



Cradle of the Stars

the story of the
Louisiana Hayride

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF COUNTRY
AND WESTERN MUSIC

"It's a story about good days and those that saw a lot of tears. It's a tale that takes place in the years following the second world war--when people were ready to hope again. It's about dreams that came true...and some that didn't. It's the story of the Louisiana Hayride." With these words, Hank Williams, Jr. opens a new chapter in the history of country and western music in Louisiana and America.

"Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" airs _____
_____ on _____.* Over a year of planning and production was allowed to ensure historical accuracy and to obtain archival film footage and interviews with personalities involved with "the Hayride" during its heyday...a period that spawned success stories like Hank Williams, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Johnny Horton, Kitty Wells, and a host of others.

The Louisiana Hayride was the launching-pad of country music in the 40s and 50s. Unlike the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, you didn't have to "prove" yourself to succeed at "the Hayride." Radio station KWKH, with 50,000 watts of power, wanted to give unknown talent a chance to "do their thing." The stage of the Louisiana Hayride was a forum for the unique, unlike the more conservative Grand Ole Opry. The Hayride allowed Elvis Presley, a truck driver from Mississippi, to gyrate himself to stardom with more moves than Nashville could tolerate. But it wasn't the Hayride itself that prompted the musicians to be different, to express themselves and their music as they saw fit. It was the tremendous support of the fans who loved these pioneers on the very edge of what was then called "hillbilly" music.

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*Check local listings



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Begun in 1948 at the Municipal Auditorium in Shreveport, Louisiana, the Louisiana Hayride offered as much in the way of new and exciting talent as the fans wanted. And they wanted a lot. They came from Texas, Arkansas and all over Louisiana every Saturday night. As long as the Hayride could provide the old favorites and the promising new trend-setters, the fans kept coming...they were a part of what quickly became a cultural phenomenon in Northern Louisiana and all across America.

When KWKH joined the CBS radio network and the Armed Forces Radio System, the listening audience grew to encompass an entire world of new listeners intrigued and excited by the Hayride's transformation of "hillbilly" music into "country" music. "The Cradle of the Stars" was more than the birthplace of new musical genres, it was a cultural explosion waiting for a time and a place to happen. It could have been Birmingham, Dallas, Wheeling, or Memphis. The fans, however, demanded Shreveport, Louisiana.

"Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" was produced and edited by Rick Smith and produced and written by Carole Adornetto Leslie. Executive Producer is Beth Courtney. Major funding for the production of "Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" was provided by a grant from the Louisiana State Arts Council, Division of the Arts. Additional funding was provided by Friends of LPB. "Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" is a production of the Louisiana Educational Television Authority/Louisiana Public Broadcasting.

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