



# Secondary Programmers Address Change, Music and a Crowded Marketplace by Jon Freeman

With the radio audience being offered more listening options than ever, the programmer's job is constantly evolving to stay competitive. One not only has to keep a station sounding great, but also address the audience through social media and maintain that elusive balance between focus and diversity. We spoke with four of our CountryBreakout panelists about the current marketplace and while they don't always agree on how to get it done, they know sitting still isn't the answer.



Mike Thomas

"The biggest challenge is trying to keep the playlist fresh," says **Mike Thomas** of KFAV/Warrenton, MO. "Having been around when the charts were moving at lightning speed, I realize that wasn't the best scenario either. The economics of the music industry dictate the labels get the biggest bang for the buck out of every single but that same philosophy is also hurting the industry by limiting the number of talented artists."

"I'm not so much about quantity as I am about quality," says **Don Brake** of WHWK/Binghamton, NY. "I

want a meaty playlist with lots of great music. When I have to start searching for a song to add, I'll just simply cut the playlist by a song or two. When I have more deserving songs than I have spots, I might add one or two songs."



Don Brake

Breaking new stars is critical for the industry, but it's never easy—especially if you're an independent artist. Secondary radio tends to be more open to new and independent music, but it's no cakewalk. Our panelists do agree on one important criterion, however: for Pete's sake, make it sound good.

"One of the biggest problems independent artists face is getting good quality recordings," says Brake. "A great song is still a great song, but a great song with great production is better than one that is poorly produced."

**Tom Duke** of KQUS/Hot Springs, AR agrees that an indie artist "has to have a good song just like anyone else and they should be able to sing. I have heard some songs that should never have been recorded and I have heard some singers that couldn't sing."

**SUNNY SWEENEY**  
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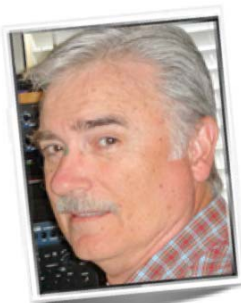
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Tom Duke

So it is doubly important for new and independent artists to bring their A-game when going up against established and familiar names.

"Our audience already knows the established artists," explains **Ryan McCall** of WGLR/Platteville, WI, "so they have an advantage when choosing between adding one of their releases or one from a new artist."

"Listeners see a video by an established artist that I may not be on yet and they will request it," adds Duke. "I am forced to get on those songs sometimes before I really want to and that leaves the independent/unknown artists out in the cold."

But how does one decide what to play and how much to play it? Primarily listener passion and a certain amount of intuition, but charts can be helpful as well.

"The charts are important, but if I feel really strongly about a song, that may also lead to a quick add," says Brake. "If that gut reaction is then backed up by listener response and especially in our online testing then I have no problem moving a song up my playlist faster than the national charts. I also have no problem holding a song back locally that I feel is moving up the charts too quickly. Songs that hit No. 1 in about 10 weeks are simply moving too fast most of the time. I want more equity in a song before I push it up to 50 spins a week."

"Sometimes you just have to go with your gut in deciding what you think would work for your audience," adds McCall. "Jaron & The Long Road To Love, Jerrod Niemann and now Walker Hayes are all gut records that have paid off for us this year."

"I use the charts to get a feel of what the rest of the country is doing but you can never go wrong programming what your listeners want," offers Duke. "I believe that by playing their requests, they seem to be happy and that is what I want."

"It's all about the listeners first," agrees Thomas. "They are the ones who actually spend money to buy music. If the listeners like it, roll with it. And gut instinct has to come

into play—as long as it doesn't turn into arrogance and make you think you're the god of music programming, a little personal influence can sometimes prove to be a good thing."

Some stress the importance of committing spins to a song if it really works.

"Even with a bigger playlist it still is difficult to play all the songs I want each week," notes McCall. "Our light rotation is 10 spins per week and I would not want to lessen that in order to make room for more songs. Anything under 10 spins is considered 'test' play. If a song starts getting played 7 or 8 times a week then it needs to become an official add. If you can't commit to playing a song at least once a day, to me you are just testing it."

"If you're going to add a song, give it enough spins to get a fair shake on the chart and allow the listeners to hear," agrees Thomas. "If you believe in a song enough to add it, one spin a week is not good enough to impact listeners."

The one constant of the last few years has been change and for veteran programmers, that means acclimating to new duties and (sometimes begrudgingly) letting go of old ones in order to survive.

"The business today is all computerized," says Duke. "The songs are in the computer, the liners are in the computer, and the commercials are there. You can put the computer on auto and go fishing. You couldn't do that with records and carts. Give me the the records and carts. You actually had to time your show. It took talent to do that."

"To think we thought going from vinyl to carts and carts to CDs were big changes," says Brake. "Now all the music is on hard drive and we are trying to keep up with our website, our mobile club, sending e-mails to our listener club and being relevant on Facebook. It's a whole new ballgame and those who can adapt will continue to be the ones who produce the best overall product."



