

ACM Awards – 2011 Edition

Was it really 11 years ago already that we got to attend the 2000 Academy of Country Music Awards in Los Angeles? Newcomer Brad Paisley won that year for Best New Male Vocalist, and he's now a country music veteran who took the Top Male Vocalist prize in 2011. Someday, I'd like to attend the recording of another live awards show. Nothing beats the excitement in the air and participating in a live tv show taping where anything goes. And never in one place will you see so many super performances by a variety of outstanding performers – both from country music and also outside the genre. But my 4.5 kids keep me grounded, and I don't travel as much as I would or as much as I used to. So until the day when I can get back to a live country music awards show taping (and I will be in no hurry to go to the ACMs until they move it out of Vegas!), I will enjoy watching and voting along at home.

This year was a super show; I had a nice time watching it last night. And a surprise awaited me at the end...

Some highlights:

– Brad Paisley opens with a performance, and then he's joined by none other than – ALABAMA!! They were so awesome; this number really got my country blood pumping!

– Some unlikely duos performing this year:

Unlikely duet #1 – Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland and pop star Rihanna. Their duet made for an interesting performance. Not my favorite kind of music, but they sounded good.

Unlikely duet #2 – Country music sweetheart Carrie Underwood screaming alongside Aerosmith frontman turned American Idol judge Steven Tyler. The first song wasn't great; it was more for Tyler than Underwood, in fact, I thought it a waste of her

lovely voice. But their "Walk This Way" duet was toe-tappin' fun!

Unlikely duet #3 – Zac Brown Band and James Taylor. I'm really starting to enjoy the harmonies of the Zac Brown Band, and their performance with James Taylor tonight was thoroughly enjoyable!

– Probably the first time I've cried while watching the ACM awards – Darius Rucker's song backed by a chorus from the Lifting Lives music camp was incredibly uplifting and awe-inspiring! I loved every minute of it!

Overall, a wonderful show! Except one thing – where the heck was Rascall Flatts?!?

And oh yeah, that surprise at the end – Taylor Swift won Entertainer of the Year. No surprise there; if I had paid attention when I filled out my fan ballot and realized that the Entertainer award was fan-chosen, I would have picked Swift in a heartbeat. But I spaced and chose Miranda Lambert (still beat Hubby on the ballot 7-3, just sayin') for some reason. The real surprise came when they announced the nominees for Entertainer of the Year, and I actually found myself rooting for Taylor Swift – what was going on? I've never been a fan of Swift's music, and I hadn't voted for her, so what gives? My 6-year-old daughter was enjoying the show with me, and every time Taylor Swift came on or her name was mentioned, Sammie got SO excited. So I told her I would let her know when "the big award" was coming on, and you should have seen her face when Taylor Swift won – she cheered! It was adorable, and I cried. I cried at the ACM awards twice last night, what is wrong with me? Oh yeah – pregnancy will do that to you. Probably a good thing that I was watching from the safety of my own home.

If An Athlete Gets Athletes Foot, What Does A Snowmen Get?

This afternoon, after picking my new-battery installed car from the theatre, I went to the school to watch the dress rehearsal of Alex and Alyssa's Elementary Christmas program. I just found out about it this morning and since I am otherwise engaged this evening, I thought I would go and lend an ear. The program was divided up into two adorable musical revues. The K-2 portion featured close to 90 little ones in a show entitled *The Incredible Reindeer*. It seems that an asteroid is hurtling straight toward the North Pole which will not only wipe out the planet but will cancel Christmas. Enter a quartet of super-powered reindeer: Lightspeed, Mighty Moose, Laser, and Robodeer. Will the heroes save the day and who will lead the sleigh through the murky fog with Rudolph out with a cold?

The second half was an American Idol parody entitled *North Pole Star*. The eight reindeer were the contestants with the host and three celebrity judges: Santa and Mrs. C, and the obligatory Simon stand in (sorry did not catch the name). The audience got into the act by voting for their favorite on a ballot sheet. Personally, I thought Comet the Comic was the most talented, but once again I was not in the majority.

