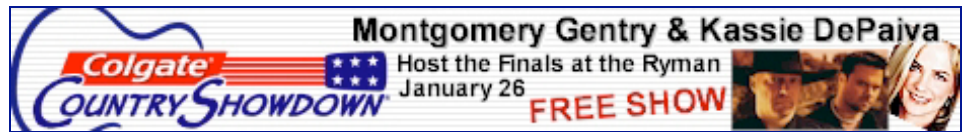


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Latest News: Updated 1/9/06

Music Industry Veterans to Judge 24th Annual Colgate Country Showdown

NASHVILLE, Tennessee--Five Nashville music industry veterans have been invited to judge the 24th Annual Colgate Country Showdown. [Craig Campbell](#) (Sony Records), [Keith Follese](#) (Midas Records) Producer, [Garth Fundis](#), [Mike Martinovich](#) (The Consortium Group) and [Tinti Moffat](#) (William Morris Agency) will be seated as professional critics at the National Finals as the five regional winners compete for \$100,000 and the title of *Best New Act in Country Music*. The National Finals, to be held Thursday, January 26, 2006 at the Ryman Auditorium, will be taped for television where country music duo Montgomery Gentry will star in America's Largest Talent Search, hosted by Kassie DePaiva of ABC's *One Life To Live*.

The 2006 Finals event judges are:

Craig Campbell

A 21-year music industry veteran, Campbell is the Vice President of Press and Publicity for Sony Music Nashville and has spent the last twelve years heading media efforts for the company's Epic and Columbia labels. He has been instrumental in the success of the Dixie Chicks, Miranda Lambert, Patty Loveless, Montgomery Gentry, Gretchen Wilson and others. Campbell is a past judge for the Showdown.

Keith Follese

Named both ASCAP and BILLBOARD magazine's Songwriter of the Year, he has held the #1 Single chart position for a record 15 weeks. Keith Follese had #1 singles with Randy Travis, Little Texas, Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, Martina McBride and Lonestar. He continues to write with top producers and artist all over the world including Rhett Lawrence, Jorgen Elofsson, Jessica Simpson, Marc Anthony, Lance Bass, Brian Latrell, Wynonna, Jo Dee Messina, Kenny Chesney, Darius Rucker, Nick Lachey, Jamie O'Neal, Gary Burr and Cliff

Magness.

Garth Fundis

An independent record producer and recording engineer with over 30 years of experience in Nashville's music industry, Garth Fundis' credits read like a who's who of country music with artists such as Trisha Yearwood, Keith Whitley, Don Williams, Waylon Jennings, Emmylou Harris, Alabama, Buddy Jewell, and most recently, 2005's breakout success story, Sugarland. A past Showdown judge, Fundis' collaborations with his artists have earned numerous awards from the Country Music Association, Academy of Country Music, Billboard and American Music Awards as well as a host of GRAMMY nominations. He is also the owner of Nashville's legendary Sound Emporium Recording Studios and a past Showdown judge.

Mike Martinovich

Spending his entire corporate career with CBS Records/Sony Music Martinovich played an integral role in the successes of Billy Joel, Barbra Streisand, Placido Domingo, Michael Jackson, Willie Nelson, Bruce Springsteen, Journey, James Taylor and Pink Floyd. In Nashville, he led the marketing team that launched Ricky Van Shelton, designed a marketing campaign, which gave Dolly Parton and Patty Loveless their first platinum albums in years and spearheaded the marketing thrust behind Joe Diffie, Collin Raye and Mary Chapin Carpenter. Martinovich is a past Showdown judge.

Tinti Moffat

Moffat joined the William Morris Agency in April 2001 and is responsible for signing Katrina Elam, Sugarland, Jon Randall and others. Previously, she formed and operated a successful independent booking agency then held a 12-year tenure at Balmur Entertainment, an artist management and music publishing house. Currently, she is a member of the CMA, NARAS, an alumna of Leadership Music and sits on the board of the W.O. Smith Community Music School. She is the founder and Chair of "The Birdhouse Thing," an annual fundraising event benefiting the W.O. Smith Community Music School and she is project coordinator for the annual William Morris build day for Habitat for Humanity.

