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SPECIAL REPORT

A big new sound

blows

out of Nashville . . .



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A SPECIAL REPORT

Once the Saturday night gathering place of roving geetar pluckers, foot stompers and blowers of corn likker jugs, Nashville has suddenly been discovered by some of the most sophisticated fastes in the U. S. music industry.

The Nashville Sound is sweeping the charts in national music popularity—propelled by best-selling records cut by performers like Ray Charles (above). The city is now the No. 2 source of American popular music.

A big new sound blows out of Nashville

IT'S COUNTRY DOLLED UP, CORN REFINED AND HOTTEST THING IN MUSIC

The industrial city of Nashville in Central Tennessee's rolling hills provides the setting for a cultural revolution that has rocked the nation's music industry.

Within a decade a cozy little recording center whose musical attainments once scarcely drew a sneer from Tin Pan Alley has now burgeoned into a \$40 million economy, with Nashville second only to New York as a source of popular music.

This combined commercial and cultural phenomenon has risen out of the adenoidal moans and strident strings of a past era of country and western music—though the word music is applied with some misgiving by those of sophisticated tastes.

But the fact remains that one out of every two records now sold in the U. S. and a heavy proportion of the records played on U. S. radio come from a Nashville studio.

For want of a truly representative term, the diversified product of Nashville's 15 recording studios and its army of composers and musicians is loosely defined as country or country-and-western music. Actually these are trade terms applied to this flourishing industry in a fruitless effort to find a descrip-

tive name for a product that covers the gamut from hoedown through gospel and romantic to far-out jazz.

Big Names Join ■ Some of the biggest names in pop music are turning to country-style songs; many are starting to record in Nashville because the studios produce a relaxed type of musical support that performers like and the public buys over the counter.

This type of background is popularly known as the Nashville Sound. The term has become a symbol of prestige in an industry that once belittled Nashville as the corn crib of the music industry.

The transformation of Nashville into a music center of national importance can be traced to these factors:

■ For years the city has had a basic reservoir of musical talent. The *Grand Ole Opry*, a Saturday night feature on WSM Nashville since 1925, has launched literally hundreds of careers in the country music field (see separate story page 70).

■ The native Nashville talent was given outlets and polish by Broadcast Music Inc. which needed to develop new sources of music to compete with the older American Society of Composers Authors and Publishers. When

BMI came into being, ASCAP owned just about all the established composers of popular tunes, and those composers were in New York and Hollywood.

■ The growing need for music in radio programming, as the music and news format spread throughout am broadcasting, gave impetus to the development of BMI and its music sources.

In any scanning of the present state of Nashville's musical progress it's necessary to face up to the blunt facts of American musical tastes.

By city folk standards, much country music is corn. There's no disputing this label, if basic emotions and simplicity of musical form can be considered corn. Yet blue grass, a primitive version of country folk music, has suddenly become the rage of campuses and coffee houses all over the nation, and the *Opry's* roaring reception in Carnegie Hall a year ago threatened to shatter the chandelier-and-rococo decor of that august auditorium. In Nashville the Saturday night *Opry* performs with a cast of 125 singers, yodelers, guitar plunkers, fiddlers and jug blowers before an audience of 3,500 paying devotees (see page 70).

It Sells ■ Country music in its raw

BIG NEW SOUND BLOWS OUT OF NASHVILLE continued

forms may be an anathema to music's social leaders and their followers, but the hard-money men who deal in musical merchandise operate on the theory that more people are corny than sophisticated. The basic human emotions—love, joy and grief—guide the musical programming of most radio stations. Any broadcast manager who takes the time to investigate will soon discover that Nashville music ranks one-two-three as a source of station programming. Unfortunately, those who haven't kept abreast of musical progress are likely to slough off this trend with the comment that if it's Nashville music, it's country and western drivel.

They are only partly right, for Nashville has broadened its product to include progressive jazz, tuneful ballads, the latest in pop and more than a score of other types. In fact, Nashville is fast becoming the musical style-setter, a role long held first by New York and later influenced by Hollywood's movie scores.

At the Christmas weekend two country-western albums ranked right at the top of best-selling records—Vol. I and II of "Ray Charles Sings Country & Western Music." Their significance

rests in the conversion of another major pop artist to the Nashville type of music.

Top vocalist Nat King Cole reflects the Nashville influence in his popular "Ramblin' Rose" release, based on a plain little tune that has what a Washington bureaucrat might call a high coefficient of melodic persistence. Bureaucrat or laborer—people who hear "Ramblin' Rose" can't keep from singing or whistling it. At a recent National Press Club dinner in Washington, D. C., Mr. Cole had an audience of correspondents and government officials howling through a dozen choruses of this typical country tune.

Hard Facts ■ The basic economics of Nashville, 1963 version, aren't easy to document for statistical analysis. But the spirit of Nashville is felt in the southern section of the city, where its Record Row is congregated. Plant investment in Record Row isn't heavy by New York standards because the studios are noted for their technical efficiency rather than architectural beauty. The two largest—RCA-Victor and Bradley—are often booked around the clock, seven days a week. Artist bureaus and music publishers can operate in an

ordinary office suite; composers and musicians need only a stubby pencil and envelope or a wall plug for an electronic guitar.

A good share of the records taped in Nashville usually go out to a distant processing plant. Since the invention of tape it's been possible to run a substantial music business from a desk or clothes closet, depending on the number of people involved, though this doesn't fit into Nashville's growing insistence on technical quality.

