

ROCK&ROLL



COUNTRY HALL

DYLAN GOES BLUEGRASS
Dylan with bluegrass legend Earl Scruggs (second from left) and two of Scruggs' sons, circa 1972

Nashville Rock City

Country Hall of Fame charts Music City's other history - from Bob Dylan to Neil Young

IN LATE 1965, BOB DYLAN HEADED INTO a New York studio with the Band to record *Blonde on Blonde*, but things didn't jell - the magic the group produced onstage just wasn't there. But producer Bob Johnston had a novel idea: Move the sessions down to Columbia Music Row Studios in Nashville. "At the time, the city was seen as a conservative, backwater town," says Michael Gray, a museum editor at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. "Having a counterculture figure come to town to record was very unique."

Working with the cream of the Nashville session scene, Dylan finished *Blonde on Blonde* in a matter of weeks, and soon everyone from the

Byrds to Neil Young to Leonard Cohen and even Paul McCartney followed Dylan to Nashville. Now, the Country Music Hall of Fame is commemorating this period with its newest exhibit, "Dylan, Cash and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City." "There were dozens of albums made in those few short years after Dylan's album came out," says Gray. "They were so impressed with the Nashville musicians' virtuosity and their ability to play anything that they kept coming back."

Spread across 5,000 square feet, the exhibit includes the Fender Telecaster that Charlie Daniels played on *Nashville Skyline*, Johnston's *Blonde on Blonde* acetates, and the pedal steel guitar that Lloyd Green used on *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. "Now that the Black Keys and the Kings of Leon are here, people are realizing Nashville isn't just a country town," Gray says. "But we wanted to show that isn't a new thing."

ANDY GREENE