

Cast of ABC's hit TV show, *Nashville*



Nashville stars **Connie Britton** (left) and **Hayden Panettiere** perform on set



By Kristin Luna

DRAWN TO MUSIC CITY

AS A NASHVILLE-BASED JOURNALIST, I have the pleasure of meeting some of the most talented and creative locals, many of whom are drawn to Music City for its small-town, collaborative, community feel.

Locals such as **Chip Esten**, who I recently caught up with at his Brentwood home.

The fan-favorite actor not only plays smooth-talking Deacon Claybourne on ABC's hit show *Nashville*, but in real life relocated his wife Patty and three teenage kids — Taylor, Chase and Addie — to Tennessee in 2013 after falling in love with the sweet, sweet music that oozes from our capital's every nook and cranny.

Looking relaxed in a pair of jeans, a fitted tee and suede boots just the right amount of broken-in — like Deacon, the Pennsylvania-born crooner seems most comfortable dressed casually — Chip greeted me at the front door and gave me a quick tour of his home before sitting down in the living room. There, he told me about his first year living solo in **Germantown** and how he was a frequent fixture at neighborhood hot spots like **City House**, **Rolf & Daughters** and **Silo**. These days, now that the family's all here, Chip and Patty enjoy discovering

new-to-them spots such as **Burger Up** and **Josephine** in trendy **12 South**.

It turns out Chip and I not only share a penchant for great restaurants, but also a love for dogs. He adopted Deacon's on-screen yellow lab Sue, renaming him Blue. He also enjoys catching a show at the Mother Church of Country Music, the **Ryman** (“don’t worry,” he says, “you’re going to love it wherever you sit”), sipping cocktails at speakeasy-themed **Patterson House** (“my favorite is a warm bourbon concoction on a cold winter night”) and noshing on that beloved regional cuisine, the pulled-pork sandwich. We both agree **Martin’s BBQ** reigns supreme.

When Chip isn’t on set, you might find him organizing a benefit for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society or lighting up the stage at **Station Inn** or even the **Grand Ole Opry**. He spends many a Tuesday night off at the **Boogie Street Blues & Bourbon Bar** listening to “the hottest blues you’re going to hear.”

Or maybe you’ll see him in the audience at any number of venues around town, supporting his *Nashville* cast members in their own creative endeavors, with that true Southern community mentality that both he and the city embody — on screen and off.



Actress **Clare Bowen** duets with **Sam Palladio**

Chip Esten performs on stage at the **Ryman Auditorium** with **Connie Britton** during an episode of *Nashville*



MUSIC — IT’S IN TENNESSEE’S WATER

PEOPLE HERE LIKE TO SAY the music is “in the water we drink.” Probably so. At least it flows through our state like a mighty river. The fiddles of Appalachian settlers and musical depth of African slaves set the foundation for today’s rock ‘n’ roll, soul, blues, Americana, roots, rockabilly, country and everything in between. **Elvis** drank it in with his freshman release, recorded at Memphis’ **Sun Studio** 60 years ago. Both sides of his debut single were covers — a Delta bluesman on the A-side and the Father of Bluegrass on the flip. Elvis reinterpreted both and, in the process, invented rock ‘n’ roll.

Tennessee’s genres are distinct, but when the musical tributaries meet, a creative power emerges among Tennesseans to create the soundtrack of America.

Travel to **Nashville** to witness this creative energy. Musical icons and aspiring stars make their home in Music City, as this thriving community of sound and talent is the perfect place to find inspiration. Tune in to the sweet indie-roots sounds of **The Apache Relay** and the brash, impassioned tunes of rocker **Jack White**, who produces at his Seventh Avenue South label, **Third Man Records**. Purists will feel at home grabbing a drink in Broadway’s honky-tonks, watching live music over a pint and pie at **Family Wash**, catching big names at **The Cannery Ballroom** and **Mercy Lounge**, or making a pilgrimage to the headwaters of country music, the **Grand Ole Opry** (turning 90 this year) and **Ryman Auditorium**.

In West Tennessee, **Beale Street**, **Sun Studio**, **Levitt Shell**, **Stax Museum of American Soul Music** and **Memphis Rock ‘n’ Soul Museum** are obvious reference points for experiencing Tennessee’s musical past while bearing witness to its lasting influence. You can

hear it in the catchy twang of singer-songwriter and blistering guitarist **John Paul Keith**’s rockabilly-splashed songs, Memphis son **Justin Timberlake**’s soul and blues influenced mega-hits, or in the sounds at the **Center for Southern Folklore**, where a protégé of legendary country blues guitarist **Furry Lewis** will transport you back to the early days of Memphis blues, when hardship ran deep within those jangly tunes.

One visit to legendary blues crooner **Sleepy John Estes**’ Brownsville home might just have you singing the blues yourself. And a visit to the **Tina Turner Museum at Flagg Grove School** in Brownsville showcases the Queen of Rock ‘n’ Roll’s musical journey.

Over in East Tennessee, stop into Knoxville’s resurrected **Bijou Theatre** to hear **The Dirty Guv’nahs** blend country, blues, soul and rock. Sure, we might be 90 years past the “big bang of country music,” but this landmark event is memorialized in Bristol’s new **Birthplace of Country Music Museum**. Beyond the artifacts, the museum embraces our musical forbearers’ legacy by making space for original creation, such as mixing your own **Bristol Sessions** tunes. Hear it come full-circle on “**Orthophonic Joy: The 1927 Bristol Sessions Revisited**,” including 16 of the original Bristol Sessions songs performed by artists including **Dolly Parton**, **Ke\$ha**, **Steve Martin** and **Ashley Monroe**.

When you’re in Tennessee, it doesn’t matter whether you’re reminiscing on the past or reveling in the present — it’s easy to get swept away by the music.

“Tennessee is like a music history textbook. There’s a chapter on Memphis, where you learn about Elvis and soul. There’s a chapter on Bristol, where you get the Carter Family, bluegrass and Old Time. There’s a chapter on Nashville, where you certainly get all the classic country records that have been cut there, in addition to rock.”
— Brett Moore, The Apache Relay



Nashville indie-roots band **The Apache Relay**

CELEBRITIES

MADE IN TENNESSEE

For some Tennessee musicians, stardom is like a family heirloom, passed down from one generation to the next.

HOLLY WILLIAMS

“I got here on crowded trains with old guitars and a famous name,” country songstress **Holly Williams** sings in her hit “Without You” from the album “The Highway.” She shares her famous name with her grandfather and father, **Hank Williams Sr. and Jr.** — both country legends who shaped the sound we know and love today.

ASHLEY AND SHANNON CAMPBELL

Like father, like children. When country star **Glen Campbell** made the rounds on his final tour, he brought along two special guests: his daughter **Ashley** on banjo and his son **Shannon** on guitar. The siblings even performed together on the new recording project “**Orthophonic Joy: The 1927 Bristol Sessions Revisited**.”

SHOOTER JENNINGS

Singer-songwriter **Shooter Jennings** made a name for himself in country and Southern rock, and one of his most recent releases, “Don’t Wait Up (For George),” salutes close friend and mentor musician **George Jones**. (Thanks to daddy **Waylon** for lining up some legendary musical influences.)



Carl Jackson & Vince Gill work on “Orthophonic Joy”