The shows were really cute little ones standing in front of the microphone delivering their short lines. I was impressed with many of the older kids' solos, not bad for the age group. I remember the program my 5th grade year, the masterpiece that is *Santa and the Snowmobile*.

Country Music Award Time!!!

It's time for the CMAs, and I'm making just a quick little post to share my guesses – we'll see how I do at the end of the night. I know, I know I whined and cried about missing the show this year, but my family came down with H1N1 and we're under a self-imposed quarantine. I think the kids need to get to bed early – for their health, of course ☹ – and I get to watch the show live after all! Believe me, I would so much rather be at youth group tonight, despite all my whining, I swear! This is an awful sickness, and I would so much rather not have anyone in my family have to have it... but I don't want to dwell on that now – we've been living this illness since Friday night, so it's time to break from that now a little bit – CMA time!!!!

My picks – I'll try to update throughout the night to see how I did. **Correct in green, wrong in red.**

TOTAL: 4/11

Entertainer of the Year:

Taylor Swift, winner

Kenny Chesney

Female Vocalist:

Taylor Swift, winner

Carrie Underwood

Male Vocalist:

Brad Paisley

Vocal Duo:

Sugarland, winner

Brooks and Dunn

Vocal Group:

Lady Antebellum, winner

Rascal Flatts

New Artist:

Darius Rucker, winner

Jake Owen

Album:

Taylor Swift's Fearless

Single:

I Run To You – Lady Antebellum

Song:

In Color – Jamey Johnson, winner

I Told You So – Randy Travis

Event:

Start a Band

I Told You So

Music Video:

Taylor Swift

NOTES: Awesome show so far – great performances, and I love the hosting duo of Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood. Their little duets are entertaining, funny, and even pleasant music to listen to! I especially appreciate the ditty about the swine flu – priceless, and it really hits home right now! Carrie Underwood has an **amazing** voice! Thank you American Idol for gifting her to country music!

I love the infusion of the classic country: Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys and especially the Zac Brown Band's rendition of Devil Went Down to Georgia (on speed!) was EXCELLENT!!

Brooks and Dunn's final CMA performance (retiring) with ZZ Top is a highlight!

Still enjoying the show, but what the heck happened to the

awesome hosting duo of Paisley and Underwood? Seems like they haven't been onstage together for a while. And when they do reappear together, let's can the jokes about Brad checking out Carrie's looks behind the back of his wife, [Kimberly Williams-Paisley](#) – there's just been too many of those jokes, and they're stale.

What could be better than Martina McBride singing When Country Wasn't Cool with Charlie McCoy on harmonica as a tribute to Barbara Mandrell to welcome her into the Country Music Hall of Fame?!? That was GREAT! That reminds me of an addition I must make to a fellow tangents.org blog about my favorite Christmas special – The Mandrell Sisters Christmas!

Oh man... the show started out the best CMA awards show EVER! But then it slowly went downhill... until the final award – Taylor Swift?!? You've got to be kidding. She is very talented and has done a wonder for attracting teen and tween girls to the country music genre, but... What about the rest of us?!? Let's face it, she did have a heck of a time hitting some of those high notes... Well, I'm not going to act like Kanye West. Taylor Swift deserves her time in the spotlight, even if it did ruin the entire flow of the CMAs...

Oh, and judging by my total guesses correct, it's obvious how much I'm allowed to listen to country music radio these days... For me, it's mostly KidsSongs and videos from the library (lately Shelley Duvall's Fairy Tale Theater) in the car. Whatever – no one could have seen that Taylor Swift Entertainer of the Year coming no matter what you spend your day listening to. I don't care if she IS the youngest CMA nominee for Entertainer of the Year ever – in my opinion, she should have had a lot more ground to cover before she won an award like that! The show started out great, but I have to say, I am left disappointed, and not only by my terrible score

□

This Town's Got Talent AND Faith

I already wrote about our 3D movie-going experience in my previous post, so I will skip that part of the weekend here, but I neglected to mention the cool restaurant we found because I didn't want to enlarge an already lengthy post...

