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Patsy Cline Museum and the wonderful women of Music City give you more reasons to be crazy over Nashville

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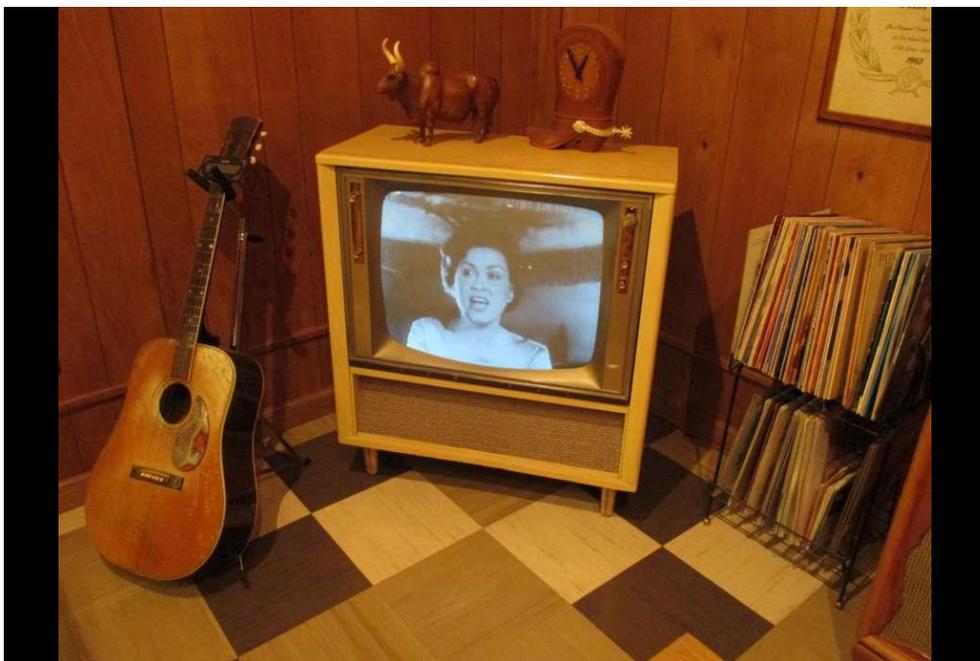


Photo: By Robin Soslow / For The Express-News



IMAGE 1 OF 15

Artifacts from the musician's home add personal touches to the Patsy Cline Museum in Nashville.

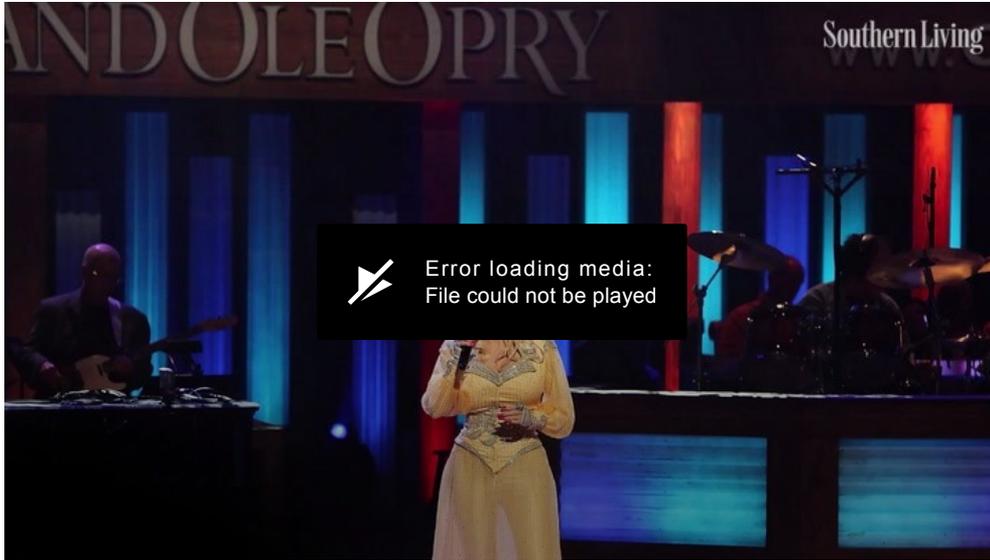
What female singer ranks highest on the Top 10 All-Time Jukebox Hit Singles, according to Gibson.com? Hint: the year this hit, written by another rising star, came out was 1961.

“Crazy” — the Willie Nelson ballad that Patsy Cline turned into the ultimate expression of yearning. It became a cornerstone of the late 1950s-early 1960s Nashville Sound that tempered honky-tonk style with smoother pop elements.

Nashville’s Patsy Cline Museum, which opened April 2017 above the Johnny Cash Museum downtown, is a treasury of songs, archival photos, costumes, scrapbooks and even furnishings from the iconic performer’s home. Most surprising to me: the crescendo of Cline’s achievements that blazed the trail for country music, particularly for female entertainers

Born Virginia Patterson Hensley, Cline dropped out of school, put on red lipstick, walked to her local radio station in her mountain hometown of Winchester, Virginia, and got herself on the air. Same thing with Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts, the TV variety show on which she crooned "Walking After Midnight."

Recommended Video:



Hint: It takes a lot more than strong record sales to become an inductee.

Media: Southern Living

She didn't wait to be invited on the Grand Ole Opry; she talked her way on stage. All this before she recorded "Crazy" in 1961 while on crutches right after being seriously injured in a car crash.

