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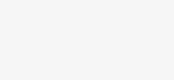
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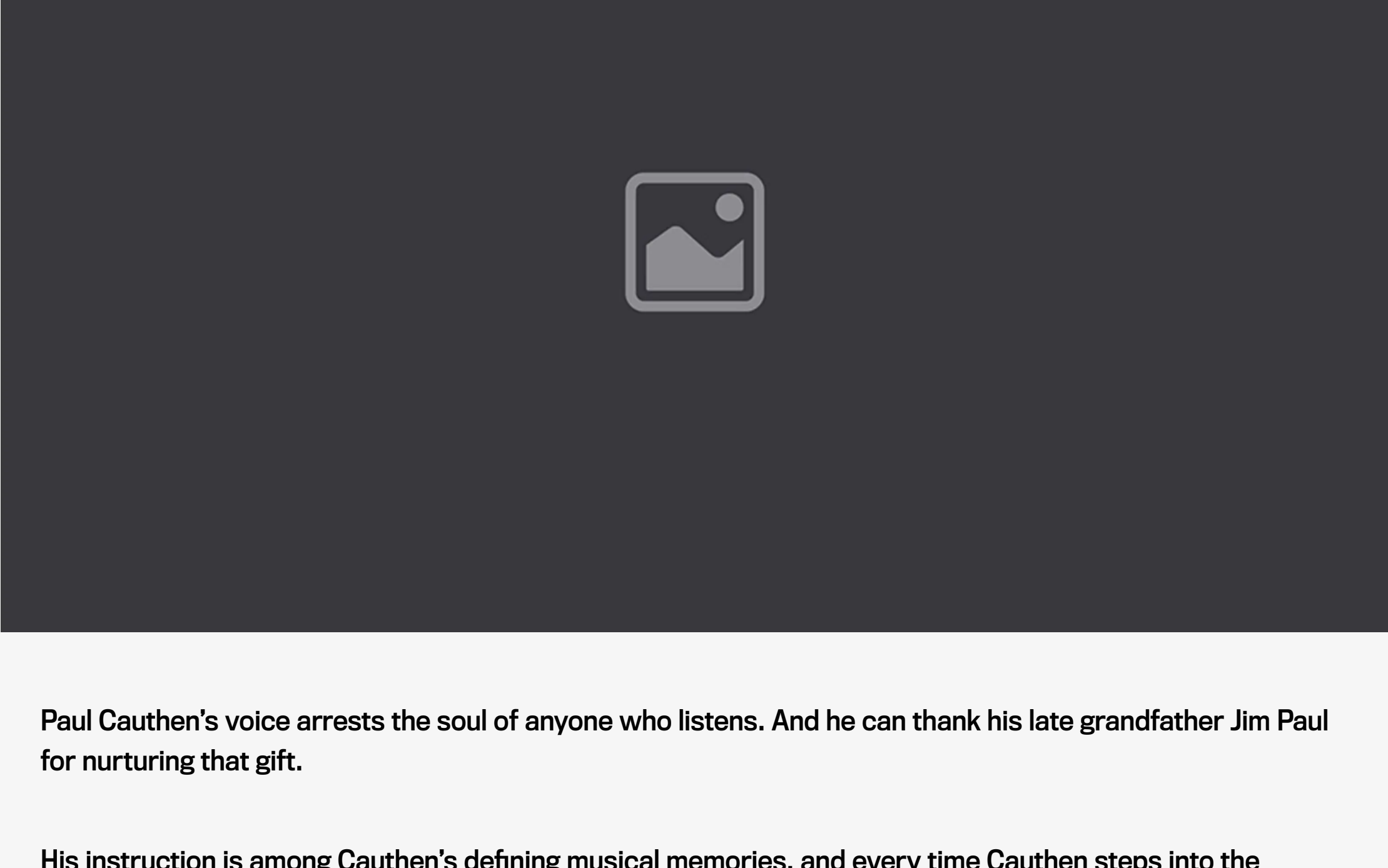
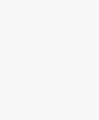
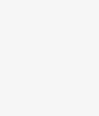
CMT SHOP



PAUL CAUTHEN: THE SOUND AND THE FURY

MEET COUNTRY'S NEXT BIG VOICE

By Lauren Tingle
November 7, 2016
5:18 PM



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Paul Cauthen's voice arrests the soul of anyone who listens. And he can thank his late grandfather Jim Paul for nurturing that gift.

