

## **Episode Title:** Jake Owen's Family Cookbook

**Episode Summary:** In our first episode, Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine, talks to country musician Jake Owen about macaroni croquettes, growing up in Florida, and the story behind his hit song 'Homemade'. Plus, a little a capella to enjoy during quarantine.

## **Episode Transcript:**

### ***(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)***

**Voice Over from SID EVANS:** *Welcome to the first episode of Biscuits and Jam, a new 12-part podcast series from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine, and I'm thrilled to have you join me as we speak with legendary musicians and celebrated chefs about their hometowns, their first jobs, their big breaks and the Southern food they love -- both at home and on the road. We'll cover everything from being hungry for a career in the spotlight to being just plain hungry. Recorded as we all sheltered at home, you'll also hear honest conversations about what really matters, and the hope for a better future.*

*Later this season, we'll get to chat with Kimberly Schlapman of Little Big Town, Martina McBride, John Hiatt, Scott Avett from the Avett Brothers, and more.*

*To kick things off, today's guest brings a little Florida sunshine to the world of country music, and some great stories about making it big in Nashville.*

**Jake:** **Well, when I saw that I was doing a Southern Living podcast, I thought, wow, mom's really gonna be proud of this one.**

**Sid NARRATION:** *Jake Owen grew up on the east coast of Florida in Vero Beach and moved to Nashville in 2003. Two years later, he scored a record deal, leading to his first number one hit, "Barefoot Blue Jean Night."*

***"Barefoot Blue Jean Night" fades up during Sid's statement of "leading to his first number one hit" with the 2nd part of the song's chorus at full volume after Sid saying the name of the song. Approx :051 - 1:04 plays so we can hear the following clearly: "We were doin' it right / We were comin' alive / Yeah, caught up in a Southern summer barefoot blue jean night"***

*His most recent album, Greetings From Jake, was released in 2019, and you may have seen him as a judge on the USA Network's music competition series Real Country, alongside Shania Twain and Travis Tritt. You can count Sugarland, Little Big Town, Florida Georgia Line and Kenny Chesney as just some of the acts Jake has collaborated or toured with, in addition to hosting his own podcast from iHeartRadio, Good Company with Jake Owen.*

***music end or fade-out***

*On today's show, we'll chat about his most recent number one hit "Homemade," and the short film inspired by his grandparents' love story.*

**Jake:** The song tells its own story, but I wanted to tell my story. I think everybody can relate to the song in their own unique homemade qualities in ways. But I really wanted to let them see my homemade story.

**Sid NARRATION:** *Then, hear how a Sunshine State college kid made a name for himself in an area not especially known for country music.*

**Jake:** When you have a talent in something, if you're not interested in it to the highest degree, then it doesn't matter how talented you are in it, because what does it matter? And I've found that I'm not that talented in music, but I love it way more than I am talented.

**Sid NARRATION:** *Plus Owen family recipes, a once-in-a-lifetime experience at Augusta National with his father, and much more coming up on Episode 1 of Biscuits and Jam, with Jake Owen.*

**music end or fade-out**

**Sid:** Well Jake, welcome to Biscuits and Jam.

**Jake:** Thanks man. I'm happy to be talking to you cause I definitely love biscuits and I'm a fan of jam. I like to jam.

**Sid:** Tell me a little bit about growing up in Vero Beach, what that was like for you.

**Jake:** Growing up in Vero, I honestly feel like it's a fairy tale really.

I feel like Florida is this place in my mind that, uh, the sun always shines. It feels like summertime all the time. There's Spanish Moss hanging from the live Oak trees. And, you have the Atlantic ocean on one side of the Barrier Island in Vero.

And then on the other side, you've got the Indian River Lagoon. And I spent a lot of time with my twin brother fishing and playing sports because, I mean, shoot, if you wanted to play football, tennis, golf, uh, soccer, anything that you do outside...I mean, we just never, we were never indoors as kids and we, I never had shoes on. I was barefoot all the time.

**Sid:** So does Vero, would you say it feels like a real Southern town?

**Jake:** It depends. Um, there's two separate sides of Vero. You've got the beach side, and then you have the mainland side. I lived on both sides. And, um, so I would say as far as it being Southern, it doesn't have the Southern-Southern feeling on the beach side cause you have all these people that aren't from there. But when you get to the mainland side, it feels more Southern than most places I've ever been. Because most of those people are your blue collar workers.

