin Neal, president of Buddy Lee Attractions. "The fairs are benefiting. They are one of the hottest new artists in the genre."

3. CARLY RAE JEPSEN

Ohio State Fair, Columbus, July 31; Kentucky State Fair, Louisville, Aug. 16; Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Aug. 17; Maryland State Fair, Timonium, Aug. 25

The former "Canadian Idol" contestant and Justin Bieber protégé had a huge hit with "Call Me Maybe." The song went platinum five times, spent a record-breaking nine weeks on top of the Billboard Hot 100 and was nominated for a Grammy for Best Song. In 2013, she will be hitting major state fairs in support of her second album, "Kiss." The Wanted opens for her at the Iowa State Fair while at the Ohio State Fair, it's Hot Chelle Rae.

"Carly Rae Jepsen comes out the gate at No. 1, in my book," said Dave Snowden, CEO of Triangle Talent. "She's a young lady who had a monster hit with Justin Bieber's help, and now Justin Bieber's manager is managing her."

4. GARY ALLAN

Great Jones County Fair, Monticello, Iowa, July 18; Wisconsin State Fair, West Allis, Aug. 3; Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, Aug. 10; Erie County Fair, Hamburg, N.Y., Aug. 14; Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Aug. 16; Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Aug. 18

The raspy-voiced singer whose sound has been compared to other Bakersfield-sound artists such as Buck Owens and Merle Haggard released his ninth studio album, "Set You Free," earlier this year. Following two sold-out shows at the revered Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Allan hit the road for the summer, playing a combination of sheds, casinos, fairs and festivals. He co-wrote his No. 1 song, "Every Storm (Runs Out of Rain)" with Nashville hitmaker Hillary Lindsey.

"He always has a good draw," Snowden said. "What has happened here is he has totally reinvented himself, and he is outselling some of the mega artists in ticket sales. I'm blown away by him. It usually doesn't happen like that, a resurgence like this, especially for an artist who has been around for as long as Gary."

5. AUSTIN MAHONE

Delaware State Fair, Harrington, July 22; Orange County Fair, Costa Mesa, Calif., July 24; Ohio State Fair, Columbus, July 26; Wisconsin State Fair, West Allis, Aug. 9; State Fair of West Virginia, Fairlea, Aug. 11; Allen County Fair, Lima, Aug. 17; Great Allentown (Pa.) Fair, Aug. 28; York (Pa.) Fair, Sept. 14

How hot is teen star Austin Mahone? When he's not opening for Taylor Swift this summer on selected dates, he will be crisscrossing the nation playing other venues — including fairs — as a headliner, hitting the East Coast (Delaware State Fair), the West Coast (Orange County Fair) and the Midwest (Ohio State Fair) in four days. He has been called "the second coming of Justin Bieber," and there are some similarities, including Mahone's start by posting videos on YouTube and a shared manager in Scooter Braun. Mahone has accom-

plished his tour without an album but with a couple of singles, including "Say You're Just a Friend," which samples the Biz Markie song "Just a Friend."

"We're excited to have Austin as part of our fair concert lineup," said Brett Chance, entertainment director at the Ohio State Fair who books acts for the event. "I think he's going to fit the teen and 'tween markets, teens and a little younger, similar to what we've had with the Disney and Nickelodeon acts that we've had success with in the past. He's filled that niche. He gets play on Radio Disney and his career is on the uptick."

6. HUNTER HAYES

Jay County Fair, Portland, Ind., July 10; Red River Valley Fair, West Fargo, N.D., July 12; Madison County Fair, Madison, Neb., July 13; Porter County Fair, Valparaiso, Ind., July 18; Elkhart County 4-H Fair, Goshen, Ind., July 24; Casconade County Fair, Owensville, Mo., July 27

Another rising young star, Grammy-nominated 21-year-old Hunter Hayes already has two No. 1 singles under his belt, "Wanted" and "Somebody's Heartbreak," and he has done pretty well at awards shows, snagging New Artist of the Year at the CMAs and Single of the Year — New Artist and Music Video of the Year — New Artist, at the ACMs, for "Wanted." This summer, when he's not playing fairs, Hayes can be found opening up for Carrie Underwood. His self-titled album debut has gone gold.