In any case, it doesn't take much capital to decide on a label name and produce a record. A Nashville cabbie, catching the spirit of the recent 11th Annual Country Music Festival, popped this question to his fare, "You in the music business?" Without waiting for a reply, he went on, "I'm starting my own label, Bucket Shop Records. I'm getting a terrific combo together and we're ready to go."

New Music World ■ Nashville is in the music business up to its ears. It now has the facilities, earnest and skilled musicians who like to play, interested technicians, a vast supply of active composers and the urge to turn out good records.

This onetime gateway to the West is now "open sesame" to a new world of music because broadcasters were forced a score of years ago to start a new music source. This happened when they organized Broadcast Music Inc. in an effort to cope with an ASCAP rate increase they considered intolerable.

BMI was formed, and at last the frustrated composers who had tried vainly to crash ASCAP's gates now had a market. They still have this market because BMI easily leads the current lists of top tunes.

The records are coming out by the hundreds, artists are booked all over the world, publishing houses turn out sheet music, better background musicians or side men are busy. But ask the executives of recording houses about their business and you'll get an embarrassing silence. If Gimbel's wants to know, Macy's isn't supplying the information.

A series of inquiries brought this recap of estimates about the national grosses in the recording industry: RCA Victor may do \$70 million from all its records, Columbia \$68 million, Capitol \$53 million, Decca may be between Columbia and Capitol. The rest are said to be under \$50 million. ABC-Paramount, Mercury, Dot, United Artists and the others are mum when their private business is probed.

Signs of Progress ■ Yet there are some educated estimates about the basic facts of Nashville's music industry. Many can't be fed into a computer, but here are some of the figures picked up around Record Row:



Like so many other popular singers and musicians Gogi Grant finds the Nashville atmosphere to her liking. Recording here, in the RCA-Victor

studios, she is accompanied by Bobby Moore, bass, and Buddy Harmon, drums. Nearest the star at the piano is Dick Pierce, a&r for Valiant.

▪ Half of U. S. recordings originate in Nashville.

▪ Three out of four Decca pops are from Nashville; RCA-Victor and Columbia pops may run around 50%.

▪ Over 60% of all single records have country influence.

▪ Over 75% of successful singles are country oriented.

▪ In the average week the U. S. recording industry turns out 465 records, 60% of them country oriented. Nashville is absolutely dominant in singles; New York and Hollywood lead in albums.

▪ The year's most successful recording company, according to trade talk, is the one whose country-and-western department is the most active; pops are the big money makers.

▪ Probably half the records spun by radio stations that feature current hits (the "top 40" format, for example) have country music roots.

▪ BMI has 208 publishers in Tennessee (mostly Nashville); SESAC has three; ASCAP has some, but no figure is available.

Growth symbols abound in this new music economy. ASCAP opened an office in Nashville a few weeks ago. Jules Collins, ASCAP sales manager, said the society is about to update its 1957 bulletin listing country-and-western songs. "Our publishers have always had a lot of music in this field," he said, mentioning three favorites as examples—"Don't Fence Me In," "Last Roundup" and "Wagon Wheels." He recalled that Gene Autry (Western Music Publishing Co., an ASCAP publisher) had been a powerful force in building the popularity of country-and-western music.

Mr. Collins said many old, established ASCAP songs have been recorded in the Nashville style. He credited WSM Nashville and its *Opry* with a lot of the growing popularity of music having the country and western flavor.

BMI Strong Point ▪ BMI has long dominated the Nashville music industry. It maintains an office there, second only to its New York headquarters, with Frances Williams Preston in charge. Mrs. Preston knows practically every personality, writer and executive in the field and serves as a combination goodwill ambassador, counsellor and reference source.

BMI's annual awards are cherished by country musicians. It presents them during the annual festival week that draws thousands of music industry delegates to Nashville each fall. It's buzzed around Nashville, incidentally, that BMI has bought a site for a new building to house its spreading operations.

Although BMI's leading role in the Nashville music supply is conceded, it



Johnny Ray's ballads have helped make the Nashville Sound popular. Most of his recent albums have been recorded there. Here Owen Bradley

likes to emphasize that its library is broad-based and points to a strong classical repertoire. But as far as Nashville is concerned, there's one type of success story for BMI and it goes like this—at the yearend 58 of the perennial singles hits recommended by *Billboard's Music Week* as standards for year-round programming by radio stations are licensed for performance by BMI. This is BMI's answer to the ASCAP claim that the society is far superior in the field of standards, or numbers that persist as popular favorites for around five years or more.

Another spreading influence in the country field is SESAC. Its library has a rich store of folk, western, country and gospel music. SESAC recordings use such Nashville favorites as the Anita Kerr Singers and Jordanaires, Webb Pierce, Chet Atkins and other prominent artists. Like BMI, it lends encouragement to composers who haven't been able to break into Tin Pan Alley, which is ASCAP's stronghold.

Another recent growth symptom has appeared: ABC-Paramount, often called the largest entertainment organization in the world, had its eyes opened in mid-1962 when Ray Charles, blind pop singer, quickly hit the million mark

sets the mood at the piano as Johnny and Dottie Dillard prepare to record a new song. Session is at the Bradley studio in the Tennessee city.

with his first "Modern Sounds in Country & Western Music" album. Volume II naturally followed shortly, in the musical tradition that when something is a smash hit, everybody gets on the bandwagon in a hurry. When "I Can't Stop Lovin' You" was pulled out of the Ray Charles album for a single, it too hit the million mark and kept going.

