

Episode Title: Kane Brown Loves Country Music

Episode Summary:

In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of Southern Living Magazine, talks to Kane Brown about his Georgia roots and his family that consisted of a Harley riding Grandmother who was also a detective, the encouragement he received from fellow country artist Lauren Alaina in his youth, Alan Jackson's influence on his music, and his work with the Boys and Girls Club. Plus, Kane shares the recipe for his Nana's special Christmas Drink and much, much more!

Episode Transcript:

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound - plays for 9 seconds before Sid's voice comes in)

Voice over from Sid Evans: Welcome to a special Summer Tour edition of Biscuits and Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine, and my guest this week is one of the biggest young stars in country music. Raised in the small town of Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, just outside of Chattanooga, Kane Brown is now playing stadiums all over the country and electrifying audiences with his deep voice and his powerful catalog of hit songs. Ever since he burst onto the scene with "Used to Love You Sober" in 2014, he's been racking up awards and building a loyal fan base, as well as a reputation as a guy with a big heart. We had a great conversation about growing up with a Harley-riding grandmother who was a detective, the encouragement he received from his middle-school friend Lauren Alaina, Alan Jackson's influence on his music, and why he loves working with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Plus, Kane shares the recipe for his Nana's special Christmas drink and much, much more.

Biscuits & Jam theme music ends

Sid Evans: Kane Brown, welcome to Biscuits and Jam.

Kane Brown: Thanks for having me.

Sid Evans: Where am I reaching you right now?

Kane Brown: I just got home. So I'm in Nashville.

Sid Evans: You've been on tour?

Kane Brown: Yeah. We've been doing some dates. I actually leave tomorrow, for the next show down in Savannah.

Sid Evans: Well so, Kane, you grew up in northwest Georgia right near Chattanooga. but it seems like you're more of a Georgia fan than a Tennessee fan, is that fair to say?

Kane Brown: Oh yeah. My Pop was a Tennessee fan but my Granddaddy was a Georgia fan. So, it's been fun watching the Dogs, for the last couple years.

Sid Evans: I'll say. I guess it's been a good year to be a Georgia fan.

Kane Brown: Definitely this year.

Sid Evans: So, Kane, tell me a little bit about the town and the neighborhood where you grew up. I know you moved around a bit. But what's the place that feels most like home?

Kane Brown: I mean, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia is where I grew up, But, honestly, anywhere in Chattanooga, around that area, it all feels like home.

Sid Evans: So was it kind of a rural small town or did it feel a little bit more like a suburb of Chattanooga?

Kane Brown: Well, my home town's got 9000 people in it. pretty small. And then there's just so many other little cities around or counties around, that it just makes it feel kinda like a big city. but I'm talking about 30 minutes away. You know? but it only feels 15 when you live there forever.

Sid Evans: Yeah. Well, so, Kane, you were raised mostly by your mother, Tabitha. And you know, we like to talk about food on this podcast. What can you tell me about her cooking?

Kane Brown: Oh man. I mean, my momma, she always made good food but it was always, you know, like, Chef Boyardee out of a box. And, canned ravioli and beef-a-roni. And, my wife makes fun of me all the time 'cause she's like what's something your mom used to cook that you like? And I'm like potato soup. But all it is is water, potatoes, butter and salt.

Sid Evans: Well did you grow up with a taste for southern food? Um, or were there places that you liked to go, in town when you were a kid?

Kane Brown: I mean, I just liked to go out to eat when I was little. but my Mamaw and my Nana, they were pretty good cooks. my Mamaw used to make these homemade biscuits and salmon patties, which I always loved. And every time I go down, back home, she always has them ready for me. And then my Nana made the best egg sandwiches, hands down. I don't know what it was, if it was her love that she put into them or what, but they were always amazing. And of course, of course Cracker Barrel, Cracker Barrel's my spot.

Sid Evans: (laughs) Right. So was this kind of a bacon, egg and cheese type of sandwich? Or what was special about it?

Kane Brown: Just eggs and bread and Nana's love.

Sid Evans: (laughs) So Kane, what were the holidays like, in your family growing up? Was that a big deal? Did y'all have big get-togethers? or was it a smaller thing?

