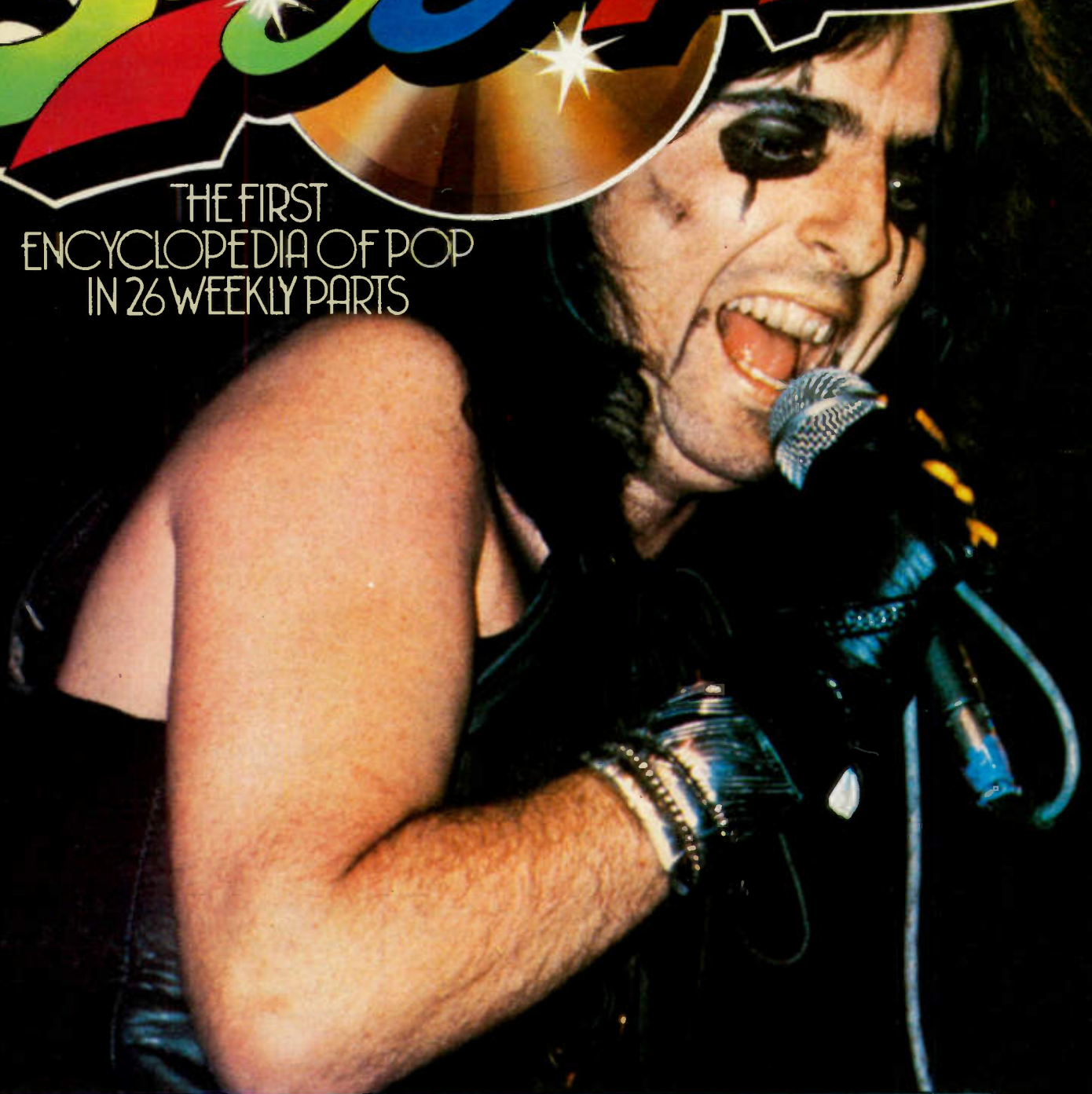


THE  
RADIO  
ONE

# Story of Pop

THE FIRST  
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POP  
IN 26 WEEKLY PARTS



PART 5

25p

EVERY THURSDAY

**ALICE COOPER:** Super-Ghoul!

**ROY ORBISON:** Lonely Man of Pop

**CONNIE & BRENDA:** First Ladies of the Fifties

**PLUS:** Highschool, Chuck Berry songs, coffee bars & more

AUSTRALIA 65c NEW ZEALAND 70c SOUTH AFRICA 70c NORTH AMERICA \$1.25



One of the many changes wrought by R&R was the shift from 'popular' to 'pop' music. By the late '50s, pop was universally the music of the young. The rough edges of rock had been knocked off to produce a polished diamond; inevitably, though, an industrial diamond.

Young idols were thrown up to ride the pop boom. Many of them, like Bobby Darin, Connie Francis, Eddie Cochran, Duane Eddy, Paul Anka, Fabian and Frankie Avalon can be heard either on record or talking on the Radio One documentary. They were the new breed of music stars, and in the programme you will hear how they rose to fame and who steered them to stardom. The BBC features the impresarios like Don Kirschner – 'The Man With The Golden Ear' – who for a generation from Bobby Darin, through the Monkees to the present day, has been instrumental in building up stars and matching them to songs and songwriters.