Friday night after seeing *My Bloody Valentine 3D* in Maumee Ohio, a suburb of Toledo, we noticed a restaurant across the street called Nick's Cafe who advertises breakfast all day. My husband and I are both Eggs Benedict connoisseurs – we really appreciate a great-tasting serving of Eggs Benedict, which is a breakfast dish consisting of English Muffin halves topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and a layer of Hollandaise sauce. In our pre-parenthood days, we explored the country and sampled various versions of the dish along the way to our traveler's goals; whether they were destinations of business or pleasure. A requirement of great Eggs Benedict is homemade Hollandaise sauce, and by 'homemade', we (unlike many of the restaurants we tried) don't mean mixed up in the kitchen from a package. You need a double boiler to make it, and good Hollandaise sauce has nothing to do with a powder or a package. In all of our travels, we never found anything that even compares to the Hollandaise sauce at Uptown Cafe in downtown Arlington Heights, Illinois. We've visited numerous restaurants in our quest, and we've called some of them ahead of time, but even if you ask if their Hollandaise sauce is homemade, many will say yes, even if we don't agree on the definition of homemade. Such was the case Friday night at Nick's Cafe in Maumee, Ohio. They said their hollandaise sauce was homemade on the phone, but oddly, when we arrived, they wouldn't let us taste a sample. That was a first! Of

the dozens of restaurants we've visited in search of the perfect Eggs Benedict, no restaurant had ever denied us a sample! On Friday night, my husband bravely ordered the Eggs Benedict at Nick's Cafe without trying the Hollandaise sauce ahead of time, and disappointingly, it was of the non-homemade, out-of-the-package variety. He did say that the Canadian bacon on the Eggs Benedict was great, but it unfortunately cannot rescue the dish if it uses packaged Hollandaise. So negative Eggs Benedict experience aside, the reason I would highly recommend this place is for their Mediterranean cuisine. And regular readers of my blog (and of those email forward all-about-you quizzes) know that this is my favorite type of food, therefore I am a huge critic. But Nick's Place in Maumee has excellent gyros, Tzatziki sauce, and Greek salads. Gyros are only good when they're off the spit and even then, it's easy for them to taste too salty. Not the case at Nick's Place; if you like Mediterranean food, I **highly** recommend their gyros and Greek salads – incredible.

But I must move on to Saturday afternoon, when we took our kids to see the movie, [Hotel for Dogs](#). I've been waiting for this movie for months, which is probably why we didn't want to cancel our planned outing there on Saturday even though Kid #1 went off her rocker. Seriously, the kid went berserk and I was really tempted to give her "the talk", especially after I noticed a pimple on her cheek... (well, one of 'the talks' anyway – the one about womanly bodily changes – she's 9 years old and I would rather we talk about puberty stuff *before* it happens to her). But anyway, she'd probably be *mortified* if she knew I was posting this on the internet (what are mothers for?), so I better get off this tangent... After the episode Saturday morning, our oldest really didn't deserve to go to the movie, but it's difficult in a large family to not 'let the bad apple spoil the bunch'. Our younger girls had been very good all morning, so why keep them (or me!) from going to the movie? Our oldest was punished for the tantrum by having to go without a Kid's Pack (popcorn, pop, and candy) at the

movies, and to her credit, she was mature about the consequences of her actions. However, soon after our arrival at the movie theater, the tide changed and our 2-year-old became the problem. I don't know why we keep trying to take a 2-year-old to the movie theater, but every time, it's regrettable. Actually, it's been this way since even *months* before she turned two... I guess we keep hoping that one of these times, she'll actually settle down enough to enjoy an entire movie without driving anyone crazy. So anyway, I'm trying to keep our 6-month-old busy and quiet while attempting to watch Hotel For Dogs and not disturb our neighbors, and my husband is busy with our handful of a 4-year-old, so next thing we know, our two-year-old is drinking my Mountain Dew. Of course she loves it, but even *before* the Mountain Dew she's had a sugar-infused Kid's Pack, and now she's practically bouncing off the walls. She smiles and announces in a loud voice, "**I take clothes off!**", so now I'm trying to put my son back in his car seat so I can stop his sister from stripping off her clothes right there in the movie theater... Too late. She is down to her diaper by the time I get both hands free, so my husband covers her with a coat. For some reason, she's willing to wear nothing but a coat and a diaper in the movie theater, and somehow we make it through the rest of the movie without having to leave. So as for Hotel For Dogs, I liked it (I think – I actually didn't see much of it)... it's a cute, predictable fun movie, and if you're a dog lover, there's plenty of canine eye candy.