Kane Brown: Yeah. I mean, to this day they still have holidays down there. It's harder for me to get there but, Christmas, Easter, every holiday we were going over to my Mamaw and Papa's. Everybody brings a

dish, And we all just gather around and eat. And it's a little cool now that I get to go back because I don't get to see them as often as I did. so I always have stories for them of me being on the road and, and things like that. And you know, you get to go back and it has changed a little bit. I don't get treated like the old Kane that I used to be. But, they're still pretty level headed with it.

Sid Evans: Who tends to bring the best dish? Do you have an aunt or somebody who's famous for their cooking?

Kane Brown: I mean, to me it's still my Mamaw and my Nana. Hands down.

Sid Evans: Well, I wanna ask you about a recipe that y'all used to make around Christmas.it's a very simple recipe. And it's one part green sherbet and one part ginger ale. What is it about that drink that you like so much?

Kane Brown: I don't know. I think, you know, my Nana started making it. And it's like- it's not frozen but it's, just cold enough. And I don't know. It tastes delicious and I've loved it ever since I was a kid. So I mean, I haven't had it in a while but I would love, if my Nana brought it up today, I would drink the whole bowl. But it's always in this big punch bowl that would be on the counter. You know, just with a little scoop spoon. And I don't know. I, I think it just was a tradition that I fell in love with.

Sid Evans: And it just sort of feels like the holidays to you?

Kane Brown: Definitely. it's not Christmas without it if I go down there. I need to start doing it at my house but I don't know how to make it, even though it is a simple recipe. I tell you- and Nana's love. There's something about it.

Sid Evans: So Kane, I interviewed Lauren Alaina for this show and she talked about your Chattanooga connection and how y'all grew up, singing choir together.

Kane Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. I was, uh, always the quiet one in the room. and she could always sing. And, she got me my own, Solo. I think I was singing I Can Only Imagine. And she, made-everybody left the class. She made me stay and made me sing for the teacher. and then went on to do her thing for American Idol. So she really inspired me and that's what kinda got me into the talent shows and all that stuff.

Sid Evans: She said she was one of the first people that you ever sang in front of.

Kane Brown: Yeah. Other than my momma, she was one of the first ones. But she kinda forced me to. it was no, uh, no question about it.

Sid Evans: (laughs) Well, so was the church a big part of growing up for you? And did it kinda help you discover your voice?

Kane Brown: Yeah. We used to go to church, like, every Wednesday and every Sunday. You know, I was in the choir. And then of course going through elementary school, I was always in plays. Even at the high school I took theater my sophomore year. And it was funny 'cause I was quiet there too but then we had one time that we had to act out- and I'm always in my shell. And I don't know what it was but I was like

I'm gonna kill this. And I got up there and the whole class was laughing. And I remember there was this one girl that she was like, "That was too much. You're so dramatic." (laughing)

Sid Evans: Well, I imagine that voice made quite an impression, in that choir. I mean, did you have that deep baritone, back then?

Kane Brown: No. I had a very high voice. My friends always made me scream, 'cause I could scream so loud that it would hurt your ears, like high pitched. And then I guess I hit puberty one day and, yeah. It just went away.

Sid Evans: (laughs) Well so you and Lauren, recorded that song What Ifs together, which ended up becoming this huge multi-platinum hit. What was that like for a couple of kids from Chattanooga?

Kane Brown: It was cool for me because we had had two songs go out at Country Radio. And, Used to Love You Sober was my first song. And it did really good without even really touching radio that much. and then Thunder in the Rain. And then What Ifs was my next single and it was kinda like I hope this works. But also having Lauren on the song, and just being able to share that with her, and We were friends since seventh grade. So you had somebody in this big city, -with you on a song. It was really comforting. And for it to blow up how it did, you know, no matter where our careers go down the road, we'll always have that moment.

Kane's song "What Ifs" fades in and we hear the following at full volume:

What if I was made for you

And you were made for me

What if this is it

What if it's meant to be

What if I ain't one of them

Fools just Playin' some game

Sid Evans: Yeah. That's really something. Chattanooga is not really known for producing tons of great country artists. and to have both of y'all come out of there at the same time is pretty special.

