

# Nashville



- February 18 - 21, 2010 -

## American Pie

*Did you ever see Dallas from a DC-9 at night?  
Dallas is a jewel  
Yeah, Dallas is a beautiful sight  
Dallas is a jungle  
But Dallas gives a beautiful light  
Did you ever see Dallas from a DC-9 at night?*

*Jimmie Dale Gilmore*

Dallas does indeed give a beautiful light, Jimmie; it sprawled off both wing tips on our descent into Dallas/Fort Worth International at the end of our first leg to Nashville.

Bear and I didn't take a hot holiday this winter but we decided to zip down to Tennessee for four days in February to see what it is all about.

We learned that Nashville is a fascinating slice of the American pie.



## Yosemite Sam

*"I paid my four-bits to see the High Divin' Act and I'ma Gonna' see the High Divin' Act".*

*Yosemite Sam - Warner Bros.*

What would Texas be without Yosemite Sam? He boarded at Dallas; a bow-legged cowboy with a ten-gallon hat and a huge handlebar moustache. He was considerably taller than Bugs' nemesis but he bore a striking resemblance.



## I'm Movin' On

*That big eight-wheeler rollin' down the track  
Means your true-lovin' daddy ain't comin' back  
'Cause I'm movin' on, I'll soon be gone  
You were flyin' too high, for my little old sky  
So I'm movin' on.....*

*- Hank Snow (The only  
Canadian on the wall of the  
Country Music Hall of Fame)*

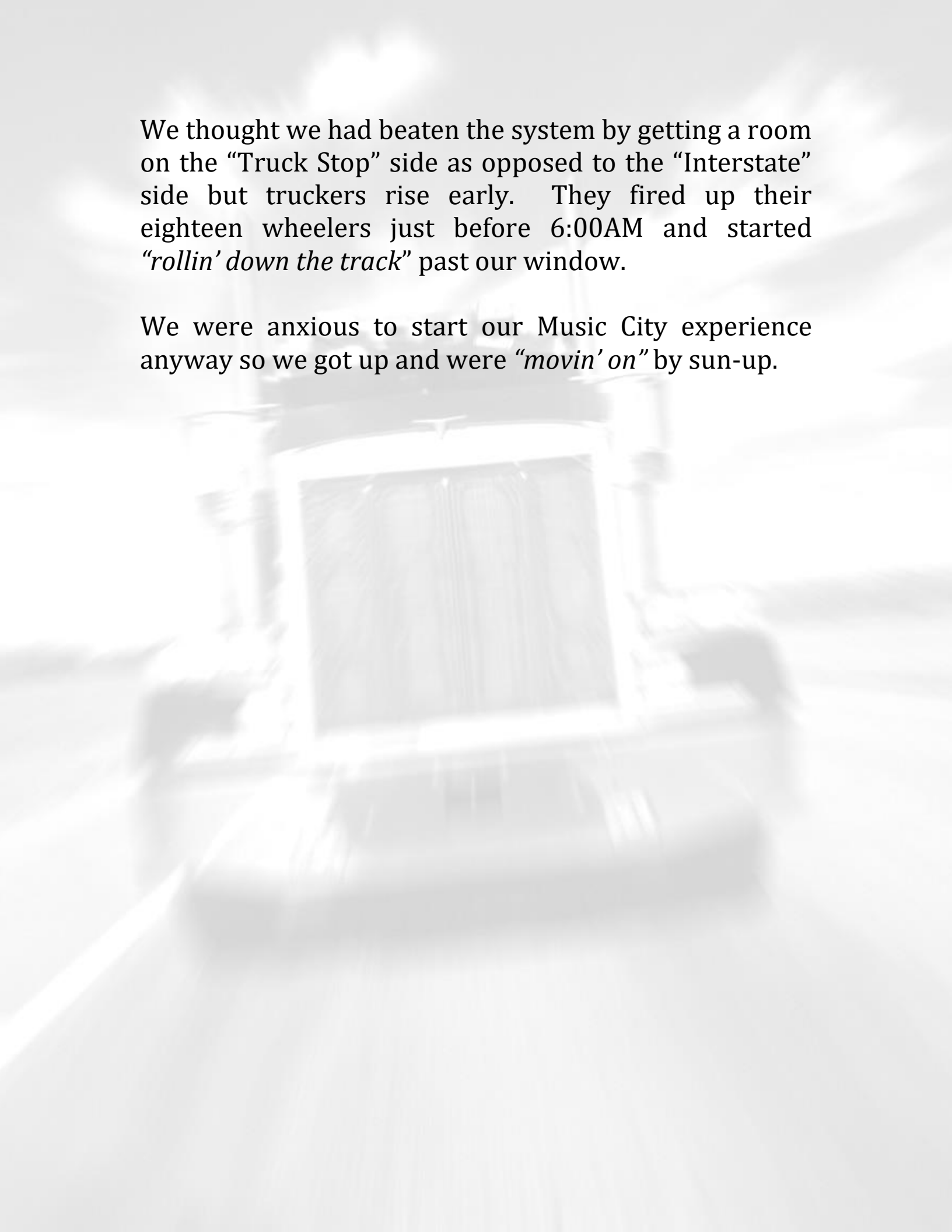
We booked our Nashville hotel on the internet, which is a wonderful tool; convenient and fast, but you can only learn as much about the facility as the data entry people are willing to tell you. If the advertizing folks at Best Western had mentioned that our hotel was *"A truck stop, conveniently located on top of Interstate 65 with heating units that sound like they were built by Kenworth"*, we probably would have given it a pass. But they didn't and we spent our first night in Nashville.....