Following the movie, I went to a local talent show based upon the popular "American Idol" TV show. Some great friends graciously stayed with the kids, and my husband also stayed home to catch up on the work he missed last week during the 2-hour-school delay and the school closing we have on Friday and Monday. He works from home, and it's all I can do to keep the two little ones out of his hair every day – add the older two to the mix and all Hell breaks loose – any chance of getting anything productive done flies out the window. So, a strange

occurrence at the talent show – me, myself, and I for a change. I did attend with friends, but it's not like I would bother Carol next to me with my philosophies on music or the tone of one's voice; that would be something to make my husband endure. And it was bizarre to simply sit back and listen and watch the show... For those hours, I had absolutely **not one thing** else to do besides enjoy the show... such a change of pace for me and much appreciated. Not that I would want to experience that all the time, but it was very nice for one night...

Adding to the relaxation for me was the spiritual tone of the evening. I had known the event would be sponsored by a local church, but I didn't realize that we, the audience, would be praying to both open and to close the show; as well as the fact that the majority of the acts were religion-themed. As I said, for me, it was refreshing and relaxing, but I think they should properly advertise such a theme if they do this again next year. Less open-minded people may have been displeased. My dear friend and the entire reason I was a part of this concert experience in the first place, performed wonderfully and I was pleasantly surprised to be able to pick out her voice from the rest of the delightful group with whom she performed. Despite my best efforts to vote for them, however, they didn't win the competition, and the top prizes went to a drama group from the church who sponsored the event (!), a very talented violinist, and a well-known local talent who is only a Junior in high school but who has already been a vocalist with the Toledo Opera going on her 3rd year. Besides seeing and hearing my friend perform, my favorite part of the evening was when a boy who was part of the drama group that won burst into tears. Their skit was acted out to music, and it portrayed a young girl being bullied by 'temptations' but ultimately triumphing over sins and choosing Jesus. The group got a standing ovation after they performed and because they were from the church that sponsored the event, it was no surprise when they won first prize in the competition, but the

kid asked the crowd, "I just want to know that everyone was moved – was everyone moved?" There was applause and verbal affirmations, and the next thing I knew, the kid had burst into tears and it slightly reminded me of the movie [Leap of Faith](#)... But it was sweet and real, and I was glad to be a part of it. Even though the talent show did a poor job of advertising the theme of the show; thereby the religion kind of snuck up on its patrons, it was a welcome and calming change of pace – at least for this member of the audience. And even though I wasn't aware that I needed it, the evening restored my faith while proving to me yet again what a great place it is in Northwest Ohio to raise kids – we have so much talent and so many opportunities here for our youth!

That Time Of The Year... AGAIN

Yes, tomorrow night begins the drama that has become known as American Idol. This season promises to be as memorable as the past how many ever it has been (I've lost count). There is going to be an added female judge joining Simon, Randy, and Paula. Maybe she will inject added controversy with the often addled-appearing Paula Abdul. I enjoy watching the first few weeks of the audition process when the producers put the worst of the worst before millions of television audiences. Honestly, who can imagine this unfortunate soul singing(?) [Like a Virgin](#) being taken seriously? I guess one should not scoff at someone attempting to fulfill a dream, but... Somehow future seasons saw contestants like William Hung and Sanjaya Malakar advance a few stages. Curiosity will lead me to watch some this season, but it definitely does not have the appeal it once did.[poll id="12"]

CMA TIME!

It's fall – time for the CMA Awards already! If you don't know that CMA is short for Country Music Association, then you have my permission to skip this blog post – it will only bore you anyway!