Kane Brown: Yeah. honestly after it happened we looked up if anybody had done it before. and if they did, we didn't really find too many people. So it's cool to be, I guess, one of the first.

Sid Evans: (laughs) So Kane, I wanna ask you about your dad. I know he was kind of out of the picture, since you were a little kid. But I'm just wondering what kind of relationship you have with him now.

Kane Brown: I don't really have that much of a relationship with my dad. He, I don't know. He, he left when I was, you know, three years old. So, We used to talk every now and then. but now it's just, like, I don't know, kinda pointless, I guess. luckily I have my grandparents that were, that were in my life. That, you know, my Pop, he was basically my father. And then, uh, my friends, when I would go from house to house, some of their dads that were kinda my father figures to look up to. And, He's not really been in my life much.

Sid Evans: Well you're a dad yourself now. And you got two little girls. and, you wrote a song called, For My Daughter, that came out a couple years ago. And it talks about being a dad and how you wanna be

the best one that you can be, tell me a little bit about writing that song and kinda the head space you were in when you wrote that.

Kane Brown: Well I wrote that before my first daughter, Kingsley, was born. I would say it was close to about the time she was about to be born. and I was just thinking, you know, like it wasn't, you know, her choice to be born. So I need to be there. You know, I never had that, that father figure to look up to other than my granddad. And he always made me feel real special. You know, he always took me to my baseball games. and so I just know that whatever she wants to do, I wanna support. and help her be the best that she can be. And just give her a life that, that I never had.

Sid Evans: Well, you might have to change the name of it to For My Daughters now.

Kane Brown: Yeah. That's the only thing about writing songs. Stuff changes.

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)

Sid Evans Voice Over: I'll be back with more from Kane Brown after the break.

(AD BREAK)

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)

Sid Voice Over: Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and today I'm talking with Kane Brown.

Sid Evans: (laughs) I know you've talked about your grandmother, who I believe was a, a sheriff or she was in law enforcement. Is that right?

Kane Brown: Yeah, she was a sheriff and a detective.

Sid Evans: So you also wrote a song about her, that was called Good As You. And, I'm just wondering if you can talk a little bit more about how she influenced you as a young man.

Kane Brown: Yeah. Well, originally that song I, I wrote it about my wife. And then, Alex, my videographer, because I talk about my Nana so much, came up with the music video, completely different. So, she was just a huge part of my life. My mom ended up leaving me for a little while. I think she went to, like, North Carolina or something. So I stayed with my Nana and we got really close. And, she would take me for drives in her police car. And I would go down to the police station all the time, so the cops always knew who I was. And made me feel special. And, I would get to see the bad guys come in in their jumpsuits with their handcuffs and stuff. And my Nana would be like, "You never wanna be here." so you know, I had- I had that positivity of being in the jail but not being in the jail. so I feel like that was, you know, very important in my life coming up. and she was just a strong woman.

Sid Evans: Yeah. She sounds like she was kind of a tough customer.

Kane Brown: Yeah. I mean, like I tell a lot of people this. You don't- you don't have a- you can't say your grandma is a detective and, and rode Harleys.

Sid Evans: So you know, you've talked about the military, at some of your shows. you have a great song called Homesick, which I've heard you dedicate to veterans before. other than your grandmother, did you have military or law enforcement in your family?

Kane Brown: Yeah. A bunch of my grandparents were in the military. and of course I had a- a bunch of friends in the military and I even tried to join the military at one point. I had too many tattoos. They told me I had to get them removed and I was like nope. I wish I could give back more than what I do. but I felt like that was a small gesture. Just salute them at my shows because a lot of them come to my shows so that's just me actually thanking them, um, you know, as much as I can for putting their life on the line for us.

Sid Evans: And that song Homesick, was that really what you were thinking about when you recorded that song?

Kane Brown: no. When I- when I recorded the song, I was- it was basically my first time really touring and being away from my family and being away from my wife, uh, at the time my girlfriend. and so I started thinking, like, who else can really relate to this song? And I'm like, man, look at me over here crying about being on the road doing shows when these people are going overseas and away from their family and then their families not even knowing if they're gonna return. So deep down I was like that's the audience that's going to really relate to this song.