"On his debut album, he plays every instrument," said Mindy Klein of Romeo Entertainment Group. "He's been making music since he was 10 years old. He's amazing. He's only 21 and he's a very accomplished writer and musician."

7. BRANTLEY GILBERT

Calgary Stampede, Calgary, Alta., July 11; North Dakota State Fair, Minot, July 21; Medina County Fair, Medina, Ohio, Aug. 1; Montana Fair, Billings, Aug. 9; Wyoming State Fair, Douglas, Aug. 14; Evergreen State Fair, Monroe, Wash., Aug. 27; Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul, Sept. 2

“He’s got a huge buzz around him. Even though he’s a new act, he has what is considered a cult following. Most of the shows we have him on he’s a headliner.” — MINDY KLEIN

The ACM’s Top New Male Artist of 2013 has made a name for himself writing hits for artists such as Colt Ford and Jason Aldean. Gilbert, who has hit No. 1 singles “Country Must Be Country Wide” and “You Don’t Know Her Like I Do,” will warm up this spring opening up for Tim McGraw in amphitheaters before hitting the fair and festival circuit as a headliner.

“He’s got a huge buzz around him,” Klein said. “Even though he’s a new act, he has what is considered a cult following. Most of the shows we have him on he’s a headliner.”

8. LUKE BRYAN

Delaware State Fair, Harrington, July 18; Cheyenne (Wyo.) Frontier Days, July 24; Great Allentown (Pa.) Fair, Aug. 30

Last year, Luke Bryan was opening at fairs for Jason Aldean. This year, Aldean is moving into larger arenas and stadiums and Bryan is getting more arena dates with his Dirt Road Diaries tour, but still has a number of fair dates on tap this summer.

In April, Bryan won Entertainer of the Year at the Academy of Country Music Awards, beating out Aldean, Miranda Lambert, Blake Shelton and Taylor Swift. Bryan had three No. 1 singles — “I Don’t Want This Night to End,” “Drunk on You” and “Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye,” off his 2011 album, “Tailgates & Tanlines.”

Bonnie Brosious, entertainment director at the Great Allentown Fair, noted that last year Aldean sold out the fair’s festival configuration of 14,500, compared to the regular 10,500-seat setup, with Luke Bryan opening.

“Immediately after that show, I started getting the offer in the works for Luke and we feel very fortunate that he accepted the offer,” said Brosious, who also snagged a returning John

Mayer for one of his three summer fair dates.

“When we went on sale with Luke and his guests, Florida Georgia Line and Thompson Square, we were happy to have that show and we’re very close to a sellout. They will match Jason in the box office record category because the ticket prices are the same as it was for Jason. We were able to sell that show in February. It was the first show we announced. We sold tickets faster than any other show. By the end of the first day, we were approaching 12,000. That was pretty amazing.”

Said agent Paul Moore of William Morris Endeavor, “Luke will continue to consider playing dates at major fairs and festivals. However, the economics come into play because of his fee. He will only be able to play at those fairs that have capacities in their venues that are comparable to capacities in the major arenas where his tour will take him.”

However, he added, “Luke loves the fairs and knows that a lot of his fan base comes from the work he’s done at fairs and festivals as he has built his career.”

9. ALAN JACKSON

Cheyenne (Wyo.) Frontier Days, July 20; Clark County Fair, Ridgefield, Wash., Aug. 7; Rockingham County Fair, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 14; Kentucky State Fair, Louisville, Aug. 15; Iowa State Fair, Des Moines, Aug. 15

Jackson is no stranger to fairs, but this time he has a new album, “Thirty Miles West,” which peaked at No. 1 on the Billboard country chart. The veteran country artist is fitting fair dates amid his tour this summer that also consists of festivals and amphitheater appearances. Always one to spark interest with a collaboration — like “It’s Five O’Clock Somewhere” with Jimmy Buffett and “Murder on Music

Row” with George Strait, he recently teamed up with the Zac Brown Band for “As She’s Walking Away,” which won a Grammy for Best Country Collaboration with vocals.