Each spring, the nationwide Colgate Country Showdown search begins with more than 400 country music radio stations producing over 500 shows to find the best new country musical talent in their market. Radio station winners compete at state and five regional competitions throughout the summer and fall. The Colgate Country Showdown culminates with a national television final that has been hosted in the past by country music superstars such as Barbara Mandrell, Reba McEntire, Willie Nelson, Sara Evans and Billy Ray Cyrus.

Before They Were Famous...

These are just some of the notable country music artists who have competed in the Country Showdown for the title of *Best New Act in Country Music*:

- *Sweethearts of the Rodeo* (1985) *National Winner*
- *Martina McBride* (1981) *Kansas State Winner & National Finalist*
- *Neal McCoy* (1981) *Texas State Winner & National Finalist*
- *Erika Jo* *Tennessee State Winner & National Finalist*
- *Sara Evans* *Missouri State Winner*
- *Billy Ray Cyrus* *Kentucky State Winner*
- *John Michael Montgomery* *Kentucky State Winner*
- *John Berry* *Georgia State Winner*
- *Bobby Pinson* *California State Winner*
- *Miranda Lambert* *Texas State Winner*
- *Chad Brock* *Florida State Winner*
- *Garth Brooks* *Oklahoma Local Winner (and backup band)*
- *Toby Keith* *Local Winner (performing as a member of Easy Money band)*
- *Tim McGraw* *Local Winner*
- *Tracy Lawrence* *Local Winner*
- *Tracy Byrd* *Local Winner*
- *Mark Chesnutt* *Local Winner*
- *Brad Paisley* *Local Winner*
- *Billy Dean* *Local Winner*
- *Katrina Elam* *Local Winner*

For the very first time, the 2006 competition will feature FIVE women – listed with their sponsoring radio stations

- West Regional winner, Michelle Rene' (KZUA Show Low, AZ); Northeast Regional winner, Jessi (WBRT Bardstown, KY); Midwest Regional winner Ashley Ford (KNDK Langdon, ND); Southwest Regional winner Rebecca Frederick (KKNK Oklahoma City, OK) and Southeast Regional winner Catherine Ritter (WKBL Covington, TN).

The National Final will air nationwide in March and April over syndicated television with a second airing to follow on Great American Country and can be seen internationally on government access channels in more than 175 countries.

Colgate-Palmolive is the national sponsor and leading global consumer-products company tightly focused on Oral Care, Personal Care, Household Surface Care, Fabric Care and Pet Nutrition. In the U.S., Colgate sells its quality products under such nationally recognized brand names as Colgate, Palmolive, Mennen, Ajax, Irish Spring, Softsoap, Murphy Oil Soap, Ultra Brite and Fab.

For more information how to enter and to learn which television station is carrying the show in your area, please visit the Colgate Country Showdown website at www.colgatecountryshowdown.com.

24th Annual Televised Colgate Country Showdown National Final Starring Montgomery Gentry & Hosted by Kassie DePaiva

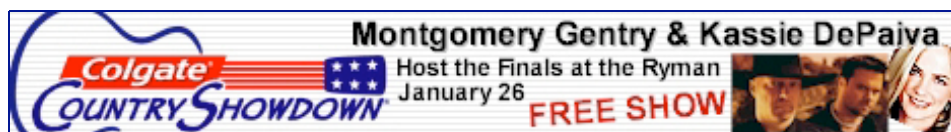
TV Special to be Produced at The Ryman Where Five Finalists Compete for \$100,000

Nashville, TN, (date)— Country music duo Montgomery Gentry stars in America's Largest Talent Search, hosted by Kassie DePaiva of ABC's *One Life To Live*. The 24th annual Colgate Country Showdown National Final will be produced from the Ryman Auditorium on January 26, 2005 and will air nationwide in March and April over syndicated television with a second airing to follow on Great American Country. The National Final will also be seen internationally on government access channels in more than 175 countries. The one-hour show will feature five regional winners, each competing for the Grand Prize of \$100,000 and the title of Best New Act in Country Music.