Like true Florida crackers that born and raised there. You know, their necks are red and crinkled and their families have worked in the orange groves or, um, or a citrus industry or packing houses. Um, and so to me that's what Southern Florida is.

**Sid:** Well, either way. It sounds like you miss it a little bit.

**Jake:** Oh my gosh, man. I miss it. I miss it more every day. I think when I left there to, to leave for Nashville, uh, I had this dream of doing what I'm doing now and um, I could care less at the time. But I think that's like everyone's life. When you're a young kid, you have dreams and aspirations to chase, and anything that gets in the way of that is, you bet you're just pushing it aside.

So if it was my family and my friends and everything, my hometown. I pushed it aside and I, and I headed towards Nashville. And now that I'm here, and now that I made it, and now that I realize everything that made me the guy that I am today is my hometown, I long to go back there. And so I do, I miss it a lot.

**Sid:** So, tell me about your mom. I've heard that your mom was a Southern Living fan.

**Jake:** Oh, gosh. Yeah.

**Sid:** I don't know if that's true or not...

**Jake:** Well, when I saw that I was doing a Southern Living podcast, I thought, wow, mom's really gonna be proud of this one. Because growing up, um, my mom had Southern Living, on the coffee table, stacks of 'em and, uh, I remember reading Southern Living as a kid, just, uh, thumbing through it with my mom on the couch at night, looking at recipes and things like that. So, yeah, my mom's a big Southern Living fan. My mom grew up born and raised in Haines City, Florida, which is Polk County, which is right next door to Winter Haven, Florida, where my father grew up, which is also Polk County, and that's where I was born...is Winter Haven.

But my mom, her dad was in the citrus industry, sold oranges, and um, he died at a young age. He was only 49 years old. I never got to meet him. His name was Jake. And so, uh, when I moved to --

**Sid:** Oh, no kidding.

**Jake:** Yeah. All through high school, everyone called me Josh.

That's my legal given birth name. And, uh, when I moved to Nashville. There was a couple other singers at the time by the name of Josh. There was Josh Turner, who's a great artist, and believe it or not, there was another guy in Nashville named Josh Owen. I went to this BMI to give him my CD, and they were like, "were you here yesterday? We have a Josh Owen CD." And I was like, "no, I wasn't." And he showed it to me and I thought. "All right. My name is not going to be Josh anymore." So I told my mom, I'm just going to take my granddad's name. So I took Jake, but my mom grew up there in Haines City, her father, Jake, um, JC Long, ran the citrus business there.

And my mom was Florida watermelon queen. So if that's not Southern, uh, I dunno what is.

**Sid:** That is some serious credibility.

**Jake:** Oh yeah. She prides herself to this day on that, she traveled all around the country, um, telling people about Florida watermelons and so everywhere I go now and play shows, I'll meet like the national watermelon queen once a year. But my mom is an angel of a person. She is the most loving, caring human being that I've ever come across. And I know that's easy to say when it's your mother, but she really is.

I don't know that I've ever met anyone that's said a negative word about her.

**Sid:** Oh man, nice. Yeah. So was she a cook?

**Jake:** Oh, yeah. My whole family's a cook. That's why, again, Southern Living, uh, biscuits and jam is my, is my jam. I mean, growing up, my grandmother, if you don't mind me backing up a little bit. Really, my family stems, back to my dad's side of the family, which is my grandfather and my grandmother.

And this kind of ties into actually my new album that's out. And my new song just went number one, it's called "Homemade". And the video, we portrayed it around my grandparents story. They were both from Kentucky. My grandfather was from Hopkinsville, Kentucky. My grandmother's from Mumfordsville, Kentucky.

He was in the service. Um, he then went to school at University of Kentucky and his buddy wanted to leave for the weekend. They left for the weekend, hitchhiked at the time. It's a beautiful story. My grandmother and my grandfather tell their story firsthand on my podcast about their love life and how they met.

