

Dear Nashville,

Last week, on the day that would have been Chet Atkins' 90th birthday (June 20, 1924), my office received news that the historic RCA Building on Music Row is likely to be sold. This building, with the historic Studio A as its centerpiece, was Atkins' and Owen Bradley's vision and baby, and had become home to the largest classic recording space in Nashville. Word is that the prospective buyer is a Brentwood, TN-based commercial development company called Bravo Development owned and operated by Tim Reynolds. We don't know what this will mean to the future of the building.

First off, kudos to the estates and descendants of Atkins and Bradley for doing their best to keep the building alive. They've owned the property all these years and could have at any point closed it up or mowed it down. Sadly, it's what happens in the name of progress.

Studio A, which turns 50 years old next year, has a rich history. Here are just some of the artists and groups who have made hits here:

Peter Bradley Adams, Gary Allan, Brent Anderson, Anika, Arlis Albritton, Asleep at the Wheel, The Beach Boys, Ben Folds Five, Tony Bennett, Amy Black, Jason Blaine, Blind Boys of Alabama, Joe Bonamassa, Wade Bowen, Eden Brent, Jim Brickman, The Brothers Osborne, Rachel Bradshaw, Brentwood Benson, David Bullock, Laura Bell Bundy, Ken Burns, The Canadian Tenors, The City Harmonic, Steven Curtis Chapman, Chocolate Horse, Brandy Clark, Brent Cobb, Jesse Colter, Elizabeth Cook, Wayne Coyne, Margaret Cho, Billy Currington, Matt DAME, Danae, Ilse DeLange, Rebecca de la Torre, Steve Earle, ESPN, Jace Everett, The Fabulous Headliners, Dani Flowers, Danny Flowers, Colt Ford, The Frog Sessions, Eleanor Fye, Cami Gallardo, Billy Gibbons, Sarah Gibson, Vince Gill, Alyssa Graham, Peter Groenwald, Harlan Pepper, Harper Blynn, Connie Harrington, Hunter Hayes, John Hiatt, Faith Hill, JT Hodges, Adam Hood, James House, Sierra Hull, Alan Jackson, Joe Jackson, Casey James, Jenny Jarnigan, Jewel, Jamey Johnson, Josh Jones, Kristin Kelly, Kesha, Anna Krantz, Ben Kweller, Lady Antebellum, Miranda Lambert, Sonny Landreth, Samatha Landrum, Mark Lanigan, Stoney LaRue, Jim Lauderdale, Frank Liddell, Lfeway, Meagan Lindsey, Longmont All Stars Jazz Band, Lyle Lovette, Luella and the Sun, Tayla Lynn, Amanda Palmer, John Pardi, Rich Parkinson, Alan Parson, Charlie Pate, Kellie Pickler, Pistol Annies, Pretty Lights, Mike Posner, Sean McConnell, Scotty McCreery, Kate Miller Heidke, Ronnie Milsap, Miss Willie Brown, Danny Mitchell, Allison Moorer, Kacey Musgraves, Musiq Soulchild, David Nail, the Nashville Symphony, Jerrod Neimann, Willie Nelson, Joe Nichols, Sierra Noble, Natalie Noone, The Oakridge Boys, Jake Owen, Rainfall, Johnny Reid, Thomas Rhett, Lionel Richie, The Robertson Family, Henry Rollins, Shannon Sanders, Jader Santos, Alejandro Sanz, Mondo Saez, Kate Schrock, Bob Seger, Sera B., Brian Setzer, Nikki Shannon, William Shatner, SHEDaisy, Jordyn Shellart, Joel Shewmake, Sleeping With Sirens, Jake Shimabukuro, Mike Shipp, Kevin Shirley, Anthony Smith, Joanna Smith, Dr. Ralph Stanley, Chelsea Staling, Steel Magnolia, Tate Stevens, Jay Stocker, Rayburn, RED, RockIt City, Jeff Taylor, Justin Towns Earle, Josh Thompson, Those Darlins, Josh Turner, Bonnie Tyler, Carrie Underwood, Keith Urban, Ben Utecht, Phil Vassar, Venus and the Moon, Andy Victor, Amanda Watkins, Chuck Wicks, Hank Williams Jr., Williamson Country Youth Orchesta, Alicia Witt, Lee Ann Womack, Word Entertainment, and Charlie Worsham.

