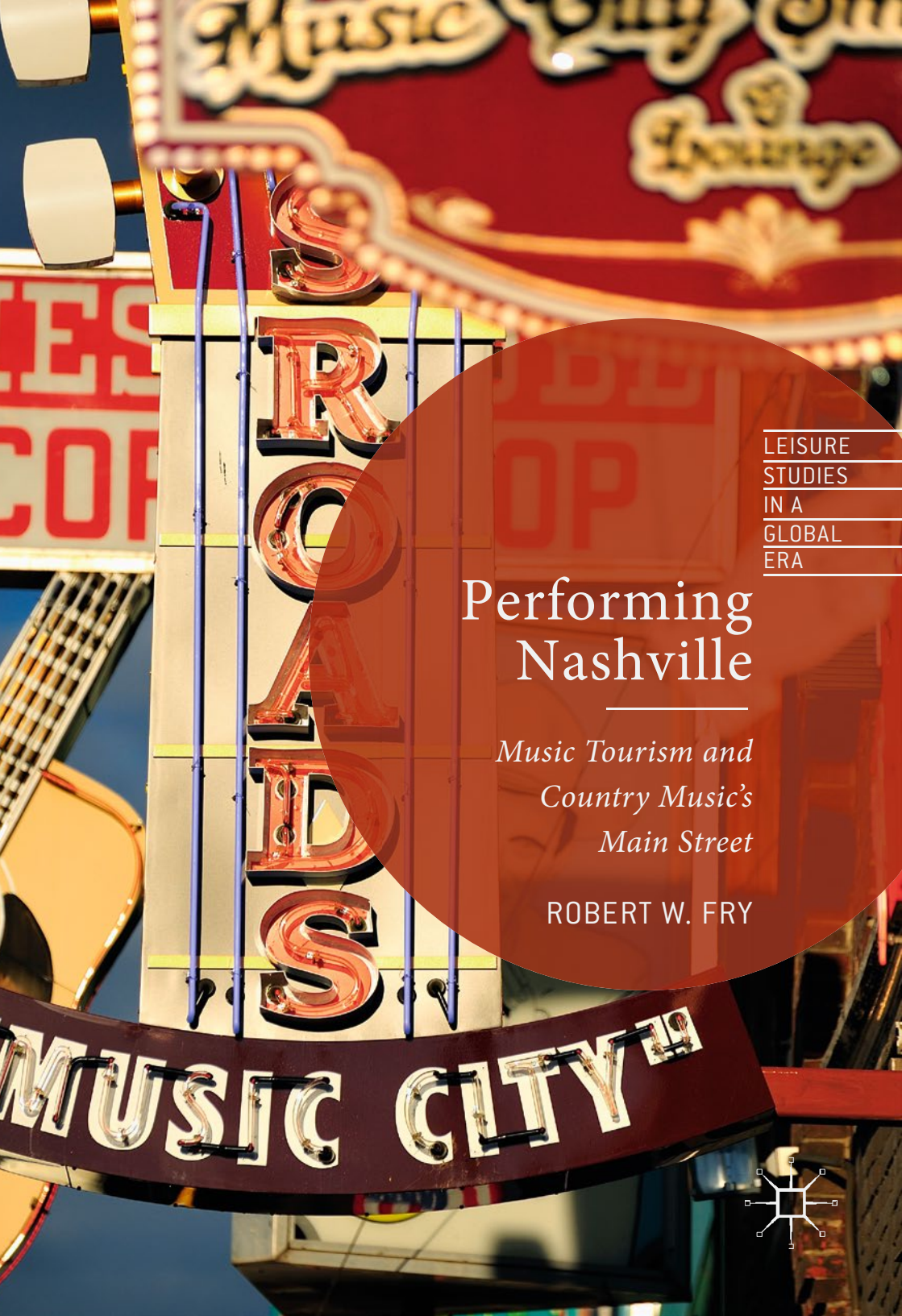

LEISURE STUDIES IN A GLOBAL ERA

Performing Nashville

Music Tourism and Country Music's Main Street

ROBERT W. FRY

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I dedicate this book to my wife, Laura, and our two children, Lillian and Oliver. Without their patience, support, and love, the completion of this project would not have been possible.

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Class on Tour: An Experiential Approach to Teaching and Researching Popular Music

In 2001, during my graduate studies in musicology at Ohio University, I had the unique opportunity to teach a history of British popular music in London for a fine arts study-abroad program. I had been teaching classes in popular music at Ohio University for two years and felt well prepared to lecture on the impact of British music and artists on the birth and development of the larger global popular-music industry. I arrived in London equipped with recordings, readings, films, guidebooks, and PowerPoint presentations, eager to teach popular music in one of its most famed places of production and performance. Ohio University had rented a classroom in London's Florida State University Student Centre. The class space was, however, available only one day per week, forcing me to leave the confinement and comfort of the classroom and take students directly to the musical sites we were discussing. When covering the British folk and blues revival, for example, we toured the sites of London's famed blues, jazz, and skiffle clubs and experienced the blues live at Ain't Nothin But the Blues Club in Soho. When discussing the Sex Pistols, we visited Vivienne Westwood's World's End on Kings Court Road and were lucky enough to see an exhibit of Westwood's fashion designs that was

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concurrently displayed at the Victoria Albert Museum. When discussing Beatlemania, we took a tour with Richard Porter, former president of the London Beatles fan club, who took us to sites throughout the city and gave us insight into the history of the band, their connection to the British landscape, their impact on popular music, and the fans' connection to the band.[1]

Like many of the students, this was my first trip to London. In the days, sometimes mere hours, before each class, I could be found hurriedly trekking through the city with a notepad and guidebook mapping out the next group outing and attempting to stay at least one step ahead of the students. While I knew the history of popular music in London as presented in textbooks, liner notes, and documentary films, I soon realized that I was clueless of where that history had actually happened and the geographical placement of and influence on the many styles and artists we were discussing. Although I presented myself to students and to British locals as the "professor," I was just as amazed and awestruck as the students were by the unexpected musical and social experiences we were having. London's places of performance, production, and preservation reinforced the information I had read in rock history books while also meeting my own fan and tourist expectations of musical and cultural otherness and authenticity.[2] In addition, my understanding of popular music strengthened as the students and I went beyond musical sound, personality, and story to include the geographical and socio-political influences that had shaped the sounds we were studying.

The initial class plan, which I had outlined from a carrel in the Ohio University library weeks before, had been to teach the history of British popular music through a historical and canonical approach, using specific landmarks and musical sites to reinforce and illustrate both the music and the artists we were to study. Place was to be a mere backdrop to the history, a living museum of sorts, that would bring the object of study—the music—to life. However, the limited time for classroom instruction and the resulting and unexpected formation of the class through my

[1] Richard Porter continues to offer public and private Beatles tours of London. Descriptions of tours and booking information can be found at http://www.beatlesinlondon.com

[2] Places of performance, production, and preservation as categories of tourist sites were borrowed from Chris Gibson and John Connell (2005) and will be used throughout the manuscript.

own tourist gaze resulted in a presentation of popular music that moved beyond significant recordings, styles, and artists and toward a focus on the ways we as music fans, through the theatrics of fandom and tourism, interact with the music, the artists, the place, and the myths of the popular-music industry.[3]

Such a gaze and the resulting ethnographic methodologies, including social observation and the analysis of and participation within the larger fan community and London's musical tourist agenda, led to fascinating and fruitful class meetings in which students discussed the music through both cultural and musical analyses. Such a dual analysis also provided a veil of academia for students and professor alike, resulting in the illusion that we were not tourists but were, instead, informed and educated scholars studying musical sound and the sociology of music tourism and reception. As a class, we perceived our time in London as an educational endeavor; we were drawn to the city to experience something new and edifying, to take part in something educationally unique from our regular academic careers and lives in Athens, Ohio. It was a type of experiential education that allowed us, as a class, to step outside of the institution where history and culture were preserved and analyzed and that permitted us to participate within cultural spaces where history was made. We soon noticed, however, that our interest in the city as a social and sonic environment that influenced and fostered pop stars, new technologies, iconic music, and influential youth cultures mirrored the interests of the mere "tourists." While we supposed our intent to be different, rooted in academia and reflective of its scholarly rigor, through tours and onsite lectures, we united with fans and tourists through shared stories of music's past and present, of pop music and meaning, and through the collective performance of London's places of performance and production. Through these experiences, we felt stronger and more intimate connections to the artists, their music, geographical and cultural spaces, and the larger body of music fans we were observing and quickly becoming invested in and a part of.

It was during these classes and in discussions with students and colleagues that I first became interested in fandom and music tourism as a

[3] The tourist gaze as a set of expectations of the tourist was defined by John Urry (2002).

subject of research. Through the class' realization of our multiple roles as scholars, tourists, and music fans, we began to realize the fine and often vague line between academic and tourist and came to terms with our dual role as both researchers and the subjects of the research. In the introduction to his book, *Culture on Tour*, Edward Bruner poses the question: "Was I a closet ethnographer on tour, or a closet tourist doing ethnography?" (Bruner 2004, p. 2). Bruner's question illustrates obvious yet often overlooked similarities between tourist and scholar. Differences arguably exist in their initial intent and the rigor of the study, yet both are attracted to specific sites or sounds through what is perceived to be an opportunity to observe and participate in a cultural experience unobtainable in everyday life. For both music fans and scholars, these experiences are often connected to specific locations that serve as places of creation and continuance of the celebrated and/or researched tradition. These experiences of musical, cultural, and geographical authenticity are therefore deemed real through the fans' and scholars' opportunity to experience not only the music but also its geographical placement and origins. To walk in the footsteps of musical idols, to stand in a studio where hit songs were recorded, and/or to visit geographical and man-made locations mentioned in past and current songs or seen on album covers bring music to life and connects the sound to a specific place and/or object.

Through a connection to place, recorded music, which through the recording industry and the rise of virtual sound catalogs has become increasingly placeless and ephemeral, is reconnected to its geographical roots and to the fan's desire for belonging to a community. It is in this connection that we as music fans and scholars connect to the music and the music culture being observed. In an age of increased social and musical isolation due to mp4s and iPods, the need for place or a sense of geographical connectivity to sound seems heightened. The touring of cultural sites including those connected to popular music allows us to go beyond the individual ephemeral to also experience music through the collective visceral. Place becomes a space for performing and interacting with the music tradition rather than a mere backdrop for the tradition. The centrality of the performance allows fans, for a brief time, to enter and become part of the tradition. Philosopher Edward Casey states: "Places not only are, they happen. (And it is because they happen that they

lend themselves so well to narration, whether as history or as story)" (Casey 1996, p. 27). For fans, musical soundscapes happen through their interaction with the past in the present in a place that serves as a living stage for both. The ways we remember, apply meaning, and share these collective experiences further reinforce the similarities between tourism and ethnography and serve as the inspiration for this project.

Touring the Field

The music researcher seeks to capture, translate, analyze, and present a portrait of the music culture being studied. Typically, an analysis is based upon photographs, interviews, archival research, video and sound recordings, and documentation of the researcher's own personal experiences. Once collected and theorized, the findings are shared with colleagues through academic conferences, publications, lectures, and term papers where the "expert" shares his/her experience with others who, like the researcher, are fascinated with experiences of and interaction with musical and cultural otherness.

The tourist or fan, while he/she does not approach the culture with the same type of academic rigor, leaves the site with a very similar snap shot, obtained through a collection of tourist commodities such as photographs, recordings, souvenirs, communal interactions, and memories of his/her own engagement with the tourist destination and its "unique" cultural objects. Like researchers, tourists analyze and share their findings with colleagues through "unofficial" living room lectures and water-cooler conferences, where the one who has visited the site, and holds the objects that validate the pilgrimage, shares his/her experiences with those who will not or have not yet interacted with the destination.

There are obvious similarities in the collection and presentation of both travelers' experiences, but academia is clear to mark the difference between tourist and ethnographer. The tourist is believed to be naïve in his/her acceptance of the cultural production, blindly accepting the staged authenticity created by the tourist industry for the tourist. The ethnographer, on the other hand, is expected to see past the facade and document speculative reasons for the production, noting what such a simulation

can inform us about the tourist space and society more broadly. However, in the production and collective performance of a musical space through the theatrics of tourism, the line between reality and staged authenticity is often blurred, exemplified by my London course. While our interaction with the sights and sounds of the city was validated through the academic veil, we were tourists of the spaces we visited and fans of the music we discussed. Such a realization resulted in a move away from the standard historical and canonical approach to popular-music pedagogy and instead toward a focus on music fandom and tourism and its importance in and to the popular-music industry. We, like tourists, desired the backstage experience, an illusion that was reinforced by the "insider" knowledge presented to us through the veil of academia. Through the theatrics of tourism, we became more connected to the music we were studying, going beyond historically significant artists and songs to better understand the music's connection to place and to the people who identified with popular music's sounds and images. At the end of that semester abroad, I returned to the USA and, having graduated from Ohio University, pursued further graduate studies at Florida State University, where I once again taught the popular-music canon from a textbook in a windowless lecture hall. However, I continued to research music tourism and the act of fandom and travel as performance art, and I concluded my graduate studies with a dissertation on blues fandom and cultural tourism in the Mississippi Delta.[4]

The King Biscuit Festival

Conducting ethnographic work at the King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena, Arkansas, introduced me to a number of blues fans whose stories caused me to reevaluate my research and the story I wanted to tell.[5]

[4] The section titled "Touring the Field" also appears in an earlier version in my unpublished dissertation: We are the Blues: Individual and Communal Performances of the King Biscuit Tradition. The dissertation can be downloaded and read at diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:182523/datastream/PDF/.../citation.pdf

[5] The King Biscuit Festival is an annual event that draws thousands of blues fans to the Arkansas Delta to experience the best in blues music and Southern food and culture. Information on the

My initial plans were to document the organizations and individuals responsible for the creation and operation of the festival. I spent years talking to festival organizers, locals, and musicians and digging through archives, paying little attention to the thousands of people with their faces and cameras turned toward the stage. With a press pass around my neck, I spent most of my festival time at the front of the crowd near the stage, photographing some of the great bluesmen while trying to score an interview. I was interested in tourism, but I was ignoring the tourist; interested in the role of fandom in the blues industry but only talking to artists. At the 2007 festival, I turned around once to gaze at the audience, and it clicked. The story on stage had been told repeatedly; the story in the crowd had not. The following few years of my festival attendance were spent in the crowd, at the campsite, at local restaurants, and at the temporary and permanent residences of festival participants. The stories that emerged as I talked to and observed fans were ones of identity formation, remembrance, and transformed traditions, experiences that relied on the blues as an object, an idea, and a soundtrack but were secondary to the performative experiences obtained at the festival. In addition, the research caused me to better understand my own love for and fandom of American music and the importance of its geographical origin. In the process of immersion, I simultaneously became the researcher and the researched.

This book is about country-music tourism, yet many of the themes in the book are similar to those I discovered while researching the blues. This was not a forced connection, but an organic one. Many of the fans are different, and they make musical distinctions between the two styles. However, themes within the music and what these styles represent are undeniably similar. Both genres signify American tradition and a collective identity that seem to defy the rapidly changing society around them. The sound of the music may change, but the themes remain similar, suggesting a continued tradition rooted in an idealized and performed past. An interaction with the home of country music or the blues is therefore the opportunity to interact with a theatrical space that permits a performance of the desired past and of belonging. The time that I spent in

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festival can be found at http://www.kingbiscuitfestival.com

Helena, Arkansas, helped to formulate my thoughts on tourism and led me to recognize the importance of fans and the insightfulness of their observations. It was years later that my experiences and observations in London and in Helena transformed into an experiential classroom opportunity for students at Vanderbilt University, realized by my own fascination for country music and my amazement at having the opportunity to talk about and teach this rich musical tradition within the city revered as its home.

Teaching Popular Music in Nashville

In 2007, I began teaching popular-music courses at Vanderbilt University. I was immediately struck by the fact that, although we were in such close proximity to many of the sites we were discussing in class, such a small number of students had previously visited these sites or even knew of their historical significance or geographical placement. The Ryman Auditorium—the "Carnegie Hall of the South," "Mother Church of Country Music," and long-time home of the Grand Ole Opry—is only two miles from my classroom. The Grand Ole Opry, which weekly features the biggest names of country music, is only nine miles away. The famed Music Row and its most revered surviving studios, including RCA Studios A and B, the Quonset Hut, and Columbia, are a short walk from campus.[6] Within these famed places of performance and production, artists such as Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Chet Atkins, Elvis Presley, Charley Pride, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, the Everly Brothers, Jim Reeves, and Patsy Cline had recorded and helped shape the popular-music industry. Alongside the historical studios, current music, alive and vibrant, is daily recorded and disseminated to the masses of country-music fans around the globe. The strong presence of the current and historical tradition is reinforced by the many music venues throughout the city that feature live music nightly. These clubs, including 3rd and Lindsley, The Bluebird Café,

[6] Maps of Nashville and its tourist district can be found at http://www.visitmusiccity.com/visitors/thingstodo/mapsandtransportation

the Station Inn, Robert's Western World, and Exit/In, host artists performing a mixture of new music and covers, reminding fans of the city's historical legacy while demonstrating that music is still being made. Nashville's simultaneous historical relevancy and current vibrancy produces a rare musical space where narratives of country past are reinforced by and simultaneously reinforce in turn the current and vibrant industry occurring outside museum walls. This dichotomy is unique among music cities and makes Nashville stand out as a place of historical significance and current relevancy. While there are many music cities across the USA, most attract fans because of what previously happened there, rather than what is currently happening. In many of these musical spaces, museum walls serve as barriers between the tradition that once was and the reality that exists in the present. Nashville, on the other hand, uses this past/present dichotomy to construct a space that validates the tourist experience, placing music fans within the city's musical and performative tradition. This past/present and backstage/frontstage relationship in the performance of Nashville will be explored throughout this book.

Vanderbilt University's location near downtown Nashville provides students with unlimited live music opportunities, access to local musicians and industry executives, onsite and experiential music experiences, and the chance to interact with the sounds and personalities of historic country music through the many music museums and their artifacts, yet many rarely take advantage of these opportunities. Class sizes, limited time for instruction, rigorous course work and high academic expectations, and lack of personal transportation result in continued reliance on standard classroom pedagogy that teaches the popular-music canon from a textbook and a CD set in a windowless classroom, reinforcing to students that although history happened nearby, it can be learned only within academia's confined classroom spaces. In an attempt to repair this disconnect between Nashville and Vanderbilt communities, I created the class Music City Museums and Memorabilia, an onsite and ethnographic study of music, tourism, and fandom, an educational experience that has changed the way I think about and teach popular music and serves as the foundation for the pages to follow.

Music City Museums and Memorabilia

In 2009, I wanted to develop a summer course in popular-music studies for Vanderbilt's Blair School of Music. After some consideration, I combined my previous study-abroad experience with my vision for taking the Vanderbilt classroom into the Nashville musical community to teach music history at the spaces where history was once the present. I therefore designed the course using Chris Gibson's and John Connell's *Music and Tourism: "On the Road Again"* as a model (Gibson and Connell 2005). The authors' discussion of tourist sites as places of performance, production, and preservation shaped the class and allowed me to move beyond what happened at these spaces to also explore the spaces' presentation and the fan's interpretation of the sites, the musical tradition, and/or the artist. Concerned with both a history of Nashville music and the performative nature of tourism, the course gave students the opportunity to embrace their own role as fans in the production of Nashville while also allowing them to interact with Nashville's famed music history and its vibrant present. This class was focused on a specific musical place, but the themes of popular music present in Nashville resulted in a dialogue that went far beyond a history of country music to also include the role of all popular music in American society and, more specifically, the role of popular music in the lives of the class participants. In a 2001 article titled "Introducing the Experiential Learning Spiral," Gloree Rohnke defines experiential education as follows: "Experiential education can be described as a term for how learners translate personal and collective experience through social and cultural filters into personal discovery, performing a process of viewing the experiential components from different angles, perceptions, and vantage points" (Rhonke 2001, p. 33). A class focused on music tourism and fan culture encourages this type of experiential learning and personal discovery. The following brief description of the class will illustrate what I believe to be the benefits of touring the cannon or teaching music through tourism and the performances of fandom and ethnography as pedagogy for popular music education.

On the first day, I introduce an overview of the history and sociology of travel in addition to a brief history of Nashville's musical and social

history, present, and legacy. Questions as simple as why do we travel, who travels, why are we attracted to specific sites or musical genres, how is sound put on display, and what is the role of the tourist/fan in the production, performance, and preservation of a cultural space result in a rich sociological study of both tourism and music fandom. Through the discussion, the connection between landscape and soundscape is introduced, along with the role of each scape in authenticating the other and the importance of tourist/fan expectations to the country-music sound and its physical and experiential presentation and performance. Students begin to recognize that themes regularly and stereotypically heard in country music, such as family values, patriotism, the working class, rural life, spirituality, and home, are not only stated through lyrics and reinforced through musical sound, but are also found in the genre's physical and experiential representation in the recording iconography and in the many tourist sites throughout the city. Following this introduction, students board a van for their first tour of the city. Because of their excitement to see and/or interact with the Ryman, the Country Music Hall of Fame, Printer's Alley, Jefferson Street, and Music Row, students immediately take on a dual role as both researcher and the subject of the research. They are simultaneously drawn to the tourist agenda and encouraged to question its presentation—what is included, and what is left out? Their dual role as eager fan and critical scholar results in an educational experience that allows students to fully grasp history, how it is made and how it continues to be presented, the close relationship between place and sound, and the vital role of the fan in the production of the tourist site and, in the case of Nashville, the sound that is the city's key draw.

Throughout the semester, the class visits, interacts with, analyzes, and writes about famed venues, studios, and tourist sites throughout the Nashville area, such as the Ryman Auditorium, the Country Music Hall of Fame, RCA Studio B, the Quonset Hut, Fisk University, Lower Broadway, and Printer's Alley. As a class, we attend a broadcast of the Grand Ole Opry, experience a songwriter night at the Bluebird Café, and attend a Time Jumpers concert at 3rd and Lindsley. We take driving tours of less-visited music sites, including Jefferson Street, Nashville's home of Rhythm and Blues; Fisk University, home of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, arguably the city's most historically influential and important musical

site; and Nashville's Centennial Park, an important space for nineteenth-century live music, reminding students that Nashville was a "music city" long before it was country music's epicenter. The class also features a number of guest speakers, both in class and onsite, such as emerging artist Julia Cole, who shares her insight on the industry and the importance of building a relationship with fans; a private tour of Gruhn's Guitars with owner George Gruhn himself, who takes us around his shop while providing insight into his love for guitars and ruminations on the reasons people collect instruments; a private tour of RCA Studio B with former studio manager and producer Luke Gilfeather or studio tour guides, who reinforce the myths of the studio with a back-region tour of the control booth where the technology and the recording process responsible for the famed "Nashville Sound" came alive; and a walking tour of Music Row with studio drummer Hayward Bishop, a highlight for the class. On this tour, I as the musicologist share the history of the recording and performative spaces, while Bishop as a studio musician who recorded in these spaces shares personal stories of interaction with other musicians, engineers, and the space itself, providing a tour that presents itself as a backstage experience for the class.

For each site visited, students are assigned corresponding readings and are given a series of questions to be answered through observation, participation, and personal experience. Students then discuss their findings with peers in class and on a communal class blog. Through research, participation, and discussion, students explore the history of country music but also the process of historiography and the sociology of historical interpretation rooted in fandom and music tourism. While the class moves away from a canonical approach to popular music, the students seem to better understand the meaning of popular music in the twenty-first century and, in the process, gain a better understanding of popular-music history and its accompanying performance and presentation by academia and the recording, broadcasting, and tourism industries.

While Nashville's status as the "home" of country music and the current country-music industry offers unique pedagogical opportunities, popular music is performed in every college town or city in America. I believe that onsite and experiential education can be adapted within these spaces, offering a new way of exploring all music and its ever-changing

role in the American and global soundscape. Experiential education has shaped my interest in fandom and tourism studies and serves as the foundation for my teaching methodology and my research on Nashville and country music and their presentation and performance by the music and tourist industries. The onsite tours and class discussions conducted with Vanderbilt students have provided me with a place to hatch many ideas and themes on music, tourism, and fandom and serve as the inspiration for this book's thesis.

Nashville continues to be identified worldwide with country music. In light of this association, locations of creativity, performance, and production have become sites of interest for a growing number of music fans interested in both the history and continuation of the country-music industry. While Nashville's recording and broadcasting history has been well documented, little has been written on country-music fan culture, the fan's significant role in the performance and preservation of Nashville, the changing demographic of the country-music fan, and the heightened role of music fandom in the age of social media. In this book, I present a study that explores the formation and continuance of Nashville, Tennessee, as a tourist destination and as a music place. In the process, I shed light on the importance of the fans (tourists) in creating Nashville's multifaceted musical identity, and the music and city's influence on the formation and performance of the individual and collective identities of the country-music fan. In so doing, I illustrate that these multifaceted identities emerged from and have evolved through a history of complex socio-musical interactions among host and guest cultures, individuals, institutions, and technologies. More importantly, I explore the larger issue of country music as a signifier of "tradition," arguing that for many attendants, the music serves as a soundtrack, while Nashville serves as a performative space that permits the creation, performance, and remembrance of not only the country-music tradition but also individual and collective traditions along with a romanticized American identity.

This book, therefore, provides insight into the role of the fan, both local and visitor, in the establishment, performance, and realization of a music place. Through the theatrics of tourism, Nashville and its connection to country music are performed daily, meeting the desires of both host and guest communities. While Nashville and its musical traditions

are the key draw for tourists, I suggest that the personal experiences and newly formed social traditions that occur within shared physical, virtual, and sonic spaces are the true catalysts for the realization of an authentic fan experience and are, therefore, reinforced through the sound and landscape of country music.

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2

Performing the South

When visiting the honky-tonks in downtown Nashville, my first destination is often Robert's Western World. The club, located on Nashville's Lower Broadway between Fifth and Fourth Avenues, exemplifies the past/present, backstage/frontage, and real/hyperreal dichotomies that combine to create the Nashville brand and experience. A night in the club reinforces the many themes and stereotypes of country music and showcases the multiple desires and expectations of the country fan and of the Nashville tourist. An emphasis on "traditional" country is reinforced through the performing bands' chosen catalog of hits from the "classic" country era and the constant reminder to patrons that they are indeed listening to the sounds of "real" country in a "real" honky-tonk in a "real" music city. The wall décor, including shelves of cowboy boots, neon beer signs, decorative markers of rural authenticity, and photographs of country music's most iconic performers such as Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, Patsy Cline, Minnie Pearl, Roy Acuff, and Marty Robbins; the exaggerated costuming of the club's performers, which blends the myths of the country music industry with those of Western film; and an abundance of references to WSM, the Ryman, and the Grand Ole Opry, only fifteen feet from the rear entrance of the club,

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affirm to fans that authenticity is heard not only in the interpretation of country songs but also in the image of the performers, the location of the venue, and the history and placement of the city, its venues, and its most famous cultural product, country music. The club's website reinforces its placement within the geography, history, and continuation of country music, describing the club as follows:

> Robert's Western World is located on Lower Broadway in the famous historic district of downtown Nashville, Tennessee. It stands in the shadow of the Mother Church of Country Music, the Ryman Auditorium, original home of the Grand Ole Opry…. Robert's was used as a warehouse, office space for river merchants, and for a variety of other purposes. From the late 1950s to the early 1980s—the heyday of country music—our building served as the home of Sho-Bud Steel Guitar Company. Shot Jackson and Buddy Emmons, two of the greatest steel guitar players in history, manufactured and sold some of the best steel guitars and other musical instruments ever made. They manufactured Dobro-style guitars and made other unique instruments including custom steel guitars for popular bands such as The Monkees, Yes and Poco. (Robert's Western World 2016)

This description from the club's website firmly places the venue both geographically and historically within the country music tradition. Through the club's description, tourists are reminded that while Robert's was not a "traditional" honky-tonk during the golden era of country music, it was connected to this era's music as home of Sho-Bud Steel Guitars and through its close proximity to the most famous hall in country music, the Ryman Auditorium. Fans are reminded of the club's authenticity when touring the Ryman's backstage, where the original sign for Sho-Bud Steel Guitars is visible through the auditorium stairway windows. A night in Robert's, therefore, presents traditional country music in a club that can lay claim to taking part in both the music's creation and its continuance. Its present role as a place of hillbilly performance and preservation, a timeless place where country fans can listen to, interact with, and perform timeless music in the present, firmly places Robert's Western World within country music history and the sound and touristscape of Nashville.

At Robert's, as in the many other clubs that line Lower Broadway, country music, made famous through recording and broadcasting, comes alive through musical performance. The centrality of the performance is crucial to the realization of the fan experience and manifests through the theatrics of live music and the performative act of listening and touring. It is the performance, therefore, that transforms the concept of musical authenticity from passive auditory to experiential participatory. While recordings allow audiences to collectively listen to one artist multiple times with no change in interpretation, resulting in a concept of the authentic defined by musical elements and performer, the live performance allows a heightened and personal experiential authenticity to emerge, and I suggest that, for music city tourists, this surpasses a need to interact with the authentic sonic artifact. Within Nashville's honky-tonks, featuring bands covering the biggest hits of traditional and contemporary country, the original artist is replaced with the real experience of being there and a part of the musical performance. This emphasis on the participatory, realized through live music and performed history, transforms music from an object to an event. Christopher Small introduces the term "musiking" to help explain this transformation and the multiple roles of musical performance:

> To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door or the hefty men who shift the piano and the drums or the roadies who set up the instruments and carry out the sound checks or the cleaners who clean up after everyone else has gone. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance. (Small 1998, p. 9)

Live music venues within Nashville's Lower Broadway, therefore, become a stage for the production and performance of "authentic" country music as imagined by the fan, a performance of place, sound, community, and the past that is dependent on all in attendance. Through participation within the musical event in the musical city, the performance becomes

more real in the tourist imagination than the recorded music and artist it is replicating. Add to this the very real possibility that the cover artist on stage will be the next big star, and the experience also becomes an intimate interaction with a country music artist that is unobtainable with the artists whom the stage musician is covering. Here, fans have the opportunity to intimately experience the roots and future of current country music while performing its continuation in the present.

In part, this transition is due to the multiple signifiers of country music authenticity that co-exist and reinforce each other within the clubs and within the larger Nashville tourist and sound scape. Venues and performers in the present authenticate the past, while the history and myths of the country music industry, narrated through the tourism and music industries, authenticate the present. These multiple levels of cultural validation result in a hyperreal presentation of Nashville that blurs the line between front and back stage, past and present, reality and staged authenticity, creating an "inviting" space for the realization of the anticipated country experience. As Umberto Eco proposed: "If a reconstruction is to be credible, it must be absolutely iconic, a perfect likeness, a 'real' copy of the reality being represented" (Eco 1986, p. 4). In Nashville, as in many cultural tourist sites, reality is subjective, based on the realization of desired and performed otherness. The copy is, therefore, of what is imagined to be real and, to meet the tourists' demands, constructed to be performed. This performed simulacrum is based on media representation of the site and the culture being celebrated. It is also, however, based on past tourist experiences at the site. For most fans, a trip to Nashville is not realized through an interaction with the city's diverse and vibrant population nor through an interaction with the many cultural opportunities available in a growing and thriving metropolitan area. It is instead a chance to hear, see, and/or experience "real" country music in its supposed place of creation and continuance. Fans realize this experience through performance on Nashville's Lower Broadway, where the guest culture becomes the local through multiple visits to and performances of the imagined Nashville. The performance of locality in Nashville's tourist district creates the illusion of belonging and masks the performance itself. The following brief discussion of the concept of cultural authenticity as it applies to the sounds and images of country music and its supposed

place of creation and continuance helps elucidate additional examples of tourist expectations and subsequent performances that are analyzed in the coming pages.

Authenticity and the Preservation of Culture

The perception of the music, the performer, and Nashville as a cultural tourist site is directly dependent on individual and collective notions of "authenticity."[1] Although the term has been explored numerous times in relation to American music, sources have historically attempted to define and preserve a so-called authentic tradition. This desire for the preservation of authenticity has been a recurring theme in ethnographic literature. While the use of the term "authenticity" is extremely problematic, it is crucial to this discussion and raises recurring questions in all fields concerned with documenting, researching, presenting, and interpreting music and culture. Although the concept has been applied to different musical forms and geographical regions by varied disciplines in myriad ways, the themes of preservation and presentation are shared. While my primary focus is the perception and participation of the tourist/fan within the music city, an examination of the term "authenticity" helps to ground many of the issues I address in this book within a body of literature that explores this concept and its relevance to the perception, presentation, and performance of music and culture.

In her book *In Search of Authenticity* (1997), Regina Bendix traces the term's development, arguing that while authenticity in the pre-Enlightenment era was primarily concerned with religious and spiritual truth, the Enlightenment directed philosophers to seek authenticity in secular realms, and the concept of authenticity was often associated with

[1] The above discussion on authenticity and tourism literature was previously printed in my unpublished dissertation "We Are the Blues: Individual and Communal Performances of the King Biscuit Tradition" and can be accessed at diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu:182523/datastream/PDF/.../citation.pdf

While the musical genre discussed in this book is country music, my previous graduate work on the blues and tourism in the Arkansas Delta inspired this project and introduced me to a body of literature that applied to the multifaceted country music tradition and performance in Nashville.

a return to nature or an opposition to civilization. This is clearly seen in Rousseau's ideas of civilization's effects on man. As Lionel Trilling summarizes: "From Rousseau, we learned that what destroys our authenticity is society" (Trilling cited in Bendix 1997, p. 16). An authentic existence is, therefore, one in which man returns to his purer state by living in accordance with nature. Rousseau's ideas introduced a concept that his followers soon imagined and referred to as the "noble savage," a simplistic figure who retains an idyllic and genuine life thanks to the lack of modern civilization. As Mira Morgenstern explains this Rousseauian concept of the desire for authentic experience: "Consequently, the attainment of authenticity is always possible, even in the midst of a corrupt and decadent society" (Morgenstern 1996, p. 7). It was precisely this possibility that led and continues to lead scholars, writers, artists, musicians, scientists, the tourist industry, and cultural tourists on a quest for the "genuine" that is in opposition to what is often seen as a decaying and homogeneous American society. Such an influence can be observed in the emergence of disciplines in the nineteenth century concerned with cultural preservation, documentation, and representation, in which one observes a historical and continued search for the authentic self as well as the concept's transformation into the quest for and claiming of authenticity of the "other."[2] This quest also manifests within the emergence of the popular music industry and its reflection of the rapidly changing American experience at the turn of the twentieth century. Like academics, the general population sought refuge in the past at a time when the past was expected to soon disappear completely. This opposition to change manifests in many American musical forms, most notably Southern forms such as country music and the blues, which historically and presently offer a sonic snapshot of cultural independence, defiance, and preservation in

[2] The concept of otherness is a recurring theme in Western philosophy, which suggests difference from one's self and everyday reality. Edward Said famously described the "other" as the opposite, that which is different from and inferior to the West (1979). Otherness may be a stated desire for many music fans, realized through an interaction with the landscape, the host community, and the musical genre, but I would suggest that for a large number of music fans, the other is not perceived as inferior but rather as a romanticized ideal. Through the theatrics of tourism, visitors to the music city experience a performed other. Therefore, the guest community, for a brief period, is able to become the other and perform notions of their "authentic selves" in a theatrical space that presents the music and its place of creation and continuance as evidence of an American utopia.

musical performances of the imagined and romanticized past that are always in opposition with change inherent in the unknown.

In this desire for and presentation of the past, one observes not only a preservation of the authentic but also its construction. In many cases, the construction goes beyond sound to include the portrayal of the performer who, like the music, is considered of the past and of nature. A prime example of this construction is in John Lomax's making and marketing of Lead Belly (Huddie Ledbetter). Although he was an active performing musician at the turn of the twentieth century, Lead Belly's career as an "authentic" Southern folk musician was a product of the need to preserve and present authenticity in the form of cultural otherness. Released from prison in 1934, he traveled across the country, presenting the sounds of Southern music to eager Northern audiences. A 1934 promotional letter written by John Lomax describes the blues musician as follows:

> Leadbelly is a nigger to the core of his being.
> In addition, he is a killer. He tells the truth only accidently. . . . He is as sensual as a goat, and when he sings to me my spine tingles and sometimes tears come. Penitentiary wardens all tell me that I set no value on my life in using him as a travelling companion. I am thinking of bringing him to New York in January. (Lomax cited in Filene 2000, p. 59)

In Lomax's description, Lead Belly is described as an unpredictable, dangerous, animalistic figure who, in addition to music, will bring to New York a cultural performance of the imagined and desired South. While these features and desires are borrowed directly from the minstrel stage's representation of both Southerness and blackness, they are now attributed to a single person rather than to a stock character. Lead Belly, like his music, becomes an artifact of Southern culture, reaffirming notions of the imagined South. Benjamin Filene suggests that "by dispensing with the second-hand interpreters and foregrounding the rural musicians who created the folk music, the Lomaxes added a new source of authenticity—the performers themselves. Purity now was attributed not just to specific folk songs (e.g., Child Ballads) but to the folk figures who sang them" (Filene 2000, p. 58). The Lomaxes' presentation of Lead Belly and other folk musicians strengthened notions of musical

authenticity and, through their position in academia, validated the connection between this authenticity and the performer. However, the connection between musical and performative authenticity is a construct that begins even earlier with the early-twentieth-century development of the recording industry and the resulting shift from live performance to recorded sound. Before recordings, music celebrities were often the composers whose music was interpreted by a number of performers travelling across the country. With the birth of the recording industry, images and sounds previously the product and property of the American stage were brought into the homes of a growing listening demographic. The concept of authenticity was now applied to both a specific performer and to the exaggerated sounds that had become, for many, "authentic" American folk music. The phonograph introduced and solidified a construction of the authentic musician and music and created a set of expectations for fans to authentically experience music and the culture that created it. These signifiers of cultural and musical authenticity continue to shape the way we listen to, interpret, and interact with musical forms. The construction has become part of the popular consciousness and is therefore accepted as real. Both representations and misrepresentations of culture and place have become part of our sonic memory, directly informing our perceptions of America's musical past and, in return, our perceptions of musical, touristic, and geographical authenticity.

Touristic Authenticity

From the above brief overview of how authenticity has been discussed in recorded music, it is apparent that the concept, although transforming, is firmly rooted in the preservation, production, and presentation of music and culture. David Grazian's *Blue Chicago* (2003) explores both this construct of authenticity and how it is created and recreated for fans in the Chicago urban blues tourist industry. While Grazian's study is concerned with the blues, his exploration of the merchandising and marketing of music for economic gain questions our modern-day conceptualizations of what constitutes authenticity in all American music genres, helping us to better understand the expectations of the music fan/tourist and how

such expectations are realized through a multi-lateral constructed performance of both music and place.

While Grazian illustrates the fabricated construction of such notions, his work also points to the fact that for the tourist industry and the tourists, the concept is real and is a key marker of touristic experience. Therefore, we should not merely avoid the issue but, instead, analyze what this concept means to those who use it as a promotional tactic and to those who use it as a signifier of a genuine musical and/or cultural experience. In addition, for many fans the concept of authenticity applies to their own experiences within the site and through their interaction with the music. While the historic and present country music industry is the initial draw for most visitors to Nashville, once they are within the city limits, they find opportunities to perform notions of tradition and community that are in opposition to their everyday lives. The touristic focus on experiential authenticity is evident in the many ways fan culture interacts with the musical place.[3]

The concept of authenticity is also an important concept within the fan's perception of the country music tradition. It is common to hear fans describe certain country music periods or artists as "real" in comparison with other artists who do not fit the fans' understanding of the tradition. Clubs throughout town highlight the hyperreal as a means of convincing fans of their country music, Nashvillian, or rural authenticity. Artists use imagery and/or lyrics to reinforce both the music's and the performer's authenticity. Studies by Richard Peterson (1997), Pamela Fox (2009b), and Diane Pecknold (2007, 2014) explore the concept of authenticity as performed and presented within the country music tradition and industry. Their research serves as a foundation for the study that follows.

Of additional relevance is anthropologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's work on museums and touristic interaction. In her book *Destination Culture* (1998), Kirshenblatt-Gimblett addresses the many ways tourists interact with, perceive, and validate cultural sites. Regarding visitors to Plymouth Plantation, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states: "Visitors

[3] Several studies address such an interaction, including MacCannell (1976, 1979), Smith (1977), Fine and Speer (1981), Bruner (1991), Urry (2002), Waitt (2000), Cantwell (1993), Reader and Walter (1993), Wang (1999), Filene (2000), Cohen (2002), Badone and Roseman (2004), Gibson and Connell (2005), and Kim and Jamal (2007).

do not 'passively' watch a performance on a stage, look at displays in a museum, or take 'rides' through installations in a theme park. They actively engage the site and those in it" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p. 195).

According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, interaction with a site transfers "authenticity" from a concept used to validate the past into a validation of the present experience, which is realized through the visitors' engagement with what is alleged to be the very site where the past was created and preserved. Therefore, the tourist space, like museums and historical reenactments, puts culture on display yet differs in the visitor's perceived experience. Through an interaction with the tourist site, the tourist is provided with a means of entering and actively interacting with the displayed culture. This is heightened when musical performance is part of the tourist agenda. With the invitation and expectation to take an active part in the performance, the object on display moves beyond the historical or cultural artifact and includes the performance space, the experience, and the performers and locals who are seen as the creators of the culture on display. This invitation to interact with both country music and its host city has transformed Nashville's history into a touristic commodity manifested through tourist imagination and the performative act of touring the past. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes the heritage industry's promotion of the past as a tourist destination: "They transport tourists from a now that signifies hereness to a then that signifies thereness. The attribution of pastness creates distance that can be traveled" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p. 370). It is this performance of the past that simultaneously authenticates the fan experience and the musical destination.