In this issue we reflect the programme's content with features on two of the First Ladies in pop, the sugar-sweet Connie Francis and the husky-voiced Brenda Lee; here too is Roy Orbison, whose agonised songs of loneliness mirror the tragedies of his own life. We also look at a peculiar pop trend – 'High School'; the music of the teens who were torn between the onset of adulthood and the restraining hands of authority at home and at school. Their music is often referred to as pap rather than pop, but it perfectly described those lost, rather more innocent times. They offer a sharp contrast, for instance, to the altogether brasher personalities of today; none more extraordinary, surely, than our superstar Alice Cooper whose 'School's Out' is strangely redolent of both 'Here Comes Summer' and Cochran's 'Summertime Blues'. The words of the latter, together with Sedaka's 'Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen' are printed in full inside. And the enormous talent of Chuck Berry as songwriter – 'America's first rock poet' – is profiled.

In addition we continue our look at the two most influential music streams by spotlighting the new lyricism of rhythm & blues and the continuing and healthy life of American country music. This week's issue and programme show how the music grew out of its infancy and entered its adolescence.

*Although the radio programme and this publication have been linked for readers in the UK, we have taken care to ensure that readers abroad will find this publication complete in itself.*

**How to obtain future copies:** The Radio One Story of Pop is on sale in 26 weekly parts. The best way to make sure you do not miss any of the future parts is to ask your newsagent to keep a copy for you each week or deliver it to you. When you place a regular order in this way you are not putting yourself under any long term obligation. With two weeks' notice you can cancel your order at any stage. But the great advantage of placing a regular order is that you run no risk of missing one of your weekly parts.

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# The Lonely Man of Rock



Robert Ellis

When the Beatles and Merseymania swept all before them in 1963, creating an entirely new music scene overnight, only one solo performer survived: Roy Orbison. The reason he emerged unscathed was simply that the anglicised 'rhythm & blues' being peddled by the groups didn't impinge on his realm. Orbison was the only one singing seriously and convincingly about loneliness, grief and despair.

*'Only the Lonely  
Know the way I feel tonight  
Only the Lonely  
Know this feeling ain't right  
Only the Lonely  
Know the heartaches I've been through  
Only the Lonely  
Know I've cried, cried for you'*

'Only The Lonely' was the first time most people had ever heard of Roy Orbison. In the late summer of 1960 the record made the top position in the music charts on both sides of the Atlantic, earning him a Gold Disc. It looked like another 'overnight success' story, but in fact Orbison had been around for quite some time. The delay was

due to his failure to find the right type of music for his highly individual voice.

Roy Kelton Orbison was born on April 23rd 1936, in Vernon, Texas. Not long after, his family moved to nearby Wink, and when he was about six his father started teaching him how to play the guitar. In his teens, he was the leader of a group known as the Wink Westerners, who played country & western music at local functions and even had their own programme on Radio KWWC back in Vernon.

The Wink Westerners gradually evolved into the Teen Kings, and Roy struck up a friendship with another young Texan singer, Buddy Holly from nearby Lubbock. When Holly started working under the supervision of Norman Petty at his studio in Clovis, just over the border from Texas, in New Mexico, Holly arranged for Roy Orbison and the Teen Kings to audition for Norman Petty. By this time, the Teen Kings had developed their country music into country-rock, or rockabilly as it was then known, and two of the songs they recorded with Petty, 'Tryin' To Get To You' and 'Ooby Dooby', were released on the Jewel record label.

Two states to the east, in Memphis, Tennessee, Sam Phillips' Sun Record Company had become the mecca for all rockabilly singers seeking to emulate the success of Phillips' protégé, a local truck

driver named Elvis Presley. Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Conway Twitty, Johnny Cash and Roy Orbison made the trip.

Phillips had heard Orbison's only release, and had him re-cut that and record several new songs in his studios at 706 Union Avenue. The new version of 'Ooby Dooby', a fast-paced rocker very much in the style of 'Long Tall Sally' about a dance called the Ooby Dooby, was almost an instrumental – just a few verses and two long solos in the classic style of early rock & roll.

'Ooby Dooby' was released as Sun 242 backed by 'Go, Go, Gō', and it sold something in the order of 350,000 copies – quite a fair-sized hit. Orbison went on to record a lot of material for Sam Phillips, and had three more singles released on the Sun label – 'You're My Baby', 'Sweet And Easy' and 'Chicken-Hearted' – but none came anywhere near selling as many as 'Ooby Dooby' (which resulted in his nickname, the Big O).

A song Roy Orbison had written about his wife, 'Claudette', another driving rocker, was recorded by the Everly Brothers as the 'B' side to 'All I Have To Do Is Dream', which turned out to be a double-sided million-seller. The Everly Brothers had been signed to the Acuff-Rose music publishers by Wesley Rose, and he was impressed enough by 'Claudette' to offer Orbison a contract.



