

### Fight For Her Write

Hi-Fi Fusion's **Todd Cassetty** has helped create content for artists including **Taylor Swift**, **Carrie Underwood** and **Kelsea Ballerini**. Like many in the industry, he also noticed "a bit of a drought of females" in the genre. So last year he teamed with CAA's **Blake McDaniel** to start the weekly Nashville songwriter series *Song Suffragettes* – an outlet where, as Production Manager/Talent Booker **Helena Capps** says on the *Suffragettes* website, "Boys are welcome. They just don't get to perform."



Starting in the backstage room at Nashville venue 3rd & Lindsley, the series outgrew the space after only two months. They moved to The Listening Room, where Cassetty had a set builder construct an onstage environment that "doesn't look like your typical stark five-stools-on-a-barren-stage writer round," he says.

Since the series began, more than 80 women have played and approximately 450 have auditioned. "We're very aggressive about trying to find the best young women we can find," he says. "We probably have three come through our office a week. A lot of the girls play frequently, but we are putting up fresh faces every week. We have a very strong 'all ships will rise' mentality. If we put the best out there, they'll get better together."

Established artists are on the bill occasionally – Lauren Alaina, Kelsea Ballerini and Matraca Berg among them. One of Cassetty's favorite moments happened in June at *CMA Music Festival*, when Deana Carter anchored a *Suffragettes* show on the CMA Close Up stage. "They closed the show with 'Strawberry Wine,'" he recalls. "Watching all the girls harmonizing with her – they were over the moon. It was one of those 'this is why I like to be in the music business' moments."

Cassetty likens the series to another grassroots movement that produced stars including Big & Rich and Gretchen Wilson. "I jokingly have said we're trying to put on a Shabby Chic MuzikMafia," he says. "They did something that people got really passionate about and they had some great artists involved. Then when one of those artists broke it really shined a spotlight on the collective and a lot of those other artists got opportunities as well. That's really what our hope is."

Video clips are shared on the website, YouTube and through social media. A *Suffragettes* tour and perhaps even partnering with a label are on the wish list. "I've heard so many fantastic female songs in the past year," says Cassetty. "What we ought to be starting is a publishing company. But again, we didn't start this thing with a master plan. We started it because it just needed to be started. When you're passionate about something and you chase that, the opportunities will evolve naturally." Reach Cassetty [here](#). –Wendy Newcomer



Morgan Dawson, Kalie Shorr, Deana Carter, Kristen Kelly, Maddie Larkin, Julia Cole