These Ray Charles recordings reflect the growing interest in the country type of music. The songs weren't recorded in Nashville, but they were strictly country-type selections. In this first venture into a new field, the artist used his customary background—a big orchestra for numbers recorded in New York and a strings-and-chorus group for Hollywood recordings.

Then the Flood ▪ The ABC-Paramount venture with Ray Charles touched off a flood of country and western recordings by labels that hadn't done much in the field, contributing to the 1962 convergence of the recording industry toward Nashville. And Tommy Roe's first ABC-Paramount recording in Nashville brought him numerous personal appearance offers and a chance to do a pilot film for ABC-TV.

Such are the typical symptoms of Nashville's growth. The extent of this expansion is put this way by Charles

BIG NEW SOUND BLOWS OUT OF NASHVILLE continued

Lamb, publisher of the trade journal, *Music Reporter*:

■ Nashville is the home of 1,100 musicians, 350 songwriters, 110 publishing houses and 15 recording studios, plus artist bureaus and booking agencies.

■ Of the 1,100 musicians, 750 are members of American Federation of Musicians. The rest are non-union performers who saw at cigarbox fiddles, puff mouth harps and kazoos and perform numerous other rites on impromptu instruments unfamiliar to most concert halls.

The parade of big pop names into country music constantly amazes those who have waged the long fight to attain

national recognition for the city's product.

Among feminine stars who have sampled or embraced country orientation are Connie Francis, Patti Page, Joni James, Kay Starr, JoAnn Campbell, Connie Stevens and Della Reese. Besides Ray Charles and Nat King Cole there are Bobby Vinton and Johnny Tillotson, to mention two male vocalists. And of course Nashville boosters were delighted last autumn when Stan Kenton and Walter Brennan recorded Bill Anderson's "Mama Sang a Song."

Then there's Burl Ives, whose record sales have multiplied since he embraced the Nashville Sound. He opened a whole new career by utilizing Nash-

ville's able technicians and side men. Fats Domino, another established performer, has recently been playing songs written by Hank Williams, revered country composer of the last decade.

Matter of Taste ■ Records become hits overnight, with no scientific explanation. The vagaries of the public's tastes constantly baffle those in the business. No one was more surprised last autumn than composer Bill Anderson when his "Mama Sang a Song" became a top-seller for Decca. It was a personal thing, Bill explained. "I had always wanted to write a song about the way my own mother sang to me as a kid when I had problems. She would sit me on her knee and sing 'Rock of Ages' and soon the hurt would go away." Radio exposure of "Mama" was effective, just as it pushed the cur-

Opry fans jam ugly, old Ryman Auditorium each Saturday

A musical miracle appears in downtown Nashville every Saturday night as 3,500 or more howling people pay \$1.50 or \$1 to worship in pews at an old tabernacle. These semi-hysterical folks jam Ryman Auditorium to take in WSM's *Grand Ole Opry*.

Ryman is big and it's ugly—traits that are cherished by WSM as well as the performers and those who squeeze in to see the show. Another squeeze is the responsibility of Ottis Devine of WSM, motorman of the show, who has to fit 125 performers

plus assorted guitars and bull fiddles into the limited backstage facilities.

Two WSM executives—Robert E. Cooper, radio manager, and Mr. Devine, WSM program manager and manager of *Opry*, say the stringy, nasal music of the 30's is giving way gradually to romantic, rhythmic styles though Roy Acuff's breakdown fiddle will rattle the timbers at old Ryman on a Saturday night. Roy was the first big country singer.

Hay Originator ■ The history of *Opry* dates from 1925 when George D. Hay, an announcer on WLS Chi-

cago, moved to the new WSM and started what was then known as the *WSM Barn Dance*. The name was changed two years later. The *Opry's* still riding high, and artists cheerfully give up a \$1,000 booking to get the \$31 scale *Opry* pays. Most country musicians are *Opry* alumni. [Mr. Cooper likes to discuss the *Opry's* success stories. It's a highly effective sales vehicle, he said, mentioning Martha White Mills (flour), a small local enterprise that started on *Opry* a decade-and-a-half ago and quickly spread out over 17 states. At one time it opened 200 dealers in roughly a month. The sponsor sends artist groups around and includes local talent in its shows.

But *Opry's* place in the history will always be that of the show that launched hundreds of careers.

One outstanding alumnus is Elvis Presley, an old *Opry* bull fiddler who has passed the 25-million record mark for RCA-Victor. Mr. Presley is usually considered a rock-'n'-roll performer, but he has drawn heavily from the country repertoire.

And *Opry* history will always pay a tribute to one man—Edwin W. Craig, board chairman of National Life & Accident Insurance Co., which owns WSM. Last November during festival week the then governor-elect of Tennessee, Frank Clement, presented Mr. Craig with a scroll signed by *Opry* personnel and called him "an old mandolin picker." Gov.-elect Clement said Mr. Craig once said to him, "I would rather be complimented by the people responsible for country and western music than by any group in America."