And it's an amazing, firsthand true story of their love. It's almost like a "Notebook". So he hitchhiked to Mumfordsville, Kentucky. Got off with his buddy there and he just saw two beautiful girls walking down the street and they walked into this house and he told his buddy, said, "that was the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

He said, I need to meet her. And so he took a picture of the house, which at this point in 2020 might seem a little creepy, but I guess in 19, you know, 40 that was okay. He took a picture of the house. He went back to Lexington to school, and he started writing her love letters and he said they corresponded.

And they made a time to rendezvous, um, which never ended up happening. And so they kept writing each other again, and they eventually met. And got married and they've been married for over 70 years. And to cut that all in half, they moved the family when they got married to Sikeston, Missouri.

My grandfather had a job there. And that's where my father was born. And then they moved to Winter Haven, Florida, where my grandfather, a lot, like my mother's father, he was in the citrus industry. He had a packing house and he built all of the wooden crates that they put the oranges in. So one side of the family, my granddad and my mom's dad sold the oranges, and my dad's dad packed the oranges. So, um, when you look at my album and you kind of

see the flare in my music and things like that, uh, there's a lot of that Southern Florida sunshine citrus sort of thing going on.

**Sid:** I love that. I saw the film that you made, which was pretty unique. What gave you the idea to make a film instead of just doing a video?

**Jake:** Well, um, I think to fully explain that I have to give you the backstory on how I got that song. I think a lot of people think sometimes when they hear artists' music that the artists themselves wrote every song. I remember as a kid listening to George Strait, and I thought he wrote every song he sang. And a lot of George Strait songs, he didn't, I'd say 95% of the songs George Strait didn't write, if not 98% of them.

I think artists have great careers by choosing songs that are the best songs for them, whether they wrote them or not. And my really good friend Jared Mullins, came out to my house, uh, about a year and a half ago, and he was going through a rough time and he's a great songwriter. And he was kinda asking me for some advice and I said, "Hey buddy, why don't you just play me the best song that you think you've written that nobody's recorded? I'd love to hear that one." He said, "Oh, it's right here. I'll play it for you."

And he started singing it and the chorus says, "home made me love a dirt road, home made me crave some ice cold homemade sweet tea that only mama knows how to make."

And first off, when he said that, my mom makes the best sweet tea. In the world next to my grandmother who even puts more sugar in her sweet tea. So, as you know, I mean, if you're Southern sweet tea is part of, it's like in your blood. And, uh, so when he said that in the song, it hit me. The lyrics go on and basically say, "I want to settle down in a home made for the two of us."

Basically, I'm a homemade individual. And when I heard those lyrics, not only do I want to record it, and then I never knew it was going to be a single, and once it was a single, I thought, this deserves more than just a video about, you know, somebody pouring sweet tea. Like there's a lot of videos that are very literal to the song.

The song tells its own story, but I wanted to tell my story. I think everybody can relate to the song in their own unique homemade qualities. In ways. But I really wanted to let them see my homemade story. And I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my grandfather hitchhiking from Lexington down and getting off in Mumfordsville and randomly seeing my grandmother on a front porch and then starting to write her letters.

So I wanted to tell that story because me saying "I'm homemade" really starts with that. And that's what that video is. I think most people that know me would tell you that I'm very spur of the moment. If I believe something, I'll do it. And I'm, and I don't even think twice about it, I just go after it.

**Sid:** So speaking of "spur of the moment", I mean, could, could you just sing a little of that chorus?

**Jake:** Yeah, I, it goes "home made me love a dirt road / home made me crave some ice cold / homemade sweet tea only mama knows how to make / Yeah, homemade. / Home made me

love a small town." Vero, there you go. "Home made me want to settle down / in a home made for the two of us / Everything I love / is homemade."

**Jake:** It's pretty cool...the first line of the song says, "where I grew up / getting dressed up means a buttoned down shirt and a good pair of jeans / It wasn't Sunday without collard greens / Dad was boss and Christ was King / And Friday nights I was waiting for the lights to come on, but I turned to Miller Lights when I turned 21." I mean, it's, it's everything about my life and...

**Sid:** Right.

**Jake:** I think sometimes growing up in a town like Vero when you get away from it, you think you're a little bit different than everyone, not better or anything, but you just, it's different.

