

canoe.ca

... travel

December 21, 2007

Hall of Fame rocks Nashville

By Simone Abrahamsohn, special to Canoe Travel
I feel like a Pretty Woman.

I see the robin's eggshell-blue guitar at the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville on which Roy Orbison played the classic song's intro. I suspect I'll be hearing the catchy chords in my head for the rest of my week-long stay in 'Music City.'

This feeling is reinforced whenever Joe Chambers, CEO and founder of the Museum, hums, sings and taps his toe as he explains the origins of each artifact. He is Nashville's new kid on the musical museum block, having opened the Musicians Hall of Fame in June 2006 across from the Country Music Hall of Fame, which honours the music industry's players who recorded their classic songs in Nashville.

The affable Chambers organized the first annual Musician's Induction into the Hall of Fame on November 26. The event featured performances by original members of groups being honoured, including the Wrecking Crew, Funk Brothers and Memphis Boys.

"These are the actual musicians who played on so many records that have become such a part of our everyday lives," says Chambers, whose unwavering passion for all things musical is palpable. "There are so many more musicians to be recognized and every year we will add more names to those who will be honoured. These are the guys who played on tens of thousands of records, whose sounds we all instantly know, but whose names we don't."

With an unassuming manner which belies his impressive achievements, Chambers can identify with and understand the unsung musician. As a songwriter originally from Georgia, his resume includes the Ricky Van Shelton hits "Somebody Lied" and "I Meant Every Word I Said." He self-deprecatingly calls himself a "has-been that never quite was."

Among the one-of-a-kind musical artifacts the museum – nicknamed "Joe's Place" by local sessions musicians - boasts are the fender tele which Charlie Daniels used on "Nashville Skyline" with Bob Dylan, J.I. Allison's drum kit from Buddy Holly, the stage Jimi Hendrix played on in Nashville, the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Chad Smith's drum which he used to record the "Blood Sugar Sex Magik" album, and the bass Lightin' Chance used on Hank Williams' "Your Cheatin' Heart."

Chambers pointedly tells me (upon learning of my Canuck citizenship) that Neil Young is prominently featured in the museum, as he recorded "Heart of Gold" right here in Music City.

"Nashville is known as the center of Country music, but not everyone knows how many other styles of music have been recorded in the past and now," he says. "It's not only about 'Stand by your Man' – there have been so many hits produced here from all musical genres."

I ask Chambers what the number one country song of all time is.

"He Stopped Loving Her Today" by George Jones, he tells me.

And just when I expect him to break into song again, we walk past the Roy Orbison guitar exhibit and hear "Da na na na na na nuh."



The Sun Records display at the Musicians Hall Of Fame and Museum. (Courtesy Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum)

To think I was missing my iPod.

The Musicians Hall Of Fame and Museum is located at 301 6th Ave South, in the heart of downtown Nashville, two blocks off Broadway behind Nashville Arena and one block west across from the Country Music Hall of Fame.

www.musicianshalloffame.com