Although the above sources provide insight into the transformation of Nashville into a constructed tourist site, they do not fully address the agency of the tourist in such a construction. Dean MacCannell's landmark study *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976) addresses this role, arguing that authenticity is realized by the tourist through a collective experience that is absent in the alienation of modern life. Borrowing from Victor Turner's work on pilgrimage (1969), MacCannell associates the tourist's quest for an "authentic" experience with religious pilgrimage,

which provides a theoretical model for exploring the tourist's role in the realization of an "authentic" performance and in the individual transformative process that occurs through such an experience.

MacCannell suggests that the tourist's quest for authenticity is not rooted solely in musical genre, race, and location, but also in a perceived experience of belonging to the culture being celebrated. Edward Bruner's *Culture on Tour* (2005) reinforces this notion. As an anthropologist hired as a tour guide in Bali, Bruner conducted extensive research on cultural tourists' expectations and realizations of authentic performances. While he does not denounce the tourist's quest for authenticity, Bruner argues that through the witnessing of a perceived "authentic" experience, tourists develop a sense of attachment to and a deeper understanding of the host community (Bruner 2004, p. 147). I suggest that, as Bruner observed in Bali, it is through their perceived understanding of the host culture and its traditions that tourists take part in the performance of Nashville, becoming part of the community and taking on the responsibility for its realization, well-being, and continuance. In the process, host and guest communities meet in a liminal state, united by the desire to revive and save individual and collective notions of tradition. Tamara Livingston's definition of a revivalist tradition is useful in understanding this phenomenon:

> any social movement with the goal of restoring and preserving a musical tradition, which is believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past. The purpose of this movement is two fold: (1) To serve as cultural opposition and as an alternative to mainstream culture and (2) to improve existing culture through the values based on historical value and authenticity expressed by revivalists…. Core revivalists, whether insiders or outsiders, tend to feel such a strong connection with the revival tradition that they take it on themselves to "rescue" it from extinction and pass it on to others. (Livingston 1999, pp. 68–70)

For the majority of country fans who visit Nashville, their only knowledge of the city is through the performance of country music fandom. Therefore, "otherness" is not rooted solely in the product of a preserved or constructed past but also in the performance of its present through

the establishment of what Neil Rosenberg describes as a "transformation of traditions," or newly formed traditions that are based on pre-existing rituals (1993). It is in the creation and continuance of these transforming traditions that authenticity is fully realized. For fans, Nashville provides the opportunity to interact in an intimate way with the country music tradition, providing a soundtrack for revitalizing and performing notions of kinship, small-town America, community, and one's perceived authentic self, as Diane Pecknold points out: "Nashville serves as a symbolic geography and social structure within which the core values of country music culture are narratively recapitulated" (Pecknold 2014, p. 21).

The centrality of performance within the Music City experience is crucial to understanding notions of authenticity as well as the role of the fan/tourist on Nashville's production and preservation. Such performances are realized within the tourist space through a negotiation among fans, organizations, institutions, and musicians. A shift in this space and in its many meanings provides fans with an experience that can be obtained only in Nashville, giving them the illusion that they are not mere observers of the tradition but, instead, important components of the musical and social experience they are witnessing. The musical experience is based on expectations and the realization of a desired experience on a constructed stage that has its roots in the earliest forms of mass-disseminated music. Richard Perterson's concept of "fabricated authenticity" is applicable here: "authenticity is not inherent in the object or event that is designated authentic but is a socially agreed-upon construct in which the past is to a degree misremembered" (Peterson 1997, p. 5). While often constructed and marketed by the industry, the fabrication of experience also points to the audience's role. Given the media construction, the audience validates it through a performance of the fabrication. What is deemed real, therefore, is a product of multi-lateral dialogue and performance among fans, producers, musicians, executives, and others. The construction is based on what is known, what is presented, and what is experienced. A closer look at the fabricated South as represented in the pop-music industry provides insight into tourist expectations as well as the stage where these expectations are performed and realized.

Minstrelsy and Performances of the Imagined South

Before the advent of recording and broadcasting, the minstrel stage introduced to the nation, through live performance, the first body of mass-disseminated music and comedy. The songs, performances, and images of the minstrel stage, rooted in and reflective of nineteenth-century racial and social ideology, brought racial politics to the newly formed music industry, established a set of tropes that shaped the earliest recorded popular music in this country, and presented the commercial and social possibilities of American popular music. Common to minstrel music and theater is the recurring theme of home and nostalgia. Minstrel songs often reference an idealistic past and, through musical text and theater, perform a return to an imagined home, as heard in the lyrics of Stephen Foster's 1851 "Old Folks at Home":

> Way down upon de Swanee Ribber,
> Far, far away,
> Dere's wha my heart is turning ebber,
> Dere's wha de old folks stay. (Poetry Foundation 2016)

An exaggerated dialect in first-person perspective tells the supposed story of an African American man who has left the plantation but remembers it fondly and desires to return. The emphasis on roaming and the unrealistic and nostalgic portrayal of home were common themes in minstrel songs and were also seen in the promotional iconography of the era. The sheet music for Dan Emmett's 1843 "Original Banjo Melodies," for example, reinforces the stereotypical representation of African American culture and the romanticizing of Southern plantation life. On the cover, slaves are presented in a carefree performance of everyday life. Banjos, fiddles, tambourines, and bones accompany dancers on the Southern landscape. Their shared experience of music and dance suggest an enjoyable performance on the plantation, rather than the forced interaction with the land and the stark reality of the slave experience.[4] While Southern music

[4] The iconography discussed on the cover of "Old Dan Emmit's Original Banjo Melodies" can be accessed through the Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection online archive, Sheridan Libraries Special Collections, Johns Hopkins University, http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:020.099

was and is certainly influenced by place, it is important to keep in mind that most Americans' introduction to Southern culture was not through accurate cultural or geographical representation but rather through the exploited and misrepresented forms of African American music on the minstrel stage. In minstrel songs, place is often referenced but also highly romanticized. The music does not reflect the "true" South but the imagined South, which, through continued performance, becomes perceived as real.

From our twenty-first-century perspective, such a representation is clearly absurd, yet during the nineteenth century it was accepted as reality by audiences eager to experience cultural authenticity and otherness through a staged production of the foreign South. Many audience members from areas outside the region had very limited encounters with African American life, so the examples presented on stage and in promotional materials were often accepted as authentic "Southern black" music. Without reality to compare with the fabrication, in the minds of the audience the fabrication became real, a marker of Southern and racial authenticity, the model for later performances and the marketing of both blackness and the American South. Sam Dennison expounds on this dichotomy and its long-term effects:

> The black represented on the minstrel stage was, in summarizing characteristics stressed through songs, sketches, and dances, unrecognizable as the actual black in bondage. Yet this image was disseminated and accepted internationally as the true black. Contradictions between myth and fact melted before the avalanche of songs, depicting the "happy plantation slave," living on "de old plantation" and whiling away the evening hours playing on his "ole banjo." (Dennison 1982, p. 154)

By romanticizing the African American plight and reinforcing negative stereotypes, the minstrel stage offered a supposed glimpse for audiences into the music and life of the Southern plantation and, therefore, into what they believed was a unique and foreign element of American culture. The minstrel show's success was, however, at the expense of African American culture, creating stereotyped representations that validated racial politics of the time, establishing a racial division within the early

music industry, and continuing to this day to shape racial representation in popular culture.

While the minstrel stage was rooted in, reflected, and reinforced nineteenth-century racism, its themes of rural life, which were simultaneously uniquely American and in opposition with the country's urban transformation, provided temporary escape for audiences across the country, an opportunity to experience and, in a sense, witness what was believed to be a preserved American tradition. Robert Crawford suggests that the audience's stereotypical view of African Americans was not the sole focus of the minstrel show but that, instead, the performances provided a mask for social commentary on relevant issues of the era. The show's primary focus, according to Crawford, was "white Americans' responses to the conditions of their own lives, delivered from behind a mask fashioned from their view of African American culture " (Crawford 2001, p. 199).

Crawford's "mask" should be further explored: What issues were addressed on the minstrel stage, and where do these issues reappear in the early twentieth century with the advent of new media-dissemination technologies? Introducing and discussing many of the socio-political issues addressed through minstrelsy, Alexander Saxton points out that while the issue of racial representation and the legacy of the minstrel stereotype have significant influence on both race relations and popular culture, the minstrel stage was also a place to discuss taboo topics, including sexuality, politics, class division, and race. These issues, which were considered taboo in mainstream culture, were therefore opened for discussion by the mask of the minstrel character and the performative liminal space of the minstrel stage (Saxton 1975, pp. 4–7).

Interestingly, what was presented onstage was both a product of new urban life and a response to it. Many of the socio-political issues addressed in minstrelsy reflected the newness of American cities and the corresponding new American experience. The minstrel image of the South, a product of the Northern imagination, became a stage on which the imagined past could unfold. The minstrel character, presented as being close to nature, became a performer of the past and of the idealized country. Outside the theater pulsed the modern city and the new American industrial and urban experience. The theater door provided a threshold

to the past, an opportunity to time travel into an imagined place and experience, a romanticized place and time in opposition with the reality of the modern American experience. The minstrel character, therefore, represented not only the other but also the audience's own lives. The contrast between the stock characters Zip Coon and Jim Crow reflected the tension between the urban and rural caused by the mid-nineteenth-century rapidly changing way of life, and the minstrel stage, through performances of songs from the imagined South and its residents, brought these tensions to the entire country's consciousness. The South as imagined and performed became the imagined home of all America, a place frozen in history. Alexander Saxton writes further about the symbolism of the idealized South on the minstrel stage:

> When the wandering minstrels carried their fragments of African music back to Northern and Western cities, they took them encased in a mythology of the South as a region of fascinatingly different, closely wedded to nature, and above all timeless. The word "timeless" defines the relationship which would develop between the image of the South and the anomie experienced by men and woman of rural, Eastern background who lived in cities or who moved out West. The South became symbolically their old home: the place where simplicity, happiness, all the things we have left behind, exist outside of time. (Saxton 1975, p. 14)

The mythological South as home has been and continues to be a marker of rural authenticity and a selling point of popular culture. In addition to the minstrel stage, the sheet music of the era performed in parlors and living rooms all across the country provided a soundtrack to sonically escape to the timeless South, and in many cases, the music included an accompanying visual image that provided a cue for the imagined performance. Songwriter Will S. Hays composed a number of songs cashing in on the South's presentation as a timeless place. On the cover of Hays' collection, *Beautiful Songs of the South* (1877), for example, a young woman in Victorian dress sits under a shade tree overlooking a winding river; in the background sits the homestead, and in the distance a steamboat.[5]

[5] Will S Hays, "Oh! Give Me A Home in the South," can be accessed at the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/resource/sm1872.12119.0/?sp=2

Signifiers of nature and home on the cover present the imagined South, which is further reinforced through the song titles included in the collection: "Beautiful Girl of the South," "My Southern Sunny Home," "Take Me Back to Home," "My Dear Old Southern Home," and "Oh! Find Me a Home in the South." All five songs reference the South as home, and four of the five include the word "home" in the title. The lyrics of "Oh! Give Me a Home in the South" give insight into the common presentation of the South as America's nineteenth-century imagined home:

V1: Oh! give me a home in the South, Down by the murmuring stream, Where the magnolias bloom, Life's like a midsummer's dream. Beautiful stars of the night, Peep thro the curtains of space, Shedding their soft mellow light, Loving to smile on my face.
V2: Oh! give me a home in the South, Where the mockingbirds gather and sing their melodies cheerful and gay, Welcoming beautiful spring, Where the river flows gaily along, In its winding way out to the sea, I care not where others might dwell, a home in the South give to me.
V3: Oh! give me a home in the South, A home 'neath a Southern sky, Where I've lived all the summer of life, Where the friends of my youth live and die, When I'm called by the angel of death to leave all I love on the earth, May the angels then find me asleep in the beautiful land of my birth. (Library of Congress 2016)

Markers of rural authenticity and therefore of an idealistic America are clearly heard throughout the first two verses of the song: the listener is reminded of the murmuring stream, the open sky, the flowing river, and the beauty of the performed South. The last verse further authenticates the song. The listener discovers that the protagonist is like nature—born of the South and, with death, will return, implying that the character has been roaming away from home, but at the end of his or her life desires to return to a simpler, more "real" way of living that can only be found in the past and, therefore, in the South. While the theme of returning home was a popular trope on the minstrel stage, the lack of an exaggerated dialect in this specific song suggests that the performance of the South went beyond the minstrel stage and was also enacted in American parlors. The South became not only a geographical space but also an imagined space where all pasts could be performed and remembered.

The musical, socio-political, and thematic influence of minstrelsy is widespread and long lasting. While minstrelsy's reign as the most popular musical and theatrical American genre dissipated with the rise of the recording and broadcasting industries, it continued to be performed throughout the country well into the 1960s. Its influence can be seen in the format and performance of vaudeville, in the characterization of blackness and Southerness in the early film and broadcasting industries, and in the burgeoning recording industry's creation and promotion of race and hillbilly records in the early 1920s.

Race and Hillbilly

Before the 1920's development and promotion of race and hillbilly music, early record executives were not interested in recording music of black or rural white artists. Interestingly, as Barry Mazor points out in his biography of record producer Ralph Peer, this lack of interest provided an opportunity for the newly formed Okeh Records, pioneer of both race and hillbilly music, to reach out into unexplored musical landscapes: "Okeh's strategy was to develop its own essentially undeveloped, less contested arena rather than competing head-on in mainstream pop, where it was weak" (Mazor 2015, p. 37). Okeh focused on Southern American music, first turning to jazz and blues and then to hillbilly. While the genres are contrasting in sound, interpretation, and intended audience, each directly reflects the socio-political climate of the second decade of the twentieth century and reinforces the image of the South as America's romanticized home.

The 1920s was a time of radical social transformation, and the supposed newness of jazz and blues offered a welcome soundtrack to the changes in the American experience, while hillbilly music seemed to suggest a tradition rooted in cultural preservation rather than cultural transformation by reinforcing themes of home, family, patriotism, and general defiance against modern society. These themes are similar to those presented earlier on the minstrel stage and, like minstrelsy, presented audiences with an idealized and romanticized look at an American experience that was in evident contrast with their own. Hillbilly music reflected the

audience's nostalgia for a constructed past, defying the reality of the rapidly transforming 1920s society. For those outside the tradition, hearing this music for the first time through recordings or broadcasting offered perspective not only into the South's cultural manifestations, but also into their own fears of change and loss of identity. The hillbilly, therefore, became a national symbol of defiance, of independence, and no matter where the listener resided, his voice spoke for their own desires and fears. Hillbilly music represented otherness—or S'otherness—through simplistic themes that seemed to defy modernization, ignore the reality of urban transformation, and speak to the imagined collective American identity.

Due to its unexpected popularity as a marketable form of commercial music, the industry set out to sell hillbilly music to a specific demographic, the rural white Southerner, with a type of focused marketing that was also utilized in the dissemination of race music to black audiences. Through these marketing practices, commercial music became increasingly connected to the politics of race. Recorded music was meant for specific buying demographics, and performers were chosen based on the expectations of the audience and executives and what the industry believed would sell. Speaking of this division, Christopher Waterman states: "music has long played a privileged role in the naturalization of racial categories and where commonsense conceptualizations of musical 'blackness' and 'whiteness' have been manipulated by racial supremacists, politicians, academics, and—perhaps most efficaciously—the entertainment industry" (Waterman 2000, p. 167). With these music categorizations firmly in place, industry executives did not seek out racial integration; in fact, in many cases, musical styles that represented a clear synthesis of influences were outright ignored by the talent scouts and academics who were documenting and popularizing "authentic" folk music in the 1920s. Waterman continues:

> In music-historical discourses, the retrospective construction of well-bounded, organically unified race traditions—musicological corollary of the infamous one-drop rule—has tended to confine the complexities and contradictions of people's lived experience (including their experience of racism) within the bounds of contemporary ideological categories. Performers, genres, texts, and practices not constant with dominant

> conceptions of racial difference have as a result often been elided from academic, journalistic, and popular representations of the history of American music. (Waterman 2000, p. 167)

These categorizations were based on what was recorded and presented to the new listening demographic. For many, the music was new, and what was presented became, for them, the authentic tradition. As author Kate Mauser describes it, "The history that's presented to people, that they can interact with, is the product of power. It's about who had the resources to tell the story and what story they chose to tell" (Mauser, cited in Toppo 2016). For record executives, influenced by what they believed was marketable, the story was that distinct traditions rooted in the black and white experience developed separately, and both represented a frozen past. These musical categorizations were therefore based on ethnicity rather than musical sound: race music was performed by black performers and marketed to black audiences. Hillbilly music was performed by white musicians on the margins of white society and marketed to that same demographic. Although they are faulty constructions not representative of music before recordings, these divisions within the industry continue to shape our understanding of musical genres. With the onset of race and hillbilly music, Okeh's strategy of recording and marketing to the ignored demographics was a success, reintroducing older forms of American vernacular music to the mainstream. The result was not only racial divisions within the industry but also, arguably, two of the most important and influential recordings of the twentieth century: Mamie Smith's 1920 "Crazy Blues," which initiated race records by demonstrating the potential of an African American artist and the presence of an African American listening demographic, and Fiddlin' John Carson's "A Little Log Cabin in the Lane," which initiated the commercial hillbilly genre by uncovering an untapped rural white demographic. These recordings led to the establishment of the modern pop-music industry and introduced Southern folk styles to the entire country, laying the musical and performative foundations of all modern popular music. The marketing of these genres also codified stereotypical images that continue to shape music genres, the tourism industry, and the fans' understanding of racial, regional, and musical authenticity.

While the term "race" applied to early recordings by African American performers and was initially marketed to the black demographic, many of the advertisements utilized minstrel tropes to support race music's image of authenticity. One of the clearest examples coincides with the birth of the race music industry and the rise of its first star, Mamie Smith. In a 1920 issue of *The Talking Machine World*, Mamie Smith's recordings, including "Crazy Blues," are advertised by a stereotypical representation of blackness referred to in the advertisement as Mr. Public Opinion. Complete with white gloves, top hat, suit, makeup, and exaggerated features, expressions, and dialect, Mr. Public Opinion informs us that as a minstrel performer and, therefore, an expert on black music and culture, that the music of Mamie Smith is the best and most authentic on record. The character states: "I's heard Blues, but I's telling you Mamie's beats 'em all" (Okeh Advertisement 1920, p. 190).

By utilizing settings, images, and an exaggerated dialect reminiscent of the minstrel plantation scene, advertisements formed a direct connection between recorded music and a specific place—the Mississippi Delta—while also reinforcing the happy, carefree portrayal of African Americans in that setting. Through the association with minstrel theater, such Southern signifiers reinforced the connection between blackness and Southernness, further authenticating the music and the performer.

The popularity of race records and the need for additional recording artists led record labels to search throughout the country, and early rural music of the Appalachian region was soon also recorded. In his book on the history of King Records, John Fox explains further: "The recording of country music was actually an inadvertent result of the search for black talent. In the wake of Mamie Smith's hit, record company talent scouts went out looking for singers and musicians to record. Enterprising record men such as Ralph Peer fanned out across the south in an unprecedented search for native talent. It was on such a trip to Atlanta that Peer was persuaded to record Fiddlin John Carson" (Fox 2009a, p. 5).

Like race music, the success of early hillbilly music was unexpected and relied on a typecast of Southerness that was rooted in an imagined and frozen place that borrowed images and themes from the minstrel stage as a way of validating and authenticating the music, the performer,

and the setting. Karl Miller draws a parallel between the two genres' artists and their demographics:

> The hillbilly shared a great deal with the classic blackface minstrel. Both stereotypes depicted southern characters as happy in their exclusion from urban civilization. The minstrel's plantation slave danced in a land of natural abundance and familial love, while the hillbilly simply laughed in the face of scarcity and family strife. Both treaded on their difference from the urban North and granted urbanites the opportunity to fantasize about a pastoral ideal while maintaining a sense of superiority to those they imagined living in it. (Miller 2010, pp. 143–44)

The presentation and celebration of the "other" found in both hillbilly and race music was key to their national success. While both genres were initially intended to be marketed to specific buying demographics that identified with one or the other, both genres found success from outside audiences that viewed the music as an audible experience with the authentic other, a chance to escape through music into the life of the mid-twentieth-century noble savage. This fascination and subsequent presentation of otherness in hillbilly and race genres is directly connected to the rise of the recording industry at the turn of the twentieth century and broadcasting in the 1920s and has lasting influence: many if not most of our ideas on pop-music authenticity are directly connected to the categorization, documentation, presentation, and broadcasting of music during this era.

Hillbilly music, for example, moved beyond its origins as a folk form marketed as a documentation of Southern experience, by and for the rural white demographic, to become a national popular music that presented the "Southern" experience to those outside of the targeted culture. Along with the music came the performer's image, which reinforced these Southern markers of authenticity. The earliest recorded country music's popularity was therefore largely dependent on its success as a marker of the idealized South (a romanticized place that stood in contrast with American urbanization) and a performer who seemed frozen in an ideal time. Richard Peterson points out that following the unexpected success of Fiddlin John Carson's 1923 recording of "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane," the "authentic"

performer became an important point in early country music marketing: "Entertainment industry impresarios sensed that the essential appeal of the music was rooted in the feeling of authenticity conveyed by its performers. Accordingly, they sought out old men steeped in tradition, playing old songs in traditional ways" (Peterson 1997, p. 5).

This search for rural authenticity, as presented by the musicians, places the desired image of the hillbilly on an equal field with the music he or she played. Authenticity in country music was validated through the sound and the image of the performer, complex duel criteria that led to both the construction and promotion of musicians who could best present this newly desired hillbilly image and sound. In many cases, musicians' personas were constructed or enhanced to meet the industry's criteria and the new buying demographic's imagination. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, performers coast-to-coast, inspired by the hillbilly craze, adopted these stereotypes in an attempt to capture the hillbilly's essence and, more importantly, the urban audience's imagination. Bands such as Rex Cole's Mountaineers from New York and the Beverly Hill Billies from Los Angeles point to the widespread popularity of hillbilly music, the audience's interest in the cultural other, and the industry's construction of this desire for the fans. These faux hillbilly performers would perform the roles of the Southern mountaineer through stereotypical costuming, elaborate backstories of their supposed Southern origins, fanciful stage names, exaggerated Southern accents, and many other performable markers of rural authenticity. Anthony Harkins provides a wonderful introduction to these fabricated hillbillies in his book *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*:

> The brainchild of radio station manager Glen Rice of KMPC Los Angeles, the Beverly Hill Billies were supposedly members of an authentic hillbilly community discovered by Rice while wandering lost through the Malibu Mountains. In reality they were local musicians, Leo Mannes, Cyprian Paulette, and Tom Murray who were clandestinely recruited by Rice to portray genuine mountaineers. Rice carefully set up his audience for the ruse, announcing his plans to take a vacation in the mountains, disappearing from the air for several weeks, during which time radio announcers expressed concern for his well being, and then reappearing with the incredible story of

> having discovered "Zeke Craddock," "Ezra Longnecker" and the other "Hill Billies" who had agreed to perform on the air. Dressed in hillbilly fashion and described by Rice as having just ridden into town on their mules, the band was an immediate success. (Harkins 2005, p. 87)

The success of the Beverly Hill Billies was largely dependent on the many layered elements that suggested authenticity. Like in minstrelsy, authenticity is not based on lived reality, but rather the negotiation and subsequent performance of a fabrication based on what is known or what is presented. In early hillbilly music, what was known by most outside of the Southern, mountain region was a stereotypical caricature of the hillbilly, as defined and presented by media and industry. As early as 1900, the term "hillbilly" was used in a derogatory way to refer to the uneducated Southerner, or the Northerner's cultural other. A description from 1900 from the *New York Journal* illustrates this simultaneous cultural othering and fascination with the "hillbilly" stereotype: "A Hill-Bille is a free and untrammeled white citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whisky when he gets it, and fires his revolver as the fancy takes him" (*New York Journal* cited in Harkins 2005, pp. 48–9).

Anthony Harkins points out that while the above description at first glance appears derogatory, there is also a sense of fascination with the otherness of the stereotypical hillbilly: "Clearly derogatory and accentuating the poverty and improper social behavior of its subject, it also suggests more admirable attributes of freedom, self identity, and independence." (Harkins 2005, p. 49). With the advent of recording and broadcasting, music, as a cultural manifest of Southern identity, offered an intimate glimpse into the desired otherness of hillbilly culture at a time of great national change. Bill Malone and David Stricklin demonstrate that the backwards image of the Southerner gained strength in the 1920s at a time when the nation's citizens saw themselves as progressive and forward thinking. Meanwhile, there was a romantic interpretation of Southern culture that mirrored that of the minstrel stage: "If some people rejected hillbilly music because of what they considered its crassness, others may have gravitated toward it because it represented to them an image of an older and simpler America and an alternative to the frantic dance music of the 1920s" (Malone and Stricklin 2003, p. 64).

Jazz music, first recorded six years before the first commercial hillbilly song, represented newness, the music of a modern age. Its rhythms, improvisation, spontaneity, and focus on the audience seemed to break with traditional culture and offer something completely innovative. Hillbilly, although also new to many listeners, represented something older, firmly connected with America's past, landscape, and therefore tradition. The nostalgic desire for history and place that was represented in this music, as on the minstrel stage, was dependent on the very thing it opposed. For minstrelsy, rural life was presented as an opposition to the growing cities, yet the art form was only possible through the rise of American theater, which was dependent on the city. Likewise, for hillbilly and race music, the performed South was dependent on the mass dissemination of the imagined South and its music by the modern recording industry and its new technologies.[6]

This widespread, yet seemingly overnight, introduction to popular music was directly dependent on new technologies and the resulting conceptions of sound and place.[7] While live music reinforced the importance of physical spaces and thereby connected sounds to specific geographical and performative locations, recordings allowed the entire country to sonically reside within a new technological concept of space. While the advent of recording technology signals a shift between democratic and passive musical interaction, it also signals a shift from individual to collective musical accessibility, allowing everyone with access to a phonograph to experience identical performances and to share in and collectively perform popular culture. As William Howland Kenney states:

> a more accurate image of the phonograph's past would involve not just the individual alone with his "talking machine," but large numbers of individuals around the country and indeed the world, "alone together," actively using their phonographs to replay as they wished commercially mediated musical messages. (Kenney 1999, p. 4)

[6] Diane Pecknold points out that this tension between the rural and the modern is also at play in the presentation of Nashville. She points out: "Rhetorical mobilizations of Nashville as the home of country music have frequently mediated the tension between the genre's core working class and rural ideologies and its material position as a hugely profitable global entertainment industry" (Pecknold 2014, p. 30).

[7] For a detailed discussion of the impact of the phonograph on music, popular culture, and notions of space in the modern era, see Katz (2010) and Doyle (2005).

Audiences, therefore in the comfort and safety of their homes, could experience American otherness and a sense of freedom and independence by musically escaping to a culture that seemed to defy their own modern and urban lives through a preservation and performance of pure unadulterated yet imagined American "tradition." This fascination with the South as a place for an unfolding of the past and the hillbilly as the past's performer can be seen in the number of names for the newly recorded tradition: Hillbilly, Old Familiar Tunes, and Old Time Music—these names suggest that the music, unlike jazz, is not new, but merely recordings of a preserved style, a soundtrack for the listener's nostalgia for a disappearing nation, a sonic snapshot of the rare, preserved American geography, culture, and experience. In the years preceding WWI, most Americans lived in rural spaces, but by the mid-1920s, for the first time, most Americans lived in urban areas (census.gov 1993). This transformation coincided with the birth of the commercial recording industry, pointing to a possible reason for the unexpected national appeal of rural Southern American music and the unexpected success of the new hillbilly genre. Zeb Larson for *Redefine Magazine* describes this period as follows:

> As railroads and textile mills were being built in the South, industrialization led to an influx of poor whites seeking work in rapidly expanding cities in the Carolinas, such as Richmond, Durham, and Charlotte. Many of these people were coming from Appalachia, one of the poorest and least developed parts of the United States. The migration and subsequent settlement in urban areas created a new class of consumers who were familiar with traditional music and formed a record-buying class as well as a class of musicians. Though the marketing of white country music was similar to that of blues music, as it depicted familial displacement from a traditional way of life. (Larson 2014)

Hillbilly music was marketed to listeners who utilized the sounds, text, and images of the music to recall their past and to collectively experience a Southern identity, even though they were no longer in the South. The music, however, with its simplistic commentary on the state of the American experience and its recollection of a previous and "better" way of life, spoke to listeners outside of the intended buying demographic of displaced rural whites. This spreading popularity of a reinterpreted Southern

identity is evident in an advertisement for the Columbia Records hillbilly catalog, in the June 15, 1924, issue of *Talking Machine World* (Columbia Advertisement 1924). The advertisement includes images from the genre's earliest stars, Gid Tanner, Ernest Thompson, Samantha Bumgarner, and Eva Davis. The copy reads: "Columbia leads with records of old fashioned southern songs and dances," reminding the record dealer that these recordings are indeed traditional and authentically from the Southern landscape. Above the claim of Southern authenticity is written "The fiddle and guitar craze is sweeping Northward," reminding all that, like the people making the music, the songs are not frozen in the Southern landscape but are migrating to areas out of the South and becoming the cultural property of the entire country.

On the surface, this music represents home, and part of its success was due to its role as a marker of Southern identity for those leaving rural areas for industrialized work in America's cites. But on a deeper level, this music was and remains symbolic of all America, a romanticized vision of the way life once was and could be, a preserved music from frozen cultural stages now made public through the advent of new technology. The phonograph and later the radio allowed the entire country to sonically escape the present through a collective performance of the past and the American South.

While new technologies gave way to a national recorded music, much of the music was not new at all. Many of the earliest recorded songs in the new pop industry were renditions of earlier popular songs made famous on the minstrel stage and distributed through sheet music. The first commercial hillbilly song is no exception. "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" was published in 1871 by Will S. Hays for the minstrel stage. The song's sheet music from 1871 gives credit to the composer but reminds audiences that this song was performed and made famous by touring minstrel troupes.[8] It is highly likely, due to the popularity of minstrelsy in the nineteenth century and the sheet music industry at the turn of the twentieth century, that a large number of people were already aware of this song long before John Carson recorded it in Atlanta. The lyrics remind us

[8] An 1871 publication of Will S. Hays' "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" can be accessed through the Historic American Sheet Music Collection at Duke University. http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/sheetmusic/b/b08/b0840/b0840-1-72dpi.html

of the song's place in the minstrel show and lead to questions concerning its interpretation when recorded as a hillbilly song in 1923.

> I'm getting old and feeble now,
> I cannot work no more,
> I've laid de rusty bladed hoe to rest,
> Ole massa an' ole miss's am dead,
> Dey're sleepin' side by side,
> Deir spirits now are roaming wid de blest;
> De scene am changed about de place,
> De darkies are all gone,
> I'll neber hear dem singin in the cane,
> And I'se de only one dat's left.
> Wid dis ole dog ob mine,
> In de little old log cabin in de lane. (Historic American Sheet Music Collection 2016)

The exaggerated dialect and the first person perspective reiterate both the common themes of nostalgia and home and the characterization of blackness on the minstrel stage. Here, an imagined elderly African American man remembers the past fondly, a "home" that no longer exists in the modern era. The song's popularity is evident from the number of nineteenth-century troupes that performed it and its multiple recordings in the early recording industry era. Before Carson's 1923 version, the song had already been recorded by a number of artists, including Metlaf and Spencer (Columbia, 1902), Silas Leachman (Victor, 1903), Frank C. Stanley (Victor, 1906), Carroll Clark (Columbia, 1909), and Oscar Seagle (Columbia, 1922). In addition, the hymn "Lily of the Valley," composed by Charles Fry and arranged by Ira D. Sankey, used the tune of Hays' "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" in 1881, and by the turn of the twentieth century, it had been included in many Protestant hymnals. Between its appearance in hymnals, sheet music, live theater, and early recordings, the song later was both familiar and firmly placed within the entirety of American culture by the 1920s.

The song was not new, but Carson's perspective was. Earlier versions of the song were from the perspective of the minstrel or vaudeville performer, in both cases an outsider performing the role of the Southerner on the stage of the imagined South. Carson's version wasn't presented through

the musical filter of an imitator; it was a Southern song performed by a Southern artist. With this new perspective, the song's meaning shifts. The lyrics, minus the dialect, are consistent with the minstrel version, yet when sung by Carson, the text seems to reflect the reality of Americans' rural-to-urban transition rather than continuing earlier performances' connection to the plot or set of a minstrel plantation scene. Now, the emphasis is on the quickly disappearing past rural experience, replaced by the new urban industrial experience. While this would have likely resonated with transplanted Southerners in urban centers throughout the country, it also became popular with those not connected with the rural, allowing these listeners to escape into the performative South through the hillbilly caricature, an escape previously completed through the minstrel stage's black caricature on the romanticized Southern plantation.

The unexpected success of Carson's "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane" led to a number of successful recordings of hillbilly music during the first few years of recording, including the 1925 recordings of Al Hopkins, the first commercial recordings to be branded as hillbilly. The hillbilly genre as well as hillbilly archetypes were solidified in 1927 at the Bristol Sessions, known as the Big Boom of Country Music. These Victor recording sessions in Bristol, held between July 25 and August 7, were part of a two-month trip by Ralph Peer to record undiscovered Southern music. Bristol's location on the Tennessee–Virginia border and its close proximity to North Carolina, Kentucky, and West Virginia meant it was a prime location to attract musicians. Artists who recorded at the sessions included Ernest Stoneman, Ernest Phipps, the Blue Ridge Corn Shuckers, the Johnson Brothers, El Watson, and B.F. Shelton. Also recording at these sessions were two of the most influential artists of the hillbilly genre. On August 1, 1927, the Carter Family recorded four of six songs, and on August 4, Jimmie Rodgers recorded two songs. These artists helped to develop a country sound and also solidified two country archetypes still present in today's country music industry, which Bill Malone and Jocelyn Neal aptly describe as follows:

> Rodgers brought into clear focus the tradition of the rambling man which had been so attractive to country music's folk ancestors and which has ever since fascinated much of the country music audience. This ex-railroad man

> conveyed the impression that he had been everywhere and had experienced life to the fullest. His music suggested a similar openness of spirit, a willingness to experiment, and a receptivity to alternative styles. The Carter Family, in contrast, represented the impulse toward home and stability, a theme as perennially attractive as that of the Rambler. When the Carters sang, they evoked images of the old country church, Mama and Daddy, the family fireside, and the "green fields of Virginia far away". Theirs was a music that might borrow from other forms, but would move away from its roots only reluctantly. (Malone and Neal 2010, pp. 64–65)

These contrasting tropes of the country music brand are still evident in the presentation and authentication of today's biggest country stars. Placing these tropes within the socio-political climate of the 1920s reaffirms the role of country music as both a reflection of reality and of a desire for escapism. At a time of social and cultural transformation in American society, the 1920s gained the nickname of the "New Era," which suggested that the decade was both modern and in opposition with the preceding eras and ways of thinking. Innovations in technology, industry, and transportation transformed the country, leading to the modern American city, the rise of a leisure class, and the creation of a "new" culture which both reflected and shaped the decade. For many, these shifts in American society represented a welcomed progress; for others, these changes reflected a way of living that was directly opposed to previous generations' lifestyle and values. Historian Laurence Levine comments on this conflict: "The central paradox of American history, then, has been a belief in progress coupled with a dread of change; an urge towards the inevitable future combined with a longing for the irretrievable past; a deeply ingrained belief in America's unfolding destiny and a haunting conviction that the nation was in a state of decline" (Levine 1993, p. 191).

While this duality is evident in most eras of American history, its centrality in the 1920s has led many to describe the decade as an era of conflict between an old culture rooted in Victorian ideology and a new culture whose lifestyle questioned the social norms of previous generations and attempted to establish their own American identity. This conflict manifested in many aspects of American life, leading to debates over spirituality, race, and gender constructs, each of which was a product of a larger

metamorphosis of the American landscape and the resulting American experience.[9] Such debates can be seen in the discussion over Women's suffrage, civil rights, and prohibition to name a few. Paul Murphy states: "Disruptions in the social and cultural order redistributed power and authority. Old customs of family, community, and religion withered and new ways of independent living proliferated. Metropolitan values displaced small-town mores" (Murphy 2011, pp. 2–3). Across the country, Americans were discarding previous ways of life and ways of thinking, exhibiting a move away from former ideologies to a new way of being that was built around ideas of consumerism, pleasure, and liberation, which were performed within America's recently transformed urban spaces.

The transformation of the American experience through the nineteenth-century growth of American urban centers and the American population's migration into these cities is reflected in the "new" sounds and images of jazz and blues, while concerns over this transformation are reflected in the images of the rambling man (Jimmie Rodgers) and the homestead family (the Carter Family), which mirror in some ways characters from the minstrel stage. The contrast between the free-spirited and rambling Jimmie Rodgers and the stable and familial Carter Family resembles the contrast played out on the minstrel stage between the stock characters Jim Crow and Zip Coon. These performances did not mirror the content, stereotyping, and so on, of the minstrel stage, but they are reminiscent of its themes, and there are possible similarities in audience interpretation. Like minstrel performers, hillbilly performers adopted the mask, the expectation of the audience, many of which were completely disconnected from the tradition. Within both performances, audiences, no matter their background or geographical origin, could find their voice. Rodgers' persona and his eclectic music, like the Zip Coon character, represented a rambling, a confusion, a displacement, and an amalgam only possible in the new urban reality of and reaction to the new American experience. A close analysis of Rodgers' 1928 hit "Waiting for a Train" illustrates the musical and textual references to this new

[9] For a discussion of this clash of cultures, see Matthew Davis, "Introduction," Clash of Cultures in the 1910s and 1920s, Ohio State University, Department of History, https://ehistory.osu.edu/exhibitions/clash/default

American experience (Rodgers 1997). Rodgers sings of displacement, of wandering, of the new reality of being far away from home and the recollection of his Southern homeland, which is clearly stated in the lines "On my way from Frisco, going back to Dixie land" and "I'm a thousand miles away from home just a waiting for a train." These lines like those heard in minstrelsy and the earliest hillbilly music refer to the idealized home and therefore the past. The song "Waiting for a Train," however, illustrates a musical negotiation between the old and new, between tradition and modernity. After a cowboy-like yodel which takes on the sonic shape of a railroad whistle, listeners to the "father of country music" hear a jazz trumpet, followed by the sounds of Rodgers' guitar and the slack key guitar of Hawaii setting into a form influenced by the twelve bar blues. Following the first verse, a yodel response, and a musical interlude featuring the jazz trumpet and clarinet, listeners are retuned to the second verse, where Rodgers reminds listeners through his lyrics of his displaced status while his music suggests cultural amalgam and assimilation.

The Carter Family, on the other hand, like the Jim Crow character, presented an idealistic and romanticized portrait of home, a performance of a desired and glorified pastness that was in opposition with modernity. The music and lyrics to their 1928 recording "My Clinch Mountain Home" illustrate the home as such a signifier. In the third verse of the song, the Carter Family sings:

> In my hand I hold a picture of the old home far away
> In the other one my sweetheart I'm thinking of today
> On the sunny mountain side. (Carter Family 2000)

In this verse, sung by A.P. Carter, the past is not a place to merely return to, but to romanticize about. A. P. is holding a picture of home and a picture of his sweetheart, two signifying tropes of the romanticized past that, according to the chorus, can only be experienced in the idealized home of Clinch Mountain, Virginia. Interestingly, the chorus in its repeated line "Carry me back to Old Virginia" also references a song titled "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," which was written for the minstrel stage in 1878 by James Bland. Like "Waiting for a Train," home is referenced in the lyrics. Its inclusion of "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" in the lyrics, however, references the minstrel stage and likely for many listeners the South

as presented on the minstrel stage. Unlike Rodgers' song, the music does not contrast with the desire for "home" but reinforces it. There are no references to the newness of jazz and blues but, instead, a steady focus on the musical tradition that, like the home referenced in the lyrics, is of the past and of Clinch Mountain.

Returning to Richard Crawford's suggestion that minstrelsy was "white Americans' responses to the conditions of their own lives, delivered from behind a mask fashioned from their view of African American culture" (Crawford 2001, p. 199), I suggest that early hillbilly music, like that of the minstrel stage, was a response to and a reflection of the era by the people who lived it. The music of Rodgers, the Carter Family, and many other hillbilly artists who found fame with the birth of the recording industry offered listeners a chance through musical, textual, and symbolic nostalgia to escape the newness of the American experience through the performance of an idealistic past. While the earliest recordings created stars, it was the radio that would make regional stars into national stars and would transform a river city known for printing and education into the country music capital of the world.

Nashville and the Nationalization of Country Music

A trip to Nashville is a chance to visit the center of the country music industry. From the historic tradition preserved and performed at museums and Nashville's live music venues to the current industry alive on and near Nashville's famed Music Row, Nashville has successfully branded itself as the home of country music, or "Music City, USA." The association between country music and Nashville was not directly dependent on the earliest hillbilly records, which are geographically credited to Atlanta, Georgia and Bristol, Tennessee, but instead on the mass dissemination of these artists through broadcasting on Nashville's WSM 650 AM radio station. Established by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company as a promotional tactic, the show first went on air on November 28, 1925, only two years after the first commercial hillbilly recordings and two years before the Big Boom of Country Music in Bristol. Originally named the "WSM Barn Dance," the show was one of several programs

throughout the country that featured the "new" sounds of hillbilly culture. Under the direction of George D. Hay, the "Barn Dance" was renamed the "Grand Ole Opry" and began a broadcasting tradition that introduced the country to the sounds of Southern music and which remains the focal point of most pilgrimages to Nashville today.[10] The nationalization of country music was further expanded through the Grand Ole Opry when, in 1932, WSM increased its frequency to 50,000 watts; this, when combined with the station's clear-channel status, produced a show that could be heard throughout the nation. While country music was not born in Nashville, for much of the country it was first heard from Nashville. Each Saturday night, audiences across the country listened to performances by America's "hillbillies" from their new home on the Opry stage in Nashville, Tennessee. The themes of Southerness, nostalgia for home, and rural life in opposition with modern society were brought to the entire country via the radio, like the minstrel stage did in the previous century, providing Americans with escapism through the theatrics of Southern culture. While earlier recordings had reinforced Southern stereotypes through musical sound and promotional iconography and had introduced a shared national musical experience to the entire country, recordings lacked in audience participation. Listening to a recording in no way altered the musical performance; but live music, on the other hand, is directly affected by the audience. Radio provided a medium that allowed for the best of both live and recorded music, producing a live show where the unexpected could happen, where audiences interacted with and shaped the music and its performers, where the possibility of visiting and participating was real. Like recordings, however, the entire country could collectively listen to the same artists, and through radio, audiences could now have a national and collective experience of the live performance. The live hillbilly performance (the barn dance) was, however, a new medium, and it also drew on vaudeville and the earlier minstrel show for influence.