Rose also negotiated a recording contract for Orbison with RCA Victor, who were based 200 miles cross-state from Memphis, in Nashville. At the old Victor studios there on 17th Street and Hawkins, Orbison cut several tracks under the supervision of Chet Atkins – who'd also been in charge of recording Rose's other clients, the Everlys. RCA released 'Almost Eighteen'/'Jolie' as a single, but with little response, and turned down his next offering 'Paper Boy'. So Wesley Rose thought a change of labels might do Orbison some good and took him across town to Fred Foster's newly-formed Monument label. Orbison's first session with Monument produced 'Paper Boy' – the 18,000 sales, however, seemed to reflect RCA's good judgement in rejecting it.

His second session with Monument resulted in 'Uptown' – another fast rocker very reminiscent of Eddie Cochran's 'Teenage Heaven' in structure, instrumentation and lyric-content. That sold 75,000 copies, a big improvement on 'Paper Boy' but still well below his lone Sun label hit, 'Ooby Dooby'.

At their next recording session, Orbison gave Foster two songs he wanted to record. Foster suggested that the two be combined and brought in a string section and a male vocal backing group. The result was 'Only The Lonely', a Number One hit record, and a million sales. 'Only The Lonely' was a complete departure for Orbison and for Foster. The use of the almost self-parodying male backing singers ('Dum, Dum, Dum, Dummy-Doo-Wah') and the string section made the record pure pop. It was a beautiful ballad of teenage emotions, but unlike most teen-ballads of the

time, it was sung in the most hauntingly dramatic way:

*'Maybe tomorrow  
A new romance  
No more sorrow  
But that's the chance  
You gotta take  
If your lonely heart breaks  
Only the lonely . . . .'*

Although the strings were a bit heavy-handed, Orbison had managed, in that one record, to perfect the art pioneered by such other former Sun artists as Conway Twitty (then known as Harold Jenkins) and of course Presley; namely of channeling rock & roll into the traditional ballad form.

Orbison's immediate follow-up to 'Only The Lonely' was another song from the same session, 'Blue Angel'. Although it was essentially an inferior imitation of his first hit, employing the same male chorus and surging strings, it did give Orbison a chance to show off his semi-operatic voice – singing some incredible wordless passages in between his sympathising with the blue angel over her broken romance.

At the time of Orbison's two hits grief was quite a popular theme, although no one else was treating it as seriously as Orbison. The usual treatment was more in the vein of 'Tell Laura I Love Her' (Ray Peterson's hit about a guy dying in a stock-car race trying to earn enough money to buy his girl a ring), or 'Teen Angel' (Mark Denning's record of how a girl dies going back to her boyfriend's car, which is stuck on the railway tracks, to get the ring he gave her).

The introspective tragedy that Orbison

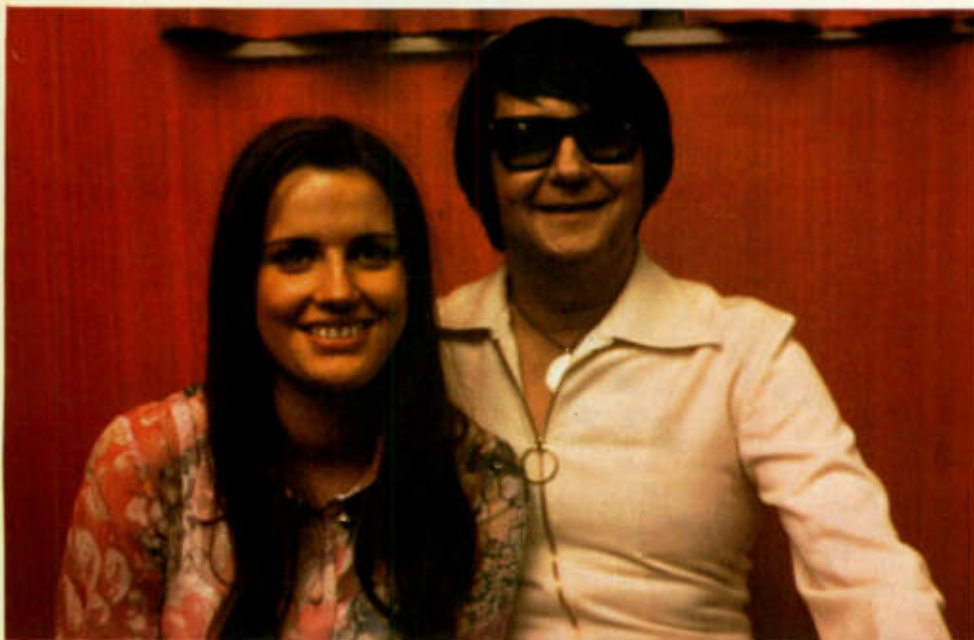


Syndication International

sang about was not his exclusive province: the Everly Brothers notably had been covering that ground for quite some time with hits such as 'When Will I Be Loved' and 'So Bad'. Of course the Everlys used a much faster tempo and a much more 'teenage' style, and with them it only seemed a flesh wound from which they would undoubtedly soon recover (even if it did seem like a mortal wound at the time); but Orbison sounded like a terminal case.