Saturday night is "Grand Ole Opry" night in Nashville. Then 3,500 of the faithful pay \$1-\$1.50 to jam into the pews in Ryman Auditorium to hear the WSM program that originated in 1925. It

was such "Opry" singers as Roy Acuff and more recently Elvis Presley who are responsible for the growth of Nashville as the nation's leading country and western music center.

rent "The First Family" album, mimicking President Kennedy, into multi-million figures. Mr. Anderson is one of the five top country-and-western writers and holds a number of BMI citations.

All discussions of the growth of Nashville's music eventually get around to the profound influence of radio—playing records all day long, especially best-sellers and catchy numbers. A country record was a freak 15 years ago if it sold 300,000; now million records are almost commonplace and much of the explanation rests in the steady exposure of records provided by thousands of stations.

How It Began ■ Radio's recognition of the Nashville product goes back to the post World War II days when RCA-Victor and Decca sensed the potential of this type of music. Decca was one of the first labels to do something about it, using Owen Bradley as its artist and repertoire (a&r) man. Red Foley and Ernest Tubb, still active, were among early successes. Like many performers they didn't want to record in New York or Hollywood, preferring to be among friends in Nashville. Hank Snow, RCA-Victor, was another artist who preferred Tennessee.

Columbia has bought the original Bradley studio, ugly but highly functional and an engineer's dream. Like RCA-Victor's more elegant plant, it's familiar territory for technicians and performers who know every bounce and decibel off its baffles.

While Nashville was acquiring modest recognition, another phenomenon was developing in music—sheet sales started to slip with the arrival of television. Often the piano was in the living room along with the tv set, which naturally captured family attention. Television's musical quota is not heavy so the public turned to radio and phonograph records for music, and radio played what it felt the public wanted to hear.

Augmenting these influences was the development of the German-born tape recorder into a simple and economical American gadget. Thus the Nashville musical revolution began to assume serious proportions.

Constant Changes ■ Television still grows, music remains popular but in varying forms and Nashville is alert to cash in on the trends. Times are still changing, however. The four-year-old Country Music Assn., new center of industry activity, is a serious trade association whose staff is headed by Mrs. Josephine Walker, executive secretary. CMA elected Gene Autry as its president last November. Wesley Rose, publisher, recorder and artist bureau head, is board chairman of CMA, which has 737 individual and 27 organizational members.



Country and western stars are expected to dress and live the part. Here's Decca Records' Webb Pierce with brocade suit and tooled-leather lined car. Door handles are six shooters. Silver dollars adorn the steering wheel, instrument panel and windshield.

CMA is interested in the impact of radio and tv on country music. A new CMA survey shows over 1,300 radio stations programming 2 to 24 hours of country music daily. Ninety-seven stations program country music on a full-time basis. In television, CMA found, 70 stations use live country talent and 32 country music; 28 use both film and live. This makes a total of 130 tv stations active in the country field.

Ken Nelson, RCA-Victor and retiring CMA president, said CMA should make "the invasion of television its No. 1 project and objective for 1963."

When he took over the CMA presidency last November, Gene Autry recalled the slow acceptance of country and western music three decades ago. "Now country music is accepted all over the world," he explained, "and is performed by leading artists and bands who use, copy and borrow from country music." He added that requests have come recently from Japan, where the music has been heard on American Armed Forces Radio.

CMA is a serious successor to the old Country Music Disc Jockey's Assn., a semi-formal organization that once met in Nashville every autumn under somewhat convivial auspices, earnestly soliciting all the free discs in sight.

Widely Traveled ■ Nashville's roving troupes have had inestimable millions of dollars worth of free promotion in the form of dj announcements that go about like this, "And don't forget folks, you can hear Harry's Bobcats in person

Saturday night at the Odd Fellows Hall."

At one time a country troupe ranged out maybe 150 miles maximum. Now they're everywhere, including Canada and Europe, as a result of the fame that has come from radio and recordings. The WSM *Opry* paced this geographical spread in the two decades it was on NBC Radio network plus limited tv exposure. *National Barn Dance* at WLS Chicago performed a similar role along with other favorite radio programs.

The *Opry* and *Barn Dance* coverage is no longer national, but country music spreads from coast to coast. The CMA radio study, while incomplete, is valuable for its demonstrations of broadcasting's use of country music.

Stations featuring this music sometimes have trouble trying to convince Madison or Michigan Avenue their audiences are profitable buys, according to Jerry Glaser, vice president-general manager of WENO Madison-Nashville. "They still look at me on nine out of 10 calls with those martini eyes and ask sneeringly, 'You mean people listen to that stuff?' But we try to sell them a way of using country music rather than to attempt to convert them to the charm of the music itself. After all, we've got to get them exposed." Mr. Glaser made his comments at a panel discussion during the music festival last autumn.

"On the other hand," Earl Hotze, account executive of Gardner Adv. Co., St. Louis, said, "nobody really tried to sell us on country music this year. Reps and station personnel sell the stations but not the music. Agencies are just beginning to recognize the country music market but it's not yet well defined in the advertising world."

Los Angeles Listens ■ Metropolitan Los Angeles has a 24-hour country music station, KFOX-AM-FM at Long Beach. "Don't make the mistake of downgrading country music," vice president Dick Schofield warned. "It's the music of Americans." He said 86% of the Los Angeles population has a country background, adding that the am-fm operation is sold out solidly midnight to 6 a.m.

