



Cradle of the Stars

the story of the
Louisiana Hayride

HANK WILLIAMS, JR. NARRATES COUNTRY MUSIC SHOW

Well-known country music star Hank Williams, Jr. is the narrator for an hour-long country music documentary that airs _____ on _____.* "Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" explores the Shreveport, Louisiana musical roots of some of country music's most venerable stars, including Hank Jr.'s daddy Hank Williams, and Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Johnny Horton, Bob Luman, George Jones and a host of others.

The "Louisiana Hayride" was a radio show that gave fresh talent a chance to perfect their distinct performance styles before a weekly live audience. During its heyday, between 1948 to 1958, "the Hayride" rivaled even Nashville's famed Grand Ole Opry in the number of country music careers that it spawned.

Hank Williams, Jr.'s participation in the show has special significance for him. He was born in Shreveport while his famous father was a member of the Hayride cast! Hank Jr.'s own unique singing style was strongly influenced by the hard-driving honky-tonk music played by his daddy back then. Of the Louisiana Hayride itself, Hank Jr. says "The Louisiana Hayride has got to be one of the pillars and institutions of country music. In fact, when you get right down to it...the record shows that the Hayride and the Opry, that's where the big people came from." Shreveport native and country crooner Faron Young calls the Hayride "my jumping block...the very seed that was planted for Faron Young's career."

Webb Pierce's unique singing style was honed on stage in the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium. Pierce moved there from West Monroe, Louisiana in 1950 to wait for his big break. Singing on the legendary show catapulted him to the top of the country music charts and set him firmly on the path of a long-running, successful career in country music.

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*Check local listings

A production of Louisiana Public Broadcasting.
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"Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride"

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Young and Pierce are only two of the many personalities who appear in the documentary. Also interviewed are Merle Kilgore, Floyd Cramer, Jimmy C. Newman, Nat Stuckey, Slim Whitman, Johnny Wright and Kitty Wells. The program traces the beginnings of their careers and looks at the Hayride's influence on their successes.

The show also highlights some of the many shakers and movers behind the scenes of the KWKH radio show. Program producers, announcers, promoters, talent managers, staff band fiddlers and guitar players and longtime fans reminisce and discuss some of the separate elements that went into earning "the Hayride" the title of "Cradle of the Stars."

"Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" uses old photographs, film clips and live transcriptions of old radio show recordings to tell its entertaining and informative story. From the string band sound of the Bailes Brothers to the rockabilly rhythm of Elvis Presley, the program is a short course in how country music grew up in the 1950s.

"Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" was co-produced by Rick Smith and Carole Adornetto Leslie with funding from the Louisiana State Arts Council, Division of the Arts. Additional funding was provided by Friends of LPB. The program's executive producer is Beth Courtney. "Cradle of the Stars: The Story of the Louisiana Hayride" is a production of the Louisiana Educational Television Authority/Louisiana Public Broadcasting.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR TV/MUSIC/ENTERTAINMENT WRITERS: Co-producers Rick Smith and Carole Adornetto Leslie are available for telephone interviews. Please contact one of the LPB promotions personnel listed below to schedule.

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