In his third hit, 'Running Scared', which brought him his second Gold Disc, Orbison added another devastating ingredient: the slow-burning fuse, or the crescendo. Most of his hits from 'Running Scared' on employed this technique, in various ways, starting off very slowly, building up until it almost bursts over with emotion: the pop 'Bolero'.

'Running Scared' began in a spoken whisper, coming in over the simple but staccato strumming of his guitar, and built up in four definite stages. First the backing of a bass and drum comes in; then that is filled out; followed by a heavenly chorus and finally the whole orchestra. The narrative builds up in the same way with Orbison's growing sense of disaster as his girlfriend's ex-lover comes back:



From left to right: Roy Orbison, unmoved as ever; indulging in his favourite pastime; a pleasant portrait with his wife; singing his sad songs.

*'Just running scared/Each place we go  
So afraid/That he might show  
Yeah running scared/What would I do  
If he came back/And wanted you  
Just running scared/Feeling low  
Running scared/You loved him so  
Just running scared/Afraid to lose  
If he came back/Which one would you  
choose.'*

Orbison's own 'live' performance of 'Running Scared' was also perfect. His natural complexion is a pasty, death-like white, and he heightened this dramatically by dyeing his hair jet-black (slicked back 'pompadour' style), and wearing dark glasses and all-black outfits rather reminiscent of those worn by flamenco guitarists.

There he stood on the stage; all black and white and completely alone. When he sang, he hardly moved a muscle – not even his lips. Movement of any kind would have detracted from the dramatic image of 'self-control in the midst of despair'. It was a very powerful image complementing perfectly the very powerful emotions laid bare in his songs.

Orbison wrote most of his own songs (in collaboration with someone called Melson), and they fell into three distinct categories: songs about love which has been 'lost' ('Only The Lonely', 'It's Over', 'Blue Angel'); songs about the absence of love, and about loneliness ('In Dreams', 'Oh Pretty Woman'); and songs in which there was the potential threat of the love being lost ('Running Scared', 'Falling').

All were sung by Orbison in his soaring voice which just seemed to strike the right chord inside the listener, to exactly capture the feeling expressed in the words. Some of those songs – six of which sold over a million copies each – were pure poetry set to music, and turned into pop



SKR

*I awake and find you gone  
I can't help it  
I can't help it  
If I cry . . .  
I remember  
That you said  
Goodbye  
Too bad that all these things  
Can only happen in my dreams  
Only in dreams  
In beautiful dreams'*

The last four lines encapsulate it perfectly, and Orbison's voice singing them can only be described as magnificent. 'It's Over' contrasts with all Orbison's other songs in that it, for once, goes beyond the poetry of ordinary day-to-day language, and uses very romantic couplets to emphasise the gulf between what there was and what is left. When the love was there, everything was warm and colourful; now it's gone, there's just blackness and emptiness. It begins:

*'Golden days before they end  
Whisper secrets to the wind  
Your baby won't be near you anymore  
Tender nights before they fly  
Send falling stars that seem to cry  
You're baby doesn't want you any more'*

and ends:

*'Setting suns before they fall  
Echo to you, that's all, that's all  
But you'll see lonely sunsets after all  
It's over, it's over, it's over, it's over.'*

Again, the build up to the singing of the last two 'it's overs', in which Orbison manages to evince pain rather than sing mere words.

All of Orbison's songs dealt in tragedy ('pack as much poetry and philosophy into a two-minute pop record as you can' was how he once described his formula for success) and in the end life dealt out some tragedy of its own to him. On June 7th, 1966, he and his 25-year-old wife Claudette were motorcycling home from a race meeting when her bike was involved in a head-on collision and she was killed instantly. Needless to say, he was almost wiped out emotionally, but poured all of his love into his three sons, Roy junior, Tony and Wesley. He even wrote a song about the tragedy – 'It's Too Soon To Know' – which made the Top Three in Britain.

Then two years later, while he was in Bournemouth on a tour of Britain, his Tennessee home burnt down with two of his kids inside – Roy junior, who was 13, and eight-year-old Tony. Since then, he hasn't had a hit record at all, and now he has reverted to the music of the Wink Westerners, pure country & western.

**NEXT WEEK IN ROCK:**  
Tommy Steele – one of the original working-class heroes, but he went off in search of 'all-round entertainment'.

arias by Orbison's rich and soaring voice.

'Running Scared' was a pure distillation of Orbison's technique, almost a skeletal framework; and the other songs – particularly 'In Dreams' and 'It's Over' – were the fleshing out of those bones. In both songs Orbison's voice again exceeds itself at the climax, with notes of such timbre and quality that the words just melt into pure emotion.