For other country music fans like me, this is one of our two biggest nights of the year – the Superbowl for country fans. I get really excited, and unlike other awards shows like the Oscars, I don't like to ~~tape~~ (I am a child of the '80's) record country music awards, and I especially don't like to miss anything – the live performances are some of the best parts! I always play along and try to choose the winners, but I don't think my picks are going to be that strong this year because I'm listening to country music radio less than ever – I enjoy talking to my kids in the car, or they're watching dvd's. At home I'm usually listening to Dora, the DoodleBops or Noggin. But the CMA Awards show will be a blast to watch, as always, and there are only two nights like this a year – cross your fingers for me that my kids decide to act like human beings tonight and let me watch the show. My picks for the winners, however uneducated they may be, are made obvious by my *comments in itallics*:

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

Kenny Chesney – *ok, so he doesn't dominate this awards show like the ACMs, but I'm going with him anyway – just because he is not one of my favorite singers and I'm not expecting the show to go well for me*

Brad Paisley

Sugarland

George Strait

Keith Urban

Top Female Vocalist

Alison Krauss

Miranda Lambert

Martina McBride

Taylor Swift

Carrie Underwood – *I called her from one of her first appearances in American Idol. I said – she's going to win Idol, but she has a voice for country. Now she's established herself as one of the best female country singers out there today.*

Top Male Vocalist

Kenny Chesney

Alan Jackson – *my favorite of those nominated, but what's he done lately?*

Brad Paisley

George Strait

Keith Urban – *my pick to win – tough call between Keith and Brad, but you gotta congratulate a guy for a successful stint in rehab*

Vocal Duo of the Year

Big & Rich

Brooks & Dunn

Montgomery Gentry

Sugarland – *their unique sound will win them many awards – just one question: who else is in Sugarland besides Jennifer Nettles?*

The Wreckers

Vocal Group of the Year

Eagles

Emerson Drive

Lady Antebellum

Little Big Town

Rascal Flatts – *tried and true, these guys have talent. So do Brooks and Dunn, but they haven't come out with anything lately*

New Artist Of The Year

Jason Aldean

Rodney Atkins

Lady Antebellum

James Otto

Kellie Pickler – *another American Idol reject—crossover*

Album Of The Year [Award to Artist(s)/Producer(s)/Record Company]

Carrie Underwood's Carnival Ride Produced by Mark Bright

Brooks & Dunn's Cowboy Town Produced by Tony Brown, Ronnie Dunn and Kix Brooks

Alan Jackson's Good Time Produced by Keith Stegall

Kenny Chesney's Just Who I Am: Poets & Pirates Produced by Buddy Cannon and Kenny Chesney

George Strait's Troubadour Produced by Tony Brown and George Strait – *gotta give him something*

Single Of The Year [Awarded to artist and producer]

"Don't Blink" Kenny Chesney Produced by Buddy Cannon & Kenny Chesney BNA Records

"Gunpowder & Lead" Miranda Lambert Produced by Frank Liddell & Mike Wrucke Columbia Nashville

"I Saw God Today" George Strait Produced by Tony Brown & George Strait MCA Nashville

"Stay" Sugarland Produced by Byron Gallimore, Kristian Bush and Jennifer NettlesMercury Nashville – *not really sure of the difference between single and song of the year, but Stay has to win one of these. I'm going with Single, I guess.*

"You're Gonna Miss This" Trace Adkins Produced by Frank Rogers Capitol Nashville

Song Of The Year [Awarded to songwriter and primary publisher]

"Good Time" Alan Jackson EMI-April Music/Tri-Angels Music

"I Saw God Today" Rodney Clawson/Monty Criswell/Wade Kirby Big Red Toe/Extremely Loud Music/Steel Wheels Music/Blind Mule Music – *like I said, I don't think Strait will walk away with nothing tonight – just hope I didn't reverse the single and song of the year!*

"Letter To Me" Brad Paisley EMI-April Music/New Sea Gayle Music

"Stay" Jennifer Nettles Jennifer Nettles Publishing

"You're Gonna Miss This" Lee Thomas Miller/Ashley Gorley EMI
Blackwood Music/New Songs of Sea Gayle/Noah's Little Boat
Music/Songs of Combustion Music

Musical Event Of The Year [Awarded to each Artist]

