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Nashville: A Little Bit Country

By Janis Hashe

Country twang, sure. Cowboy hats and big hair, oh yes. But “Music City” is now so much more than just country music—though it remains the world’s top destination for fans of Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, Vince Gill and other mega-stars in the country heavens.

As the popularity of country music has surged over the past few decades, Nashville has grown up in every way. It’s bigger, brighter, richer—and while you can still happily wile away time in the smoky honky-tonks, where the next country sensation may be singing, you can also listen to Mahler in one of the world’s top symphony halls. You can still chow down on classic chicken and grits—but you can also nibble on epicurean delights and sip top-notch wines. The famous Hatch Show Print shop is still printing their classic posters (and you can stop in and buy copies), but you can also view touring international art shows at the stunning Frist Center.

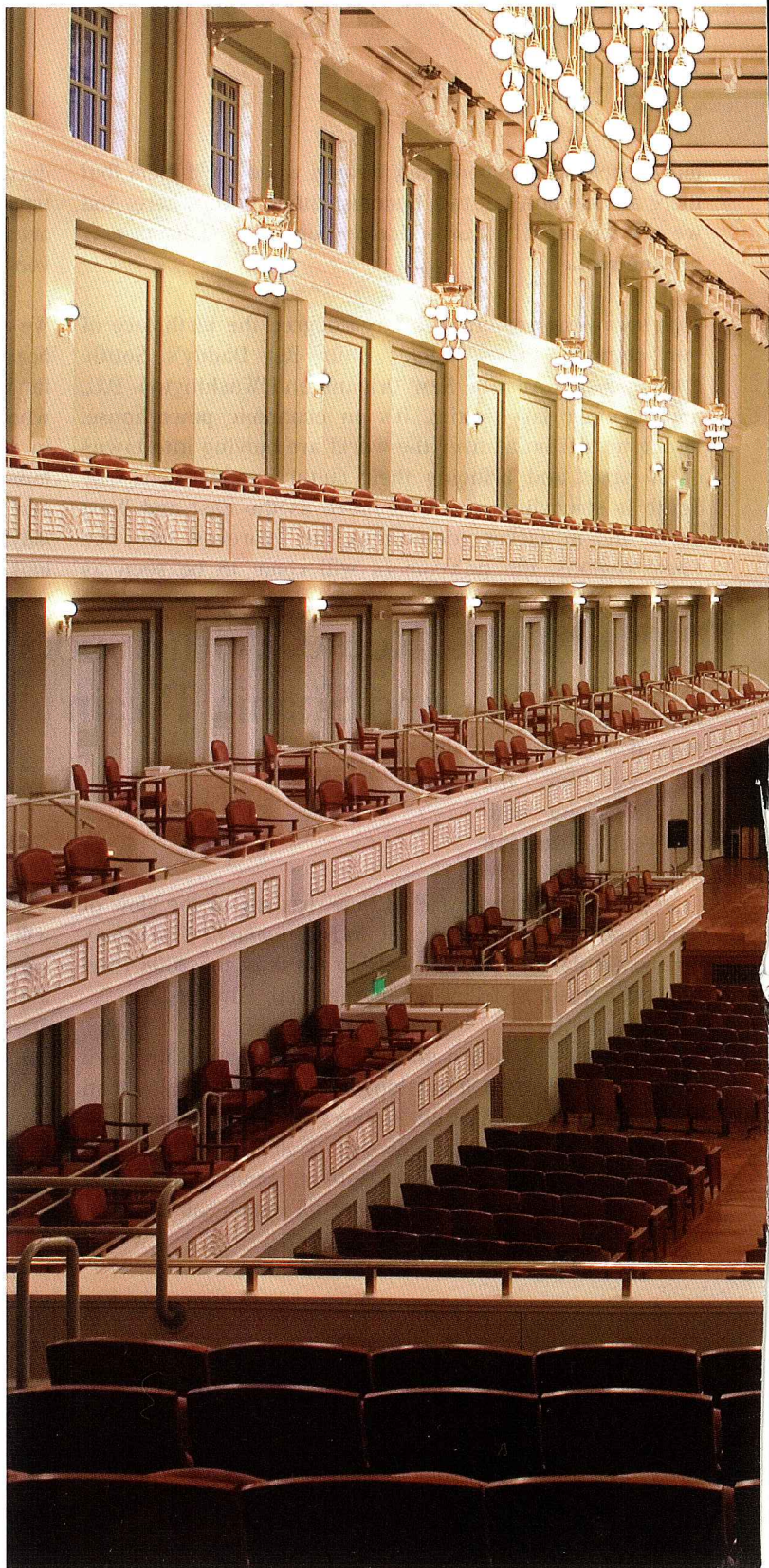
**AN EVENING WITH
WILLIE NELSON**

SINGER, SONGWRITER, ACTOR, AUTHOR

7:00 PM JULY 18 2005

PENGROWTH SADDLEDOME

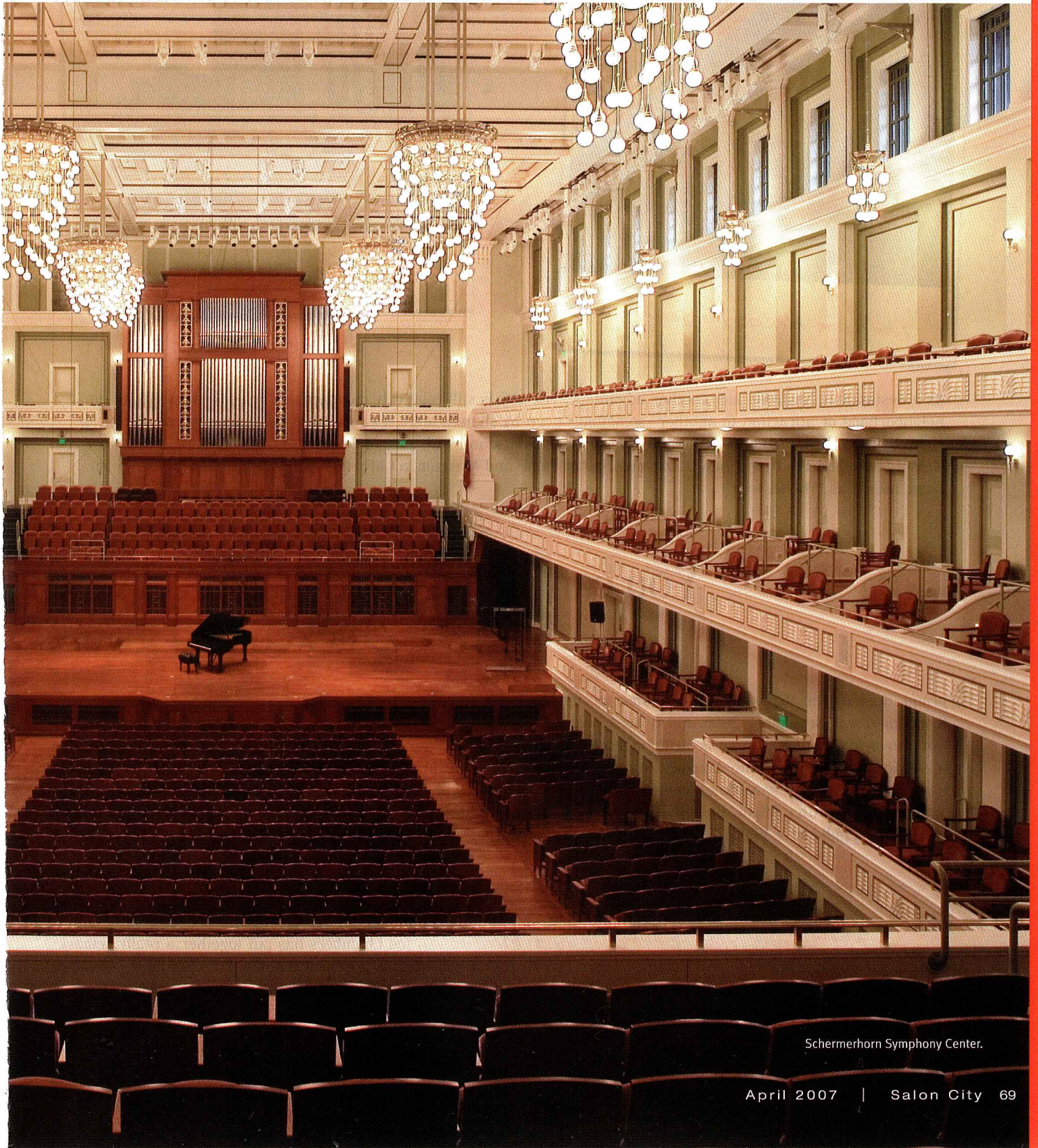
CALGARY, ALBERTA



“Nashville has grown up in every way.
It’s bigger, brighter, richer...”