Ryan McCall

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**MUSICROW**  
Nashville's Music Industry Publication

Weeks On Chart	Last Wk Position	This Wk Position	Artist/Song/Label	Spins/ Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +-	Last Wk # Spins
15	1	1	<b>Lady Antebellum</b> /Our Kind Of Love/Capitol	3701/100	1	45	3656
15	2	2	<b>Billy Currington</b> /Pretty Good At Drinkin' Beer/Mercury	3297/90	0	-11	3308
8	3	3	<b>Kenny Chesney</b> /The Boys Of Fall/BNA	3287/97	5	148	3139
10	4	4	<b>Darius Rucker</b> /Come Back Song/Capitol	3204/100	5	155	3049
19	5	5	<b>Easton Corbin</b> /Roll With It/Mercury	2988/91	3	95	2893
13	6	6	<b>Toby Keith</b> /Trailerhood/Show Dog-Universal	2953/99	2	61	2892
14	8	7	<b>The Band Perry</b> /If I Die Young/Republic Nashville	2720/97	3	73	2647
8	11	8	<b>Reba</b> /Turn On The Radio/Starstruck/Valory	2657/98	11	257	2400
17	9	9	<b>Trace Adkins</b> /This Ain't No Love Song/Show Dog-Universal	2640/99	2	52	2588
9	10	10	<b>George Strait</b> /The Breath You Take/MCA Nashville	2593/93	4	106	2487
4	14	11	<b>Taylor Swift</b> /Mine/Big Machine	2506/94	12	262	2244
5	12	12	<b>Rascal Flatts</b> /Why Wait/Big Machine	2489/96	8	190	2299
6	13	13	<b>Sugarland</b> /Stuck Like Glue/Mercury	2403/90	5	120	2283
15	16	14	<b>Justin Moore</b> /How I Got To Be This Way/Valory Music	2345/97	6	129	2216
22	7	15	<b>Josh Turner</b> /All Over Me/MCA	2328/73	-14	-377	2705
24	15	16	<b>Josh Thompson</b> /Way Out Here/Columbia	2253/87	1	22	2231
12	18	17	<b>Eric Church</b> /Smoke A Little Smoke/Capitol	2101/93	8	151	1950
23	17	18	<b>Rodney Atkins</b> /Farmer's Daughter/Curb	2013/79	-2	-32	2045
5	20	19	<b>Brad Paisley</b> /Anything Like Me/Arista	1976/89	10	179	1797
10	21	20	<b>Miranda Lambert</b> /Only Prettier/Columbia	1893/87	7	117	1776
6	26	21	<b>Luke Bryan</b> /Someone Else Calling You Baby/Capitol	1700/93	16	233	1467
20	23	22	<b>Uncle Kracker</b> /Smile/Atlantic / Bigger Picture	1686/49	-3	-44	1730
27	19	23	<b>Little Big Town</b> /Little White Church/Capitol	1634/48	-10	-187	1821
9	25	24	<b>Joe Nichols</b> /The Shape I'm In/Show Dog-Universal	1618/86	8	117	1501
3	30	25	<b>Zac Brown Band feat. Alan Jackson</b> /As She's Walking Away/Atlantic/BPP	1509/81	22	276	1233

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Weeks On Chart	Last Wk Position	This Wk Position	Artist/Song/Label	Spins/Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +-	Last Wk # Spins
11	28	26	<b>Steel Magnolia</b> /Just By Being You/Big Machine	1439/79	6	86	1353
21	29	27	<b>the JaneDear girls</b> /Wildflower/Warner Bros.	1304/67	5	67	1237
4	33	28	<b>Jason Aldean</b> /My Kinda Party/Broken Bow	1252/75	15	166	1086
11	31	29	<b>Sunny Sweeney</b> /From A Table Away/Republic Nashville	1249/74	4	47	1202
12	32	30	<b>Cody McCarver</b> /I'm America/E1 Records / PLC Records	1175/60	4	43	1132
17	22	31	<b>Keith Urban</b> /I'm In/Capitol	1134/37	-36	-630	1764
3	36	32	<b>Dierks Bentley</b> /Draw Me A Map/Capitol	1108/80	18	166	942
10	35	33	<b>John Rich</b> /Country Done Come To Town/Reprise/WMN	996/58	4	35	961
12	37	34	<b>The Roys</b> /Beautiful/Pedestal	987/51	5	45	942
6	39	35	<b>Chris Young</b> /Voices/RCA	970/58	9	82	888
23	34	36	<b>Bekka Bramlett</b> /I Got News for You/Shongaloo Records	958/42	-3	-32	990
6	40	37	<b>David Adam Byrnes</b> /Sweet Distraction/Better Angels	935/59	13	106	829
2	64	38	<b>Carrie Underwood</b> /Mama's Song/Arista	879/59	117	474	405
12	43	39	<b>Mark Wayne Glasmire</b> /You Opened My Eyes/Traceway	741/39	8	52	689
8	42	40	<b>Katie Armiger</b> /Leaving Home/Cold River	729/54	5	37	692
13	45	41	<b>Lathan Moore</b> /Beautiful Girl/Blue Steel Records	717/38	9	59	658
11	44	42	<b>Matthew Huff</b> /Back Again/MGH Records	704/38	6	38	666
3	51	43	<b>Burns &amp; Poe</b> /How Long Is Long Enough/Blue Steel	695/52	22	124	571
9	47	44	<b>Charlie Allen</b> /Grandpa's Recipe/River Run	686/50	11	66	620
11	46	45	<b>Greg Hanna</b> /What Kind Of Love Are You On?/Pheromone	671/42	6	39	632
9	50	46	<b>Darren Kozelsky</b> /Somebody Find Me a Preacher/Major 7th/Spinville	610/48	6	34	576
3	57	47	<b>Trailer Choir</b> /Shakin' That Tailgate/Show Dog - Universal	604/41	30	141	463
7	53	48	<b>Sherry Lynn</b> /What A Day to Shake A Heartache/Steal Heart	599/39	12	66	533
14	49	49	<b>Due West</b> /Bible And The Belt/Bigger Than Me	597/37	2	10	587
10	52	50	<b>Frankie Ballard</b> /Tell Me You Get Lonely/Reprise/WMN	580/36	4	23	557
13	54	51	<b>Bridgette Tatum</b> /That's Love Y'all/Root 49	527/31	0	2	525
9	55	52	<b>Chelsea Field</b> /Things I Should Have Said/Moxy Records	519/35	0	1	518
2	70	53	<b>Jamey Johnson</b> /Playing The Part/Mercury	514/41	50	172	342