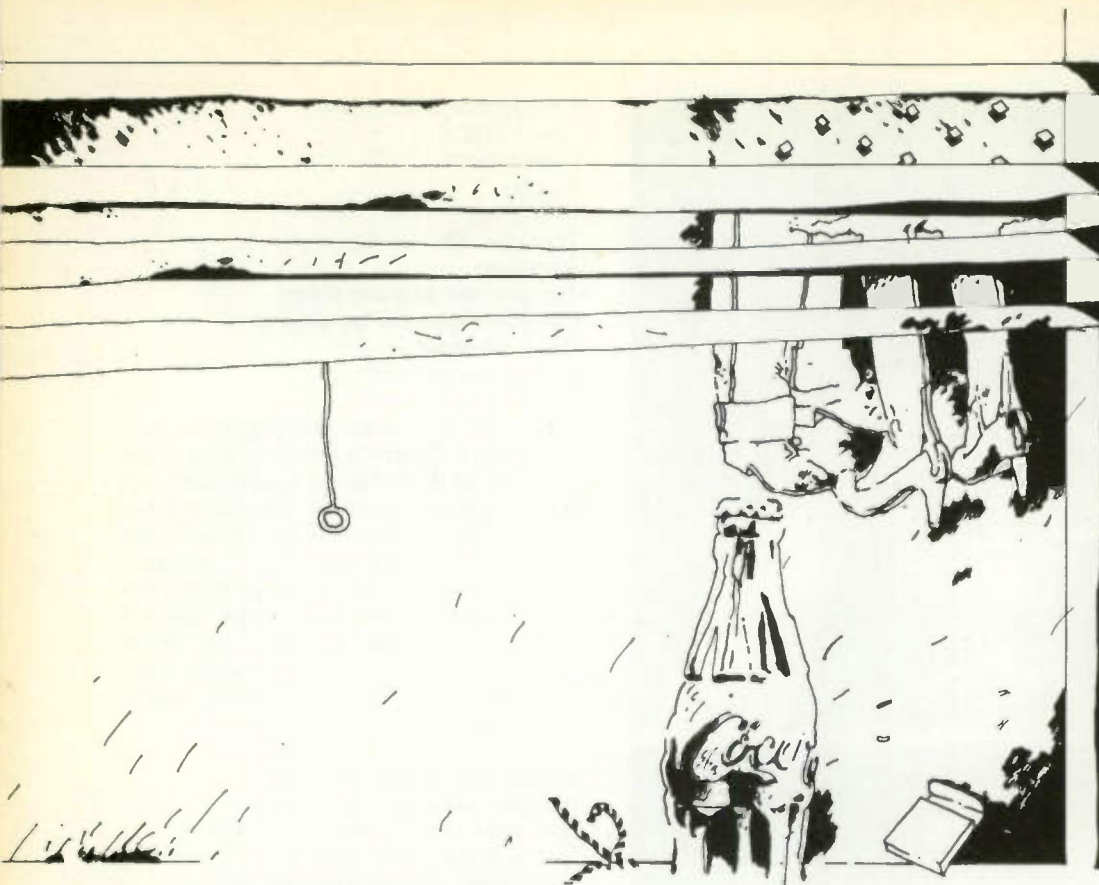
'In Dreams' is the simple plea that Bobby Darin had sung about in 'Dream Lover' and the Everlys had in 'All I Have To Do Is Dream'. In dreams everything is as we want it to be:

*'I close my eyes/then I drift away  
Into the magic night/I softly say  
A silent prayer/like dreamers do  
Then I fall asleep to dream  
My dream of you'*

the only thing we don't control, is how long it goes on:

*'Just before the dawn*

Robert Ellis



## POP CULTURE: THE '50s

# Storm in a coffee cup

In 1956 Bill Haley starred in a movie called *Rock Around The Clock* – which cost a mere \$200,000 to make and grossed a million. In Britain it played at 300 cinemas, most of which had their seats ripped up in joyous thanks by the audiences. With that the '50s generation was born.

Some people called it the 'beat' generation, but that included other groups of young people who didn't – like the '50s generation – spend their time jiving in clubs, knocking back cappuccinos, and slicking back their DA hair-dos in every shop-window they passed. The 'beat' generation was really a separate culture, which preferred dope and jazz and intellectual talk about The Bomb.

The coffee bar crowd was different. Or indifferent, as a series of articles claimed, pointing out that one of the main characteristics of this group was boredom. Perhaps. But the '50s kids couldn't be compared with their decadent predecessors, the upper-class Bright Young Things of the '20s. They didn't imitate the habits of privileged adolescents. They invented and founded a new youth-cult of their own. They left school on the crest of prosperity

in a Britain about to 'Never Have It So Good'. Girls of 17 earned more than their grandfathers; they were all financially free of their parents. And for once there was no National Service to straight-jacket teenagers in these, the freest, years of their lives.