His instruction is among Cauthen's defining musical memories, and every time Cauthen steps into the spotlight to perform, he feels the presence of his spirit. He died when Cauthen was 10, leaving him to carry on his legacy.



His grandfather came up in the same class of musicians as [Buddy Holly](#), [Sonny Curtis](#) and other Crickets including [Waylon Jennings](#), and was the song leader at the local Church of Christ in Tyler, Texas, where the younger Cauthen grew up singing in the choir.

"I was just belting louder than any kid on the block," Cauthen recalls. "I still think about it today. My granddad taught me at a talent show I was performing at Andy Woods Elementary School, and he said, 'Son, are you nervous?' And I said, 'Yes, sir.' And he said, 'Well, that's good. If you don't have any butterflies, then you're not going to have the right energy to be able to perform.'

"He pulled back the curtain and said, 'You see that big picture of Andy Woods up there -- the guy in the painting the school is named after?' 'Yes, sir.' 'You see that exit sign above it that's all lit up? Now, you sing your ass off to that point, and you only think about singing to that point. It's OK to look around. But you're still harnessed into that one point where your volume has to be there.'"

There is no holding Cauthen back on his solo debut *My Gospel*, which was recorded over three years at some of the country's most sacred music places, including Willie Nelson's Arlyn Studios in Austin, Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, Sargent Recorders in Los Angeles and Modern Electric Sound Recorders in Dallas.

The collection lays into country, gospel and soul as Cauthen sings with the emotional conviction of [Johnny Cash](#) and the timelessness of [Roy Orbison](#). "Grand Central" was one of the first songs written for the album after leaving his former band Sons of Fathers. Co-written with Nik Lee, Owen Temple and producer Beau Bedford, the closing title track has Cauthen completely revealing who he is in his mind, heart and soul. He sings, "Son, are you weary with the troubles in life?/So you take your heartache with a glass of wine?/Are you haunted by the ghost you know?/Pay them off with kindness, the debt you owe."

"Young as You'll Ever Be" was co-written with his late friend Victor Holk, who passed away from injuries sustained in a house fire. In "Hanging Out on the Line," Cauthen begs and pleads his love to stay and take his last name even though they might not be meant for one another.

Backing Cauthen on *My Gospel* are representatives of the Texas Gentleman, a fraternal order of musicians around the Dallas/Fort Worth area. According to the [Dallas Observer](#), they call themselves the Gents, and they operate by scheduling shows and asking a handful of other Gents to jam with them. On the night of the gig, whichever members happen to be available are the ones who show up.

For our CMT.com interview, Cauthen called from home in Wichita Falls, Texas, on a rare day off in between fall dates with [Elle King](#). Between answers, he chucked tennis balls in the yard for his chocolate lab Scarlet Begonia and Merle Australian shepherd Red Demon to retrieve. His day consists of laundry, cooking a pot of black-eyed peas and baking his grandmother's recipe for cornbread in a cast iron skillet that hasn't felt soap and water since President Lyndon B. Johnson held office. And he's definitely not giving up Carla Sue's family recipe.

"You gotta add some love, buttermilk and different things," he said. "I can't give you my recipe. I don't know you that well. I'm about to talk with my management about stuff to get to my band and get everybody in order."

CMT.com: Your voice is incredible. How did this record bring out the best in you?

Cauthen: Well, thank you. That's a great compliment. I really found it on this record. It's kind of crazy -- I wasn't so boisterous all the time because I was singing with another guy in my last band, Sons of Fathers. I sang two-part harmony, and if I sang that loud, you wouldn't even hear it. So, on this one I was like, screw it. Adele is doing it. I'm going to try to sing real loud.