Like, things I took for granted by being in a town where there wasn't a lot of hardship, there wasn't a lot of struggle. I didn't witness that as a kid. I was kind of like, uh, insulated in this little Pleasantville of a town. So for me, it's been a beautiful blessing to travel this country and leave there and chase a dream.

**(fifteen second instrumental music break)**

**Sid:** So, other than the sweet tea, are there things that your mom made that you just, you know, were your favorites, all time favorites, or that you still think about?

**Jake:** Oh, yeah. Every Thanksgiving and Christmas, it was a big time for all of us because every woman in our family is a great cook. Uh, I think, again, that stems from my grandmother, "Nanny" we call her, Jean. She was a great cook and I think she always kind of held court in the kitchen during all the Thanksgivings and Christmases and everyone brought something, but everybody had to step their game up.

Obviously, if you're bringing something around a woman that can cook amazing, right? So my mom became a great cook. My, my aunts are all great cooks. So we had everything from, you know, coconut cream pies and pecan pies. And my grandmother makes the best, uh, macaroni croquettes, which is basically, if you're not familiar, it's a very, in my mind it's a Southern thing where you take macaroni and you make it, and then you put it in like a Pyrex dish and chill it. And then you can cut it into squares. And when you cut it into squares, you then dip it, the squares, into a nice batter that you then fry the square in like a nice cast iron skillet.

**Sid:** So it's super healthy.

**Jake:** So, uh, like all Southern food, you know, and then my grandmother would douse, the top of it with her homemade pimento cheese spread like this hot melted pimento cheese spread. So it was like a pimento cheese, macaroni brick. So that was amazing. And then my grandmother was very famous for her Tutti Frutti ice cream. I think. Um, we all in our own family have a sweet tooth, thanks to my granddad.

**Sid:** Oh man, that sounds good. We, I don't know about the macaroni croquettes. We gotta try that at Southern Living. Put that in through the test kitchens.

**Jake:** Right? Well, speaking of your macaroni croquette mention, my cousin Carrie put together for Christmas a few years ago... she called around to everybody in the family and then she got my grandmother to give not only her recipes, but all of her mother's recipes. And my cousin made everyone for Christmas, an Owen family cookbook with everyone's classic recipes. And so I have that. So if you guys are interested in any special, unique Owen family recipe, uh, we don't give those out a lot, you know, but I, I, I keep Southern Living in high regard, so I'll sneak you guys a famous Owen recipe.

**Sid:** I mean, absolutely yes. Send it our way.

**Jake:** And I do, I do believe Sid that, that the macaroni croquettes are in there.

**Sid NARRATION:** *There'll be more of my interview with Jake Owen, after the break.*

**(fifteen second instrumental music break)**

BREAK

**(fifteen second instrumental music break)**

**Sid NARRATION:** *Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and we're talking with Jake Owen.*

*Long before his rise in the music business, Jake pursued sports, but he admits to getting bored, switching gears, or quitting so often that his parents started to doubt where he was headed.*

*He became an avid golfer but a shoulder injury in the late 90's sidelined Jake from the fairway. That seemed like as good of a time as any to try something new.*

**Jake:** I find that when you have a talent in something, if you're not interested in it to the highest degree, then it doesn't matter how talented you are in it because what does it matter? And I've found that I'm not that talented in music, but I love it way more than I am talented. And, um, so my dad said, "you're gonna have to get a job."

I saw this guy playing music at this place called Potbelly's in Tallahassee that night after he told me that, and I was just in my head, "what am I going to do? Am I going to flip burgers? Am I gonna go work at the college bookstore,"

I just saw this guy playing guitar and he had a pitcher of beer in front of him, which I love beer. And a bunch of girls look like they enjoyed what he was doing. And I like girls. And uh, and then he had a tip jar full of money and I was like, "well...that's a job, obviously." So I was like, wait a second, this guy's making money, drinking beer and playing for chicks.

A 19-year-old kid like me, he was like, "Dad, this is what I'm going to do." So, uh, I didn't tell him that yet, but I did go buy the guitar, with some money that I'd saved up or probably

money that was in my account for school for probably books or something that I wasn't buying. And I bought this guitar and I started teaching myself to play, and about a month and a half later, I went back to that same bar and I lied to the guy, uh, that was sitting there I said, "Hey man, uh...Is a bar owner or somebody around here I can talk to?" And he's like, "I'm the owner." I said, "Oh wow, okay. Hey, I walked by here about a month and a half ago, and I saw you had a guy in here playing music. And I do that. I moved from down South Florida and I do that and I'd love to play your bar sometime." He's like, "Really? What do you play?" I said, "Everything mostly, but I love country music." And he looked at me, he's like, "well, that's great because we don't have anybody that plays country music."