"Another Try" – Josh Turner featuring Trisha Yearwood MCA
Nashville

"Every Other Weekend" – Reba McEntire and Kenny Chesney MCA
Nashville

"Gone Gone Gone" – Robert Plant and Alison Krauss Rounder
Records

"Life In A Northern Town" – Sugarland featuring Little Big
Town and Jake Owen Mercury Nashville

"Shiftwork" – Kenny Chesney (duet with George Strait) BNA
Records – *What does 'vocal event' mean anyway? By the looks
of how they wrote the nominees, I guess 'vocal event' means
'when record labels lease their stars'. Chesney always wins
big at awards shows, but I personally prefer Jimmy Buffet's
beachcomber style over Kenny Chesney's knock-off version. I'm
guessing the Country Music Association does not agree.*

Music Video Of The Year [Awarded to artist and director]

Don't Blink Kenny Chesney Directed by Shaun Silva

Good Time Alan Jackson Directed by Trey Fanjoy

Stay Sugarland Directed by Shaun Silva – *everyone knows by now
that Jennifer Nettles cried real tears during the filming of
this video, is it enough to win her the award? My vote is
yes, but maybe it's just wishful thinking.*

Waitin' On a Woman Brad Paisley Directed by Jim Shea

You're Gonna Miss This Trace Adkins Directed by Peter Zavadil

Musician Of The Year

Jerry Douglas, Dobro – Drums

Paul Franklin – Steel Guitar

Dann Huff – Guitar – *will win. But then again, this is the
blind lottery award for viewers. Like I know who any of these
people are, so I just picked the name that jumped out at me,
and Dan Huff it was.*

Brent Mason – Guitar

Mac McAnally – Guitar

For sure, a great time will be had by all. I might update my blog with winners as I watch tonight. And after reviewing my reasons for my picks for tonight's awards, it needs to be said that it's been way too long since some classic artists (and my personal favorites) came out with anything noteworthy! Alan Jackson ~~Garth Brooks~~ and Martina McBride, you know who you are!

Academy of Country Music Awards Night!

Awards time was upon us again last night! Overall, I had a good time during the Academy of Country Music Awards, not as much fun as actually being there like I was in 2000, but a good time! There were some disappointments for me though, as you will read in my play-by-play of the awards below:

Carrie Underwood opened the show – I like Carrie Underwood; even though she's a country crossover, I think she has an amazing voice. By the way, very early in her season of American Idol – when I still watched it – I predicted that she would win and also that she would be a very good country singer. Just had to get that in there to boost myself after I did so horribly at predicting this year's ACM awards. But her new song isn't country enough for me, and it made it seem like she is trying to cross back over into pop or rock. Was not a big fan of her performance.

Next Reba McEntire made a funny joke in a beautiful blue dress with a classy fit. The joke was about 1986, and she said, "Back then, Roger Clemens wasn't even interested in country music!" The audience oohed and ahed, I guess it was kinda controversial, but I liked it. The joke was in reference to

the affair that took place years ago and just now came to light between a married and much older Roger Clemens and a teenage up and coming country star named Mindy McCready, who unfortunately is better known these days for controversy than for country music. Reba's jokes were actually pretty funny tonight, I liked the Kenny Chesney song reference: "she thinks my *fracture* is sexy" and also when Reba was talking about the correlation between #1 hits and birthdays, she said, "I have 33". Her delivery made that joke pretty funny, and I do like her as a host.

Next up was a live performance from Toby off-Keyth. To his credit, many of the performers seemed off pitch tonight, could there have been some issue with the sound system? That aside, his new song is simply awful. Quite possibly the worst country song ever. The lyrics are terrible, and hearing it off-key was even worse.

Time for the first award! SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR – I guessed Don't Blink by Kenney Chesney, and hubby guessed Stay by Sugarland. Other nominees were Miranda Lambert, Big and Rich, and Gary Allan -Slow start – hubby is one up on me already since the winner is Stay. Gotta give him some credit, it's a nice song.