Montgomery Gentry (Eddie Montgomery and Troy Gentry) has become a headlining act for Sony Music Nashville's Columbia Records. Their CD *You Do Your Thing* went gold and the duo had their first #1 spot on both country single charts - Billboard and R&R - with "If You Ever Stop Loving Me". Montgomery Gentry was named the CMA's Duo of the Year and received the American Music Award for Favorite New Artist - Country, also taking honors as the Academy of Country Music's Top New Vocal Group or Duo and the 2000 and 2001 Radio & Records Readers' Poll award for Top Country Duo.

Kassie DePaiva (pictured right) is widely known for her role as Blair Cramer on ABC's *One Life To Live* and Emmy nominee for 2005 Best Daytime Actress. She was the 2003 Colgate Country Showdown host.

The show is free but you must reserve your seats in advance, for more ticket information call Erin at 615.321.5130 or email at erin@countryshowdown.com.



Finalist Bios

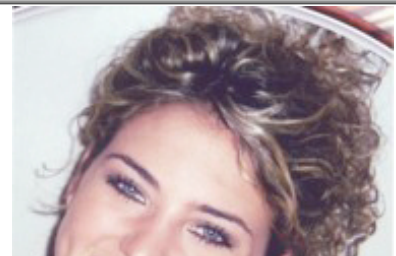
Michelle René

West Regional Winner

Home Town: Phoenix, AZ

www.MichelleRene.com

Michelle René, remembers the first time she sang a solo - as a cow in a nativity scene. Moving on, musically, she began performing throughout



Arizona the past four years at state and county fairs, music festivals, professional sports arenas, talent shows and local TV shows. She also has her own show, *The Michelle René Show*, at Desert Ridge in North Phoenix every Saturday at The District AMC Fountain Stage. As a singer/songwriter, she has the opportunity to record her own music for demos, play guitar and perform with her band, The Michelle René Band. According to René, "I love being able to express myself through my music and see who it touches and entertains."

Michelle won her local show with KZUA in Show Low, AZ; the Arizona State Final at the Yavapai County Fair in Prescott Valley, AZ and the West Regional at the Stockman's Hotel & Casino in Elko, NV.



Jessi

Northeast Regional Winner

Home Town: Bardstown, KY

Jessi began performing in church, school plays, competitions and recitals at a young age. Her original dream was to become a dancer, even founding and opening her own studio, Dance Pros of Bardstown, Inc. after graduating high school. She worked with her young singers and dancers on stage presence and instilled the importance of feeling the music. After three years in a successful business, Jessi sold the studio and moved to Nashville, working at the Red Iguanas' Wanna B's. Recently, she teamed up with a local band, As Is, from her hometown and have opened for Hot Apple Pie and Blake Shelton. She has also used her musical talents to entertain audiences at the Nelson County Fair, the Bourbon Festival and the Lincoln Jamboree. Jessi says she is "able to pull you into the songs she sings whether it is a break your heart ballad or bring you to your feet get down song."

Jessi won her local show with WBRT in Bardstown, KY; the Kentucky State Final at the Executive Inn Rivermont in Owensboro, KY and the Northeast Regional at the Capitol Music Hall in Wheeling, WV.