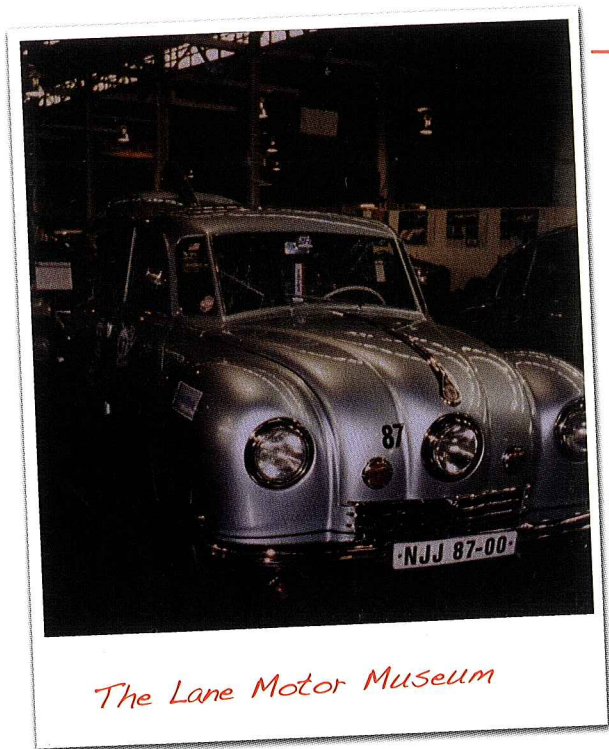


and A Little Bit **Rock** the World

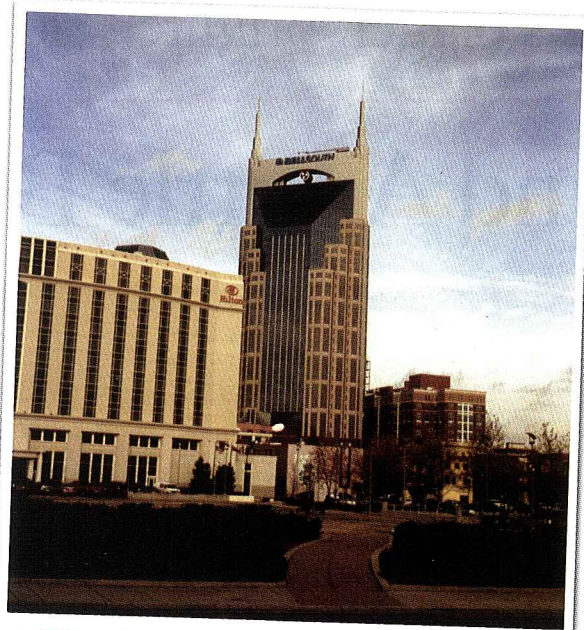


Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

Beauty of the New South



The Lane Motor Museum



The Bell South (aka "Batman") Building on the Nashville skyline.

As a destination, Nashville has another advantage: The city is still relatively compact, and it's easy to get from one neighborhood or attraction to another—sometimes even by shank's mare (aka walking). For example, you can stroll from the Frist Center to some of the most famous music bars, and with a small detour take in both the Country Music Hall of Fame and the brand-new Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum, all of which are contained in the neighborhood known as "The District."

Favorite highlights from a recent visit...

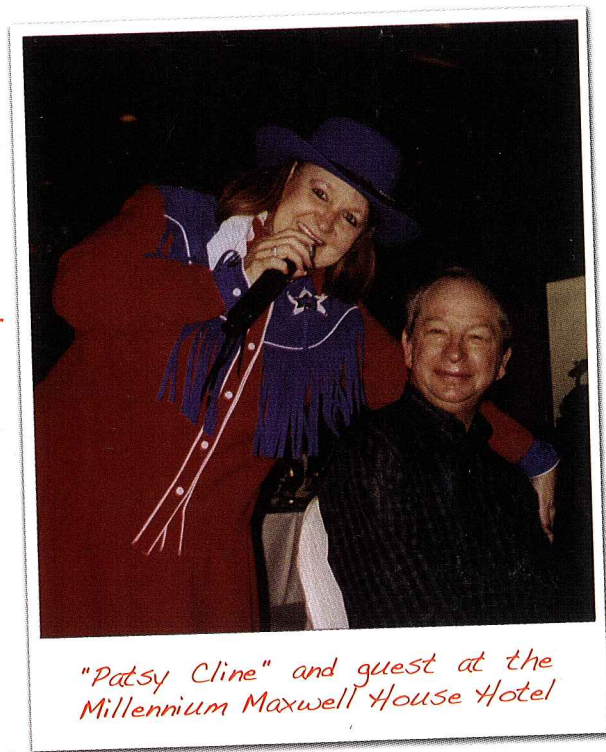
You can still chow down on classic chicken and grits—