Next is a live performance from Brad Paisley – his new song is ok, I like it, but he seems off key too. Hubby says, Brad Paisley? He's always off key on the live shows. I don't remember this being the case, Is he?

Next, Taylor Swift wins TOP NEW FEMALE VOCALIST – no surprise there – hubby is 2 for 2, and I am on the board with 1.

Miranda Lambert's live performance – alright.

Now the award for NEW DUO/VOCAL GROUP – Never even heard of any of the nominees since I listen to Kidsongs in the car now; I no longer get to listen to country radio, so all the new stuff on the awards show tonight was truly news to me. Quiz

me on Kidsongs episodes though, and I'd win every time!

Rodney Atkins gives an off key live performance. Not that this song about kids swearing sounds that great on the radio either. It's an ok song, but he has a crackly country voice, and live singing just makes it worse.

TOP NEW MALE VOCALIST – Hubby guesses Luke Bryan I guess Jake Owen, and the nominee not chosen by either of us wins – Jack Ingram.

Live performance from Kenny Chesney – I'm never a huge fan of Chesney, but he wasn't off-key, so I won't complain.

Live performance by Geroge Strait – I was not crazy about his new song but at least he wasn't off key either. Live performance duet – Kenny Chesney and George Strait – Chesney went a little off key, but I don't like this song Shiftwork anyway.

Next was a world premiere of Sugarlands new single, which I really liked! The woo-oohs were a little corny, but the song reminds me of 80's country and it was a very catchy tune.

ALBUM OF THE YEAR was won by Miranda Lambert – and nobody in our household guesses this category correctly.

Live performance by Brooks and Dunn – not off key

SONG OF THE YEAR – I guessed Kenny Chesney, hoping he would win this instead of Entertainer of the Year, but I was disappointed because Hubby guessed Sugarland's Stay would get this award.

Taylor Swift gave a live performance – a little off key until it started raining on her on stage. That was pretty cool, but did they turn off her mic and let her lip sync? Would the mic even work in the rain? She got pretty wet and was suddenly on key, so I wonder...

TOP VOCAL DUO – Brooks and Dunn – We both guessed this one correctly – EVERYONE WINS!

Trace Atkins live performance – pitch problems

I have to comment on the baby puking commercial that aired here. I believe it originally aired during the Superbowl. But it shows a baby talked into a webcam, and all of a sudden, he spits up. I just love the irony of the baby talking like a normal adult, then all of a sudden spitting up like a baby. You have to see it and probably have kids to appreciate it.

Now finally, after stringing us along all night, it was time for the Garth Brooks tribute. Garth used to be my favorite country singer, way back when, until he sold out, retired a few times, became Chris Gaines, etc etc. But he still has some great music in his library, some of which he treated us to tonight in a live performance. Reminded me of the 3 times I got to see him in concert. He was a GREAT performer, and even though he has aged a little, he can still give a good concert. I loved how when he went off key, he covered by pretending he was just having fun with the song and meant to have pitch problems – yeah right! And he did mess up the words in The Thunder Rolls – he came in too early. But a good concert by him overall, even if he was a bit rusty. He also included the following songs in his montage: Callin Baton Rouge, Friends in Low Places, We Shall Be Free, The Dance, Just Ledoux, In Another's Eyes (special guest duet with wife Tricia Yearwood. Not to be rude, but I was POSITIVE Garth was going to be announcing some baby news – Tricia looked extra puffy. He didn't say anything though, so I guess I'm just a jerk for noticing and saying so. Being in the public eye must suck!), More Than a Memory, Rodeo, and the finale Ain't Goin Down Til the Sun Comes Up. Then, Garth was given the Crystal Milestone Award of which he is deserving, despite all the selling out he's done. And when he called Reba Ms. Yearwood, it was hilarious, but since it was followed by "I love her", I can see why he mixed up the names to say that about his wife –

aw!

Next award – VOCAL GROUP – Rascal Flatts

Keith Urban live performance – liked the song, but what's with the do doo's? This is the second do doo's song tonight!

David Spade's long joke was funny, but I have yet to understand his presence at country music awards?

Rascal Flatts live performance was off key.