“Alan has done fairs for years and has done well,” Snowden said. “This year, I feel he is even stronger with his CD sitting at the top of the charts. In early sales, he’s looking quite strong. Of course, on our two dates, he is with Gary Allan, which is as hot as it gets.”

10. JEFF DUNHAM

Delaware State Fair, Harrington, July 23; Ohio State Fair, Columbus, July 24; Kentucky State Fair, Louisville, Aug. 25; Great Allentown (Pa.) Fair, Sept. 1

Snowden booked the intriguing comedy tour of Dennis Miller, Dana Carvey and Kevin Nealon at the Iowa State Fair, but Dunham has more fair dates booked so far. In the past few years, he has reached another level of stardom, appearing in the past few years in the Steve Carell/Paul Rudd film “Dinner for Schmucks” and on an episode of “30 Rock.” His appearance at the Great Allentown Fair will be his third performance there, said Brosious, who also noted the tickets are not yet on sale. “The buzz I’m getting is that it’s going to do pretty well,” she said.

Said Snowden, “Dunham always is strong. He is a perfect fit for fairs. He has an unreal following. For fairs, he always does a PG-13 show, unlike his Vegas shows that are a bit more of an R show.”

Interviewed for this story: **Curt Motley**, (615) 251-4400; **Kevin Neal**, (615) 244-4336; **Dave Snowden**, (502) 267-5466; **Brett Chance**, (614) 644-3247; **Mindy Klein**, (712) 786-2222; **Bonnie Brosious**, (610) 433-7541; **Paul Moore**, (615) 963-3000

Under New Management

Former Ryman GM Pam Matthews takes the helm as the new Executive Director of IEBA

by **DAVE BROOKS**



Pam Matthews, veteran of Nashville's Music Scene, is the new executive director of IEBA.

The International Entertainment Buyers Association has a familiar face in the corner office. Former Ryman Auditorium General Manager Pam Matthews has returned to Nashville to run the talent buying association that's been part of her life dating back to her childhood.

"I knew about IEBA when I was 16 years old," said Matthews. "I used to go to the Opry when I was still a baby. Those are some of my earliest memories — I grew up in the music business."

It's practically a full circle return for the music industry vet who worked for two of the biggest promoters in the Southeast, spent 12 years with one of the biggest acts in country and eventually went on to manage one of the most beloved venues in all of Nashville.

Her first foray began at the age of 15, working for promoter Bob Kelley as a runner for his Mid-South Concerts in Memphis, which ran the old Mid-South Coliseum.

"I did everything, from delivering guitar picks to picking out spray paint," she said of her early days as a driver and venue grunt. In 1985, she was recruited by country promoter legend Louis Messina to help design, build and operate the Starwood Amphitheatre in Nashville. Located in the suburbs of Antioch, the 17,000-seat shed was practically the size of an arena and during the 1980s and early 90s drew A-list country acts as the new outdoor play in Music City.

In 1988, after three seasons at Starwood, Matthews accepted a position with mother-daughter country legends The Judds. She spent

12 years working for the duo, ascending to the position of VP and Treasurer of Wynonna.Inc.

"I did their farewell and reunion tours and when it was over, I said, 'You know girls, I've been here for a while and I need to take a break.'"

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC AND BACK

Off to Europe she went, first to Italy and then Paris, taking in the breathtaking culture a full world away from Music Row. This trip was different — it wasn't just Matthews' first major vacation — it was her first chance to finally unplug and get to know herself a little better.

"That was a very special time in my life, one where I really had a chance to reflect and I wasn't sure what my next move was — I wasn't sure I wanted to go back," she recalled. "But one day I got a call from Rod Essig about a position open at the Ryman. And when you're a native Tennessean, and you're offered a position like that, you say yes."

Starting in 2000, Matthews served as the General Manager of the iconic downtown Nashville concert hall, owned by Gaylord Entertainment. She held the position for seven years, leaving so that she could accompany her husband, a decorated Special Operations Team Leader in the U.S. Army, while he was stationed at the Presidio of Monterey, Calif., studying Arabic at the Panetta Institute, run by former Obama Administration Defense Secretary Leon Panetta.

