

Colt Ford



Song Samples:

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|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| The New Single: "Back" featuring JAKE OWEN | Country | Play Song | Download |
| Answer To No One: featuring JJ Lawhorn | Country / Roots Rock | Play Song | Download |
| Drivin' Around Song: featuring JASON ALDEAN | Country - Hip Hop / Rap | Play Song | Download |
| All In: featuring KIX BROOKS | Country | Play Song | Download |
| Ain't Out Of The Woods Yet: with MONTGOMERY GENTRY | Country | Play Song | Download |
| Lucky: featuring Jonathan Singleton | Country / Roots Rock | Play Song | Download |
| Dancin' While Intoxicated featuring LoCash Cowboys & Redneck Social Club | Country - Hip Hop / Rap | Play Song | Download |
| Chicken and Biscuits | Country | Play Song | Download |
| Twisted with special guest TIM MCGRAW | Country - Hip Hop / Rap | Play Song | Download |

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The new album: "Declaration of Independence" feat

"Colt Ford mixes down home country with R&B grooves, a rock and roll attitude and delivers his original blend of music with a heart felt and down home feel that is a delight to his ever growing audience of millions."

Why every country station is not playing this music is a mystery to me. Hit songs a brilliant delivery and a crack production team made up of Shannon houchins and Jayson chance rivals or surpasses the better known mainstream Nashville producers. Just amazing, slammin and fun. It is no wonder that he has sold millions!" Monte C. Willis Radio Submit

Here's more!

Are label co-heads **Shannon Houchins** and **Colt Ford** really just a couple of Average Joe's as the name of the label might have you believe? Not according to newly hired label President **Tom Baldrice**. "It feels to me like this model is the future," says Baldrice "I like the authenticity that the artists radiate from the stage. These folks are out there touching the fans."

The Label

Baldrice exited Sony Music last year, where he had served since 1993. "I was very flattered that there was a lot of interest in me while I was on vacation," he smiles. "But this Average Joe's Ent. opportunity just kept coming back into my head. It felt right. They've been smart about building the business and paying for things themselves. Looking in Shannon's eye and talking to Colt, the vibe was great and that's an important piece of what I'm all about. I'm 120 days into it now and know it was a great decision, no doubt."

Tony Morreale, who had worked with Baldrice at BNA/Sony was responsible for connecting the parties. "I went out to see a couple of shows and stood with them and watched in utter amazement," remembers Baldrice of his Colt Ford musical baptism. "We were in Birmingham Ala. at the Hank Jr., Jamey Johnson, Colt show and I watched 8,000 people sing the words to every one of Colt's songs. I've spent the last 18 years of my life getting songs on the radio and prior to that playing them on the radio, so for me to be sitting there amongst that group knocked me out."

Ford's press describes him as a grassroots country phenomenon. "It's an accurate description," Baldrice insists. "Colt has done this the old fashioned way. He started playing in towns to small groups which would grow to a few hundred people and eventually large crowds. Each time he'd return the crowd would grow by word of mouth. It started in Georgia with he and Shannon, who are co-owners of the label and life-long buddies. Momentum from the shows inspired a few radio stations to play his music, but there wasn't a promotion team or anything, just Shannon, Colt, some CDs and a van stuffed with t-shirts in the back. The reaction was the same in every town. Get that happening once or twice and it's nice, but watch it fifty times and more and you start to believe you have a trend happening, something is striking a nerve. So yeah, grassroots fits."

The facts support Baldrice's story. Tunecore, the company that handles Ford's digital distribution recently awarded the Average Joe's Entertainment (AJE) artist a sales award for selling over one million downloads since 2008, including over 375,000 via iTunes and Amazon. In addition, AJE's Memphis-based indie physical distributor, Select-O-Hits, reports that Ford has sold over 500,000 physical album units at retailers such as Walmart, Target, Best Buy, FYE and Hastings. On the touring side, Ford played for over 620,000 people last year. (His current tour schedule (see www.coltford.com) includes 31 dates between April 14-June 26, 2011.)

Shannon Houchins, AJE CEO, first found success as a Hip Hop record producer in the mid-90s in Atlanta selling over 40 million albums. He owns studios in Atlanta, owns a printing company and a Hip Hop label among other things. "He's a mogul, there is no doubt about it," agrees Baldrice. "But he is an artist friendly music guy who is about everybody winning. There is a great spirit about him. He loves the music and the business and is doing some things to try and change it. I worked for arguably the best record man this town has ever seen, Mr. Galante and learned a lot, so it's especially interesting to move from the corporate level to the street level."

The Music

On the street it's all about the music. Ford's hybrid sound tells stories and deals with many of the same emotions that more traditional country artists sing about. A big difference is that he combines verses in rap style prose with melodic choruses. "Recitation and talking records were here long before me," says Ford who hails from Athens, Georgia. "And they'll be here long after me. I'm a country artist and I want people to know how much I genuinely respect this music and my fans."