**Sid NARRATION:** *In the Tallahassee area in the early 2000's, Jake says most bars with live music were looking for covers of the Dave Matthews Band or John Mayer. Instead, Jake played the hits of Alan Jackson and George Strait, carving out a name for himself and becoming a draw.*

**Jake:** There was something about that music that made me feel like, "Holy cow. I believe that I can do this." And I watched that crowd, like, believe me too. I think there's something when the crowd sees an artist believe in what they do, the crowd believes it too.

But I went from the kid that was bouncing all around and didn't really have any direction to... while all my friends were partying and drinking in college and stuff, I was playing five nights a week by myself on a barstool, and so I didn't have time to do that.

Like I had to plug my own wires in and speakers and pack them up in my old 4runner and when I was done, while everybody else was stumbling out of the bar as a drunk college kid, you know, my hands were sticky and black from pulling in chords that they'd spilled beer all over and I had to get my stuff packed up so I could play the next night somewhere else.

And it's just looking back on it, it's not until moments like this where I get deep into explaining to people how I got here, that it really reminds me of how in the hell I got here.

**Sid:** It's a crazy story. It's pretty late in life to be picking up the guitar, especially when you consider how many years later was it that you had a number one hit?

**Jake:** Oh, quite a few. I mean, I kind of became a kid in Tallahassee, where everybody was hiring me to play country.

I was the only guy singing country songs. So I was playing hayrides and sorority and fraternity parties and bars. I eventually, was just like. "I'm going to move to Nashville," and I called my parents on the phone, the same parents, by the way, that already thought I was a quitter and I had basically a whole other semester to finish. But I just was over school and my grades weren't that great.

But I think it was, cause I was staying out until three in the morning playing music. My mom answered, I said, "mom, do you mind getting dad on the phone? I need to talk to you guys about something." And being the kid that I told you they already thought I was, they were worried. My mom said she thought I had a girl pregnant or something.



My dad thought I was for sure arrested. And so they were actually kind of pleased to hear when I had the spiel, I said, "y'all, look, found this music thing", and this had been about two years into it. I said, "this music thing has really taken over my life, and I think I'm really good at it. And, um, I believe in what I'm doing. And I believe that the only way I can make something of myself is if I move to Nashville" and my dad kinda chuckled a little bit. And he said, "well, when are you planning on doing that?" And I said, "probably this weekend." And, uh, and, uh, my dad didn't say anything. And my mom, I could hear her. She started crying.

And then at that moment I realized that my mom again thought that here I was quitting college to chase another stupid dream, just like I'd quit everything else in my life. And, um, and I just heard her voice break and she's like, "honey, I don't know what dad's gonna say, but I can tell in your voice that you really believe that you can do this." And she said, "I, I don't know what your father is going to say after I tell you this, but I've never heard you sound so confident in something. You're always, you know, questioning if you want to do something or not. And this is something you are just passionate about." So she said, "I, I, I give you my support as a mother."

And my dad at that point said, "son, listen, your mom's right. I, I, I value what you're saying." But he said, "uh, if I wanted to take a damn four year vacation, I would have taken one." Like, basically, saying, you know, he paid for me to go to school for four years as it was a vacation with nothing to show.

But I don't think what he realized at the time was, is that I might have not got the book education that they set me out to get by going there. But man, the education I got by picking that guitar up and playing for people is everything. It was like me going to school for three years as somebody would go to school to be a lawyer.

But I went long enough to get my degree in entertaining that I knew that it was time for me to go be an entertainer.

**Sid NARRATION:** *Once arriving in Nashville, Jake opened an account with a bank on Music Row, with the hopes of bumping into someone in the industry. After giving his bank teller a demo CD, she called him a few days later to say she passed it on to another bank customer: the head of Warner Chappell Music Publishing.*

**Jake:** When she said that, I was like. I'd only been in town for like a month and a half or something. And, I was like, "Oh man, I'm going to be a superstar. This is, this is it." I just, I called my mom, I called everybody told, and they were super excited and, um, but it did get the ball rolling for me.