- *Schermerhorn Symphony Center.* The grand opening of this grand hall, home to the Nashville Symphony, was September 2006 and it does Nashville proud. Not only beautiful, it is also an acoustic marvel—you can hear a whisper on stage in the balcony. As it's Nashville, the acclaimed symphony sometimes collaborates with partners such as the Country Music Hall of Fame to present shows like "Is It a Fiddle or a Violin?" www.nashvillesymphony.org.
- *The Frist Center.* Named for the family of the now-former Senate Majority Leader, Bill Frist, this facility is a stellar example of how to use a fabulous old building—in this case, a New Deal-era post office. The Frist has no permanent collection, but hosts top-quality touring exhibits—and has the most fun "ArtQuest" room for kids and families (and adults who are kids) you'll ever see. www.fristcenter.org.
- *The Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum.* Joe Chambers has put together a really remarkable salute to the troubadours of popular music. He's acquired instruments and memorabilia from legendary sessions, including a recreation of the stage at the Jolly Roger club in Nashville where Jimi Hendrix was a frequent performer. A must for music fans. www.musicianshalloffame.com.

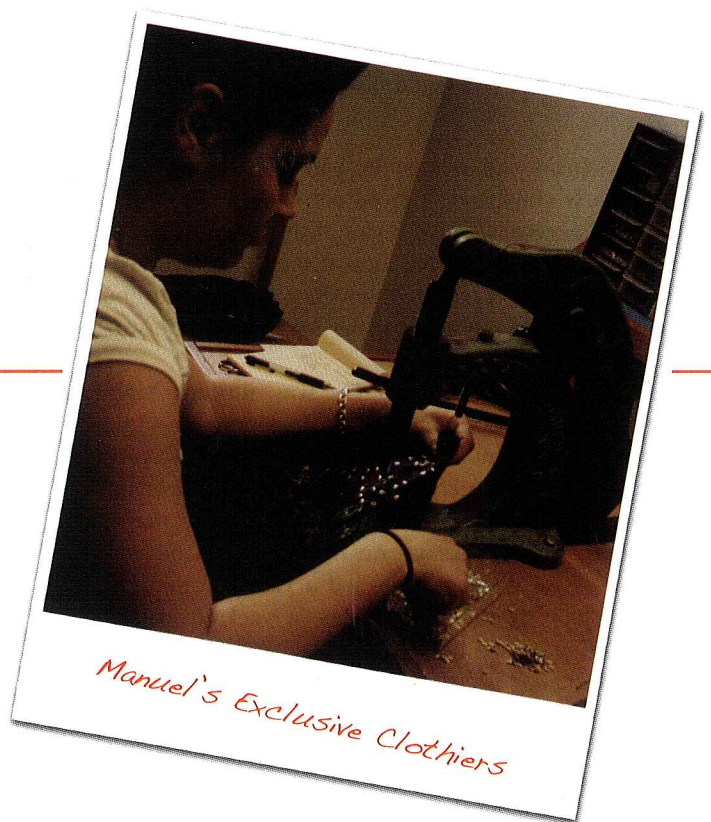
• *The Lane Motor Museum.* Begun as a private collection, the 150-car collection is now housed in a former bakery. Everything from rare Czechoslovakian cars to teensy microcars to one-of-a-kind vehicles is on display, most in running order. Even non-auto fanatics will love this place. www.lanemotormuseum.org.

• *Manuel's Exclusive Clothiers.* That silver fox, Manuel, has created dazzling, sequin-covered costumes for just about every major country star, past and present, and is still going strong. (Rock stars love his work as well.) Ordinary folks can visit and buy at his studio and store, but get out your credit card—the pieces are individually designed, cut, and painstakingly embroidered and sequined by hand and are priced accordingly. 615-321-5444.

• *Ombi.* An excellent example of the innovative cuisine now available in Music City is found at Ombi. Try crawfish croquettes with crystal beurre blanc, spinach and fennel salad with olives and almonds, and duck breast with pomegranate molasses. Yum! Save room for the wonderful desserts. Ombi has an outstanding wine list and makes a mean Manhattan. 615-320-5350.



"Patsy Cline" and guest at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel



Manuel's Exclusive Clothiers

—but you can also nibble on epicurean delights and sip top-notch wines.

• *Music Night Life.* Always Nashville's ace in the hole, you can take your pick from concerts at time-honored Ryman Auditorium to an acoustic evening at legendary singer-songwriter hangout The Bluebird Café. Fans of Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli should plan a visit around a performance by The GipsyHombres, wherever they are playing. Visit www.gipsyhombres.com, order the new *Nou Veau* CD and be transported by the cut "Crystal Kiss."

If you go: You'll find all the accommodation, transportation, and pretty much any other info you need at the Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau's comprehensive web site, www.musiccityusa.com. ■