In an attempt to appeal to listeners, Opry performers were deliberately modeled on previous representations of the country bumkin found

[10] For a detailed discussion of WSM radio and the history of the Grand Ole Opry, see Ellison (1995), Kosser (2006), and Havighurst (2007).

in vaudeville and the idealized Southerner found in minstrel characters. As Richard Peterson explains, "Like other impresarios of the unidimensional radio medium, Hay tried to create easily identifiable characters who could be visualized though unseen" (Peterson 1997. p. 75). In the earliest Opry broadcasts, there were no studio audiences, so visual image was not as important:

> So long as the Opry was defined simply as a radio show, Hay paid no attention to aspects of image beyond those of name, musical sound, and verbal repartee that could be heard over the air. The earliest pictures of the Opry members show them in dark suits, white shirts, and ties. The style of clothes would make them indistinguishable from other townspeople. Only when the show began to cater to a studio audience—about 1928—did Hay begin to insist that group members look the part of hillbillies. (Peterson 1997, p. 76)

The inclusion of stereotypical images, combined with a theatrical format and humor influenced by the minstrel stage, introduced new sounds that represented older ideas of the American South and of an idealistic country. Dale Cockrell explains that "by the mid-1930s the Opry had absorbed aspects of minstrelsy's performance conventions, many of which are still in evidence today" (Cockrell 2012, p. 36). These images, songs, and artists provided a performance of the South that, along with an increase in broadcasting frequency in 1932, syndication by NBC radio in 1939, and televised broadcasts on ABC in 1955–1956, increasingly became connected with the show's location: Nashville.

Although today Nashville is a center for the recording and dissemination of popular music, at the time of the first Opry broadcast, there were few places to record music within the city. The Opry attracted musicians and the music industry to Nashville and led to the city's association with the sounds of country music, but the first professional studio in Nashville, Castle Studios, didn't open until 1945. Its success led to a number of other studios and to visits by major labels interested in recording the talent featured on the Opry' weekly broadcasts. Nashville's status as a center of recorded music coincides with the development of the "Nashville Sound," with the Bradley Brothers' founding of the Quonset

Hut in 1955 and RCA Studio B's opening under the direction of Chet Atkins in 1957. These two studios established Nashville as a center of musical production and, along with the Opry, attracted music fans and tourists to a city that continues to brand itself as the former, current, and future home of country music.[11]

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[11] For a detailed discussion of the creation and commercialization of Nashville's recording industry, see Jensen (1998).

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3

Performing Nashville

Music City as a Performative Space

Music sites and places are often described as reproductions or as simulations of the historic city, site, or event that initially drew the tourist to the destination. While I concur that a fan's musical experience in Nashville, like other musical cities, is validated through the opportunity to observe signifiers of pastness, Nashville is unique among music cities in that it offers the opportunity to actively interact with such signifiers in the present and in their alleged space of creation and continuance. Unlike other musical cities where music heritage is experienced through exhibits of the past and museum walls serve as markers between the glory of the way it once was and the reality of the way it now is, Nashville's music heritage is grounded in the past but is ongoing and vibrant outside of the city's museum walls. In addition to the home of country music's past, Nashville is also home to the present day and thriving country music and tourism industries. Only feet away from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, for example, are a number of honky tonks featuring live country music, and a mile away is the famed Music Row, where much of the

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music on display at the museum and in the live-music venues was written and/or recorded. This past/present duality in the presentation and perception of Nashville provides fans/tourists with perceivably authentic back-region experiences and a sense of heightened eminence within the Nashville community. Fans are not mere observers of the cultural production but become active performers of the country-music tradition, responsible for country music's vitality and the well-being and continuation of Nashville and its country-music identity.

This past/present and frontstage/backstage relationship in the presentation and validation of Nashville is largely due to the way that the city and its individual sites are promoted and presented by the local government, heritage, and tourism industries. The city itself, because of its historical and current role in the development and broadcasting of country music and its role in performing the imagined South, becomes an important player in both the country-music tradition and in its authentication. In addition to the country-music songs and icons that attract fans to Nashville, there is also an open invitation from government and tourist organizations, along with clubs and heritage sites, to join in the performance of the city, the imagined South, and the country-music tradition. Common themes heard in country songs and rooted in hillbilly and country music—such as family values, the common man, the working class, religion, and the South as home—are reinforced through the tourist literature and in décor as a means of connecting places and fan experiences to the music that speaks to and for the fan base. Examining the performative space in Nashville's tourist district and its roots in earlier representations of the larger and imagined South is helpful in understanding the tourist agenda and its realization by organizations and institutions throughout the city, as the following discussion shows.

Going to the Country

In an 1889 collection of essays titled *Spirit of Place*, poet and essayist Alice Meynell writes about the appeal of going away to a "place": "Spirit of place! It is for this we travel, to surprise its subtlety; and where it is a strong and dominant angel, that place, seen once, abides entire in

the memory with all its own accidents, its habits, its breath, its name" (Meynell 1899, p. 3).

That being in and interacting with a geographical space affects the way we remember cultural experience is no surprise for those who have found themselves talking about trips or sharing photographs or souvenirs with those who stayed behind. The importance of place on the formation of how one recalls past experience provides insight on the reasons we travel, especially when the primary attraction is mass-mediated culture that can be experienced through technology in the comfort of one's own home. It is the chance to collectively interact with both the music and the creative place and to be renewed through these experiences of interaction that draws American music fans to music cities such as Memphis, New Orleans, and Nashville. These cities and their strong identifications with specific music genres, sounds, and artists offer fans the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of musical icons, stand inside venues where music was performed, walk through studios where the songs that define our identity were first played and recorded, interact with geographical landscapes that influenced regional styles, and surround themselves with a community of like-minded individuals who share a passion for American music. Chris Gibson and John Connell describe the attraction of music places thus:

> Vivid myths of place are linked to the music there, and local identity is partly constructed in relation to unique musical sounds or successful people. Such identifications rely on a sense of 'authenticity' being created in relation to the music and to place, so attracting audiences for a musical style or fans of a performer to experience the social and cultural environment within which that music originated. (Gibson and Connell 2005, pp. 43–44)

The act of touring and interacting with the city, studios, and venues that produced and influenced artists and songs adds a level of touristic/fan performance not obtainable in one's passive interaction with recorded sound. The audience's physical act of being in a place, democratically connected to the music and the artist, takes the song beyond its role as a sonic /social accompaniment to one's life. Through touring,

music fans interact with the creative space in the present and, in the process, become part of the music tradition that they identify with and are now observing. The music itself moves beyond the auditory and becomes an artifact for the tourist gaze, which further authenticates the music, the performer, the place, and the overall tourist experience. The appeal of music tourism, therefore, is in the heightened emotional experience realized through the performative act of physically being a part of the music and the creative process, a democratic performance that is increasingly lacking in current modes of musical production and consumption. The interaction with a place that is connected to a recognizable sound strengthens the musical connection to the past but also the bridge between past and present, real and fabricated, backstage and frontstage and heightens the performative role of the fan in the musical production. Involvement with and within the site, therefore, adds a new and heightened connection with the sound and the physical and geographical spaces connected to it. Through tourism, fans are permitted to perform their connections to the music in the city that is both accompanied by and responsible for the musical tradition. They therefore exist in between the music and place, mediating both the sonic and geographical narratives and their multiple meanings. The past, brought to life through the soundtrack, no longer only involves hearing the song, but is now also related to interacting with the artist, the studio, the creative place, and the song itself.

While this emphasis on place is crucial to most tourist experiences, I argue that it is heightened within the Southern musical landscape, an area that has long been presented by the entertainment industry as a frozen place from which, through song, one may step into the past. In his book *The Most Southern Place on Earth*, James Cobb writes: "I soon noticed that in Mississippi one spoke not of going to Clarksdale, Greenville, or Greenwood, but of traveling 'into the Delta.' The implication being that of a passage back in time" (Cobb 1992, p. 1). Cobb's observation about the Mississippi Delta is similar to the way much of the American South is presented and imagined. Many expect the Southern landscape and culture to be reflective of the past, of a bygone era that is in opposition with the rest of the country's development, but remains necessary and survives for personal and communal rejuve-

nation. This romanticized presentation, as explored in Chap. 2, dates back to the earliest forms of American theater's display of the American South as a performative space, continually reinforced and reintroduced to audiences throughout the history of the recording and broadcasting industries as a marker of Southern authenticity. The American South, as a geographical and cultural space, consciously and subconsciously informs musical composition through a dialogue among place, performer, musical composition, historian, media executive, and listener. While the environment contributes greatly to the musical composition, perceptions also inform music, which, in turn, informs place. The South, through musical instrumentation and techniques that are connected directly to the landscape, can be heard in musical sound, but I also suggest that what the listener is hearing and perceiving as the "South" is a combination of sonic references to the landscape and the landscape's romanticized perception, presentation, and commodification. It is through the act of tourism that the perception is performed and, in the process, authenticated. Understanding the close relationship between the landscape and soundscape of the American South illuminates the appeal of music tourism within the region: this music is of the land, of the people, and directly connected to a region and its unique cultural identity. Through technologies and modes of musical dissemination, regional Southern music became national music and contributed to a new national alternative identity in contrast with the present through thematic references to place and the romanticized past.[1]

Markers of authenticity in Southern music, largely from these performative experiences, include musical characteristics, instrumentation, image, social status, race, and sex. Each of these signifiers manifests in its own unique fashion, but each is also directly related to the importance of place in the composition, presentation, and reception of Southern culture. Therefore, the notion of place is crucial in signifying to many modern fans and tourists that the performance they are listening to, viewing, or participating in is an "authentic" song, composed

[1] For a detailed exploration of the relationship between soundscapes and landscapes see: Chambers (1985), Whiteley, Bennett and Hawkins (2004). Bennett and Peterson (2004), Cohen (2007), Krims (2007), Gibson and Connell (2003), Johansson and Bell (2009), and Roberts (2012).

by an "authentic" musician in an "authentic" place. This sentiment is reinforced by audiences who often refer to seeing country music in Nashville or the blues in the Delta as special musical experiences that are far superior to seeing these same traditions in other geographical spaces. Referring to Nashville, one fan shared with me: "It's real, it's real music. It's great! It's more than I expected." A nearby fan responded: "You can honestly go anywhere and hear awesome country music, downtown especially."[2]

The concept of authenticity is therefore central in the presentation and subsequent realization of the fan's listening, viewing, and/or participatory experience with the music and its host geography. The term "authenticity" is used regularly by fans and tourists when discussing the legitimacy of the music as a "true" American genre and performers as convincing and real musicians; it is also employed when discussing the South as a place and one's interaction with that space. The myriad ways in which the concept of "realness" is used to describe Southern culture suggests a close relationship among the performers, the music, their place of origin and performance, and the ways we as fans interact with each. The following analysis of the performance and promotion of the imagined South, including the ways country music reinforces these notions, further illustrates the region's importance, and specifically Nashville's role, in the realization of what is considered by both host and guest communities to be key signifiers of an "authentic musical and geographical experience" by providing the unique touristic opportunity to perform these ideas in the present.

Performing the Imagined

Nashville as a performative space is not only important to the authentication of the country-music tradition but also authenticates one's touristic interaction with and identity within the performance of Music City. Owain Jones and Joanne Garde-Hansen's thoughts on space, time, and

[2] Interviews and survey responses with fans used throughout the book were conducted between June 2014 and June 2016. All fan participants remain anonymous in the monograph.

identity are helpful here: "How memory folds into the practice of ongoing identity is in complex interplay between the space and practice of the present and the spaces and practices of the past. Family life, work life, and all their spatiality and materiality (both past and present) are complex and anticipatory in the practice of identity" (Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012, p. 18). The role of space and practice in the authentication of the tourist experience within Nashville is crucial. However, the "memories" that connect individuals to the space are not always of an event that happened to them personally, but instead those that occurred in the hyperreal, the imagination, and/or in anticipation of the individual's experience or that of the collective community. Within this real/fabricated duality, place becomes both an idea and a tangible site that is shaped by the fan's preconceptions of the city and the city's representation in television programs, tourism literature, and country music. In other words, what we imagine to be Nashville becomes Nashville and is authenticated by the presence of tourists who assume the role of actor and local in the tourist district. Interacting with the city of Nashville is, therefore, interacting with the conceptual Nashville and, in the process, with one's own imagined self. Nashville as a place becomes reality through an imagined past and an imagined persona. Through a bi-lateral relationship between place and person that occurs in the now, identity and constructed memories are performed and experienced, in a way similar to how Jones and Garde-Hansen describe memory formation: "At its most basic, memory, too, is a process of encoding and storing records of experience which can be retrieved or which re-emerge in subsequent practice" (2012, p. 20).

As visitors to a cultural site, what we store and encode is a mixture of experiences from both lived and imagined reality. The geography, like the experience, is a construction meant to reinforce our ideas about the cultural site and its objects. The result is a liminal performance that exists between real and false, or within the hyperreal, where the distinction between what is real and what is constructed becomes blurry, as each is reinforced by the other. Ann E. Schlosser, in her study "Learning through Virtual Product Experience: The Role of Imagery on True vs. False Memories," defines the concept of the critical lure as "a 'new' item that is plausible and highly related to the studied items" (Schlosser 2006, p. 378). The critical lure is often used in recognition tests to study the

creation of false memory. In these tests, a list of words is used and studied; then the studied words are mixed with nonstudied, unrelated words and nonstudied, related words (critical lures) during the recognition test. In a 1995 study by Roediger and McDermott, it was found that critical lures were falsely recognized and recalled more often than nonstudied, unrelated words. (Roediger and McDermott cited in Gallo et al. 1997, p. 271). Likewise, signifiers of the past and of the present authenticate a visit to and performance of a cultural site. These signifiers rely on what is known or perceived by the visitor, knowledge that is learned through the representation and commodification of the cultural product and in the preparatory stage of travel and recalled through visual and sonic cues onsite. Before visiting Nashville, for example, fans have studied documentary films on country music, liner notes, websites, television programs, and tour books. One fan, for example, informed me that he watched the television series *Nashville* before visiting the city and attended a performance of the Grand Ole Opry because of its inclusion on the show. Virtually touring a city is, therefore, an experience that, like a physical interaction, is stored and retrieved through practice. In Nashville, the practice is touring and interacting with the sites, each of which provides critical lures or critical signifiers that, while "new," also resemble what visitors already know and accept, creating the sense that they are welcomed, that they belong, that they are finally "home."

Sing Me Back Home

Place is an important component in the marketing and performance of the country-music tradition and the city of Nashville. The imagined South, the south as an idealistic home, and home as a place to belong and to reconnect to one's identity, is a recurring theme in the history and continuation of much American music, but most consistently in country music. Songs from the earliest recorded hillbilly music, as seen in the lyrics of Jimmie Rodgers' "Waiting for a Train" and the Carter Family's "My Clinch Mountain Home," reference home as an idealized place that is in opposition with modernity, a place to go back to, to escape and to perform notions of community and one's desired self (see Chap. 2).

This emphasis on the past and home continues in contemporary country music, as heard in songs such as Eric Church's "Give Me Back My Hometown" and Justin Moore's "Small Town, USA." In the conclusion of the first chorus of the latter, Moore sings, "A simple life and I'll be okay here in Small Town, USA" (Moore 2009). Like many of today's country hits, this song references home by placing the artist in an imagined geographical space and with lyrics that focus on "belonging" somewhere or to something.

A similar approach is taken in "Give Me Back My Hometown," which provides a snapshot into Eric Church's own supposed life experience (Church 2014). However, the song's lack of a named town (its placelessness), combined with the familiarity of a remembered and/or imagined place, allows the fan to identify with Church and his/her own imagined home. Most of the place markers mentioned avoid referencing a specific geographical space but instead recall home through markers that conjure images of all home places, such as Main Street, the high school, sleepy street lights, and grandparents. Each triggers the listener's individual memories of home, family, and/or the imagined past through the use of critical lures or signifiers. The song's only specifically named place is the restaurant Pizza Hut, but since this is a ubiquitous, nationwide chain, even this specific reference provides a shared physical space and experience, further connecting the song's narrative of place to all listeners. Throughout the song, material objects connected to the protagonist's hometown are second to the place where the memories connected to these objects were formed. Place aids in the construction of meaning and identity within the song; in turn, the song aids in the construction of the fan's memory and imagination of home and self.

The videos for both "Give Me Back My Home Town" and "Small Town USA" are of interest for their reinforcement of this duality of place and placelessness. The importance of place on the song narrative is made clear, yet both present a blank geographic performative space in which listeners can imagine, remember, and perform their own ideas of place (Zavadil 2014). In the "Give Me Back my Home Town" video, there is a lack of specific visual place references and a backdrop of a barren New Mexican landscape, pointing to the pos-

sibility of "anywhere." Meanwhile, the music video for Moore's "Small Town USA" uses a slightly different approach but achieves the same imaginative space (Hickey 2009). Filmed in Moore's actual hometown of Poyen, Arkansas, there are a few specific site references: immediately, viewers see football players wearing an Indians jersey (the mascot for Poyen High), an elderly man sitting in a diner wearing a University of Arkansas hat, and the store David Teel's Grocery and Hardware, a landmark in Poyen, population 290. These are, however, the only specific place references in the video. Far more images avoid specific markers and instead reference common themes of country music and of the imagined South as home: open fields and wooded areas absent of development or geographical markers, a high-school football field, pickup trucks, the American flag, a church, and blue-collar workers. Limited cultural and geographical markers clearly reinforce the song's and country music's narrative, capture the essence of home and small-town America, connect the artist to place, and allow all listeners to connect to their own notions of home. As Elizabeth Blair and Eva Hyatt speak to this idea of a utopian home as a space for family values and a haven from the chaos of modern life: "The home is a universal symbol of love, security, and family. It is the one thing we would all like to go back to, somehow expecting that it will still be there, just as we remember it," suggesting that the emphasis of home in country music is based on a constructed and/or imagined past (Blair and Hyatt 1992, p. 80).

Others have suggested that the emphasis is not on a recalled past but rather on an imagined and optimistic future. David Fillingim, in his book *Redneck Liberation: Country Music as Theology*, argues: "Home songs are often assumed to be expressions of nostalgia—romantic idealizations of a simpler golden age located somewhere in the past. I contend, however, that the longing expressed in these songs is more often for a new future than for a lost past" (Fillingim 2003, p. 84). I suggest that, for many fans, there is no real expectation of the idealistic. Fans don't think they will be transported back in time or relive the past in the future. Instead, they desire escapism from their everyday lives, which is realized through a sonic and touristic performance that manifests in the present as it exists between past and

future, realism and fabrication, in a liminal state, which Victor Turner defines as "a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status" (Turner 1979, p. 465). Turner introduces the concept of liminality within the boundaries of religious ritual and pilgrimage, yet it also helps to explain a state of being when one is interacting with music and music sites. As tourists and music fans, we escape to imagined places through both musical sound and the tourism industry. When the sonic is combined with the visual and experiential within a music place and through performance, the liminal is fully realized. Within this performance, the idealized home in the past, which never actually existed, and the optimistic hope for home in the future, which never will exist, is performed through the act of listening and the performative act of tourism and therefore only exists in fandom's performance of the imagined now.

A number of additional songs in country music past and present come to mind that present to listeners both the idealistic home set in the past and a return to this past as a hope for the future. No recent song, however, better exemplifies this desire and interpretation than Rascal Flatts' 2002 "Mayberry," which begins with the phrase "Sometimes it feels like this world's spinning faster than it did in the old days" (Rascal Flatts 2002). The listener is immediately informed that the song's subject is not the actual past, but the imagined past, which is in stark contrast with the present and the anticipated future. The title "Mayberry" provides a timeless and placeless yet familiar stage on which the imagined performance can unfold. In his book *A Cuban in Mayberry*, Gustavo Perez Firmat speaks of the lasting influence of the imagined town immortalized in popular culture by *The Andy Griffith Show*, which ran on CBS from October 3, 1960 to April 1, 1968: "Mayberry is the quintessential small town, the kind of place where everyone is kith or kin and life's troubles are brief, comic, and solvable…. As often happens with Southern fictions, place is crucial… because TAGS derives meaning from location. The implicit premise is that what happens in Mayberry does not happen anywhere else" (Firmat 2014, p. 3).

While place in *The Andy Griffith Show* is crucial to the plot, it is not truly specific. What happens in Mayberry might only happen in Mayberry, but viewers can all imagine themselves in the city and see themselves within the show's narrative and alongside its memorable characters. While the sameness of television sets and characters allow viewers of all television programs to connect to the plot and the characters, *The Andy Griffith Show*'s focus on the imagined American Main Street, through Mayberry, also connects viewers to the American myth of home. The presentation of Mayberry is, therefore, not only a television set for weekly viewing and escapism, but also a manifestation of our own recalled, imagined home. The show's longevity and its continuing place in American popular culture due to syndication provide a shared cross-generational space to remember and perform rural America and home. The presentation is a simulation of a simulation that over time signifies the desired authentic and the imagined ideal. By referencing Mayberry, listeners are permitted to imagine their own past through memories of interaction with the show and its hyperreal narrative. Therefore, in Rascal Flatts' song, Mayberry is not actually referenced until the chorus. Throughout the verses, generalized rural tropes such as the mountain, the dirt road, Sunday as a day of rest, a dad carrying a fishing pole are contrasted with references to progress, the city, noisy streets, and the overall chaos of modern life. A reflection of post-9/11 nostalgia, "Mayberry" uses the idea and the ideal of Mayberry to represent a place that is long gone, irretrievable, but that we should strive to return to. References to the imagined and simplistic town are combined with performative actions: sittin', drinkin', pickin', callin', and watchin'. Through a series of intertexts, listeners are able to recall and perform the imagined past and place that is *The Andy Griffith Show*, while simultaneously recalling their own past experience of watching the show. The chaos of modern life is represented by the unpredictable present. Mayberry becomes the predictable past and the imagined utopic future. Through the song and the imagined performance, listeners can momentarily and sonically escape reality within a liminal space that exists between the imagined past and utopic future, between the real and the fabricated. A song titled "Mayberry" with a focus on a simpler and less chaotic life would not have worked as well in other musical genres. The song's strength lies in the connection between place/ home and country

music, a genre that, like *The Andy Griffith Show*, utilizes the non-specific "home" to attract audiences and, through thematic consistency in the tradition, create a shared space where cross-generational audiences can recall and perform their own idealized and imagined lives.

Homecoming

The focus on home in country music has also been used and promoted in the tourism industry, where the liminal is performed through dualities of past/present and frontstage/backstage and, as in many country songs, manifested in the duality of place and placelessness. Like other musical cities and their musical claims-to-fame (Memphis' blues; New Orleans' jazz), Nashville is unique in its musical identity (country). It is also, however, a place where one may realize through touristic performance the imagined South, presented as an idealistic home where all are welcome and belong. This emphasis on belonging was reinforced in a recent campaign by the Nashville Convention and Visitor's Bureau, which borrowed the theme of home, common in earlier forms of American music and theater and continued in country music, to welcome all music genres and fans to Music City (Music Calls Us Home Campaign 2016) In the 2005 photo ad, contemporary Latin Christian performer Jaci Velasquez is captured in a frozen moment of performance accompanied by the slogan "Music Calls Us Home." While Nashville is most known for its country-music heritage, the campaign used artists and genres outside of country music to broaden the Music City brand and welcome a more diverse group of artists and fans. The *Nashville Business Journal* quoted Deana Ivey, President of Marketing for the Nashville Convention and Visitor's Bureau: "[The] 'Music Calls Us Home' campaign is an important step in the branding of Nashville, a task to which the organization has devoted much effort since it rolled out the Music City Branding initiative in 2005" (Ivey quoted in Lawley 2006). By highlighting a marginalized musician and a historically underrepresented genre, the Nashville Convention and Visitor's Bureau's goal of broadening the Music City brand to audiences and performers outside of country music is effective. However, by

using the common country-music theme of home, the country-music identity is not surpassed but rather opened up for all to participate. Tourists, like musicians, are invited to become part of the tradition through both observation and performance. In addition, the accompanying slogan "Music Calls Us Home" invites tourists to witness musical authenticity in a place of creation and performance, reminding fans that while Nashville is a historical center for the creation, dissemination, and preservation of "traditional" country music, it is also "Music City, USA," a place where music and music celebrities from multiple genres have been and are still being made. In other words, Nashville is branded as the home of the music but also the performed home of the fan. This presentation of the past/present, backstage/frontstage, and real/fabricated dualities is reinforced through an original song also titled "Music Calls Us Home," written and performed by Gabe Dixon and Jeremy Lister. Referred to as "Nashville's video," the music video for the song first aired on CMT and remains viewable on the "Visit Music City" website, providing an intimate pre-tour guide by including specific place names in the lyrics and visual images of Nashville's landscape, community, celebrities, and most famous musical landmarks (White 2009).

Through this welcoming campaign and its accompanying theme song and video, Nashville is presented as a place of complex and diverse music heritage; however, it is also presented as a living place where everyone can reenact and experience the themes of country music in the present. This emphasis on Nashville's present is seen in the most recent update to the "Visit Music City" website, which markets the city as what is instead of what was (Visit Music City 2016). The home page opens with a slideshow that first states, "Nashville Tops the Charts," which is then supported by a list of awards given to the city by travel sites and publications such as "Best in Travel: Top 10 Cities" (Lonely Planet), "#1 for International Travel" (Trip Advisor), "Destination of the Year: Readers' Choice" (Travel+Leisure), and "16 Top Destinations for 2016" (Forbes Travel Guide).

Interestingly, the slideshow's focus is on the present-day city and contemporary experiences rather than on the cultural history that originally put the city on the tourist map. Rather than country-music history,

country music's continuation is emphasized through recurring references to experiences and live music. The past is clearly on display in the city and its promotion, but as the city grows, the opportunity to experience the present, to take part in Nashville's growth and its cultural continuation, is as important for the visitor and the city as the historical tradition and narrative that forms the foundation of the city's current identity. It is in the space between the city's past and present that tourism transforms from a mere act of observation to performance art, which is dependent on the artist's own body, as the following Museum of Modern Art description explains: "In performance art, the artist's medium is the body, and the live actions he or she performs are the work of art. … Performance art usually consists of four elements: time, space, the performer's body, and a relationship between audience and performer. Traditionally, the work is interdisciplinary, employing some other kind of visual art, video, sound, or props" (Museum of Modern Art Learning 2016).

This above definition of the art form is comparable to many of the reasons Nashville and the country-music experience are unique. Within the city, time, space, body, and relationship are all performances of liminality. Time is relative, place is imagined, body is absent of the social markers and responsibilities of everyday life, and relationships are temporary and often staged. The result is a conceptual performance of country music and its host city that is both improvisatory and dependent on the many actors involved, and as artist Sol LeWitt defined conceptual art: "The idea itself, even if it is not made visual, is as much of a work of art as any finished product" (LeWitt 1967, p. 79). Likewise, in the performance of music fandom, the idea of Nashville is crucial to the realization of Nashville, and the two are mutually dependent. However, the concept is fluid and shaped by a dialogue over expectations and historiography among all participants. Darya Maoz discusses this phenomenon with her introduction of the term "the mutual gaze," which "makes both sides seem like puppets on a string, since it regulates their behavior" (Maoz 2006, p. 225). This mutual gaze is applicable to the performative nature of country-music tourism and the focus on and opportunities for immersive experiences within Music City.

Such performances are realized within the tourist space through a negotiation among fans, organizations, institutions, and musicians. Through

a shift in space, time, body, relationships, and their many meanings, fans have experiences that can be obtained only in Nashville. Added to this is the illusion that they are not mere observers of the tradition but instead important components of the musical and social experience they are witnessing. The open invitation to interact with both country music and its host city has transformed Nashville's history into a touristic commodity manifested through the tourist imagination and the performative act of touring. This liminal performance is fully realized through an interaction within Nashville's "District," but it begins earlier with the pilgrimage to and entrance into Music City.

Pilgrimage to Nashville[3]

Borrowing from Arnold Van Gennep's discussion of rites of passage (1960), I suggest that a trip to Nashville is a transformative experience allowing music fans to detach from their former selves and momentarily perform, experience, and participate in a liminal community within a specific touristscape that signifies both one's identity and cultural otherness through the performance of the past and what is perceived to be a disappearing America. Van Gennep outlines three stages of a rite of passage: separation, liminality, and reincorporation. A closer look at Van Gennep's description of the initial stage of separation helps demonstrate the way the passage from everyday life to the performance of the tourist space is accomplished and illustrates how notions of place, both real and fabricated, validate this transformation: "Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically . . . in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds" (Gennep 1960, p. 17). For country-music fans, the two worlds are represented by (1) their everyday lives, which are governed by work and responsibilities at home, and (2) their country-music fandom, which, while in Nashville, is free from real-life responsibilities, allowing them to participate briefly in a

[3] This idea of pilgrimage to the tourist district was first explored in my unpublished dissertation, We are the Blues: Individual and Communal Performances of the King Biscuit Tradition and can be accessed at: http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A182523

utopia, where fans from around the world come together in Nashville in a communal homecoming to celebrate the music, the artists, themes of country music, and the city credited as country music's place of creation and continuance.

There is no single rite for transitioning between everyday life and the performance of the tourist experience. Instead, tourists go through a series of preparatory rites as they plan their immersion into and interaction with country music and its host city. Books and websites on specific sites, the larger cultural region, and country music are read, studied, and bookmarked. Artists are googled, downloaded, viewed, and listened to. Clothes are carefully selected so that the tourists may blend in with the host and/or newly formed tourist community. Although activities vary among individual tourists, each suggests a desire to fit in and function properly within the temporary community. Through a series of preliminal rites, tourists begin the transition between "real life" and the performance of the country-music culture long before the physical pilgrimage is made. When the time comes to board a plane, crank the car, or load the family into the RV, tourists have already mentally made the transition between the mundane and the sacred. Music tourists prepare themselves for the transformation through a number of preparatory rites, but Music City, USA, is only fully realized when tourists cross a symbolic threshold, enter a new world, and momentarily leave their everyday lives behind. It is at that point that the connection between the music and the city of Nashville is validated. Preconceptions of the city's musical authenticity provide markers for the visitor to interact with and therefore complete the transformation from everyday reality to another place, another time, another way of life.

Tourists come to Nashville from diverse locations and via various routes. The following description of one such specific path will illustrate this transformative process. For many fans, the country-music experience begins when they land at Nashville International Airport and arrive in the terminal, wherein the city's nickname, "Music City, USA," is proudly displayed and accompanied by images of country music's biggest stars and its most iconic venues. Upon exiting the gates, fans are surrounded by sounds and images of country music. From safety reminders voiced by Vince Gill and Brooks and Dunn, to adver-

tisements for iconic and up-and-coming artists including Olivia Lane and Blake Shelton; to advertisements for country-music industry institutions including Warner Music and BMI; to corporate advertisements borrowing from the region's musical identity such as Cracker Barrel and Logan's Steak House; to signs promoting tourist destinations such as the Grand Ole Opry, the Johnny Cash Museum, downtown honky tonks, Hatch Show Print, and the many boot stores that line Lower Broadway; to themed cafes and gift shops that preview fans' anticipated musical and communal experiences on Nashville's Lower Broadway including Discover Nashville, Opry Originals, The Gibson Café, Tootsie's Orchid Lounge, and Nashville Star. Upon leaving the terminal, visitors are welcomed into Music City with live music from a stage facing the terminal exit. Near the stage is a sign that reads "Country Music Concourse Food Court" with an image of Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton, further validating the space and the live music coming from the stage. Even the airport's website, designed with music notes and image markers of country music, such as a guitar and fret board on the home page, suggests the importance of music in the Nashville experience (Nashville International Airport 2016a). The website also includes a quick link to "music and the arts." While many modern airports provide entertainment, the Nashville airport's emphasis on the arts is designed for tourists, presenting the airport as a gateway to the country-music experience. The website describes the "Arts at the Airport" program as follows: "Nashville International Airport truly is a gateway to the city and to Tennessee. As part of this gateway, Arts at the Airport's goal is to provide a great first impression and positive impact for the arts" (Nashville International Airport, Arts at the Airport 2016b).

Special arts events and exhibits are held at the airport throughout the year. Live music, however, is part of the "Music in the Terminal" program, which provides music throughout the concourse. According to the airport website, there are four stages located within the terminal, and between eighty and one hundred artists or bands of diverse styles perform at the airport yearly (Nashville International Airport, Music in the Terminal 2016c). While each stage provides a soundtrack to the airport experience, the stage at the concourse exit is of special interest for the tourist. Having already been introduced in the terminal to the many sounds and images

of country music, fans see the stage featuring live music just before leaving the airport; it is a final welcome to the city before they retrieve their bags and travel the final leg of the trip from the airport to downtown, or from liminality to the performance of the imagined Nashville. For many tourists, the iconography combined with the supposed sounds, smells, and tastes of Music City in the airport provide the initial markers that they have arrived. Leaving the airport on Interstate 40, visitors are met with a number of billboards advertising clubs, museums, and the Grand Ole Opry, ensuring fans that they have indeed made it to the "Home of Country Music." Once downtown, the transformation is complete, the music, images, and vibrancy introduced in the preliminal rites and through the initial threshold are now fully realized with the invitation to perform the city through the pilgrimage that they are now a part of. Nashville is presented as a place of country-music heritage; however, it is also presented as a living place to perform the conceptual themes of country music and to experience ideas of home through a collective performance of locality. As one fan commented: "Nashville is an awesome city. I love the culture. I love the music here…I feel at home here."

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4

Performing the Backstage

Music City and its tourist sites invite fans not only to witness history but also to take part in, shape, and make history through supposed back-region experiences and staged performances of locality and intimacy. In an advertisement included in the 2015 Nashville Visitors Guide, the Country Music Hall of Fame is introduced with the slogan "Step Inside the Story," and RCA Studio B (managed by the Hall) by the slogan "Step Inside the Hits" (Nashville Visitors Guide 2015, pp. 2–3).

In both cases, fans are invited to go beyond witnessing history to become part of it, to experience the back regions of Nashville and, in the process of cultural and historical immersion, become part of history and of the living country-music tradition. Rather than merely look at the city and its many artifacts through the touristic presentation of country music, fans are invited to tear down the fourth wall and experience a performance where the realistic and the romanticized become one and the same, mediated through the tourist gaze and subsequent performance.

Like the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Grand Ole Opry offers opportunities, for a fee, to experience and perform the coveted backstage on tours advertised with the slogan "Go Backstage" in tourism literature

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and on local billboards. This "Go Backstage" Opry slogan is an invitation for tourists/fans to visit and perform in areas assumed to be off limits, to walk in the footsteps of musical icons, and to have a fan experience unobtainable through normal modes of music dissemination and consumption. In a description of backstage tours on the Opry's website, this slogan is combined with the text "walk in the footsteps of country music superstars," reminding the fan once again that the Opry, like country music and its host city, is not only of the past but alive and vibrant in the present. This duality is reinforced through quotes by today's biggest country-music celebrities. On the Opry's website, for example, backstage-tour descriptions are paired with the following video statement by Blake Shelton: "I, for one, am excited to show you around this home of ours, a true country-music showplace. See you backstage" (Shelton quoted in Grand Ole Opry Backstage Tour 2016). This statement points to the uniqueness of the backstage and of the fan's experience there: walking in the footsteps of their musical icons, a sentiment shared by Shelton who, in the tour video, seems as excited about the show's history as the tourists taking the guided tours are. Backstage tours at the Opry include the daytime tour, the post-show tour, and the VIP tour, each of which focuses on a different backstage experience, illustrating the importance of the fan and the tour as a performance space for mediating Nashville's multiple dualities.[1]

Both the daytime and post-concert tours point out the unique opportunity to walk in the footsteps of country music superstars and to gain insight into what happens behind the scenes. The VIP tour goes beyond insider information and provides an experience that only superfans and superstars experience. This tour, which takes place at the beginning of an Opry performance, permits visitors backstage before and during the most famous show in country music and gives them the "rare" opportunity to stand near the back of the Opry stage as the curtains open for an Opry performance, an exclusive backstage experience. All three tours offer unique fan experiences that rely on the history and the continuation of the Opry for their realization. The longevity of the Opry as an institution, its long connection to Nashville, and the placelessness—or, conversely, the multifarious connection to all places—due to broadcasting connects

[1] Descriptions of available Opry tours can be found at http://www.opry.com/backstagetours

the past to the present, blurs the line between outsider and insider, and offers numerous unique opportunities for fans to become part of the tradition through backstage experiences and the collective performance of the country-music fan community.

On a recent backstage tour, I accompanied an international group of country-music fans backstage for what the guide referred to as "Oprytunities." We were told stories of the Opry's past and present and were shown themed dressing rooms used by the stars; a backstage lot where the 1970s and 1980s television program *Hee Haw* and, more recently, *Nashville* were filmed; the private entrance for Opry members and their guests; a wall of plaques featuring a select group of Opry members; and mailboxes where fans have the opportunity to mail letters to their favorite Opry artist. The highlight of the tour was walking across the stage and singing in the famous circle, the very spot where the greatest names in country music have performed. As fans of country music, we stood singing the Carter Family classic "You Are My Sunshine" on the most sacred and exclusive spot in all of country music.

The tour's emphasis on walking in the stars' footsteps and of intimate backstage experiences suggests that this is a pilgrimage that is shared by tourists and musical performers alike. In a recent brochure for the Grand Ole Opry, country-music superstar and Opry member Brad Paisley references this pilgrimage effect in Nashville: "Pilgrims travel to Jerusalem to see the Holy Land and the foundations of their faith. People go to Washington D.C. to see the workings of the government and the foundation of our country. And fans flock to see the foundation of country music, the Grand Ole Opry" (Paisley quoted in Grand Ole Opry: Celebrating 90 years of Great Country Music 2015). Touring or watching a performance of the Grand Ole Opry offers music fans the chance to simultaneously witness country-music heritage and actively participate, through performance, in its present. Due to its history and current relevancy, the Opry has become a must-see on any country-music fan's or musician's trip to Music City. Current country-music stars discuss the Opry and the Ryman from the stage and in interviews with the same type of awe as the fans express. Paisley's comment, for example, goes beyond a mere description of the Opry and its history to include his own personal connection to and love for both the space and the music featured on

stage. Several quotes on the Opry's website by legendary and new artists alike reinforce this seemingly universal affection for the Opry and amazement of being part of this tradition. Bill Anderson, for example, says: "The Grand Ole Opry, to a country singer, is what Yankee Stadium is to a baseball player. Broadway to an actor. It's the top of the ladder, the top of the mountain. You don't just play the Opry; you live it" (Anderson, cited in Opry quotes). This reverence for the history of country music and the importance of the Opry stage, seen in the above artists' comments, is a shared sentiment among fans and artists, creating an intimate bond rooted in fandom and a way to become closer to the tradition. Fan Lisamadcat in a Trip Advisor review of the Opry re-posted by the Opry describes the performance as follows:

> If you want a foot stomping, hand clapping, laughing, crying good time, you need to go to the Grand Ole Opry where you will experience both old time and modern country music. The two hour live show features performers who have been around and are famous as well as rising stars. We have been numerous times and have never been disappointed.

Also posted by the Opry is a Trip Advisor review by fan Sally W. who states: "What a fun thing to do when in Nashville! Loved all of the variety in the performers, and since we took the backstage tour, we got to see most of them up close and personal. It seems like such a prestigious place, yet still casual and homey in that the performers seem like one big happy family. A must-do when in Nashville" (Grand Ole Opry reviews 2016).

The above descriptions, like those by artists performing at the Opry, reference the past/present relationship in country music, the anticipated and the unexpected experiences that manifest within and authenticate an Opry performance, and the Opry as a familial space where those who love and live country music, both performers and fans, can come together in the ultimate performance of the country-music tradition. This performed camaraderie results in a homecoming for country-music fans, a heightened fan experience, a sense of belonging to the creative space, and the illusion of intimacy with music celebrities that is noticed and promoted by the Opry as a key reason to visit. On the front cover of the February 2016 *Greater Nashville Key*, for example, the Opry is described with the text, "Only the Opry Makes Fans Feel Like Family" (*Greater Nashville*

Key 2016). It is in the shared admiration of the past and the invitation to perform alongside musical celebrities in the present that the tourist experience of country music, home, and family is fully realized. Through the tourist connection to country-music themes, exhibits of country music's past, and interactions with its present and its biggest stars, fans become a vital part of the country-music tradition and take on a performative role within Music City. The eminence given to fans allows them to move beyond the role of spectator to become performers of the presented space, further authenticating the music, the artists, Nashville's history, and their own fan experience within the country-music tradition. Places such as the Opry, where past meets present and where audience meets stardom, allow audiences to physically interact with musicians and the music in a theatrical space set up for such participation. These venues, therefore, become both a space to watch performances of Nashville's music and a space to further connect to music and musicians through the fan's own performance and myths of performance within the venue. Finally, this immersive experience of an Opry tour is enhanced and authenticated through attendance at a live Opry performance.

