



The SURFLINE

The Weekly Newsletter of 94.9 The Surf • WVCO FM
Official Station of the Society of Stranders • CBMA Hall of Fame Radio Station

Volume 1, Issue 36 • Wednesday, October 7th, 2026

IN THIS ISSUE: Ocean Drive Scene • A Wave of Pink at HOTO's • Your Vote, Your Countdown • Chart Spotlight: Little Big Town • Back to the CBMAs: 2001

Ocean Drive Scene

Weird Saturday. If your radio sounded a little off around ten o'clock, there's a reason: there was no Surf Countdown, because Jay Kinlaw was on the highway to Alabama.

He's spending this week with Jim Quick and about 150 Coastline Crazies at the **Swamp Soul Gathering on the Gulf**, October 4 through 8, at the historic **Flora-Bama Lounge**. The Flora-Bama is the Gulf-front roadhouse that sits right on the state line between Orange Beach, Alabama, and Perdido Key, Florida. Jim & Coastline have the stage, the Island House Hotel is home base, and for five days a good piece of the Carolina beach music scene is a road show.

Sue Martin is down there with them. She won the Surf's Suitcase Challenge, the scavenger hunt that started July 4th at Lee Funeral Home and finished Labor Day weekend at the Tiki Bar at HOTO's. She matched the official 94.9 The Surf Suitcase item for item, and the prize was this exact trip: two people, Flora-Bama, Swamp Soul on the Gulf. She packed right, and now she's on the Gulf. Congratulations again, Sue.

Main Street didn't slow down while Jay was gone. Friday the Tiki Bar at HOTO's turned pink for the Surf Pink Party — that story is below. DJ Heavy, Rick Kosko manned the Surf Mic and were joined by Peter Saturday, Ray's List ran to 47 shows, from Frankie Moree at HOTO's at noon to Bailey Road at Duck's at 9, with Deb & Marlisa at Patios at 4 and Steel County Express on the House of Blues deck along the way.

The Countdown comes back **Saturday, October 10**, 10 to noon, and the ballot is open now. Sixty-six songs are on it, and there's a space at the bottom for the one we missed. Ratings close Friday. The details are inside, along with a Chart Spotlight on one of the two records left waiting on the bubble two Saturdays ago: Little Big Town's "Sucker for a Sad Song." Surf voters kept this band on the chart for most of 2023, and this record tips its hat to a soul classic.

This week's look back goes to 2001, and it has two names that matter this week. The FM Radio Station of the Year that fall was WVCO, 94.9 The Surf. The Group of the Year was Coastline — the same band holding down the Flora-Bama right now. Back to the CBMAs: 2001 is inside, with a Hall of Fame class that put two Embers in together.

CBMA Weekend is November 5–8 at the Ocean Drive Resort and the Alabama Theatre, with the awards show Sunday, November 8, at 3 p.m. That is four weeks.

See you on Ocean Drive.

A Wave of Pink at HOTO's

Fight Like a Champ

Friday, October 2, the Tiki Bar at Harold's on the Ocean turned pink. 94.9 The Surf went live from HOTO's from 11 to 3 for the **Pink Party for Cancer Awareness**, and every dollar went to **TR's Cancer Fighters** (trscancerfighters.org).

The pink boxing gloves on the poster said it all: Fight Like a Champ. There were pink ribbons, pink hibiscus and a crowd that came dressed for it. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the beach music family started it the way it usually does, by showing up.

DJ Heavy, Jim Quick, and Ponytail Rick Kosko were at the Surf Mic. CBMA's Peter Carpenter was there...TR Cancer Fighters' Timmy Ray Davis, and lots of supporters.

Thanks to everyone who came out, to HOTO's for hosting, and to TR's Cancer Fighters for the work they do the other 364 days of the year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Friday, Oct. 9 — Deadline to rate songs for the next Surf Countdown**
- **Saturday, Oct. 10 — The Surf Countdown returns with Jay Kinlaw, 10 AM–12 Noon**
- **Nov. 5–8 — CBMA Weekend, Ocean Drive Resort and the Alabama Theatre; awards show Sunday, Nov. 8, 3 PM**
- The [Daily Calendar for NMB](#) is posted every morning

Your Vote, Your Countdown

Jay's back in the chair Saturday, October 10, 10 a.m. to noon. What he plays is up to you.

