12-1-2013


Keith Hatschek
University of the Pacific, khatschek@pacific.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/com-facarticles

Part of the Music Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/com-facarticles/4
Reviews


Lady Antebellum has risen to become one of the most successful crossover country acts in recent memory. Their breakout 2009 hit single *Need You Now* topped both the *Billboard* Country and Hot 100 charts, opening up a broader market to the pop-leaning trio. This video combines one night’s performance on the group’s 2011-2012 arena headlining “Own the Night” tour, filmed in Little Rock, Arkansas, with selected backstage and tour-diary segments that provide the viewer with a good behind-the-scenes look at the roles and responsibilities artists and their support team assume when they get to the top levels of the music business.

For an introductory class in music industry studies, these clips are especially helpful in that the artists are speaking candidly about their aspirations and about their reliance on their eighty-person team to put on a successful show night after night. Three of the backstage segments bear note to help students see behind the spotlights, video walls, and three-level production stage that are used on the U.S. concert segments. The first, titled “From the Ground Up,” details the production design and thought that goes into building and staging an eight-month-long arena tour. Set designers, riggers, lighting techs, sound, video, and backline crew are all shown in action helping to underscore their crucial offstage roles in preparing and executing each night’s concert. The second, “The Road to Here,” provides video clips of the band’s early career, showing their work ethic and dedication to building an audience. It won’t be lost on students that one of these gigs was to play in a rural truck stop/diner to celebrate the opening of deer season! Most of the diner’s patrons ignore the band while a local radio personality shoves a mic between the trio serenading the sleepy crowd at 7 a.m. Nonetheless, Lady Antebellum soldiers on, touring in one Jeep Grand Cherokee with their acoustic guitars and merch boxes in the back. So much for overnight success.

The third segment may be the most insightful to what makes this band so successful. It’s their 24/7 dedication to writing original songs that connect deeply with their audience. Titled, “Evolution of a Song,” this
chapter starts with each member sharing his or her earliest involvement with music and the roles that supportive family played in early musical development. Singer Hillary Scott insightfully states that the trio see themselves as “songwriters, first” and that they are a band that chooses to focus their energy on songwriting every single day they are together. Scenes portray them working at their writer’s craft individually and as a group, before Dave Heywood demonstrates their Pro Tools mini-studio, which they tour with to constantly cut new demos of songs. The efficacy of such an approach can be heard in the concert segments as the group plays their hook-laden crossover pop-country songs to the tumultuous acclaim of the packed arenas both here and overseas.

For a music business educator, *Lady Antebellum: Own the Night 2012 World Tour* offers an excellent first-person account of a phenomenally successful crossover act that retains a sense of wonder and humility about the path they’ve taken to the top, with plenty of the off-stage nuts and bolts on display to remind students of what really underpins their success and rise to international acclaim and multi-platinum success.


There has been no shortage of writing about the seminal singer, bandleader, and self-appointed “Godfather of Soul” James Brown. Brown is a fascinating figure, larger than life, often serving as a lightning rod for controversy throughout his career. Personally, I found myself looking forward to picking *The One* up from my bedside nightly as I journeyed through Smith’s fascinating narrative, drawn along by his recounting of James Brown’s long, productive, yet troubled life. In many ways, Brown looms as large as Louis Armstrong in the pantheon of genre-establishing, original American musical and cultural voices of the twentieth century. However, much of what has been published by and about Brown was filtered through his own prodigious PR, marketing, and hype machine. Refreshingly, RJ Smith’s biography offers an engaging, thoroughly objective, and vivid portrayal of this deeply flawed, but supremely gifted artist,
This volume would be useful not only as a case study for a self-made artist, but also for any course in popular music, African American studies, or sociology that looks at the cultural or societal impacts of popular music. Brown’s legacy includes many outpourings of social activism, lyrics, and interviews that addressed black self-reliance and entrepreneurship, convincing young Americans to stay in school, and a host of anti-drug songs and initiatives. The fact that Brown was a staunch Republican who corresponded regularly with politicians, presidents, and other power brokers provides rich material for discussion with students about music’s and musicians’ roles in our world. *The One* stands as a notable achievement providing a more balanced and well-researched look at one of the most interesting artist-entrepreneurs in American popular music, for which RJ Smith can be justifiably proud.

Keith Hatschek

**Keith Hatschek** is Professor of Music and Director of the Music Management Program at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. Prior to joining academia, he worked in the music business for more than twenty-five years. He is the author of two music industry books: *The Golden Moment: Recording Secrets of the Pros* and *How To Get a Job in the Music Industry*, which provides career development tools and strategies for young music professionals. He contributes monthly music industry commentary for the music blog, *Echoes-Insights for Independent Artists*. Among his research interests are music industry curriculum and pedagogy, student-led music businesses, recording and music technology, and the life and work of jazz pianist, Dave Brubeck. He has presented a number of conference papers and talks about Brubeck’s role in Cold War jazz diplomacy, the Civil Rights movement and musicians’ collaborative efforts to address segregation in the mid-twentieth-century United States.