"Country music needs careful programming," he said, catering to the tastes of an audience that is mostly middle-class augmented by the more recent college and coffee shop set. He added a reminder, "Nashville's musicians aren't country squeakers; they're ad lib virtuosos."

Metropolitan Washington has two country music stations. WAVA-AM-FM Arlington, Va., play "Americana" music. WDON Silver Spring, Md., started the new year by going country from sign-on to 2 p.m. CKLW Detroit has joined the country list. There's at least one

country station around most major markets.

WCMS Norfolk, Va., cites its rating progress to show the popularity of carefully programmed, diversified country music. It scorns the nasal vocalists.

A national representative firm, Country Music Sales, handles Country Music Network. It is headed by Charles Bernard and represents 50 stations in 26 states that feature basic country music. The rep firm has headquarters in New York.

The explanation for this nationwide musical transition can best be stated by those most responsible. Jim Denny, who at 52 operates his own artist bureau and Cedarwood Publishing Co. in Nashville, went through chore boy tasks and *Opry* operations at WSM to become head of the station's artist bureau—and then he decided to go in business for himself.

At any given moment he'll have one or more artists or troupes in distant countries in addition to American bookings. His list includes two-score top country artists who get \$500 to \$5,000 a show. Cedarwood has 25 employes and writers in Nashville, plus offices in Berlin and London. In addition Mr. Denny owns three Georgia radio stations—WJAT Swainsboro, WBRO Waynesboro and WSNT Sandersville. Among his artists are Webb Pierce, Jimmy Dean, Minnie Pearl and Justin Tubb. "We're giving people what they want," he said simply. His calculations lie behind the \$40-million estimate of Nashville's music economy.

European Origins ■ The popularity of country music in Europe takes this art form right back where it started. Many of the old folk songs were brought over by immigrants from the British Isles and the Continent. They headed out into the hinterlands, many stopping in Tennessee after pushing through Cumberland Gap. This is often cited as one of the reasons folk music has been especially well liked in Tennessee.

A foreign musician, Bill Fuller of the Royal Showband of Waterford, Ireland, says Americans "have no idea how popular country music is in Europe." Interviewed during an American tour, he said, "We play your Nashville numbers in Ireland and they like it because it's our kind of music." And a December dispatch from the Rome bureau of the *Chicago Daily News* said, "The folk singing revival in the United States has spilled over to Italy. American folk songs are repeated everywhere." The Kingston Trio and Harry Bellafonte lead in record sales, the *News* said, but the youngsters like to play folk music themselves and it has spurred the learning of English lyrics.

"Country music was rebuffed in New

York," Wesley Rose recalled. "Even in the postwar years they looked down their noses at us as Tin Pan Alley turned over its business to a younger generation that commutes from the suburbs and takes a three-hour lunch. On the other hand many of our Nashville composers start their writing day at 6 a.m. They write of memories, the only permanent thing you get out of life."

One of the leading figures in Nashville music, Mr. Rose said the city will continue to grow as a music center so long as it provides good songs. His composer father, Fred Rose of Tin Pan Alley background ("Red Hot Mama," "Deed I Do"), started Nashville's publishing industry with Roy Acuff, featured *Opry* star, as anchor man.

Looking back a decade and more, Mr. Rose said Nashville's music industry was small and backward for years. Then a young composing genius started turning out songs that started to draw nationwide attention. His name was Hank Williams, whose works are still on the top-tune lists 10 years after his death.

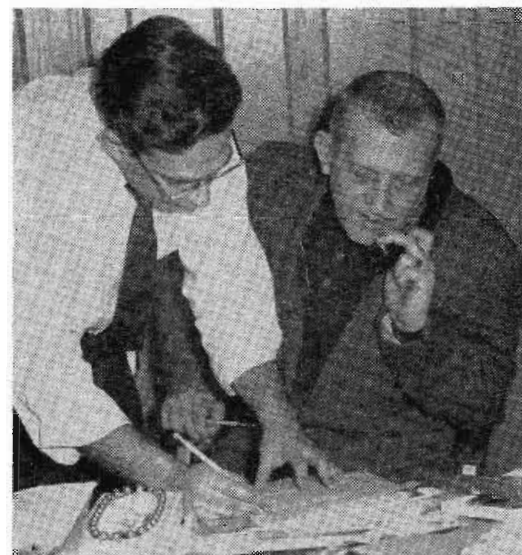
"Hank gave us the strength to crack the popular music field," Wesley Rose said. Now the business started by the elder Rose has grown and the Acuff-Rose publishing firm is often classed as one of the largest in the music world.

Incidentally the still-important sheet-music business has undergone a technical overhaul. Music Type Service, in Nashville, has an intricate but cost-cutting method of providing camera-ready masters for music printers. It started in 1959 with Acuff-Rose Publications (BMI) and its Milene Music affiliate (ASCAP) as first customer.

The younger Rose appraises a song by having it performed while he works at his desk. "I judge a song by hearing it," he said. "If it pulls me away from the sheaf of papers, then I know it has something. To me Broadway show music is all alike." He said the classical influence is spreading in Nashville but added, "Our music will always be simple because modern people are heading toward ways of simplifying the living process."

Role of Broadcasting ■ "Radio is the basic cause of Nashville's musical growth," Mr. Rose says. "It reaches the masses and plays the music they want. We owe radio tremendous thanks." A portrait of Hank Williams hangs in the Acuff-Rose office. The Williams royalties are said to exceed those of Jerome Kern and Cole Porter.

