

The Country Music Awards Report

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Most people think the Country Music Awards is just a TV show that is produced out of Nashville once a year. Little do they realize the work begins with the Country Music Association hosting monthly meeting and events all over the United States.

Every city had the opportunity to bid on hosting the show, but New York pulled out all the stops to host the 2005 show, including the Mayor playing his guitar for Nashville. That took guts!

The day the announcement was made that Brooks & Dunn would host the show at Madison Square Garden, the media frenzy commenced. Between interviews and publicity photos, it kept a team of wardrobe, make-up and hair stylists hopping throughout the year, just for a three hour show.

Having worked with Brooks & Dunn for several years, it was my job to help them maintain a consistent look from the time of the announcement until the show aired nearly a year later. I was also responsible for maintaining their look for every publicity event the week of the show, sometimes waking as early as 3 or 4 am and working through the night for several straight days.

The camera seems to be drawn to their charming and memorable faces. They both sport facial hair, so keeping their skin young and fresh presents its own challenges. TiGi / Bed Head has supported them by keeping them in the latest facial and hair care products.

Keeping on the forefront of the country music scene presents its own challenges in the hair department. The window of pushing the limit can be tricky with the look and hair care constantly changing. One style maybe perceived as boring to some and crazy for others. The question is, will the fans accept it and how will this transfer through the camera eye. Kix's hair is thick and curly in texture and can give you volume if you are looking for it. His chestnut brown locks change over the season because of his outdoor lifestyle. The opposite is true for Ronnie's. You'll find his locks bouncing behind a mixing board in a studio. Changing back and forth from razor to sheer cuts or a touch of color here and there is the challenge of keeping this country boy within any limits.

The week preceding the Awards Show broadcast, Brooks & Dunn were camera-ready when their boots hit the ground. Paparazzi were outside their hotel and TV cameras followed their every move. There was never a dull moment. The ambitious schedule of changing locations due to live televised interviews and satellite promotions sometimes left me on the street corner with map in hand.

The next day they opened Wall Street by ringing the bell. They made history by singing on top of the marquee of the Madison Square Garden. It stopped all movement as far as the eye could see. The day of the show a complete rehearsal was priceless; it cleared up most of the glitches ahead of time. While the guest artists ran through their songs and left to prepare for the night, there was no down time for the hosts as they continued to work closely with the director, fine tuning the show.

I must admit, there is something magical about a live show. As show time approached, the energy kicked up as we got in our off-stage seat, a private enclosed area in the stands with the producer and director. You know the set-up, with all the monitors and the director calling the camera angles. This spot was more important than being close to our changing room, as the show could change within a moment's notice.

A prime example – the booth got a call during the show from the manager of an artist who was about to do a live feed from Times Square. New York was not going to let the artist, Garth Brooks, do a sound check because he didn't have clearance. There is nothing like a hotline to the Mayor!

Keeping everything handled in the control booth, it allowed the backstage crew to work like a well-oiled machine. In the dim lights, they were responsible for the constant moving maze of large platforms with fully dressed-out sets, moving fluidly as if they were in a dance. In between these moving sets you have trails of people that transfer from one side to the other lining up to go on live.

While there is an anxious air as everyone is waiting to hear the next winner announced, it's really more like a family reunion as artists, bands and their entourage celebrating together.

There is a feeling you walk away with when you work a live show. The way the teamwork happens when all these people come together is rewarding in itself. It gives you an energy that you take home with you. And despite the unglamorous hours, you just can't wait for next year's show.

I'm proud to be in the shadows and just one of the many people that it takes to make a live televised show a great experience for the millions who are watching.

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