



STEVE BRUCKER

## Randy Montana

**Date Signed:** August 12, 2009  
**Label:** Universal / Mercury Nashville  
**Type of Music:** Country  
**Band Members:** Randy Montana, vocals, guitar; Trae Gunter, vocals, guitar; Josh Taylor, vocals, guitar; David Grant, drums; Jeremy Branon, bass guitar.

### —CONTACTS—

**Management:** Borman Entertainment, 615-320-3000  
**Booking:** CAA, 615-383-8787  
**Legal:** Lester Yano  
**Publicity:** Fount.Lynch@umusic.com  
**Web:** randymontana.com; umgnashville.com  
**A&R:** Joe Fisher, Universal/Mercury Nashville



## Melissa Ferrick

**Date Signed:** October 20, 2010  
**Label:** MPress Records  
**Type of Music:** Folk Rock / Indie

### —CONTACTS—

**Management:** Melissa Ferrick, 212-481-7243, ferrickteam@gmail.com  
**Booking:** joshuadick@theagencygroup.com  
**Legal:** Nathan Osher / Randall Wixen Music Publishing, nathan@wixenmusic.com  
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**A&R:** Melanie@mpressrecords.com



BRYAN ALLEN

## Sonia Leigh

**Date Signed:** August 2009  
**Label:** Southern Ground Artists, Inc.  
**Type of Music:** Southern Rock, Americana

### —CONTACTS—

**Management:** ROAR Nashville, 615-858-1282  
**Booking:** CAA Nashville, 615-383-8787  
**Legal:** NA  
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**Web:** sonialeigh.com, mspace.com/sonialeigh  
**A&R:** NA

Most parents cringe when their child announces his or her intention of making music a career. For Randy Montana, the choice was a natural outgrowth of his upbringing. "To me, guitars and songs was just how a kid grows up." His father, Billy Montana, is a talented songwriter, and their family has lived in the country music capital, Nashville, TN, since the artist was three. This musical atmosphere, and the contacts that result, was a definite advantage for this would-be artist when he struck out on his own.

Before signing a record deal, however, Montana stretched his wings as a writer first. "The good thing about the publishing side is that I had met a ton of publishers through my dad. They were family friends." Despite the built-in rapport with numerous industry folks, Montana took his choice seriously and worked hard to earn respect. "I was writing three or four times a week, and treating it like I already had a publishing deal, trying to build up a catalog." He paired up with co-worker and fellow songwriter Alex Dooley, who already had a publishing deal, and shopped his work around to several labels. Clay Bradley at Sony/BMG heard Montana's demo, called him to set up a meeting that resulted in a publishing deal.

Bradley's efforts brought Montana's songs to the attention of Joe Fisher at Universal/Mercury. "Joe and I went out to lunch, hung out and really hit it off," says Montana. "That was why I wanted to be a part of Universal; we really saw eye to eye on my songs, and I thought, 'If they're going to let me make a record of songs that I love, that's the best situation in the world.'"

Montana submitted every song he wrote to his publisher Sony/BMG, except the ones he wanted to perform himself. "[Sony's] job is to pitch songs around town and get holds from other artists. I would turn my songs in and say, 'Hey, this one's on hold for me.'"

Universal/Mercury funded Montana's debut record and set up an extensive touring schedule, including numerous radio appearances, and also handled the promotion. The artist's self-titled debut hit retail on July 30th.

—Sarah Whited

After a decade of releasing records through her indie label, Right On Records, Melissa Ferrick realized she could no longer do everything herself. "Putting out records on your own can really wear on you artistically," confesses the openly gay singer-songwriter. "I wasn't writing for, like, two years, because I was so overwhelmed."

As she toured during that period, Ferrick periodically ran into fellow artist and MPress label owner, Rachael Sage. Although formed initially for the purpose of releasing her own material, Ferrick learned the keyboardist had signed 22-year-old Seth Glier to her micro-operation. Getting to know label manager (and artist in her own right) Jojo Gentry further convinced Ferrick that MPress could provide the structure she needed.

Emboldened by the release of a cover album and a new job teaching at Berklee College of Music, Ferrick asked Sage point blank if she'd be interested in adding her to MPress's burgeoning roster. Having been signed to a major (Atlantic) and an indie (W.A.R.? - What Are Records?), Ferrick knew what she wanted and what she didn't in a deal. "I retained all of my publishing and my merchandise," Ferrick claims, adding, "they don't have anything to do with my touring income. And I asked for complete creative control, which I didn't get in writing but I got with a nod of the head."

Although they considered a number of options, including an administrative deal, the end result was a full-on, 50 / 50 split, three-record contract. The final document, which took two months to hash out, only runs four or five pages, a stark contrast compared with Ferrick's convoluted Atlantic agreement, which went a full 45. "This was readable to a layman," she declares, warning newcomers they can expect to sign several bad deals over the course of their careers. "And it's okay," she soothes. "In the end, is it better to be able to make a record or not? You have to give up some things."

Ferrick's MPress debut, *Still Right Here*, is set for release on Sept. 13th.

—Andy Kaufmann

Americana singer-songwriter Sonia Leigh has a talent for making friends that's been her key to unlocking the music industry.

At 14, she wrote a song for a friend who introduced her to a record label scout. She left home at 17, she says, with \$50, a bag of clothes and a guitar. "When I left, I found [the scout's] number and gave him a call; he remembered me, hooked me up with a producer." This second encounter brought Leigh a management deal.

For many years, Leigh played tirelessly anywhere she could land a gig. "I just played as much as I could, for free. I didn't have a plan to make it as a musician, or what I would do if I didn't make money, I just felt like the music was free to me and I loved it."

Eventually, Leigh joined the all-girl band Butterfly Stitch as lead guitarist. Through a friendship with her band mate, she met John Hopkins, bass player in the Zac Brown Band. He and Leigh also became good friends, and in 2007 Hopkins produced Leigh's album *Run or Surrender*. "I'm very proud of that record, and I think out of anything I've done, it served as a really good springboard for getting my music out there."

Leigh's friendship with the bassist spilled over, and she soon became friends with Zac Brown. "I started opening for him, and I would just go [to see them] anywhere. Even if I wasn't playing, I would go, and [Brown] would usually end up getting me up on stage because that's just how he is." Despite Brown's runaway success with the album *Chicken Fried*, he and Leigh remained fast friends.

With a successful independent album under her belt and a solid performance record, Leigh began to attract the attention of several labels. "I had a couple interested in me, so I called Zac, and he said, 'Don't sign anything. I'm starting a label [Southern Ground], and I really want you to be a part of it.' So now I'm blessed to have the same team that he gets to work with, and keep good people around me, and I'm really happy. That's one of the great advantages of my contract. I plan on being with Southern Ground forever, hopefully."

Leigh's debut *1978 December* retailed on Aug. 30th.

—Sarah Whited