Owen Bradley, who with his brother owned the Bradley studio (sold to Columbia recently) noted that pop records build names and the pops get the most radio exposure. He's Decca's a&r man in Nashville but remains active as a



A leading figure in the growth of Nashville music is Owen Bradley (r), Decca artist and repertoire executive as well as performer and director. Here he is with Harry Silverstein, his aide. Mr. Bradley is a composite a&r man, executive and director. He helped Nashville's music grow.

performer and directs his own 16-piece band over weekends.

Shelby Singleton, vice president of the Mercury label, makes another point. "Nashville is uninhibited," he said, "providing a chance to experiment. Our music isn't just a job; it's a way of life to these sincere musicians."

Others emphasize the lower production costs due to simple arrangements that are often jotted down on scratch pads and to the ample talent supply. The spontaneous arrangements are conceived in minutes whereas a New York arranger may require a week of writing, lots of money and a costly orchestra.

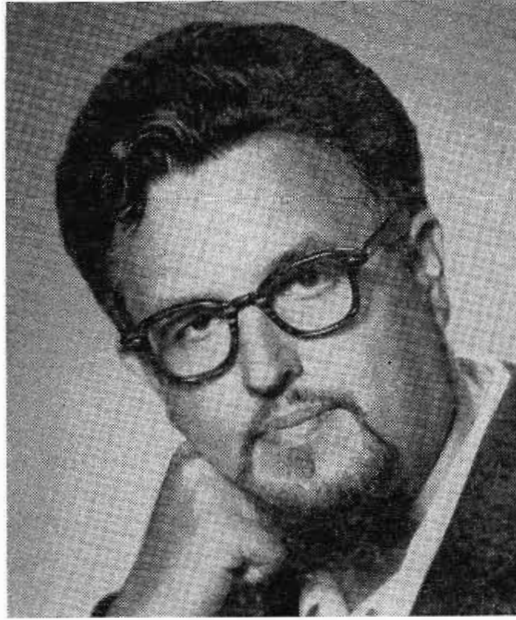
Single Center ■ Goddard Lieberman, president of Columbia Records Div., CBS Inc., estimated nearly 80% of single record hits come from Nashville. He said the success of the local product traces back to early American folklore, the post-Civil War minstrels and the ability of the songs to document the growth of a pioneering nation. "Nashville is finally finding its level in the musical world," he said.

Harlan Howard and Boudleau Bryant, successful composers, agree that radio is paramount in the spreading popularity of country music. Like many other composers they cite the opportunity provided by BMI, augmented by radio performances, to give new composers a chance to be auditioned and performed. The bearded Bryant is a former symphonic violinist in Atlanta. Now he collaborates with Mrs. Bryant and sings some of his own numbers.

Joe Allison, a&r for the Liberty label, said, "Radio is the greatest single force, the omnipotent factor, in the Nashville miracle. This city is the new Madison Avenue of the popular-country music



Nashville's composing - performing couple, Felice and Boudleau Bryant, combine professional musical activi-



ties with helpful hints in performance of Bryant compositions, many of which are among national favorites.

business. Radio cultivated national tastes that had been there all the time. Composer Howard, who has won more BMI awards than anyone in history, operates without the benefit of musical education. His "Pick Me Up on Your Way Down" and scores of others are pure Nashville. Mr. Howard tells the story about the New York executive who asked a Nashville musician if he could read music. "Not enough to spoil my playing," the musician replied.

Not Hillbilly ■ Stephen H. Sholes, manager of RCA-Victor's West Coast record division, who has watched Nashville for two decades, recalled frequent predictions that country music was on the wane, but its popularity grew and kept on growing. "These spontaneous Nashville recordings are free of tension," he said. "The music, musicians and technical standards are improving every year."

The deft digits of an inspired Nashville guitarist, RCA-Victor's Chet Atkins, are heard on a dozen solo albums. They are heard, in addition, behind more vocalists than a computer could compute. An *Opry*-reared star, he's now an RCA-Victor executive in Nashville but puts in a big day in the studio producing and playing. He describes the Nashville Sound as a promotional tag. "Actually it's a state of mind reflected in the spontaneous enthusiasm of the product," he explained.

Mr. Atkins pointed out that Nashville recorders are broadening their instrumentation. Violins from the local symphony, trumpets, saxophones and an occasional harp are heard, and the professional voices of the Anita Kerr Singers and Jordanaires are likely to dispel any recollections of the adenoidal moaners and four-chord guitarists who still symbolize country music to those not fully informed on the subject.

Among delighted beneficiaries of all this Nashville progress and the popularity of country music are the musical instrument companies. At the Nashville festival last November Michael Cole, eastern sales manager of Fender sales, Santa Ana, Calif., said sales of guitars and other musical instruments are "way up" and attributed this fortuitous trend to radio performance of country music. A plain or acoustic guitar runs from \$40 to \$500, depending on the quality of workmanship; electronic versions are \$300 to \$400.

