

# New Brevard fest lands big musical acts

BY KEILANI BEST • FLORIDA TODAY • December 1, 2010

Organizers on Tuesday announced they have secured two of the biggest names in country music for the inaugural Runaway Country Space Coast Music Fest next spring, good news for Brevard County's soft economy and the legions of country music fans across Central Florida.

Miranda Lambert, who had nine nominations at the 2010 Country Music Awards on Nov. 10 and won female vocalist of the year, album of the year, video of the year and song of the year; and Dierks Bentley, a three-time CMA nominee this year, will perform at the April 15-16 festival at Wickham Park.

"We think there's a huge country music audience (in this area), and there's already been a huge reaction," said event Executive Director Gary McCann. "Everyone's like, 'They're coming here?'"

Other performers scheduled to appear include Jake Owen, Justin Moore, Josh Kelley, Lo Cash Cowboys, and Lil Ed and The Blues Imperials.

McCann estimates that anywhere from 12,000 to 15,000 people will come out each day, although the nearly 400-acre park will be set up to accommodate almost 50,000 people.

Tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. Dec. 10 at [www.runawaycountry.com](http://www.runawaycountry.com). One-day admission tickets will be \$59 and admission for both days will be \$89. McCann said a three-month, interest-free payment plan will be available on the website.

"Let's face it. Times are tough, but people still want to go out and have a good time," he said.

Rob Varley, executive director of the Space Coast Office of Tourism, said in a statement that the event will bring a "very welcome economic boost" to Brevard. Estimates of the financial impact were not available Tuesday.

The tourism office provided McCann advertising funds to help pay for radio spots targeting markets from Fort Pierce to Orlando.

McCann owns EventStrategic, which runs the Beach Bus publicity program for the tourism office and operates a fleet of RVs wrapped with advertising. He hopes the festival will raise Brevard's profile.

"We've been trying to put together a signature event for a number of years, and we've been really working on something that draws a real strong demographic to the area," he said.

The festival almost certainly will be a boon to local hotel operators.

Tom Poehailos, general manager for the Crowne Plaza Oceanfront and spokesperson for the Melbourne Beaches Hotel Association, said that local hotel packages will range from \$159 to \$199 per night, including festival tickets for both days.

"We think it's going to be really big," Poehailos said, mentioning Lambert and Bentley. "Those two names alone are going to draw huge crowds. We're excited, and we hope to do more events like this in the future."

Varley of the tourism office said the festival is the kind of event that the county can "build its reputation on," and organizers are fully prepared to partner with local tour operators so that visitors can see other attractions on the Space Coast.

"When we bring in this kind of crowd, we have these great artists, this great demographic, let's show off," McCann said. "Let's show them the area. We're more than just a concert site, that's for sure."