And it was about a year later that I got a record deal. So what you said previously, "it wasn't long before I got a number one," I actually got a record deal in September, 2005 and I moved there in 2003 and then I had my first number one in 2012, seven years later, so seven years it took to get a number one, but...

**Sid:** That's still, that's pretty quick. That's pretty quick.

**Jake:** Yeah. It's pretty cool.

**Sid:** Well, I guess your parents are on board with the way things have worked out now.

**Jake:** Yeah. They're really proud. Um, you know, it's, it's funny how the way life works out. What I think every father can take away from this is that my dad never saw, as a kid, how much his life lessons resonated with me as far as hard work ethic, morals, values, um, the things that make you into a, like a successful man. And, uh, he taught me all of that and I always stored it away in my back pocket, but I just needed to find the right thing where I could put all those lessons my dad taught me towards, and I did that with music.

it's great to be a parent. But it's also great to let your kids be kids and find out what they want to do. And, my dad now I think is able to realize like, "Holy cow, like Jake is successful because of what I taught him as a kid; he's not successful as a musician.

He's like, he's successful in his life and he's made good decisions" because of what he's taught me. And I think now that he's able to see that from afar, it really fulfills his life to know that he was a great father and he didn't do anything wrong, which would have led me to drop out of college or whatever, you know, it was, he's able to look at it now from like, "Holy cow, like I guess I did teach him right."

And I, I'm really proud to know that he feels that way.

**Sid NARRATION:** *Despite pursuing music full-time, golf still meant a lot to Jake as well as his father. And through music, Jake was able to deliver a once-in-a-lifetime experience that they could share forever.*

My dad was interested in golf and because he...and he should've played professionally, really, he's that great. Um, he wanted that for me so bad. I think my dad wanted to one day just walk the fairways of Augusta National with me while I played in the Masters or whatever because that was going to be our only way there, you know, Augusta National and

Fast forward 10 years after I moved to Nashville, I played a radio show for the kind people of Augusta, um, not the golf course, but the radio station. And the guy there told me, he's like, "Hey Jake, I know you're a big golfer." He said, uh, "I promise you one day I'm going to get you on Augusta National."

And I said, "no way." I said, "well, listen, if that ever happens, the only way that I'll play is with my dad." And, he goes, "all right, well, if I can make that happen, I'll let you know." So it was like 2013 or 14. Um, I get a call, it was December 22nd. And my buddy said, "Hey. Uh, go ahead and get your bags packed and meet me tomorrow over here in Augusta cause we're gonna play around of golf in Augusta. You think you can get your dad up here?" And so I called my dad, I said he answered the phone and I said, " you need to go ahead and head home and pack your bags and get your golf clubs cause we're playing Augusta National tomorrow."

And he's like, "you're kidding me." And I said, "Nope." And so he went home, packed his bags, got on a plane, flew to Atlanta, drove up and met me in Augusta the next day. And the two of us played Augusta National together. And I watched my dad tear up walking down the first fairway. And, um, man, it's like...

It's kind of wild to think about that because the one thing, which was golf, that you would have thought would have brought my dad and I together to Augusta is, is not at all what happened. The one thing that my dad could have never taught me how to do that I chased because I believed in it, which was music, is what brought my dad and I to Augusta.

And, uh, I will, I just, um, I can't tell that story enough because I think it's really, uh, important for kids out there to know that always respect your parents. Always listen to them and what they say, but have a confidence to what you believe in as a kid too. Because if you have a dream, like anything is possible. Not just fulfilling your dreams, but man, quite frankly, I fulfilled my dad's dream of playing Augusta National by chasing a dream that I wanted to fulfill. And I think sometimes people don't realize that you can fulfill a lot of people's dreams outside of your own by just being confident in and chasing something you believe in. And, uh, I know it's kind of, you know, pretty heady and deep to think that way, but, uh, I'm pretty much living proof of that.

So, um, I'm, I'm a really proud of my parents and my family.

