

# 10 WAYS THE GRAND OLE OPRY CHANGED NASHVILLE

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## IT GAVE THE CITY ITS WORLD-FAMOUS MONIKER

650 WSM-AM first went on the air in October 1925. The next month, the show that would come to be known around the world as the Grand Ole Opry was first heard over its airwaves. It was one of the station's announcers, David Cobb, who in 1950 first referred to Nashville, Tennessee as "Music City, USA."



## THE OPRY HELPED CREATE COUNTRY MUSIC'S FIRST SUPERSTARS

"Country Music Is Big Business, and Nashville Is Its Detroit," headlined Newsweek in 1952. "Once found, the talent is almost invariably turned over to WSM and the Grand Ole Opry," stated the magazine's article. "Besides [Roy] Acuff, the other top stars at WSM include Red Foley... and Hank Williams."



## NASHVILLE AS A CENTER OF THE MUSIC BUSINESS AND A SONGWRITING CAPITAL

The Opry drew Roy Acuff to Nashville in 1938, and Acuff went on to become a key figure in the founding of Nashville's music business. In late 1942, he and WSM pianist Fred Rose formed Acuff-Rose Publishing to promote his popular Opry songs. One of the songs they published was "The Tennessee Waltz." Written by Opry stars Pee Wee King and Redd Stewart, this song's immense popularity helped launch the city as a songwriting capital. Today, Nashville has one of the world's largest songwriting communities, placing hits on all the charts from pop to hip hop and, of course, country.



### **THE OPRY HAS KEPT NASHVILLE – AND AMERICA – LAUGHING FOR YEARS**

In 1940, the Opry introduced a little-known character created by Sarah Ophelia Colley to radio audiences for the first time. That character—Minnie Pearl— and her trademark \$1.98 hat and “How-deeee” greeting would go on to become Nashville’s unofficial goodwill ambassador to the world.



### **COUNTRY’S CITY SQUARE**

If country music was a town, the Opry would be its town square. The Opry is where three generations of artists gather to connect with each other and with some of the biggest country music fans in the world. No one can possibly begin to guess the songs that have been written, the musical collaborations that have come about, and the life-long relationships that have grown out of encounters at the Opry.

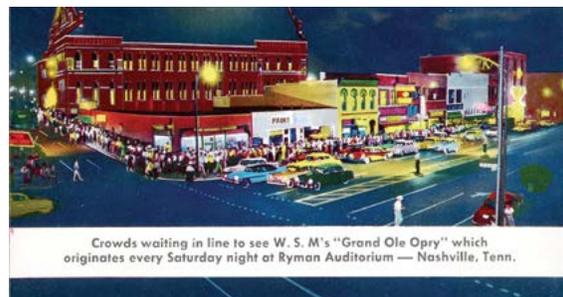
Here’s a small sample:

- Johnny Cash and June Carter met for the first time backstage at the Grand Ole Opry.
- It was during the Opry’s visit to Carnegie Hall that Alan Jackson spent time with Alison Krauss and considered asking her to produce an album with him. (The result was the Grammy-nominated LIKE RED ON A ROSE.)
- New country traditionalist Josh Turner first introduced childhood musical hero Ralph Stanley to their hit “Me And God” backstage during an Opry performance.



### **IT GAVE US BLUEGRASS**

On December 8, 1945, Earl Scruggs made his debut with Bill Monroe’s Blue Grass Boys, completing the historic line-up that would serve as the prototype for the bluegrass sound—Monroe on mandolin, Scruggs on banjo, Lester Flatt on guitar, Chubby Wise on fiddle, and Howard Watts on bass. When the new lineup premiered on the Opry at the Ryman Auditorium, audiences went crazy for its new supercharged sound. Monroe, Flatt, and Scruggs would go on to become members of the Bluegrass Hall of Honor and the Country Music Hall of Fame, with Monroe also claiming a spot in the Rock ‘N’ Roll Hall of Fame. Bluegrass, meanwhile, is alive and well at the Opry today thanks to Grammy-winning Opry members including Alison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs, and Del McCoury.



### **IT MADE NASHVILLE A TOURSIT MECCA**

A 1955 edition of The Reporter read, “sponsored by Station WSM and broadcast every Saturday night from the Ryman Auditorium, ‘Grand Ole Opry’ is the biggest hoedown in the history of hoedowns. It usually plays to a packed house of three and a half thousand at the Ryman, with another one or two thousand waiting outside for vacant seats. These thousands, on the average, represent devotees from thirty-eight different states come to view their favorite artists.” The magic continues today, as more than a million people visit the Opry complex each year from all 50 states and dozens of foreign countries.



### **THE OPRY TOOK COUNTRY MUSIC TO THE WORLD... LITERALLY**

When the Opry first hit the airwaves in 1925, it utilized the cutting edge technology of the day to share its music with as wide a distribution base as possible-- AM radio. In 1932, WSM began transmitting with what was then the world's tallest radio tower (878 feet), increasing the station's broadcast power to 50,000 WATTS. On Saturday nights, the Opry can now be heard from New York to California and into Canada and Mexico. With each generation of Opry fans have come new ways to listen to the Opry's unique brand of entertainment. Today's fans can still catch the Opry from New York to Mexico on WSM-AM, but can also tune in from Tokyo to Moscow on the Internet, not to mention catching the show on cable television and satellite radio.



### **THE OPRY GAVE 'THE CLASS OF '89' A "HOME ROOM"**

A remarkable group of artists rose to fame in 1989-90 and lifted country music sales to unprecedented heights. Known collectively as the "class of '89," they include Alan Jackson, Clint Black, Travis Tritt, Garth Brooks, and Vince Gill. All are songwriters. All are distinctive vocal stylists. And all five men are members of the Grand Ole Opry.



### **THE OPRY HELPED SOLIDIFY CARRIE UNDERWOOD AS A TRUE-BLUE COUNTRY MUSIC STAR**

When Carrie Underwood competed for the title of *American Idol*, she said her dream was to be a country music star. Then, less than two weeks after her Idol win, she made her debut on the Opry stage on June 10, 2005. The multi-Grammy winner became an official member of the Opry in May 2008.