Observations of the Opry

As I stood outside of the Grand Ole Opry house on June 7, 2016, two days before the official kickoff of the CMA Festival, there was a noticeable level of energy and anticipation for the night's performance. Due to the large number of fans in town for the festival, the Opry plaza had been converted into a carnival-like atmosphere. Vendors and live music filled the area, offering entertainment opportunities for the thousands of fans who were eagerly waiting to get into the Opry Hall. Overlooking the crowd who would soon become the audience and a part of the Opry story was a marquee with images of country-music legends and superstars, barely visible because of the flashes from tourists' cameras. While waiting patiently for the Opry doors to open, I overheard and participated in conversations by groups of fans discussing their favorite artist of the evening, past trips to the Opry, and their sincere excitement at being at the legendary venue. Other fans stood in silence gazing at the hall, as if no words could explain their thoughts

on finally making it to the most famous show in country music. After I had waited in line for twenty minutes, the doors opened to a roar of fans rushing in, many to catch their first glimpse of a space they have heard of and listened to music broadcast from for years. While Carrie Underwood's performance seemed to be the most anticipated highlight of the night, the entire two and a half hour performance maintained a level of high excitement in the crowd, manifested through their shared love for country music. Between acts that included Darius Rucker, Jeannie Seely, Lindsay Ell, Carrie Underwood, Bill Anderson, and Chis Janson, advertisements from corporate sponsors were paired with interactive opportunities and competitions, including a dance off hosted by sponsor Dollar General and a sing-along hosted by Cracker Barrel, both providing fans the possibility of being invited onto the Opry stage. During the music performances, many fans made their way to the front of the stage in the hopes of capturing an up-close and personal moment with their favorite star, often crouching in front of the stage and returning to their seats only after snapping a coveted photo. Although other opportunities for fan engagement occurred throughout the show as musicians encouraged the audience to sing or clap along, the very act of being at an Opry broadcast is performative in itself. At the beginning of each Saturday night show, for example, the Opry is introduced by its broadcast number, beginning with show #1 on November 28, 1925. On July 9, 2016, for example, the show was introduced as follows: "From the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, TN, 650 WSM FM is proud to present the 4,723 consecutive Saturday night performance of the Grand Ole Opry." The announcement suggests that fans are not only watching an Opry performance, they are taking part in a tradition of fandom that is almost as old as the music genre featured and celebrated on stage.

As a Nashville local and an instructor of a class on popular music and tourism, attending a performance of the Grand Ole Opry has become a biannual event with my classes and a must-see for all my friends and family who visit me in Music City. Over the years, I have seen legends such as Loretta Lynn, Jeannie Seely, Little Jimmy Dickens, Whisperin' Bill Anderson, and Charley Pride, along with the biggest stars of the current industry, such as Brad Paisley, Carrie Underwood, Dierks Bentley, Little

Big Town, and Darius Rucker, as well as up-and-coming artists making their Opry debut, like Chris Janson, Lindsay Ell, and Sarah Jarosz.

All these artists, regardless of their role within the industry, seem to share a love for the Opry that surpasses their celebrity status. It is not uncommon to hear musicians make awe-filled comments acknowledging the importance of the spot where they are standing and who stood there before them. This sentiment was heard repeatedly during my most recent visit to the Opry, where almost all of the night's performers spoke about the unique experience of being on the Opry stage. Darius Rucker followed a performance of his hit cover "Wagon Wheel" with a thank you to the fans, a comment about how much he loved the Opry, and a reference to the Opry as "home." Jeannie Seely, an Opry and Hall of Fame member, introduced her third song of the night, "Don't Touch Me," by explaining that this was the first song she performed at the Opry in 1966. And Carrie Underwood, one of the biggest names in popular music, spoke about the uniqueness of the Opry as a performance space and its meaning to country-music artists, tradition, and fans.

While celebrity artists on the Opry's website point out the show's uniqueness and its famed history and continuation, those speaking on the show's historic relevance during the performance also serve as a welcome to the hall and give the audience a moment of intimacy through the sense that they share fandom and a love for country music with the stars on stage. Performing artists openly sharing their love and respect for the Grand Ole Opry remind visitors of the importance of the hall and the country-music tradition. For example, as the opening act, Darius Rucker went beyond a simple "thank you" to refer to the space as "home." In the process, he opened the show with an extended welcome for all participants to enter the home of country music. Likewise, Jeannie Seely went beyond an Opry history lesson; as a legendary artist, she illustrated a relationship with the space, history, and the many fans who have sat in the Opry pews over the years. Finally, Carrie Underwood went beyond telling the fans about the Opry's importance to country music by including the artist, the hall, the tradition, and the fans in the list of influences, reminding all that the Grand Ole Opry is a tradition that exists through a shared love for and performance of country music. The fans' importance is also referenced throughout the show when hosts

regularly remind the audience of the uniqueness of attending an Opry performance, and the show's widespread dissemination on the airwaves, and by asking fans to cheer aloud so that their fan participation can be heard by the entire listening demographic. This inclusiveness suggests that the Opry attendee's role as a fan is important and, like the music heard on WSM, is broadcasted around the world. On that Tuesday night Opry in June, host Bill Cody stated: "It's just electric in here tonight. . . . You can just feel the excitement in the air. People making it to the Opry for the very first time. They've always wanted to come or celebrate that special occasion and then coming to be a part of something that goes back so far".[2]

The shared love for country music that is performed at the Opry and the open invitation for country music fans to step out of the passive role of spectator and into the role of performer results in a negotiation among fans, organizations, institutions, and musicians in which a shift in space and its many meanings provides fans with an experience that can be obtained only in Nashville and gives them the illusion that they are not mere observers of the tradition but instead important components of the musical and social experience they are witnessing. The open invitation to interact with both country music and its host city has transformed Nashville's history into a touristic commodity manifested through the tourist imagination and the performative act of touring. This performance is first realized through one's initial interaction within Nashville's "District," a back-region space and experience created for and performed by country music fans.

Country Music's Main Street

Nashville's Lower Broadway (the District) before its renovation and revitalization in the 1990s presents a contrasting snapshot with the current city. While most who visit Nashville's Lower Broadway assume that today's honky tonks and the city's vibrant music and social scenes have

[2] Archived shows of the Grand Ole Opry, including the performance discussed above, can be accessed at http://wsmonline.com/archives/grand-ole-opry/

long been a part of the city's famed sound and landscape, "Nashville" as experienced today is a recent phenomenon that corresponds with the district's abandonment, redevelopment, and rebranding and illustrates the transformation of the downtown area from Nashville's main street to the "main street of country music." Comparing past tourist and city maps with those presented today in tourist literature illustrates how the country brand was adopted for the city and how music/tourist sites were consolidated into one performative space.

A 1960 Nashville tourist map published by Esso Standard highlights the tourist sites throughout the city, but unlike contemporary maps, the front cover of the guide does not contain images of country-music celebrities or music sites or institutions but instead forefronts the Hermitage, home of President Andrew Jackson (Esso 1960). Inside the map is a list of must-see sites within the city and its surrounding neighborhoods, including historical sites such as the Hermitage, Belle Meade Plantation, Fort Nashborough, the Sam Davis Home, the Parthenon, the Old City Cemetery, Traveller's Rest Plantation, and the War Memorial Building. Natural sites such as the Old Hickory Reservoir and Cheekwood Gardens are also featured. Interestingly, while the Grand Ole Opry had been on air since the 1920s and at the Ryman since 1943, the show is not listed in the brochure as a Nashville tourist site. It is, however, listed on the map of Nashville's downtown alongside government buildings and hotels. Its inclusion on the map as a downtown landmark rather than a tourist attraction suggests that the Opry had become a staple of the city, a Saturday night, live-music show that had become part of the local soundscape, its significance likely taken for granted or ignored by local Nashvillians, including those working in the tourist industry. While the Opry was a popular event for country-music fans and, due to Opry broadcasts, was associated around the nation as the home of country music, it had not been accepted fully by locals or the industry as a solid marker of Nashville identity. Bill Carey, in *Fortunes, Fiddles, and Fried Chicken: A Nashville Business History*, points out that before the 1960s, there is little to no mention of the Ryman Auditorium or the Grand Ole Opry in most tourism literature: "Despite the fact that the Grand Ole Opry lured hundreds of thousands of visitors to the city every year in the 1930s and

1940s, Nashville residents remained ambivalent about country music" (Carey 2000, p. 394).

Also notable is that the Ryman is the only site on the 1960 Esso Standard map dedicated specifically to country music and its fans. Downtown business maps of Nashville from the late 1950s illustrate this absence of musical sites, portraying a very different Broadway than the one presented in today's tourism literature and experience. In a downtown business map from 1956, for example, the two blocks on Broadway between fifth and third avenues, known today as the "Honky Tonk Highway," represent instead a vibrant downtown business district, with merchants intended for the local Nashville community rather than for its visitors (Downtown Friendly Nashville 1956). Included are department stores, furniture stores, insurance companies, cafes, banks, grocery stores, drug stores, and hotels. The Ryman is clearly marked on the map as the home of the Grand Ole Opry, but there are few businesses or clubs that cater to the fans of country music noted. Within a decade, this would change dramatically.

The 1960s were the first of several transitional decades for Nashville, the development of the music-tourism industry, and the establishment of country music's "main street." Following the success of the Bradley Brothers, who opened their studio at 804 Sixteenth Avenue South in 1955, and Chet Atkins at RCA Studio B in 1956, Music Row began to expand, with additional studios and businesses catering to the suddenly in-demand country-music industry. The Country Music Hall of Fame was built in 1967, establishing not only a place to preserve country-music heritage but also a location for tourists to visit and interact with the music tradition Nashville had long been known for.[3] The Hall of Fame and Museum became one of the city's earliest tourist sites dedicated to music, reinforcing the city's long-standing association with country music and its newly adopted musical identity. A brochure and map from 1970, published by the First American National Bank, lists city attractions and illustrates this new acceptance by including alongside those historical and natural sites listed in the 1960s Esso Standard tourist map,

[3] For a detailed discussion of Nashville's adoption of its musical identity, see: Jensen (1998), Carey (2000), Pecknold (2007), Kosser (2006).

music sites as well, most notably the newly built Country Music Hall of Fame and the nearby Ryman Auditorium (Guide Map of Nashville 1970). A 1970 documentary film directed by Robert Elfstrom, titled *The Nashville Sound*, captures the forty-fourth anniversary of the Grand Ole Opry and a rare glimpse of the icons of the country-music tradition of that era in their prime. It also captures Nashville in the midst of this transformation to Music City, USA.

The film opens with a view of the Nashville skyline from a car window and a sign that reads, "Mayor Briley Welcomes You to Music City" (*The Nashville Sound* 2006). Immediately, there is a contrast between Nashville as presented in this 1970 film and the Nashville presented in earlier tourism brochures and downtown maps. A series of snapshots of fans from outside Nashville illustrates the tourist draw of the country-music scene and the Opry, more specifically. Before viewers see the Ryman and the film's opening performance by the Scruggs Family Band, the camera scans Lower Broadway: souvenir shops, restaurants, and merchants, all catering to fans visiting the Grand Ole Opry, are now the predominant presence on Broadway, illustrating a city coming to terms with, and capitalizing on, its musical and touristic identity.

The above discussion of Nashville's transformation suggests that Nashville's current identity as "Music City, USA," and more specifically as the home of country music, is the result of a city's acceptance of its musical identity rather than its promotion of it. With the construction of the Country Music Hall of Fame, the growth and success of the music industry and Nashville's Music Row throughout the 1960s, and the supporting businesses that opened nearby to cash in on the new opportunities for and from music tourists, Nashville was becoming not only a place for country musicians to perform on Saturday nights but also a place for country music fans to perform. Such performances led to the city's adoption of its music identity and the development of new businesses catering to the country-music fan community.

The realization also led to a second development that shifted the music-tourism industry away from downtown, leaving the shell of a city that would soon revitalize to become country music's main street. In 1969, NLT (National Life Third), the parent company of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, announced plans to build a

$16 million complex to include a theme park (Opryland), a new hotel (Opryland Hotel), and a new performance hall for the Grand Ole Opry (The Opry House), which moved the country-music tourism industry away from the downtown area into the suburb of Donelson (Carey 2000, pp. 396–99).

The Opryland theme park opened in 1972, the final performance of the Grand Ole Opry at the Ryman was on March 9, 1974, and the Grand Ole Opry Hotel opened its doors in November of 1977. The new complex, collectively referred to as "Opryland," created an isolated tourist space that shifted attention away from downtown and created a hyperreal space and experience removed from the space where music history was actually made. While the Ryman was not torn down as originally proposed by NLT, years passed before it was renovated and once again became the center of Nashville's musical and touristic identity.

A tourist map from 1973 illustrates Opryland's impact on the city's acceptance and promotion of its country-music identity. Titled "Visitor's Guide to Music City USA" (1973), the map illustrates the city's newly adopted identity and its spatial transformation. For the first time on tourist maps, a new area labeled "Opryland USA" is visible on the map between the Cumberland River and the newly built Briley Parkway. On the far side of town and the map is Music Row, the other prominent tourist destination of the 1970s. On Music Row, the Hall of Fame, gift shops, and other music sites such as the Country Music Wax Museum are listed as must-see destinations for country-music fans. While the Ryman (still labeled the Opry) is listed on the map, it is the only site in the downtown area, as all other attractions have been removed from the city into what is essentially a new city built nine miles away entirely for the fans. The Opry soon followed by relocating permanently to Opryland the following year.

The advertisements within the 1973 map are of interest because of their unified focus on country music sound and image: Ovation Guitars, featuring a picture of singer-songwriter Tom T. Hall; *Music City News*, billed as "The World's Largest Country Music Newspaper"; King of the Road Motel, owned by singer Roger Miller and featuring up-and-coming artist Ronnie Milsap in its rooftop lounge; Oweman Productions, who claimed that one could "record with the Nashville Sound"; Western-wear shops; record stores; country-music theaters; country-themed restau-

rants; instrument instruction booklets; and organized tours of the Opry, homes of the stars, Music Row, and the Country Music Hall Of Fame. All suggest that in a short time the tourism industry had shifted its attention to country music, and merchants throughout the city had quickly recognized the economic potential of connecting their products to the city's most famous sound, a practice that continues today with every imaginable product somehow connected to the city's most profitable cultural commodity.

In 1974, the Chamber of Commerce published points of interest for the city's visitors (Welcome to Nashville 1974). Number one on the list was Opryland USA, followed by the Grand Ole Opry, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and the Country Music Wax Museum. By 1976, the list had added the Ryman as a separate destination, and by 1979, newly established Music Row attractions, including entertainment centers, record stores, and vanity museums, were added (Nashville Points of Interest 1976, p. 79). Following the list of music sites, formerly top-billed historical sites such as the Hermitage, the Belle Meade Plantation, and Fort Nashborough were listed. Once the only attractions listed in tourism literature, these sites had, in one decade, become second to the many music sites, venues, and institutions that were transforming the city's geography and identity.

The 1970s fully established Nashville as the center of country music, but the relocation of music sites and supporting businesses led to the further demise of Lower Broadway. Once a thriving downtown with businesses catering to the Nashville community, by the end of the 1970s, much of the area was boarded up and/or occupied by less savory and family-friendly attractions, such as adult entertainment stores and peep shows. As in many other American cities, businesses were moving from downtown districts to the suburbs. Throughout the 1980s, country music reached unprecedented crossover success; the Grand Ole Opry flourished at its new location and was once again televised to national audiences. The Opryland complex remained Nashville's most visited site, and the downtown area remained deserted and, for the most part, off the tourist agenda.

The city's next major transformation was during the 1990s and at the turn of the millennium with the revitalization of Nashville's downtown,

beginning with the reopening of the Ryman Auditorium (1994), a renovation initiated by music artists, most notably Emmylou Harris. This was followed by Opryland Theme Park's closing (1997), the debut of Nashville professional sports with the Tennessee Titans National Football League franchise and the Nashville Predators National Hockey League franchise (1998), the revitalization of Tootsie's Orchid Lounge in the early 1990s and the subsequent establishment of the many other honky tonks on Lower Broadway, and the relocation of the Country Music Hall of fame (2001). With these developments, downtown Nashville was reborn, this time with a country-music theme that appealed to the many visitors now flocking to the city. The revitalization also led to a consolidation of the tourist experience. What had been three distinct tourist areas—Music Row attractions, Opryland, and the Ryman—were now in one space, the District, developed with the tourist experience in mind. Tourists could reserve a hotel room, dine at restaurants, listen to live music, sing karaoke, and learn to line dance, all in the shadow of the "Mother Church of Country Music," the Ryman Auditorium. It is also worth noting that the CMA Festival, discussed in Chap. 6, moved from the Davidson County Fairgrounds to the District in 2001, the same year as the relocated Country Music Hall of Fame's grand opening. The downtown district, long abandoned by the city's residents and the tourist industry, was reclaimed by country-music fans and transformed into a new city, in which the fans could perform locality and intimacy and experience the themes and preconceptions of country music through a performance of its main street, geographically and sonically situated in the shadows of country-music history and in the midst of its continued, performed soundscape.

The District: A Living History of an Imagined Past

Visiting Nashville's music landmarks serves more than an edifying purpose; it also validates the current musical tradition simultaneously occurring outside the museum walls. Exhibits of Nashville's musical identity are often extended into the present through the festival-like performance of the country-music tradition that is both visible and audible as soon as

one exits the museum space. Such an extension reinforces Nashville as a musical city while simultaneously validating the fans' experiences and their role in the city's production and continuation through the invitation to perform tradition and history.

It is important to note that while there are similarities between a living history museum and the city of Nashville, there are also important differences that contribute to the overall tourist experience. While a living history museum provides a performative experience that validates the past, Nashville and its duality of country-music heritage and thriving pop-music tradition blurs the line between past and present, shaping the fan experience in multiple ways. In addition to an interaction with the city and its cultural history, there is also a real possibility that fans are interacting and participating with a new face or sound of country music or will have an unexpected and personal experience with a seemingly "unapproachable" celebrity. This simultaneous interaction with the past and the present relies on the geographical space of Nashville, a music city that has its own history and provides a stage for all other narratives to unfold. The significance of place in Nashville's performance and realization is played out within the downtown area, where the importance of immersive institutions and activities and places to see, experience, hear, and/or interact with culture is crucial to the realization of the tourist experience. Many of these spaces, including the Hall of Fame and the Ryman Auditorium, will be discussed in more detail in Chap. 5. I suggest, however, that the ultimate place of interaction within Music City is the city itself. Interacting with and within the District gives one the chance to witness, experience, and perform preconceptions of both country music and its host geography. It is within the confined District that the music of the past is transcribed through a performance in the present, and fans not only hear country music but are also invited to physically experience it. These performances and subsequent experiences are based on what is known of the tradition and of the city, knowledge based on the tourist narrative and traded by tourists and locals as social capital. In addition to printed promotional materials and word of mouth, the many sites of performance, production, and preservation that are open for tourist immersion, and their geographical and cultural location within the vibrancy of the present-day city, provide this knowledge, showcasing the

city's rich musical history and its current musical relevancy, reminding fans of what once happened while also reinforcing what is (or could be) happening outside the museum walls. Through an interaction within these places and a newfound knowledge, fans take on a heightened role in the musical production, moving beyond the role of passive spectator to assume the role of participant, preservationist, and/or mediator of the past/present, real/fabricated, and backstage/frontage dualities presented throughout the city. An examination of the close relationship between Nashville's sound, its landscape, and several sites throughout Nashville and their placement within the larger cultural and geographical space of the downtown district shows how important a consolidated tourist and music place is in the presentation of the dualities that have defined, and continue to define and authenticate, Music City.

The Ryman, the Country Music Hall of Fame, the George Jones Museum, and the Johnny Cash Museum's location within a short walk of Lower Broadway proves the importance of space for immersive experiences within Nashville's larger geographical and cultural network, for the realization of the fan experience, and for the celebrated tradition's continuation. While museum spaces provide insight into Nashville's history and significance as a music city and country music as a tradition, the geographical and cultural space around the museums is where tourists are invited to continue their performance of the museum exhibit into the city's present. This performance relies on Lower Broadway's consolidation of multiple tourist spaces into one collective experience. It also relies, however, on new knowledge learned and experiences gained through interaction with the city. As Tim Edensor states, "The notion of performance suggests that particular enactions need to be learned so as to achieve a degree of competence" (Edensor 2000, p. 326). I suggest that by the time most country-music fans and Nashville tourists make it to Lower Broadway, they have become, through educational, cultural, and sonic immersion, part of the country-music tradition and temporary locals, rather than mere spectators of the tradition and its geographical host. Their experiences through pre-travel preparations, encounters at nearby museums, and interactions with fans, locals, and celebrities shape their understanding and their subsequent performance of the city, as seen in the example detailed in the following pages.

Performing the Soundscape

Many fans begin their immersion into the country-music tradition with a trip to the city's famed Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, where fans come face to face with artifacts, musical sounds, and interactive experiences that bring country music, its most famous icons, and Music City itself to life while also connecting the genre's history with the current tradition occurring outside the museum walls. After learning the history of Nashville's famed musical past, visitors leave the museum space to be surrounded by a city that reinforces this history and suggests that history is still being made. This is achieved through the close proximity of the museum to the live-music scene of nearby Lower Broadway. The past/present duality created through the continuing tradition and reinforced through the museum's geographical and cultural placement is unique among music destinations. A visit to nearby Memphis, Tennessee, for example, offers exceptional onsite tours of Sun and Stax Records. In both cases, however, as fans leave the tour or museum space, they are immediately met with the contrasting current city, which seems to lack the musical activity showcased between the museum walls. Like many other music cities, Memphis is presented as where music happened instead of where it is happening. Nashville, on the other hand, offers an interaction with the past that is continued into the present and the possible future through the vitality of the current industry and through the year-long festivalization of the city. The tourist mediates Nashville's multi-presentation through an interaction with physical and sonic artifacts and a performance of the tradition in real time. Iconic country-music recordings that are heard and studied in the museum are replaced outside of the museum space with the live sounds of up-and-coming artists covering these same songs from the many honky-tonk stages that line Lower Broadway. Songs that fans have heard through recorded and broadcasting mediums are recreated as live music while also bringing life to Nashville's geographical past and present in a process that is reminiscent of Edward Casey's theory, "Places not only are, they happen" (Casey 1996, p. 27). It is through musical performance that both Nashville's soundscape and

the landscape of country music "happens." The performance of anticipated, familiar songs invites tourists into new tourist spaces by directly connecting new communal experiences with notions of history and, through interactive and live experiences, with the music and history on exhibit at nearby museums. It is the tourist performance, therefore, that brings life to the constructed and/or revived space.

As they navigate between the museums and these performative spaces, fans are bombarded with images and sounds that further reinforce Nashville's "authenticity" as a music city and their own musical and cultural experiences. From street-post speakers broadcasting the newest hit country recordings, to street performers playing live covers of country classics, to signs on club walls and windows promoting "rural" authenticity, to billboard and bus-bench advertisements for country-music icons and newcomers, fans are constantly reminded through visual and sonic cues that they are interacting, through performance, with a musical city of historical and present-day importance.

The authentic tourist experience is heightened through interaction with local merchants, musicians, or residents who welcome the temporary community into their homes, establishments, and city and through the unearthing of unpredictable musical and/or social opportunities during a self or communal exploration of and interaction within Nashville's tourist district. Experiences that visitors perceive as local and intimate reinforce their belief that what they are interacting with was never intended for the passive tourist's eye and can be experienced only by the "true" fan who, through an increase in cultural and social capital in the form of insider knowledge and experience, has become part of the host culture and is now aware of the coveted and previously invisible and inaccessible backstage. This transformation from outside observer to inside participant is not immediate, but instead develops though knowledge, inclusive and "backstage" experiences, repeated trips to Music City, and insider knowledge traded among visitors. The following examples of these immersive experiences and the resulting performance of locality demonstrate the ways Nashville's soundscape and touristscape are performed, as well as how music sites' placement is significant to the production of Music City and the tourist experience.

Performances of Locality

Valene Smith defines the tourist as "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change" (Smith 1989, p. 1). This desire for change is fulfilled through an interaction with most tourist sites, and the trip itself is perceived as an opportunity to interact with the desired other. Nashville is unique in that the "other" is realized through the opportunity to experience and perform a tradition that fans feel connected to and imagine to be more genuine than where they come from. This is accomplished via a connection to the country-music tradition and a transfer of roles; on Nashville's Lower Broadway, the local culture becomes the tradition's outsider, while the tourists become temporary locals.

Accompanied by the sounds and themes of country music, Nashville's downtown becomes a live museum of the city's past and a contemporary exhibit of its present—the fans serving as costumed actors, complete with cowboy hats, boots, and concert t-shirts. Like a living history museum, the history that lives on through the performers has been modified and carefully selected to meet the demands of visitors who, in this case, are also the performers. In other words, through performance, imagined history is enacted and preserved in the present via the tourist gaze. While this type of role reversal is common during music festivals, the year-long festivilization of Nashville presents an atmosphere more akin to a museum than a weekend carnival. Helpful to understanding this phenomenon are John Riemer's thoughts on living history sites: "The past has been sanctified, disinfected and altered to conform to a sentimental view of a culture or a heritage which no longer resides in reality but engages with images of fantasy . . . as in all good theme parks, the past is spruced up to appeal to the sensation seeking tourist" (Riemer cited in Gibson and Connell 2005, p. 167).

These "spruced-up" experiences are found throughout the District, where fans can interact with and, in many cases, perform the backstage, giving them a sense of experiential authenticity in which their presence and participation is both presented and realized as genuine, unique, and

crucial to the well-being of the city and its most famous export. It is within this performance that "authenticity" is transferred from a concept used to define an object to a way of being, similar to Ning Wang's theories on tourism and "objective authenticity," which "assumes that there is something inherently 'authentic'" (Wang 1999). Borrowing from Wang's theories, Christian Engler states: "This is a very 'museum-linked' way of perception, based on 'original' objects, such as an 'authentic Roman coin' to which 'authenticity' attributes a certain origin in time. However, tourism transfers this concept to people, sites, services, or events and any subsequent modification, transformation or creativity to the 'original' idea is negatively seen as inauthentic" (Engler 2016).

Within Nashville, preconceptions of the city and its musical tradition become the expectation for experience and therefore the key marker of authenticity. While downtown Nashville is a spruced-up version of the city and its musical past, through repeated tourist performance it becomes the "authentic," defined by the realization and performance of anticipated experience rather than by historical accuracy, reinforced through the country-music themes that sonically validate the fan performance and also shape the city's identity. Such a presentation places the fan in the middle as a mediator and, therefore, as a temporary local observer of and participant in the city's celebrated tradition. The presentation of the city and the country-music tradition is not the product of a unilateral construction by the local for the visitor, but instead relies on a bilateral performance by both host and guest cultures. The collective performance that occurs in Nashville is the result of the "mutual gaze," a dialogue on expected roles between the host and guest culture in which each individual group's performance directs the other's. Through the host culture's performance of the tourist attraction and the Nashvillian, the theatrical space and supporting actors are established, and the fans can then perform the role of local preservationist, which in return ensures the well-being, continuation, and vibrancy of the city, the host culture, and the tourist attraction. This antiphonal performance is key to the city's musical identity and the realization of the true fan experience, and it is made possible by a shared desire to experience the imagined back region of America's Music City.

Backstage Gaze

The recurring themes of home and backstage, combined with the shared admiration of Nashville's country-music tradition and the opportunity to perform alongside musicians and local residents, result in the illusion and subsequent performance of locality. The visitor's desire to blend in with the local is not unique to Music City. For many travelers, there is an unspoken need to avoid being labeled a passive tourist, and travelers often perform the local by sharing with others their insight as informed travelers. On the travel website tourist2local.com, for example, locals provide visitors with tips about tourist destinations so they may avoid being spotted and/or labeled as a tourist. Generally these tips involve the following categories: eat like a local, immerse yourself in local culture, meet the locals while traveling, speak like the local, stay with the locals, party with the locals, and so on. Nashville, meanwhile, with its strong emphasis on creating musical experiences for the visitor, blurs the line between guest and host cultures and between the real and hyperreal. On Lower Broadway, divisions between host and guest are made hazy through a shared performance of the imagined city. Ideas of the local and its most famous musical export are filtered through the performance of the imagined Nashville.

Borrowing from Dean MacCannell's research on social spaces and authenticity (1973), the following study of the creation and realization of these spaces within the downtown district and several venues throughout Nashville will further illustrate the performance and shift of roles. MacCannell uses Erving Goffman's discussion of front and back regions within theatrical settings to discuss these areas as poles within the tourist experience: the front region is where tourists enter and are allowed to mingle and experience the culture, and the back region is where tourists hope to eventually interact with the culture. MacCannell divides the regions into the following six shifting categories that obfuscate the distinctions between front and back regions and therefore between perceived authentic and inauthentic experiences:

Stage 1 Goffman's front region: the kind of social space tourists attempt to overcome, or to get behind.
Stage 2 A touristic front region that has been decorated to appear, in some particulars, like a back region.
Stage 3 A front region that is totally organized to look like a back region.
Stage 4 A back region that is open to outsiders.
Stage 5 A back region that may be cleaned up or altered a bit because tourists are permitted an occasional glimpse in.
Stage 6 Goffman's back region: The kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness. (MacCannell 1973, p. 598)

Stage One, which constitutes those sites and institutions promoted by the tourism industry, sites designed for the tourists, and those the tourists want to overcome, is abundant within Music City. Museums, historical venues, studios, organized tours, and themed dining and nightlife offer a packaged experience designed for the fan in Nashville's front region. These sites meet the basic expectations of the city's visitors, often serving as gateways into the musical tradition and into the city itself. For most fans, stage one is the starting place, not the end of the desired tourist experience. MacCannell suggests that the tourist's ultimate goal is to experience stage six, or the back region, an area created in the tourist's imagination, which they believe is off limits and difficult for visitors to obtain access to. Finding ways to glimpse into and/or interact with the back stage becomes the tourist's motivation. As managers and owners are likely aware of this desire, sites within Nashville provide opportunities to interact with—or the illusion of interacting with—Nashville's back region, reinforcing the experience of becoming part of the tradition and transcending the staged presentation. Within the Nashville touristscape, an area constructed to obscure the divide between place and placelessness, outsider and insider, past and present, the illusion of the backstage is so common that it becomes the tourist norm. From the previously mentioned "backstage tours" at music venues, to reserved front-row photo lines for all attendees of the Grand Ole Opry, VIP passes at the CMA Festival resembling concert crew passes, and the design of the Nashville honky tonks, which place the performers at the front of the

club with their backs to the front door, allowing audiences to enter the venue through the backstage and experience momentary stardom when the club's audience turns their attention to the new face entering the club and momentarily appearing beside the concert stage. Here tourists (outsiders) are gazed upon by other tourists whose earlier arrival and placement in the club have assumed the "local" (insider) role. For those entering the club, such a gaze permits the performance of the star, while for those in the club, a performance of locality. As suggested by Maoz, such a mutual gaze creates a dialogue among participants which shapes behavior and authenticates experiences (Maoz 2006, p. 225). These tourist experiences within Nashville create a fluid space where the backstage is both visible and slightly out of reach for those looking in.

Therefore, while the illusion of the back region motivates touristic consciousness and brings country-music fans to the city to interact with country music's geographical and sociological background, what they believe to be the back region is only fully realized through their performance in the present within Nashville's front region. While the host culture initiates such performances, the fan accepts and executes the performative role, authenticating the tradition, its geographical placement, and the supposed backstage experiences.

In his article, "Staging Tourism: Tourists as Performers," Tim Edensor defines three modes of performance: disciplined rituals, improvised performances, and unbounded performances (Edensor 2000, pp. 334–38). Each provides a model for exploring the complexities of the Nashville touristscape and the important role of Nashville's temporary country-music community. Disciplined rituals bring tourists to the city and fuel the tourist industry. Edensor defines these rituals as experiences that the host site and, more importantly, tourists expect as markers of a true and edifying tourist experience. Bus and walking tours of Music City, the stars' homes, and the imaginary Nashville, for example, are well organized and allow little room for tourist improvisation but provide a frontstage experience that meets visitors' preconceptions of the city and the musical tradition on display. The *Nashville* tour, for example, takes visitors throughout the city to explore *Nashville* sites, homes, and performance venues first seen on the television series. While tourists are not permitted access inside of most of the spaces, the chance to see the sites brings

the show to life while authenticating the city. This is a very disciplined tour but provides insight into the supposed back region of the television show and therefore Nashville. Other sites become disciplined rituals through their part in country-music pilgrimage and, thereby, are Music City must-sees. All country fans must visit, for example, the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Ryman (the Mother Church of Country Music), and no trip to Nashville would be complete without attending a performance of the Grand Ole Opry or strolling down Lower Broadway in search of the perfect honky tonk to show off one's newly purchased Western attire. These disciplined rituals created by the tourism industry have become must-see sites and must-do activities on a trip to Nashville and are easily found by locating the large number of people congregating around and outside them. Tourism at these sites creates monetary capital for the industry, but it also creates cultural capital among fans, firmly placing them into the present-day performance of Nashville, further validating their newly adopted roles within the city, and signaling the tourist shift from passive spectator to active participant, from outsider to local, and from fan to country-music performer.

Improvised performances, according to Edensor, are perceived as more spontaneous than disciplined but are based on insight from tourism officials and guide books or through word of mouth from other fans, implying that one is experiencing genuine off-the-grid sites and events. Strolling the Nashville streets offers plenty of chances to enter and interact with the local club scene; the last-minute decision to grab a drink at Tootsie's or a burger at Robert's might seem improvised, but it actually relies on the context of the tourist district, tourist walking paths, and the disciplined ritual taking place within the clubs. While these events seem spontaneous and hint at the desired backstage, they are initiated and/or suggested by cues, including the tourist literature, word of mouth, historical markers, creative branding, and large groups of tourists occupying and/or performing the space. Other backstage opportunities experienced throughout the city are presented as local experiences, taking place outside of the tourist space and/or agenda. A performance at the Bluebird Café, a songwriter session at the Commodore Grille, a Monday night performance by the Time Jumpers at 3rd and Lindsley, lunch at Arnold's Country Kitchen, or a late-night dinner at Prince's Hot Chicken are

experiences that tourists view as a chance for interaction with the local culture and therefore seem improvised rather than regulated and disciplined. These experiences, combined with the disciplined, are learned and shared with other fans as social capital, validating visitors' heightened role within the city and their performance of true fandom.

The unbounded performance, in Edensor's theory, is viewed as the most genuine experience, the most disconnected from the tourism industry, and therefore the most desired by the Music City tourist as the closest to a true back-region experience. These types of performances offer visitors the opportunity to interact with not only the local but also the geographical host and thereby experience the "real" Nashville, rather than the staged production suggested through tourism literature. However, the unbounded, in Nashville's case, is firmly connected to the ritualistic and the improvised. Like the desired backstage, it doesn't really exist, and yet for most tourists it is the ultimate experiential destination. The city and its blurring of past and present, front and backstage, real and fabricated, provides an experience that is fluid, flowing among and blending Edensor's three modes of performance until they are indistinguishable. The tourist performance becomes only a performance of Nashville that, on Lower Broadway, is performed and realized by locals and tourists alike through a mutual gaze and an antiphonal performance of the first-imagined and now-realized Nashville.

Performing the Imagined Nashville

The entire metro area of Nashville has a population of over 1.7 million, yet the downtown district has the essence of an isolated community, a small unadulterated town surrounded by and contrasting with a major metropolitan area, a timeless place that defies but also benefits from the growth around it. Jeff Kunerth's thoughts on small-town tourist attractions are applicable to this small-town illusion in the District: "Many small towns are betting their futures on an aging population in search of its past. Bypassed by the interstates, those communities hope to draw tourists back off the highways by turning their main streets into living movie sets of small-town America" (Kurneth cited in Rotenstein 1992,

p. 139). Similarly, Nashville, like the country-music tradition itself, draws tourists away from the rest of the city by turning the District into a sort of movie set of the idyllic home and/or main street that is sung about in country music. There, fandom and tourism are not looked upon with question, but instead are seen as the Nashville norm. The outsiders, for a brief period, become the locals of the performed space, which is evident from the surprise often expressed by merchants and bands when they learn that a member of the crowd is an actual local. In my own experience, at times I have felt awkward and out of place within the downtown district of my own hometown.

To better understand this role reversal and the confinement of the tourist space, let's return to Nashville's duality of place and placelessness. While references to Nashville and the city's most famous landmarks are abundant throughout the city, what fans perceive and experience as Nashville does not represent the complete Nashville, but instead a hyperreal and selective performance of the imagined South that is frequently represented in country music. For the fan, the South is home, and the city of Nashville is its capital. In other words, Nashville signifies the Southern home and, through its connection to country music, points to those elements of the past that are believed to have been lost in modern life but are, to fans' delight and surprise, not only alive but also allowed to be engaged in and performed in Music City.

The uniqueness of the District as a place for tourists to perform locality and country-music ideology is evident when comparing the area with the rest of the city, which is very different than the Nashville represented in most country-music songs, on Lower Broadway, and on CMT'S TV show *Nashville*. A few miles away from downtown, for example, lies a growing and diverse urban center that seems to defy many stereotypes associated with country music and the American South. Drew Jubera from Cox News Service describes the "other" Nashville as follows:

> Six miles south of the Country Music Hall of Fame—home to artifacts like Naomi Judd's wringer washing machine and the cornfield from TV's *Hee Haw*—there's a strip mall that shows a newer Nashville. Its tenants represent a world atlas of ethnic groups: an Indian and Pakistani grocery, a Mexican butcher, a Nigerian restaurant, a Chinese market. Next door is

> practically a small Iraqi village: a warehouse turned Muslim mosque and two grocery stores, one run by an Iraqi Kurd, the other by an Iraqi Arab. On Fridays, after afternoon prayers, as many as 600 people mingle within a tiny block. (Jubera 2005)

This is Nashville, but it is neither the "Nashville" that most fans desire to interact with nor the "Nashville" presented to tourists on websites or literature devoted to the tourist experience. The District, an area devoted to the fan experience and to country music as a commodity, becomes the Nashville made famous through country music and Nashville's tourist industry, as an analysis of a Nashville tourist map which allows the fans a limited view of the city illustrates.

While visitmusiccityusa.com offers several maps of Nashville's neighborhoods outside the District, the downtown tourist map is often the only one included in the tourist literature.[4] It is focused on the district surrounding Lower Broadway. Most of Nashville's most famous music landmarks, including the Ryman, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, the Johnny Cash Museum, the George Jones Museum, and the many honky tonks that reinforce these sites and remind fans of the vibrancy of the musical city that they are interacting with, are included on this map. Red lines marking the tourist trolley route provide additional evidence of the city's focus on the downtown district. The trolley, which in itself signifies an idyllic main street of a previous era, sticks to a path that reinforces the nostalgia for small-town America and the romanticized country-music tradition. Beginning at the commuter train station on First Avenue, the trolley travels through Nashville's Broadway (honky-tonk central), Second Avenue (which features clubs, restaurants, and themed bars such as the saloon), the artist district, and the square around Music Park (which provides access to the Cash Museum and the Country Music Hall of Fame). While this route is modeled on the most visited sites, it also helps confine the tourist area into a well marked-off space, delineating it as if it were a traditional American main street contained in a geographical space and separated from the rest of Nashville by the river,

[4] The downtown map of Nashville discussed above can be accessed at http://www.visitmusiccity.com/maps/DT_POI-1.pdf

interstates, and government buildings. This focus on Nashville as Main Street, America, authenticates the space, distinguishes it from the larger metropolitan city of Nashville, and further blurs the line between reality and fabrication. Entering the District, this dichotomy is clearly marked, as seen in the following image: (Fig. 4.1)

In the image, visitors to Nashville's Lower Broadway are welcomed to the tourist district, where the imagined Nashville is performed and

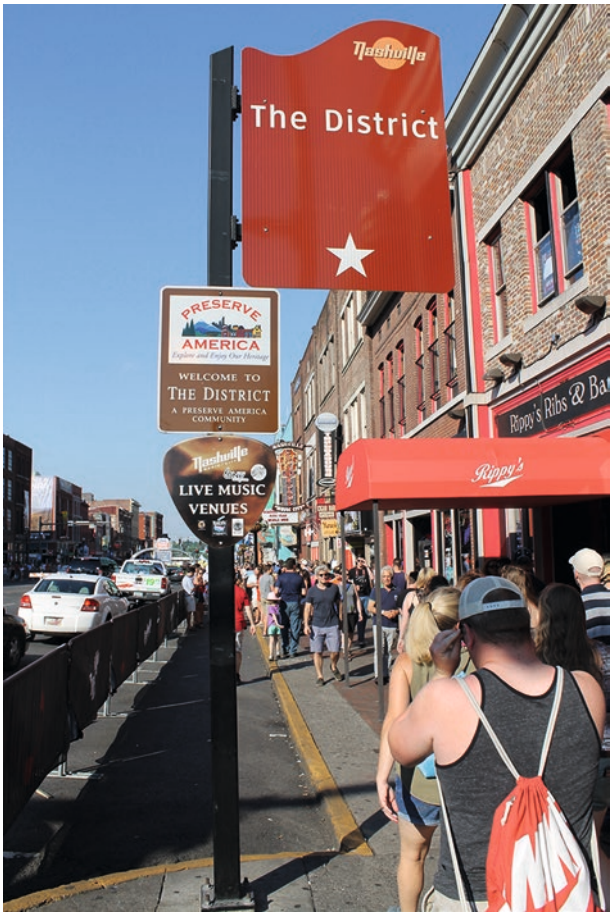

Fig. 4.1 Preserve America/preserve Nashville (Photograph by author. May 6, 2016)

realized by the fans. Music is always present, which is suggested by the live music sign and reinforced through the constant soundscape provided by both live and mediated music. These two signs, paired with the "Preserve America" sign, result in an interesting performative space that makes opaque the divisions between the multiple dualities present in Nashville. The Preserve America program is described on their website as follows: "Preserve America recognizes and designates communities, including municipalities, counties, neighborhoods in large cities, and tribal communities, that protect and celebrate their heritage, use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization, and encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs" (Preserve America 2012).