### **(fifteen second instrumental music break)**

**Sid:** With everything that's going on, I wanted to ask what it's been like for you, as we're all kind of, holed up, we're all dealing with this virus that's kind of changed everybody's life.

You're used to being on the road, playing music and being around people. What has this time been like for you?

**Jake:** It's been absolutely phenomenal. Um. Which isn't the answer probably you're expecting because everybody's really..., I feel bad almost saying that because there's so many people struggling.

But, um, as you said, like "you're so used to being on the road," you're right. I am. And the only reason that I stay so busy on the road is because, I've always been this guy a lot. Like I mentioned my dad, the work ethic of like, work while the sun is shining, go, go, go, go, go.

You know? But meanwhile. As we go back to what we chatted earlier about homemade and me being a family guy, the most important thing to me in my life is my family so staying so busy on the road for the last 15 years, I told you I got a record deal in 2005. So for 15 years, I've just been going, going, going, going, go and got married, had a baby, got divorced, go, go, go, go, go.

My child moves to Florida, trying to be a dad on the road, you know that does, has his daughter feel like she knows him and is there for her, and then go through this point of life of not knowing if I could ever just trust, you know, a relationship again. And then I met Erica, um, and she changed my whole life and now we have a daughter together, Paris.

And so that's the important stuff in my life. And I realized when all this stuff went down, none of us were expecting it, but it's almost a blessing in disguise because all this time I've been saying, "I'm going to take time off and take more time with my family" and all this." Like, I don't know that I really would have done that.

I just think it was one of those things that I kept planning to do. But, here I am now kind of forced to do it. And I can't tell you how much this last month being home every day. And the simple things of watching my little girl. As...a one year old, like crack up laughing in the morning while we're feeding her a bottle or like I'll get down on the floor there and stuff where usually I'd be calling her from wherever, from a bus somewhere, parking lot, FaceTiming Erica and going, "how's Paris doing today? Can I say hi to her?" And you know, I'd maybe get like enough of her attention to kind of wave at her. And it's hard to be a father when you're trying to do it through FaceTime. You know, but when you can be home all the time like this, it has been a really big blessing for me, not only as a father, but for my relationship with Erica.

And, um, quite frankly, just creativity. I've been writing songs like every day. I tend to do things I don't do on the road. I mean, I'd go for walks with Erica, we'd just like go outside and I don't feel like a caged animal, you know, like, uh, like seriously. I almost feel sometimes on the road, like...

I'm a circus animal that's in a cage that come showtime they open up the cage and you'd go out in the arena and you go do your little thing, and then all of a sudden they're like, okay. And then the guy, like tour manager, you know, walks his animal back to the cage and they shut the door and then they roll you to the next city and you get out and do it again.

And, and so you kind of feel that way sometimes. And then as a kid too, that was in the early part of my career, I didn't have a wife. I didn't have kids. I was really, I was kind of very selfish in a way, but it was okay to be at the time and now it's not okay to be. So I'm really loving this time home.

Um, it is unfortunate with everybody going through everything. Uh, and it's scary, but I gotta tell ya, I haven't been this happy in 15 years, which is weird to say that in a time, like right now. But what I, what I hope is for everyone is that our country as a whole for a very long time, and it's something we're proud of as Americans, is we've all been very patriotic.

That's what we pride ourselves on. We're the home of the brave, you know, and...a lot of our patriotism has been based upon military presence, and we can kick your ass kind of like, we're the best, biggest country, you know, and it's not about that, like patriotism isn't about fighting and stuff.

To me, patriotism is about loving your neighbor and being caring and understanding how together we can be better. And, uh, to me, that's kind of what I do with music. When I play music, I don't care who is a Steelers fan. I don't care who's a Cleveland Browns fan because they don't like each other, you know what I mean?

But for the next 90 minutes. Everyone's going to do the same thing, and everybody's going to have fun, and they're going to put aside these differences that they have, and they're going to put aside the fact that maybe they lost their job or they're gonna put aside the fact that they went through a breakup. I'm able to kind of breed that life and energy and love into people, and that's what's contagious for me. And so I'm hoping with this virus and everything that's happening is that it breeds that same love and energy into people of understanding

that life is fragile and you don't know, like nobody gives you a timecard to check out when it's time to check out.