And so Nashville sits in the spotlight of musical growth. Its music may be simple, weepy, joyous, reverent. Whatever its type, people feel it's meant for them—even for New Yorkers. After contemplating Flatt & Scruggs recordings, a *New York Times* reviewer wrote, "The Jamboree and Banjo discs capture the driving excitement . . . and



Two top executives in Nashville's expanding music industry are Jim Denny (l), head of Jim Denny Artist Bureau and associated enterprises, and Wesley Rose, head of Acuff-Rose Publications and other music projects.

are showcases for Mr. Scruggs' widely imitated use of the five-string banjo and Mr. Flatt's buoyant singing." He added that Flatt & Scruggs and their Foggy Mountain Boys have established themselves firmly in New York. Flatt & Scruggs are heard weekly on the popular CBS-TV series, *Beverly Hillbillies*.

Corny, simple, heartstring-tearing or whatever it is, music talks in Nashville—\$40 million worth.

Music festival week draws the faithful

One week out of every 52 the patient citizens of Nashville turn over their downtown to the uninhibited antics of several thousand visitors who come in November to worship at the shrine of country music.

The might of the electronic guitar is goaded into assorted sonic booms with the aid of the nearest 110-volt floor plug as gaudily costumed instrument luggers huddle in hotel lobbies and corridors, exalting in the cacaphony and hoping an astute talent scout might be overwhelmed by the sheer muscle of their artistry.

Most civic rules are off during Music Festival Week, which is sponsored and programmed by WSM Nashville and shared by the four-year-old Country Music Assn. The panels, meetings and feedouts are supported by major recording firms for the benefit of several hundred radio disc jockeys, a thousand or more guitar and bull fiddle players and assorted fan clubs whose teenage, or even middleage, members often have artists' names crocheted on their sweaters or, in some exuberant cases, on the seats of their pants.

All these migrants to country music's mecca join artists, record company executives and other members in the crushing crowds that overwhelm hotel lobbies and exhibitors' hospitality suites.

Business Too ■ Despite this chaos, important business is done by the Country Music Assn., which manages to read its minutes, hear reports and stage an orderly convention beyond reach of those who come just for the fun.

Many in the music industry aren't quite sure whether it's all worthwhile. Nashville hostelries make a killing; WSM is still amazed at the magic of its *Grand Ole Opry*; the local gendarmes, who years ago had their paddy wagons booked hours ahead, now have few major incidents except for the double-parked, block-long Cadillacs of visiting dj's who make the trek to meet others of their ilk and to chat with name artists they have helped direct to fame.

The 1962 version, the 11th festival

week, reflected the steady transition from abandoned revelry to the somewhat restrained enthusiasm that has been taking place in the last decade. Sartorially there's not much difference. A name performer would sooner be caught without his guitar than unadorned in the bizarre, crocheted, high-chrome rigs his fans seem to expect.

Aside from a hotel crisis during festival week, businessmen making Nashville calls are likely to see little evidence of the city's \$40-million music economy unless they happen to be in the same phase of the music business and run out to the 15 studios and scattered offices in the section loosely known as Record Row.

A Clan Apart ■ The local folk pay little attention to the music industry except during festival week. A dial twister motoring around Nashville on

the eve of last November's festival was surprised to find WSM playing incidental music from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* instead of good old mountain music or a range dirge.

A tour of night clubs during festival week revealed this musical curio—there isn't a country combo within five miles working regularly at a club. Cocktail lounges play standards instead of country stuff. WENO Madison, a few miles out, is the only fulltime country music station.

The metropolitan city of Nashville, with a total population of 415,000, is an industrial center fanning out from the Cumberland River. Main income sources are industry (chemicals, glass, apparel and shoes), government (it's the state capital) and music, plus the various commercial complexes of the modern community.

The \$40 million in music money comes from all over the world—from record and music sales, artist bookings and assorted royalties. A lot of it stays right in Nashville where many country composers and artists live, along with the executives and musicians who man the offices and 15 studios in Record Row.

Nashville is mostly indifferent to the presence of name artists who live there or fly in for a recording job. Performers move around with no thought of the screaming autograph-hunters who tail them elsewhere.

That's Nashville—Music City U.S.A., the shrine of country music, the site of Vanderbilt U., the second-ranking recording center in the world, the home of Distillery No. 1 (Jack Daniel) and the focal point for an almost unheralded musical revolution.



Mr. Acuff

Mr. Smith

Mr. Gibson

Mr. Williams

Mr. Atkins

Miss Thompson

Business and artistic talents are merged in Nashville's music industry, carrying the city to high rank in this phase of American business and culture. L to r: Roy Acuff, one of the early developers of Nashville popularity in the broadcast and recording fields, and music pub-

lisher as well as talent agent; Carl Smith, vocalist; Don Gibson, composer-singer; the late Hank Williams, whose songs are classics in the country field and are featured in the Ray Charles albums; Chet Atkins, RCA Victor executive, performer, a&r man; Sue Thompson, vocalist.

Eastern, western music meet in Nashville

UNION OF TWO POSES A SEMANTIC MYSTERY

Wanted: a definition of "Country Music."

And another: "the Nashville Sound."

They're basic and they're real in this fast-growing musical center but efforts to analyze the semantics of Nashville often end up in confusion.

At the current stage of musical history the term country music is a complete misnomer. Often it's linked with western music—shortened to c&w. Country or c&w—neither term is accurate or adequate.

Many Types ■ Actually the general terms cover many musical types, including a substantial share of the popular (pop) record production. There's a saying around Nashville that goes like this: A country record becomes a pop when it sells 100,000 copies.

