

urban toughness typify the most interesting music in post-state-sap-'n'-strings Nashville. A transplanted Connecticut Yankee with a punk demeanor and a Tammy Wynette voice, Ferris first got turned on to country music by her Italian grandmother. Her first video features said grandma in curlers, Ferris's husband in a grass skirt, and a voodoo drumbeat superimposed over an otherwise 1940s country song.

Alternative enough for you?

See, you *can* spend a whole weekend club-hopping in the Country Music Capital without hearing any country music—but don't.

Instead, start your day at the gentrified Tootsie's Orchid Lounge (422 Broadway, 615-726-3739; no cover), where Patsy Cline and Hank Williams used to sneak in during Grand Ole Opry intermissions (ask someone to show you the back door). The usually original live music starts at 10 a.m. Among the patrons I saw there at that hour were a non-English-speaking French exchange student in a ten-gallon hat, a wiped-out-looking 9-year-old kid nursing a soda, and Will, a singer/songwriter (as is everyone you meet in Nashville): "This here's a town of broken strings and broken dreams," he said solemnly while applauding Jeannie Lomax, a Tootsie's bartender who sounded eerily like Patsy.

Later on, go to one of the hottest clubs for new and different country-derived music. Douglas Corner (2106A Eighth Ave. S., 615-298-1688; cover \$3 to \$5) resembles a seedy luncheonette. But the live music here beats a luncheonette juke box any day. I caught local rising star David Ball, who looks like a hillbilly lounge lizard and sings like an angel. One worthwhile club in downtown Nashville's former warehouse/whorehouse district is the Ace of Clubs (114 Second Ave. S., 615-254-2237; average cover \$4). You're less likely to see the old local crowds here than at the other clubs. The night I went to the Ace of Clubs, the nouvelle R&B group Bordello had the new-wavish young crowd clapping and testifying like old gospel churchgoers.

But the favorite local hangout among musicians is probably the rustic, rough wood Bluebird (4104 Hillsboro Rd., 615-383-1461; cover for late shows \$4 to \$5). I heard "Women in the Round," an informal singer/songwriter playoff featuring Jonnell Mosser and Enough Rope, who generate the same audience excitement as I bet the young Janis Joplin did. The bizarre Marshall Chapman also performed that night. She was rasping out originals like "Don't Make Me Pregnant, I Just Want to Dance" even back in Nashville's syrupy '70s.

Nashville's Alternative-Music Must: The taping of TNN's *Crook and Chase Show*. Tickets are free for the music and talk show, which features true



country-grit musicians like Ricky Skaggs and Eddy Raven. Taping sessions are at 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, at Jim Owens Productions, 1525 McGavock St.—the same building where Elvis had his first recording session with RCA.

Alternative-Music Must Avoid: Opryland. But I really didn't have to tell you that, did I?

In the capital of country, alternative shops can be hard to find. But they do exist. Try Cornerstone Music (184 Second Avenue N., 615-255-3642), two doors down from the Empire State Club. Inside you'll find indies, imports, house singles, and some spiffy wall murals to boot. Prices range from \$3 to \$15. Or check out the Great Escape (1925 Broadway, 615-327-0646), whose huge collection of used records swings from country to alternative, from \$4 for used selections to as low as \$25 for collector's items.

PAM BRANDT, a New York City freelance writer, used to make her own alternative music with a band called the Deadly Nightshades.  
Record store information reported by David Baker

You'll see people wearing everything from polyester leisure suits to designer athletic shoes at Tootsie's Orchid Lounge. On stage is club regular Ronnie Root.