You know, like, let's start taking care of everybody around us more. And, um, and I think, again. That's what I've kinda got out of this whole thing of being home over the last month or so is just a more understanding of not only myself, my family. The world. Because when you're in that rat race of just being an artist and going, going, going all the time, you're kind of so engulfed in what you're doing that you tend to have blinders on and not look at everything else.

And, not playing music and seeing fans sad about is tough. So we're all excited to get back out on the road and, and do what we do. Because again, as I've told you throughout this interview, like that's what I chased it for. That's, it's, what's a drug to me. I love it.

**Sid:** Do you feel like this whole experience has kind of changed you and in any kind of way, any fundamental way?

**Jake:** I think so. I do. Mostly I think from a financial standpoint. And I say that because being a musician and having a band and a crew is not just like being a small business that has employees that they come and go, you know what I mean? Like we wake up in the morning together. We hang out all day, we play the show that night, and then we get back on the bus and we ride together.

And so we're together more with each other than they are with their own spouses. You know... It's another family. And so you can't just -- when times get tough like they are right now for everybody -- make the decision of, "I can't afford to pay these guys anymore."

And then have to make that call to call them and tell them that, um, is really tough. It's like telling your family member, you know, like, "Hey, you're cut off." I can't do it. And they rely on me. Not only do they rely on me, their wives, their kids rely on them for that job. And so it's been a little hard on me because, I never ever thought something like this would ever happen, where I would have, you know, basically furlough my employees, and, and wish them luck with whatever it is that they're doing. You know what I mean? Don't get me wrong. I mean, we're doing all we can as a business, and my business manager and myself are taking care of all of them as best we can right now without putting myself in a hole.

Um, but yeah, I think when you ask, have I learned anything or is, I think it's more that I think I need to be a little bit smarter going forward as to how I want to handle situations that kind of come out of nowhere cause no one, even my managers and booking agents and people like that, nobody thought that shows would be canceled for five months, you know?

And so everybody that relies on that income to come in is now like, "what do we do?" It's non-existent. And then they're, now they're searching everywhere else. You see all these people online doing online shows, everything. It's like, wait. Not just for me learning stuff, but like the whole world.

And I think everyone's learning new ways of how do we better prepare ourselves if something like this hits the fan again where we're not scrambling trying to figure out what

we're going to do, we kind of have a plan on what we're gonna do. And I think that for me is what I'm taking away the most of it is just, I want to be better prepared next time.

Especially being a kid that dropped out of college and played on a barstool that never went to school as a business guy, that all of a sudden now is this essentially I'm a CEO of a small business with lots of employees that rely on me and I didn't get a degree in how to be that guy.

So I've kind of learned throughout the years how to do that. And um, I'm getting better at it. So those are the things that I think I've been working on during this time home.

**Sid:** Well, Jake, we're all looking forward to seeing you back out there. And, I look forward to meeting you in person one of these days.

**Jake:** Heck yeah, man. I really appreciate it, Sid. Thank you so much. I appreciate the questions and that's really good sometimes for me to sit back and remember those kinds of stories because you can store those away in those little folders in the back of your mind, you know, but when you open them up, it's almost like pictures sometimes. You know, you can hang them on your wall, but until you stop and just look at that picture and why you hung it on your wall because it meant something to you is the same as those folders in the back of your mind when you pull them out and revisit them.

Man, it's pretty cool. I got a little emotional talking about some of that stuff, so thanks, Sid. And thanks Southern Living and Biscuits and Jam. You guys are awesome. And, I look forward to my mom listening to this. She can't put this on her coffee table though.

**Sid:** And I'll look forward to getting that cookbook.

**Jake:** Yeah, buddy. I'll get you those macaroni croquets for sure.

### ***Theme music fade-in***

**Sid NARRATION:** *Thanks for listening to my conversation with Jake Owen. His latest album Greetings from Jake is available wherever you get music, and visit [jakeowen.net](http://jakeowen.net) for news updates and more.*

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*Biscuits and Jam is produced by Heather Morgan Shott, Krissy Tiglias and me, Sid Evans, for Southern Living. Thanks also to Ann Kane, Jim Hanke, Eliza Lambert and Rachael King at Pod People.*

*I'll be back with you next week for more Biscuits and Jam.*