

Getting real with Blake Shelton



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So you want to get to know Blake Shelton, find out about the guy behind the country music star? You don't need to schmooze his publicist for access. No need to track down his family and former classmates. And please, don't stalk him at the fairgrounds when he shows up for his show on Wednesday.

If you have Internet access, there's plenty of Blake Shelton out there — the real guy, not the star.

You can find out how he prepares for a show (orange Orbit gum, Bacardi Rum and Sprite Zero figure prominently). You can hear him poke fun at country music stars' hairstyles (Rascal Flatts gets called out). And you can learn his views on animal rights activists (he and PETA aren't getting along).

"I think there are times when I definitely take it too far. But I also think that country fans are tired of the cookie-cutter personalities they've been fed for 50 years," Shelton said.

Shelton is a country music star because of his music. He has six No. 1 singles to his name, and his most current release, "All About Tonight," is his fastest-rising song to date. But he's far from a hit-making machine pre-packaged from Nashville.

Speaking from a festival in Minnesota during a phone interview, Shelton shared his post-performance plans to demonstrate his aversion to putting on airs or hiding his rough edges.

“There’s a thousand people there camping out. When this show is over, I’m going to get on a golf cart and grab a beer and hang out with them. And guess what? They drink and they cuss. It’s just the way people are, and they want to know that there are other people just like them,” he said.

Shelton likes to keep his fans entertained, both with his music and his sense of humor. The “Take 6 Tuesday” videos featured on his website are his take on the Letterman Top Ten list. He recently signed on as an advice columnist for the Great American Country website. And he’s fully embraced social networking in all of its revealing glory.

“Twitter has helped me connect with (fans), and I’m finding they’re just like me. Then you wonder why all of these years have I been so afraid to talk about getting drunk the night before and feeling like crap the next day. Why is that wrong to say it? That’s what happens,” he said.

“All of that stuff is basically album promotion things. Its things that I can do that will be entertaining and that other artists would never do,” he said.

True to his nature, Shelton is also taking a non-traditional approach to releasing music. Instead of recording full-length albums, he’s begun selling his songs by the Six Pac.

His first Six Pac was released last March and featured “Hillbilly Bone,” a duet with Trace Adkins that went to No. 1 on the country singles chart. The second six-song collection, “All About Tonight,” came out last week.

Shelton said releasing smaller batches of songs more frequently helps keep his live shows fresh because he’s not touring to promote the same album for two years. It also allows him ripe pickings when it comes to finding songs to record.

“It sure keeps the writers and publishers in Nashville interested in you. They know they aren’t going to have to wait two years until you record again. In the back of their mind, they’re thinking, ‘We can get this song to Blake and hell, it can be on the radio in three or four months,’” he said.

Opening for Shelton will be Candy Coburn, returning to the fair for the second year in a row. The Missouri native is best known for the single “Pink Warriors,” a song dedicated to the battle against breast cancer.

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