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LIVE AT THE GRAND OLE OPRY: **COUNTRY MUSIC LEGEND ROY ACUFF COMMEMORATED** **ON NEW POSTAGE STAMP**

NASHVILLE—Roy Acuff, country music's legendary and first true superstar returned to the Opry stage today when the U.S. Postal Service unveiled a new commemorative postage stamp in his honor.

The Roy Acuff commemorative stamp first day of issue ceremony was held in conjunction with a live Acuff tribute show at the Grand Ole Opry amidst family and thousands of Acuff fans. The 37-cent self-adhesive stamp will be available at Nashville Post Offices today, and at Post Offices nationwide starting tomorrow.

"I'm particularly pleased to be here because, when I served as Postmaster General in the 1990's, I approved the Roy Acuff stamp as part of the 2003 stamp series," said Marvin T. Runyon, former Postmaster General of the United States Postal Service, who dedicated the stamp.

"I take great pride in being here at the historic Grand Ole Opry, as we honor Roy Acuff—the man who helped shape the sound of country music," he said.

Joining Runyon at the ceremony were Grammy award winners, Vince Gill and Roy Clark; Acuff's son, Neil Acuff; General Manager, Grand Ole Opry, Pete Fisher; former Tennessee Governor Ned R. McWherter, who currently serves on the presidentially appointed Postal Service Board of Governors and Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell.

Acuff helped turn the Grand Ole Opry into the nation's foremost country music institution, and his role in the music publishing business helped make Nashville the country music capital of America.

Roy Claxton Acuff was born in Maynardville, Tenn., on Sept. 15, 1903. Acuff was a natural athlete who aspired to be a professional baseball player, but a severe case of sunstroke in 1929 ended his athletic career. While recuperating, he honed his skill with the fiddle. During the summer of 1932, Acuff fiddled and performed in skits with a traveling medicine show.

In 1933 Acuff formed a band known as the Tennessee Crackerjacks, later renamed the Crazy Tennesseans by a radio announcer. In 1936, Acuff and his band made their first recordings, including a version of a traditional song that would become one of Acuff's best known numbers, "The Great Speckled Bird." The band first performed at the Grand Ole Opry in October 1937, but it was Acuff's Feb. 5, 1938, performance of "The Great Speckled Bird" that first earned him national fame and made his band—renamed the Smoky Mountain Boys—Opry regulars.



Acuff's repertoire included renditions of traditional and sacred songs such as "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" and "I Saw the Light," as well as sentimental favorites such as "The Precious Jewel." He was also well known for his songs about trains, especially "Wabash Cannonball."

For decades Acuff's name was nearly synonymous with the Grand Ole Opry. In 1983, he moved into a house on the Opryland grounds and continued to perform on the Opry stage until shortly before his death on Nov. 23, 1992.

Acuff received numerous honors and awards during his long career, including entry into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1962 – its first living member. In 1987, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In July 1991, President George H. W. Bush presented a National Medal of the Arts; and in December 1991, he was honored by the Kennedy Center.

The stamp captures Acuff in a playful moment—holding his fiddle under his arm instead of his chin—from a black-and-white photograph taken by John E. Wood, which appeared in the March 5, 1949, issue of Collier's magazine. Richard Sheaff of Scottsdale, Ariz., designed the stamp.

The following text appears on the back of the stamp: Roy Acuff (1903-1992) was one of country music's first superstars. He helped turn the Grand Ole Opry into the nation's foremost country music institution and was instrumental in making Nashville the country music capital of America.



Former Postmaster General Marvin Runyon joins country artist Vince Gill in dedicating the new Roy Acuff commemorative stamp during the live show from the stage of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville Sept. 13. Joining him on the left were USPS Southeast Area Vice President William J. Brown; former Tennessee Governor Ned R. McWherter, who currently serves on the presidentially appointed Postal Service Board of Governors and Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell.

To see the Roy Acuff stamp, visit the Postal Service Web site and open this press release at www.usps.com/communications/news/stamps/welcome.htm.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. In addition, a selection of stamps and other philatelic items are

available at the online Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop. Custom-framed art prints of original stamp art are available at www.postalartgallery.com.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. It is an independent federal agency that visits 140 million homes and businesses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$66 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. The Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world's mail volume—some 203 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year—and serves 7 million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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