The District's branding as a preserved main street of America suggests that the tourist center (where, as I argue above, tourists are the locals), is a preserved America in contrast with the rest of the city outside its invisible borders. Within this space, the tourist performance moves beyond the socially unacceptable role of passive observer and becomes a performance of the past, of preservation, and of philanthropy. The preserved and confined downtown where such performances manifest is clearly indicated by visual and audible markers that inform tourists that they have indeed arrived in the heart of country music and that their presence is not only permitted but especially welcomed and crucial to the performance and preservation of their Music City. In other words, they are encouraged to feel that the real and preserved Nashville is kept alive through their continued visit to and performances of Music City.

Sound Barriers and the Confined Soundscape of Music City

Driving into downtown, most fans enter from one of several interstates that surround and pass through Nashville. Main thoroughfares leading to the District include Broadway and Demonbreun off of I-40 and Shelby Road and Woodland Street off of I-65. Each of these roads offers not only a way into the District but also provides periodic markers that one

has arrived in a culturally significant space. Of all the roads leading into the District, Broadway is the most suggested route in tourist literature, and it is the most welcoming and clearest threshold. Exiting Interstate 40 on to Broadway, tourists are immediately alerted of their close proximity to the District. Brown tourist signs marking important and relevant sites, such as the Country Music Hall of Fame and Ryman Auditorium, direct traffic down Broadway toward the tourist space. Visible almost immediately upon merging onto Broadway, a billboard dedicated to the Country Music Hall of Fame validates these smaller signs and markers while welcoming country-music fans to their desired Nashville. This invitation to step into history is followed by a large digital billboard welcoming all to "Music City." The closer one gets to the confined downtown district, the clearer the visual and audible markers become. Topping the hill at Broadway and Seventh Avenue, visitors catch their first glimpse of the District, which simultaneously suggests a preserved main street and a tourist spectacle. From this distance, tourists can see a number of neon guitars, fiddles, and boots decorating business marquees. These signs are within a highly populated area, pointing to places of musical and tourist performance and the overall vibrancy of the city. As one moves closer, landmarks such as the Country Music Hall of Fame, the world-famous honky tonks, and the Ryman Auditorium become visible, further solidifying the importance of the musical space with which visitors are now or will soon be interacting.

These visual cues are combined with and reinforced by the many sounds of live and mediated music coming from the District, creating a constant and shifting soundscape that reinforces the realness of Nashville as a music city while serving as a soundtrack for the tourist performance. Mapping the sound of Nashville further identifies the tourist district as a confined and "gated tourist" community, reflective of the imagined and performed Nashville, and illustrates the close relationship between visual and audible cues and the tourist performance. With few exceptions, there are no quiet spaces within the District. The downtown area is saturated with the sound of Nashville music, further reinforcing the authenticity of the city's past and present. Honky tonks provide sites where one can listen to live music, and the stages' placement close to the clubs' entrance, so that the music drifts out into the street, contributes to the overall Nashville soundscape. Cover bands, playing a mixture of classic

and contemporary country, provide live and intimate performances of visitors' favorite songs and become part of the tourists' soundscape even without their entering the club. In front of storefronts, where music-themed merchandise is sold but live music is not the featured product, street performers provide the soundtrack with music in a variety of styles, including country, old-time, jazz, folk, and rock. These musicians fill the sonic voids between clubs. While honky tonks provide anticipated performances, street performers provide the unexpected, reinforcing the myths of the backstage and the sense that Nashville is indeed alive—at least the Nashville preserved and performed within the District.

In addition to reinforcing the authenticity of the tourist experience and of Music City, the District is also marked by musical utility boxes that line the desired route into and through the musical city. In 2015, there were a total of twenty-five boxes, twenty-two of which were located in the downtown district.[5] The three outside the downtown district are located in areas that are also frequented by tourists and are an important part of the Nashville brand: on the roundabout at the entrance to Music Row, on the corner of Eleventh and Pine Streets in the Gulch, and at the corner of McGavock and Music Valley near the Grand Ole Opry Hotel and Nashville's Music Valley. The remaining boxes are found in the heart of the District or along the main thoroughfares into and through the tourist area. Boxes correspond with where people visit, but they also suggest walking routes and thereby help reinforce the musical Nashville that fans desire. Public parking locations near the District also reveal information about the boxes' placement and purpose. The closest parking spaces listed on parkitdowntown.com show the close proximity of the music boxes to parking areas, as well as the important role of mediated music in downtown Nashville. In most of these parking lots, when visitors turn off their car engines and step outside, they are immediately greeted with the musical sounds that brought them to the city. These music boxes serve as one element in the soundtrack for visitors' interaction with the city and contribute to the shifting soundscape, whose ubiquity continually reinforces visitors' notions that Nashville is an important music center. Because of the strategic positioning of these music boxes, one's first step into the

[5] The above placement of sound utility boxes was obtained from a map given to me by the Nashville Metro Government Customer Service.

District is often accompanied by the sound of the tradition on display. The music boxes also help draw attention to nearby tourist sites. For example, when visitors walk by the box on Third Avenue and Broadway, they hear Johnny Cash and see his image on the box's side. A quick glance around brings the Johnny Cash Museum, nearby on Third Avenue, into focus—the visitors have been sonically primed to now notice it. Similarly, boxes on Second Avenue across from the Schermerhorn Symphony Center play classical music, while boxes on Fifth Street and Charlotte near the Tennessee Performing Arts Center play Broadway tunes corresponding with the Broadway series held in the venue. These boxes serve as sonic guides and also as musical thresholds into the liminal performance of the city. In 2014, visitmusiccity.com instructed tourists to "just follow the music and discover for yourself why music calls us home" (2014). While the sound boxes provide early evidence that fans are indeed in Music City, and their placement can possibly shape the tourist's walk, or at least the tourist's gaze, the boxes heard throughout the district are only one small component of a rich geology of musical sounds that make up the entire Music City soundscape, using sonic suggestions to motivate tourist activity and convince them not only that the imagined is real, but that their participation in that constructed reality is crucial.

Nashville is therefore realized through an interaction with the imagined manifested within the visual and audible District. Due to the confined space, Nashville, in the mind of the performing tourist, is much smaller than Metropolitan Nashville. The visitor's Nashville is removed from reality, from a specific place and time. It is a stage for the performance of locality and liminality, the performance of belonging and community that lies between frontstage and backstage, place and placelessness, time and timelessness, realism and fantasy. These multiple dualities are played out through a series of touristic performances within the city, providing both a sense of belonging and, in some cases, ownership.

This role reversal and merging of host and guest cultures within the District is similar to experiences at music festivals, where new and isolated communities emerge for a brief period. But unlike a music festival, Nashville is not momentary but rather a continuous performance that encourages multiple visits, further reinforcing the "realness" of the visitor's experience. What fans know of and define as "Nashville" is directly dependent on their past trips to the city or on advice they've gleaned from tour

books, websites, and other music fans. While many fans may realize that they are participating in a staged "tourist" activity, most lack the information needed for an honest and thorough comparison with the Nashville that exists outside of the tourist gaze. Unique and intimate opportunities that occur only within the District and through a performance of locality present an authentic experience that transcends the frontstage and moves tourists closer to the backstage, off-limits area. In this process of immersion, fans become temporary locals of the performed city, a relationship that is heightened through an interaction with Nashville's many tourist sites.

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5

Country Music and the Sonic Artifact

Sites dedicated to preserving and showcasing Nashville's rich musical history are abundant throughout the city. These museums are must-see destinations on the music-tourist agenda, act as gateways into the culture being preserved and performed, and provide visitors a space to interact with culture in new and intimate ways. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett comments on the role of museums in cultural tourism: "Tourism needs destinations, and museums are premier attractions. Museums are not only destinations on an itinerary: they are also nodes in a network of attractions that form the recreational geography of a region and, increasingly, the globe. Museums, by whatever name, are also an integral part of natural, historical, and cultural sites" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p. 132).

Nashville's museums are also integral parts of the history and culture of the city, forming a dialogue among places of preservation, artifacts, songs, visitors, and the many performative spaces occurring outside the museum walls. Through this relationship, the past on exhibit, housed in the city's museum collections, authenticates the performances of the country-music tradition occurring in local clubs and in Nashville's designated tourist district. In return, the clubs present Nashville as a vibrant musi-

R.W. Fry, *Performing Nashville*, Leisure Studies in a Global Era,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-50482-1_5

cally alive city, which validates the museum exhibits and the history and continuation of the country-music tradition within Music City.

Museums dedicated to specific artists such as George Jones and Johnny Cash, to producers and studio musicians such as the Musicians Hall of Fame, to the history of a genre and its most notable icons such as the Country Music Hall of Fame, and iconic performance venues such as the Ryman Auditorium are integral to the tourist experience, serving as nodes that connect the complex narrative that is Music City. Immersion within these spaces transcribes history into a present experience and translates the audible into collective experiences and into physical objects that can be touched and/or gazed upon. The physicalization of sound therefore transforms the placelessness of recorded music into a physical object that is connected to the geographical specificity of its host city; in the process, tourists move beyond the passive role of spectator and become active performers of the past and present and mediators of this duality. Museums "transport tourists from a now that signifies hereness to a there that signifies thereness. The attribution of pastness creates distance that can be travelled," as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett points out (1998, p. 370). Through travel, fans become invested in the museum experience because of their appointed roles as mediators of history, the sonic artifact, and the many activities occurring outside of museum walls. Led by tour guides, other visitors, and self-guided script and/or audio, fans travel through country music's past via their interaction with artifacts and stories of the past in the performed present. However, this presented and performed duality is not clearly delineated but fluid. Interacting with Music City occurs within a liminal space between the past and present and, like the music being celebrated, becomes timeless. It is because of this interaction with sound—a placeless, timeless, massless, and mass-mediated object—that the music-museum experience is unique. While most tourist spaces are interpreted through multiple senses, the music museum replaces sound with the physical, elevating the object associated with sound over the sound itself.

In a recent essay titled "Sound Walking the Museum," Salome Voegelin borrows and expands on Howard Broomfield's thoughts on the contrasting ways we interact with the sights and sounds within and without the museum walls. Broomfield asks: "Vienna is a filthy, noisy city. Is this what happens when the public turns its attention to the concert

hall and museum, but forgets about the soundscape and the landscape of everyday life?" (Broomfield cited in Voegelin 2014, p. 119). Voegelin responds by noting that "While this might lead to a filthy, noisy, urban environment, the consequence of this separation must also be a lack of relevance of what is on display inside the museum or performed in the concert hall" (119). Voegelin proposes using a soundwalk first, introduced by R. Murray Schafer, as a way to better connect the sensory possibilities of a museum experience.[1] Voegelin's work, primarily concerned with the visual museum and the lack of multi-sensory experience within the museum, suggests using the soundwalk practice as a way to engage with the soundscape and look at the museum as not only a place for the visual but also the audio-visual: "The museum is not a visual place but an audio-visual environment unfolding its space in the time of ricocheting footsteps, sincere whispers, loud echoes of children's laughter, security guards' fuzzy walkie talkies, tour guides' hushed lectures, and a few audio-visual works that remind us that even the work is not as quiet as we might expect" (120).

While sound museums in Nashville and experiences within these museums are shaped by the extra-musical soundscape, which includes the sounds of tourists interacting with artifacts, recalling stories of songs and/or musical experiences, and singing along to a favorite song, the unique question that arises in a sound museum is how to transcribe the audible into the physical. Recorded sound can be and is experienced anywhere. In order to be an object for museum display, sound must be connected to the experiential and the physical and therefore to the artist who wrote or recorded the music, explained aptly by Chris Gibson and John Connell: "Unless connected to the mythologies and personal lives of key individual performers or styles, music is rarely a good museum theme" (2005, p. 125). Museums in Nashville present the city's musical commodity by focusing exhibits on iconic artists' lives and/or the themes of the country-music tradition. Through personal narratives and recurring themes, the sonic artifact is put on display next to the music's physical signifiers and their many meanings. In the music museum, it is therefore the visual that aids in the realization of the sound and connects the invisibility of sound

[1] For an in-depth discussion of Schafer's soundwalk see: Schafer (1977, 1993).

with the physicality of the object. Within the music museum, sound, the very thing that makes Nashville unique among other tourist destinations, is authenticated by physical objects that connect the visceral experience of listening to the physical experience of being there. Simultaneously, interaction with the sound ensures the authenticity of the object on exhibit. In addition, the contrast between experiences outside and inside the museum walls is softened within Nashville's soundscapes and landscapes. In Music City, the museum exhibit does not contrast with living culture but instead is extended into the present, strengthening the relevancy and authenticity of both the museum objects and the cultural soundscape.

Nashville comes alive through the welcoming invitation to perform and mediate the many sites throughout the city. While each site preserves and/or presents a history of country music, each also becomes a performative space for the many dualities that define Nashville and as the liminal space where touristic authenticity is realized. The following description of select sites, venues, and tours is based on my observations while visiting/touring the sites, talking with tourists, tour guides, students, and site organizers. Also included are my observations of the promotional materials used to sell and authenticate these sites' placement within the Nashville narrative and the museum script used to sell and authenticate the visit. In this chapter, sites and experiences are categorized using Chris Gibson's and John Connell's divisions of performance, preservation, and production (see Chap. 1). Through my descriptions, I hope to reiterate the importance of Nashville's performed dualities—backstage/frontstage, past/present, and real/fabricated—in the realization of both Music City and the tourist experience. This detailed look at several Nashville museums, clubs, and performance venues provides insight into the close relationship between the sound and landscapes of both the museum and its host city.

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

The Country Music Hall of Fame's stated mission is as follows:

> The Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum seeks to collect, preserve, and interpret the evolving history and traditions of country music. Through

> exhibits, publications, and educational programs, the museum teaches its diverse audiences about the enduring beauty and cultural importance of country music. (Country Music Hall of Fame, "Our Mission," 2016)

As stated, the museum is a place to, through collection, preservation, and exhibition, educate and celebrate the richness of the country-music tradition. This mission is evident even before entering the space or interacting with the many artifacts on display. The Country Music Hall of Fame describes the architecture of the building as follows:

> The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's acclaimed building celebrates country music's origins and inspirations through many architectural details. Viewed from above, the building's outline resembles a massive bass clef. The vertical windows in front are positioned like the black and white keys on a piano, and the dramatic sweep of the building's concrete roofline recalls the tail fin of a late 1950s Cadillac. A replica of the iconic WSM radio tower pierces the roof of the Hall of Fame Rotunda, also evoking a church steeple. The Hall of Fame Rotunda, with its cylindrical shape, references small town towers and grain silos. It is topped by four concentric circles that represent the 78-, 45-, and 33-rpm records and the compact disc. Stone bars on the outside of the Rotunda symbolize the musical notes of the Carter Family Song "Will the Circle Be Unbroken." Inside the conservatory entrance, bathed in natural light, features a steel frame inspired by the railroads and bridges connecting small-town America, a stream flowing from the second floor to a fountain in the Conservatory represents the movement of music across the American landscape. The floor consists of blocks of yellow pine, used in factories and warehouses. Walls of crab orchard stone, from East Tennessee, lend a rustic touch. (McCall 2015, pp. 3–4)

This description points to the hall's architectural uniqueness and its tribute to country music, the city of Nashville, and the region. But the above description also alludes to the many and recurring themes of both historic and contemporary country music, including home, spirituality, small-town America, the past, rural life, and nationalism, suggesting that the museum provides the opportunity to interact with both country music's historical artifacts and the timeless themes and stories of country music in the present, a key draw to the tradition and to the city. When tourists,

for example, discuss the reasons they love country music, its themes and lyrics are often referenced[2]:

Fan 1 "For me, the music is relatable. The themes and motives that are found in country music, they are ones that I feel like relate to my everyday life. You know, growing up in the country, small family—that's what I relate to, the stories."
Fan 2 "Country music comes from the soul and they're real-life stories that people can relate to."
Fan 3 "It is all about the storytelling in country music vs. something you can't relate to. It is very relatable music."

At the Hall of Fame and Museum, the themes heard in and associated with country music come alive for fans through a physical interaction with not only the artifacts but also the museum space, beginning with a greeter who welcomes tourists into the museum with a moment of anticipated Southern hospitality in a lobby that simultaneously suggests the grandeur of the tradition being celebrated and the simplicity of the music and its many themes housed inside.

After purchasing tickets at the box office, visitors line up for an elevator that will transport them to the exhibit and into the history of country music. In line, fans eagerly wait as surrounding cues remind them of the museum's importance. On the wall to the left is a list of musicians who participated in the "All for the Hall" program, an annual benefit concert to raise money for the Hall of Fame. Above this list, which includes Luke Bryan, Peter Frampton, Emmylou Harris, Keith Urban, Sam Hunt, Brad Paisley, Carrie Underwood, and the program's founder Vince Gill, is a thank-you note from the Hall to the artists for their contributions to the museum's mission.

On the wall behind the line is the well-known, oft-repeated Harlan Howard quote, "Country Music is three chords and the truth," which for many defines country music. Its prominent placement reinforces the importance of this space that is supported not only by the acknowledged

[2] Interviews and survey responses with fans used throughout the book were conducted between June 2014 and June 2016. All fan participants remain anonymous in the monograph.

artists, but also by the fans through the performative act of being there. With this introduction to country music and the connection to specific country artists, a greeter then invites the visitors into the elevator, and when they reach the top floor, they exit into the exhibit from a second set of doors on the opposite side of the elevator, simultaneously reinforcing the museum's motto "step into the story" and the sensation of a backstage experience that the museum promotes. The permanent collection begins with influential music predating the commercial genre; its juxtaposition with visitors' own touristic participation in the museum and surrounding contemporary country references immediately reminds tourists of the past/present duality present in country music. Directly across from the elevator exit, for example, is the Taylor Swift Education Center. Surrounding the educational center entrance and covering the entire third-floor wall are Hatch Show Print poster replicas portraying country music icons such as Merle Haggard, Loretta Lynn, and Flatt and Scruggs, documenting Nashville's long and continued history of both country music and printing. Right away, visitors are presented with a reminder that one of the most popular artists of the current music industry has donated money for a center to educate visitors about country-music heritage, in a location surrounded by posters chronicling the history and continuation of country music as a commercial genre. On the surface, it immediately connects the past to the present, but it also creates a sense of solidarity between a current artist and the current country-music fan base. Like the list of All for the Hall concert participants, this evidence of Swift's support for education and country-music preservation seems to prove her own passion for the genre and therefore joins artist and fan, past and present. This past/present duality is realized through the performance of heritage, which Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines as "a mode of cultural production that has recourse to the past and produces something new" (2012, p. 199). The country music fans and the country music star collectively become both the interpreters of history and the artifacts on display. This experience is heightened for fans through the Hall's audio tour, available for an additional fee.

In the audio tour, WSM radio and Grand Ole Opry personality Bill Cody introduces the space and provides a brief description of the overall museum layout and specific exhibits within the permanent collection.

The tour begins with an introduction to the Hall in which Bill Cody reinforces the past/present duality found throughout the museum by ensuring fans that they will have the opportunity to interact with both the past and present of country music (an experience that visitors are already experiencing due to the pairing of Hatch Show Print and Taylor Swift at the very location where tourists are prompted to listen to the introduction). Cody then introduces the permanent collection, titled "Sing Me Back Home," after first mapping out the floors. Floor 3: nineteenth century to the 1960s. Floor 2: 1960s to the present. Cody states: "As the Merle Haggard song title suggests, the exhibit is an exploration of the power of music to make history and to connect us to our deepest feelings" (Cody, Country Music Hall of Fame, Audio Tour 2016). Again, country-music history is paired with the current industry and the fan experience. The brief introduction prepares tourists for their interaction with the space and its artifacts, while also reminding them that, as listeners, they are part of the tradition and, through an interaction with the sonic artifact and its accompanying physical objects, they are allowed to recall and be at home within the museum space.

The past/present duality is continued throughout the museum, as on the third floor's "Precious Jewels" collection, a museum highlight for artists and fans alike. Here, Maybelle Carter's, Jimmie Rodgers', Hank Williams', and Lester Flatt's guitars, Earl Scruggs' banjo, and Bill Monroe's mandolin are proudly on display. Fans come within inches of the instruments that played the genre-changing and genre-defining songs written or interpreted by the true icons of the country-music tradition. In an almost religious experience, tourists who are already aware of the country-music tradition pause to contemplate these relics of the genre's history, in awe of standing so close to the musical past and instruments that are so intimately connected to the musical icons who made that history. Fans interact with the exhibit through musical conversation and recollection with others, impromptu lectures, musical nostalgia, and attempts at capturing selfies with the instrument without the glare from the glass museum cases. In the audio tour, this exhibit is narrated by country-music performer and hall of famer Vince Gill, who points out the unique relationship between artist and instrument and these instruments' significance in country music history: "Instruments are the tools

that musicians use to create their music, but they are more than that. Instruments are treasured companions for musicians and, in many ways, extensions of a musician's personality" (Gill, Country Music Hall of Fame, Audio Tour 2016).

The museum's mission of preservation is reiterated by the instruments' personification and the reminder of their importance in country-music history. The exhibit's placement within the museum and Gill's narration also connect country music's heritage to its ongoing and changing tradition. One can see reflected in the "Precious Jewels" collection's glass the temporary exhibit spaces displayed beside the observation windows into the Hall of Fame archives. For instance, from September 18, 2015 to February 21, 2016, the exhibit on Eric Church titled *Inside the Outsider* displayed Church's clothes, musical instruments, sunglasses, song lyrics, and so on, all of which are much closer to country music's present than the Hall's "Precious Jewels" on the facing wall. Standing between the two displays, museum visitors inhabit a liminal space between past and present. The significance of Church's exhibit at the Hall of Fame is reinforced through its close proximity to the "Precious Jewels" collection, only feet away, which is mutually reinforced by this connecting of history to the present and restating of the importance and influence of these iconic instruments and their performing artists, the vestiges of whose image and musical stylings can be heard and seen in current artists like Eric Church.

Another example is the first museum case with which visitors interact, featuring a pair of bones, a minstrel-show guide, and a copy of the sheet music for James Bland's "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny." This exhibit of African American folk music and its appropriated form on the minstrel stage by white performers illustrates African American music's influence and how it was borrowed in the birth of "country music." A video screen immediately across from the exhibit gives proof of this influence, playing a program titled "Going Back to Dixieland" that features video footage of The Blue Ridgers with Cordelia Mayberry performing the Stephen Foster song "Oh Susanna," a nineteenth-century hit made famous on the minstrel stage. As visitors face the minstrel-show exhibit's glass case, they see the video's reflection; on the other side of the glass, they can see the temporary Gretsch Guitars exhibit. Looking through the glass case of the nineteenth-century minstrel-show exhibit, visitors can see a modern

guitar and the name "Chet Atkins," one of the fathers of the modern country-music industry. Nearby, on a film reel labeled "Country Roots," African American artist Uncle John Scruggs is seen and heard playing another song made famous on the minstrel stage, "Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane," which later became one of the first commercial songs in country music. While the minstrel exhibit is the first of many tracing country music's chronology, this museum moment captures the genre's history in one gaze, connecting the traditions past and present. While not all visitors consciously make these connections at first, these musical and cultural themes continue to unfold throughout the museum, culminating in a stroll through the Hall of Fame Rotunda, where bronze plaques immortalizing country-music icons past and present signify their permanence.

In her book *Performing the Past: A Study of Israeli Settlement Museums*, Tamar Katriel points out that the past is presented in one of two contrasting ways: memory orientation, designed to connect the past to the present through atemporal experiences, and historical orientation, where the past is presented in a linear, chronological fashion with influence on the present (1997, pp. 99–100). The Country Music Hall of Fame, like many pop-culture museums, works within both of these orientations. Country-music historiography is told in a linear way: tourists begin with nineteenth-century music and travel through the exhibit and through time exploring the genre's chronological continuation and development. However, the sound and video clips, artifacts, and interactive exhibits encourage fans to pause and remember first hearing a song, seeing an artist, or attending a performance. While told through historical orientation, the museum narrative is therefore authenticated and made personal through memory orientation. Unlike a museum of ancient artifacts that have little to no "real" connection with an individual's present life, the cultural artifacts on display at the Hall of Fame are directly connected to songs that were listened to in the past and can be replayed in the present, forming a soundtrack to one's individual and communal memory and its unfolding. As Tia Denora writes, "like an article of clothing or an aroma, music is part of the material and aesthetic environment in which it was once playing, in which the past, now an artifact of memory and its constitution, was once a present . . . . music reheard and recalled

provides a device for unfolding, for replaying, the temporal structure of that moment, its dynamism as emerging experience. This is why, for so many people, the past comes alive to its soundtrack" (2000, p. 64). In the Country Music Hall of Fame, these contrasting orientations of historiography, past, and present reinforce and complement each other. Visitors throughout the museum can be witnessed singing along, dancing, or just smiling as the songs on display unfold their own memories of and connections to country music.

The performed duality of backstage/frontstage is also apparent throughout the museum space and is likewise immediately viewable upon exiting the elevator and "stepping into" the museum space. Architectural designs such as the wood floors, low-hanging lights, and visible catwalk above the exhibits are reminiscent of a stage where the artists on exhibit have performed and where museum patrons are now performing, and the effect is heightened by Bill Cody's audio-guide introduction. When visitors begin the tour, facing the permanent collection "Sing Me Back Home," they are given two simultaneous museum experiences. On the left is the chronological history, artifacts, and sounds of country music. On the right is the archive, which is visible through glass walls. Video screens featuring performances that correspond with the exhibits are visibly framed by the working archive, providing a glimpse into the backstage, off-limit area of the museum, itself designed as a backstage area of country music. Through the glass, museum staff are visible examining and sorting guitar cases, recordings, artifacts, and papers, providing both a performance of the back region and an authentication of the front-region performance space.

The archive is referenced throughout the museum, reinforcing the museum's mission while also providing a glimpse into the desired backstage. On the third floor, for example, the preservation booth, where recordings are readied for the museum's collection, is its own exhibit with an accompanying video that asks if "you are wondering what is behind the glass," in reference, of course, to the archives. Notably, everything in the museum is behind glass. The archive's placement behind museum glass does not distinguish it from the exhibits but instead signifies that the space and its unknown treasures are as important as the artifacts on permanent and temporary display, and, like all other important artifacts

on display, they are described to visitors with a plaque titled "Behind the Glass," located on the third floor near the beginning of the permanent collection, which reads:

> The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's collection is accessioned, preserved, and stored using the best museum practices. Like many accredited museums with large holdings, we display less than a tenth of the artifacts in our collection at one time. Here in the design gallery, curators and archivists prepare artifacts for exhibit and carry out other tasks related to the preservation and interpretation of the collection. As they work, you can catch a sneak preview of our latest acquisitions, or see treasures from deep within the vaults. (Behind the Glass 2016)

These treasures, while visible to visitors, are unmarked, creating a curious interaction with the museum's back region. While I was noting the above description, for example, two artifacts caught my attention and that of other visitors. On a guitar stand near the back of the archives was a banjo with an autographed head, and next to it was a guitar case with a tag. From our viewing location, we couldn't identify specific autographs or museum descriptions, causing us to wonder and speculate aloud on who may have owned and played these instruments: Did the banjo belong to Earl Scruggs, and was the guitar that of his partner Lester Flatt? While the artists connected to these instruments remained a mystery, the opportunity to collectively gaze backstage and imagine seemed unique, intimate, and outside of the tourist agenda. Here, Dean MacCannell's discussion of the back region as a place only realized through imagination is both on exhibit and performed for fans (1973, 1976). The backstage, seen through the windows and through the filter of the tourist gaze, provides a glimpse of artifacts whose identity is left up to the fan's imagination. These undefined archival artifacts—both the items and the researchers on display with them—become as important as those on display in the authentication of the museum and of the fan experience. When conducting my own research in the archive reading room, I was aware that I, too, had become an artifact, seated directly behind the second-floor exhibits, my actions narrated by Vince Gill's description of the space. Now, my placement in the back region, off-limits area was of interest to others, as well as

how I had obtained access into this area, separated from the exhibit space by merely a temporary wall of museum artifacts.

Not only the archive on display, but also the act of touring the museum space is performative. The permanent collection plays on the utopian idea of home and family common to country music and earlier forms of American roots music (see Chaps. 2 and 3). From the beginning of the tour, the Hall welcomes fans into the performative space with the museum slogan "Step Inside This House," suggesting that this is more than a museum visit; it is a homecoming and a chance to interact with others in the family of country music. The permanent exhibit is introduced with a sign that reads:

> Country music has always been about real people and real lives. Whether performed on homemade instruments for family and friends or on high-tech gear for thousands of people, country music communicates shared truths and common experience. It speaks directly and eloquently to the human heart through songs about love, loss, and everyday joys and sorrows. From its origins in folk tradition to its vibrant life in the 20th century, country's essential spirit remains unchanged, even as its sounds evolve with the times. Join us for the journey as we explore country music's history. (Introduction 2016)

Within this museum welcome and introduction, fans are reminded of country music's recurring themes, its history, and its continuation as a musical tradition. Most importantly, fans are invited on the journey and to become part of the tradition, welcomed to join in the performance rather than observe from a far.

Journeying through the collection, fans are invited to view artifacts unique to country superstars, and through such an intimate glimpse into the lives of the stars, they learn the history of country music: costumes worn by Hank Williams, Roy Rogers, Patsy Cline, and Wanda Jackson; instruments such as Deford Bailey's harmonica, Fiddlin' John Carson's fiddle, and Pee Wee King's accordion. Accompanying these artifacts are listening stations, video screens, and photographs, where the instrument or artifact on display is seen in the hands or on the body of the connected performer. Gold records line the walls, and select discs

are playable, allowing for more interactive experiences. The country-music tradition unfolds within the museum space in a multi-sensory experience for the visitor. Through listening, viewing, and touching, the past comes alive to its soundtrack and connects to the present tradition and the experiences happening outside of the museum and within the fan's memoryscape.

Musicians Hall of Fame

While the Country Music Hall of Fame provides a backstage glimpse into the history of country music and its most revered icons, the Musicians Hall of Fame, a few blocks away from the District, presents a musical backstage experience which the museum describes as follows: "The Musicians Hall of Fame is a premiere Nashville attraction and the one and only museum in the world that honors the talented musicians who actually played on the greatest recordings of all time" (Musicians Hall of Fame 2016). The exhibits focus on studio musicians and producers of popular music, those behind and responsible for musical scenes, sounds, and celebrity musicians.

Throughout, the museum contains references to celebrity connections and to Nashville's most famous musical institutions, including the Grand Ole Opry, the Ryman, and RCA Studio B, as a means of connecting the sonic to the physical. The connection between artist and sound is used as a way of shifting the tourist gaze away from the celebrity and toward the art of music making and the musicians responsible for the sounds we identify with, instead of the celebrity artists whose image we often solely associate with these sounds. The museum's slogan, "Come see what you've heard," reiterates the message that the exhibits are not about mere celebrity memorabilia but instead focus on the physicality and visualization of sound, giving the visitor insight into the music-industry backstage and the recorded medium. In addition, the museum's location outside of the standard tourist path within the District suggests a possible interaction with the real Nashville and the popular music that is improvised and outside of the tourist ritual. While there is a sign on Lower Broadway and Fourth Avenue directing tourists toward the museum, when visitors walk

the few blocks in that direction, they leave the tourist district and have the opportunity to interact with a "back region" of the city not included in the standard tourist agenda.

The Hall's collection is divided geographically into musical regions and includes exhibits on Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Memphis, Atlanta, Detroit, Muscle Shoals, and, of course, Nashville. Each of these music cities, represented and recognized by its own indelible sound and studios, comes alive in the museum through recreated recording and performance spaces, images of and quotes from musical personalities, and displays of instruments, recording equipment, videos, and sound recordings. As in the Country Music Hall of Fame, artifacts are combined with sounds, which are connected to musicians, who narrate the museum space. Unlike the Country Music Hall of Fame, many of the individuals telling the stories are unfamiliar to average listeners and music tourists, because the focus is on the creative process rather than the finished product. Throughout the exhibit, audiences are given the backstage opportunity to learn more about a sound through an introduction to the perhaps unfamiliar musicians responsible for much of the sound rather than the celebrity who is usually given complete credit in the music's promotion and presentation.

To reinforce the museum's emphasis on sound, the visit starts and ends in the same space, with an exhibit showcasing the history of recorded sound and mediums, reminding visitors before they enter the exhibit that the museum's focus is on what you have heard rather than what you have seen. Leaving this opening display on the history of recorded sound, visitors enter a theater to view a video that explains the site's importance and the uniqueness of seeing and hearing the behind-the-scenes of a recorded song. Museum visitors are then invited into the Hall, where they interact with instruments, sound boards, amplifiers, and reconstructions of some of the most famous studios in popular-music history. The recreation of musical spaces and the immersion into the production experience allow fans to step into the studios, replicas of places of production that are usually off-limits to the fans of the music that is produced there. Entering these exhibits becomes an imagined interaction with a replicated space and, therefore, a perceived interaction with and performance of a desired back region of Music

City. Signs and plaques connecting celebrity images and quotes with backstage musicians reinforce the importance of the artifacts and replicas on exhibit while also connecting the musical past to the present and to the larger Music City narrative. Exhibits on studio ensembles such as the Funk Brothers, the RCA A-Team, the Wrecking Crew, the Blue Moon Boys, and the Swampers among others are paired with the instruments they played and lists of recordings where the instruments may be heard, while select songs are played in audio examples to accompany the visitor's interaction with the space and the housed artifacts. This museum tells a too-often unheard story of studio musicians and producers, but visiting the museum also complements and completes the story told at the nearby Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and experienced within Nashville's many live music venues. After my first visit, I left with a sense that I had experienced something unique to the city, a backstage glimpse into the musical past of recorded music, where sound mediated through the placelessness of recorded technology becomes tangible—something to see, to experience, and to connect to. Like the Country Music Hall of Fame and the many honky tonks of Lower Broadway, this realization relies on the tourist quest for a performed past and an interaction with the backstage and unique Nashville experience of stepping into, performing, and mediating the backstage past in the present.

Musicians on Display

The Nashville museums dedicated to specific musicians show country music through the lens of its most iconic practitioners, giving visitors both backstage and historical experiences, insight into the creative process, and a stronger connection with music, its geographical and personal origins, and the identifiable country music brand. Within these spaces, personal lives, so often hidden from view in the supposed back region of the music industry, are on public display. The Nashville museums dedicated to the life and music of individual performers Johnny Cash and George Jones are interesting examples of the celebrity showcase and the ways fans interact with and experience these spaces.

Johnny Cash Museum

Opened in 2013, the Johnny Cash Museum was the first museum dedicated to an individual performer in the downtown area in recent years, in contrast with the Nashville tourist district of the 1970s and 1980s near Music Row, which advertised fan museums and gift shops dedicated to several living artists and bands such as Barbara Mandrell, Alabama, Conway Twitty, and Hank Williams, Jr. Unlike these former "vanity" museums, which all closed in the late 1990s, recent downtown museums are dedicated to remembering a deceased performer's legacy rather than to promoting a current artist's popularity or future legacy. The musicians honored by today's downtown museums are some of the most iconic musicians of the country tradition, and their musical careers are also chronicled in other Nashville museums. Building on these stories, individual artist museums offer country-music fans a more intimate gaze into the industry through an icon's personal and professional life. Soon after the Cash Museum's founding in 2013, the George Jones museum opened on Second Avenue, two years after Jones' death in April 2013, and a museum on Broadway dedicated to Patsy Cline's life and music is in the planning stages.

At the Cash Museum, Johnny Cash's musical and personal life is narrated through his musical catalog and realized through fans' interaction with Cash's personal artifacts, revealing of not only Cash's life but also country-music history more broadly. Listed on the museum's website are quotes by politicians, artists, journalists, and family members about the space, the musician, and potential experiences visitors may have within the museum walls. Of special interest are terms of endearment by Cash's closest friends and family, such as the following by Duane Allen of the Oak Ridge Boys: "When I went through the museum, it just captivated my every thought. It was so real, and so classy, that I almost felt that just around the corner, the man in black would rise, again, from his easy chair, and give me a big old bear hug. I dearly loved that man. I will go back to the museum again when I have time to really listen to and read all of the wonderful collection pieces." And this conjecture by Johnny's son, John Carter Cash: "I believe he would be excited about this, and believe in. I think this offers a true picture of my father, and shows a deeper insight into his spirit and who he

really was" (The Johnny Cash Museum 2016). Such personal statements verify for tourists the authenticity of the museum space and their potential experiences there. Interacting with the space and the many artifacts on display therefore provides insight into Johnny Cash's life and is verified by firsthand accounts of those who knew Cash personally.

Like other Nashville museums, this one is organized chronologically but simultaneously presents the dualities of past/present, backstage/frontstage, and real/fabricated. Walking into the museum, one first sees an exhibit on Cash and the Tennessee Two, Cash's band for over 25 years, showcasing the start of his music before his personal life is addressed. Proceeding, one observes a time line of Cash's musical life to the right of the museum path, with specific musical selections representing each decade of his life. To the left of the path are artifacts that tell of Cash's early life, such as a Sears and Roebuck Guitar (the same model as Cash's first instrument), school yearbooks, childhood toys, a Future Farmers of America membership card, postcards from a high-school senior trip, and so on. Not only are fans drawn to interact with a backstage area—the personal life of an iconic celebrity—but they are also mediating the past/present relationship inherent in Cash's music. Fans are allowed to listen to the music while interacting with the man through his personal objects and mementos of his experiences. In the process, the music comes to life, and the Johnny Cash myth and brand becomes personified.

This dual exhibit of past and present continues throughout the museum space. Artifacts including gifts from Folsom Prison inmates, Maybelle Carter's autoharp, a collection of hats Cash wore in Hollywood films, awards, furniture taken from the House of Cash, a Valentine's gift once given to June Carter Cash, personal letters, autographs, and so on immerse visitors into the musician's life and his craft. These artifacts are reinforced through the art, listening stations, video clips, and interactive exhibits which shift the visitor's attention from the artist to the music. This back-and-forth focus on the museum space, a front region designed for the tourist, and the illusion of a back, off-limit region fueled by the many artifacts and sounds on display results in a powerful fan experience where the focus is fluid, ever changing among the man, the music, and the history of country music. Before exiting, fans are reminded that Cash's music is still alive by an interactive exhibit that allows fans to listen to covers of Cash's music by current artists from all genres.

Fans are also reminded that in addition to inspiring musicians, Cash also listened to and was influenced by other artists. The final exhibit one sees before exiting into the brightly lit gift shop is a screening of the award-winning 2002 video of an elderly Cash's cover of Trent Reznor's haunting song "Hurt." The video includes snapshots of Cash recalling his past life after the line "I remember everything." Images of Cash performing on stage and walking with June are contrasted with that of the elderly Cash remembering his past. Images of an earlier closed Cash museum located near the Cash estate in Hendersonville, Tennessee are seen throughout the video, a comparison that, according to video director Mark Romanek, was made to reinforce Cash's deteriorating health (Binelli 2003).

Within the current museum, the reference to the old, closed museum also suggests the Cash legacy's resilience, because many of the artifacts featured in the video are back on display within the new museum space. This is also true of Johnny Cash himself, who died in 2003, a year after the video was released: Tourists are left with the illusion of intimacy, a moment of interaction with the artist. Visitors are allowed to remember Johnny Cash as he remembers himself in the video.

Leaving the museum space and exiting the gift ship is not the end of the exhibit, as tourists exit onto Nashville's Third Avenue and Broadway more aware of and educated on Cash's musical life and influence. Listening, one can now hear Cash's songs, or others that he directly influenced, from the nearby honky tonks, street musicians, and music boxes at crosswalks. His image is present in honky tonks around town, on posters in store windows, as souvenirs in Music City gift shops, and on bumper stickers that need only one word, written in bold capitals: "CASH." The past one has experienced in the museum is continued in the streets through Cash's influence on and placement in the history and mythology of country music and on the city that is now performed by Cash's fans.

George Jones Museum

Opened in 2015, the George Jones Museum on Nashville's Second Avenue is a tribute to the Possum, his music, and his love for music. *People Magazine* reported at the grand opening: "Jones's widow, Nancy, seems to have kept … every other artifact and piece of memorabilia important to

telling the story of the man many consider the greatest country singer of all time" (Kruh 2015). In *People Magazin*e and on the museum's website, Nancy reiterates her mission: "I want everybody that knows and loves music to know about this guy and how much he loved it" (Kruh 2015).

Dedicated to the life of a specific iconic artist, this museum is narrated by artifacts collected and curated by Nancy Jones, the person closest to the museum subject, which go beyond a presentation of Jones' music; they are also signifiers of the man and a personal relationship and therefore provide an interaction with the musician's private life. At the bottom of the "About" page on the museum's website, there is a video clip created by Larry McCormack for the *Tennessean* of Nancy talking about George's last words: "All of a sudden he opened his eyes . . . and George said, 'Well, hello there.' He said, 'I have been looking for you.' He said, 'My name is George Jones,' and he was gone. He closed his eyes, and that was the end of it, so in my heart I know he was talking to God" (George Jones Museum, "About" 2016).

These stories of the man rather than the artist add to the sense that one is being given insight into a personal life, a sense that comes alive through such interactions with the past/present and the frontstage/backstage of George Jones' life throughout the museum. Upon entering the museum floor, visitors are first met by a video of Alan Jackson talking about Jones' influence on his own career. As in the Johnny Cash Museum, the exhibit begins with the music, followed by the artist's life. While Jones is among the most well-known country-music artists and among the most influential voices in all of popular music, the exhibit goes beyond Jones as an artist to also showcase his love for the country music genre. After the initial reminder of Jones' musical legacy, he is immediately presented as a young boy. His original guitar on the wall and descriptions of his love for artists including Hank Williams, Roy Acuff, and Lefty Frizzell personalize the celebrity. Through this exhibit of George Jones' fandom for his own musical heroes, George Jones the country-music legend is made more approachable and the exhibit more personal.

