

On Music Row: Idol audience presents marketing bonanza for Row stars

Music Row staff

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American Idol will feature the Grand Ole Opry on March 17 and 18 and showcase Opry members Carrie Underwood, Brad Paisley plus Randy Travis, who is the show's musical mentor this season. In addition, Sony and Warner Bros. are leveraging the show's audience of more than 24 million in some interesting and unconventional ways.

Underwood's recording of Motley Crue's "Home Sweet Home" was chosen as the season's soundtrack for its weekly Idol-going-home segment. It is currently on sale as a digital track.

Underwood will also sing "I Told You So" with Travis this week and the digital duet will immediately be available for sale online. This track appears concurrently with her hit solo version of the song now climbing the charts.

Paisley will perform his new single, "Then," for the first time on Idol and immediately offered as a digital single. Also taking advantage of this mass-market bonanza, Travis will release his new CD on March 17 to capitalize on the coverage.



Surely, all these marketing hooks are no coincidence. *Music Row* checked in with Sony Music Chairman Joe Galante told *Music Row* last week that his team's first release of a digital-only single by Underwood — the song she performed on last year's Idol Gives Back show — spurred thoughts of developing a song for this year's edition.

"She demoed 'Home Sweet Home,' everyone loved it, and it wound up being the song for the 'going home' segment," Galante said. "And the Randy/Carrie duet came about because it is a special occasion. Randy was the one that introduced her on the Opry and asked her to join. The idea became a natural after the Idol folks decided to do Opry week and Randy became the mentor."

Asked about his sales expectations, Galante said music lovers of many stripes will jump at the online-only offerings.

"There's no doubt in my mind that the fans are going to want to capture this moment."

Opryland revs up with new 'experiences'

Gaylord Opryland Resort has announced seven new "Country Music Experiences" that the hotel is touting as part of "the nation's most authentic country music vacation."

The new experiences include:

- Gibson's Check-In, Rock Out!: This new program allows guests to create music in their rooms by choosing from a variety of Gibson guitars to lease for a day. Guests receive a "Pocket Pod" amplifier with headphones so they won't disturb other guests while rocking out in their rooms.

- **Opry Country Classics:** Beginning March 26, Opry Country Classics at the Grand Ole Opry House will feature a revolving door of hosts that will feature Larry Gatlin, Marty Stuart and John Conlee performing classic country songs along with storytelling and vintage country film clips.
- **World-Famous Wildhorse House Band Search Contest:** Incoming Wild Horse Saloon manager Ron Kerere will oversee a number of new activities at the downtown Nashville venue, including this nationwide competition for a new house band that will be held late spring.

RCA promotion director leaves

Effective March 12, RCA Nashville Director of National Promotion Doug Baker has exited the company. With RCA for the past eight years, Baker served as the label's director of Southeast regional promotion before rising to director of national promotion in 2006.

Baker's resume also includes stints as national director of promotion for Virgin Nashville and director of radio marketing for Capitol Nashville. He also spent more than 15 years in country radio, with tenures at KNIX Phoenix, WFMS Indianapolis and Nashville's WSIX.

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