



## *Sometimes I Wish I Lived in an Airstream*

By BECKY BLANTON

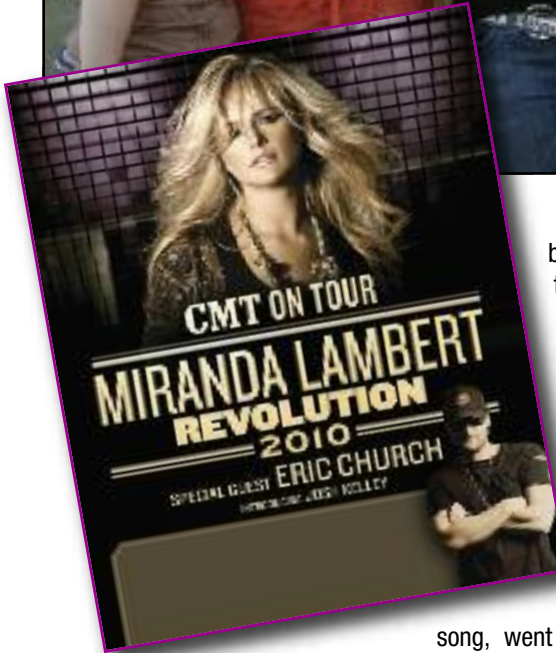
Country music star Miranda Lambert owns three vintage Airstreams, so it's a question she gets asked a lot: "Did the Airstream song you wrote inspire the Airstreams, or did the Airstreams inspire the song?"

The song ("Sometimes I Wish I Lived In An Airstream,") definitely inspired the Airstreams, she says. She wasn't thinking about Airstreams when she was inspired to write her wildly popular song by the same name. She credits another county music legend for the song.

"One of my favorite songs of all time is Merle Haggard's 'The Way I Am.' I've wanted to write a song like that, with that same feel, for a long time. So then I started thinking about Airstreams and how it was like so much freedom. You could just hook it up, get in your truck and drive somewhere and just escape."

Haggard's song is about escaping to a beach somewhere, but Lambert's song is about a lifestyle of freedom – beginning with living in an Airstream:

*Sometimes I wish I lived in an Airstream  
Homemade curtains, lived just like a gypsy  
Break a heart, roll out of town  
'Cause gypsies never get tied down*



**TOP:** The day of the big "reveal" of Miranda's 1953 Flying Cloud. **FROM LEFT TO RIGHT,** "Junk Gypsies" Jolie Sikes-Smith and Amie Sikes, Miranda Lambert, Phillip Sikes, Janie Sikes.

Other than the demands of being a country music super star, there's not really anything to escape from. Miranda's life is going pretty well right now. She scored nine nominations in the 2010 Country Music Awards (CMA) including the big one, Entertainer of the Year. She was also nominated for best female vocalist and album of the year. Her CD "Revolution," including the hit "Airstream"

song, went platinum with more than one million sales this year. It is the third studio album Lambert has released.

She had nominations in the single Song and Music Video Of The Year categories for two of her songs, "White Liar" and "The House That Built Me." Fiancée Blake Shelton has four CMA nominations. She's acquired dozens of awards over her seven-year rise to fame; but she counts her three Airstreams among the most important acquisitions of her career.

### The Airstreams

Lambert didn't actually buy an Airstream until after the Airstream song came out. Her first trailer, a 1953 Airstream Flying Cloud was gutted, polished and the running gear brought up to snuff by Pat McDowell of Wimberly, TX. Then it was handed over to "The Junk Gypsies" – sisters Amie and Jolie Sikes, and their mother Jani. The Junk Gypsies collect and sell vintage collectibles and "junk." The trio of family friends designed and decorated Lambert's tour bus when her career began to take off and she needed to be on the road full time. It only made sense, Lambert said, to task them with designing and decorating the interior of the Airstream as well. "We're kind of cut from the same cloth. Our dad camps with her dad and we're all just kind of family," Jolie Sikes said.