*"Walking the floor over you,  
I can't sleep a wink that is true."*

*- Ernest Tubb – Walking the Floor  
Over You*

We thought we had beaten the system by getting a room on the “Truck Stop” side as opposed to the “Interstate” side but truckers rise early. They fired up their eighteen wheelers just before 6:00AM and started *“rollin’ down the track”* past our window.

We were anxious to start our Music City experience anyway so we got up and were *“movin’ on”* by sun-up.



## Music Row

*Down on Music Row  
Down on music Row  
If you want to be a star  
That's where you've got to go*

- Dolly Parton

So..... that's where we went; Music Row and the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Music Row is an ill-defined area of downtown Nashville, populated by recording companies, radio stations, stores, theatres and Honky Tonk Bars all focused on the Music business, Country in particular. Anybody who wants to be *Somebody* in Country music eventually shows up there.

The Country Music Hall of Fame is where all those *Somebody's* end up; if they make it.

The Hall of Fame could be described as *The Museum of American Culture*; it explores the roots of Folk, Bluegrass & Country music, which run in direct parallel with the American way of life.

Three floors of exhibits illustrated how Country music was born of early hardship, as America struggled to emerge. The museum demonstrated how this unique

art form was nurtured during America's blossoming and how Country music's influence has spread worldwide like the nation that inspired it.

The future of America is uncertain but, wherever she goes, Country music will be there to tell her stories.

## Southern Cookin'

*“Tennessee State Law requires that bars provide food if they are serving alcohol – State Law does not require that they serve GOOD food.”*

- *Attendant at the Country Music Hall of Fame, when asked if there were any good restaurants on Music Row.*

We ate ribs and cornbread for lunch at Jack's Bar-B-Q, a legendary eatery on Music Row. We perpetuated the Tennessee legend most of the afternoon, with heartburn and hickory smoke trailing off our jackets, but it was worth every burp and sneer.



## RCA Studio B

*Are you lonesome tonight,  
Do you miss me tonight?  
Are you sorry we drifted apart?  
Does your memory stray to a bright sunny day  
When I kissed you and called you sweetheart?  
Do the chairs in your parlor seem empty and bare?  
Do you gaze at your doorstep and picture me there?  
Is your heart filled with pain, shall I come back again?  
Tell me dear, are you lonesome tonight?*

- *Elvis Presley – Are you Lonesome  
Tonight*

Roy Orbison was just leaving RCA Studio B as we arrived. He shook my hand and asked me to help him to his car. As I guided Roy down the sidewalk to his waiting limo, Elvis pulled up in a white Cadillac. He jumped out, said “Hey” to Roy, gave Bear a wink and asked us to join him at his recording session. Carl Perkins held the door for us and we followed his entourage into the studio.

Charlie Pride was just wrapping up “Kiss an Angel Good Morning”. He handed me his guitar pick for “Luck” when we entered the recording box.

There was some confusion while Elvis was setting up for “Are You Lonesome Tonight”; he was missing an “E” string, and nobody seemed to have a spare. I said I had one back on the bus and asked if he wanted to borrow it. “Thank You, Thank You Very Much”, he said and I ran to get it.

I bolted out the back door of the RCA studio just as Dolly Parton came around the corner in a Buick, at full speed. She slammed on the brakes; too late, the car crashed into the side of the building.

Dolly was a bit flustered; as I helped her out of the car, she explained that she was late for a recording session. I complimented her on the way she looked to calm her nerves.