The Surf Countdown isn't put together in a back office. It starts with the songs you've been calling in to request on 94.9 The Surf. Those requests go on a ballot, and you rate every song from 1 to 10, with 10 the best. The station adds up every point each song gets until the deadline, and the totals set the next countdown. **Ratings close this Friday, October 9.**

This week's ballot has large number of songs, and it covers a lot of ground. Jim Quick is on it three times: "Don't Turn My Heater Down" with Gary Brown, "My Heart Is Not a Toy" with Gary Lowder & Smokin' Hot, and "Wait For Me" with R. Mark Black and Allie Privette. You can rate those while Jim is playing the Flora-Bama. Gary Lowder also has three songs, and Jennifer James has three, including "Suspicious Minds" with Brad Cox. Vaughan Penn has two, "Bands on the Beach" and "Sandbar Shuffle." "Bands on the Beach" was #1 on our last Countdown, Sept. 26.

There's history on the list too. The Tams are there with "I Tried." So is Jackie Gore, the voice of The Embers from 1958 to 1994 and a member of the 2001 Hall of Fame class in this week's look back, singing "Love Makes the World Go Round" alongside Russell Thompkins Jr. There are also new names and Grand Strand regulars: Rivermist, Groove Harbor, Pink Slips Band, North Tower, the Tonez with "NMBSC," and Jennifer Licko's "Meet Me at the Shag Pad." Some songs come from outside beach music, like Ella Langley, Miranda Lambert, Little Big Town and Bruno Mars, which shows how wide the Surf audience listens.

The station asks for one thing: **rate more than just one or two of your favorite artists.** The countdown works best when everybody rates a lot of the list.

Don't see your song? At the bottom of the ballot there's a space for songs that aren't on the list. If you're hearing a record on the radio that you think belongs in the Surf Countdown, add it there for consideration. Many songs on this week's ballot first got there because a listener asked for them.

Little Big Town featuring Ashley Monroe, “Sucker for a Sad Song”

Back on the bubble three years after a 40-week run, and tipping its hat to a soul classic

On the bubble. Two records were waiting just outside the Top 20 on the September 26 Countdown. One was Marlisa Kay Small’s brand-new “In Way Over My Heart.” The other was this one, its first appearance on the Surf chart, and it’s on this week’s ballot. Whether it gets in on October 10 is up to you.

Been here before. Little Big Town has done this on the Surf once already. In 2023 Surf voters adopted “All Summer,” the opening track from the band’s 2022 album *Mr. Sun*. It was never released as a single, and it ran on our chart as “All Summer Long.” It was already in the Top 20 on the first posted chart of 2023, January 14, and it was still there on November 4: at least 40 Saturdays in all. It peaked at No. 7 on April 15 and finished No. 12 on the 2023 Year-End Chart, between Jimmy Buffett’s “Bubbles Up” at 11 and Marlisa Small and Jerry West’s “Love Really Hurts Without You” at 13. Three years later, Little Big Town and Marlisa are side by side again, both on the bubble.

The porch. The song started as an offhand remark. Karen Fairchild was writing with Ashley Monroe and Shelby Lynne on Lynne’s back porch. As Fairchild tells it, she stepped into the kitchen, came back out and said, “I don’t know, y’all, I’m just such a sucker for a sad song.” The three of them started writing from there.

The writers. Fairchild is one of Little Big Town’s four voices. Monroe is one-third of the Pistol Annies with Miranda Lambert, who is also on this week’s ballot with “Sunset Marquis.” Monroe sings on the record too. Shelby Lynne won the Grammy for Best New Artist in 2001, the same year as this issue’s look back at the CBMAs.

The sad songs. The lyric is a love letter to the records that hurt the right way, and it names a few. There’s “Long Black Veil,” the 1959 Lefty Frizzell murder ballad. There’s “Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain,” Willie Nelson’s 1975 hit. And there’s “Rainy Night in Georgia,” the Tony Joe White song Brook Benton took to No. 1 on the soul chart and No. 4 on the Hot 100 in 1970. That last one is the reason this record makes sense on the Surf: a Nashville song about sad songs that reaches for a soul ballad Surf listeners have known for fifty-six years.

