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Times two for Carrie

Carrie Underwood made history at the Academy of Country Music Awards last week, becoming the first woman to win entertainer of the year twice. **Chris Talbott** reports.

CARRIE UNDERWOOD won the Academy of Country Music Awards top honour last year. This year, she beat out Taylor Swift, Kenny Chesney, the Zac Brown Band, Toby Keith, Brad Paisley, George Strait and Keith Urban. "I think I just got makeup all over Brad Paisley," an excited Underwood said as she went on stage to accept her trophy. "Thank you, God, praise the Lord."

Underwood was also recognised earlier in the evening with a special trophy for "triple crown" of ACM wins – entertainer of the year, top female vocalist and top newcomer – in the course of her career.

Top-selling trio Lady Antebellum was the dominant winner though, grabbing five trophies. And the trio's good friend, Miranda Lambert, won three awards.

Lady A, the top-selling trio that includes Hillary Scott, Charles Kelley and Dave Haywood, was the lead nominee, entering the show with seven. They snapped Rascal Flatts' seven-year run as best vocal group and won song and single record of the year for the crossover hit *Need You Now* (they got two trophies for their single record of the year win because they also produced the record, and also got two trophies for their song of the year win because they composed it).

"It's just wild, man," Kelley said. "You never know where a song can take you, and tonight is probably the pinnacle of our career."

Adding to the emotion of the night for the group was wins by good friends Lambert and Luke Bryan.

The trio broke into cheers backstage when Lambert won top female vocalist. A stunned Lambert hugged Underwood as she made her way to the stage, then read off the names of the other nominees – Underwood, Swift, Reba McEntire and Lee Ann Womack. "You've got to be kidding me," she said.

She also won album of the year for *Revolution*, an award Lady A openly lobbied for her to win, and video of the year for *White Liar*.

Lady A also could help celebrate the win of one of the night's other winners, Luke Bryan, who nabbed top new artist.

Lady A's Kelley and Haywood helped their good buddy write his hit, *Do I*. "Everything about tonight was honestly just so fun," Kelley said. "If we could've gone down the list and scripted it..."

Lambert also won top female vocalist, snapping Carrie Underwood's three-year run in that category.

Paisley, after a performance of his single *Water* where he fell backward into a pool of water on stage, won top male vocalist of the year for the fourth consecutive time.

And Brooks & Dunn, who are retiring after a summer tour, won best vocal duo for the 10th time in their two-decade long career.

"We are currently in therapy with Brett Favre trying to figure out how to waffle on this," Kix Brooks joked after the win.

The show was heavy on performances. It kicked off with Underwood and Lambert, joined on stage later by Paisley, Charlie Daniels and John Fogerty, who ripped through a rendition of Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Travelin' Band*.

"That's how you start a television show, son!" shouted Daniels, who recently recovered from a stroke.

Swift, who won album of the year last year, was shut out this year, despite being nominated for five awards; it might have been the first awards show since her pop superstardom where she didn't take home a trophy. But she had a big performance: She began her rendition of *Change* while soaring over the crowd on a platform. She ripped off her white dress and revealed a black outfit underneath, made her way through the crowd and joined the Tritones, a college a capella group on stage for a spirited chorus. She then fell backward into a crowd of fans.

The Zac Brown Band – one of eight nominees for entertainer of the year – wasn't able to make the show because of a USO tour in the Middle East.



Carrie Underwood

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Will the next mayor be a singer or dancer?



MATE
 Mark Wilson

IT'S great that the real race shaping up for the Invercargill mayoralty is drawing the gaze of the country. Fighting out of the blue corner, weighing in at a slightly more well-nourished weight than the end of *Dancing With the Stars* and clocking up 63 years of experience on this earth, New Zealand's most well-known and longest-serving sitting mayor, Tim Shadbolt.

Fighting out of the red corner, tipping the scales at a more petite and lady-like weight is the queen of country, long-time local lass and willing future defender of Invercargill's reputation, Suzanne Prentice.

Who would be best for Invercargill and the Southland community as a whole?

We all know Tim – what else is there to say – like him or loath him, the general consensus is he's a publicity machine, a shameless promoter for the deep south and a person who goes about fighting for his chosen causes with more passion and a fair amount less limp wristedness than an Italian soccer team celebrating a match-winning goal.

Suzanne, we know, can sing, dresses smartly and is a long-time Invercargill local with her perception of the best interests of the community at heart.

She would put an 80s power ballad-like effort into the role, for sure, and could be articulate on the end of a microphone even, if not to the level of uncontrollable laughter and loss of bladder control as her adversary.

Singing Suzanne definitely has some support among my parents' demographic. Many possible members of this mystical old boys' round table seem to be growing tired of a mayor they perceive to be losing his marbles and as having a knack for not quite following the most politically correct procedures at all times.

They see Suzanne as a nice, safe, well-respected lady of integrity and high moral standing.

Maybe they are right. It could be time to go for a sensible candidate, specially one with a slightly elevated profile among the narrow band of New Zealanders who supported country music in the 70s and 80s (let it go on record I am part of this band – love country music).

However, I think what some people fail to realise is that the mayor is not necessarily the brains of the council; the mayor is the face, the cheerleader for the city, the motivator, the person who makes you feel proud to be a part of the city and confident to shout out to the world that you love it down south.

You don't always need the most sensible mayor or the one who can beaver away on the bookwork the best. You want a face and voice for your city.

If Tim has done one thing among the pigs flying, fox trotting and mayoral fund headlines, it's to make the people of Invercargill feel confident once more to say "I love Invercargill", not just in the bathroom while having a one-on-one with the mirror but on the rugby fields, netball courts, TV screens and streets of the nation.

If you have any doubts over how much he is worth to us, go to Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and look at your city from outside. Ask people to name three mayors. Tim will always be one of the three they name.

I think as long there is air in his lungs and a smile on his face, he is the mayor for us.



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