The museum is organized chronologically, directing the visitor through important moments in Jones' musical career. Listening and video stations provide interaction with Jones' music in close proximity to his personal artifacts, instruments, awards, and so on, which reinforce the musical

sounds and connect them to the museum space and to the artist. Visitors are then invited into a recording booth where they can sing along with the Possum. These moments for musical and personal interaction are supported by the surrounding personal items that once belonged to the star; some are expected, such as instruments, awards, and stage clothing, but it is the unexpected items that offer the greater illusion of intimacy, such as a driver's license application, passports, a Costco membership card, and collections of signed footballs, whiskey bottles, belt buckles, and pocket knives. These artifacts are truly of the back region previously outside the audience's view, and they therefore offer a museum experience that goes beyond sound while also authenticating it. The exhibit ends with a photograph of the musicians who performed at the George Jones tribute show after his death in a concert that had originally been scheduled as a performance by the star himself. The number of musicians who participated speaks to Jones' influence, while the number of musicians who have signed the guest wall included in this display proves how many have visited the museum and paid their respects to George Jones. This shared admiration among audiences and artists for a performer is in itself an experience of country-music intimacy that brings fans together and allows for a truly back-region experience and view into George Jones' life and music, the country-music tradition, and Nashville.

Willie Nelson Museum and Gift Shop

Eleven miles away from Nashville's downtown tourist district is the Willie Nelson and Friends Museum and General Store, a 36 year old institution located in Music Valley, a shopping area across the street from the Grand Ole Opry Hotel and the former location of Opryland Amusement Park (now the home of Opry Mills Mall), and in between the Nashville Palace, a revived Music Valley honky tonk, and Cooter's Dukes of Hazzard Museum and gift shop. While all of Nashville's museums include a gift shop, the Willie Nelson Museum seems to be more of a gift shop (it is billed as Nashville's largest) that includes a museum.

One enters the gift shop first, and at the back of the building, near a display of guitar-shaped key chains, whiskey-barrel magnets, and a

Willie Nelson plush toy, there is a swinging saloon door leading into the museum space, where visitors are greeted by a large cardboard cutout of Willie Nelson. Above the door is a flashing neon "open" sign framed by two plaques detailing the museum's origins and content, implying a strong connection between fan and performer, artifact and experience.

Unlike many music institutions in Nashville, this museum has not only a story of preservation but also a story of true fandom and friendship, harkening back to a time before Nashville's downtown revitalization and tourist-center relocation. Mark Hughes, museum owner and manager, shared with me the museum's origins and the history of his personal and family connections to Willie Nelson:

> Mother started out at Rick Records, which was a, obviously, one of the many independent record companies, so at that time she worked with some of the writers, like Kristofferson and Mel Tillis, so she kind of got to know them through the work and so forth. . . . In that time period, Frank, my stepfather, worked for this company, Mary Carter Paint. So, Mary Carter Paint was a sponsor of the Grand Ole Opry, so Frank's job at Mary Carter was to go and recruit country-music singers to represent Mary Carter paints during their spots on the Opry.

Looking at the exhibit, Mark pointed me toward a picture of Faron Young singing on the Opry stage with the Mary Carter Paint banner in the background and continued to tell the story of his mother and stepfather and the museum's creation: "He got hooked up, talked to Faron, signed Faron with Mary Carter, and that's really the genesis of all the relationships, because they [his parents] got along really very, very well with Faron. They liked each other."

As he shared the story of their friendship, each artifact in the museum exhibit sparked a memory of Willie Nelson, but more importantly, about his parents. Mark pointed, for example, to another picture of Frank and Jeanie Oakley's wedding and to Faron Young, who was the best man: "From that, time went on, and because my mother knew these people from the record business, Frank was a big fan of the whole country-music scene. . . . And so with this connection to Faron, it got him hooked up with a lot of people." Mark next connected Faron Young, Willie Nelson, his parents, and the museum's creation:

> Now, Faron recorded Willie's first number-one song, which was "Hello Walls." As a songwriter, that was the first song that Willie wrote that reached number one, performed by Faron, so Faron and Willie became great friends, which almost by default pulled my parents into it. Kind of spread from there because, at the time, in the early '70s, we had a picture framing shop in Madison…
>
> She got out of that [record] business, Frank got out of the paint company, and they opened a picture-framing shop and began framing picture frames for a whole lot of the music people.

As Mark continued to show me around the museum, he pointed to the many display cases, stating:

> Pretty much all of the people in this museum, the whole thing evolved from over the years, these people giving my parents stuff, and they finally said, "Well gee, let's make a little museum." Most of this . . . is very personal, museum by default almost.

As Mark guided me through the museum, each artifact's story connected to the larger story of his parents and their relationship with Willie Nelson and, by extension, his friends. He pointed out that many tourists are unaware of these connections: "There is so much of this stuff. Everything in here has a story that I am aware of simply because I lived through it, where the casual observer, you read it and go on." Walking through the museum, fans of Willie Nelson and of traditional country music get an up-close glimpse at his instruments, personal letters, photographs, clothing, furniture, awards, and other memorabilia meant to provide the sense of a backstage interaction with Willie Nelson and an immersion into the country-music tradition. At the surface level, the exhibit is about Willie Nelson, the country-music icon. On a deeper level, it is about a complex relationship, a friendship between an artist and his fans, and a true love for country music. Mark explained that in the 1970s, many stars had museums, and the reason this museum has survived when others closed is because of his parents' love for country music rather than commercial interests: "For my parents, this wasn't really, I don't want to really call it a business for them, it's just what they enjoyed doing, that's why it went on and on."

On my first visit to the museum, I objectively admired several pieces, including the guitar Nelson played at his 1963 Opry premiere and a booth from Tootsie's, the downtown honky tonk where Nelson got his Nashville start. But after my private tour with the owner, the stories of these artifacts gave them life—not necessarily the stories of Willie Nelson, but those of how these items were obtained and the growth of a friendship between the artist and his fans, and their story is as interesting a part of the museum as the celebrity artifacts. Exhibited beside the photographs of Willie Nelson and his celebrity friends are images of Mark's parents, Frank and Jeanie Oakley. After reading the brief description of the museum's origins, visitors enter and immediately see a picture of Frank and Jeanie Oakly with Willie Nelson. Nearby, a painting of the museum hangs side by side with images of a young Willie Nelson and his hometown of Abbot, Texas, with the label "Birthplace of a Legend," a powerful statement about Willie Nelson's hometown but also about the museum and its creators. And as I was leaving the museum, I noticed a photograph of Jeanie Oakley with Ray Charles taken at Willie Nelson's birthday party. From beginning to end, this museum is the history not only of Willie, but also of Frank and Jeanie, Willie and friends.

At first, I was dismayed by the lack of interaction within the museum space. While traditional country music was playing on a stereo, and a video clip was playing on a screen from the back of the room, providing a soundtrack for interacting with the collection, there were no interactive stations providing up-close, personal interaction with the music and the space, except in the act of consumerism in the gift shop and the Willie Nelson Fortune Teller machine near the checkout, which offers advice for a dollar.

After leaving the museum space and spending some time writing field notes and thinking about my most recent museum experience, I found that trying to place these experiences within the backstage/frontstage and past/present dualities that form the Nashville experience was difficult. It was only when I began to think about the museum's creation that my experience was realized in the framework of these dualities: The back region, while present in an interaction with celebrity memorabilia, does not truly offer the backstage experience. Instead, the museum founders' very act of collecting this memorabilia leads to a unique and back-region

experience for the fan, who observes the evidence of the process. As a fan of Willie Nelson and of traditional country music myself, I found that I felt closer to the artist not because of the artifacts on display, but because I, too, could imagine collecting these artifacts as a fan, turned friend, turned museum curator, just as Frank and Jennie Oakley had done and testified about so personally and publicly by displaying their collection as a "museum"-cum-temple. Willie Nelson and his many friends on display, through the Oakleys' sharing of their own personal experience, become approachable for other fans. The theme of friendship on exhibit invited me in and provided the illusion that I was not among objects, but among friends, and that, in our shared affinity, I was included.

Places of Production and Performance

Places of production and performance allow an intimate, immersive experience into the sounds of country music unobtainable at other sites. Rather than interacting with an artifact in a place of preservation, the place itself is the artifact, and the tourist becomes part of the performance. The following studies of RCA Studio B and the Ryman Auditorium reinforce this idea of space as both museum exhibit and theatrical stage.

RCA Studio B

A tour of RCA Studio B, Nashville's only studio tour, is offered only as a guided tour that begins with a bus ride from the Country Music Hall of Fame. Like Nashville music museums, a trip to the studio further exemplifies the duality of past/present, front/backstage, and real/fabricated found elsewhere in Nashville. Fans are transported from the museum space that preserves history to the studio space where that history was made, as if they are traveling back in time to an undisclosed location within the historic and mythologized Music Row. Because they are taken there by bus, and the studio is not open for walk-up tours otherwise, it is as if the studio's location is hidden or undisclosed, which provides visitors with the feeling that they are traveling into historic Nashville and allows

them to immerse themselves in the space that fully established Nashville as the home of country music. It is a completely disciplined ritual, yet the limited access to the space and the time-like travel that occurs en route results in the illusion of an improvised performance. The theme of travel, of a journey back in time, was a common trope that I heard used by multiple tour guides on my multiple trips to the studio space. Personal stories of iconic artists interacting with the site are combined with the history of the technology that led to the studio's success and the guide's own personal connections with the space. Fans are given inside information, hear songs recorded in the studio and personal stories of the musicians, and are shown microphones and instruments used by the recording artists, including the very piano heard in recordings by Floyd Cramer, the Everly Brothers, Roy Orbison, Dolly Parton, and, of course, Elvis Presley, who recorded over half of his catalog within this sacred musical space and is the focus of much of the guided tour. The interaction with the objects and the geographical space responsible for recorded music results in an authentically perceived experience of sonic and cultural immersion. Luke Gilfeather, former RCA Studio B manager, explained the tour as such:

> Any of the artifacts that we could tell them were there at the time, they loved. There was a Mono Ampex 300 tape machine out front in the very first room that was original to the building, so that was one of the things that tour guides always tried to mention. People loved that. Of course people loved the grand piano in there because it was original, and people could imagine the stories surrounding that with Elvis and the Jordanaires. . . all of the hits that they were hearing played back having been played on that piano and the other instruments in there, like the vibes and the marimba and the tack piano and the celesta. . all of that stuff was original and appears on all of those albums . . . That was the real draw because they could play the music and say, "Listen to that piano. It's this one, not one like it. It's this actual piano." That was a very direct connection for people.

The emotional experience of interacting with historical artifacts is also enhanced through stories of famed celebrities and of the recording process, which is best represented by the focus on Elvis Presley throughout the tour. Located next to the touchscreen jukebox, used by guides to provide a soundtrack for the room and the studio narrative, is a display wall

featuring the many hits Elvis recorded here. After learning about Elvis, the pictures on the back wall of numerous other artists—such as the Everly Brothers, Dottie West, Charley Pride, Waylon Jennings, Dolly Parton, and Porter Wagoner—are pointed out, each seeming to stare at the King, who stands alone in the corner of the room. Their music, also available on the jukebox, becomes an alternate sonic and interactive experience when the tour guide allows fans to choose a selection or two. Following the musical introduction, the tour then follows a hallway into smaller rooms, where visitors are introduced to the Nashville Number System, recording technology, and the history of the space and are shown videos of musicians recording there, which helps bring the historic studio to life. This step into the hits is, in itself, a step into the past and into the backstage, further reinforced by the windows that provide the visitors' first view into the studio control room. Before they are invited to come inside, to walk in the footsteps of musical icons or stand where Elvis recorded (a space now marked by a red x on the studio floor), tourists catch a glimpse into the backstage area of sound, which at first seems accidental, as if they have stumbled upon an off-limits area of the music industry or they are viewing the unapproachable musical past on exhibit, like museum artifacts, behind glass. On a recent tour, fans turned their back to the guide as they stared into the studio and the control room, the opportunity to gaze backstage taking precedence over the presented narrative. Finally stepping into the space is the pinnacle of the tour. Surrounded by the instruments, the technology, and the music that is being played from loud speakers, guides tell intimate stories of the space and the musicians who recorded here, including an anecdote about Elvis' recording of "Are You Lonesome Tonight" in the dark. As the story unfolds and the music plays, the studio lights are dimmed until the atmosphere of the legend of Elvis Presley's creative process is fully imitated. Luke Gilfeather explains the goal of this part of the tour as follows: "Supposedly when Elvis cut 'Are You Lonesome Tonight,' he asked for the lights to be turned off in the studio. They [the tour guides] shut the lights off. Just about every other tour group, there would be at least one person in the audience crying. I was like, Wow, so something about the whole thing working together kind of brings out emotions of people and enhances the whole experience."

This emotional moment, which I have experienced as a tourist and researcher, is not only dependent upon the guide's story but also on the grand piano that is original to the studio and is personified by the story and the simultaneous visitor experience. It is a living artifact, like the studio itself, so there are no walls or glass separating visitors from the piano, in stark contrast with the Hall of Fame experience visitors have had immediately before boarding the bus for RCA. In past years, visitors were even allowed to touch the piano. On one occasion, I watched fans line up as if on a religious pilgrimage to touch the instrument, like those visiting St. Peter's Basilica queuing to touch the statue's foot. With tears in her eyes, one of the fans sat down and played Floyd Cramer's "Last Dance," allowing other visitors to hear the instrument live and to have an in-person experience with it. If a visit to the museum is not only a step into history but also a performance of fandom, within the studio, the museum barrier is lifted and, for a brief time, through story, song, and artifact, visitors are as close to their favorite recording and the history of country music as they will ever be.

The immersion into recording industry history is heightened by the presence of other working Music Row studios outside Studio B's walls, which is in itself a unique back-region experience, strengthened by the relocation of the Country Music Hall of Fame and the accompanying tourist industry. Before 2000, the Hall of Fame and many tourist sites were located on Demonbreun Street at the end of Music Row, an area today known as Demonbreun Hill, a hangout for the music industry employees and nearby Vanderbilt University staff and students. At this original location, across from the Hall and near the studios' entrances were vanity museums and shops centered on stars such as Hank Williams Jr., Conway Twitty, and Barbara Mandrell, who recorded only blocks away, making the studios part of the tourist agenda. Walking maps of the tourist district in the 1970s and 1980s also included the recording studios. Exploring these spaces resulted in impromptu performances and the very real possibility of an interaction with a celebrity.

Like the downtown honky tonks are today, music studios became part of the attraction and an extension of the Country Music Hall of Fame. In the museum's new location, fans are farther away from where the music is made, but they are closer to an imagined performance of

country music on Lower Broadway. In a sense, the working studios have become more removed from the tourist frontstage and now serve as Music City's unapproachable backstage areas. The many honky tonks that line Lower Broadway provide a hyperreal performance of country music that, through performance, validates the real tradition that is happening nearby but has been moved to the backstage. The tour of RCA Studio B, however, allows fans to travel into the past and also to catch a glimpse of the present-day industry via the supposed backstage. While the tour is primarily focused on the past, the golden age of country music, the RCA Studio B tour reminds fans of the historic studio's location among the healthy and vibrant studios that surround it. Curb Records, RCA Studio A, Sony, and Warner Brothers, as well as the offices of ASCAP and BMI, are steps away and become unexpected parts of the tour when they are observed on the return bus ride to the museum. It is also possible to spot a celebrity entering a working studio or on break during session work. This past/present dichotomy presents a historic Nashville that meets country-music fan perceptions while also providing a backstage experience into the current industry and the rare but possible interaction with the next big star of the tradition. After the hour-long tour, fans are transported by bus back to the District. The immersive ride into country music is complete, and now that fans feel they belong to country music and have gained insight through touring one of its most famous studios, they can begin their own performance in places of tourist performance and production.

The Ryman Auditorium

While best known as the home of the Grand Ole Opry between 1943 and 1974, and nicknamed the "Mother Church of Country Music," the Ryman was actually the fourth home of the Opry and its rich history goes well beyond its association with America's most famous radio broadcast. The hall was built in 1892 as the Union Gospel Tabernacle, a church funded by Captain Thomas Ryman, as a place for traveling ministers, most notably Reverend Sam Jones, to preach to the Nashville community. Renamed the Ryman Auditorium in 1904, the venue became the

center for the Nashville performing arts but retained its architectural appearance and spiritual essence as a place of worship. The hall is now both a museum and an award-winning concert venue.

When attending a concert at the Ryman today, fans sit in the original wooden church pews with their backs to the graceful stained glass windows and are often encouraged to come forward for a closer interaction with both the space and the present-day musical saints who grace the venue's stage. The reverent architecture combined with the hall's famed role in the commercial success and history of country music reinforces the themes of religion heard in country music. The hall is therefore more than a world-renowned performance venue; it is also a country-music pilgrimage destination that reinforces Nashville's placement in the history of country music and in the city's and country genre's strong connection with spirituality, as Chris Gibson and John Connell write: "Pilgrimage attests to movements in search, or in celebration of places and times where life was simpler, where identities were both more solid and more spiritual, and where community appeared to have more tangible local boundaries" (2005, p. 206).

This search for and celebration of another place and time is realized at the Ryman, as at the Country Music Hall of Fame and RCA Studio B, through the performance of fandom that unfolds within the many dualities of the country-music tradition. A self-guided tour of the venue reinforces this duality, while reminding fans of country-music tradition's vibrancy and the fan's importance within the performance. The past, the present, and the imagined are presented side by side. A Ryman tour begins with walking into the hall through renovated additions and newly constructed spaces that were added to the original auditorium. These new spaces provide a lobby, gift shop, refreshments, and a café. Almost immediately, however, the original doors and windows of the Ryman are visible, now on exhibit inside the building, and serve as the actual gateway into the historic hall. Before entering, guests are directed to the second floor, where a video presentation titled "Ryman: The Soul of Nashville" introduces tourists to the historic venue and its placement within the history of Nashville's complex musical history. While the film showcases country music, it also introduces the many other performers and styles that predated the relocation of the Opry to the Ryman in 1943 and those

that continued to be performed at the Ryman long after the Opry relocated to the Opryland complex in 1974. In an interview with Joshua Bronnenberg, Ryman museum and tours manager, he commented on the tour video's concept and its placement in the museum experience:

> When we designed the show, the concern was [that] a lot of people have a misconception of what this building is. A lot of people think that the Opry was here and that is it. . . . You know, the Opry is certainly a very, very important part of this building's story, but we have fifty years of very important performances here for Nashville and the region before the Opry ever got here. The thought was that we wanted to give people a nice understanding of what this building really is and the sheer volume of talent that came through the building. The thought was that you plant that emotional feeling in them before they actually see the building itself, so they can really understand all of the impressive things that happened here beyond what they probably initially thought. We want them to feel like this is their building, this is Nashville's building, so they walk in and they feel an ownership of it.

Interestingly, like many tourist attractions, the Ryman presents a combination of a story based on what fans most often expect and the museum's educational mission, which is to present and educate visitors on the complete Ryman story. Referring to this dual expectation, Joshua Bronnenberg states: "You get some people [who say], 'Grandfather listened to the Opry. My daddy listened to the Opry. I've grown up listening to country music,' and so they have that expectation. They want to hear Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, and Loretta Lynn. They walk in, and that is what they expect, and I think if they see some other things beyond that, that's great."

He followed this statement with a story of an encounter he had with a specific guest:

> Just happened to be walking through the hall and a guy pull[ed] me aside and [said], 'You're telling me that there is a rock-n-roll band here tonight? Yeah, whoever it is, that is sacrilege. You can't have that here. It's desecrating this building!' I always have to say, 'Sir, we have always had a wide variety of performers: Derek and the Dominos were here. Ray Charles,

> Neil Young. We have always had wide variety of performers here.' I look at that as an opportunity to expand their experience and give them a little more information.

A balance between the desired story and the complete and complex Nashville musical narrative is unfolded in the tour video, "The Soul of Nashville." It begins with a black-and-white video image of the Ryman and a simulated crackling sound imitating early recordings as viewers are introduced to the Ryman's long history through the supposed sounds and images of antiquated styles on antiquated technology. Tourists learn of the Ryman's origins, its near demise, and its rescue by artists and fans alike and are introduced to a number of artists who have graced the Ryman stage. This short, state-of-the-art film therefore presents what visitors can expect of the tour; creates an emotional bond among the space, music, and fans; and broadens the story to go beyond that of the Grand Ole Opry alone. The video's conclusion, featuring a performance by Vince Gill, Darius Rucker, Sheryl Crow, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, brings the hall up-to-date, connects its past with its present, reminds fans of the diverse musical styles that accompany the venue's history, and invites fans into the living museum that is the Ryman Auditorium. At the film's conclusion, the illusion of shadows exit the screen and are projected on the wall, directing tourist movement through the exit doors and into the museum space.

Fans enter the museum through doors that were once the Ryman's original windows, at which point they get their first glimpse of the historic venue's interior space. While exhibits reinforcing the film's content are located throughout the hall, the primary attraction is the venue itself. After the film introduction, one's first interaction is characterized by awe and imagination. I have lost count of the number of Ryman concerts I have seen over the last nine years of living in Nashville, but I still vividly remember my first Ryman concert and my first view of the auditorium. In 2008, I was lucky enough to get tickets to see Merle Haggard. I arrived early and spent at least half an hour standing in awe of the space, lost in my imagination about events that had previously happened there including performances of the Grand Ole Opry; productions by the Metropolitan Opera, Caruso, and Rachmaninoff; and recent appearances by my own

favorite artists including Neil Young, Elvis Costello, Aretha Franklin, and Bob Dylan while simultaneously thrilled that I was about to see the legendary Merle Haggard onstage. I had read about the Opry and the Ryman, I had taught my classes about the space and its importance to country music and Nashville, but nothing could prepare me for the emotions I felt while sitting, imagining, and waiting for the concert to start. This awe for the space is a recurring sentiment expressed by visitors in online reviews. "Grace J988," for example, posted the following review on the Trip Advisor website: "My favorite part of visiting Nashville is going inside the Ryman and just absorbing the atmosphere" (Grace J988 2016). And "Travel the World 61" writes, "Fabulous experience, just to stand in the original Grand Ole Opry and see the original pews, you can almost feel the presence of some of the world's best performers from the likes of Elvis, Johnny Cash, Reba McEntire to the rock and roll greats, this places runs chills up your spine" (Travel the World 61 2016).

As expressed in these comments and in my own experiences and observations, the Ryman comes to life through the imagination of the space and the interaction among the space, the artists, and the fans. Walking into the venue is a step into history and a performance of its continuation, a duality that is further reinforced through backstage tours of the Ryman.

On my most recent Ryman tour, I followed the video presentation with a behind-the-scenes tour. While the video presented the illusion of past/present, the duality of back/front stage was clearly presented on the tour. Beginning in the lobby, our tour guide reminded us of the tour's uniqueness, that we would have the rare opportunity to experience a view from the stage that few have seen. Not only were we backstage, but at the end of our tour, we were allowed to see the frontstage through the eyes of the musicians as we peered from the stage into the auditorium, an experience similar to that of entering the downtown honky tonks at stage rear (see Chap. 4). Throughout the tour, we were told not to take pictures or videos of the dressing rooms, but we were encouraged to do so while on stage at the pinnacle of the tour. The dressing rooms, named after iconic country-music performers, were made more intriguing by stories of performers and through our own imagined performances within the spaces. We learned that everyone who performs in the space utilizes these rooms,

and for the next thirty minutes, they were ours. Sit, touch, make yourself at home, experience, and remember.

By denying us a photograph of the dressing rooms, despite the fact that they are the least historical spaces of the entire venue, the significance of our interaction within the space increased, and, as the fans, we treated these spaces with a high level of reverence. After touring rooms named "Johnny Cash," "The Women of Country," "Roy Acuff," "Minnie Pearl," "The Bluegrass Room," and "The Lula Naff Room," we were escorted onto rear stage right of the famous Ryman stage. Here, we were told the origins of the wooden floor and the venue's placement in the history of country music, and we were given the "rare" opportunity to capture this experience with our cameras. The performative act of photography became a highlight of the tour, a moment of social interaction with like-minded fans, and the photo a treasured relic and memento of the experience. However, we were taking a picture of the front stage, which could have been captured during the self-guided tour from the front of the hall. We were, however, capturing through the act of photography a behind-the-scenes experience that could be shared later as tourist capital and as evidence of our participation. Joshua Bronnenberg explains that the tour is popular because it offers exclusive opportunities within the auditorium:

> It's an exclusive experience. . . . It's good for the guest 'cause they really get a personalized experience from the guide [who] … gives them a lot of extra information, extra history, you get to go in the same space as all these musicians go into today. …I think the a-ha moment … is when you get to go on the stage. We just recently started crossing the stage in the last year or two, so you are actually taking guests all the way across the stage in the spotlights, and people love that.

The opportunity for experience within and interaction with the venue and its iconic stage becomes a performance of both fandom and living history in the Ryman Auditorium, where the space becomes as important as the artifacts on display. Unlike newly constructed music museums that exhibit signifiers of music history, this museum is the artifact itself, and fans have the unique opportunity of stepping into and interacting with the museum object. Brommenberg explains this phenomenon further:

"We are a museum. We have a lot of history to preserve and artifacts on display and so forth, but the fact of the matter is, the biggest artifact is the building itself."

The Ryman is similar to RCA Studio B as a place where history was made and where fans have the opportunity to walk into, interact with, and perform history, yet it contrasts with the studio because it is not frozen in time but is still a working venue that hosts some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry, from Herbie Hancock, to Bob Dylan, to Yo-Yo Ma, to the Pixies. Bronnenberg describes the space as a kind of a living-history museum: "This building is continuing to do what it's always done. It's not like it is a museum that is frozen in time. We have always had a wide variety of performers of all kinds, genres, styles, and the fact that we are still doing it means that generations today can still experience what generations in the past have been experiencing for 125 years."

Touring the hall or attending a performance, therefore, goes beyond an interaction with a display of history, because history is still happening in the space. By visiting the auditorium, guests become part of a living Nashville institution that has existed as a live-music venue since the nineteenth century. The emphasis on participation and being part of the tradition is apparent in the ways that guests are invited to interact with the space. In addition to the self-guided and guided tours, the auditorium permits fans, for a small fee, to have their pictures taken on the stage holding instruments. In 2009, I ended a class tour with a group picture. In front of the Grand Ole Opry backdrop, my class stood with instruments imagining the opportunity to play on the Opry stage. After the photography session, I embarrassed the students with my own rendition of John Prine's song "Angel from Montgomery," live on the Ryman stage. Although it was a hyperreal and touristy experience, I can claim—and prove with a picture—that I have stood on stage and sung at the Ryman, even if only for my bemused students and a few other mildly interested tourists. My connection to the Ryman as a music fan and an ethnomusicologist is based on my knowledge of its history and my own frequenting of the twenty-first century concert venue. Others have a stronger connection to the space through their own longer histories of nostalgia, memory, and tradition. Over the years, I have observed people on the stage or gazing at exhibit artifacts with tears in their

eyes, sharing stories and memories of the space and the music with their travel companions. I have seen others sit quietly in the pews as if in prayer, overlooking the venue and imagining its history. When I mentioned these observations to Bronnenberg and asked him about his own, he told me a story of his grandfather's encounter with the space that points to the hall's importance and his own family's "Opry tradition":

> I have seen multiple people get very emotional and get very moved just by being there and getting to stand on the stage and say, 'My father's dying wish was to come here, and he never made it, and here I am, and it's just really special.' On a more personal note, my grandfather—I have shared this story a few times with people—he was a World War II vet. He was the patriarch of the family. He is an old military guy. He doesn't show a lot of emotion, and he came down shortly after I moved here to see where I worked, and at the time we had a different exhibit. It was an Opry case from the '40s and '50s, and it had Hank Williams and Minnie Pearl, and he walks up, and he just starts getting real emotional, and he starts crying, and I asked him about it, and he grew up in rural Indiana, in Carthage, Indiana, and his dad had one of the only radios in the area, so all of the neighbors would come in. They would pile in his living room and pile around the radio, and he said that is what you did Saturday night, the Opry. You never missed it. You always listened to the Opry, and it was just such a national thing, and just seeing him get so emotional, casual, all of these emotions flooded in. I think it is easy to forget about how important a radio show was for the country.

Following this story, I was reminded of a similar story of community, tradition, and the Opry told by my own uncle Bill Hales who shared with me that as a young man, the Opry was often a community event. While Bronnenberg and I are too young to have memories of Opry radio broadcasts when it was housed at the Ryman, our sharing of family stories connects us to the space and to a community and points to the emotional bonds that can and often occur on the Ryman stage.

Following my interview with Bronnenberg, I attended a Bluegrass Night at the Ryman, featuring Del McCoury and David Grisman. Our discussion earlier in the day caused me to analyze my own concert experiences within the hall. I thought about how many fans had seen bluegrass

on the Ryman stage, the very place where bluegrass as a named genre was born when in 1945 a young Earl Scruggs joined Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys on the stage of the Ryman. How many fans had sat in the very seat I occupied? I recalled my own backstage tour while imagining what happened, was happening, and will happen backstage before, during, and after the concert that night. The richness of the venue's and bluegrass' history transformed my concert experience from passive auditory and visionary to active participatory. I was seeing bluegrass legends on the legendary Ryman stage, hosted by the legendary WSM 650 AM, the same station that had broadcasted the Grand Ole Opry to the entire nation since its premiere broadcast on November 28, 1925. This was more than a performance. I, along with thousands of other fans, was taking part in both history and its continuation, my role in the performance existing somewhere between the back and front regions of the city. My mediation of these dualities made me part of the Ryman tradition and, therefore, part of the exhibit.

Places for Tourists to Perform

On Broadway, between First and Fifth Avenue, there are over twenty clubs dedicated to the sounds, images, and themes of country music. These clubs welcome country fans by providing a performative stage to experience their expectations of the country-music tradition. Clubs offer opportunities to dance, sing karaoke, and perform country-music fandom with newly formed country-music fan communities. Such performances reinforce the inclusiveness of the musical experience and the uniqueness of this experience in Nashville. Christopher Small, discussing examples of such inclusiveness, coins the term "musicking," defining it as follows: "Music is not primarily a thing, but an activity in which we engage" (Small 1987, p. 50). In addition to the musicians on stage, audiences engage with the music through listening, dancing, and country-music role-play, all performances of the anticipated country music that are presented by the local community, but only fully actualized through the tourist performance.[3]

[3] For a detailed discussion of the concept of "musiking" see (Small 1998).

The performance begins when fans enter the clubs and realize that their role in the performance is participatory. This begins with the invitation to interact with the club and in the welcoming facades of country-music community and authenticity that draw fans into the space. From afar, the current trend of new clubs built with open windows and the recently added patios on several of the honky tonks throughout the downtown area suggest a vibrant music scene and an open invitation for all to participate. While Nashville's honky tonks have always put music on display, inviting fans to experience "real" country music, visible groups of fans joyfully celebrating country music shift the attention from the space's history to the fans themselves, and from the sounds of country music to the ways we interact with sound. Within these performative spaces, the sonic artifact on display at nearby museums is transformed from an object of admiration to a living soundtrack that accompanies and authenticates the supposed backstage and the resulting fan experience. This shift from country-music past to present and from preservation to performance allows audiences to move beyond the role of spectator and momentarily become the music celebrity. On any night of the week, fans stand on patios and open-air porches and balconies, overlooking the city and cheering to their imagined "fans" below. Such a performance of tourist vanity firmly connects the fan to the geographical and cultural space of Nashville while also inviting other fans into the welcoming communal space.

As one gets closer to the clubs, one sees that the bars are decorated with the proverbial neon lights, over-the-top "country" décor, such as images of boots, hats, and references to Tennessee moonshine. Club walls are covered with country-music memorabilia, autographs, photographs, L.P.s, instruments, and clothing. While many of the clubs have a geographical and often historical connection to the country-music tradition, many others, in their current presentation, were completed relatively recently with the rejuvenation of Lower Broadway in the 1990s and have no real connection to the earlier artists that they are celebrating. Instead, these clubs serve as exhibits of the imagined past, where fans are invited to fully immerse themselves within the romanticized country-music tradition. Through their own performances in the space, fans add vibrancy to these recreated or revived spaces, becoming locals of the tradition and,

in the process, part of the exhibit. Their performances are reinforced through the honky tonks' sonic and visual façades, which signify the space's importance but also the significance of their interaction with the space. Helpful here is John Urry's discussion of the role markers play in the validation of a tourist site: "The plaques on the sides of buildings are signifiers that otherwise mundane buildings are worthy of being gazed upon" (Urry 2002, p. 2).

Similarly, plaques can be found throughout Music City advertising live-music venues and places and monuments of historical events, artists, industries, and so on. In Nashville, plaques are also created to cater to the imagination of fans, as in the example of the plaque located on the front entrance of Legends Corner, a honky tonk on the corner of Fifth and Broadway, which illustrates the role imagination plays in the construction of the tourist site. The plaque near the front entrance ensures fans that their interaction with the club is indeed an interaction with the anticipated history of downtown Music City and that the club is not only a performance venue but also a music-history museum of sorts. On the plaque fans are informed of musicians who have played the venue as well as the country music artifacts that decorate club walls. Like many clubs on Lower Broadway, its connection to history is not in the celebrated culture but rather in the celebration itself. Legends was built in 1997 and therefore represents the history of the tourist industry and the revitalization of Lower Broadway rather than the music industry's greater history.

At honky honks, plaques and markers of historical importance, when combined with memorabilia visibly connected to music stars and seen in the presence of live sound, surpass the need for historical accuracy. Tourists expect the venues to be true to the city, and their physical and sonic experiences within these spaces reinforce these ideas. Within these clubs, it is therefore not only the visual that shapes the tourist interpretation, but also the sonic. Through such multi-sensory markers, Nashville, as presented by the industry and as envisioned and experienced by the fan, is momentarily realized through the hyperreal presentation of the imagined city. Further examples of how this occurs are seen in one the most popular downtown honky tonks, Robert's Western World, which illustrates the presented backstage and the corresponding tourist performance.

Robert's Western World

One of several honky tonks on Lower Broadway, Robert's Western World has two entrances, each offering a unique supposed backstage experience and a glimpse into the supposed off-limits areas of a "real" honky tonk. As discussed in Chap. 4, the main entrance on Broadway offers a chance to momentarily appear on stage, as fans are entering from the backstage into the club. If one uses the second entrance, from Ryman Alley, one enters from the rear of the club. This door is a virtually hidden entrance used primarily by locals and informed tourists. Here, fans have a backstage experience, not of the actual backstage, but of insider, backstage knowledge and of walking in the supposed path of musicians, who leave the Ryman and skip across the alley to Robert's for mid- or after-show refreshments. When entering the rear of the club directly onto the Robert's Show Bud balcony, fans find themselves in the backstage past, preforming the celebrities, musical traditions, and legends that first brought them to Nashville's District and remain an important part of the musical and historical narrative. At Robert's, opportunities to experience the backstage past and present result in a liminal performance of the hyperreal South that is reinforced through sound, taste, and visual cues. The wall décor of cowboy boots, gold records, dollar bills signed by fans and celebrities alike, honky-tonk art by local artists, posters of upcoming artists alongside iconic images of country music's most revered artists, and markers of Southern identity reinforce the illusion that Robert's is both of the past and of the present; it provides a frontstage performance but also a backstage experience; it is placeless but firmly connected to the audience and to the idea of place, realized through the tourist's interaction with and performance of the imagined Nashville.

The many clubs that line Lower Broadway transform museum experiences into the present through personal experiences. The artifacts, which include the musicians on stage and the covers of country classics that they perform, are reinforced by the nearby museums and the present-day studios that continue to churn out country-music hit songs, which will soon also be played in the many honky tonks. These dualities of past/present, frontstage/backstage, and real/hyperreal make Nashville a unique music city and tourist destination. While a visit to any Nashville

museum offers performative opportunities and a space for participating in and performing tradition, community, and identity, those experiences are heightened by the many Lower Broadway honky tonks. They are not themselves museums, yet their ubiquitous decorations and continuously playing sounds of country music's past and present provide the essence of and connection to Nashville's museums, without limitations or industry control. In other words, as in a museum, artifacts and sound are on display in the honky tonks; conversely, these sounds and artifacts are not behind glass but are approachable and shaped by visitor participation. In the honky tonks, as in a visit to RCA Studio B, fans believe they are walking into a performance of country past; as in the Ryman, this performance is ongoing, reliant on guests to mediate and perform the past and present.

Conclusion

Music tourism in Nashville is unique in that it offers a chance to both witness and perform heritage and the present through participating in musical performance. Fans are not merely witnessing cultural otherness or difference, but are provided a space and a heightened opportunity to take part in this difference. My observations as a fan and researcher touring the Hall of Fame, RCA Studio B, the Ryman, and select museums celebrating the lives of individual performers reinforced for me the uniqueness of this experience. While the backstage is imagined, it is validated by reality. What might have happened is authenticated by what did happen: my own interaction with the space. Unlike a traditional museum experience, Nashville's places of performance, production, and preservation allow for a museum tour but also for a chance to interact with the space as living and present-day venues. The Ryman, for example, stages over two hundred concerts each year. Fans can tour the historical venue by day and purchase tickets for a show that evening and sit in a pew that has been present for every Ryman performance and, like the venue surrounding it, has become as important in the musical experience as the artists on stage. Fans experience history while becoming part of it, experience the frontstage and backstage and country music through both a historical

and personal mnemonic orientation. In addition, the imagined performance is realized through the city itself, which plays on simultaneous dualities of past/present and front-region/back-region, dualities that are heightened during the CMA Festival, country music's "ultimate fan experience," discussed further in Chap. 6.

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6

CMA Festival: The Ultimate Fan Experience

The heightened role of the tourist in the performance of Nashville is best exemplified by the annual Country Music Association (CMA) music festival. Described by CMA as the "ultimate country music fan experience," the festival, now in its forty-fifth year, is held each June on Lower Broadway (CMA 2016). This four-day, free festival is dedicated to the fan and offers multiple opportunities for backstage experiences and intimate interactions with both Nashville and the sounds and personalities of country music. In the process, the festival transforms the District into a space that no longer belongs to Nashville or to its locals, but is instead the Main Street of country music and the property of country-music fans, where country-music themes and preconceptions are realized and the dualities of past/present, backstage/frontstage, and real/hyperreal are both mediated and performed.

The first CMA festival, originally called Fan Fair, was held in Nashville's Municipal Auditorium in 1972, a year that corresponds with the opening of the Opryland complex and therefore the acceptance of a new country-music identity and tourist industry. From 1972 to 1982, the biggest names in country music played the Municipal Auditorium only

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blocks away from the Mother Church of Country Music. But in 1982, record festival attendance caused organizers to follow the Opry's lead and move the festival away from the downtown center to the Nashville fairgrounds, where the CMA Fan Fair remained for the next eighteen years. In 2001, the annual festival joined the rest of the tourism and heritage industry in relocating to and revitalizing downtown's Lower Broadway as a consolidated space for the unfolding of tourist experiences.[1] While most visitors whom I spoke with about the festival's geographical and historical placement believed that the festival's downtown location heightened the country-music experience, fans who recall the festival's years at the fairgrounds make distinctions between the two spaces: John, a tourist who has attended the festival for twenty-six years, was critical of the festival's downtown location: "In my opinion, it has gotten too big, and it's more commercialized. Part of it was better at the fairgrounds because you could see a lot more of the entertainers and get a lot closer to them." John continued by sharing stories of his own experiences with celebrities at Fan Fair:

> The biggest [star] I ever met over there was Garth Brooks. He was just so nice, and I was walking by, and he said, "I see you have a camera. Don't you want your picture taken with me?" Of course we did that. About a week later … he was up at [a local] festival and he said, "You come and see me," and I spent the whole night backstage with him. . . .Years ago, I met Reba McEntire, and then she had a fan club party, and we were playing volleyball with her. They don't do that anymore. You don't get near the up-close and personal anymore like it was years ago. The bigger ones seem like they don't want to be bothered. Something that I have always said was, if it wasn't for us fans spending all of this money, they wouldn't have anything. (John 2016, interview, June 12)

According to John's recollections, there were originally more opportunities to meet and interact with the country-music stars at the Nashville fairgrounds. John spoke of community and, most importantly, of the value the artists assigned to fans—a sense that they were appreciated

[1] For an introduction to and history of the CMA Festival as well as a wonderful discussion of Festivalization at and during the CMA Festival, see Jonathan Wynn (2015).

for their contributions to country-music careers and sounds. For John, the commerciality and growth of the festival at its current location has resulted in less interaction between the artist and the true fan.

For other fans less connected to the festival's past, the downtown area permits a performative space to escape reality and to act out the themes of country music in the present. The clubs that provide extra-musical happenings, the museums that educate about the tradition, and the many sites of historical importance around the downtown area add to the country-music experience while validating festival acts and participation. When talking to fans about the downtown area and the festival experience, I found that they often went beyond sharing stories about events and artists listed on the festival schedule. Their experiences also included the nightclubs, restaurants, performances at the Ryman, visits to the Country Music Hall of Fame, and so on. One fan told me with excitement, "I think [the festival] is awesome. I think it is amazing. You know you just can't beat it. Going to Nashville is more of a country-music experience."[2] This "country-music experience" that this fan and others reference is the result of a transformation from the temporary, carnival-like festival at the fairgrounds to a more stable and immersive festival and geographical experience in downtown Nashville, which signals a shift in fan experience from a gaze at tradition and history into the participatory performance of that tradition and history in the present. The permanency of Nashville landmarks such as the honky tonks and the Ryman Auditorium reinforces the authenticity of the transient community that arises during the festival weekend. Fans are surrounded not only by makeshift attractions and vendors that suggest country music but also by historical markers, venues, and institutions that signify authenticity: history was made in the space and is now extended into the present through the tourist's attendance and subsequent participatory performance. While there is a musical conflict between current pop country music featured at the festival and traditional country music preserved in many downtown honky tonks and in the Hall of Fame, I suggest that the two sides of this musical and performative "conflict" reinforce each other

[2] Interviews and survey responses with fans used throughout the book were conducted between June 2014 and June 2016. All fan participants remain anonymous in the monograph.

by connecting the past to the present through sonic, thematic, historical and geographical means. A festival geographically separated from the history and the city being celebrated may be interpreted as something new or in contrast with the conflicting space, but when a festival takes place in the shadow of history, surrounded by the city and landmarks that fans associate with the tradition and the city, each annual celebration becomes part of that history and is validated through its placement. During the CMA festival, new music that is heard from festival stages located within the downtown area is, therefore, validated as part of country music through its very presence within the performative space of the city. In other words, music played for country fans in the shadow of the country-music tradition and in the heart of the city from where it developed and is perpetuated becomes "authentic," regardless of its sound. The following image from the 2014 festival, for example, shows that the temporary Samsung Stage has been placed directly in the shadow of the Country Music Hall of Fame (Fig. 6.1).