The 1953 Flying Cloud became the mascot for Lambert's "Rolling Bar & Pink Guitars 2010 Tour." It also doubles as the post-concert hangout for Lambert, her band, crew, and a few select fans and friends. A high school friend follows Lambert's tour bus, towing the Airstream with a vintage Chevy truck.

*"We told her we'd never done anything like a tour bus before but she said,*

She admits the Airstream bug bit hard. After the Rolling Bar tour trailer was completed she bought a 1952 Flying Cloud and had it renovated for camping – real camping, not parked in the driveway camping. Anyone who hears the Airstream song isn't surprised Lambert talks about being a "red dirt girl."

"I write about my real life. My songs are authentic," she said. Born in Longview, TX in 1983, she grew up with her toes in the dirt. Her father, now a retired police officer who runs a detective agency with Miranda's mother, introduced her to shooting early in life. So she became an avid deer hunter and camper, with a true appreciation for the adventure and escape Airstreams promised. She still enjoys venison and says that "even though I obviously work weekends, I still love to camp. I belong to the Airstream club out of Austin and go when I can."

Her third Airstream is an old 1976 Argosy she rescued from the side of the road. No word on what she has planned for the Argosy, but it has been repainted and repurposed. She admits at least one of the Airstreams will figure into her wedding with Country Music star Blake Shelton. The two started dating in 2006 and became engaged in May 2010.

"I don't think we'll get married in it, but it will be there, someplace to go. I can't imagine not having it near me then." The Sikes, who are helping with planning the wedding, also say there will be an Airstream involved, but aren't divulging details yet.

### The Design Process

The Sikes started with some small designs – like t-shirts. When Lambert hit the big time and decided to move from leased buses to owning her own tour bus four years ago, she asked the Sikes to decorate the interior.

"We told her we'd never done anything like a tour bus before but she said, 'That's okay. I know you can do it.' And we muddled our way through it." Jolie said.

When the gutted Airstream came along it was a déjà vu moment for the women. "We told her we'd never done anything like renovate an Airstream, and then we found out on top of that we only had two weeks to do it and she said, 'That's okay. I know you can do it,' and somehow we did."

With no formal design or restoration background – Jolie has a Master's degree from Texas A&M, and Amie turned down a law school invitation – the sisters relied on their personal taste. Cowboy style and an eye for vintage "junk," jewels, and cowboy bling is in their DNA. Combining their passion and knack for flea market finds with their outrageous sense of humor, the women pulled together an eclectic blend of history, nostalgia, and Texas icons. Lambert's "Rolling Bar and Pink Guitars" came together in a whirl of pink, blue, sparkles, and spirit. Old license plates, old wood and a collection of tapestry pillows continue the eclectic western vintage vibe that began inside Lambert's tour bus.



*... 'That's okay. I know you can do it.' And we muddled our way through it."*



Hanging from the nose of the trailer is a special piece of art created by Texas artists who run “Texas Trash & Treasures.” The piece? A winged metal guitar that says “Just like a gypsy” in honor of the song’s lyrics. Call it cosmic cowboy. Lambert and the Sikes do.

The women credit the magical transformational of the Airstream to inspiration, hot glue and super sticky adhesive, and a “Bedazzler” for a lot of the vintage and rhinestone bling in the 54’ Flying Cloud. “Channeling” the spirit of famous Texas bars and the soul of a century of country music helped them envision details like the “retro cowboy wall.”

Like Jimmy Buffet and Alan Jackson would say, “It’s 5 o’clock somewhere,” and for Lambert, it’s always 5 o’clock on the retro wall. A golden stallion stands guard over a non-working clock nestled in a horseshoe. There was no time to fix the clock so the women set the hands to 5 o’clock, cut the electrical cord, and made Parrotheads around the world proud. A Mexican batea (hand-painted wood tray), hand-made curtains at the windows, a big red and white checkered floor, and dozens, if not hundreds of personally significant and vintage finds set the cosmic cowgirl mood.

