

'Honky Tonkin With Big D & Bubba' Is A Labor Of Love

 barrettmedia.com/2025/01/15/honky-tonkin-with-big-d-bubba-is-a-labor-of-love

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January 15, 2025

Music Features



Derek “Big D” Haskins and Sean “Bubba” Powell host the Nashville-based “Big D & Bubba Show.” Compass Media Networks syndicates the show to over 100 stations. Additionally, the show is broadcast to 177 stations worldwide through the Armed Forces Radio Networks.

The duo recently took over hosting “Honky Tonkin’ With Big D & Bubba,” previously “Honky Tonkin” hosted by Country star Tracy Lawrence.

I caught up with the duo to pick their brains about the show’s success as well as the addition of “Honky Tonkin’ With Big D & Bubba.”

The duo got together in 1996 at WTGE in Baton Rouge. According to the Big D, the show was a little rough in the beginning.

“We were pretty bad. I mean, really bad, really unlistenable, and it took us a little while to get stuff ironed out. Finally, we kind of figured it out. It took us three to four months I knew where we wanted to go. We sorted it out and figured out that this is the kind of show we want to be.”

“They tasked us with trying to figure out the best way to do this multi-city stuff, and so we experimented, made mistakes, figured it out, made more mistakes, and it’s funny because we started off doing pure voice tracking, and then we realized that oh, no we can do this in segments.”

“We broke radio. We started doing segment shows and showed that you can do basically one show for most markets and then fill in the gaps with local content.”

“Amarillo was our first affiliate. “Now we are on 100 plus radio stations plus the official Country morning show of the United States military on Armed Forces Radio.”

The show is unique in that it is done live in real time allowing for callers and interaction with the listeners.

“There are people in radio who are doing it when they can, and we’re doing it when the show is on, so when you can call us. It’s weird to say that we actually have phone calls, and that’s a selling point now. And there’s a reaction. It’s interaction,” said Bubba.

“It’s happening right now. The great thing about radio is that everyone can experience it at the same time, and it’s dynamic, so it’s changing. So, a caller calls in and says, Hey, I’m on the side of the road. How do I change the thing for the tire pressure or whatever.”

“Then someone will call in, and then someone else calls in, and then we get resolution, and you got a bit that happened in 35 minutes real time with real callers from around the country.”

With a worldwide audience, being funny may not always be appropriate. So, how do they handle something like the Los Angeles wildfires?

“We have people driving on the 5 around Santa Clarita who have checked in and given us real-time reports. It’s the same with the flooding in North Carolina and the hurricanes on the Gulf Coast or wherever the tragedy is. We have a station there.”

“We have a lot of real-time information coming in as a man-on-the-street type thing instead of being presented by a news reporter. One of our listeners is in the car, going, “Hey, I’m driving by the fire.” I can see it from the car now. It’s getting a little close.”

As the show evolved, so did the idea of adding characters to the cast. Jessica “Carsen” Humphreville joined the show, bringing a female voice and perspective.

“Adding Carson was a big deal in the early days of doing the show. Everybody felt like, oh, you need a female voice, and we fought it, and we fought it and fought it, and then one day we went, you know, we need a female voice,” said Big D.

“We needed another opinion but didn’t want a giggle box. We wanted somebody who would be just as strong, just as vocal, and just as steadfast as the two of us who also understood the ins and outs of radio, the formatics of how to make a bit work, and Carson was it.”

“We looked, we looked for a while, and she was the absolute best person for the job. There was no question about it. I’m saying Carson is the best female in radio.”

The duo recently took over hosting duties for the weekend syndicated program, “Honky Tonkin With Tracy Lawrence,” rebranding it “Honky Tonkin’ With Big D & Bubba.”

“We tried to convince him to stay on, but he’s got a lot of really good stuff going on in his life, and we’re so excited about it, so we looked at all the options,” said Bubba.” Who can we bring in?”

“We looked at other artists from that era and talked to several radio people that we reached out to as well. One day, Big D’s wife Kathy said, ‘Why don’t you and Bubba host it?’ The thought had never even occurred to us because we already have enough on our plate.”

“The show has not skipped a beat. Our very first guest on the show was actually Tracy Lawrence. We followed up with Mark Wills and then went on to it. It’s a very organic and very fun show.”

Playing and interviewing 90s artists means coming full circle for Big D & Bubba.

“We love that music. That was the music when we started in 96, and we would play 80s, 90s, and 2000s on that show. We had so many friends who are artists that got their start in music on our show, and now they’re coming back, and we’re talking about great stories from Mark Wills or Tracy Lawrence, all the greats of Country music in that era.”

“It’s cool to reconnect with a lot of these guys because we haven’t seen them in a bit, and they’re like, oh my gosh, you are my very first interview. I can’t tell you how many. If we called ten people, at least five would say you were my first radio interview, and I’ll never forget it.”

Those relationships will allow “Honky Tonkin’” to be a labor of love.

“It’s almost like having a hobby, but like really enjoying and having a passion for something and doing it on the weekends. It’s a lot of fun, and the music is hotter than it’s ever been in that era. We’re proud to be leading the way.”

Listen to [Big D & Bubba here](#).

For syndication information on either show, contact [Compass Media Networks](#).



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