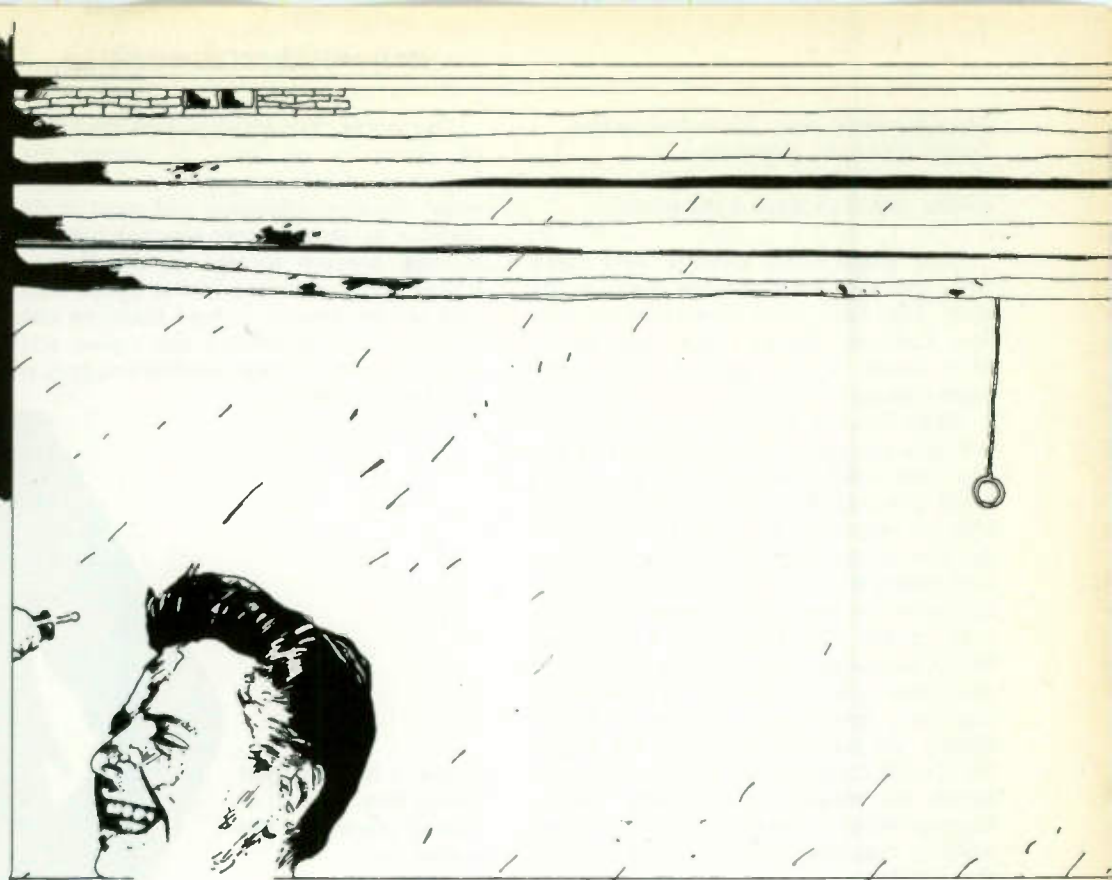
Like all groups they had first to establish a uniform. Teddy Boys (so called because they wore a version of the Edwardian look) went to endless trouble to kit themselves up in big drape jackets with velvet or moleskin collars, and drainpipe trousers (or 'drains') that carried with them the awful rumour that you might get gangrene if you wore them too tight. A frilled shirt under a silk-patterned waistcoat was essential, plus the inevitable suede creeper shoes that later were abandoned in favour of winkle-pickers when the more Italianate style came in. Being adolescent and untrained in the physical activities of the army they were usually spotty, skinny, unattractive creatures with thin lips and undernourished, wartime faces – the foreheads of which were usually concealed by the inevitable flop of the DA (Duck's Arse, or Ducktail) hair-do. It cost around 50p to get those greasy waves set at the front and arranged to hang over the face, with the oil smeared thickly to flatten the hair round the sides.

Different and tougher than the Teds were the Ton-Up boys, whose main obsession, like rockers, was with bikes. Muscular characters, they had different gear which included coloured, fluorescent socks, wind-cheaters, medallions, turned-up jeans, studded ornamental belts and leather jackets with the names of their particular gang marked out in gleaming studs on the back.

### Swooned and Jived

The girls, unless they were Ton-Up boys' chicks ('chicks' was a very up-to-date expression in those days), when they wore padded jackets, straight skirts and blouses with bow ties, tended to go in for the more goody-goody Sandra Dee look; swelling their hips with numerous petticoats under their near ankle-length skirt, worn with either stiletto-heeled shoes or flat shoes with ankle-socks making them look like ducks. Their hair, held by the wide hair-band, was usually short and permed, and their lipstick was bright-red.

Those kids whose families could afford a television set watched rock & roll on shows like Jack Good's *6.5 Special*, introduced by Pete Murray and the gym-mistress Jo Douglas, or his later shows, *Oh Boy!* and *Wham!*, all of which created a special



Barry Thorpe



The Espresso machine – 100 shallow cups from 1 lb of coffee.

'teen-slot' in television hours – the six-to-seven hour squeezed in between children's and adults' programmes.