Do you feel like this is the first piece of work that captures your authentic sound?

Beau Bedford, my producer, really dug deep on the things I could do vocally. He would get me into a certain timbre. He would ask me to get closer to the mic and sing it from the bottom of my gut. He would talk about Johnny Cash and Roy Orbison a lot. And that's really where my head was at. Those were my granddad's favorite guys. He would fill up the Church of Christ auditorium with 500 people, sing without a microphone and be the loudest one in the church. That's kind of what it all came back to for me. I had to really focus on my upbringing.

Chris Stapleton, Sturgill Simpson and all these other cats have been doing it forever. They're guys I really admire, not only for their success but for their songwriting and the way they sing. Finally, every one of them broke when they went back to where they came from. For Stapleton, it was his father passing. He had to dig deep into what he loved growing up and what his dad loved to listen to. And he wrote *Traveller*, which was just beautiful.

We tapped into exactly how I've sung since I was 12 -- really loud and boisterous rather than having more rasp and less vibrato because it's more theatrical. I'm just singing to sing -- loud and strong -- and this album is the first time I've ever done that.

I wanted to ask about writing "Grand Central" and "My Gospel."

Well "Grand Central" was the first song that I wrote after leaving Sons of Fathers. We had all put our hearts and souls into this thing. And I was kind of the one to leave. So I was in a down part in my life. Before I left, David, my old bass player, was writing in the other room while I was writing "Grand Central" in another. So I could hear that he was writing for his next venture already.

I'm not stopping because that's how we write. We really just try to be prolific and write as much as we possibly can. I wrote those "Grand Central" lines, "If I get to heaven, I better roll me some sevens because right now my ticket's punched for hell." That's exactly how I felt. I felt like I needed a boost and needed some help. I just figured a way to tap into being able to vent through song, and I wrote it very fast in probably under 10 minutes.

"My Gospel" was started a long time ago with a guy named Owen Temple and it was a plea in a song, trying to tell people what I'm about and who I am. I didn't finish it with Owen. We just had the beginning, "Son, are you weary of the troubles in life? Take your heartache with a glass of wine. Are you haunted by the ghosts you know? Pay them off with kindness with the debts do you owe." Then I put in "This is my Gospel" after that by myself.

I showed it to the guys while we were at Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals and we were sitting in the room where Aretha Franklin and Spooner Oldham finished a lot of songs, trying to take in all the juju and vibe in the air. When we finished it, it was very silent and we all looked at each other like, "Yeah, that's definitely the song." The spirit was leading us. It was crazy.

How do you keep from getting spiritually lost out there on the road?

It's a constant day-to-day battle. I have my days like anybody else. But sometimes my days are pretty rough. I don't know. I don't act rationally. I've just learned to be able to cope with who I am as an artist and know that it's OK to be kind of crazy. But I've got to manage myself. I'm a solid businessman, and I can act right in certain circumstances.

But that doesn't mean that I'm not screaming inside. Sometimes you have to put on this front and act a way you don't really want to act because this guy is about to introduce you to someone who is going to move your record. And then this guy is going to introduce you to someone from Europe who is going to break it out there. And you've got to be nice to this guy because this guy can do this.

It's a rat race.

It's playing the game. I've learned to do it. But in the same token, I just love being in the middle of nowhere, hanging with my dogs and kicking it.

It's your writer's relief.

For sure.

What has been the No. 1 lesson that you've learned professionally?

Well, be thankful for every person from the janitor, to the sound guy, to the front of house, to the bartender, to the host in any establishment because we're all working together. And sometimes I lose sight of that. I've learned to cool it and let stuff slide off my back. Everything's got to be water off a duck's back because if you start stacking up shit that pisses you off, you're going to hate everybody.

The Texas Gentlemen are a fraternal order of about 24 men that are all holding each other accountable as musicians. And we're all the best musicians in Texas -- like Leon Bridges, me, Beau Bedford and Daniel Creamer -- these songwriters are amazing. We try to build each other up, be positive and spread a good message. And when we leave a place, let's leave an impact.

