

Nashville Cats Biographies

The following biographies offer a brief introduction to the Nashville Cats profiled in *Dylan, Cash, and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City*, and mentioned throughout this curriculum. Words in bold are defined in the glossary (Appendix) and names in red indicate another Nashville Cat who is also included in the biographies. An asterisk denotes that the Cat is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

These biographies are designed to give limited background information about each musician during the time period discussed in the exhibit in the hopes that students will further research these talented artists. These musicians were well-known session players for many country artists, providing a catalyst for other recording artists to pursue the Cats' talent for their own recordings. For additional resources on the Nashville Cats, visit CountryMusicHallofFame.org to see interviews, read Country Music Hall of Fame biographies, and purchase exhibit related materials.



David Briggs Piano

David Briggs was born on March 16, 1943, in Killen, Alabama, and quickly discovered his passion for music. Briggs started playing piano in nearby **Muscle Shoals** “because nobody else there was good enough. I was the best of the worst.” In his teens, Briggs played on numerous country, pop, and **Rhythm & Blues** hits at FAME Recording Studios. Owen Bradley, Nashville based producer and record executive, signed Briggs to Decca Records as a singer-songwriter in 1962, before moving him to Nashville in 1964.

In 1965, Briggs played the piano on Elvis Presley’s recording of “Love Letters.” He opened Quadrafonic Sound Studios with bassist-producer **Norbert Putnam** in 1969. Briggs produced, arranged, published, wrote, and performed with **Area Code 615**.



Kenny Buttrey Drums

A Nashville native, Aaron Kenneth Buttrey was born on April 1, 1945, and began playing drums professionally by the age of eleven. In his teens, Buttrey toured with **Chet Atkins** and performed with a show band called **Charlie McCoy and The Escorts**. He formed a friendship with **Charlie McCoy**, a harmonica player in Nashville, who helped him enter the local session scene. Buttrey helped launch a blend of country and rock music that can still be heard today. He co-founded Nashville rock bands **Area Code 615** and **Barefoot Jerry**.

Buttrey played on four Bob Dylan albums: *Blonde on Blonde*, *John Wesley Harding*, *Nashville Skyline*, and *Self Portrait*. His drum work can also be heard on Jimmy Buffett’s “Margaritaville” and Neil Young’s “Heart of Gold.”



Fred Carter Jr. Guitar

Fred Carter Jr. was born on December 28, 1933 in Winnsboro, Louisiana where he grew up playing rock & roll. In the mid-1950s, Carter played on *Louisiana Hayride*, a radio and television show broadcast from Shreveport, Louisiana. He moved to Los Angeles and appeared on the TV show *Town Hall Party*, a popular variety show that aired from 1952-1961.

Carter moved to Nashville in 1961 and became the first session guitarist to regularly feature the Fender Telecaster, an early electric guitar. He toured with Roy Orbison and Conway Twitty. Carter played guitar on Simon & Garfunkel’s “The Boxer” and Bob Dylan’s “Living the Blues.”



Charlie Daniels

Guitar

Born on October 28, 1936, in Wilmington, North Carolina, Charlie Daniels taught himself guitar by age fifteen and began learning rock & roll, bluegrass, jazz, and country music. He had his first big success when a song he wrote, “It Hurts Me,” was recorded by Elvis Presley in 1964.

Daniels moved to Nashville in 1967 and can be heard playing guitar on Bob Dylan’s “Country Pie” and bass on Leonard Cohen’s “Diamonds in the Mine.” He decided to pursue a career as a solo artist, releasing his debut album in 1970. He formed the Charlie Daniels Band in 1971 and earned a #1 country hit in 1979 with “The Devil Went Down to Georgia.”



Pete Drake

Steel Guitar

Roddis Franklin “Pete” Drake was born in Augusta, Georgia, on October 8, 1932. His father was a Pentecostal preacher and his brothers performed as the Drake Brothers. When he was eighteen, Drake visited his brothers in Nashville where he attended the Grand Ole Opry and was inspired to buy a steel guitar. Drake moved to Nashville in 1959 and was quickly booked for a recording session.