Kane's song, "Homesick" comes in and we hear the following at full volume then fades out:

Well it says Kane Brown on a sign with a line out the door

Sold out some little town I've never been before

Yeah they're screaming my name

This is what we dreamed about

But out here singing 'bout you baby

All I'm thinkin' 'bout is how I'm homesick

Sid Evans: Well, you know, you talked about giving back and, there were times that you dealt with homelessness as a kid. And you've used that experience to support organizations that work on affordable housing and homelessness. What are some things that you learned about that experience that, that have really stayed with you?

Kane Brown: Well for me, some of the parts, luckily I was too young to remember. I just got told 'bout stories from my mom and my Nana. And then the other parts I was fortunate enough that, you know, I wasn't homeless, like on the street. I just didn't have a foundation. So I was, you know, staying with friends or, whoever would let me stay with them, basically. So luckily I always had somewhere to lay my head down. but didn't have that stable home foundation. Two of my best years of my life growing up was when I, you know, my sophomore year, lived with my mom for a full year. We had an apartment. It was great. You know, I had somewhere, uh, didn't have to move and I, I knew that I was gonna be good there. when we moved away from there, it went to crap. And then, uh, my freshman year was also great because we had a house for a full year. I had my own bedroom. just the moving around part and the moving schools, and, not being at the same pace, going from one school to another school. And like we

didn't learn this at my old school. Where are we at now? I'm lost. I had to five years in, in high school just because of moving around so much. So it really goes deep in my heart for just kids growing up that have no say so, of where to stay at, I want them or their family, whatever the cause might be, just to always have a stable home. And I think parents need to realize that it's very important that your kid stays somewhere for multiple years instead of having to move around all the time.

Sid Evans: Yeah. What are some of the organizations that you've gotten behind, in your support of that issue?

Kane Brown: We did Make Room. That was some- uh, probably three years ago. And then recently we've been doing the Boys and Girls Club. That honestly, when I found out about them it just broke my heart and made me feel good at the same time 'cause I would always bring kids in, first of all, that never got to go to a concert. I'd bring them in. It was their first concert. And then, uh, I would talk to them, basically just how I grew up, my whole story. It was cute. A lot of them were coming up saying, "Can I go home with you?" it was, stuff like that really, really touches my heart. We've been with the Boys and Girls Club, which is amazing. 'Cause, for me too, a lot of places... Like if I didn't have sports, I could've gotten into so much trouble because my mom, she would work 'til five or six and there was nobody watching us. so I could've went in any direction. But sports kept me out of all that. so for these people that are going and taking care of these kids, in a place for these kids to go after school while their parents are working and, you know, they have basketball and they, they have people that help them study and all that is, is so amazing to me. So I, I love supporting them and being behind them.

Sid Evans: Yeah. Kane, I wanna talk music for a second. and I wanna ask you about one of the songs that really put you on the map. I pulled up a video of Used to Love You Sober. And it has something like 93 million views. and this is kind of an old school country song. But what do you think it was about that song that really resonated with people?

Kane Brown: Well, that was my first song after I had actually got a pretty big fan base. Like I released a EP before but my fan base... I hadn't, like, went viral yet on Facebook. And so this was my first song after I started doing covers. got my, you know, million followers on Facebook or whatever. This was the first song I put out whenever that happened. So I think that, you know, they were telling me to write songs and I, I think they were just really excited, that this was the first song that technically they got to be a part of me releasing. and it just, it shot up the, the charts for me. And, and I couldn't be more, more happy and more proud of it.

Sid Evans: Well, people sure do love it. And, you know, I wanted to also ask you about Alan Jackson. You've talked about Alan Jackson being an, a big influence. and, you've done tributes to him. I mean, what was it about his music that you loved or still love?

Kane Brown: I'm a huge fan of his songwriting. Drive and Chattahoochee are definitely two of my favorites. Chattahoochee's close back to where I'm from. We've taken a boat out there a couple times and rode on it so I definitely relate to that. And, his song Drive, kinda going back to, you know, me growing up without a dad. I always, you know, I didn't have a dad to teach me how to drive. But, I had my mom. So, you know? So I just jumped in the car and took off. And, she would, you know, she would always be like slow down, slow down. I'm like, I'm doing 20. What are you talking about? But this- his song is so fun and, and so well written. And I love his voice. And they're catchy and, when I put Chattahoochee on, it's like summertime. I'm ready.