Fig. 6.1 Performing in the shadow of country-music history (Photograph by author. June 6, 2014)

A number of emerging artists made their CMA Festival debut on this stage in 2014, playing for country fans eager to listen to and foster up-close and personal relationships with the featured artists. Directly behind the stage is the Country Music Hall of Fame, an institution dedicated to the preservation and presentation of country-music history. Behind the audience is Lower Broadway, the key tourist strip, home to Nashville's honky tonks. The architecture of the Hall, which signifies many elements and themes of country music including tradition, the music industry, family, home and ruralness, provides an elaborate and historical backdrop for the makeshift stage that the fans' eyes are trained on. The country-music sounds from the honky tonks can be heard between sets, and these songs remind fans of Nashville's role—and their own roles—in the ongoing tradition. The stage's placement between country music past and present suggests that what fans are seeing is genuine, firmly connected to the country-music tradition and its continuation. Due to their geographical and historical placement, the music and musicians on stage, as well as the audience, are now part of the tradition that mediates the past and present. Other stages also overlook historical venues or institutions or are set up in their shadow. In 2014, the Budweiser Stage, as seen in the picture below, used the Bridgestone Arena as its backdrop, while the fans' backdrop was, again, comprised of the many Lower Broadway honky tonks and the Ryman Auditorium, which, along with the audience itself, were reflected in the Bridgestone Arena windows (Fig. 6.2).

At the 2016 festival, new stages were added, and pre-existing stages were moved to new locations, yet similar markers accompanied them all. For example, the Tootsie's Honky-Tonk Alley Stage, located in an alley between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, referenced the most well-known and long-lasting Nashville honky tonk, while its temporary location directly behind the Johnny Cash Museum grounded the temporary stage in the historical and geographical specificity of Music City. While fans listened to emerging artists performing on the Tootsie's stage, photographs of Johnny Cash, one of the tradition's most iconic and beloved figures, gazed over the crowd, the musicians, and the larger festival, authenticating the performance space, solidifying the significance of the stage's placement at the festival, and reinforcing Tootsie's within the country-music

Fig. 6.2 Fans watch a performance at the Budweiser Stage (Photograph by author. June 7, 2014)

pantheon. The stage's name also reinforces and validates the real Tootsie's and its storied connection to country music. The "alley" mentioned in the temporary stage's title not only references the stage's location at the festival but also in the city: the nearby Ryman Alley is an alleyway between the two buildings; it physically and symbolically joins the Ryman and Tootsie's by offering both back-door access to the club and a backstage entrance to the Ryman. The two sites' close proximity in a shared back region of Nashville creates a historical connection between the two which extends to the fan experience: Like the country musicians who are rumored to have frequented Tootsie's during the intermission and after Opry shows over the years, fans can enter the honky tonk through the back door via the alleyway and, in the process, step into the back region of Nashville history. The historical shadow of the Ryman Auditorium, the architectural design and mission of the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the vibrancy of the many Lower Broadway honky tonks solidify the connection between current country music performed live at the festival and the history of country music still alive in Nashville. While landmarks provide

cues of the festival's and city's authenticity, sound further connects what happened in Nashville to what happens during the festival weekend. A stroll down Broadway during the festival results in a fluid and historically rich sonic experience. The sounds of pop country and traditional country merge in the cacophony of competing honky-tonk bands, street performers, mediated music, and festival stage performances.

Exploring the Festival Soundscape

When one strolls through the festival space, the fluidity and regularity of sound becomes apparent. While downtown Nashville is always alive with and accompanied by sound, its effect is heightened and broadened during the festival week and experienced immediately when visitors park their cars and step into Nashville. On the first day of the 2015 festival, I parked at a festival suggested parking garage one block away from Broadway. As I exited my car, I could hear the sounds of bass drums and guitars echoing off the parking garage walls, the many mediated sounds resonating from the music boxes and downtown merchants on the street, the sounds of live music from the clubs in the near distance, and the sounds of car stereos playing fans' favorites—all before I officially entered the festival space. The closer I walked to the festival space, the louder and more competing the sounds became. Multiple festival stages featuring new and traditional artists completed the festival soundscape. Within a five-by-two-block area, there were ten official stages. In every corner of the festival space, which also comprises the downtown district, official music could be heard. However, this is but a small portion of the music tourists experience during festival participation. In addition to official festival stages, Nashville's honky tonks become additional, unpromoted stages during the long, four-day weekend festival, further complimenting the heightened sonic experience and providing fans with unplanned, unexpected musical happenings. The Nashville Visitor's Center website lists eleven clubs located between Fifth and Third Avenues. With stages near the clubs' entrance and most with open doors and/or windows, a walk through the festival space provides an ever-changing and vibrant soundscape represented by the newest and most treasured sounds of

country music. The constant opportunities for live music are a recurring observation of fans on Broadway. A sampling of fan responses when they were asked the simple question "What are your thoughts on the Broadway scene?" is as follows:

Fan A I love it. I love the city, and I love the atmosphere, the excitement. I love the fact that you can just walk down the street and hear the music coming out of all of the venues. It's fantastic.

Fan B There's nowhere else in the world that you are going to see world class musicians just playing at a bar. So, I love Broadway.

Fan C I love that Broadway has live country music from ten a.m. to three am every day of the week. It's all good, 'cause everybody is here to sing, and they play all the top 40, so I actually know all of the songs.

Between the honky tonks, one hears the sounds of country music broadcasted from gift shops and eateries, street performers playing acoustic versions of everything from Hank Williams songs to Louis Armstrong songs, and the musical and non-musical sounds of fans interacting with and within the District.

While most fans I have met at the festival come to see and hear music celebrities, I suggest that the space around the stars, the stages that are nearby and compliment the official stages, and the musical and cultural landmarks that serve as festival backdrop all make the CMA Festival stand out among music festivals and create an inviting space to perform true country-music fandom. The multiple stages throughout the festival space give fans musical choices and varied opportunities. Within a small geographical space, fans can choose the festival artist they want to see or visit a local club to discover new talent. Multiple stages and musical choices in close proximity create constant audience movement. Unlike other festivals, however, where staged events bookend the festival activities, during the CMA Festival, all activities are in some way accompanied by live music. Walking through the festival space therefore becomes more than an act of movement or relocation to a new musical space. It also becomes an opportunity to experience the unknown and, in the process, presents the illusion of an improvised performance of locality

and vibrancy that is witnessed by all participants, giving everyone at the festival the dual role of both spectator and performer; in this way, the festival's temporary community emerges and gives life to the space. The organized stages provide the spectacle of festivalization, while the permanent institutions that complement the festival provide evidence that the city's vibrancy is not temporary but a yearlong celebration of country music. Navigating the musical space is left up to the tourists, who are often left to decide for themselves what is permanent and what is temporary. While pop-up festival stages are obviously temporary and legendary live-music venues like Tootsie's or Robert's Western World are obviously permanent, other venues' status is not as clear. In 2014, for example, the Arts and Entertainment Channel (A&E) established a strong presence at the festival. The History Channel, owned by A&E, featured exhibits on its shows *Swamp People*, *American Pickers*, *Biker Battleground* and *Top Gear*, all television shows that apparently are expected to appeal to the same demographic as the country-music festival. In addition, A&E introduced a new show, titled *Big Smo*, which follows the career of the emerging country/hip-hop artist who goes by that stage name. The program's introduction at the festival was accomplished by transforming the pre-existing honky tonk Nashville's Whiskey Bent Saloon into a demo room for this new A&E reality show, creating new signage reading "Big Smo's Whiskey Bent Saloon" to replace the original, blurring the line between reality and reality television. By connecting *Big Smo* to a pre-existing Nashville institution, rather than setting it up as an obviously temporary festival exhibit, the musician and his show were effectively linked to Music City's permanency rather than the CMA Festival's transience. For many fans, unfamiliar with the artist Big Smo and/or the cityscape of Nashville, this connection among artist, place, and venue authenticates and benefits both artist and club.

Similarly, at the 2016 festival, Dierks Bentley promoted his new album *Black* via a temporary shop on the corner of Nashville's Fourth and Broadway, the future home of Bentley's club: Bentley's Whiskey Row Bar. The shop, like the many vendors outside in the streets, offered multiple opportunities for fan interaction and refreshment. However, its placement within a permanent site on Nashville's Lower Broadway line of clubs, often called "honky-tonk highway," differentiated the display from

that of the many other street vendors. In a recent press release, Bentley commented on the placement of his festival shop: "It's pretty cool to have a pop-up shop dedicated to this album just a few doors down from the most legendary honky-tonks of all-time" (Bentley cited in Reuter 2016).

The celebrity connection to these transformed spaces is possible, and seems plausible to viewers, because of other music celebrities' names and images gracing various downtown venues. Each honky tonk and many of the merchants on Lower Broadway feature photos, posters, and paintings of legendary and contemporary country-music performers including Kris Kristofferson, Garth Brooks, Reba McEntire, Patsy Cline, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Charley Pride, and Kitty Wells. And although many of these musicians did indeed once play in the venues where their images are now used, such as the images of Kristofferson and Nelson on both the inside walls and the façade of Tootsies, often these images are only used as décor to reinforce the venue or merchant's supposed authenticity. Complementing these associations are the downtown businesses named for or owned by a music celebrity, such as Ernest Tubb or Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville and recent announcements by country-music celebrities of future Broadway clubs, including Alan Jackson's "AJ's Good Time Bar" and John Rich's "Redneck Riviera", both to be opened in 2016, and Dierks Bentley's Whiskey Row Bar, which opened in 2017. Throughout Nashville, these connections are not only possible but also highly likely and anticipated. Therefore, using permanent spaces to house temporary exhibits merges the festival space with downtown Nashville, allowing fans opportunities that are only available at the festival but occur in a place that feels genuinely connected to the Nashville landscape.

The inclusion of lesser-known artists such as Big Smo in 2014 also points to another festival phenomenon. Nashville is a place where one can interact with not only the country-music superstar but also the future superstar, the working musician who may be "the next big thing." Rags-to-riches stories are common in the genre and are retold at each downtown venue. Who played at the venue, or at least who is believed to have performed at the venue, is often as important if not more so than the music currently being played on stage. When talking about the Broadway clubs, fans often refer to the musicians who got their start in those local clubs, as one fan shared:

> I think it is great. The funny thing about it, some of the best musicians in town are on Broadway, and if you look at the history of Broadway, a lot of great musicians came out of Broadway. Dierks Bentley played on Broadway. Gretchen Wilson started at Printer's Alley. A lot of big country stars have started there. It is a great place to go down there and you can hear really talented musicians in town.

The chance to interact with musicians and music within Nashville's most famous musical venues also merges past and present, frontstage and backstage. Downtown honky tonks are not museums, yet like museums, they preserve history and artifacts and connect these markers, through music, with the ongoing tradition performed onstage and the fans in the audience.

Personal interaction with artists and music also occurs at the official festival stages, where emerging artists play for smaller crowds. In 2014, I caught a performance at the Bud Light Stage in the courtyard of the Bridgestone Arena by recently signed artists Sam Hunt and Chris Stapleton. The crowd of a few hundred people in attendance that afternoon enjoyed a free up-close musical experience with these artists who would soon be two of the biggest stars in country music, although none of us could've known that at the time. Two years later, in 2016, I saw both musicians again, this time playing the Nissan Stadium for 70,000 fans during one of the evening CMA Festival concerts, for which audience members had paid an entrance fee. For those of us who saw their first festival performance in 2014, it is a story that we share and brag about. Watching Chris Stapleton at the 2016 festival, I commented to the person seated beside me that I had seen him on the free stage in 2014. I was rewarded with my fellow audience member's moment of disbelief followed by expressions of jealousy. As a country-music fan myself, I felt a sense of pride at having "been there" and "discovering" a musician early in his musical career's rise to stardom. These sorts of festival experiences give the fans a sense of insider knowledge and ownership. As I look at the 2016 CMA Festival program, having seen musicians at different stages of their careers at different locations within the festival space, I wonder what future star I may have met this year. Which performers at the emerging artists' stages will be featured, like Hunt and Stapleton this year, at the 2018 CMA Festival? Most importantly, as a country-music fan, I wonder

how my being there supported and aided his/her career. This support of and dedication to emerging musicians can be seen throughout the festival weekend and becomes an opportunity for festival and therefore country-music immersion. During the festival, the opportunity to meet and greet emerging musicians is the chance to have up-close, personal interaction with musicians that may be the next big stars, an optimistic performance of fandom that is reinforced by the many musical success stories of Nashville. As one fan on Lower Broadway commented: "I think Nashville is a reflection of Country music. There are a lot of people working on Broadway right now trying to get somewhere." Another fan commented: "There's nowhere else in the world that you are going to see world class musicians just playing in a bar." Another stated: "It is a really exciting place. Anyone that wants to get famous in country music or any music genre moves to Nashville. There's such a cool energy downtown, performers in the street….You have the stage where people are trying to make it on that stage, performers on the street, hoping someone will notice him or her."

In addition to a performative space for the musicians who might be the next big stars, the country-music festival is also seen by many fans as a homecoming for music celebrities. As one fan, referring to the relationship between fan, musician, and Nashville, noted: "They have a connection with the fans by coming back home and playing for us here. They are just the same as we are. They can get together with their friends during the fest just as well as we can. Country music and Nashville are about staying true to the downhome roots." Another fan commented: "All the artists are very thankful and thus connect with the fans. Even in a stadium of thousands you feel as though they are personally thankful for you as a person. Nashville screams country music and most of them got their start there. It makes them reminiscent and more personal and friendly when they're there."

These chances for spatial, musical, and personal interaction with and within the country-music tradition, outside and inside the festival space, foster a country-music community that is dependent on country-music heritage. In the process, fans also become part of that tradition, and the differences between historical festivalization and historical preservation become indistinguishable. Fans become performers of the tradition, their

presence crucial to the festival's success and continuation. These tourist performances are validated by the shadows of the surrounding historical sites, reminders on plaques of the city's historical significance, crowds of fans congregating around specific institutions, and most importantly the musical sounds that connect the performative now to the auditory and imagined past. While these visual and audio markers of authenticity are crucial to the festival experience, it is the festival's placement within Nashville that provides the stage on which the performance unfolds.

"It's Nashville": Performing the Imagined City

The festival space contributes to and engages in a hyperreal production of Nashville that presents country music's past and its present in complimentary ways. Architecture, advertisements, historical markers, and sounds remind visitors that they are indeed in the heart of country music and that the festival experience they are participating in, while structured, is also authentic and can only be experienced in one location: Nashville, Tennessee. The illusion of locality created by the music and tourist industries via presentation and opportunities for tourist participation results in a unique experience represented as a celebration of the fan's contribution to the music and the city. Homecoming, a common country-music theme, is referenced throughout the festival. From the invitation to participate in the musical culture, to the act of hospitality in the form of free food and product samples from the many corporate vendors, to historical and commercial exhibits that offer fans a warm welcome to booths and to country music's main street, the theme of home or belonging, as in country music itself, is ubiquitous, and its repetition and familiarity permits and encourages tourist performance. The emphasis on belonging was clearly on view at the temporary HGTV Lodge in 2016. This stage located near the Country Music Hall of Fame and Fan Alley takes the image of a barn, the rural home now in the midst of the South's urban performance. A duality is also seen in performances of the Grand Ole Opry with its iconic backdrop of the red barn and again on the television program *Hee Haw* that brought the performed South into the homes of the USA for twenty-eight years (1969–1997) (Fig. 6.3).

Fig. 6.3 Welcome home country-music fans (Photograph by author. June 10, 2016)

A sign on the barn facade reads: "Welcome Home, Country Music Fans," reminding country-music tourists that the festival is for them and that they are a crucial part of the country-music family. The recurring theme of home and family at the festival and the invitation to perform country music and all that it signifies result in an experience of belonging to and a heightened eminence within country-music culture.

This dedication to the country-music fan through an emphasis on participation and belonging is also apparent in promotional materials. In 2012, for example, the CMA Festival website described the event as follows: "Created for the fans in 1972 and committed to the fan experience in 2012, CMA Music Festival brings it all together – artists, music, autographs, pictures, activities, and more – all for you, the most devoted fans in the world!" The website included a list of expected opportunities possible only at the CMA Festival in Music City:

– Hundreds of artists from up and comers, to legends and superstars performing on multiple stages

- Thousands of fans from around the world coming together in the epicenter of the Country Music community to party
- Countless opportunities to get close to the stars for a treasured autograph or priceless picture
- Once-in-a-lifetime occasion to discover new artists before they hit it big, hear new music, and meet other fans who share your passion for Country Music in Music City USA (CMAfestmobi 2015).

While country music is the initial draw and is clearly referenced in the advertised opportunities above, the emphasis is also on experience, community, and belonging and the CMA Music Festival's uniqueness. Attending, therefore, goes beyond listening to a favorite artist. Over the course of the long weekend, opportunities for cultural immersion are realized through a multifaceted performance and reception by all festival participants. While I have suggested that the District is always a performative and local space for country-music fans, this effect is heightened during the festival when country-music fans visiting from outside Nashville outnumber locals, when stereotypical "country" dress, such as cowboy boots and hats, becomes the norm rather than the exception. For one week every June, preconceptions of country-music authenticity are performed by the fans and their favorite artists. As in the museum spaces and live-music venues in town, authenticity is realized through tourist and host performances of the city's imagined and desired back regions and through a sonic and visual mediation of the past and present country-music tradition. During the festival, the entire downtown becomes a perceived back region that is accessed through visitors' heightened role within Nashville, which begins when one crosses the festival's threshold and enters the liminal space of the festival weekend.

Entering the Festival: A Performance in Liminality

Since I moved to Nashville in 2007, the CMA Fest has become an annual family ritual. Until 2016, however, I had not fully experienced the festival, as my family and I usually opt out of the ticketed events.

But in 2016, I purchased a Gold Circle pass that permitted me entrance into all festival events, which allowed for a deep analysis of the musical and cultural events that were taking place within the festival space. While the following notes are focused on the 2016 festival, my observations and participation at this event were informed by my recollections of past festival experiences, which will also be addressed in the following pages.

While multiple festival stages present numerous musical performances, I suggest that the true performance is found in the streets, the local clubs, and by the audiences at venues and on makeshift stages throughout the city and begins with the moment one enters the festival space. In 2016, I arrived downtown on a Thursday morning, shortly after the official festival kickoff at the Chevrolet River Stage by country artist Jake Owen. Having parked in the official recommended Nissan Stadium lot across the Cumberland River from the daytime festivities, like many festival participants, my entrance into the festival was via the Cumberland River Pedestrian Bridge, which offered an intriguing sonic and visual threshold into the liminal performance of country-music fandom. Halfway across the bridge is an overlook that provides a moment to pause and take in the sounds and sights of Nashville and, in this case, the festival in which I would soon be participating (Fig. 6.4).

From a distance, the festival, like the country-music tradition itself, becomes an exhibit that provides a glimpse into the impending festival experience and insight into the complete and complex Nashville narrative. In the below photograph, for example, one notes a temporary stage floating on the river at the end of Nashville's Broadway. This festival stage is a makeshift space that adds to and complements Nashville's geography and history. On the left of the photo is visible the roof-top bar at Acme, a Nashville club, restaurant, and live-music venue on the corner of Broadway and First Avenue, which provides a space for fans to overlook the festivities that are unfolding in the street below while engaging in their own festival performance. Museums, such as the George Jones Museum, are visible to participants and serve as a backdrop for the festival performance. In the distance, overlooking all these performances and validating the placement of this contemporary Nashville and its temporary performance spaces are the Ryman Auditorium and the L&C Tower,

Fig. 6.4 Gazing at the festival (Photograph by author. June 9, 2016)

Nashville's first skyscraper built in 1957 by Life and Casualty Insurance, a company also largely responsible for the birth and broadcast of the Grand Ole Opry. To the right of the L&C Tower is another skyscraper that serves as the Country Music Television (CMT) headquarters, a media company partly responsible for the modern dissemination of Nashville's music and the recent savior of the *Nashville* television show after its ABC cancelation. In this one photograph, Nashville's past and present, backstage and frontstage, real and fabricated merge. Country-music festivals are held around the globe, but attending a music festival in Nashville offers fans the opportunity to interact with so much more than the country-music celebrity and/or sound. The CMA Festival offers the chance to interact with the city and the culture that gave rise to the music, artists, and myths being celebrated during the ritual. Like the presentation of the city itself, the festival experience is realized through the invitation to mediate via one's own participatory performance the many dualities that unfold in the city and that are represented in the above picture. The following discussion of festival regalia reinforces the performative nature of the event.

Concert Regalia and the Country-Music Ritual

Straw cowboy hats, leather boots, and festival T-shirts are abundant throughout the festival space, serving as the official regalia of the country-music fan performance (Figs. 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7).

The photographs below, taken at past CMA Festivals, illustrate the ritualistic clothing worn by many festival attendees. In a recent collection of essays on ritual in modern culture, Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing discuss the wearing of Western costumes and/or clothing during Helldorado Days, an annual Western-themed festival held in Tombstone, Arizona:

> The use of such outfits, for both men and women, may be compared to masks and costumes in more traditional festivals and rituals. Wearing such clothes, talking and behaving a certain way are all means to disguise one's everyday image and adopt a completely different persona…perhaps who they want to be in their dreams. The festival is a liminal space and time and the costume and the pretense that goes with it are the means for a temporary transformation. (Frost and Laing 2015, p. 219)

Fig. 6.5 The perfect hat (Photograph by author. June 8, 2014)

Fig. 6.6 Window shopping (Photograph by author. June 8, 2014)

The transformation that occurs during the CMA Music Festival, like that of Helldorado Days, provides a liminal space between reality and fabrication, shifting social constructs and assigning ownership to country-music fans. This heightened role allows tourists to perform the role of the "local" and/or a "true" country fan. For most of the year, an ensemble of a neon straw hat, tank top, and shiny, un-scuffed boots would clearly indicate one is an outsider, a visitor to Nashville drawn to the local boot store's kitschy advertisements and country-music stereotypes, a heartfelt

Fig. 6.7 Discarded boot boxes (Photograph by Tristan Jones. Reprinted with permission from the photographer. June 8, 2012)

attempt to blend in with what one thinks is the local culture. During the festival weekend, however, such costuming becomes both expected and the norm, and it is the local who stands out within the festival culture as oddly outside the temporary community being performed in the theatrical space that is downtown Nashville. Several fans attending the 2015 festival explained to me that they had bought clothing for souvenirs and to wear at the festival to blend in with other tourists. Reagan, a fan and longtime attendee of the CMA Festival, when asked about what type of souvenirs she purchased, answered simply: "cowboy hat and

shirt, every year." Joanne, from Canada, informed me that she bought a festival shirt, adding: "I tend to buy T-shirts from all music concerts that I attend." Cassidy, from Dresden, Ohio, stated: "I purchased an LP Field shirt with all the performers because it was my first time attending, a 'Music Has Value' shirt from Big Machine, and a *Nashville* shirt because I saw Charles Esten wearing it in a picture, haha!" Kathleen from Dickson, TN, stated: "I bought a CMA hat. I bought it because I wanted something to remember my first CMA by, and I ended up getting artists to sign it." Another fan referring to the Broadway scene responded: "It is very country. I feel out of place not wearing cowboy boots and I do not own a pair."

Cowboy hats and festival memorabilia reinforce the imagined Nashville, serve as signifiers of past and present participation, and foster camaraderie and conversation among music tourists and fans. This type of remembrance, sharing, and bonding is seen throughout the festival, where artist, concert, or past festival T-shirts act as evidence of fan dedication and as a means of fostering fan community. The adoption of such regalia signals an experienced festival regular and a true country fan. Zeus Ooozak, an artist who exhibited at the 2016 Fan Fair X, an interactive space during the festival where fans can meet and greet emerging and established music artists, commented on the definition of a "true" country fan: "They are devoted, and they're going to wear the T-shirts, and they are going to come to Nashville with their cowboy hats and boots because they honestly, in their hearts, believe that that's what makes them a fan, the look" (Ooozak 2016, interview, 20 June).

During the festival, therefore, the fan takes on an identity, becoming an integral part of the Nashville narrative and brand. The T-shirt below, worn by a festival participant in 2016, is a clear statement of this sense of belonging (Fig. 6.8).

"I am Nashville" also hints at the fan's importance in Nashville's branding and identity. The costuming discussed above is an opportunity to role play, similar to cosplay, a fan performance that combines costuming with performance (play) and is most often associated with anime, videogames, and comics, where fans take on the image and/or identity

Fig. 6.8 I am Nashville (Photograph by author. June 10, 2016)

of favorite characters. In her 2011 article "Stranger than Fiction: Fan Identity in Cosplay," Nicolle Lamerichs argues that "Cosplay is a form of appropriation that transforms, performs, and actualizes an existing story in close connection to the fan's own identity" (Lamerichs 2011, p. 1). At the CMA Festival, the almost mandated stereotypical country dress seems less of an attempt at replicating a named character or star and instead an attempt at a performance of a caricature of one's self or of the preconceived country-music persona. Dressing up for the festival performance is a signifier to other participants that fans have left reality and their "real" selves behind in favor of a liminal existence through a performed persona of one's desired self rather than the reality of one's life. Through the festival performance of locality and desired identity, fans leave their lives behind, replacing them with a shared identity available only through the festival and among other dedicated country-music fans.

Being in the Know: Festival Experiences as Tourist Capital

This sense of fan dedication does not include festival regalia alone, but is also evidenced by knowledge obtained through fans' research and multiple trips to Nashville. Fans trade information on the best music venues, restaurants, gift shops, and tours, and knowing enough to give this type of advice creates a sense of pride. The act of directing and advising is in itself a performance of locality and, because of the city's transformation during the festival weekend, such advice can only be given by the knowledgeable fan who, through repeat attendance and pre-festival preparation, knows the temporary city better than those who call it home for the remaining 361 days of the year.

While festival spaces remove social status divides of everyday life, they are replaced with levels of fandom which are marked in various ways but all connected to past participation and/or current devotion to country music. Levels of fandom are, therefore, marked by levels of obtained knowledge. Festival participants who have attended for years take on a mentoring role in the experience. Their stories of past festivals, of a transformed city, and of an ever-changing yet thematically consistent musical genre, provide tips to those attending for the first time. If one stands in a line during the festival, it is likely that he or she will hear fans sharing with other fans tips on where to eat, the best bar for after-hours entertainment, unadvertised fan-club parties, and accounts of past festivals that, in hindsight, are deemed superior to the current festival. New fans are also aware of their fledgling status and told me the complications of participating in the festival without veteran knowledge. Brooke from Australia, for example, described for me her "rookie" experience: "As this was our first time at the festival, we felt like novices at how to get the maximum experiences with the artists, such as signings, meet and greets, and pop-up shows. It was really disappointing missing out all the time." Brooke's statement is interesting, because in addition to her disappointment over missing the unscheduled or at least not publically shared events, there is an open acknowledgement that her missing out on such events was because of her novice status, which suggests that with repeat performances, more

opportunities would become available. In other words, the festival is for everyone, but specific events within the festival are exclusively for the true fans, those who have been there before and are "in the know." Learned festival knowledge is traded as social capital and is treasured as much as the autographs fans showcase on their cowboy hats.

A common festival question is, "How many years have you attended?" This is often followed by questions about specific festival moments, performances, and/or opportunities. These questions, and the subsequent discussions that they open, are moments of social interaction and shared experience of being there and of being true fans. In 2009, for example, I attended a performance at LP Field that was scheduled to conclude with a performance by Brad Paisley and Dierks Bentley. After a few opening acts, fans were ordered to evacuate the coliseum due to severe thunderstorms and lightening. Thousands huddled together in the stadium's covered hallways and lobbies waiting for clearance to return to their seats. Whitney Self of CMT News described the night as follows:

> The loyalty and patience of country music fans was put to the ultimate test Thursday evening (June 11) as torrential rain and lightning threatened the first night of concerts of the annual CMA Music Festival. Around 9 p.m., only an hour into the show at LP Field, fans were evacuated and told to find shelter in the nearest dry spot, underneath stairways or awnings, anywhere away from the lightning. No promises were made as to whether or not the music would return, but that didn't matter to the thousands of excited fans who decided to wait it out. And wait they did — three hours in fact — into the wee hours of Friday morning (June 12). Those who remained were rewarded with appearances by Brad Paisley, Dierks Bentley and Darius Rucker before the show finally ended shortly before 2 a.m. (Self 2009)

I was, unfortunately, one of the fans who left, expecting the rest of the evening to be canceled. On several festival occasions since then, talking to fans about the 2009 festival has brought up this event and the inevitable question, "Did you stick around?" When I tell people that I went home, I am often met with a look of disbelief and their recollections of how great the show was and of the unique experience that I missed. For

fans, weathering the storm was, therefore, an act of true fandom, while for the musicians, weathering the storm was an act of gratitude that fulfilled the festival's promised focus on the fan. Fans were rewarded for their act of dedication by the musicians' similar dedication: no scheduled act canceled during the three-hour storm delay. There are many unique, specific performances and events that connect fans through a shared moment and memory of past festivals. Glen Campbell's 2012 performance, the Nashville Flood of 2010, Garth Brooks' twenty-three-hour marathon autograph session in 1996, and a fifteen-hour session by Taylor Swift in 2010 are a few of the many events that come up in discussions of past festivals and serve as markers that fans were there and shared an experience, even if they did not know one another at the time. The performative act of being at the festival to support the artists, the city, the tradition, and the festival itself results in a tourist status symbol that divides the true fan from the passive listener or casual, occasional festival attendee.

Festival status is also marked by the CMA Fest lanyard worn by paid attendees, resembling a backstage pass and serving as tickets for the nightly concerts at Nissan Stadium, access to photo lines at multiple stages, early access into free stages, and entrance into the Fan Fair X. More importantly, these passes signify a level of participation beyond a passive listening or a weekend experience by informing all festival participants that one is a true fan, fully invested in the tradition. Fan level is also determined by the color of the pass that one wears, as each is color-coded to match a certain seating area of Nissan Stadium.

In 2016, I joined the gold-circle pass club, the crown jewel of country-music fans at the CMA Festival. My seat in section D was only fifteen rows from the main stage, the envy of thousands of fans behind me. Walking into the arena, I was not stopped by security guards as I had been in years past for accidently walking into a restricted area. My pass allowed me anywhere within the performance space's front region. As others stood at the edge of areas restricted to them, attempting to catch a glimpse of the artists, I was able to flash a pass and walk right through. While still separated from the artists, I, as a fan, was as close as I would ever be to many of these musicians, and because of this, my assigned seat became part of the performance. I also walked through the festival space

with a sense of fan privilege, knowing that my pass served as my festival and "true" fandom credentials. Several fans seated nearby commented on how great the seats were. A fan directly next to me pointed out that she had attended many country-music concerts but have never been so close to the stage, so close to the artists. On the second night of the festival, during Dierks Bentley's performance, Bentley left the main stage and reappeared on a makeshift stage two rows behind my seat. Turning around to see the artist placed my entire row behind the stage looking at both Bentley and the thousands of fans looking at us, an experience that one fan referred to as "a performance with Dierks." In addition to close proximity to the artist, the pass also becomes a symbol of fan dedication and proof of investment into the country-music tradition. Passes for other events within the festival space are also worn around fans' necks, further signifying true fandom. In 2016, for example, the Grand Ole Opry handed out "VIP" passes to Opry attendees on the Tuesday before the festival and to visitors to their downtown gift shop on the first day of the festival. These lanyards did not offer access to any festival events but instead the possibility of an additional unique Opry experience, as the Opry's website advised: "Fans can get caught wearing their Opry VIP laminates to win cash prizes, free tickets to Opry events, free Opry merchandise, and more!" (Grand Ole Opry 2016). In addition to the promise of gifts and experiences, the pass also serves as a symbol of fan dedication and/or Opry attendance, as well as a chance for the Opry to promote their show through the fan experience. Wearing this lanyard causes other fans to look, curious about what experiences they may be missing that the more knowledgeable fan is having. Without a word, the pass communicates. Fans want a pass and, more importantly, they want the opportunities the pass permits and the status that is associated with being in the know.

Waiting Is Performing

The CMA Festival is unique in its dedication to the fans. Organizers and vendors provide opportunities for attendees in the form of interactive booths and immersive musical and social experiences within the

confined and controlled tourist area, where the imagined Nashville, the "main street of country music," is given a space to be performed and is separated from the rest of the city. The front region designed for tourist interaction becomes the supposed back region that is regulated and controlled by the tourism and music industries. Within this space and through multiple opportunities, fans feel appreciated and at the center of attention. This emphasis on the "ultimate" fan is further reinforced by the many vendors lining Broadway and capitalizing on country-music themes and identity, providing further opportunities for fans to interact with the space and with each other.

While vendors are present at most cultural festivals, I suggest that at the CMA Music Festival, they take on a heightened role, allowing fans through performance to create their own story line that builds on and compliments the larger festival and Nashville narrative. Throughout the festival space, merchants and corporate representatives offer products associated with recurring country-music themes. Vendors offer gifts to those willing to stand in line, an activity that suggests the vendor's importance and becomes a performative act for fans. In 2014, for example, I left the festival with a bag full of merchandise including T-shirts, sunglasses, guitar strings, foam cowboy hats, and a number of coupons for free food and discounted boots. The performative act of collecting becomes a competition to see who can receive the most festival bounty; the more one receives, the more evidence that one was present and the more complete the festival regalia and experience. But more important than receiving the items is the performative act of standing in line, where one meets other festival attendees, is given recommendations for restaurants, activities, and new artists and festival experiences off the festival agenda. These lines, therefore, serve as a way to interact with not only a product but also the city and other fans. The vendors on the street provide tourists the chance to observe the city and, more significantly, to actually perform the main street through waiting and exchanging gifts and, in the process, performing community. My own participation within the festival reinforces the importance of reciprocity. Over the years, I have stood in line for free hats, T-shirts, underwear, sunglasses, and samples of refreshments such as Spam, Cracker Jacks, Dr Pepper, Mountain Dew, and Blue Bell Ice cream. I have performed Garth Brooks' song "The Dance" at a karaoke

Fig. 6.9 Performing on Broadway (Photograph by author. June 11, 2016)

bar in the middle of Lower Broadway and waited in line with other fans to perform my own song and momentarily become the performer at the Martin Guitar Tent (Fig. 6.9).

The temporary vendors that line Lower Broadway in no way replace the musical spaces found throughout the city; they do, however, suggest a path for festival experience, provide a stage for tourist performance, and like the fluid musical soundscapes create constant opportunities for interaction within the city and with the larger fan community.

The desire for interaction also occurs in the exclusive Fan Fair X, a large exhibit held in the convention center exclusively for paying fans. Like Lower Broadway, vendors attempting to capitalize on country-music themes and fans' desire for interaction set up shop within Fan Fair X. In addition to merchants and corporate sponsors, record companies and independent artists set up exhibits offering free merchandise but, more importantly, the rare opportunity to meet and interact with current and future country-music stars, an experience usually perceived as virtually unobtainable and reinforced by the performative act of collecting

Fig. 6.10 Waiting for autographs (Photograph by author. June 9, 2014)

autographs, the ultimate souvenir in popular culture. Like the vendors on Lower Broadway, standing in line to obtain an autograph becomes a social space to share thoughts on country music and to trade stories about interaction with artists and past festival experiences. In addition, the act of waiting for and meeting an artist becomes an act of dedication.

Walking through Fan Fair X during the 2014 festival, I joined the longest line with the most excited fans and found myself waiting for a meet and greet with Little Big Town (Fig. 6.10).

While my knowledge of the band was completely based on what I had heard on country-music radio, those around me were dedicated fans who shared stories of favorite songs and of past experiences with the band. Meeting the artists and obtaining the photograph or autograph was, at least on the surface, the goal. However, the conversations that I observed happening in the line suggested that the act of waiting is a complex part of the experience. Daniel Cavicchi, in his study of Bruce Springsteen fans, introduces the term "concert event," which he defines as "formal and informal activities related to the appearance of

[an artist] in a locality during a concert tour" (Cavicchi 1998, p. 164). Cavicchi gives examples of these types of events, including waiting in line for tickets and waiting for the artist before or after a show. From his description, a large element of fandom is waiting; in the process, communities are formed and identity is performed. At the CMA Festival, waiting becomes a performance of interaction and solidarity with the artists, the tradition, and most importantly like-minded fans. While the opportunity to meet and greet country-music celebrities is key to the festival experience, the performative experience of waiting in line for that event is complemented by the presence of emerging artists, with booths set up near those of more famous artists, who readily sign autographs, give gifts, and are available for up-close, backstage interactions. The emerging artists' presence is reinforced by that of spatial proximity of more established artists, and the very fact that they are featured within the Fan Fair X exhibit confers status. Fans throughout the exhibit hall can be seen in conversation with and embracing emerging artists, building relationships with an artist at the onset of his or her musical career. Emerging artist Zeus Ooozak shared with me his festival experiences and his thoughts on standing in line for a meet and greet:

> You can tell by people's faces that they will go along with this just cause my friend does. She thinks one of us is cute, so they wait in line for five minutes to come and get a picture done, or there is a chance to win a guitar, so let's sign up for that and get our picture taken. From my specific point of view, yes, I can see that, but just as an observer of people I see it. People are willing to wait in line for something, or when they think something might happen.
>
> It is kind of that old queue argument. You know, you go to an amusement park and just to get into the park there are six places open, but everybody is in one line to get in. Why? Because they assume that this is it, so definitely there is some of that. Well, what if they become famous tomorrow, and I got their autograph?

The chance for a freebie, the chance to win something, or the chance to meet an artist who may be unapproachable in the future becomes a reason for standing in line. Another reason, as suggested by Ooozak, is just

simply to stand in line. Longer lines suggest more fulfilling experiences and therefore become a space for community and for forming tradition. The relationships created among fans and artists become bonds that fans perceive as genuine country-music experiences.

This type of relation is meaningful not only to the fan, but also to the artist. Emerging country artist Grayson Rodgers had a booth at the 2016 Fan Fair X exhibit and informed me of the importance of the festival space for both musician and fan:

> CMA Fest seems to be a big step for furthering your career. This year I have dedicated most of my attention to building a solid loyal fan base, through social media, continued touring, etc. Being an exhibitor at Fan Fair X was perfect for that. And Fan Fair X is all about the fans, and many fans come to Fan Fair X looking for up-and-coming artists like myself to meet and start following. It was a great experience—I met over 1,400 fans at my booth in four days.

Throughout the hall, artists like Grayson Rodgers set up exhibits as a way to meet fans and to introduce their musical product to a high concentration of country-music fans. This meet and greet becomes a concert event and a performance in itself, reinforcing the music festival and its host city's uniqueness. As Rodgers explained:

> Meet and greets are essential to building a connection with your fans. In my opinion, fans want that personal connection. They are shocked when I respond to them on social media, because they're so used to their comments going unnoticed. Something as little as spending a few minutes to get to know them during a meet and greet means the world to them, and they remember it for years to come. In my opinion, the meet-and-greet opportunities [are] probably more important than the performance as an aspiring artist.

While the meet and greet is an important component of building a fan base at any music festival, the CMA Festival is specifically dedicated to the fan base, with opportunities set up for intimate interaction with the musical talent. Rodgers, who performs at festivals around the country, pointed out that the CMA Fest was among the few festivals that

encouraged such encounters: "Most festivals aren't driven to meet and greets. Sometimes as an opening act, they don't even slot a meet and greet for you at the festival." Rodgers continued by sharing with me the importance of a personal relationship between artist and fan: "You have to have a connection with your fans. If they feel like they're constantly being sold something, there's never a loyal relationship there. You have to have some sort of a personal connection with your fans to turn them into loyal followers."

Emerging artist Julia Cole, who performed on a CMA stage for the first time in 2016, reiterated this point when discussing the importance of social media in obtaining and building relationships with new fans:

> Every time I play, I find ways to connect to the fans who are coming to my shows. Let's say I am opening for Hunter Hayes or playing a big festival before acts like Carrie Underwood and Sam Hunt. I'll go to the headliner's social media pages and try to communicate with some of their fans who I think might have seen my performance. By striking up a conversation with them, I make them feel connected to me. If they liked my performance, it helps give them direction on how to follow me further and become invested in my future.

In addition, the large number of country-music fans who visit Nashville to hear country music provides an opportunity for musicians to reach out to new fans. Julia Cole shared with me the festival's role in broadening her fan base: "There are so many people that come to CMA Fest that are unaware of the industry and music business functions of the city. That's the beauty of it. They just show up to see country music. You can't help but make new fans when you perform at a festival that thousands of people just looking for a good time flock in search of your specific genre of music [country]."

