

*left:* Revered by musicians and music fans alike, the Ryman Auditorium is one of the most historic venues in the country. *above:* Bluegrass legend Ricky Skaggs (left) plays with up-and-comer Josh Turner backstage at the Ryman.

## MUSIC CITY MAGIC

**T**he Ryman Auditorium crackles with the energy of tales told, songs sung, and souls saved.

Home of WSM's Grand Ole Opry radio show from 1943 to 1974, the former Union Gospel Tabernacle is still considered the Mother Church of Country Music. For much of the year, the tradition continues at Gaylord Entertainment's Grand Ole Opry House east of downtown. Each November through February, however, the world-famous show returns to the Ryman.

### RICKY'S RYMAN MEMORIES

Bluegrass virtuoso Ricky Skaggs relishes his annual pilgrimage to the place where music morphed into magic the

first time he played there. "When I was 7, my dad brought me backstage," he recalls. "I was playing the mandolin and my dad was showing me off. All of a sudden, Earl Scruggs walked by."

**"THERE'S NOT ANOTHER BUILDING LIKE IT IN THE WORLD."**

*Ricky Skaggs about the Ryman Auditorium*

The legendary banjo player zeroed in on the tiny dandy, whose talent was leaving even crusty old pros slack-jawed with amazement. "That your boy?" Scruggs inquired. "Why don't you bring him down to audition for our television show?" The wunderkind landed the TV spot. "It was just that quick," Ricky says with a laugh.

The Ryman's roster of past performers from country, bluegrass, pop, rock, and rockabilly simply stuns. A sampling includes Hank Williams, Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, Patsy Cline, Elvis Presley,

### TO LEARN MORE

To hear samples of great Nashville music, to listen to other stars talk about their Ryman memories, and to find more information on where you can experience other venues around Music City, visit [southernliving.com/soulofthesouth](http://southernliving.com/soulofthesouth).

For more information on the Grand Ole Opry, visit [www.opry.com](http://www.opry.com), or call (615) 871-6779. For information on Ryman Auditorium performances, visit [www.ryman.com](http://www.ryman.com), or call (615) 458-8700. For more on other musical events and attractions around Nashville visit [www.musiccityusa.com/visitors](http://www.musiccityusa.com/visitors), or call 1-800-657-6910.

# SOUL OF THE SOUTH

Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, and Minnie Pearl. Now, as then, the venerable auditorium serves as a unifying force, bringing together all types of performers and audiences. Recently, the Ryman has hosted acts as diverse as Nickel Creek, Bob Dylan, the Indigo Girls, Etta James, and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

"I've played Carnegie Hall and other great halls," says Ricky. "But there's no place that makes me feel more at home and brings out the creativity in me like the Ryman. There's not another building like it in the world."

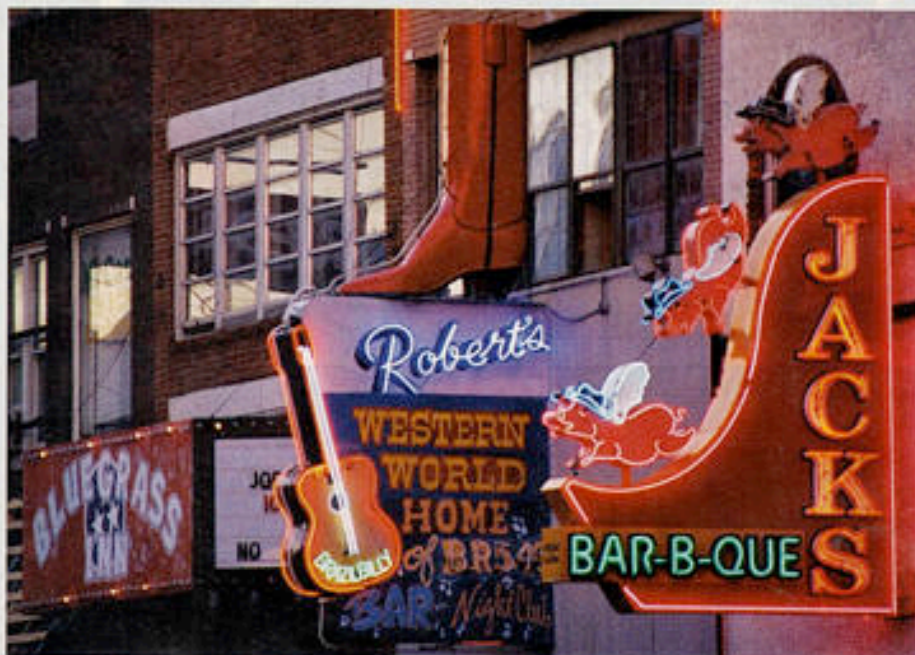
## ALL THE CITY'S A STAGE

Reverence for the Ryman aside, Ricky acknowledges Nashville's incredible variety of other musical venues. "The new Schermerhorn Symphony Center is unbelievable. To have two great music halls—the Schermerhorn and the Ryman—in a town the size of Nashville is quite a feat. It lets people know that this really is Music City."

That distinctive Nashville sound, born and raised at the Ryman, still echoes in clubs throughout the city. The main artery into downtown, Broadway holds some of the area's most storied clubs such as **Tootsies Orchid Lounge** and **Robert's Western World**, both located just across the alley from the Ryman's backstage door.

Tootsies, where Willie Nelson, Roger Miller, and Patsy Cline often bent an elbow at the bar, boasts two stages seven days a week. Some of the best rockabilly bands in the world perform at Robert's, which presents live music all day every day with no cover charge. The group BR5-49 was discovered here and still considers Robert's its home bar.

Just east of downtown, **12 & Porter** supports local bands and hosts out-of-towners too. Last year, Neil Young showed up unannounced for a show. Since then, Velvet Revolver and 3 Doors Down have also made surprise visits.



above: You can hear music seven days a week at Robert's Western World, which was named one of the "Best Bars in America" by *Esquire* magazine in 2006. left: The historic clubs and stores on Broadway have been offering music for more than half a century.

Mentioned in the same breath as the former CBGB in New York City, the storied **Exit/In** on Elliston Place has hosted artists from Chuck Berry to R.E.M. The Gulch, a Midtown development, houses **City Hall**, which presents stars such as Beck, who performed for a sold-out crowd last October—and then went next door to **Sambuca** and played an impromptu set.

Nancy Dorman-Hickson,  
Ryan Wallace

## NASHVILLE NIGHTS

- **Tootsies Orchid Lounge:** 422 Broadway; [www.tootsies.net](http://www.tootsies.net) or (615) 726-0463.
- **Robert's Western World:** 416 Broadway; [www.robertswesternworld.com](http://www.robertswesternworld.com) or (615) 244-9552.
- **12th & Porter:** 114 12th Avenue North; [www.12thandporter.net](http://www.12thandporter.net) or (615) 254-7250.
- **Exit/In:** 2208 Elliston Place; [www.exitin.com](http://www.exitin.com) or (615) 321-3340.
- **City Hall:** 405 12th Avenue South; [www.cityhallnashville.com](http://www.cityhallnashville.com) or (615) 963-9998.
- **Sambuca:** 601 12th Avenue South; [www.sambucarestaurant.com](http://www.sambucarestaurant.com) or (615) 248-2888.