She was the first female country vocalist to perform on American Bandstand, headline her own show in Vegas, and at the time, the only female country vocalist to perform at both Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl.

And all this before the March 1963 plane crash that proved to be the only thing that could stop the icon whose songs peppered Billboard charts for decades after her passing. In 1973, she was the first female to be inducted in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Cline designed her own costumes down to the final fringe and last rhinestone, which her mother Hilda sewed; answered all of her fan mail — sometimes detailing what she'd do if ever catching the person who stole her favorite coat. The museum introduces you to the singer, wife and mother who thrived on ambition and excellence. Here you can play her hits at listening stations, flip through her wonderful scrapbook, savor the handwritten lyrics of an artist who didn't need to learn to read sheet music.

Bill and Shannon Miller, who founded the Patsy Cline Museum, have done a magnificent job telling the icon's story, says museum manager Mario Munoz.

"We've seen everything from tears, joyful laughter, singing out loud and slow dancing in the gift shop. Patsy is still loved and remembered, and this museum is a valentine to her fans."

Today, Nashville's wonder women are elevating the creative scene in Cline's Countryopolitan wake.

When visiting Music City, put the fruits of these Nashville catalysts' bold visions on your hit list.

Femme-fierce bands

Throw a drumstick in any direction and you'll hit a female musician playing Nashville honky-tonks like legendary Robert's Western World, clubs like the Bluebird and Mercy Lounge, and annual showcases like Tin Pan South. Hot tickets include Sarah Gayle Meech, Bully (whose frontwoman reminds me of Gwen Stefani) and Kelsea Ballerini, who has toured with Lady Antebellum and recently played at San Antonio's AT&T Block Party. City Winery Nashville's regularly featured local musicians include Gwen Levey and Valentine James

More Information

If you go

Patsymuseum.com

VisitMusicCity.com

Taylor Swift's space at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

The superstar donated \$4 million to endow the Taylor Swift Education Center, a fun space at the museum that includes hands-on experiences and an interactive gallery.

She sometimes drops into the museum,

which is a wonderland of legendary guitars, cowboy boots, rhinestones and memorabilia.

Girrrl-power guitar shop

Women-run Fanny's House of Music in East Nashville sells new, used and vintage gear, including guitars contoured to fit smaller torsos and hands. Walls display photos of such icons as Emmylou Harris and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. While there I met Callan Dwan, known for performing guitar wizardry with her band, Bleary.

Drink crafters

A bright new star on the downtown bar scene, Carter's at Union Station Hotel is named for Gladys "Happy" Carter, a sociable telegraph office clerk who attracted crowds to the train depot lunch counter back in the day. The 1900 building's splendid historic feature huge fireplaces and sky-high 65-foot stained-glass lined barrel-vaulted ceiling that is now ringed by 125 southern-comfortable guest rooms. Pandora Elferdink became a new Gladys, drawing patrons with her "Countryopolitan" fueled with creations made with local spirits, including the hotel's own signature barrel of Jack Daniel's whiskey.

Belles elevating Nashville's beer scene include Bailey Spaulding, a law student turned homebrewer founded Jackalope Brewing, and Corsair's head brewer Karen Lassiter, a beer historian who knows ancient Egyptians' brewing secrets.

Sassy chefs

Walk Eat Nashville founder/guide Karen-Lee Ryan includes female-run dining rooms on her tours. At Margot Café & Bar, indulge in Margot McCormack's French-inspired country plates that change daily based on the morning's ingredients — paired with house-made potato chips. The charming East Nashville stop is based in a 1930s former service station. For delicious gluten-free goodies, head to Lauren Moskovitz's Little Mosko's Muncheonette & Bake Shop by the river.

Must-visit farm-to-tables include Henrietta Red, where classically trained chef Julia Sullivan and sommelier Allie Poindexter serve sharable veggie and seafood plates and daily happy hour specials.

For three decades, Deb Paquette's inventive flavors have helped catapult Music City to foodie town dominance. Special touches at her restaurant, Etch, include truffled pea pesto

and sunflower seed hummus.

“Everyone in the nighttime plays a guitar,” says the chef about the many female musicians on her staff.

Awesome art-makers

Crazy is how people described Anne Brown and Susan Tinney a decade ago when they pursued their dream of turning Nashville’s then-derelict 5th Avenue into a vibrant arts district. Well, they did it. You’d be cheating yourself by missing the suitably Nashville cool, quirky and downright delightful views that now fill 5th Avenue of the Arts.

Brown’s brainchild, The Arts Company, features inspirations such as Tiffany Ownbey’s inventive 3-D and flat-wall paper-mache critter creations, Aggie Zed’s cheerfully macabre porcelain creatures and Mandy Rogers Horton’s large-scale impressionist cityscapes. Tinney Contemporar’s talents include Carla Ciuffo, whose recent series features her nanofiber sculptures photographed using an electron microscope and enlarged into cosmic gardens. Her portraits resulted from a collaboration with Harvard scientists working to apply nanofiber materials to healing skin. Ciuffo’s honors include a 2017 award from the Women’s Essence Show in Paris.

Outside on a tall nearby wall looms Emily Elizabeth Miller’s super-sized bird-adorned guitar, one of the street artist’s contributions to the Nashville Walls project. More of her animal-themed murals appear at pizza, skate and vintage shops around town and Rymer Gallery on 5th Avenue.

In Nashville, women are seen and heard — giving us more reasons to be crazy about this town.

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