I had no idea of the extent of legacy of this great studio until I become the tenant of the space 12 years ago. Most of us know about Studio B. Studio A was its grander younger sibling, erected by Atkins when he became an RCA executive. The result was an orchestral room built to record strings for Elvis Presley and to entice international stars to record in one of these four Putnam-designed RCA spaces in the world. The other three RCA studios of the same dimensions – built in LA, Chicago and New York – have

long since been shut down. I can't tell you how many engineers, producers and musicians have walked into this space to share their stories of the great classic recorded music made here that put Nashville on the map. I've heard tales of audio engineers who would roller skate around the room waiting for Elvis to show up at some point in the weeks he booked, stories about how Eddy Arnold recorded one of the first sessions in the room that included the song "Make The World Go Away," about Dolly Parton's recordings and mixes here (Jolene, etc), of The Monkees recording here, and so on. Legendary songwriter John D. Loudermilk and his bride were serenaded by a session orchestra hired by Atkins who were recording there for an artist. He recalled that they danced all the way to the loading doors and into their wedding limo, reminiscing about the beautiful floor tiles which still line the entire space. He co-wrote countless numbers of songs with Atkins and many others in this studio.

To this day, Studio A remains a viable, relevant and vibrant space. In recent years these artists and filmmakers have recorded or worked here, to name a few:

Sara Bareilles, William Shatner, Kacey Musgraves, Jewel, Brian Setzer, Ken Burns, Kesha, The Beach Boys, Wayne Cohen, Tony Bennett, Willie Nelson, Kellie Pickler, Hunter Hayes, Charlie Worsham, David Nail, Jamey Johnson, Joe Bonamassa, Word Music, Gary Allan, and me..

While we Nashvillians can feel proud about the overall economic progress and prosperity we're enjoying, we know it's not always so kind to historical spaces, or to the legacy and foundation upon which that prosperity was built.

My motivation for spending over a million dollars in rent and renovations over these past 12 years was simple. I could have built my own space of the same dimensions with that kind of investment. But I'm a musician with no interest in development or business in general. I only want to make music in this historic space, and allow others to do the same. I've recorded all over the world and I can say emphatically that there's no recording space like it anywhere on the planet. These studio walls were born to ring with music. I just wanted to keep it alive.

Before the news of the sale I had been in recent talks with other entities on how we could collaborate on allowing visitors to Music City to see the space firsthand and hear its rich history, while also making sure that it stays busy making music history of tomorrow. No one can say now what will become of that idea.

Selfishly I'd like to remain the tenant and caretaker of this amazing studio space. I love it. But if I must let it go in the interest of change, my only hope is that it remain intact and alive. A couple of years ago my co-manager, Sharon Corbitt House, promised the late, great producer Phil Ramone, while he was in town recording Tony Bennett and an orchestra LIVE in this space, that she would do what she could to keep the studio doors open. Ramone had watched the former New York RCA studio transform into office space for the IRS and couldn't bear to see the last of this incredible acoustic design fade away.

So here's where we're coming from. Historic RCA Studio A is too much a part of why such incredible business opportunities exist in 2014 in Nashville to simply disappear. Music City was built on the foundation of ideas, and of music. What will the Nashville of tomorrow look like if we continue to tear out the heart of the Music Row that made us who we are as a city? Ultimately, who will want to build new condos in an area that has no central community of ideas or creatives?

We are Music City - the only city in the world truly built on music.

My simple request is for Tim Reynolds or whoever the next owners might be of this property, before deciding what to do with this space, to take a moment to stand in silence between the grand walls of RCA

Studio A and feel the history and the echoes of the Nashville that changed the world. I'd like to ask him and other developers to listen first hand to the stories from those among us who made the countless hit records in this studio – the artists, musicians, engineers, producers, writers who built this rich music legacy note by note, brick by brick.

I don't know what impact my words here will have on anything. But I felt the need to share, and to encourage others who also care about preserving our music heritage to speak up as well.

I believe that progress and heritage can co-exist in mutual respect. Maybe this time we can at least try to make the effort.

Yours,
Ben Folds