



FACT SHEET

The Birthplace of Country Music (BCM) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to perpetuate, promote, and celebrate Bristol's rich musical heritage; to educate and engage audiences worldwide regarding the history, impact and legacy of the 1927 Bristol Sessions from which we derive our name; and to create recognition, opportunities, and economic benefit for our local and regional communities.

BCM accomplishes this mission through its three primary branches (Museum, Festival, and Radio), special projects and events, and a multitude of community and educational outreach programs. A brief description of the three primary entities follows:

Birthplace of Country Music Museum

- The Museum, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, opened on August 1, 2014.
- The Museum is 24,000 sq. ft. on two levels.
- The Museum also houses a large space for special exhibits, a performance theater, the radio station, a learning center and The Museum Store.
- The Core Exhibits are highly interactive and feature a number of video experiences as well as various artifacts relating to the 1927 Bristol Sessions and other aspects of Bristol's musical legacy.
- The Museum has received numerous awards including the highest awards in its state organizations and has been recognized for Leadership in History by the American Association of State and Local History.

Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion

- The annual music Festival began in 2001.
- The Festival hosts over 100 bands on 13 stages in downtown Bristol each September.
- Attendance has grown to approximately 40,000+ each year.
- The Festival has been named as one of *Rolling Stone's* "Top 20 Tours and Festivals," and has won a Grand Pinnacle Award from the International Festival and Events Association.
- A 2015 Economic Impact Study showed that visitors to the Festival from outside the region had a \$16.1 million impact on the region.

Radio Bristol

- Radio Bristol is a network of channels showcasing the diversity of American roots music from the early recording era to today.
- Providing local listeners with a radio signal at 100.1 FM, and reaching the world through our online media players and mobile app, Radio Bristol produces original programming through recordings and live sessions from the Birthplace of Country Music Museum and the surrounding region.

Our free streaming content includes four channels:

- WBCM broadcasts locally in Bristol TN/VA on 100.1 FM from our studios in the Birthplace of Country Music Museum. WBCM features live performances and a diverse blend of Old Time, Bluegrass, Americana, Classic Country and more presented by our outstanding team of DJs. Centered on local and regional artists, Radio Bristol Sessions, and special live events like *Farm and Fun Time*, Radio Bristol offers listeners something unique and representative of Bristol and our region. With one foot placed deeply in the history of American roots music and the other stretching into the future, WBCM 100.1 is a great destination for today's roots music fan.
- Radio Bristol Americana features a diverse catalog of artists and the varied musical traditions that have shaped the genre.
- Radio Bristol Classic highlights historic American recordings spanning the early commercial recording era.
- Radio Bristol Video showcases digital video of live radio performances recorded at the Radio Bristol studio or Performance Theater – in the Birthplace of Country Music Museum, remote festival locations or other sites.

Why is Bristol Tennessee/Virginia known as the birthplace of country music?

In the summer of 1927, just two months after Charles Lindbergh made the first flight across the Atlantic in the Spirit of St. Louis, and during the season that Babe Ruth was blasting out 60 home runs for the Yankees, record producer Ralph Peer of the Victor Talking Machine Company was making music history in Bristol TN-VA. Between July 25 and August 5 of that year, Peer conducted recording sessions using the new Western Electric electronic microphone during which 19 performers (or groups of performers) recorded 76 songs.

Those sessions – the now legendary “Bristol Sessions” – are known as the “Big Bang” of modern country music.

The 1927 Bristol Sessions featured the first recordings of both Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family. Jimmy Rodgers is now referred to as the “Father of Country Music” and was the first person inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. The Carter Family, featuring A.P., Sara, and Maybelle Carter, is now known as “The First Family of Country Music” and are also in the Hall of Fame. The 1927 Bristol Sessions not only initiated the careers of these superstar performers but initiated the broad commercialization of country music. Many of the songs and stylings of those sessions still resonate and influence the music of today. For these reasons, in 1998 the United States Congress officially designated Bristol TN/VA as the “Birthplace of Country Music.”

The 1927 Bristol Sessions are also significant due to the technological advances used to record them. The invention of the Western Electric microphone changed the dynamics of recorded sound. In addition, Ralph Peer's introduction of the royalty system set the standard for the country music industry we know today.



These recordings in Bristol in 1927 are the single most important event in the history of country music.

– Johnny Cash

Credit: Courtesy of Sony Music Archives | PBS



QUOTES AND REVIEWS

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This is one of the best museums of its type that I have ever visited. History of Country music presented like you will see no where else.

James C.

Google Review

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Tourism is such a huge part of Virginia's economy. It is a \$20 billion enterprise that employs 200,000 folks and what we have here — as it relates to tourism — is a real jewel. The impact of this museum is about \$50 million over the next five years...This is a milestone in the history of Bristol.

Terry McAuliffe

Former Virginia Governor
(at opening of BCM Museum)

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When we were looking for a location for our Quaker Steak & Lube restaurant we decided we wanted to capitalize on the music culture BCM had brought to downtown Bristol. With Rhythm & Roots and the Museum, BCM has had the single greatest impact on Bristol's revitalization.

Jeff Tickle

Co-owner, Quaker Steak & Lube

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What a nice find on our way home from a 5 day road trip! Staff is super, admission is decent and what a nice museum! They also have a super gift shop! The building used to be a car dealership and has been all remodeled in to a great place to house a lot of wonderful information and a collection of lots of country music items. We learned a lot and you will too!

TravelinSueMaryland

Trip Advisor

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Bank of Tennessee supports the revitalization of Downtown Bristol, which led us to make a significant commitment to the Museum as we believe the Museum is a cornerstone of future development of downtown.

David Wagner

Executive Vice President Bank of Tennessee

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Jimmy Rodgers and the Carter Family are thought of as the founding families of the whole country music scene. The first two inducted into the hall of fame. The big bang of country music industry on record was that one session that's kind of thought of as that one that iconic thing.

Jeff Place

Curator of Folk Life at the
Smithsonian Institution

“NASHVILLE IS LIKE A CHILD TO BRISTOL.”

– Jim Lauderdale, Grammy-winning singer-songwriter

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No matter if you're there for Music or History (or both) the Museum and Staff are awesome. Attending events in the sound stage are magical as well, makes you feel like the musicians are throwing you a Private Concert.

Rich E.

Google Review

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During the Festival, we hire an additional 8-12 employees to handle the volume, and it's our biggest sales weekend of the entire year!

Karen Hester

Owner, Cranberry Lane
Southern Churn

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Must admit that prior to visiting I had no idea about Bristol being at the center of spreading the reach of country music via the early recording industry. A beautiful building with well thought out and interesting displays.

Neil R.

Google Review

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As our hotel's name, 'The Sessions', suggests, the Birthplace of Country Music with its events, and its spectacular museum, is the primary reason we decided to locate our unique hospitality complex in beautiful downtown Bristol.

Hal Craddock

Partner/Owner, Creative
Boutique Hotels, LLC

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This is my second trip to Bristol to go to this Museum. It is so interesting. It is a great learning experience. We are always delighted to remember our childhood thru museums like this. We spent over 4 hours there and it was the second time we have.

Wade

Trip Advisor

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The adjacent Birthplace of Country Music Museum was the key factor in our decision to move forward with the revitalization of the Executive Plaza Building into THE BRISTOL HOTEL with a capital investment of over \$20 million.

Marcus McCall

President, McCall Capital
Hotel Developer