And Teds and Ton-Up kids alike listened to rock & roll on those new inventions from the States, juke-boxes, in those other

new inventions from Italy, the coffee bars.

Coffee bars were an essential part of the '50s. They were regarded by most of the older generation as dens of vice. The first, the Coffee Cup, started in Hampstead, North London, and later the 2 Is, where Tommy Steele was discovered playing skiffle, became the last word in 'in' places for '50s kids.

But "young men and women today crave for bright lights – or not bright lights at all", said Brighton's senior probation officer at the time. "They sit in these nine-penny nightspots, coffee bars, some of which are dark, unhealthy dungeons; dens that are breeding grounds for juvenile crime."

Swinging vicars tried to set up their own coffee bars to spread the gospel in; local councils tried unsuccessfully to ban or licence them or at least force them to close early. You wouldn't have thought cups of capuccino – a special style of coffee that was  $\frac{3}{4}$  foam – could be held to blame for so much violence and crime. Espresso bars started in 1954 and boomed in 1958 when 3,000 had mushroomed over Britain and showed no signs of diminishing. The focal points of coffee bars were the juke-box and the Espresso machine, which managed to squeeze between 80 and 100 shallow cups out of only 1 lb of coffee, selling at the then crippling price of 9d or 1/3d a cup.

The vice and crime that disturbed the older generation so much was greatly exaggerated. It existed, and the essential part of the Teds' gear was indeed a flick-knife, a cosh, a knuckle-duster and a bicycle chain with which a fair bit of damage could be done. But older people became alienated by these gangs which sprang up in South-East London and consisted of natty characters loafing around street-corners, slicking back their hair and shouting rude things at

passers-by. Particularly alarming was not only the Teds' style of dress but of walking – James Dean-style.

Little did all the blasé critics of this walk know the endless trouble with which it had been cultivated, the constant sneaky looks in shop windows to see they were doing it right, the exact measured timing – like cocking a gun – to get exactly the right finger-snap accompanied by the inevitable: 'Like, er, man, get lost, dig?'

### Crazy Man Crazy

The under-20s then used a language of their own, now so recently cut-of-date as to seem ridiculous, but to them the height of fashion. 'Go, man, go' they would say, 'dig big daddy-o. Get sent, hep-cat, you're a real cool chick, crazy, man, crazy'.

If this was the language of rock & roll, jiving was the dance. Jiving was perhaps one of the most complicated forms of dancing since the waltz – and the last, until a new one comes along, that actually involved any kind of physical contact. Girls held their partner with one hand, and there was more co-ordination in these elaborate dances – which involved girls being flung over their partners' shoulders, men crawling, limbo-style, under their girls' petticoats, to re-appear, finger-snapping, the other side – than in any of the more remote dancing of today. Although band-leaders disapproved (of course), jiving did boost the ballroom figures and one man who couldn't jive because of an accident at work, was awarded £1,000 by a sympathetic judge.

*'Saturday night and I just got paid,  
I'm a fool about money, don't try to save,  
My heart say go, go have a time,*

*Saturday night, now, 'n' I'm feeling fine,  
Gonna rock it up, gonna rip it up,  
I'm gonna shake it up, gonna ball it up,  
Gonna rock it up, have a ball tonite'*

(Rip It Up)

Thus spake Little Richard. And that's what everyone seemed to be doing, in the early '50s. Rock & roll dominated all; even sex. Certainly clothes ('Don't step on my blue suede shoes' warned Elvis) were more important than girls.

When you look back you see that in fact the '50s generation was remarkably severe and conformist. True they didn't go into the army, and march around in drills with their hair cut short, but it would be difficult to tell one Teddy Boy from another. Instead of shooting the Hun, they preferred coshing old ladies on the head; instead of singing army songs, they sang rock & roll. They had a language, code and life-style all of their own – just as rigorous, if not more so, than any army could impose on them. Indeed, so clannish was their life that a Mr. Dodds Drummonds, a Scout Commissioner, felt impelled to comment: "Teddy Boys go about in patrols, have a distinctive uniform, they seek adventure. It is our fault that we have not been able to provide it. The Teddy Boy's outfit is only a uniform, something distinctive which he is proud of. There is nothing wrong with it. It is a frightening thing to become a tiny entity in millions. That is the world us adults have produced for these children. No wonder there are Teddy Boys. Jolly good luck to them! They are establishing their identity in their own particular way."

The whole '50s scene sowed the seeds of youth as an idea. It marked the beginning of affluence, clothes consciousness, violence, alienation and most of all, perhaps established that new and hitherto strange concept (except to the rich) – leisure. Leisure lurked in the coffee bars and on the streets. It bred boredom and crime but also enterprise and vigour; and after the '50s, its most adolescent days, it was here to stay.

Right: A fully-fledged Teddy Boy. Below: a typical scene in a '50s coffee bar.