Ford's new album, *Every Chance I Get* debuts May 3. Produced by Houchins and **Jayson Chance**, it features guest appearances from a cross section of well known artist including Luke Bryan, Craig Morgan, Charlie Daniels, Tim McGraw, Eric Church, Trent Tomlinson, Nappy Roots and Nic Cowan, and more.

"Colt will tell you that he isn't that great a singer," says Baldrice. "So to get the message across from the verse through the musicality of the hooks makes sense. Is he a country rapper? Is it recitation, which has been a part of this format for years? Regardless of what term you use there are great studio musicians, great writers and tremendous artists involved. They've seen the shows and asked to be a part of it. Do I hope they lend a credibility factor to it, certainly. Will it help people play some of those tracks, sure, but the set up on the guests is just to make it better music. And honestly, Colt's done it this way from the very beginning."

Ford is also enjoying songwriter success. He co-wrote the Jason Aldean single, "Dirt Road Anthem," and the new Brantley Gilbert single, "Country Must Be Country Wide."

The Marketing

Moving from a company that affords "Cadillac" marketing plans to driving a "Ford" might be daunting for an executive who only recently switched gears from the largesse of major label budgets to a stripped down grassroots mentality. "The guys in this town at the majors are all doing great work," says Baldrice. "But the AJE model, like others you see in town, are built for the current environment and the future. Those big corporations have larger overheads, larger business plans and larger everything. And the fact is that everyone has to learn to make money on nickels and dimes. So the adaptation process is different."



Colt Ford (Click photo to hear "Country Thang"
)

But Baldrice is only too happy to talk about the setup for the upcoming album on May 3, *Every Chance I Get*. "It'll be a bit regionalized," he says. "There will be more in Atlanta and Athens than you'll find in Seattle and Portland. We expect to ship around 85-90,000, which is a great number for us. So there will be more of a regional spread certainly in the Southeast and up the Atlantic seaboard and into the Midwest. The farther you go west there will be less and less. If the dream grows we will get it out there."

"There's no secrets to a lot of what we're doing," says Baldrice. "Like doing bundles with pre-sales and giving people a chance to win autographed merchandise. We are doing online listening parties. win-it-before-you-can-buy-it with radio stations and leveraging Ford's

201,000 [Facebook friends](#). We are also using the synergy of our company by cross promoting across all our websites and artists on the roster. Colt was part of CMT's *Big New Music* weekend which was tremendous, and we are doing a promotion with Verizon which has CF and AJE artist ringtones. We also have promotions with various websites such as www.camospace.com, which someone called a 'Facebook for rednecks.'

In addition to the modern day weaponry, Colt Ford also has dedicated fans. "This voracious fan base are evangelists, writing notes, sending the videos around and spreading the word," says Baldrice. "There is this group of people that feel like they are on the inside. They want to tell the rest of the world. So there aren't any big marketing secrets, just a lot of volume and intensity from devoted fans who want to help scream from the roof tops."

According to Baldrice, Ford's fans are not all young males with hats turned back. "There's a perception that his demo all have gun racks in their pickups, and yes, there certainly are some of those. But I've been to enough shows to tell you that there are young girls that dig Colt and soccer Moms, too! The Hip Hop sound is something that the younger generation has grown up with and enjoys. Typically, what parents dislike about Hip Hop is the lyrics. But it works for Colt because they love that his lyrics are about God, momma, family, country and hard work. So the kids dig the sonics and the parents are cool with the message. Result: they can share the music together. And Colt does all ages shows with no alcohol so the families can enjoy the music together during the day and then Mom and Dad can come out and have a few adult beverages later that evening. In a sense we go fishing where the fish are, but we also go to mainstream country radio plus sites like *AOL The Boot* and *Country Weekly* trying to cover as many bases as possible. Once they know about Colt they respond and want to own that music. Our job is to leave no stone unturned."

Having an artist with a solid touring base allows for a somewhat different radio strategy than is used by many developing artists who are depending upon radio exposure to help build that touring base. "My goal is to increase the awareness, increase the markets and get more places for him to be able to go play," says Baldrice. "Because every time he plays he wins. He's selling more music, tickets and merchandise which makes everyone happy—club owners, local radio stations, promoters, record labels and the artist."

The Future

What does Baldrice think about some of the new experimental marketing strategies involving singles and albums? For example, Blake Shelton's "Honey Bee" (WB) seems to have set off waves of discussion among marketers as to the importance of single sales in a world of declining album sales. ([read it here](#).) But is this an especially good model for a smaller label like AJE?

"When people love a particular song there is no evidence to suggest they will only buy that track and then never buy the album," says Baldrice. "In most cases they will buy the track, then the record and maybe even the ringtone or a special version. That is the prevailing wisdom so what Warner Bros. did was spectacular. Of course they had a lovely platform. Blake Shelton was hosting the ACM show, did a great job and is red hot. So with a great plan in place, 140,000 people bought the song making it the artist's fastest moving radio single ever. Those 140,000 people are now primed to buy the album. So maybe the new revenue mantra is, 'take it when you can get it.' Peter Strickland might have invented or unleashed a new strategy. It was brilliant."