While many participants at the CMA Fest are devoted to specific artists, the fluidity of musical sound and the large number of musical opportunities allows fans to support their favorite star and discover new talent. New artists have a pre-established and captive audience who loves country music and desires the chance to interact with performers. The opportunity to interact with an artist and other fans in Music City

is a performance of locality that is reinforced through the recurring themes of home and belonging. Through interaction with the city, the tradition, and the artists, fans are not mere visitors to Nashville, but take on a performative role of country-music fan and local. Their performances are perceived as both authentic to country music and crucial to the tradition's host city. In addition to the many opportunities for cultural immersion, personal interaction, and communal formation, fans also assume activism and philanthropy roles, which becomes the ultimate performance of true fandom and the clearest evidence of fan dedication to Music City, to the country-music celebrity, and to the larger country-music tradition.

Festival Philanthropy as Performance

Philanthropy is key to the festival experience, as fans are repeatedly reminded by markers throughout the festival space and by onstage narratives that their participation and monetary support is crucial to the festival, the city, and music education. Signs throughout the festival space remind fans that the CMA Music Festival supports music education, and fans are thanked for their participation and contribution to music education and are informed of the monetary amount given to charities. These signs remind attendees that their festival participation and country-music fandom goes beyond self-gratification to become activism and a contribution to music education, which is crucial to the festival's mission and experience.

Such reminders of the audience's importance are also narrated from the festival stages by announcers and performers. At the 2016 festival, Nissan Stadium provided a mixture of old and new, country-music tradition and the new sounds of pop country. Between musical sets by artists including Charlie Daniels, Dierks Bentley, Miranda Lambert, and Kelsea Ballerini, fan photographs and tweets were displayed on the stadium overhead screens, turning the festival spotlight on the fans and acknowledging their role in the festival's success and mission. Tweets accompanied by images of fans and the CMAFest hashtag included oaths of allegiance to artists: "Chris Young Fan!!!!" and "grandma and I can't wait to see

@ColeSwindell tonight!, a love for Nashville: "Were obviously having fun here in Music City" and "We Love You Nashville", and personal announcements of engagement, anniversary, and birthday celebrations.

While all festivals are in part about those attending, the CMA Festival constantly shifts the focus from the celebrity to the fan to the shared tradition. Over the course of a festival evening, fans witness performances by the biggest names of country music, watch videos of past festivals and CMA Award ceremonies, read tweets by fellow fans displayed on festival screens, and are reminded of the festival's contribution to music education. Through this fluidity of focus, the festival's mission becomes a partnership among all participants rather than an audience/performer dichotomy present at many other live-music events.

CMA Festival fans are given festival eminence through the festival's philanthropic mission, an assigned festival role as activist, and through this activism a heightened connection with the musicians on stage. Throughout the concert, fans are reminded that the musicians are playing for free. This donation of talent and time reinforces the CMA Festival experience's intimacy in two complementary ways: on the surface, the gift of performance reinforces the festival's stated focus on the fan and the close relationship among all participants of the country-music family. But on a deeper level, the gift of performance is also an intimate partnership with the fans. Festival attendance and admission does not put money in the musicians' pockets, but is instead a philanthropic act that makes possible the musician's gift of time and talent. This activism is, therefore, both philanthropy and an opportunity to bond with the music celebrities on stage. Fans are reminded of this fan/celebrity partnership through videos highlighting the festival's philanthropic mission and the role of all participants—fans and artists—in this mission.

At the 2016 festival, for example, country-music fans were welcomed to the space and thanked along with the musicians by the CMA Foundation for the 13.6 million dollars donated to music education, a monetary amount also displayed on signs around the festival thoroughfare. Fans were informed by the video and photographs displayed on stage jumbotrons that their attendance and simultaneous activism had aided over thirty music programs in the USA, helped to build fifteen state-of-the-art

recording facilities in public schools, had provided millions of dollars to music-education programs and funding for music-education lobbyists on Capitol Hill. Such reminders solidify the belief that fandom at the CMA Festival is more than mere touristic escapism; it is an act of goodwill and intimacy that inserts the fan experience into the festival and country-music narrative. Each festival that I have attended over the past five years has been largely authenticated by reminders of participants' activism, but the philanthropic nature of the 2010 festival, which was held only one month after the devastating Nashville flood, was heightened, because fans were given the opportunity to support not only music education, but along with musicians, to save the hometown of the country-music tradition and the CMA Music Festival.

On May 1, 2010, Nashville received 13.57 inches of rainfall. The Cumberland River crested at 51.86 feet, thirteen feet above flood stage. Twenty-one deaths were reported in Tennessee, with ten of those in the Nashville metropolitan area. Damages in Nashville totaled over 1.5 billion dollars. Many residential and commercial areas throughout the city were destroyed, as much of the city was underwater, yet it was the beloved Nashville landmarks that received the most media attention. The Grand Ole Opry House and the Country Music Hall of Fame became the center of Nashville's disaster relief, as musicians connected to these spaces stepped forward to mobilize their fan base to raise money for reconstruction. As Peter Cooper reported for the *Tennessean*:

> Music has always been Nashville's most heralded export and its prime tourism draw, but until the unprecedented flood of 2010, musicians here had never been called upon to serve as the city's disaster alarms or as its soulful saviors, as messengers of its ruin or as beacons of its recovery. The call was extraordinary, as was the response. Music makers led the charge to ease the city's suffering in ways both tangible and immeasurable. They raised the nation's awareness of the damage, raised huge sums of money and raised the worn spirits of the city that muddy waters left to soak and sob. (Cooper 2010, p. 201)

In the weeks following, a number of benefit shows were held, raising millions of dollars for local and national relief organizations. Examples

include "Flood Relief" with Vince Gill; "Nashville Rising," hosted by Faith Hill and Tim McGraw; Garth Brooks' historic and record-breaking nine consecutive sold-out concerts at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena; and a benefit concert for flood relief (featuring Dierks Bentley, Sheryl Crow, Lady Antebellum, and Braid Paisley, among others). While these artists and their concerts brought monetary aid and national and international attention to the flood and flood relief, they also mobilized fans who, through an intimate plea from both artists and the city, were appointed the responsibility of saving and bringing normalcy back to Nashville. As Nathan Followill of Nashville-based rock band Kings of Leon stated: "Nashvillians are strong so I definitely think we will recover stronger than ever," and pleaded with fans, "tourists get … to Music City and help us get back to normal" (Followill 2010, cited in Billboard).

In addition to the media call by the city and artists, musicians used social networking sites to personalize the disaster, further connecting fans with the city. In a personal YouTube plea, artist Kenny Chesney asks fans to donate. Pointing out that he is standing on his own flooded property, and evidencing this with video footage of the damage behind him, Chesney requests his fans to give whatever they can. By showing his own property, Chesney personalizes the disaster. By urging fans to give, he offers them the opportunity to connect with him and Nashville in a performance of true fandom, a bonding experience that unites the fan to the city and the country-music tradition (Chesney 2010).

A May 5, 2010, article in the online country-music magazine the *Country Music Tattle Tale* titled "All Country Music Fan Club Members and CMA Fest Goers! We Have a Mission for You," announced:

> The CMA has announced CMA Fest 2010 is still a go…. Please rally your Fan Club members and/or small groups of people and register with Hands on Nashville. Let them know what day(s) your team will be available to help and what project you would like to work on. You will already be in town and you will be able to say you were a part of bringing the beautiful skyline of Music City back to life. Please consider this mission. CMA Fest is a 4-day festival and any help you can offer will be a tremendous help. (Country Girl 2010a)

These moments for insight into personal stories, combined with a mission for fans to do their part, resulted in a mobilization of country-music fans who created Facebook group pages to share information about the flood and Nashville's immediate needs, provided monetary relief to the city, and worked alongside locals in rebuilding projects. *Country Music Tattle Tale* reported that Keith Urban's fan club signed up to volunteer while in town for the CMA Fest, and other fans donated through their annual attendance. (Country Girl 2010b). For example, Lady Antebellum, Bo Bice and others transformed their fan-club events into fundraisers for flood relief. In addition to the fans giving back to the city through donations and volunteering, the 2010 festival, which took place as scheduled one month after the floodwaters receded, donated half of all its profits to flood relief. The act of tourism had officially become an act of philanthropy.

The tourists' importance to the 2010 festival and Nashville's relief efforts is clearly seen in Mayor Karl Dean's press statement that year:

> If you have reservations to come to Nashville, we want to see you here. We expect to see you here….The airport is open. The interstates are running. We have also a strong downtown. The honky-tonks are already open, and there is music there and beer there and barbecue there. Our art museum is open. We will have the Country Music Festival in June. What I'm trying to get across to folks is, and this is really important to get, we're open for business right now. (Dean cited in Woods 2010)

After the festival, CMA thanked fans for their support and for helping to save the city:

> On behalf of the artists and celebrities who play CMA Music Festival for free, CMA donated half the net proceeds from the 2010 Festival to The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee for its flood relief efforts. With half of the proceeds already earmarked to public schools for music education through CMA's Keep the Music Playing program, the total donated to each charity was $1.45 million. The Festival also infused $23 million in much-needed tourist revenue into the local economy during the four-day event. (CMA World 2010)

Jim Butcher uses the term "new moral tourism" to describe the phenomenon in which the tourist desires the preservation of the tourist site and host culture rather than the mere consumption of a hyperreal mass production. In contrast with mass tourism, where tourists blindly accept the productions outlined and presented by the industry for their amusement and consumption, new moral tourism is characterized by self-discovery through a search for enlightenment in other places and a desire to preserve these places in the name of cultural diversity and environmental conservation (Butcher 2002, pp. 6–8). The fulfillment of this desire during the 2010 CMA Festival is manifested in the guest community's allocated and accepted role in saving Nashville's musical and cultural traditions. This responsibility led to a heightened tourist experience that was perceived by many fans to be more genuine than the staged production that initially drew them to the festival space. Acts of preservation, ranging from area cleanup, to donations to community groups, to the support for local businesses, prevailed throughout the festival weekend, allowing fans to act out country-music themes of family values, home, and morality. Through such performances, fans claimed ownership for the festival and the city and agency for its safeguarding and continuance. However, it was not activism to save Nashville alone, but also what the city represents and how fans identify with the past and present musical tradition that the city and the festival offer. For fans, saving Nashville was a chance to intimately interact with the artists, the country-music tradition, and the city. Most importantly, fans were allowed to perform the role of the ultimate fan who is dedicated not only to the tradition's history but also to its present and the performative experiences that country music, Nashville, and the CMA Music Festival have always offered. By saving the city, fans were saving their musical home and ensuring their place in both the country-music legacy and Nashville's current country-music identity.

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7

The New Nashville: Reimagined, Revised, Retold

On March 27, 2015, the Country Music Hall of Fame opened an exhibit showcasing the collaboration between the group of studio musicians known as the Nashville Cats and Bob Dylan on his albums *John Wesley Harding*, *Blonde on Blonde*, *Nashville Skyline*, and selections from *Self Portrait*. The exhibit, titled "Dylan, Cash, and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City," explores Nashville's transition in the mid- to late 1960s, a time when Nashville was broadening its musical output outside the traditional country canon, likely due to a new cultural awareness associated with the era's sociopolitical climate. In reference to the exhibit and this transition, museum commentary within the exhibit reads: "Nashville became a new place. The influx of musicians, writers, and artists during this era enlivened the city." Interestingly, this is also the era during which Nashville's modern country-music tourism industry was firmly established, which, as I have suggested, manifested through a desire for (and the potential to profit from) the city's, and country music's, preservation. I am not suggesting that today's tourism industry should be credited to Dylan or Cash or in response to their musical collaboration, but rather that this discussion between the old and often imagined, the ignored, and the new has always defined and continues to define Music City.

R.W. Fry, *Performing Nashville*, Leisure Studies in a Global Era,
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What's Left Out?

In 2009, during my first tourism summer course at Vanderbilt, I started the class with a paid bus tour of Music City titled "Making Music City." The tour's focus was on the significance of country music in Nashville, and the final destination was the world-famous Music Row, but the tour started with sites that are significant to Music City history but not usually included in the promoted Music City brand. The highlight of the tour for myself, and the most surprising moment for my students, was our tour of Fisk University and our discussion of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group largely responsible for introducing the sounds of African American spirituals to the nation and, arguably, for setting the stage for the development and dissemination of all popular music. Following this introduction, on our driving tour of Nashville's Jefferson Street, the guide shared stories of Nashville's once vibrant R&B and rock-and-roll scene. We learned of clubs where artists including Little Richard, Jimi Hendrix, Etta James, BB King, Ray Charles, and even Bessie Smith, the empress of the blues, had played; we were introduced to the radio station WLAC, which broadcasted the sounds of R&B to much of the country and, like the Opry on WSM, introduced "new" sounds to new audiences, establishing a fan base for the "new" sounds of popular music; and we also heard of Nashville's importance as a musical center for the development of gospel and the traditions that predated the recording industry. For most of my students and others on the tour, these stories created a conflict with Nashville's complete and celebrated history: Nashville is the home of country music. R&B, the blues, and rock and roll are genres associated with nearby Memphis, Tennessee. These associations are repeatedly made clear in both cities' promotional materials and presentation. During our next day's class meeting, we discussed what we had seen and heard on the tour. One student spoke of being amazed by the stories, especially that Jimi Hendrix started his professional music career in Nashville. Another student, who studied jazz, referenced the many jazz and swing instrumentalists and vocalists who were mentioned. And another student responded that the most amazing thing was not that these musicians had played and lived here, but instead the lack of attention given to these musicians and their seeming omission from most

repetitions of the Music City narrative. The class discussion that followed resulted in a series of questions about both the Music City brand and the selective history of Nashville music. How could a place coined "Music City" ignore a significant portion of its music and artists? Where was the museum celebrating genres other than country that are present in and influential on Nashville? Why were so few Jefferson Street clubs and institutions preserved or commemorated by historical musical markers? Although the Musicians Hall of Fame exhibits traditions outside of the country canon, including an exhibit on Jimi Hendrix's time in Nashville, and the Country Music Hall of Fame showcases the influence of African American music on early country music and, in the past, has included special exhibits on both Ray Charles and the Nashville R&B scene, outside of these institutions, there is little music other than that of the country tradition on display. When the "other" is presented in the city, it is often as a footnote. Rather than prominently exhibiting these traditions and their significance to Nashville, they instead focus on the genre's influence on country music, Nashville's most notable commodity and most recognizable music brand.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable attempt by the government and the tourism industry to broaden the "Music City Brand." The 2006 "Music Calls Us Home" campaign discussed in Chap. 3 was an attempt at extending the Music City moniker and illustrating the diversity of musical styles and performers here. A look at the photo gallery from the "Visit Music City" website illustrates this attempt at broadening the Music City brand, such as the nameless and faceless portrait of an African American performer's hands playing an electric guitar, accompanied by the following title and description: "Nashville Musician: Nashville musicians play sounds for every genre—making it the true music city" (Visit Music City 2016). Other photos included in the gallery reinforce this attempt at embracing multiple music genres and appealing to varied music fans: a songwriter's night at the Bluebird Café; recording studios such as RCA Studio B; a live performance at Robert's Western World; bluegrass at the Station Inn; iconic and popular country-music performers such as Keith Urban, Hank Williams Jr., and The Band Perry; rock musicians including the Black Keys and the Kings of Leon; blues musician Keb' Mo'; a portrait of the original Fisk Jubilee Singers; the Nashville Symphony; a polka

band; and the Nashville Opera. The combination of the expected and the unexpected, those traditions that meet the preconceptions of "Music City" in juxtaposition with those outside the brand help expand the Music City identity and attempt to fill in Nashville's missing musical history.

In addition, a video titled "For the Love of the Music," directed by Zach Merck, is available for viewing on the "Visit Music City" website. Like the photos, the video attempts to narrate the complex history of Nashville's music. Told from the perspective of musicians and producers, the video combines the expected (country music) with the unexpected (other traditions). During the introduction, viewers are told of Nashville's unique role as a musical city, the authenticity of Nashville's music, the diversity of styles, the strength of the audience, and the freedom to create. This picture of a musical utopia is reinforced by images of country icons, current country-music superstars, rock musicians, gospel choirs, and legendary spaces such as the Ryman, the Grand Ole Opry House, Tootsie's, and Nashville itself, along with local institutions such as Hatch Show Print and United Record Pressing. The introduction concludes with legendary local musician Emmylou Harris stating, "I love New York, and I love LA, but Nashville is the place I want to come home to," which points to the city's one-of-a-kind status and reinforces the connection between Nashville and home (For the Love of the Music 2013). The video and the photo gallery also hint at the relationship between fan and performer. Photos of audiences, of people listening to music, are included, interspersed with images of those who make the music, which further reinforces the mutually dependent relationship. In the video, fans are shown listening to live music and interacting with the space, the artists, and the city. After the introduction, viewers see RCA Studio B, home of the Nashville Sound and an important marker of Nashville's country-music history. Addressing the viewer from inside the studio, Marty Stuart broadens the narrative by pointing out that while Nashville will always be known as the country-music capital, its history is more complex. The video then takes viewers to Fisk University with a brief explanation of the Jubilee Singers' importance to Nashville history. The remainder of the video further introduces viewers to the broader Music City.

An in-person trip to Nashville, however, does not reinforce this broad and more complete and complex musical history. For the most part,

tourists are guided to perform their tourist experience in the District, an area that, aside from the Schermerhorn Symphony Center and BB King's Blues Club, is all country all the time. Traditions outside the District are also outside the tourist map and, therefore, the tourist agenda. As of August 2016, there remain no guided public tours that visit the historic Fisk University and/or Jefferson Street. While private tours of Fisk can be organized through the institution, and websites such as "Historic Nashville Inc." provide lists of important sites and information for touring Jefferson Street, there is no step-on tour that connects this history with the nearby history-of-country brand.

Attempts have been made and are in progress to connect multiple unpromoted traditions to what has traditionally been told. The Ryman Auditorium, for example, made an interesting and noticeable change to the museum narrative when it was renovated in 2015. Prior to the renovation, country music was the sole focus, and the venue's long and impressive history before 1943, which included performances or visits by The Fisk Jubilee Singers, Rachmaninoff, Charlie Chaplin, Helen Keller, and Jack Johnson, to name a few, was mentioned as a brief side note in a small exhibit case in the back hall. Since the renovation, however, these stories have been moved to the forefront and included in the tour video "The Soul of Nashville." The placement of these artists more prominently within the museum narrative paints a more complete picture of the Ryman's history and also of Nashville's music history more broadly. While Nashville institutions have been at work revising their own narratives, the African American Music Museum, scheduled to open in downtown Nashville in late 2018, aims to showcase previously ignored traditions by telling the story and influence of African American music in Nashville, the USA, and abroad. According to the institution's website, the museum's mission is as follows: "The National Museum of African American Music (NMAAM) educates the world, preserves the legacy and celebrates the contributions of African Americans and the role they play in creating and shaping the soundtrack of American life" (National Museum of African American Music 2016). Rather than celebrating this music outside the District, the museum's proposed location at the corner of Fifth and Broadway, in the former convention center building, places the museum space geographically in the center of Nashville's tourist

district near honky-tonk highway. The museum website states that musical traditions created and affected by African American artists will be exhibited, while the museum's placement also suggests its influence and important role in the city's musical identity. Located across from the Ryman, two blocks away from the Country Music Hall of Fame, and next door to the honky tonks that line Lower Broadway, the African American Music Museum will remind country-music fans of the city's diversity, as well as that of the tradition they are performing. In addition, the multiple traditions and their interconnectivity showcased in such close proximity illustrates the Nashville soundscape's complexity, moves visitors toward a more complete understanding of Nashville as a music city, and introduces the unexpected to Nashville's performers of tourist expectations, and, in the process, will likely broaden the current brand.

What's Been Added: Nashville as Seen on TV

Country music as a commercial genre and Nashville as its home are manifested within the duality of new and old. From its beginnings, the themes repeated in country-music lyrics have referenced the imagined past and home, while the opportunity for the nation to participate in collective nostalgia was available only through modern technology. The Nashville Sound, made famous by producers such as the Bradley Brothers and Chet Atkins, is often described by tour guides as a 1950s reaction to the "new" sounds of rock and roll, its nickname "countrypolitan" emphasizing the musical and geographical contrast of a music city and its most profitable commodity. Even today, a conflict within the country-music fan community exists over the very definition of country music and which performers most authentically represent the genre. This contrast was apparent during the 2016 CMA Festival concerts at Nissan Stadium. Behind me sat two groups with obviously contrasting musical tastes. As contemporary artists performed, a group of teenage girls to my right could not contain their excitement and vocally and physically shared it with the crowd during and after the performance. As the set concluded and the crowd responded with applause, an older man with a group of four fans directly behind me, wearing Hank Williams Jr. T-shirts, tapped

me on the shoulder. He gave me a thumbs-down and shook his head, physically showing his disapproval of the artist on stage and the young fans' reactions. When Hank Williams Jr. performed, however, the aesthetic contrast shifted and the older crowd displayed a level of excitement comparable to the earlier reactions of the teen girls. This contrast in styles and musical tastes among country fans can also be observed in ABC's broadcast of the CMA Festival, which aired on August 4, 2016. The title of the broadcast, *Country's Night to Rock,* like the term "countrypolitan," suggests that what by some is used as an insult has been embraced and branded by the music industry as the new music of a new music city, made even more paramount by the presentation of Music City on primetime television.

Since the premier of ABC's TV series *Nashville* in 2012, the contrasts inherent in Music City have moved beyond past and present, traditional and contemporary, back- and frontstage to also embrace the dichotomy of real/hyperreal. The show is, of course, a dramatization of the Nashville music industry and city, yet its inclusion of real Nashville recording artists, famed performance venues, and industry personalities within the fictional story line and its extension of the televised drama and its characters into the "real" Nashville obscure the division between imitator and imitated. The result is a multi-strand narrative that involves Nashville, stories of Nashville, multiple music personalities, and the fans in a performance of the hyperreal, where these parallel narratives benefit and authenticate each other and allow fans both perceived insight into country music and additional opportunities to experience and perform Nashville through the theatrics of fandom.

For the majority of Nashville visitors, their primary knowledge of the city is through its performance and presentation as outlined by the chamber of commerce and the recording and tourism industries. Within this tourist space, fans are provided a unique and perceivably genuine backstage experience, where they are permitted to perform their preconceptions of country-music tradition. This inclusive space created for the fans is frequently outlined on tourist maps that suggest both the key places to see and where tourists are most accepted. As Tim Edensor describes the importance of this type of tourist space, "One of the most important features of enclavic space is the continual maintenance of a

clear boundary which demarcates which activities may occur and who may be admitted" (Edensor 2000, p. 330). Within such a space, Mark Neumann suggests, "Tourists are rarely left to draw their own conclusions about objects or places before them. Instead, they more often confront a body of public discourse—signs, maps, guides, and guidebooks that repeatedly mark the boundaries of significance and value at tourist sites" (Neumann cited in Edensor 2001, p. 73).

This type of discourse most commonly occurs within the District where, as I have argued, tourists become the locals and are permitted to act out their preconceptions of country music within a theatrical space that is alleged to be the very site where country music was created, preserved, and continued. Add to this preserved and living history the intimate drama featured on ABC's (Now CMT's) *Nashville*, and tourists can experience multiple strands of a narrative that interact with one other in the production, performance, and perception of Nashville as a musical place. A Google map titled "ABC's *Nashville* Episode Film Locations Map" visually demonstrates this narrative overlap. Like other city tourist maps, sites including the Country Music Hall of Fame, RCA Studio B, The Ryman, the Bluebird, and Tootsie's appear on the interactive Google map (*Nashville* Film Locations). Unlike other tourist maps, however, references to the site's role in the development and/or continuation of country music are not included but are replaced with brief descriptions of each site's role in a specific *Nashville* episode. The following description of the Ryman, for example, refers to the space as "historic," but gives no details of its historical context or importance outside the TV program's narrative: "In episode 7, Rayna Jaymes and Juliette Barnes must get over their pride, bitterness and hate for one another in order to perform a duet during their record label's 25th anniversary concert at the historic Ryman Auditorium." Likewise, the Grand Ole Opry House is described on the map as, "Located at 2804 Opryland Drive, it is here that Rayna Jaymes and Juliette Barnes both perform, and meet briefly, in front of a packed crowd in episode 1. It is also where Rayna meets Deacon's cousin Scarlett and her musician boyfriend backstage. See the *Nashville* stars performing at the Opry."

Therefore, rather than being placed within the historical country-music narrative, these venues become film sets for a performance first seen through the television show. This type of disconnect is reinforced

through a Greyline tour dedicated specifically to the show, which, like the film-location map, introduces the Ryman and other sites such as the Bluebird Café within the city through their placement and role in the television series. I recently took this Greyline tour and was fascinated by the revisionist history that was presented. Each site's complex history was reinterpreted and retold through the televised narrative's frame. In addition to landmarks such as the Ryman Auditorium and the Country Music Hall of Fame, the tour took us to private residences and repurposed buildings that have been featured and given a fictional identity in the televised drama: real homes that doubled as the homes of *Nashville's* characters; hotels, cafes, and music landmarks where the show was filmed were pointed out as the scenes unfolded in the imaginations of those on tour. The level of anticipation and excitement at seeing the fictional home of the character Deacon, for example, was sincere. Fans on the tour expressed their disbelief that the sites they had seen on television were actually visible on the tour. As one fan stated: "It's like being in the show." Through the fans' excitement, for a moment it seemed possible that Deacon might walk out and wave to the bus of onlookers. Although the homes are real residences belonging to actual Nashville locals, they are introduced to tourists because of their significance in the show and the fictional characters who supposedly live there. Guides reinforce this association during tours by showing televised clips from the show and personal messages from the actors at the sites that tourists are seeing through the tour bus windows. The trip culminated in a tour of the world-famous Bluebird Café, a real songwriter club in Nashville at which many Nashville songwriters began their careers and that, in *Nashville*, serves as one of the key sets. While many great names in the country-music industry got their start in this small club, on the tour, it was the fictional characters who received the most attention. The real music celebrities seen in the many photographs on the café's wall were merely pointed to as evidence that the show was indeed filmed in this location, visual markers validating the "realness" of the televised drama and its stars. In the process, the space that the show has transferred from reality to fiction was again transformed—from fiction to reality—as evidence for the TV show's fans, further obscuring the line between real and hyperreal, between *Nashville* and Nashville.

Nashville has created "new" tourists who are more interested, or at least as interested, in the show as they are in the industry it proposes to imitate. In a 2015 article for *Forbes*, contributor Brittany Hodak discusses the real-life impact of the television series on the city:

> A tourism study last year found nearly 1 in 5 Nashville visitors who were viewers of the show cited the show as a motivating factor in their decision to vacation in Music City. Viewers also reportedly stayed longer and spent 23% more money while in town. With several *Nashville*-themed tours and activity guides—including a four-day, three-night tour package dreamed up by ABC's parent company Disney—it's not difficult for TV fans to immerse themselves in the world of Rayna Jaymes, Deacon Claybourne and Juliette Barnes. (Hodak 2015)

Referring to the "New Nashville Tourist" and those fans who come to the city because of *Nashville*, CVC President and CEO Butch Spyridon states: "We see great value in the show both domestically and internationally, but particularly internationally" (Spyridon, cited in Rau 2015). While new national and international fans come to Nashville to see in person what they see weekly on television, they are also introduced to the "real" Nashville through overlapping narratives. Spaces that are visited because of their inclusion in the show simultaneously introduce fans to these sites' parallel and historical musical narratives. Several fans commented on the show's influence on their Nashville visit and musical tastes.

Fan A: I watched the show initially because I was a fan of Connie Britton from *Friday Night Lights*. As I have continued to watch, I have become more invested in the characters as well as enjoying the musical aspect. Previous to this, I did not consider myself a fan of contemporary country music, but this show has inspired me to seek out more obscure artists because their songs have been featured on the show.

Fan B: I definitely did not care for recent country music (more of a Dolly Parton girl than a Taylor Swift one), but by featuring the work of country musicians and songwriters, I've discovered some work that I like and wouldn't have known of otherwise.

Fan C: We are planning a trip to the Bluebird Café because of how it is featured on the show.

In response, the city's tourism board added a *Nashville* page to its visitor's site, attempting to connect the real and dramatized Nashville by linking the televised drama to the sites and experiences within the city. Included are links to the music recorded in Nashville and featured on *Nashville*, a list of filming locations, guided and self-guided tours which connect *Nashville* to city landmarks, links labeled "Where the Actors Go" and "What They Said" that connect show personalities to the real Nashville while reminding fans that these actors indeed live in the real Music City, and "What Would *Nashville* Do?," an interactive tool for connecting specific venues to specific characters (Television's Hit Drama *Nashville* 2016). In this section, fans are invited to imagine fictional characters Rayna Jaymes, Juliette Barnes, Deacon Claybourne, Scarlett O'Connor, and Avery Barkley within the real Nashville. After a brief description of each character, fans are given a list of real Nashville sites, businesses, eateries, and bars that these characters might frequent if they were real country-music musicians living and working in Nashville. For Rayna, traditional sites such as the Ryman and Music City Roots are listed; for Juliette, trendy sites such as the Tin Roof and Mercy Lounge; for Deacon, songwriters clubs such as the Bluebird and Douglass Corner. The venues chosen for each artist mirror their onscreen personalities. Add to these venues various other restaurants, clubs, and merchants, and fans can truly walk in the footsteps of the imagined. By connecting places and experiences to the actors, tourists are permitted to go beyond a guided tour of Nashville, permitted now to walk in the footsteps of both the "real" and imaginary stars of the famed city. The tourist stage authenticates the show, while the intimacy that fans see weekly on the televised series authenticates the industry and city the fans are celebrating.

This connection is further reinforced through the "On Location" links, which connect the televised drama with the history of the city's places of production, performance, and preservation. The Ryman Auditorium link, for example, first places the landmark within the television series and is then followed by a brief history, validating specific references to the venue's history and continuation via connection to the show's plot. To

further this connection and in response to the new Nashville tourist, the Ryman has engaged in this promotion of the show's narrative alongside the venue's historical narrative. In addition to memorabilia from Loretta Lynn, Lula Naff, Hank Snow, and Minnie Pearl, markers of the TV show can be seen throughout the auditorium, such as a display of the dress worn by Rayna Jaymes during her performance of "Wrong Song" at the Ryman Auditorium. Although the subject matter of the song, which was written and recorded specifically for the show, reinforces and follows the series' plot, because it was performed at the historic Ryman Auditorium, it is thereby connected to the venue and, by extension, country-music history. Meanwhile, the dress placed on exhibit references both *Nashville* and the Ryman, authenticating both. By displaying this item and others from the show, the Ryman itself, alongside the television series, has woven the show's narrative into the Ryman's 123-year history and the reverence accorded it, further evidenced by the assortment of gift-shop merchandise celebrating both the famed auditorium's history and the televised drama's popularity.

Another instance where these narratives merged was in a 2013 exhibit at the Country Music Hall of Fame titled "Nashville: Like A Country Song" on display from April 5 to October 31, which showcased several items from the television series, including dresses worn by Rayna Jaymes and Juliette Barnes, a 2009 Gretsch solid body guitar played by Deacon Claybourne, a Gibson LG-2 played by Gunther Scott, and a script autographed by the cast. These items were displayed next to or nearby instruments played by artists such as Maybelle Carter and Taylor Swift, clothing worn by Patsy Cline and Brad Paisley, and handwritten lyrics by George Jones and Miranda Lambert. As in the Ryman's *Nashville* display, parallel narratives were presented side by side, further joining the show and the city it dramatizes. And this parallel resulted in a performance of the two Nashvilles at the 2012 CMA Music Festival.

Nashville in the Streets of Nashville

While the *Nashville* television show and its actors have been a visible and audible part of the CMA Fest since the show first aired in 2012, the festival that year was both heavily supported and represented by the

ABC network. At the center of the 2012 festival experience on Lower Broadway was the Buckle Stage, which featured the ABC show *Summer Block Party*. Television personalities from shows such as *The Bachelorette*, *General Hospital*, and *Nashville* made appearances to promote their respective television shows. For the stars of ABC's *Nashville*, these performances further authenticated their place in the country-music narrative by connecting their characters in real time to Nashville's physical space and to the main street of country music being celebrated and performed by fans. However, the ABC block party was not the only place at the festival where fans could interact with the show's stars, who were featured alongside recording artists in Fan Fair X (an area where fans line up for an intimate and rare encounter with their musical icon), on the main concert stage at Nissan Stadium, and in the broadcast of these concerts on ABC. At the 2013 festival, for example, actor Charles Esten, who plays Deacon, and Lennon and Maisy Stella, who play Maddie and Daphne Conrad, were featured at the concerts and on the televised broadcast.

While these actors play musicians on *Nashville*, they have also become performing musicians around Nashville, evidenced by recent performances at the Ryman and the Grand Ole Opry featuring *Nashville* cast members alongside the biggest names in country music. Actors Lennon and Maisy, Charles Esten, Will Chase, Sam Palladio, and Clare Bowen, among others, have in recent years performed on the Opry stage, at famed venues throughout the city such as the Bluebird Café and 3rd and Lindsley. At a recent performance of the Tuesday night Opry, Charles Esten announced that it was his fiftieth performance on the Grand Ole Opry stage. As a regular performer of the Opry and at venues around town, Charles Esten has moved beyond the fictional character Deacon to be embraced as a musician in his own right, and as a musician, Esten exists in both the fictional and real Nashville, obscuring the distinctions between the two. In addition to these live performances, ABC's *Nashville* broadcasted their second special, titled "Nashville: On the Record", from the stage of the Ryman Auditorium. This special episode featured the show's music performed by its characters alongside many of the songwriters behind the music. In a behind-the-scenes clip posted on ABCnews.com, Charles Esten states: "This is where the show and reality meet." It is the musical performances, therefore, that provide fans with an experience

that connects *Nashville's* and Nashville's parallel narratives. Fans of the show have the opportunity to witness the artists as they are featured on the show, within the city soundscape (Behind the Scenes with the Cast of *Nashville* 2013).

On February 18, 2016, I attended a benefit concert at the Ryman performed by the *Nashville* cast for the African Children's Choir. The concert opened with the *Nashville* theme played by music director Buddy Miller and a band of stellar Nashville musicians who accompanied the television show celebrities throughout the concert. Connie Britton, who plays Rayna Jaymes, commented on her disbelief at the honor of performing at the venue, a statement I have heard repeated by many other artists. Following her performance were Chaley Rose, Chris Carmack, Hayden Panettiere, Charles Esten, Jonathan Jackson, Sam Palladio, and Clare Bowen. Although these artists were introduced by their own names, fans still called out their character names as they entered the Ryman stage. For instance, when Charles Esten came on stage, the crowd erupted in applause, and a woman seated behind me screamed, "We love you, Deacon," which was rewarded with a wave in her direction. In addition to *Nashville* celebrities, musicians Ingrid Michaelson, Dierks Bentley, Big Kenny, and Damien Horne performed, further validating the fictional characters' performances. I sat in wonder, watching this unusual concert unfold: I was sitting in the Ryman Auditorium, the mother church of country music, watching a sold-out show with fans watching actors pretending to be country-music artists. As the show continued, however, I began to ask myself: What is the difference between the Nashville star and the *Nashville* star, and which of the two is the more authentic? In addition, how does this concert, held in the Ryman in the downtown tourist district of Music City, further blur the line between the two? In other words, I was witnessing this live-music performance in a place known as the "mother church of country music" in a town known as "Music City," the Nashville and *Nashville* narratives overlapping.

One further example will illustrate the importance of live performance on both narratives. Singer-songwriter duo John and Jacob's song "Be My Girl" was featured on the second season of ABC's *Nashville*, performed by Sam Palladio, Jonathan Jackson, and Chaley Rose, and first released on record as part of the *Nashville* soundtrack. Following

this, in October 2014, John and Jacob released their first album, with this song included. Before their album release, the duo went on a promotional tour that included a sold-out show at Nashville's 3rd and Lindsley, with opening artist, and *Nashville* star, Sam Palladio. In a review for the website *No Country for New Nashville*, Philip Obenschain describes Palladio's opening set as follows: "Sam is not Gunnar Scott. Sure, he plays that character on television (and, of course, possesses the same musical talents—that's really him singing all of those songs), but, in real-life, Sam's material is more personal, more dynamic, and has broader appeal" (Obenschain 2014). Although the review makes a clear distinction between Sam Palladio and Gunnar Scott, Palladio later joined John and Jacob onstage to perform "Be My Girl." While Palladio's appearance at the concert benefited the success of John and Jacob, the performance at 3rd and Lindsley also benefited the actor, providing sought-after performance time at a Nashville venue and authenticating his television role while simultaneously allowing him to mediate his multiple performance personalities.

Performances by *Nashville* stars at the CMA Festival and famed venues such as the Ryman, the Bluebird, and the Opry, as well as their recorded work in the famed studios of Nashville's Music Row both within and outside the confines of the show, have helped draw together and obfuscate the differences between Nashville's parallel narratives. In other words, the cast members of the fictional Nashville have become players in the real Nashville. If touristic authenticity is defined by experience, then the fan's intimate interaction with these musicians through the show and their insight into their lives and their music provide a perceived reality and a heightened fan experience that is usually unobtainable with high-profile country-music celebrities. These actors' fictional lives become as authentic, if not more so, than that of the musicians they imitate and pay homage to on the show, and their music is mediated and authenticated by its inclusion both on television and within Nashville's land- and soundscape.

This parallel narrative between the two Nashvilles is also apparent in the fans' dedication to the show and its continuation. In 2016, ABC announced *Nashville* would not be renewed for a fifth season. The outpouring of support for the show was immediately visible in tweets, commentary on other social networking sites such as Facebook, and in

multiple online petitions signed by the fans hoping to save the show. One petition started by Matthew Nelson of Bridgewater, New York, illustrates fans' dedication, their connection to its actors, and their accepted roles as its savior. The petition is introduced as follows: "It is REALLY heartbreaking for us to say it but our beloved *Nashville* was canceled today by ABC! We need to save this fan favorite show!!" (Save *Nashville* Petition 2016). The petition received over 174,000 signatures. More interesting were the comments posted by fans at the time of signing the petition and after the campaign ended. Fans tweeted to others, encouraging them to sign the petition, while stating reasons for their love of and dedication to the show and their belief that the decision to cancel was a mistake. These statements were encouraged by the actors, who chimed in with their own supportive tweets, thanking fans for their support and encouraging them to stand up for the show. For example, Charles Esten tweeted:

Twitter
Hurricane
AS
Nashies
Keep
Signing

Clare Bowen tweeted: "NASHIES WORLDWIDE! Click the link below & sign to help," and Lennon and Maisy tweeted: "I think we can… I think we can… I think we can…" Fans responded to the petition and the artists' requests, successfully saving the show, which was renewed for a fifth season by CMT (Country Music Television). A recent article in *CMT News* comments on the renewal: "Nashies rejoice! On the heels of tremendous outcry from legions of devoted fans, CMT, Hulu, Lionsgate and ABC Studios announced Friday (June 10) that the critically acclaimed and fan darling series *Nashville* will return with a brand new season on CMT" (CMT Staff 2016).

The date of the announcement corresponded with the 2016 CMA Music Festival which was held June 9–12. From multiple stages, musicians and actors from the show announced to the crowds that *Nashville* was saved and that the fans were responsible. The first to officially

announce the fifth season was Charles Esten on June 10 on the CMA Close Up Stage in Fan Fair X to a crowd of festival attendees: "I'm very, very grateful to say that 'Nashville' will have a season five" (Esten, cited in Watson 2016). The decision to announce the renewal at the festival, confirmed later that day by news sources, and the space of the announcement are significant. This was an announcement for the fans, whose outcry was largely responsible for the show's fifth season. Fans were given the role of rescuing *Nashville*, and in the process, the opportunity for intimate experiences with the artists, the actors, and the very city that they had been asked to save six years earlier following the 2010 flood.

Conclusion

The dichotomy discussed above is one more example of how Nashville as a tourist destination is the result of a tourist performance that exists in the liminal state between past/present, frontstage/backstage, and real/fabricated. Since the adoption of a country-music identity and its promotion by the tourism industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Nashville has increasingly presented itself as a stage for the performance of Nashville, whatever that means to the individual performer, whether star or fan. Places of performance, preservation, and production have opened their doors for tourists to not only walk in the footsteps of history but also leave their own for future visitors. A trip to Nashville is, therefore, more than a chance to witness country music; it is the chance to perform it, the chance to belong to a tradition that, while altered and enhanced in many ways, remains thematically consistent across generations, in contrast to rapidly changing society and technology. Country music has always been about the imagined past, home, and optimistic future. Nashville, as "Music City," provides a performative space in which these nostalgic desires may unfold. The imagined home heard in country music is performed for and by the fans. The disappearing American main street is alive and vibrant, along with a performed community that is also disappearing in American society. While the city provides a performative space for tourists to act out desires of identity, community, and country music, their performances also directly shape the city. Nashville is known

as the home of country music, an identity that has been embraced by the city and the world. On January 9, 2013, *The New York Times* published an article titled "Nashville's Latest Big Hit Could be the City Itself," which referred to the city as an "It city" (Severson 2013) Interestingly, the images accompanying the article were of the District, a small portion of metropolitan Nashville, and of watch parties for the premiere of the *Nashville* television show. The article reads, "But to be a truly great city, some skeptics argue, it has to be a place that tends to its residents first and tourists second." I suggest that there is no distinction. Nashville's growth over the last fifty years has not been followed by an increase in tourism, but is instead the result of tourism. The saving of the Ryman Auditorium, the revitalization of Lower Broadway, the current growth of Nashville's SOBRO area—are all directly dependent on the tourist dollar and impact. In 2014, visitors spent more than 5.4 billion dollars in Nashville, nearly 31.5% of the entire state of Tennessee visitor spending. The city's current growth is directly dependent on this revenue, but the tourist impact goes further. Tourists are the city. The increase in tourism is, therefore, also partly the result of new sites and historical institutions where fans can visit and interact with tradition and the current modes of country music. The increase in tourism has brought life to a city that thirty years ago was left for dead. Nashville locals watch as tourists engage and enact country music, an imagined main street, and home in a performance of what all imagine Nashville once was and what it could be.

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