# BALLANTYNE

magazine

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Fall 2013 Vol. 13 No. 3

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Winner Loretta Cozart, Husband Kip Enjoy

**Country Extravaganza** 

By Michael J. Solender Photos by Shane Baskin

THE ONLY THINGS HOTTER THAN THE PAVEMENT OUTSIDE CHARLOTTE'S FILLMORE BALLROOM on this mid-July evening were the guitar licks and riffs laid on the adoring crowd at the Girls & Guitars benefit concert. Sitting up front on the rail at a special VIP table was Loretta Cozart, the winner of the "Backstage at The Fillmore - VIP Experience." Happy to be at her side was husband William "Kip" Cozart.

The Cozarts, each 53, are longtime residents of Ballantyne's Landen Meadows neighborhood. Loretta was











randomly selected from hundreds of entrants in a contest sponsored by WKKT 96.9 "The Kat" radio station and Ballantyne Magazine.

Featuring an A-list of country and pop singers, the all-girl line-up boasted some of Nashville's most recognizable stars, including Katie Armiger, Rachel Farley, Maggie Rose, Cassadee Pope, season three winner of NBC's "The Voice," and this year's winner, Danielle Bradbery, who was celebrating her 17th birthday the evening of the show.

The headliner was none other than Albemarle, N.C. native and "American Idol" and "Dancing with the Stars" sweetheart Kellie Pickler. Her homecoming was greeted

with the evening's wildest enthusiasm.

"I was absolutely thrilled to learn that I had been selected," Loretta Cozart said before the concert. "We are big country-western fans, and I was particularly excited when I learned we'd be seeing Kellie Pickler. She represents the South so well, and I'm taken with the way she carries

The event benefited the Levine Children's Hospital and the Ryan Seacrest Foundation.

herself. We've never seen her in person so this is a real treat."

#### **Benefit for Kids**

The evening supported the Levine Children's Hospital in

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partnership with the Ryan Seacrest Foundation. The funds raised went toward the opening of an in-house multi-media broadcast center named "Seacrest Studios," giving kids their own radio studio and a place for closedcircuit shows.

The equipment will enable guest artists and celebrities to provide on-site virtual visits via the hospital's own entertainment system. 96.9 The Kat donated all the proceeds from concert ticket sales to the Ryan Seacrest Foundation.

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As Kip and Loretta entered the fabled dance hall, they stopped to take it all in. "We've never been here before," Kip said. "It is pretty overwhelming."

The Cozarts were impressed with the vast space, tiered ballroom flooring and opulent crystal chandeliers lining the bar and adorning the hall. Walls of deep lipstick-red and black velvet mimic the look of the club in San Francisco that rose to iconic fame in the 1960s.





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**Above:** Meeting Kellie Pickler was the highlight for the Cozarts.

**Left:** Cowboy boots were the concert's shoe du jour.

Before the show, the couple enjoyed plenty of excitement and regal treatment. They were escorted to the VIP Section and treated to an Italian buffet that featured bruschetta, spaghetti carbonara, tortellini, minigrilled cheese with prosciutto, pork tenderloin and cannoli for dessert.

#### **People Watching**

As the ballroom filled with fans young and old, the excitement began to build. The Cozarts remarked on the "people watching," and indeed it was fun to see moms with young daughters, couples decked in full-fringed western regalia, cowgirls in leather and lace and everywhere you looked — cowboy boots.

Boots, boots and more boots moved all over the hall, each pair attached to owners just itching to shake it up when their guitar-toting heroines took the stage.

Just before the announced show time, the Cozarts got

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word the performers would welcome them backstage where they could meet the stars and snap a photo.

In true Fillmore style, the backstage lounge "Green Room" was the same bold red as in the front of the house. The gal guitarists were eager to meet their fans and provide a personal "hello." As glamorous as they were in advance of performing for 4,000 fans, they

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The all-woman show featured top Nashville performers (from left) Cassadee Pope, Danielle Bradbery, Rachel Farley, Maggie Rose, Katie Armiger and Kellie Pickler.

were equally down-to-earth and friendly in taking time to greet each VIP as if they were a special visitor to their home.

When it was Loretta and Kip's turn for a photo op with Kellie Pickler, Loretta turned to the star and told her how proud she was of the way she represented North Carolina to the world and that the state should give her some special recognition. Pickler beamed and thanked the Cozarts, telling them she hoped they would enjoy the show.

"Isn't it wonderful that all

of us girls are in a position to do something that has such a positive benefit for children," Pickler said. "It is so nice to be back at home in the Tar Heel state where friends can come out to the show and I get to see so many familiar faces."

#### 'Red High Heels'

Pickler and the other stars didn't disappoint on stage either. Each performer cranked up the crowd with a solo and then they all played together, bringing their fans to a near frenzy. Pickler had the crowd on its feet rocking and dancing the night away, especially with her huge hit finale, "Red High Heels."

"Meeting Kellie Pickler was clearly the highlight," Loretta said. "It could not have been a more enjoyable evening."

For thousands of fans filing out of the Fillmore that night after the show, they likely were thinking the same thing.



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