Eddy Arnold tribute – Carrie Underwood and Brad Paisley sang one of Eddy's songs as a duet, and it sounded magnificent. Awesome tribute.

Kellie Pickler live performance – off pitch, like so many others before her.

Trisha Yearwood comes out to present MALE VOCALIST – kudos on the costume change, shouldn't be any baby rumors due to this dress. I have Kenny Chesney, Hubby has George Strait. Paisley wins.

Lee Ann Rimes – live performance – not off key, but the band is way loud.

Carrie Underwood wins FEMALE VOCALIST and puts me within one point of tying up the contest between my husband and me!

Montgomery Gentry – live performance off key – sounds horrible

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR – Wait, my ballot sheet says we still have Video of the year and Vocal Event of the Year, what happened? Some research on the internet shows I lost both those categories, ugh. I guessed Brad Paisley and Hubby has Keith Urban – Chesney wins AGAIN!!! I should have seen it coming, I was just hoping that with the new voting system this year – they let the fans vote for Entertainer of the Year – I thought the fans would take away Chesney's monopoly on this

category. His joke about thanking his parents for doing what they did so many years ago that led to his creation was kinda funny, if a bit unexpected.

So, you can see where my disappointments lie – mainly with the entertainer of the year award, losing to my husband, and not liking many of the new songs that were performed. But like I said, I had fun watching, and now I know I will have to do more research before the next country awards in the fall so I can get more correct guesses. I'll have to find a way to take back control over the car radio for starters!

Shout to the Lord

Even popular television can do things right from time to time. Apparently American Idol had their final eight perform [Shout to the Lord](#) not once, but **twice**. The first time they changed “Jesus” to “shepherd” presumably to not “offend” anyone (he is our shepherd though!), but the second time around they changed it back! Praise Jesus! The second, good version is below:

Crossing the Big Pond

Planning a trip to London? Let me be your guide to the best the West End has to offer in theatre. Already there are the Broadway hits [Wicked](#), [Phantom of the Opera](#) (ok, ok, it was in London first), and the just opened [Jersey Boys](#). However, there are several productions which have not yet made the leap over to the U.S.

There is the Andrew Lloyd Webber produced revival of *The Sound of Music*. Apparently, Lord Lloyd Webber cannot produce anything new on his own that is capable of making money so he must revive not only his past successes but also breathe new life into other's works as well (whatever happened to his planned sequel to *Phantom*?). There is also a revival of Webber's [Joseph....](#). In a bit of "American Idol" meets musical theatre, the Joseph for this production was chosen on a reality television show. In 2007, the new Broadway cast of [Grease](#) was chosen in this way on a series called "Grease: You're the One that I Want." Not a very original title.

There is also a new musical version of the classic novel and movie [Gone with the Wind](#). The Trevor Nunn directed production stars [Darius Danesh](#) as Rhett Butler. Darius was seen on "Pop Idol" which is the British phenomenon that inspired "American Idol." I wonder if the judges told him that he was "too theatrical" as Simon Cowell has been known to tell American contestants.

Perhaps the strangest if not the most ambitious show of all is the staging of J.R.R. Tolkien's [Lord of the Rings](#) trilogy. It took three films of nearly three hours each to scratch the surface of the novels. I'm sure Rings purists are left wanting after only one 3 hour musical.

So... if you are in West End or are planning a trip over the Atlantic, consider taking in one or more of these stage hits. Of course many times, today's hits of London become tomorrow's Broadway blockbusters and vice versa.

Ellen's Friend Gladys

I used to really enjoy watching The Ellen DeGeneres Show. It's on tv in my area at 4pm, so I used to watch it all the time while I was feeding my youngest daughter. Since that is no longer a job that requires sitting down for a good 30-60 minutes – quite the opposite nowadays actually! – I haven't caught Ellen in ages. But the other day, I was reminded of a viewer of Ellen's who she made a few phone calls to on the show... An 88-year-old named Gladys who was as matter-of-fact as can be and just hysterical. Check out the clip from her first sound byte on the show below. Gladys first calls Ellen's show and leaves a message, which is funny enough by itself, but when Ellen calls her back, hilarity ensues! Check it out: