

ALPACA CULTURE

A photograph of a brown alpaca sitting in a field of dry grass. The alpaca is looking to the left. The background is a blurred field of dry grass and other alpacas.

December 2017

**National
Alpaca
Farm Days**

Alpaca farmers
welcome the public



Country Music Awards

Presenters and Executives Gifted USA-Made Alpaca Scarves

The 51st Country Music Association (CMA) Awards aired live on ABC November 8 from downtown Nashville, Tennessee. Hosted by country music superstars Brad Paisley and Carrie Underwood, the event is widely publicized as “Country Music’s Biggest Night.” Nominees and winners are chosen each year by more than 6,000 members of CMA.

Each presenter and some executives are traditionally given a glamorous gift bag for their participation.

The star-studded list of presenters included: Bobby Bones, Luke Combs, Jimmie Johnson, Karlie Kloss, LOCASH, Dustin Lynch, Lauren Alaina, Lea Michele, Michelle Monaghan, Tyler Perry, Jason Ritter, Brittany Snow, JoAnna Garcia Swisher, Trisha Yearwood, Brett Young and others.

This year, each received an American-made alpaca scarf!

Created by Karl and Jan Heinrich of New Era Fiber in Gallatin, Tennessee, the scarves served as an introduction for some celebrities to the tantalizing texture of alpaca.

Karl explained that the 100% alpaca “scarves are a variety of designs that we are producing with our commercial Shema Seiki knitting machine.”

Machine-made in naturally occurring alpaca colors, some of the scarves are 100% Huacaya and some are 100% Suri. Others are a 50/50 blend of Huacaya and Suri.

Presenters received either the Kayleigh, Vick, Castro or Arnetta scarves. All were produced in the United States. The ribbed Castro scarf is designed for men and the Vick is a ladder stitch for men or women. The Kayleigh and Arnetta are delicate, lace-knit patterns for women.

The inclusion of the New Era scarves in the CMA Awards bags happened by chance, once again proving that if you’re prepared

when opportunity knocks, great things can happen.

Karl explained, “We have a close relationship with our electrical energy co-op because our mill is powered by solar energy.”

It turns out that the Heinrich’s local electrical co-op publication, *The Tennessee Magazine*, did an article on holiday gifts made locally and the couple were asked to be involved in the gift guide.

The woman in charge of sourcing the presenter gifts for the CMA Awards happened to read the gift guide and took notice of the beautiful alpaca scarves. Traditionally, the CMA makes an attempt to include locally-made gifts for the presenters, highlighting local goods. She had researched the New Era gifts products online and then sent the Heinrichs an email expressing her interest.

At first, Karl said “we actually thought it was a hoax, because we had not solicited them.” But Karl and Jan did their homework, researched the CMA employee and realized it was a legitimate inquiry.

They also considered if they could fill the order. New Era Fiber had about 100 scarves in stock but had previously made sure they had yarn inventory so they could respond more quickly to orders just like this.

When Karl and Jan called and agreed to participate, the sourcer was very excited. The Heinrichs and their team were also thrilled to secure the order for such a well-known event. Karl said, “Let’s just say there were some fist pumps around the mill/office.”

Living in the Nashville area means everyone is involved to some degree because the ceremony is big local and national news. Karl said, “I am a bigger fan than Jan—she likes certain artists, where I have a broader list of favorites.”

“For New Era,” Karl continued, this is an opportunity to get our products into the hands of people that may never otherwise see what we are making. New Era has been working to become involved in the fashion industry in



Nashville for a few years.”

In fact, in early November, New Era Fiber moved their knitting operation to a new area they specifically dedicated to the knitting operation at the Long Hollow Suris location.

But it didn’t happen overnight. Karl explained, “We have been planning to expand our mill and add finished knitwear for several years. Two or three years ago, we made products from our fiber successfully. Over the last year, we have made products for other breeders from their animals’ fiber on a contract basis. Now, we are ready to offer that service to all alpaca breeders.”

“Four months ago, we pulled the trigger on the mill expansion and added the knitwear as a regular option for our mill customers. We also started to sell our services to Nashville designers. Our ability to provide small-batch processing to that demographic seems like a natural fit for us.”

The Heinrichs want to be able to deliver on promises and that’s how they run their business. “Before we were willing to tell the general public about making product,” Karl said, “we wanted to prove to ourselves that we could do it. It has been a long road of trial and error but we are now in production.”

“For American alpaca, [getting the order for the CMA Awards] provides added credibility that we are the beginning of renewed industry. There are many people already making products in the United States from American alpaca.

“But there is very little publicity about those products. Most are sold on farm stores or at fiber shows, etcetera. We have been doing that for many years ourselves. It is time we market to the broader world.

“We need to go beyond ‘singing to the choir’ and sing to the fashion industry. We have started by ‘singing’ to the fashion industry in Nashville. We joined the Nashville Fashion Alliance (NFA) last year and hope to have an event for them on our farm very soon. NFA is dedicated to helping startup fashion



Clockwise from top left: The Arnetta scarf. A detail from the Arnetta scarf showing the delicate textures that can be achieved with the Shema Seiki knitting machine. The Kaleigh scarf. Available in multiple colorways, the Vick scarf is made from undyed, natural alpaca fiber.

related business succeed. The Nashville fashion industry is the third largest fashion center in the United States based on economic impact. I think it is a great place to start,” Karl said. 

Purchase the scarves from the CMA Awards for yourself or as a gift at: www.newerafiber.com and www.longhollowalpaca.com.

SOURCES:

- Personal interview Karl Heinrich.
- “CMA Announces Presenters & Pre-Telecast For ‘The 51st Annual CMA Awards,’” Airing wednesday, Nov. 8, on the ABC television network.” 2017 CMA Awards, CMAWorld.com, 2 Nov. 2017, www.cma-world.com/cma-awards/2017/11/02/cma-announces-presenters-pre-telecast-51st-annual-cma-awards-airing-wednesday-nov-8-abc-television-network/.
- Stefano, Angela. “2017 CMA Awards Presenters Revealed: Lauren Alaina, Brett Young and More.” *The Boot, The Boot*, 2 Nov. 2017, theboot.com/2017-cma-awards-presenters/.