

ABOUT FACE

Artist Alumni Look Back At Their Big CRS Moment



Joe Nichols



Jason Aldean



Emerson Drive

Keith Urban
(in The Ranch)

Craig Morgan

Five of country's most promising young performers will play for an imposing CRS crowd during the New Faces show on March 7, and all will worry their careers hang in the balance. Seeking a more mature perspective on the event, we asked successful artists who have moved on from that stage of their career to look back at their own New Faces performance.

TRACE ADKINS, 1997

What do you remember most about that night?

I remember somebody telling me, "Don't expect them to clap and stuff. It's a tough crowd." So you mentally prepare yourself for that before you go out there.

What did it mean to your career at the time?

I was nervous about it and remember feeling like it was the Super Bowl. Like it was a performance where I really need to be "on" and do my best. There was a lot of pressure.

What does it mean looking back?

It helped me get a No. 1 record. We were trying to go for No. 1 with "Thinkin' Thing" and that performance is probably the reason we got there.

Would you go back and change anything if you could?

Probably not. I didn't go out there trying to be anything other than who I was. Who's on it this year?

Luke Bryan, Jason Michael Carroll, Bucky Covington, Jake Owen and Taylor Swift.

Luke, Bucky and Jason have been on the road with me this tour.

Have they asked for any advice?

No, but I'm going to tell them some stuff now.



to me by my label guys. We felt like, "Yes, they got to see me do what I do best, and now they hopefully know that I'm here to stay!"

Would you change anything?

I would do things exactly the same, except maybe be a little more confident.

JAY DEMARCUS, RASCAL FLATTS, 2002

What do you remember most about that night?

We were very nervous. No, we were scared to death! It was so important to make a good impression. Even though we had been out on our radio promo tour introducing ourselves and performing acoustically in conference rooms, this was a much bigger stage for us.

What did it mean to your career at the time?

We were building a relationship with Country radio and we knew radio would be an integral part of our success. Radio was there for us at the beginning with "Prayin' For Daylight" and by the time we did the New Faces Show we wanted to solidify our place with them.



What did that performance mean to your career?

At the time it meant that we thought we were doing something right. It means a lot looking back, knowing our band is still going strong and continuing to make music that fans and radio want to hear.

Are there any aspects of that performance people might be surprised to know?

We all felt at the time, and still do, that four to five songs never gives an artist a chance to really showcase their music.

If you could send a note back in time to yourself, what would it say?

Treat it like any other show!



JOE NICHOLS, 2003

What do you remember most about that night?

Being scared to death. I wanted to perform well, but not come across as a guy who was just doing another show.

What did it mean to your career at the time?

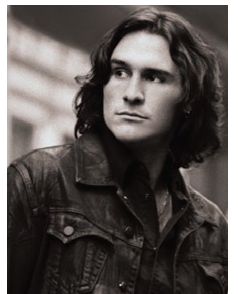
It gave me instant credibility by letting everyone see that I was a "country singer."

Are there any aspects of that performance people might be surprised to know? Travel problems, rehearsal glitches or wardrobe malfunctions?

I did "Farewell Party" instead of all original songs, because I felt like it was a do-or-die moment, and that song is definitely do-or-die.

If you could go back and give yourself some advice, what would it be?

I would write a note to myself and simply say, "Relax."



JASON ALDEAN, 2006

What do you remember about your New Faces performance?

Having the opportunity to play my live show in front of the programmers, who had only seen us play acoustically up to that point. That was a big deal because when you see my live show you really start to get what I'm all about.

What did that performance mean to your career at the time?

For the previous five or six years, I had gone and watched the show and seen guys like Rascal Flatts, so I knew how important it was. It put the pressure on. And to have a chance to play in front of the guys who decide to play your records was and still is a big deal. I was happy with my performance that night, and soon after, things started taking off a little bit for me. Looking back, I can definitely see how it helped get things off the ground.

Are there any aspects of that performance people might be surprised to know?

I remember being worried about whether my video would be as funny as the others.

If you could go back and give yourself some advice, what would it be?

I'd probably tell myself to do my thing and play the show like I normally would. A lot of times people try and treat industry shows differently from a regular show, but that's exactly what you should not do.



CRAIG MORGAN, 2004

What do you remember most about your New Faces performance?

I remember being extremely honored and nervous at the same time. Even though I had been doing this for awhile, it was still a tough stage to walk onto. Maybe the fact that I wasn't brand new made it even more so.

What did that performance mean to your career at the time?

It had a huge impact because it was my first opportunity to be in front of that size of a group of people that could have such a big and lasting impact on my career. There were some programmers there who had never seen my show, and it was a great chance to show them what my music was like live.

Are there any aspects of that performance people might be surprised to know?

Yes. About three minutes before we went on stage, I changed my set. The song list had been approved, everything was done, ready to go, everybody had agreed, but I decided at the last minute to throw in a really, really country song called "When A Man Can't Get A Woman Off His Mind."

If you could go back and give yourself some advice, what would it be?

Just do what you're gonna do [in your career], because you're going to have a long career ahead of you. I wouldn't change a single thing that happened that night.



SARA EVANS, 2001

What do you remember most about that night?

I remember it being a high-stress but great night. I so wanted to impress everyone at Country radio and I wanted to make my record label proud. It was awesome.

What did that performance mean to your career at the time?

Well, I remember just getting a lot of great feedback from radio that was relayed



BRAD MATES, EMERSON DRIVE, 2003

What do you remember most about that night?

I remember thinking to myself a year earlier that people across the country really didn't know much about Emerson Drive music. The reason we were asked to be a part of the show was that people were connecting with our songs.

KEITH URBAN, 1998 & 2000

What do you remember about your New Faces performance?

The first one I actually did was with The Ranch in 1998. We closed the show and I remember feeling amazed that we were even on the bill with new artists like the Dixie Chicks. It would be another two years before I got to play it in my own right. And if an artist says it's not the most nerve-wracking experience, then they don't really know who they're playing for. It's a tough room, but if you get the sense you're making a connection, it's the most amazing feeling. You can really feel it.

What did it mean to your career at the time?

For me, being a live performer, I felt grateful for the opportunity to finally play live with a full band to a lot of the same people that had only seen me with an acoustic guitar in a conference room full of pizzas.

Are there any aspects of that performance people might be surprised to know? Travel problems, rehearsal glitches or wardrobe malfunctions?

Well, not having Janet Jackson there did alleviate the potential for a wardrobe malfunction.

If you could go back and give yourself some advice, what would it be?

Just relax, have a blast and remember this is probably the single most important career-defining, make-or-break performance of your whole life. No pressure. Enjoy!

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