The record. Fairchild co-produced it with Gena Johnson for MCA Nashville. It came out at the end of June with a video directed by Becky Fluke. On August 28 it led off the band’s new album, *It’s a Dying Art*, right after a short intro by the same three writers. The album has thirteen tracks, with guest spots from Jason Isbell and Kelsea Ballerini. Like “All Summer” three years ago, it opens the album. The album reached No. 26 on Billboard’s Top Album Sales and No. 7 on the UK’s Official Country Artists Albums chart.

The band. Little Big Town is Karen Fairchild, Kimberly Schlapman, Phillip Sweet and Jimi Westbrook, together since 1998. Most listeners know them from “Boondocks,” “Pontoon” and “Girl Crush.” Their For the Art of It Tour opened September 24 in St. Petersburg, Florida, and runs through November.

Rate it, and the other 65, at surfcountdown.com by Friday.

“Sucker for a Sad Song” — Little Big Town featuring Ashley Monroe • Written by Karen Fairchild, Ashley Monroe & Shelby Lynne • Produced by Gena Johnson & Karen Fairchild • MCA Nashville • Released June 2026 • From It’s a Dying Art (August 28, 2026) • On the bubble, September 26th Surf Countdown • Previously on the Surf: “All Summer” (as “All Summer Long”), No. 12, 2023 Year-End Chart

Are you in the Surf Text Club?

Text the Word SURF to 877-899-2845 and never miss out on Great SURF Events like the OD Beach Music Festival and The Beach Music Cruise.

Back to the CBMAs: 2001

The year the Surf won, Coastline won again, and two Embers went into the Hall together

The Carolina Beach Music Awards met for the seventh time in 2001, and this one has extra meaning for this newsletter. **FM Radio Station of the Year** went to **WVCO, The Surf 94.9, Myrtle Beach**, the third year of the station's twelve-year run. That was twenty-five years ago this fall.

The same night, **Group of the Year** went to **Coastline** for the second year running. That's the same Coastline holding down the stage at the Flora-Bama this week, with Jay and Sue in the crowd.

Billy Scott's night

Bo Schronce's three-year run as Male Vocalist ended in 2000, and in 2001 the award went to **Billy Scott**. He also had the record of the year: "**My Kind of Girl**" won both **Song of the Year** and **Ballad/Smoothie**. That's three awards on one record and one voice.

General Johnson won twice. He was named **Producer**, and "It Ain't What You Do" with the Chairmen of the Board took **Original Song**. **The Fantastic Shakers** also won twice: "Don't Look Good Naked" for **Blues Song** and "Let's Do It Again" for **Group Album**. **Delbert McClinton** won **National Shag/Dance Song** with "Living It Up" and shared **Collaboration/Duo** with Steve Bassett on "Sing Loud."

Susan Trexler was Female Vocalist, ending Terri Gore's two-year hold on the award. The **Delta Riders** were the Rising Star. **JD Cash's** "Summer Place" took Solo Album, **Griff's** "Paint It Blue II" took Blues Album, and **Ruby Jude's** "All Aboard the Beach Boogie Train II" took Compilation Album. **Fred Shaw** was Engineer.

Radio, clubs and the industry

WLWL "Big Wave 770" in Rockingham won AM Station. **Big John Ruth** took the Larry Crockett Award as FM DJ, Dr. Feelgood (**Robbie Vogt**) was AM DJ in the award's second year, and **the Rhythm and Beach Top 40 Countdown** won Syndicated Radio.

Pirate's Cove won the Bill Griffin Award for Club of the Year. **Red's Beach Club** in Raleigh took the Cecil Corbett Award for Live Music Venue. **S.O.S. Fun Monday** was Event of the Year, and **Butch Halpin** was Club/Mobile DJ. **Sam West & Jackie McGee** won the Shad Alberty Award for national shag dancing.

Industry honors went to **Willie P. Richardson** (Sara Helms Award), **Jerry Goodman** (Industry and CBMA Appreciation), **The Record Rack** in Goldsboro (Retail Outlet), and **David and Jackie Hursey** (Fan of the Year).

The Hall of Fame class of 2001

Seven went in. Two of them came from the same band, and the rest came from the radio, the booking office and the bandstand.