A curved drink bar, made from an old circus game wheel, and fronted with a giant, winged “M” for Miranda fills one end of the Airstream. The seats of the two barstools are each emblazoned with a name. The girls couldn’t decide if they should say “Thelma & Louise,” or “Me & Bobbie McGee.” A phone call to Mama Lambert decided the issue. One says “Lover” and the other says “Fighter” because “when you’re drinkin’ you’re either a LOVER or a FIGHTER.”

A Victorian sofa upholstered in deep pink glitter vinyl and set off with gold fringe, and a bench covered in glitter blue vinyl and old license plates add soul and seating to what the sisters’ call a “Cosmic Cowgirl Roadside Bar.” A silver and pink rocket reminiscent of a Buck Rogers serial glitters on a turquoise wall over the pink couch.

The Sikes used two sacred wood tabletops from the Dixie Chicken – one of the most famous Texas bars in the United States, located in College Station, Texas. Over the years customers at the Dixie Chicken have carved their names in thick wooden tabletops while waiting on their cold beer and hot chicken.

When the Sikes sisters helped the Dixie Chicken auction off old memorabilia in 2009, the Sikes acquired several planks from the old tables – complete with hundreds of hand carved names. After cutting wooden circles out of the history-rich planks they routed the edges. Attaching the circles onto the top and bottom of flea market band drums and adding lockable casters turned a little piece of Texas history into a pair of rolling end tables.

“Miranda didn’t want to know anything. She wanted no decisions. All she wanted to do was decide on the footprint – where the bathroom and bed were to be. But she left it up to us to decorate everything else,” Jolie Sikes said. Lambert loved the results.

“They (the Sikes) inspire me as people and it all came together,” Lambert said.

The Sikes didn’t have an Airstream at that time, but after decorating Lambert’s they got one for themselves. Airstreams, their owners know, are like tattoos, country music, and potato chips. They’re addictive. Once you’re hooked, you’ve got to have more.

Country Music star and friend Dierks Bentley bought an Airstream and brought it to the Sikes for decoration as well. “We’re not set up to do them for the public, but we do them for friends,” Jolie said. “We do sell the items that we put into the Airstreams though.”



### Logistics

“I have a tour bus that I live on basically, but there’s something about hooking up an Airstream and being able to just go where you want,” Lambert said. An old high school friend pulls the Airstream with a vintage Chevy truck and follows the tour bus.

Miranda’s a working girl, so the tour bus is still officially home on the road. But with the addition of the Airstream now there’s a place to party, even if the town where they’re playing rolls up the sidewalks at 9 p.m. It’s a good thing to be able to party in the trailer, then walk home to the tour bus. Lambert considers the Airstream a great entertainment addition and a friend and fan magnet.



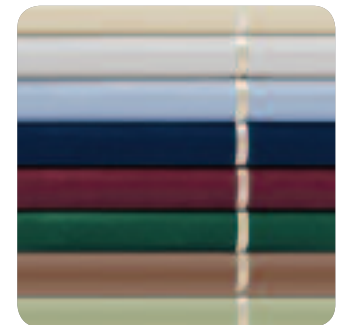
“We hang out there every night on the road,” Lambert said of the Airstream. “There’s some good juju going on in there. Some really cool people have hung out in there. I bought a Polaroid and I take pictures of everybody that comes in and post them on the wall. People love it. They feel like they can relate to the freedom and the whole feeling of an Airstream.”

Lambert refuses to name a favorite from among her three Airstreams. She loves them all, echoing the timeless sentiment of Airstream owners with multiple trailers.

“They’re my babies,” she said. “I can’t imagine not having them.” ♥♥♥

**TOP:** You’re either a Lover or a Fighter when you’re drinking at the bar in Miranda’s ‘53 Flying Cloud. **LEFT:** Dozens of “found” items from flea markets, roadhouses, vehicles, and other sources comprise the interior decor. The 1953 Flying Cloud was the mascot for Lambert’s “Rolling Bar & Pink Guitars 2010 Tour.” The trailer’s structural renovation and subsequent decoration were entirely done by people who aren’t “officially” in the business of restoring Airstreams.

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