Drake became one of Nashville’s most popular steel guitarists. He pioneered a technique called “talking” steel guitar, a method where a tube connected the human voice to the instrument. Drake played pedal steel on Bob Dylan’s “I’ll Be Your Baby Tonight” and Tammy Wynette’s “Apartment #9.” Later in his career, he produced Ringo Starr and founded a record label.



Mac Gayden

Guitar

McGavock “Mac” Dickinson Gayden was born on June 5, 1941, in Nashville, Tennessee. Mac was fascinated by the **Rhythm & Blues** acts he listened to, and he developed a distinct style as a guitarist, vocalist, and songwriter. Gayden is well known for playing slide guitar through a **wah-wah pedal** on J.J. Cale’s “Crazy Mama.”

Gayden’s songwriting had a **Rhythm & Blues** influence; he co-wrote Robert Knight’s 1967 hit “Everlasting Love.” His guitar style can be heard on records by artists from Bob Dylan to Kris Kristofferson. Gayden was a member of local country-rock band **Area Code 615**; he later joined some of the Cats in forming the band **Barefoot Jerry**.



Lloyd Green

Steel Guitar

Born in Leaf, Mississippi on October 4, 1937, Lloyd Green began playing Hawaiian steel guitar when he was seven years old. At age ten, he played pop tunes professionally in Mobile, Alabama. Green moved to Nashville in 1956 after graduating from the University of Southern Mississippi. He toured as a band member for country artists Faron Young, Ferlin Husky, and Hawkshaw Hawkins.

Green played on Warner Mack’s “The Bridge Washed Out” and Don Williams’s “Some Broken Hearts Never Mend.” Green’s pedal steel work on The Byrds’ *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* greatly influenced the sound of country-rock and his recordings with Nanci Griffith set the stage for the Americana movement.



Ben Keith

Steel Guitar

Ben Keith was born on March 6, 1937 in Fort Riley, Kansas, and later moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky. Keith was a pedal steel guitarist and a dobro specialist. He toured with Faron Young and played on Patsy Cline's hit "I Fall to Pieces."

Later, Keith became a producer for Rock & Roll Hall of Fame member, Neil Young after their first collaboration on Young's album *Harvest* in 1971. He recorded and toured with Young the rest of his life. Along with recording, touring, and acting, Keith produced Jewel's multi-million selling album *Pieces of You*.



Grady Martin*

Guitar

Thomas Grady Martin was born on January 17, 1929 in Chapel Hill, Tennessee. He learned to play piano, guitar, and fiddle, and became a regular guest on Nashville's *Big Jeff & the Radio Playboys* show when he was fifteen years old. Martin led Red Foley's band on ABC-TV's *Ozark Jubilee*, shot in Missouri.

Martin's talent and creativity as a guitarist appealed to younger rockers and singer-songwriters who came to Nashville. He played guitar on **rockabilly** and country tracks such as Johnny Horton's "Honky Tonk Man" and Marty Robbins's "El Paso." Martin was hired as session leader and arranger on albums by Joan Baez, Buffy Sainte-Marie, and Country Joe McDonald. He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in 2015.



Charlie McCoy*

Harmonica

Born in Oak Hill, West Virginia on March 28, 1941, Charlie McCoy grew up in Miami, Florida and began to play the harmonica at age eight. In 1960, McCoy moved to Nashville to further his career as a musician. He played on song demos and caught the attention of RCA record producer **Chet Atkins**.

McCoy played many instruments including harmonica, bass, guitar, keyboard, percussion, trumpet, saxophone, and tuba. He first met Bob Dylan at a recording session in New York in 1965. His guitar work during that session helped convince Dylan to record an album in Nashville. Among other hits, McCoy played on George Jones's "He Stopped Loving her Today" and Johnny Cash's "It Ain't Me Babe." McCoy and other Nashville Cats formed a band, **Charlie McCoy and the Escorts**. He was also a member of local country-rock band **Area Code 615**. Charlie McCoy was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2009.



Wayne Moss

Guitar

Born on February 9, 1938, in South Charleston, West Virginia, Wayne Moss first auditioned for **Chet Atkins** at age fifteen. After hearing Moss play guitar, Atkins told Moss he would make a good plumber. These unencouraging words motivated Moss to continue his musical career and he moved to Nashville.

Moss's iconic guitar riffs were recorded on Waylon Jennings's "Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line" and Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman." Around the time Moss began working as a session player he opened Cinderella Sound, a popular Nashville recording studio. Moss was a member of Nashville country-rock bands **Area Code 615** and **Barefoot Jerry**.



Weldon Myrick

Steel Guitar

Weldon Myrick was born in Jayton, Texas, on April 10, 1939. He taught himself to play his brother's lap steel and began performing at a radio station in nearby Stanford, Texas. In the early 1960s Myrick worked as a police officer, but gave that up to try music full-time. He co-wrote Buddy Holly's "It's Not My Fault," and after moving to Nashville in 1963 he worked on Connie Smith's "Once a Day."

Myrick was a member of the Grand Ole Opry band from 1966-1998 and performed on country television and in movies such as the *Smokey and the Bandit* comedies. He also contributed to local Nashville band **Area Code 615**.



Norbert Putnam

Bass

Norbert Putnam was born on August 10, 1942, in Florence, Alabama. Putnam's father was an acoustic bass player in a family string band; when the neighborhood kids started a band they recruited Putnam to play the bass knowing that his father owned the instrument. In his teens, Putnam joined a small band in **Muscle Shoals**, Alabama with fellow Nashville Cat and piano player **David Briggs**. Putnam and Briggs performed with Tommy Roe as an opening act for the Beatles in 1964.

Putnam relocated to Nashville and continued to play on rock & roll, pop, soul, and country tracks. Some of his early successes include the Newbeats' "Bread and Butter" and Robert Knight's "Everlasting Love." Putnam co-founded Quadrafonic Sound Studios with **Briggs**; as a producer, Putnam worked with Joan Baez and J.J. Cale. He played as a member of local Nashville band **Area Code 615**.



Jerry Reed

Guitar

Jerry Reed was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 20, 1937. Reed learned to play guitar at age nine, and appeared in shows with Faron Young and Ernest Tubb by his early teens. At seventeen, he signed to Capitol Records and released ten singles with little success. Reed entered the Army in the late 1950s. He was recognized as a ground-breaking guitarist and was supported by **Chet Atkins**, who incorporated Reed's style into his own music.

After his service, Reed moved to Nashville in 1962 and found greater success. Elvis Presley recorded Reed's "Guitar Man" with Reed playing guitar. Reed is known for his colorful, catchy, storytelling songs and his off-beat guitar picking. He played on Joan Baez's "Take Me Back To The Sweet Sunny South" and Ringo Starr's "Fifteen Dollar Draw." Reed began acting and starred in *Smokey and the Bandit II*.



Hargus "Pig" Robbins*

Piano

Hargus Robbins was born in Rhea County, Tennessee, on January 18, 1938. He was blinded in a knife accident at age three and attended the Tennessee School for the Blind where he was classically trained on piano. His teacher coined the nickname "Pig" for Robbins when he would sneak out through a fire escape to play when he was not supposed to, returning dirty as a pig.

His first major session in 1959 produced the George Jones hit "White Lightnin'." His contributions to country classics such as Charlie Rich's "Behind Closed Doors" and Crystal Gayle's "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" helped establish his influence as a studio musician. His work on Bob Dylan's *Blonde on Blonde* led to appearances on albums by Joan Baez and Neil Young. Robbins won a Grammy in 1978 for Best Country Instrumental Performance and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2012.



Buddy Spicher

Fiddle

Norman "Buddy" Keith Spicher was born on July 28, 1938 in Dubois, Pennsylvania. He first played the fiddle professionally when he was fifteen at the *WWVA Jamboree*, a radio show in Wheeling, West Virginia. There he met singer Audrey Williams, who offered Spicher a job in Nashville with her band. He moved to Nashville and joined the staff band on *The Wilburn Brothers Show*, a national TV program.

Spicher can be heard on Steve Miller Band's "Going to the Country" and Charley Pride's "Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone." Spicher was also a member of local Nashville band **Area Code 615**.