Just to make it confusing, there's a fast-growing type of music coming under the classification of country-oriented. A record is known as country-oriented when it is recorded in Nashville, or when it is based on a song with country influence, or when it reflects the informal accompaniment typical of Nashville.

One of these years the semantic mysteries of country music will be solved and more precise terminology will arise out of normal evolutionary processes. Meantime there are a score of terms that come under the general category of country music.

Here are some of the terms tossed about in the musical business: folk, authentic folk, hard folk, country folk, pop folk, blue grass, hoedown, moun-

tain, square-dance, western, range, prairie, western swing, commercial country, lonesome country, rock-and-roll (r&r), rhythm & blues (r&b), blues, jazz, country twist, gospel, spiritual, Americana, river and railroad.

Real Things Happen ■ A risky venture into the philosophy behind the Nashville phenomenon inevitably starts with this observation: When accepted artists perform country music, the records frequently become hits.

But why? First, real things happen in country songs. They may be pleasant and happy, or sad and weepy. But they're human and the tunes can be hummed. The words are simple poetry though the meter may falter; the melodic line is simple; there is minimal chording.

"Tin Pan Alley says 'rendezvous'; we say 'place,'" observes Wesley Rose, who heads Acuff-Rose, leading Nashville publisher. "Most of our composers came from small towns. All country songs are standards; they don't get old,



Decca executives and two stars confer at a Nashville studio (l to r): Owen Bradley, a&r executive; Webb Pierce

and Brenda Lee, performers; Martin P. Salkin, vice president; Leonard Schneider, executive vice president.

and they keep coming back. Country music performers are really actors who tell a story so the public will believe it," he adds.

Country music is hard to define but it's easy to discuss; around music centers it's hard not to get involved in a swapping of views about the subject. There are a few thoughts that generally run something like this:

- Country music has the soul-search-

ing touch of a mother's tear and the hippy rhythm of a bull-fiddler with 50 fingers.

- It's calculated corn—music about the things that make people tick.
- The old fiddlers whose screeches must haunt Stradivarius in his grave are waging a losing battle against violinists who've had music lessons.
- Grandma's corncob pipe is giving way to a cigarette holder.
- Most country music has an itchy-foot beat that appears in endless and often uncharted variety.

Add them up and the result is a plain indication that a new and typically American musical art form is in an evolutionary stage.

Definition Wanted ▪ "Nashville is still seeking a formula, a label or a definition for its product," said Owen Bradley, Decca artist-and-repertory man who has grown up with the city's music industry. "Right now it could be said to be 'down the middle with the masses.' People's tastes change and our music is becoming broader. Actually we're a cross-section of many types of music. Whatever we do, whatever the name of our product, it will always be spontaneous, natural and deep out of the heart."

"Don't use the term hillbilly around Nashville," suggested Stephen H. Sholes, West Coast operations manager for RCA-Victor Div. He recalled that originally one country record might sell well at Dallas, another at Charlotte and a third at Atlanta. "This sectionalized acceptance has disappeared," he said.

The term "Nashville Sound" is applied to recordings that come out of the Tennessee city's studios.

Around the recording industry Nashville Sound symbolizes free-and-easy background music that puts vocalists at

ease. Pop, rhythm, hayseed—no matter the style—it's relaxing and catchy.

Not Always Simple ▪ They like to say around Nashville that recording sessions are unplanned and unarranged. Actually they aren't always that simple. An arrangement may be merely the spontaneous offerings of the side musicians who support a soloist or it may be a well-planned musical score. Generally it's the former.

Everybody talks constantly about the Nashville Sound but the sum of these observations is a symptom rather than a specific type of music. There's plenty of agreement that Nashville recordings have a feeling of informality. But any discussion of the technical aspects of this sound winds up in a maze of engineering terms, musical jargon and the latest sales data for hit records.

In essence, artists like to record in Nashville because the studio people are skilled and know every echo that bounces off each baffle. They know the control-room boys are at home in their chairs and will make every instrument come out effectively—not too loud and not too soft. They like the friendly cooperation of the side men, who join in a round-robin arranging session that may consume only a few minutes but emerges as a smooth production.

Musicians Cooperate ▪ Nashville's side men are good. Many who profess they can't read a note of music are merely living up to a tradition that is fed in the belief it helps sell records. Their cordial cooperation with artists always delights those who have endured the clammy gaze of Hollywood and New York musicians.

And the artist and repertory representatives, who guide a recording through from selection of song and artist to the studio performance, know their music and their performers and—they hope—their public. Their role is absolutely critical. The presence of Owen Bradley, Joe Allison, Chet Atkins or any other a&r men practically guarantees a professional product.

A New Yorker has described the Nashville Sound as merely "fewer musicians." Often they're fewer but by no means inferior. Among the recent converts to Nashville's family-style recording procedure is Johnny Ray (see photo, page 69).

The Nashville Sound fits into the out-of-the-heart motif of the city's recordings. Some pros claim they can identify some of the side men or the choral combo in a blindfold test.

What is happening is a meeting of styles. New York and Hollywood, finally catching up with current musical history, now borrow heavily from Nashville libraries and musical styles. And Nashville is adding diversified instrumental backgrounds, often using symphony players in supporting casts.

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TO ME
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TO A BABY?
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EVERYTHING

I CAN MEND YOUR
BROKEN HEART
IF A WOMAN ANSWERS
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A LITTLE HEARTACHE
LONESOME NUMBER
ONE
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