

**TEXAS COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME
AND THE TEX RITTER MUSEUM
Carthage, Texas**

Some touchstones of Lone Star culture—pride in history, gift of storytelling and love of barbecue and beer—play out most convincingly to the sounds of Texas country music. Think of the great stage moments at shows and honky-tonks when a snappy two-step beat and wailing steel guitar carry your spirits away. Think of the great driveway moments when twangy heartfelt country lyrics stop you in your tracks.

Add to that the great *museum* moments you will experience at the newly-expanded Texas Country Music Hall of Fame and the Tex Ritter Museum in Carthage. A 3,000-square-foot addition (set to open by late 2014 or early 2015) will mean more glittering costumes, vintage photos and musical instruments to colorfully chronicle the lives of Texas country legends. The expansion will highlight a major tribute to the late Texas star, Ray Price, on loan from his Nashville museum. A new theater will offer vintage Tex Ritter movies and live performances (by reservation) of local musicians portraying country stars of the past.

The Tex Ritter Museum opened two decades ago in a historic home to honor its namesake and homegrown star of stage and screen. Rotating displays feature artifacts donated by the Ritter family. The museum expanded to include exhibits on Tex's musical friends and other Texas country music greats and in 2003 moved to a \$2.5 million state-of-the-art museum facility. Joining it was the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, which annually honors country legends with induction ceremonies and performances. The soon-to-open expansion will add exhibits on Tex Ritter's sidekicks, such as "Arkansas Slim" Andrews, as well as leading ladies like Rita Hayworth, Ritter's co-star in the 1937 classic, *Trouble in Texas*. The new space also will feature an expanded tribute to Ritter's son, John Ritter, the TV and movie star who died in 2003.

Thousands of country music fans come annually to Carthage from across the U.S. and many countries. (The town also features the gravesite and monument of native son Jim Reeves, an international country music star of the 1950s and a HOF inductee.)

Each August new inductees are honored at the popular Texas Country Music Hall of Fame Show, held at Carthage's civic center with performances by inductees and other top talent. The HOF weekend also features the John Ritter Tribute Showcase (attended by the Ritter family) which spotlights new Texas country talent selected through a local talent search competition designed to identify country stars of the future. Other events include the Tex Ritter Roundup (featuring another talent search performances and musical displays), plus a Sunday gospel jam.

Run-date for the proposed feature could coincide with next year's HOF show, August 8-10, 2015. The downside is the fact that by the time an August issue could hit the mail, the show would likely already be sold out and local lodging unavailable. (I could not attend this year's event, but there are probably acceptable photos available of this or recent shows.)

Otherwise, we could simply fit the piece into your available openings.