## NEXT WEEK IN POP CULTURE:

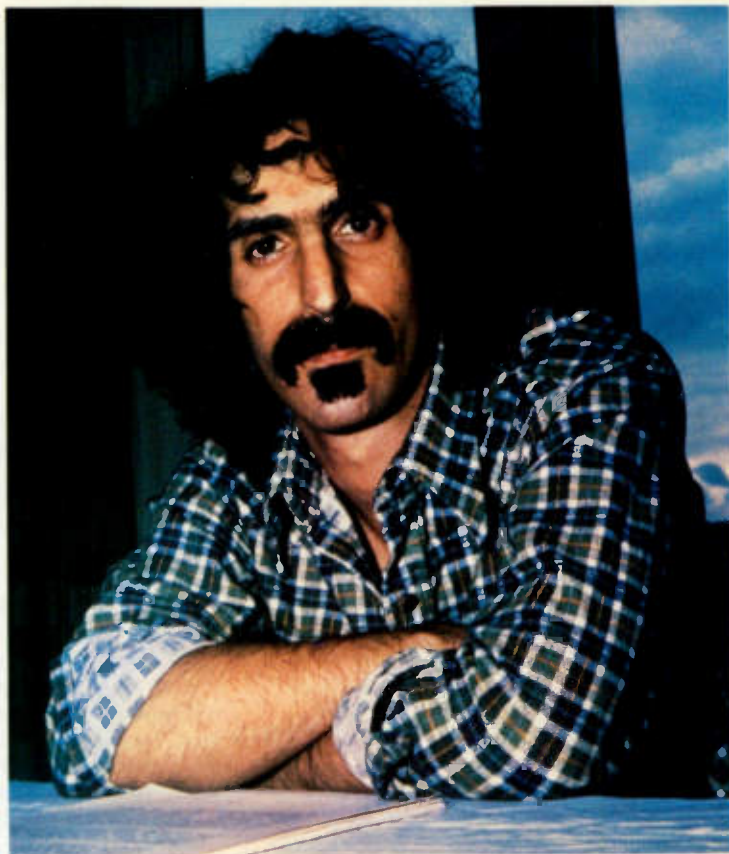
Rock Sex Symbols – We take a look at the non-musical appeal of some pop stars.



Keystone Press



# High School: So you want to be a Rock 'n' Roll star



*'If the people would just hear my plea I would give everything just to sing the songs that was turning me on in High School.'*

— sleeve notes: 'Ruben & The Jets' by the Mothers of Invention

There's a record by Stan Freberg in which he plays a record producer who sets out to deliberately make a hit record. He builds the record up gradually and meticulously with all the essential ingredients of the day: rasping drums, clanging guitars, and backing singers ranging from deep bass to high whine. But . . . there's still something missing, something is still not quite right.

— "You gotta have a teenage-idol man," says someone in the studio, "you gotta have a teenage idol."

— "Wait here," says Freberg, "I'll get one."

The target of Freberg's satire is made obvious as he pulls in the first teenager off the street outside to mumble the words 'high school' over and over. Freberg was simply taking the manufacturing of high school music to its logical and absurd conclusion. In fact, in real life, many producers went a lot further than Freberg did and there were countless 'novelty' records and hundreds of 'one-hit wonders'. But not all of it was like this, and a lot of excellent music came out of high school.

High school music was really the third move by the major record companies to regain control of the market from rock & roll. The first had been to use performers

already on their books (usually country singers or crooners like Pat Boone) to cover rock & roll; while they were busy finding singers to record the same type of material. The third move — high school — was to have teenager singers singing about teenage life and emotions, rather than the more 'adult' ones depicted in rock & roll.

Since most teenagers went to high school (well at least the ones who bought records) the music tended to be about them, and Chuck Berry's 'School Days' and 'Sweet Little Sixteen' perfectly expressed what it was all about.

## Sexual Emotions

Before rock & roll, love and sexual emotions were the strict province of the over-21s. The age of consent is 18 in most of the United States, so the bulk of the teenagers were not supposed to be thinking about such things. Rock & roll changed all that, moving the focus a generation on. The dominance of rock & roll in the mid-'50s was a simple reflection of a society in which teenagers had more liberty, more money, in fact more of everything.

So high school music was manufactured to supply this teenage demand for a culture of their own. High school culture was . . . coca cola . . . soda pops . . . sweaters with your own initial on . . . pony-tails and crew cuts . . . passing notes in class . . . borrowing your dad's car . . . drive-in movies . . . blue jeans — with your comb in the back

pocket . . . T-shirts . . . hanging around street corners . . . stealing hub-caps . . . your shirt collar turned up . . . looking (but not being) tough . . . having a job after school . . . not doing your homework . . . kept in after class . . . knowing all the words to the latest songs.

High school music naturally revolved around school ('Waitin' In School', Ricky Nelson; 'Charlie Brown', the Coasters) and all related subjects such as parents ('Yakety Yak', the Coasters; 'Wake Up Little Susie', the Everlys); working after school ('Summertime Blues', Eddie Cochran); dances ('At The Hop', Danny & the Juniors); clothes ('Short Shorts', the Royal Teens; 'Black Denim Trousers', the Cheers; 'