Nashville, Tennessee, is the most American of American cities, in that it alone seems to aspire to such a status. New York could be a global metropolis in a class all its own. Los Angeles and San Francisco are both more Californian than American, each in its own way, and in the Midwestern hub of Chicago would even be a good candidate to take the title. But despite the Windy City’s habit of characteristically looking like what is a New York street in reverse, it is not San Francisco. (It is windy there much of the year.) Nashville, for its part, sits invitingly in the south with an assured sense of self and a claim to a tradition. In that, it is an American city as they come. That tradition is country music, and not just what country music has been but what it stands to be. It’s a heritage-coded culture that is still very much breaking, bucking, alive.

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