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Weeks On Chart	Last Wk Position	This Wk Position	Artist/Song/Label	Spins/Reports	% Spin Power	Spins +-	Last Wk # Spins
7	56	<b>54</b>	<b>Amber Hayes</b> /C' Mon/Fun! Music	496/36	7	31	465
8	58	<b>55</b>	<b>Hoss Howard</b> /Dirt Road/Legends And Lyrics	475/32	7	29	446
8	60	<b>56</b>	<b>Danny Gokey</b> /I Will Not Say Goodbye/19 Recordings/RCA	459/28	9	37	422
8	62	<b>57</b>	<b>Veronica Ballestrini</b> /Don't Say/Timbob	424/30	4	18	406
8	61	<b>58</b>	<b>Braden Gray</b> /I'm Not Hungover/ATP Records	424/29	1	5	419
2	77	<b>59</b>	<b>Thompson Square</b> /Are You Gonna Kiss Me Or Not/Stoney Creek	419/38	42	123	296
3	67	<b>60</b>	<b>Clay Walker</b> /Where Do I Go From You/Curb	416/31	12	46	370
20	48	<b>61</b>	<b>Zac Brown Band</b> /Free/Atlantic	412/14	-32	-190	602
3	69	<b>62</b>	<b>Mark Cooke</b> /Can't Cheat In A Small Town/Cotton Valley	400/34	14	49	351
9	63	<b>63</b>	<b>Sean Hogan</b> /Suck It Up/Lakeland Heart	394/31	-3	-12	406
1	91	<b>64</b>	<b>James Otto</b> /Soldiers & Jesus/Warner Bros.	392/40	105	201	191
10	65	<b>65</b>	<b>Leah Seawright</b> /Country Girl 101/Skytone Records	385/23	0	0	385
2	78	<b>66</b>	<b>Blaine Larsen</b> /Leavin'/Treehouse / Stroudavarious	383/34	34	98	285
3	73	<b>67</b>	<b>Josh Gracin</b> /Cover Girl/Average Joes	363/31	10	33	330
7	59	<b>68</b>	<b>Blackberry Smoke</b> /Good One Comin' On/BamaJam	362/24	-17	-76	438
4	74	<b>69</b>	<b>Jackie Arredondo</b> /Someone Like You/Gold Voice/Big 7	361/29	10	32	329
5	72	<b>70</b>	<b>Bo Bice</b> /You Take Yourself With You/Saguaro Road Records	360/27	8	28	332
16	41	<b>71</b>	<b>Troy Olsen</b> /Summer Thing/EMI Records Nashville	359/22	-54	-430	789
7	68	<b>72</b>	<b>Martin Ramey</b> /Twisted/Curb	355/24	-4	-13	368
5	71	<b>73</b>	<b>Diamond Rio</b> /This Is My Life/Word Records	337/24	1	3	334
3	76	<b>74</b>	<b>D.J. Miller</b> /A Little Naughty is Nice/Evergreen	328/27	8	24	304
7	80	<b>75</b>	<b>David Bradley</b> /Soak It Up/Gecko	317/21	18	49	268
1	88	<b>76</b>	<b>Badhorse</b> /Mississippi Rain/Global Maximus	306/32	36	81	225
1	84	<b>77</b>	<b>Jaron &amp; TLRTL</b> /That's Beautiful To Me/Jaronwood/Univ Republic/Big Machine	305/25	25	61	244
21	27	<b>78</b>	<b>Jonalee White</b> /Naked As Fools/Lick Records	291/18	-79	-1075	1366
9	79	<b>79</b>	<b>James Wesley</b> /Real/Broken Bow	287/18	7	18	269
1	85	<b>80</b>	<b>Richie Fields</b> /Wichita/Joint Journey	272/23	12	29	243



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