Sid Evans: (laughs) well Kane, there's a lot of change happening in, in country music these days. y- you've been one of the most successful Black artists in country music maybe ever. And I'm wondering if you've felt a real shift, in the way that country music is embracing Black artists and, a shift in just kinda where the whole genre is headed.

Kane Brown: yeah man. I've seen a lot more artists come in with color or, or that look, you know, a little bit different and, and I love it. I tell everybody, I don't really talk about this much. But I just put my head down and, and I keep doing my thing. And, the more I succeed, and the more that these other artists start to succeed, the more doors open. I don't really have to say much. I got people coming to my shows. And, we're fortunate enough to have some hits on the radio. So, Nashville's accepting everything right now. It's amazing.

Sid Evans: It's a great thing. Well, you just played a hometown show in Chattanooga for the first time, I think, in about six years.

Kane Brown: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sid Evans: What was different about that show for you and what went into it in terms of planning and, and preparation?

Kane Brown: Luckily my team is very, very strong. So I, I didn't really have to do anything. I just kinda put my input of what I wanted and, and they made it happen. and then I was just, you know, so excited to play. I've waited this time because I didn't wanna go back and play and not be able to give them a show that people were gonna be, like, wow. I feel like we did that. I will tell you I do not remember going on stage and I do not remember coming off. It was kinda like I was on autopilot. I did not look for any of my friends in the crowd. I was just so focused and did not wanna mess up. But I had a, a... I remember I did have a blast. So, the show was cool. I- when I saw pictures and people, 'Cause when you're on stage you don't get to see all the effects and the fireworks and all that stuff. So when- whenever I saw it afterwards I was like dang. You know, this is a- this is a great show. so it was cool. But ja- that we'll- there'll be some video footage come out of it later. I don't know when yet. But it'll be sick.

Sid Evans: That's great. Well, it- it looked like a great time from what I saw on social media. And that must've been a really special night for you. So Kane, you're a dad now. You've got two little girls. I just gotta ask, do you ever cook for them or is that more your wife's department?

Kane Brown: That is my wife's department. Um, our oldest, Kingsley, has a food allergy. Which my wife does too. It's like she can't eat gluten and all that stuff. And I already told you how I grew up on Chef Boyardee and all that stuff. So I'm not the person to be cooking for them.

Sid Evans: (laughs) Well maybe you could at least learn how to make the green sherbet special, for them.

Kane Brown: I- I- they probably can't even have that, to be honest with you. I'm not gonna lie.

Sid Evans: (laughs) Well, Kane, I just have one more question for you: what does it mean to you to be southern?

Kane Brown: I love it down here. Honestly, I would have to say just the, the manners, me going to church all the time whenever I was growing up. honestly the- a lot of the times that I got to... Where I grew up, my mom had a boyfriend named Anthony. And he had a dairy farm. And some of those times were like probably my favorite times, you know, just all the acres, just getting to run around, uh, hang out with my brother, go fishing on the pond that was on the farm. And, you know, finding like, there was one time we found a, a lonely bird egg, I remember. And we, we tried so hard to keep it alive for the longest. and then of course it hatched but then he died. So, uh couldn't keep it alive after that. but just- I don't know. Those are some of my funnest times growing up. and I don't feel like you could do that in many places.

Sid Evans: No you can't. And, we're very happy to have you, in the south. and Kane Brown, thank you so much, for being on Biscuits and Jam.

Kane Brown: Yeah, man. Thanks for having me.

Sid Voice Over: Thanks for listening to my conversation with Kane Brown. You can visit KaneBrownMusic.com for summer tour dates, social media, music, and more. Southern Living is based in Birmingham, AL. Be sure to follow Biscuits & Jam on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen so you don't miss an episode. And we'd love your feedback. If you could rate this podcast and leave us a review we'd really appreciate it. You can also find us online at southernliving.com/biscuitsandjam Make sure to come back here next Tuesday for my conversation with Derek Trucks.