Rebecca Frederick

Southwest Regional Winner

Home Town: Ada, OK

www.RebeccaFrederick.com

Rebecca Frederick considers herself "blessed with a unique background having been born in Argentina where my parents were missionaries, and living there the first 12 years of my life." While in Argentina, she began singing in church with her sisters before branching out as a solo act. At age six, she played Cossette in the musical *Les Miserables*. She has entertained audiences on the Carnival Cruise Lines, 4th of July Special with Collin Raye, and the Centennial Rodeo Opry at Magnificent Country in Branson, MO. She was awarded the Top Ten Female Vocalist in Branson, the Aura and Tele Awards at the Showcase Jubilee and the Female Vocalist of the Year for the McSwain Musical Theatre. Rebecca's talent can be described in one word: Diversity. From her voice to her songwriting, her music could easily fit into several musical genres: country, blues, pop.

Rebecca won her local show with KKNB in Oklahoma, OK; the Oklahoma State Final at the Tumbleweed Concert Arena in Stillwater, OK and the Southwest Regional at the Sky City Casino in Acoma, NM.

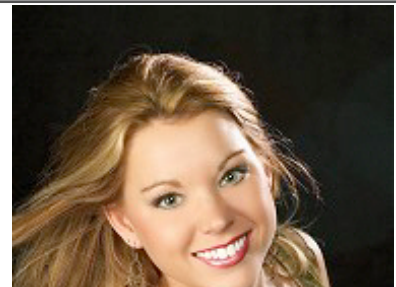


Ashley Ford

Midwest Regional Winner

Home Town: Cavalier, ND

Ashley Ford began singing as a child in church, she has been playing the piano for nine years and had private vocal training. The University of North Dakota communication major has opened for country sensation Rascal Flatts, Terri Clark, and Sawyer Brown, and has performed at the North Dakota State. Ashley was crowned the 2005 Miss North Dakota, was a contestant at the



Miss America 2005 pageant and a performer at the Miss North Dakota 2006 pageant. She has sang and spoke to over 20,000 students at 80 schools throughout the U.S. Ashley says that "country music is my passion and my goal when I'm performing is to entertain my audience so they feel connected with my music."

Ashley won her local show with KNDK in Langdon, ND; the North Dakota State Final at Kickin' Up Kountry in Lake Bronson, MN and the Midwest Regional at the Royal River Casino in Flandreau, SD.



Catherine Ritter

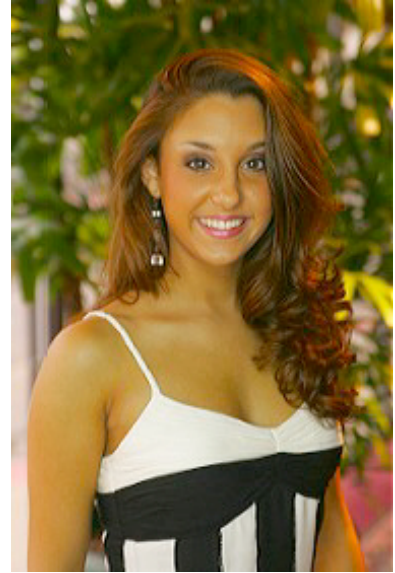
Southeast Regional Winner

Home Town: Linden, TN

Catherine Ritter is no stranger to musical competitions; she came in 2nd at the West Tennessee Idol competition, won the TSTV Talent Search at Opry Mills, earned a 2nd place title for the Sonic Search for a Star Competition and was a finalist in Nashville's famous Wildhorse Saloon's Sing to Win contest.

She sings the National Anthem at sporting events, political rallies and is actively involved in her church's youth praise team. Currently, she performs at the Huntington Hayride, a live onstage radio show, along with Dixie Carter, Car Mann, Kelly Cash and Linda Davis. Catherine is currently the Miss Teen Tennessee 1st Runner-up. She has performed with the band 6Stroke and opened for the Christian duo Lost and Found.

Catherine won her local show with WKBL in Covington, TN; the Tennessee State Final at the Tennessee Valley Fair in Knoxville, TN and the Southeast Regional at The Ritz Theatre in Thomaston, GA.



Are you an Indie Artist looking to increase your fan base? Contact [Jim Weaver](#) today to learn how CSO can help.

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