

CFD 2010 Night Show Line-Up

You can't have it both ways.

For those who want the CFD Night Shows to be heavily traditional country (not "country-western," WTE) next summer's line-up should suit you fine.

For those who want the CFD Night Shows to introduce, or bring to Cheyenne for the first time, new and popular country music artists, you're kind of left out in 2010.

Booking Brooks and Dunn on their final tour is a positive and impressive accomplishment. And Alan Jackson is as country as it gets so having him return should satisfy a lot of the gun rack people.

The two nights given over to PBR must be a financial concession. The group, "The Challenger Series" is the minor league tour of PBR. "Built Ford Tough" is the top billing but prefers, or demands, weekend gigs and the Night Shows can attract larger crowds for country music acts than bull riding which only uses part of the seating in the arena. Others get their fill of bull riding at the rodeo.

Two nights remain unfilled and perhaps the names will be big - maybe they can book "The Boss." Yeah, right. Little Steven probably gets paid more than is left for that Friday night event, the first weekend of CFD.

Maybe the Jonas Brothers? Yuck.

Aaron Tippin came onto the country music scene in 1990 and offers songs directed at blue collar America. His nasal sound is more country than Barbara Mandrell. His first hit single was "You've Got To Stand For Something (Or You'll Fall for Anything)." Twice dropped by record labels, for a time he recorded on his personal label, Nippit Records (Tippin backward for my Nebraska readers). Tippin has had many Top 40 singles and three No. 1's. He co-wrote and recorded the patriotic "Where the Stars and Stripes and the Eagle Fly" in 2001 and that was his latest Top Ten country release.

Another Aaron Tippin hit that will get the CFD crowd, assuming enough time has expired for them to get the well lubricated - inebriated - whooping and hollering, will be "Kiss This."

Neal McCoy has been to CFD at least twice before and puts on an energetic show. He also has a very distinctive voice and style and has had such diverse hits as "Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye" to "Billy's Got His Beer Goggles On." McCoy (first McGaughey, then McGoy, finally McCoy) also released an uber-patriotic song, "I Just Came Back From a War." Although without a hit for awhile (after Billy's), he will put on an entertaining show for real country music fans.

Clay Walker is a Level B recording artist but works steadily. He has had six No. 1's, including "If I Could Make a Living." Walker was diagnosed with MS in 1996 and performs charity concerts to raise money for that cause.

Sugarland is the only act booked at this time for CFD 2010 that is at the top of their game. Jennifer Nettles is known to pop fans from her duet with Bon Jovi ("Who Says You Can't Go Home?") and the Sugarland duo (which started as a trio but became a duo in 2006) has released a steady stream of country hits since 2004, when they released "Baby Girl." Nettles and her male musical partner Christian Bush have won awards from AMA, CMT, CMA, ACM and two Grammys. They supplanted Brooks and Dunn as Vocal Duo of the Year in 2007 and have held it since, including 2009.

Alan Jackson is a legend in country music and has released 25 No. 1's and been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. His 2002 hit "Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning?)" won a Grammy as Best Country Song. According to publicity, 2009 was the first time since 1998 that Alan Jackson was not nominated in any category at the recently concluded Country Music Awards. He had received 79 nominations and 16 awards since 1990. Alan Jackson is without a doubt a country music superstar but his popularity has diminished a bit.

CFD probably has limited funds with which to book acts. But, the perfect group to have booked this year - one who would relate to the beer drinking mob at CFD - would be the Zac Brown Band. Zac's the one who sings "Toes" but anyone who saw the group perform on the CMA Awards Show knows they're much more.

2009 CMA Awards

It can't get much more bizarre than this year's County Music Association Awards Show. In contemplating how to describe what country music has become, I ran across this from a 2005 column when describing The Wrights, a group that had the hit single "Down This Road":

"... an unassuming Georgia husband and wife duo who provide a pleasant alternative to country music's popular archetypes -- outlaw revivalists, Jimmy Buffett clones and thin women with thin voices."

George Jones recently said that what was being offered now was "not country." He said, "they should come up with their own name - but it's not country." And, who would know better than The 'Possum?

Thin women with thin voices.

Nothing could better describe Taylor Swift. She is more popular to preteens than peanut butter and jelly sandwiches but she is no more Female Vocalist of the Year than I am Gymnast of the Year.

She shoulders a tremendous responsibility and can offer a great example to the children who are her audience. With songs like her new "15," she can convey a message of responsibility and caring about yourself that no other singer this side of Miley Cyrus can. And Miley has become a lightning rod for unwise personal choices so the mantle falls on Taylor Swift. A thin woman with a thin voice.

Whoever chooses the nominees for CMA awards has long been difficult to understand. Tobey Keith has won only twice, and has not been nominated since 2005. LeeAnn Womack has not been nominated since 2005 either. Jason Aldean, who held the No. 1 spot on the charts for weeks, was not nominated this year.

The Taylor Swift sweep of awards was by far the most undeserved. But close behind had to be Darius Rucker being chosen as New Artist of the Year.

In 1996, Hootie and the Blowfish won a Grammy as Best New Artist. A Grammy is the most coveted music award - far more impressive and important than any from country music award shows.

Darius Rucker is, of course, "Hootie" of that popular group from the 1990's. His album, "Cracked Rear View," is one of the best selling albums of all-time. It has gone platinum **SIXTEEN TIMES!** Over 16 million copies of that album have been sold - ranking it with Elton John, Garth Brooks, The Eagles and Alanis Morissette. Only eleven (11) albums have sold more copies **ALL-TIME!** How in the world could Darius Rucker be a New Artist anywhere, anytime, in any genre?

If Barbra Streisand releases a country album, would she be eligible for Best New Artist of the Year? Patti LaBelle? How about Meatloaf? And Rucker was nominated for Male Vocalist ahead of Billy Currington, Toby Keith, Trace Atkins, Alan Jackson and Jason Aldean?

Big & Rich were nominated for Best Duo and they did not perform or tour together in 2009. John Rich became a solo performer and Big Kenny went off somewhere to find some funky new hats.

Getting back to the "thin girl with the thin voice." It may have promoted country music by heaping awards on the youngster who does better on the pop charts than on the country charts but it was an insult to the better female singers like Carrie Underwood and Martina McBride. Not to mention those who were not even nominated, like Lee Ann Womack.

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