

JOE GALANTE

Think You Know Joe?

PRESIDENT'S AWARD



Much has been written about former Sony Music Nashville Chairman Joe Galante since he announced his decision to step down from the label group he'd been a part of for 39 years. Most recently, Galante was featured in Country Aircheck's December issue, in which he chatted with celebrated air personality Gerry House about a wide range of topics. And his contributions to country music, Country radio, CRB and its seminar could fill more

pages than are contained in this issue. So rather than tell tales of his storied success, business acumen and wide-ranging influence, this profile turns to a handful of close associates who understand Galante on a more personal level.

Think you know Joe? Think again.

Randy Goodman: When Joe and I came back from New York in early 1995, we often had discussions about whether there was any benefit to hiring independent promoters. Of course, in New York it was simply a matter of course to use the independents, and Joe didn't like it. Our attitude kind of was, "Thank God we're going back to Nashville."

At some point, after we'd been back awhile, Joe came into my office and told me we were going to hire a certain person as an independent promoter. He said, "I need for you to expedite this, arrange for payment and take care of it." My response was, "I beg your pardon, what?" It was completely out of character from everything we did in a strategic or philosophical sense. But Joe asked me to do it, and that's what I did.

Joe never told me any of this, but I found out later that the person we'd hired had fallen on hard times. Joe learned about it and made a decision to help out, not as a gift, but to say, "Come work with us. There are some expectations, but we'll pay you and it will help."

Later, I had a conversation with that person, who told me that Joe's generous decision, even though it was a relatively small amount of money, made a huge impact. It was a real lifeline, and nobody really knew. Joe's viewed

as this incredibly fiscally disciplined executive, and he is, but he took time out of his crazy day and my crazy day to make something happen. He wasn't going to turn a blind eye.

Nancy Russell: Most people know the business side of Joe. There's no doubt he's in a very competitive business and can be a tough businessman. You don't get to that level without having that. But Joe has never forgotten the humble beginnings he came from. That shows in the kind of friend he is. He's never selected his friends based on what they have or what level of success they have. A dinner party at Joe's house is a very diverse group.

When I took time away from the business, as busy an executive as he was, not a week went by I didn't hear from him three times. He would just check in, ask what was going on and inquire about how I was doing. I know if he was doing that for me, there were other people he was doing that for, as well – all while running the biggest label in town. Before my dad passed away, Joe remembered every time there was a doctor's visit or procedure and checked in to see how he was doing, despite having never met my dad. He's one of the greatest friends a person could ask for.

Butch Waugh: Unless you have had the privilege to work with Joe, you may not be aware he is a 24-hour-a-day strategy meeting. Yes, he absolutely possesses all the traits of a great leader, but Joe also believes in and strives for an overall strong country music industry. He's always given so much energy to find the next generation of country artists, but he gives the same energy and time to identify the next generation of music executives. He takes time to work with, nurture and educate young people, and Sony Nashville and the entire industry is peppered with excellent industry-leading executives who first walked through the doors of RCA Records and Sony Nashville as interns seeking an opportunity. Over the past almost 40 years, if a young, aspiring and talented person wanted to be an executive in the country music industry, then Joe Galante was the person to hang your star on.

Clint Higham: Joe developed a reputation over the years of being an all-business, no-nonsense, hard-nosed, ball-busting type of guy. And he is all those things, but through the years I've seen Joe's heart many times, as



well. Joe is a true man of his word. He's never lied to me or played games. He's a great record man, but he's a great artist's man, too. He always kept the artist's best interests in mind, even though technically he was supposed to put the company's interests first. There's a great charitable side to Joe, too. He's worked tirelessly for the T.J. Martell Foundation, and I've seen him melt for animals.

It may not always be on display, but Joe's an emotional guy – he is Italian, after all. He's fiercely loyal, especially when it comes to family and those close enough to be family. He takes care of friends in a very personal way, and his loyalty extends far beyond what is good just for business.

When Dale Morris' son passed away in the mid-'90s, Joe was there every day in so many ways for Dale. Not just sending flowers or a note, but in a far more personal, supportive way. Joe was one of first people I called when I began going through a divorce. He told me he been through this and knew what I was going through. He checked up on me continually, even calling me over the holidays to see how I was doing. And there was no talk about any of the artists we manage who are on his label. It was about us, as human beings. And those are the kinds of the things you never forget.

Phran Galante: When I first met Joe, he had five beautiful golden retrievers, but he kept them outside. He didn't believe dogs should be allowed in the house. Of course, these dogs didn't have what you'd call a typical doghouse.

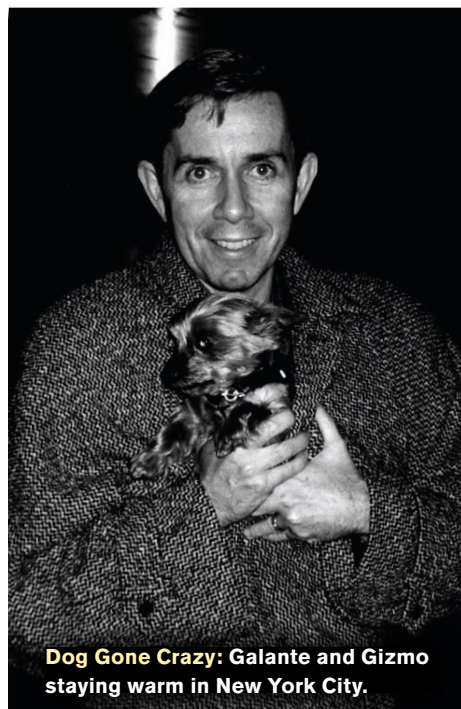
It was heated and air-conditioned. But I was still bothered by the fact that he didn't want them in the house. Fast-forward a few years, and Joe currently sleeps with three dogs in the bed – Phelony, Lexie and Fergie. And he loves every bit of it.

Brad Paisley: I came to know Joe when he became the head of Arista. I hadn't had much interaction with him up to that point, so I was nervous about dealing with a new "leader." His reputation had preceded him. To this day, legends abound about his business prowess and tenacity. I figured I would be dealing with a professional piranha of business – a tiger and carnivore of the record world. Honestly, I was a little scared.

And then it seemed like as soon as he walked in the room, instantly the ice melted. I was greeted with the warmest hug, unbridled excitement in his eyes and an air of confidence in me. I was sold. I realized that the legends of his business prowess are most likely true in results only, and not at all accurate in his execution of those results. His warmth and enthusiasm never dwindled in 10 years of dealing with one another.

I am hard-pressed to find a more enthusiastic audience for my music than Joe. Or a more sympathetic ear when I need one. Or a quicker laugh at one of my jokes or stories. So let the "when animals attack like ..." legends remain. Just know that underneath, he's closer to the *Wonder Pets*. Incredibly effective and cute as a button.

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Dog Gone Crazy: Galante and Gizmo staying warm in New York City.