“You'd be surprised how much it costs to look this cheap!” she said and hurried off to the studio.

And that was just the start of our RCA Studio B tour; Jim Reeves, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and a host of others showed up at 222 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South throughout the day to record hits with us.

Elvis, we do *“gaze at the doorstep and picture you there”*.  
*Come back anytime.*

## The Mother Church of Country Music

*In the mornin', I get the fever  
And when you touch me, sweet and tender  
There's one thing, I remember  
That your love, means everythin to me  
And your love, is all I'll ever need*

- Keb' Mo' – *Your Love*

We saw the movie “*Honeydripper*” a while ago. Keb' Mo' played a blind Blues musician named Possum. I remembered him singing *I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry* on *Timeless – A Tribute to Hank Williams* so I dug up the cd and played it again. This guy is goood!

Over the next few days I listened to more of his music and had Delta blues rolling around in my head until I had to do something about it. I pulled up his website and discovered he was going to be in Nashville at the Ryman Auditorium on February 19.

It was Valentine's Day; I played *Your Love* for the Bear (in lieu of flowers, a gift or a card) and booked some tickets.....

The Ryman Auditorium is worth a trip to Nashville in itself. Built as a church in 1885 and converted to a theatre in 1904 the Ryman is known as *The Mother Church of Country Music*.



Two levels of pews, arranged in concentric half circles, face what was once the altar. The acoustics are phenomenal and the ambiance is very personal.

The list of artists who have performed at the Ryman is astonishing.

Johnny Cash met June Carter backstage; they performed at the Ryman many times, alone and as a couple. Their daughter Rosanne performed here and Johnny's memorial service was held at the Ryman Auditorium in 2003.

Musicians ranging from Roy Acuff to ZZ Top and Patsy Cline to Sheryl Crow have performed on the Ryman stage. The audiences are almost as famous as the performers; Presidents and Kings have set on the same hard pews as we did to watch Keb' Mo's excellent performance.

The Ryman was built as a place of worship; a place to save souls. I think it worked.

## The Grand Ole Opry

*Well I woke up Sunday morning,  
With no way to hold my head that didn't hurt.  
And the beer I had for breakfast wasn't bad,  
So I had one more for dessert.  
Then I fumbled through my closet for my clothes,  
And found my cleanest dirty shirt.  
An' I shaved my face and combed my hair,  
An' stumbled down the stairs to meet the day.*

*- Kris Kristofferson – Sunday  
Morning Coming Down*

Country music is the anthem of the common man and the Grand Ole Opry has been the epicentre of Country culture since 1925. Any trip to Nashville without a visit to the Opry would be incomplete.

We bought tickets for Sard'y night. We warshed ar' faces, combed ar' har an' hussled on over to check it out.

There is something very real about country music. It can be tacky, irritatingly dim-witted and colloquial to a fault, but it touches the soul at a fundamental level. Country music is humble, to the point of wonder, and the people who flock to the Opry are the salt of the earth.

Saturday night they came in tour buses and pickup trucks. They came from the mall across the street, from rural Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama and Kentucky. They brought their kids and their grannies. They wore jeans and bib overalls, Nudie suits and camouflage. And, they filled the Opry house.

They laughed at Minnie Pearl's impersonator;

*"I got mugged the other day. Fella' frisked me up and down. I told him I didn't have no money but if he did it agin' I would write him a cheque."*

They clapped and *Hallelujahed* when the gospel singers belted out *"The Unseen Hand"*. They shouted approval with every patriotic reference and roared in appreciation as each entertainer was introduced; but the audience fell reverently quiet as each artist poured out his or her heart in songs about lost love, problems at work, and the state of change in America.

*What if no one would kill for their religion  
What if no one ever had to go to war  
What if children of the world made the decisions  
Paint-By-Number hatred wasn't hangin around anymore  
Is everything a-ok in the USA  
In the good ole USA*

- Faith Hill – Good Ol' U.S.A.

Country music gives voice to the human condition from a uniquely American perspective; the meaning of love and loss, freedom and belonging, labour and spiritualism are made clear in simple verse and heartfelt music. If you listen long enough, all will be explained..... at the Opry.



*Nice folks Y'all come back now, ya hear?*

Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs –  
Ballad of Jed Clampett

Nashville and Country music are synonymous; a little  
rough around the edges, with a big, warm heart.

We will be back.



*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long-lost friend  
Yes, 'n, hey it's good to be back home again*

*- John Denver – Back Home  
Again*