



Lady Antebellum heated up the Ryman stage with renditions of "Need You Now" and "I Run to You."

Country's hottest stars rock the Ryman Auditorium for GAC's Music City Keep On Playin'

STORY BY JESSICA PHILLIPS

NASHVILLE

KEEPS

The atmosphere at the Ryman Auditorium and the Nashville Convention Center sizzled as country music's most popular stars came together on May 16 to keep the music flowing in Nashville for GAC's *Music City Keep On Playin'*—*A Benefit for Flood Relief*. The telethon, which aired multiple times on GAC, raised more than \$1.8 million to benefit those affected by the recent Nashville flooding.

Desperate Housewives actor James Denton and actress Kimberly Williams-Paisley co-hosted the show while Kimberly's hubby, Brad Paisley, along with Keith Urban, Dierks Bentley, Martina McBride, Lady Antebellum, Sheryl Crow, Rodney Atkins, Kellie Pickler, new Nashville resident Keb' Mo' and Christian artists Jaci Velasquez and Cece Winans all performed for the sold-out Ryman crowd. Brad performed hits "Welcome to the Future" and "American Saturday Night," while Keith offered up a rendition of "Better



Martina McBride earned a standing ovation.

Life." Martina McBride's show-stopping "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" garnered a standing ovation, as did Lady Antebellum's slowed-down, intimate version of "Need You Now."

Across the street in a media room located in the Nashville Convention Center, nearly all the artists spoke about how the flooding affected them, their neighborhoods and the Nashville music community. "The picture of the Opry House was wild," said Lady A's Charles Kelley. "That was when it really hit home.

There's so much history in Nashville. I guess you'd never think of Nashville being something that could be hit by too much water. It's just very surprising."

Not content to just sing and talk about the devastation, many of the performers took part in answering the phones and logging donations. Among the artists who handled calls were Joey + Rory, Lorrin Morgan and James Otto. Keith's wife, Nicole Kidman, also lent a hand.

LADY ANTEBELLUM BY ED ROOPE/SHOOT.BZ/GAC; MARTINA MCBRIDE BY ED ROOPE/SHOOT.BZ/GAC; BRAD & LADY A BY ED ROOPE/SHOOT.BZ/GAC; RODNEY ATKINS BY ED ROOPE/SHOOT.BZ/GAC; KELLIE PICKLER BY THE LADY NELSON GROUP/GAC; KEITH URBAN PERFORMING BY ED ROOPE/SHOOT.BZ/GAC; NICOLE KIDMAN & KEITH BY AMARON CRISLER/THE LADY NELSON GROUP/GAC; JAMES OTTO BY AMARON CRISLER/THE LADY NELSON GROUP/GAC

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(From of Mic Academy)



(From left) Brad Paisley, Ellen Lehman of the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee and Lady Antebellum with a check from the Academy of Country Music's Lifting Lives program.



Rodney Atkins performed "These Are My People."



(From left) James Otto, Lady A's Dave Haywood, Julie Roberts and Whitney Duncan helped take calls.



Keith Urban performed The Beatles' "Help."

PLAYIN'

One lucky caller got to talk with Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban.





Dierks Bentley joined Brad Paisley onstage, while (right) Kellie Pickler wore her heart on her . . . shirt.



NASHVILLE KEEPS PLAYIN' CONT.

Martina McBride said that she and her daughters would be among the thousands of people helping with the ongoing volunteer cleanup efforts around the city. "They have some friends at their school who have lost everything. We were very lucky we escaped any kind of damage. [I want them to] really experience it and be connected," said Martina.

Brad, who has been at the forefront of the media attention given to the flooding, praised Nashville's generous spirit, saying, "You are seeing—in a way that you can only see through devastation and tragedy—the true character of a city and its wonderful people. We're talking about a place that has had it pretty good. We've been in a bubble. Even real estate hasn't been as badly hit as other places. Businesses are certainly hurting like they are in other places in the middle of this recession, but in Nashville people are still buying cars and doing what they do. All of a sudden we're forced to rise up. There are two ways they can deal with it—with class, honor, being helpful and volunteering, or it can become a disaster area. This place has become such an inspiration." **CW**



Kimberly Williams-Paisley and *Desperate Housewives'* James Denton hosted.



GAC host Nan Kelley spoke with Dierks Bentley, whose home basement was affected by the flooding.



Steel Magnolia's Meghan Linsey signed on for the cause.

To see more photos from GAC's Music City Keep On Playin' go to gactv.com