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Bobby Bones: The Cover Story



WRITTEN BY CHRIS PARTON MAY 11, 2020

For funnyman media personality [Bobby Bones](#) – arguably the most popular host in country radio and the reigning ACM and CMA On-Air Personality of the Year – the COVID-19 pandemic has been anything but normal. Like many others, he and the cast of *The Bobby Bones Show* have been locked out of their workplace for over a month as they deal with a complete upheaval of their lives ... but unlike the rest of us, he’s in a position to help brighten these dark times.

“I’m lucky I get to work,” Bones tells *Sounds Like Nashville*, chatting by phone the morning after still more disorder – an overnight storm which downed power lines in his yard, killing power and forcing him back to the office for the first time since stay-at-home orders were given. “I’m trying to maintain a sense of normalcy so if people want to check in, even though it’s not normal, you can listen to the radio show and still *feel* normal. ... I think my job is to be consistent in an inconsistent time.”



But for a guy who's also a rising TV star, a best-selling author, a successful touring musician and a dedicated philanthropist, consistency means trying new things. With that in mind, Bones has somehow found a way to launch yet another project – an internet-based gameshow fittingly titled *Super Easy Trivia*.

Simultaneously one of the lowest low-budget gameshows in recent memory, *and* one of the most engaging, accessible and entertaining, it finds Bones doing his best makeshift-Bob Barker, taking over a Zoom chat with his shaky home-Internet connection and a handful of contestants to do just what its title suggests – answer super easy trivia questions. And it's a huge hit.

Already reaching one million people each week across [IGTV](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#), the show has only been on the air for about two months, but its impact is already clear. Helping put a smile on dedicated fans in a time of need, it's also helping draw more attention to Bones' charity efforts, which are now focused on [providing meals](#) for kids while schools around the nation remain closed. But mainly, it's just fun to watch.



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“It was never really the plan to make this the big show I’m doing, but I’m excited that people care,” Bones says, seeming honestly surprised in his lovable, self-deprecating way. “I’m definitely not smart at this, it’s just kind of lucky.”

Born from a segment of the same name he and *The Bobby Bones Show* first tried out on the radio, the game itself proved popular enough that Bones was actively shopping a fully-produced version to TV networks before the pandemic struck ... then plans abruptly changed.

“It was fun because listeners loved to play along – mostly because the game itself isn’t hard,” Bones explains. “So I pitched it to a couple of TV networks, and we had a lot of interest, but I was gonna have to go into a studio to shoot a pilot with a whole production crew. There were even a couple of teams who wanted to be a part of it, but then all of this hit, and anything that was in development was canceled.

“I was like ‘Well, I’m not gonna let this hold back what I’m doing. How can I take what we were already working on to the next level – without anybody’s help?’”

Like so many other questions these days, Zoom was the answer, and with the help of a video-editor friend, Bones turned the idea into a 15-minute show that must be seen to be fully appreciated. Since

Zoom allows users to pick any digital backdrop they want, Bones uses it like a green screen, hosting the show with delightfully campy graphics and all the over-the-top gameshow pageantry he can muster.

The first eight weeks have featured celebrities like country stars [Lady Antebellum](#) and [Thomas Rhett](#), the NFL's DeMarcus Ware and former Number One tennis player in the world, Andy Roddick (all doing their best not to bust out laughing), plus overjoyed fans of the radio show and some of Bones' personal friends. If the celebrities win, they get \$500 of Bones' own money for the charity of their choice. If a fan wins, they get \$100 for themselves. And if one of Bones' friends wins, "I don't give them crap because they're my friend, and they're just lucky they got to play," he says with a laugh.



The questions are mostly grade-school level and are often as simple as "What is the name of this animal?," but you'd be surprised how many people get rhinos and hippos confused. Or sometimes Bones will just start drawing something and make contestants guess what that is.

"I'm a terrible drawer," he confesses. But a big part of the hilarity is Bones' over-zealous hosting schtick, modeled after daytime maestros of the '80s and '90s, "like the Wink Martindales."

"When I was a kid my grandma would watch the Game Show Network all the time, and those guys were just *a little* obnoxious, *a little* over the top, their jokes were just *a little* dorky," Bones explains. "So I always thought if I do a game show and go out to do a monologue, that's what I want to be.

"Again, I never expected this show to be a thing," he goes on. "I just figured it would hold us over until we went back into a real studio, but now cable networks are going 'Hey, we want to maybe take the show how you're doing it, and just put that on the air.'"

Bones says he's not sure what he'll say to that request. Part of him still wants to see a fully-produced version become reality, and if he goes ahead with the cable proposal, *Super Easy Trivia* isn't likely to evolve too much. But judging by fans' reaction, they may not *want* it changed.

Either way, he'll probably be busy with a different TV show – one which hasn't yet been officially announced but he's willing to tease.

"It's my first ever show *about me*," he says cryptically. "I've done shows – *American Idol* for three seasons, but that's not about me. *Dancing With the Stars*. This is my first show on a network

that's *about me*, and that's the most I've said about it anywhere."



AMERICAN IDOL – ABC's "American Idol" host Ryan Seacrest with judges Lionel Richie, Katy Perry and Luke Bryan, and in-house mentor Bobby Bones. (ABC/Gavin Bond) LUKE BRYAN, LIONEL RICHIE, KATY PERRY, BOBBY BONES, RYAN SEACREST

It's true, Bones has a lot on his plate and a growing national profile. He's currently a featured cast member on *Idol* as an in-house mentor ("I'm on the promo now! I'm one of the main five people, which is a really big testament to my listeners and the people who support me"). He's helping lead the launch of the [Grand Ole Opry's](#) on-demand streaming network, Circle. And he's also playing in his comedy band *The Raging Idiots*, writing books and finding time to raise over \$14 Million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to date ... plus his role as funnyman-in-chief on *The Bobby Bones Show* and *Super Easy Trivia*, helping a million people a week get through a global pandemic.

But when asked how it feels to be so obviously embraced by the American mainstream, Bones doesn't miss a beat.

"I don't know that I am embraced by any stream, and I don't live by that because it's so fickle," he says with an audible shrug. "I don't ever make everybody happy, and now I'm ok with that. As long as I can be honest and be me, then if people disagree with me or don't like it, at least they'll appreciate that I'm telling my truth. That's all we want from people anymore, and for me that's super cool."