"I just wanted to be a housewife for a little while and build our relationship," she said. "I didn't get married until a little bit later in my life, and I wanted to enjoy that time together. Carmel and Monterey are so beautiful."

She did return with her husband, now a legislative attorney with the Tennessee General Assembly, in 2007. It was an opportunity to find

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another challenge — as a Rhodes Scholar she studied Philosophy and Theology at Christ Church College at Oxford and she has taken an active role in her community on the Nashville Downtown Partnership, Americana Music Association, and Leadership Music where she is in her 10th year as a member of the Live Music committee.

SHARING IEBA'S GREAT TRADITION WITH THE NEXT GENERATION

Matthews said she has no sweeping changes planned for IEBA and wants to continue following the organizational mission handed off from Tiffany Davis. In October, Davis announced plans to relocate to Boston and resign her position as executive director during a heartfelt speech at IEBA's 2012 annual meeting.

Matthews said she believes the core foundation of IEBA — connecting venues, festivals and fairs with promoters, agents and managers — is still the organization's strongest asset.

"Why fix what's not broken," she said. "We're one of the most influential trade organizations in the industry. We match buyers and sellers of talent. That's what we're great at."

There are a few small changes on the horizon. After two years at Nashville's Sheraton hotel, the conference is moving to the yet-to-be-opened Omni. The move shifts the conference south of Broadway, opening several new venue opportunities for showcases. The hotel is located next to the new, state-of-the-art Music City Center, and offers access on four different levels to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Her most ambitious program for 2013 will be the launch of a young leader's initiative tied in with some professional workshops in May and a new membership category for startups and recent grads.

"We want to bring young people and entrepreneurs into the fold and we're going to look at creating different pricing levels for those just starting to get into the business," she said. "We want to create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive to everyone." 

Interviewed for this story: **Pam Matthews**, (615) 679-9601



**FROM BIG TIME TO BOUTIQUE
Q&A WITH CHRISTINE BARKLEY, FOUNDER OF CBA**

Long time IEBA agent Christine Barkley is back with a new approach to booking. After seven years with the Agency for the Performing Arts, Barkley has started new boutique outfit Creative Booking Agency, in midtown Manhattan. Venues Today caught up with Barkley to discuss life as an indie agent.

You left APA last year and took 18 of your performing arts clients with you. Did you get any blowback from APA?

No. When I was at APA I built the special attractions division and this was a roster of artists they never had before. These were relationships that I had built. You can't keep artists that don't want to be kept.

What was your first new signing?

Cirque Eloize, the sister company of Cirque du Soleil. They're one of the biggest cirque shows in the performing arts world. We're going to start adding music to the roster soon — our act One Night Of Queen does 150 PAC dates a year.

What types of acts are PACs currently looking to book?

Right now we're in a state of the economy where Broadway is becoming a tough sell. Maybe some of these shows have been around the block too many times. It's really hard to predict what will and won't sell.

Does being independent make you more vulnerable to client poaching?

When I left, people came after my roster, but I kept 18 of my 20 clients. When you have a great act, people are going to go after it, but we provide exceptional service to every one of our acts. We're constantly in touch with performing arts venues. We go to all the conferences and we offer the best marketing in the business.

Is it possible to disconnect each night, or are you always wired in?

I am very competitive by nature. Before this job, I toured the world playing volleyball. If you want to work in the entertainment industry, you either have it in your blood or you don't. It's important to have some down time and that's the one thing I gave up starting my own agency. It's totally consuming.

How does being a female in this business shape your identity?

I don't think of myself as a distinctly "female agent." I think other people put those labels on you. It is an old boys network, but I consider myself part of that group because I've been in the business long enough.

Is it possible for a woman to be tough and assertive in this business without being labeled the b-word?

Typically, that's the insecurity of someone else that puts that label on a woman. I personally conduct myself with class and dignity and believe you can be an agent without acting that way. You don't have to be tough to sell, nor do you have to be rude and abrasive. And if a show doesn't sell, it's not always the artist's fault. If a promoter loses money, they have to be a big boy and pull up their pants and reassess.

Contact: [212] 758-8064