



Last updated Wednesday, 25 January -- Edited by Skye Rivers

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Me mate, Russell

-- **David Lee Murphy**, currently in Australia for Tamworth's Country Music festival, says he's looking forward to catching up with his pal, **Russell Crowe**.



The pair met last year when the Oscar-winning actor went to two of Murphy's concerts down under, and he says they hit it off immediately.

"I was trying not to name-drop, but we are talking about getting together with Russell to do some writing while I am here," Murphy tells Seven.com.

Mr. Haney, I presume

-- **Mark McGuinn**, who had a monster hit with "Mrs. Steven Rudy" in 2001, is back on the music scene with his first studio album in four years.

McGuinn describes his writing style and new project, "One Man's Crazy," by saying "I like to think of myself as 'Mr. Haney' (Green Acres) with a Martin (guitar). Popcorn-with Hollendaise Sauce -- that's how I describe my music."

Someone's been into the wine cabinet.

Strait packing 'em in

-- **George Strait's** "2006 Arena Tour, which rolled out January 12, recently played sold-out shows in Omaha, Oklahoma City and Little Rock.

At the Little Rock show, Strait hosted Alltel Arena's largest crowd in the history of the venue, performing before 17,559 people. The previous record was set by Strait himself.



The tour, with opening acts **Miranda Lambert** and **Tracy Lawrence**, will hit 25 cities in the U.S. and Canada, between now and June.

Livin' on sponge cake

-- **Lee Ann Womack** is itching to be where there's no ice in the water bucket. Her dream of a trip to Fiji will finally come true next month, when she and husband Frank, jet off to their "long-awaited honeymoon" on the island.

Newsstand

['Heart of Gold' finds Neil Young mining tradition](#)
WTOP

[TV Producer Recalls Good Times with Elvis Presley](#)
Voice of America

[Directness drives Cash's 'Black Cadillac'](#)
Boston.com

[Ricky Skaggs and Marty Stuart wow New York](#)
Reuters

[Court: Hank Williams' heirs own rights to old recordings](#)
AL.com

[Book Review: Rednecks & Bluenecks: The Politics of Country Music](#)
Seattle Weekly

[New York's in a Joel state of mind](#)
New York Daily News

The Big Showdown

-- **Montgomery Gentry** will star in the 24th annual Colgate Country Showdown National Final, taking place at the Ryman Auditorium on Thursday (1/26).

Hosted by **Kassie DePaiva** of ABC's "One Life To Live," the Showdown will air nationwide in March and April over syndicated television with a second airing to follow on Great American Country.

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."

Take the money and run

-- **Brad Paisley's** "Time Well Wasted" tour just finished a five-city run in western Canada this past weekend, playing to over 40,000 fans and grossing over 2 million dollars.

The tour returns to the States this weekend, with shows in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Indiana.

Messina digs out her woolies

-- Avid sports fan, **Jo Dee Messina**, will be an exclusive correspondent at the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Torino, Italy, February 13 through the 24th.



Messina will provide Westwood One Olympic affiliates with exclusive feature reports, in her own words, based on her day-to-day experience as a sports fan and spectator.

Big boys on the block

-- **Big & Rich** will host the GuitarTown Auction at BMI in Nashville on February 23. **Vince Gill, Bill Anderson, Jamie O'Neal, Brenda Lee** and **Lee Roy Parnell** are also among those taking part in the doings.

The 10-foot guitar sculptures that have been exhibited around Nashville in recent months, will be auctioned off. Proceeds go to a number of charities.

London Calling

-- **Dierks Bentley's** recent wedding caught plenty of people by surprise -- and it wasn't by accident. Dierks gives the lowdown to "Country Music Across America's" special UK corespondent, **Mark Hagan** of London's BBC.



"I do so much in the public eye that, when it came to getting married I thought it was something that needed to be more private," Bentley explains, "so I just kind of went and snuck off to Mexico, took care of all the legal stuff, made it legal and got back on the road right afterwards."

Adding, "I just didn't want the circus that surrounds it to be bigger than the actual wedding itself so we decided to do it kind of private."

About making his way around London, Dierks says, "my first impression is make sure you look both ways when crossing the street. 'Cause I keep looking the wrong way."

CMAA catches up with Bentley on his whirlwind tour of the UK, Thursday night, on GAC.

Look who's back

-- On their upcoming album, the **Dixie Chicks** get help from members of the **Jayhawks**, the **Heartbreakers**, **Chili Peppers**, and noted producer **Rick Rubin**, according to Entertainment weekly.

Is it a rock album? Not exactly. "It sounds more like '70s **Eagles** than 'System of a Down,' explains the group's **Emily Robison**.

The trio reportedly delves into what they refer to as "the incident" (The 2003 UK problem), on the song "Not Ready to Make Nice" -- and on breaking up with country radio, with "Lubbock or Leave It."

"We feel free," **Natalie Maines** tells EW. "We go into this thinking, No one's going to play it -- and it's fine. We made it for people who want to hear it."

If the new album, due in April, can inject some excitement into country music, I'll buy 3 copies.

Urban & Hill pairing up at Grammys

-- Grammy nominees **Keith Urban** and **Faith Hill** will appear together as part of what the Recording Academy calls "unique pairings," at next month's Grammy Awards.

Hill is nominated for Best Female Country Vocal Performance ("Mississippi Girl"), Best Country Collaboration With Vocals ("Like We Never Loved At All" with Tim McGraw), and Best Country Album ('Fireflies').

Urban is up for Best Male Country Vocal Performance ("You'll Think Of Me").

Big & Rich will appear as presenters.

The 48th Annual Grammy Awards will take place on Wednesday, February 8, at Staples Center in Los Angeles, and will air on CBS at 8pm (ET/PT).

Mmmmm! Flipper burgers

-- **LeAnn Rimes** headlines SeaWorld's Bud and BBQ Fest, in Orlando, February 4- 25. **Lonestar** and **Lorrie Morgan** are also part of the festival lineup.

Itty Bitty Bites

-- Today in 1992, **Sawyer Brown** tops the charts with "The Dirt Road."

-- **Nickel Creek** performs on "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," tonight (1/25).

-- **Van Zant** will be in Nashville this week to tape GAC TV's "Music Mix" and "GAC Nights."

-- **LeAnn Rimes** and husband, Dean, appear in the "Instyle Wedding Special," airing Monday (1/30) on ABC, at 8pm.

-- **Jace Everett's** self-titled album will hit stores on March 7.

-- Nominations for the **Junos**, the Canadian equivalent of the Grammy Awards or Australia's ARIAs, will be announced February 15 in Toronto

-- New in stores: **Kenny Rogers**, "21 Number Ones" - **Josh Turner**, "Your Man" - **The Gibson Brothers**, "Red Letter Day" - **Rosanne Cash**, "Black Cadillac."

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