Leave it better than you found it.

That's our goal as artists, and it's a very positive thing. And I'm glad that there's such things. Because, like you said, "How do you not get lost out there?" Well, you do get lost. It's just about figuring out a way to get your way back. If you don't lose yourself out there, you're not doing the listeners any justice.

When there's any moment where you feel inundated or overwhelmed, just take a moment to breathe in deep and acknowledge the peacefulness that God can give you through prayer. That's what's got me. I'm very tapped in spiritually. I believe that God is behind all these blessings.

Cauthen is currently on tour with Elle King through Nov. 22. He will join Cody Jinks on a winter 2017 tour starting Jan. 24 in Flagstaff, Arizona.

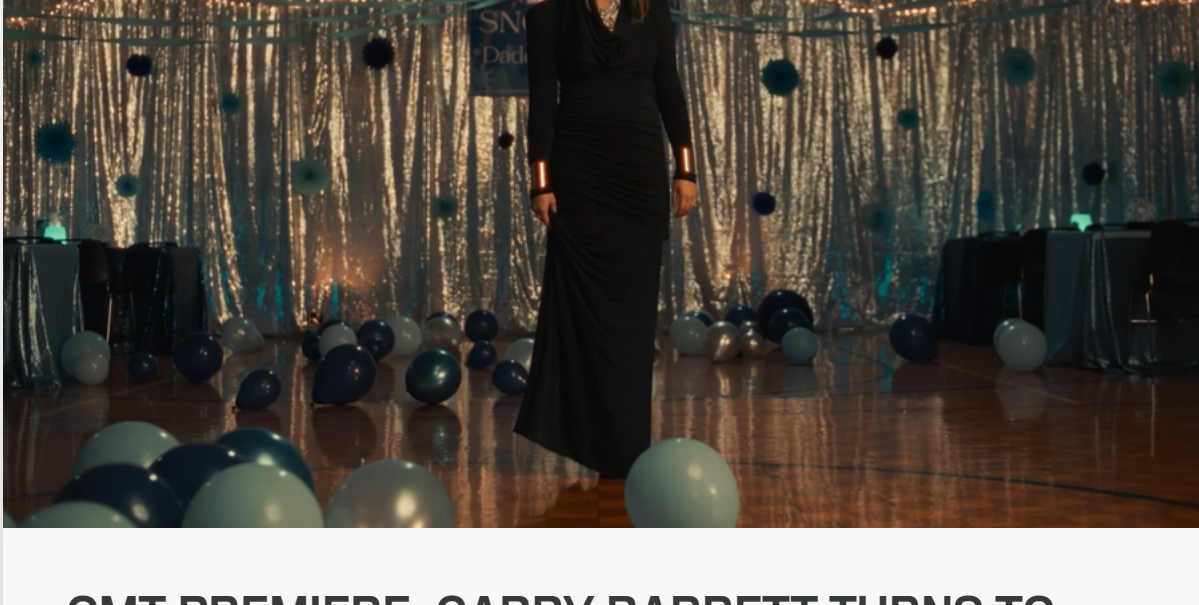
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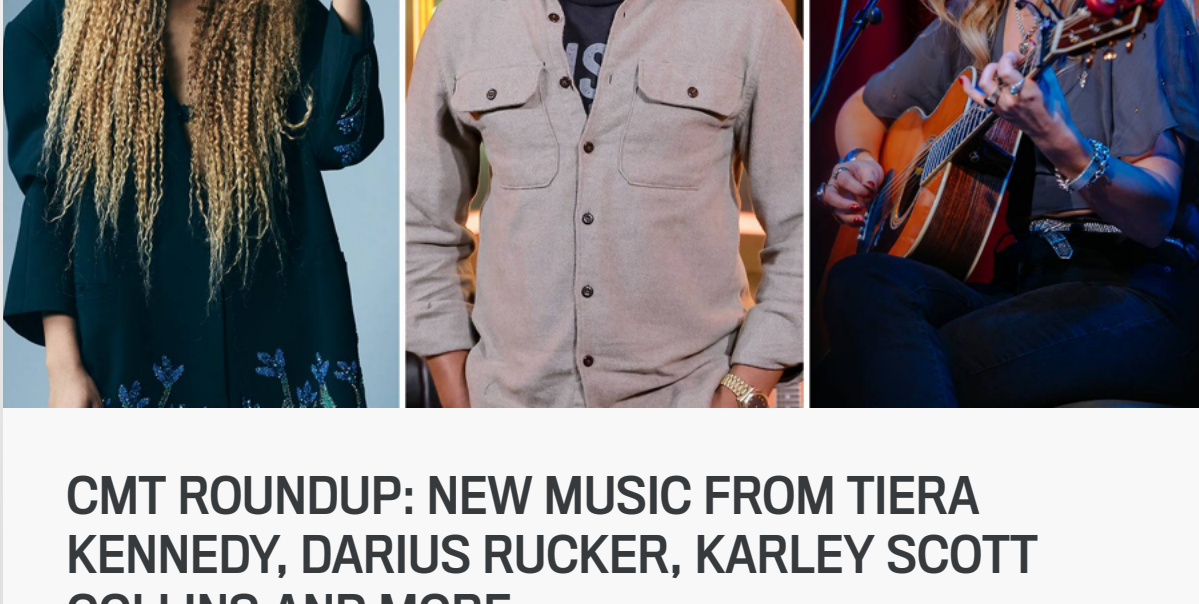
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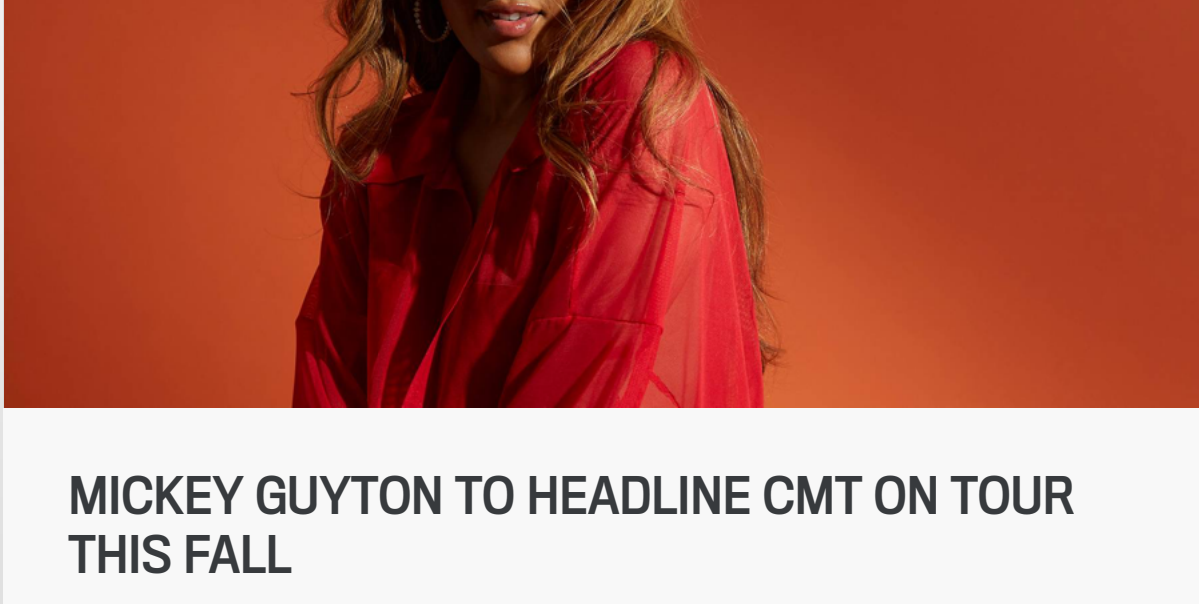
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