

TEMPO Q&A WITH "CBS THIS MORNING'S" Gayle King

We flip the script on this Country Music admirer and ask *her* the questions.



GAYLE KING WAS BORN IN MARYLAND AND SPENT SEVERAL YEARS OF HER CHILDHOOD IN TURKEY while her father was in the military. She readily admits she didn't grow up a Country Music fan, but she sure is one now. The "CBS This Morning" anchor is drawn to modern Country with a pop flavor, and she's a connoisseur of Country Music videos.

"I watch the Country Music countdown [on CMT] every Saturday," King says.

"I love Cody and I love Katie. I love looking at the videos, hearing the stories. I just think the show is really good. And I love seeing the countdown to see how the numbers change. And then you've got the heat seeker videos. Like there's a song that Brett Eldredge does, 'Sunday Drive.' I love that video."

King is accustomed to being the one *asking* the questions, but we flipped the script on her for our *ACM Tempo*® Q&A.

TEMPO: I want to talk Country Music with you. When did your love for Country Music begin? Who introduced you to Country?

GAYLE: That's such a good question. I guess it started with Taylor Swift, cause when Taylor started, she was Country. I sort of eased into it with Taylor. Maybe I've liked it longer than I realized because I've liked Faith [Hill]. I like Tim [McGraw] because I liked "Live Like You Were Dying." The thing that draws me in are the lyrics. It's the lyrics to Country Music songs that just get me. And then you've got the voice and the great storytelling.

TEMPO: I've seen you interact with the artists when they come to the "CBS This Morning" studio in New York to help announce the ACM Awards® nominees, and you're so genuinely excited to see them. Why do you enjoy spending time with them?

GAYLE: Because I think that it really is true that they have genuine appreciation for the people that like their music. I never feel that — you know, I hate the word "fans." I wish we could come up with [another word] "admirers." They really have great respect. All artists will say they care about the people that admire them and that are their fans, but I just think Country Music people seem to take it to a different level.

Look at what they do with the videos, it's stuff that people relate to. You see a Luke Bryan video and you just know it's

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going to be a party. It’s just going to be fun. Sometimes [his] mom is in the video and I get a kick out of that. I like it when the videos are — when they include their family members in the video. They allow us in a little glimpse of that. I like the song “Undivided.” They also are starting to speak to the times. I really, really like that. I hope that’s something that’s here to stay.

TEMPO: There are lots of strides recently to make the genre more inclusive. How do you feel about artists like Mickey Guyton, Kane Brown and Jimmie Allen, and even T.J. Osborne with his recent interview? Why do you think they are getting more opportunities?

GAYLE: I say it’s 2021. You know I did a story on Mickey Guyton maybe about three years ago. She wasn’t married. I really hope she blows up because she’s got a beautiful voice and she’s a very talented sweet person. She just had a baby, Grayson. I sent Grayson a baby gift because I was so excited about Mickey’s baby.

TEMPO: She sang on our show last year. She was pregnant then.

GAYLE: I know! And the *New York Times* just did a piece on her. Did you see that? Yeah, the *New York Times* did a piece on her on a Sunday about three weeks ago and I texted her and said, “Whose dress are you wearing? I want to get that dress.”

And, I love that Maren Morris really speaks up. I know it’s very risky in this cancel culture that we live in because people will turn on you quick. So, I admire that she speaks up and I think that when someone of her stature speaks up, I think it makes other people think “If she can do it ...” — because I think many people feel the way that Maren does. I just think people are afraid to step out there the way she has. I really admire that she did that. Chris Stapleton has said something, too, and when Luke Combs spoke up about the Confederate flag, that stuff makes a difference.

TEMPO: I think there are a lot of people in Nashville who would agree with that.

GAYLE: So, it has certainly taken some time. You know, Rissi Palmer has been around a long time. I would like to see her get her just rewards.



King with Lady A in the CBS News studio, 2016

TEMPO: The ACM Awards are going to be on CBS in April. What do you look forward to the most about the show?

GAYLE: What are they wearing and the performances. You know, it’s just always a great music show. You always see something you like and I always hear something that I like that I hadn’t heard before. You know, sometimes I get a new album and I have to listen to it at least three times before I can make a decision. But the times with a Country song that I hear it like Miranda’s “Smoking and Drinking,” and I don’t smoke or drink, but I just like the music of it. I love all things Lady A. They never miss a step to me.

I’m very drawn to the storytelling and the lyrics and the video of it.

TEMPO: I think that draws in a lot of people.

GAYLE: I think so. I think so. You know, like Russell Dickerson has a song, “Love You Like I Used To,” and I listened to the lyrics and then you see the video. He did such a great job on the video. You see the video and it’s a totally different thing because you think he’s breaking up with her, and then you look at the video and you see that it’s quite the opposite. So, I think the video of it has a little wink to it.

TEMPO: Right, and they do that often.

GAYLE: That’s just what I was going to say. And Country Music does that often because if you listen to “Love You Like I Used To” and then you look at the video, you go “This is really well done!”

How about like the “One Beer” song [by ACM® New Male Artist nominee] HARDY? I love the “One Beer” video. (sings) Then they tell you the whole story. (sings) I love how they tell the story of that. And then you have in the middle of it when they’re doing the video, they’re on that grassy thing ...and then Lauren Alaina lets out a big “ahhh” in the middle of it. It’s just so good! It’s so good. — LISA LEE