Steve Hardy. A year after he took the FM DJ award, the Academy put him in the Hall. Hardy started *Steve Hardy's Original Beach Party* in 1974 and kept it going for forty-five years, five hours every Sunday night, from the Farmville stations he owned to his last home, WNCT 107.9 in Greenville. He promoted Band of Oz and the Chairmen of the Board along the way. He signed off for the last time on December 29, 2019, received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine that same month, and died April 23, 2020. His son Britt carries the show on.

Willis Blume. If you saw a beach band in South Carolina in the last fifty years, there is a good chance Willis Blume booked it. He played drums with the DuPrees in high school in Sumter and later with the Persians. In 1972 he and his wife Linda started the Willis Blume Agency in Orangeburg, which grew into the largest entertainment agency in the state, with more than eighty bands. In 1980 he formed the Shagstik Band, renamed Shagtime two years later. That's the band behind "Mr. Beach," and Willis kept its drum chair until 1990, when he traded it for golf. He retired from the agency in 2007 and died in Orangeburg on August 31, 2014.

Billy Bazemore. The voice on “Shaggin’.” Bazemore sang with Bill Deal and the Rhondels in the late ’60s, served in the Army from 1969 to 1971, and came home to front the Band of Oz. He co-wrote and sang the band’s first No. 1, “Shaggin’,” in 1978, and stayed out front until 1985. He died in Richmond on February 8, 2011.

Michael Branch. Mike Branch played keyboards and wrote for the Tempests in the late ’60s, then spent the rest of his career on the business side of beach music. In 1974 he and Roger Branch started Insight Talent, a booking and promotion agency on Independence Boulevard in Charlotte, and Insight’s Beach Blast festivals put the Chairmen of the Board, Archie Bell and the Drells and Bill Pinkney’s Drifters in front of Carolina crowds. In 1979 he and General Johnson started Surfside Records out of the same building, with Mike running the business while General and Ken Knox made the records. “Mike was a very hard worker,” Knox remembered, “and was hands on in promoting Chairmen of the Board in the south-east.” The Academy now gives the Michael Branch Award every year for that kind of work, and in 2024 it went to the man who sends you this newsletter, Bo Gilbert.

John Wilson Pittman. John Pittman was a radio man and featured beach music in its formats. A Roanoke Rapids native who went to Pembroke State, he owned WSTS and WFMO in Fairmont, N.C. He died in September 1995 at 45, so his place in the Hall came six years after his death.

Jackie Gore and Bobby Tomlinson. The two of them started The Embers in Raleigh in 1958, and they went into the Hall together. Jackie was the band’s lead voice for thirty-six years, through 1994, and wrote the song a lot of people call the national anthem of beach music, “I Love Beach Music.” Bobby kept the drum chair for six decades, and the Academy gave him the **Joe Pope Pioneer Award** the same night.

Their story, from the teenage country bands they played in before there was an Embers to the Budweiser commercial and the Rolling Stones, is told in [The Embers: The Bobby Tomlinson Story](#) by Chris Jones, Bill Benners, and Skip Crayton. It’s available from BuyBeachMusic, Amazon and other online retailers, with signed copies coming straight from Bobby at brtomlinson1@aol.com.

Surf Program Guide

Live shows 7 days a week from Ocean Drive, the Shag Capital of the World — Listen live at 949thesurf.com

SHOW	HOST	TIME
Morgan In The Morning	Jim Morgan	Mon–Fri, 7–11 AM
Best Day Ever Show	Jim Quick with Harper Sanders	Mon–Fri, 11 AM–3 PM
The Traffic Jam	DJ Heavy	Mon–Fri, 3–6 PM
In Southern Soul at 6	DJ Heavy	Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 6–7 PM
The Surf Countdown	Jay Kinlaw	Sat, 10 AM–12 Noon
A Joyful Noise	Jim Morgan	Sun, 7–10 AM
Swamp Soul	Jim Quick	Fri, 7 PM

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A Weekly Publication for 94.9 The Surf • WVCO FM

98 N. Ocean Blvd., Suite 3-N • North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582

949thesurf.com • surfcountdown.com

Distribution by Bo the Webguy & Explore NMB - Historical content by Chris Jones

Contact Bo at 843-564-2610 or bo@949thesurf.com for questions regarding The SURFLINE