

24th Annual Colgate Country Showdown National Final News

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.

24th Annual Colgate Country Showdown National Final (the Longest Running National Country Music Talent Competition) to be held in televised from Nashville, Tennessee Starring Montgomery Gentry & Hosted by Kassie DePaiva

Five Finalists Compete for \$100,000 at the Ryman Auditorium--All Women In The Competition!

Before Nashville Star and American Idol were even an idea on paper, The Country Showdown was well under way and embraced by country fans across the nation. Celebrating its 24th year, the Colgate Country Showdown is America's largest country music talent search and competition--a grass roots music competition designed to seek out and showcase the most promising country music talent in the U.S. The 2006 Competition will feature FIVE women!

Contest Outline:

The Colgate Country Showdown begins each spring with over 400 local talent contests (sponsored by country music radio stations throughout the US to find the best new musical talent in their market). Winners from the local competition advance to their respective State competitions held at the State's leading fairs and expositions. Acts who have made it to the State level then compete for a \$1,000 prize, the State Title and the opportunity to advance to one of five Regional Finals. The Regional Final is the last competition before the prestigious National Final. The National Final is historically televised to a national audience from country music's most well known and widely recognized venues--like the stage of the Grand Ole Opry House, the historic Ryman Auditorium, the Grand Palace Theatre in Branson, Epcot Center at Walt DisneyWorld and Universal Studio-Florida.

The nationally televised one-hour special has been hosted in the past by country music superstars such as Sara Evans, Barbara Mandrell, Reba McEntire, Willie Nelson, and more.

Audiences from coast-to-coast cheer on the Regional Winners as they compete for the National Title and the Grand Prize of \$100,000 affording the winner the chance to launch his or her professional music careers.

Ashley Ford (KNDK Langdon, ND – Minnesota/N. Dakota State/Midwest Regional)

Cavalier, North Dakota's Ashley Ford, 22, began singing as a child in church, has been playing the piano for nine years and has grown as a musician. The University of North Dakota communication major has opened for country sensation Rascal Flatts, performed at the North Dakota State Fair and co-produced a tsunami benefit with the University of North Dakota President, Charles Kupchella. She performed at the Kick'n Up Kountry Music Festival and has sung in more than 80 schools. She is the 2005 Miss North Dakota, a contestant at the Miss America 2005 pageant and a performer at the Miss North Dakota 2006 pageant. Her biggest musical influences are her family, voice coach and country stars Faith Hill, Martina McBride and Shania Twain. She considers Martina McBride's "When God-Fearin' Women Get the Blues" as her favorite song to perform because "it's full of energy and a fun song that I think can really lift others up". Ford won the KNDK local show in Langdon, ND; the Minnesota/North Dakota State Final at Kick'n Up Kountry Music Festival in Hallock, MN and the Midwest Regional at Royal River Casino in Flandreau, South Dakota.

Rebecca Frederick (KKing Oklahoma City, OK – Oklahoma State/Southwest Regional)

Ada, Oklahoma's 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" where 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, the Centennial Rodeo Opry and at Magnificent Country in Branson, MO. Although it's difficult to name all of her musical influence, Frederick starts her list with The Judds, Reba McEntire, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Martina McBride, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Simon and Garfunkel and, of course, "My Mommy!" 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. Aside from her vocal talent, she also plays piano, survives on the drums and is learning guitar. Frederick won her local competition with KKing of Oklahoma City, OK; the Oklahoma State Final at the Tumbleweed Concert Arena in Stillwater, OK and the

24th Annual Colgate Country Showdown National Final/January 26, 2006:

This year 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 24th Annual Colgate Country Showdown National Final will be held on Thursday, January 26, 2006 the Ryman Auditorium, Nashville, TN.

For the first time, FIVE young WOMEN make up the cast of regional winners who will compete for the national title and \$100,000 grand prize.

They are (listed with their sponsoring radio stations):

Michelle Rene' (KZUA Show Low, AZ – Arizona State/West Regional)

Eighteen-year-old Michelle Rene', from Phoenix, Arizona, 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 Rene' Band. According to Rene', "I love to sing and perform my own brand of country music. By the response of the crowd, they love it too! I learn a lot from the fans. It's great because there will be people from 8 to 80 in the audience." Rene' won her local show with KZUA in Show Low, AZ; the Arizona State Final at the Yavapai County Fair in Prescott, AZ and the West Regional at The Commercial Casino in Elko, Nevada.

Jessi (WBRT Bardstown, KY – Kentucky State/Northeast Regional)

A 23-year-old Bardstown, Kentucky native, Jessi began performing in church, school plays and competitions 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. They opened for Hot Apple Pie in November and are scheduled at the Dan Talbott Amphitheatre with Blake Shelton next spring. She has also

Southwest Regional at the Sky City Casino in Acoma, New Mexico.

Catherine Ritter (WKBL Covington, TN – Tennessee State/Southeast Regional)

Catherine Ritter of Linden, Tennessee 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 performs 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 and Kelly Cash and is the Miss Teen Tennessee 1st Runner-up. She has performed with the band 6Stroke and opened for the Christian duo Lost and Found. Ritter won the WKBL local show in Covington, TN; the Tennessee State Final in Knoxville, TN at the Tennessee Valley Fair and the Southeast Regional at The Ritz Theatre in Thomaston, Georgia.

*Photos of the contestants may be obtained by visiting www.colgatecountryshowdown.com / Media Downloads

The National Finals will air nationwide in March and April over syndicated television with a second airing to follow on Great American Country (GAC). The National Final will also 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 on the Colgate Country Showdown visit www.colgatecountryshowdown.com.

used her musical talents to entertain audiences at the Nelson County Fair, the Bourbon Festival and the Lincoln Jamboree. She is comfortable serenading guests at weddings or belting out songs to get crowds involved in the entertainment. Jessi won her local competition with WBRT in Bardstown, KY; the Kentucky State Final at the Executive Inn Rivermont in Owensboro, KY and the Northeast Regional at Capitol City Music Hall in Wheeling, West Virginia.

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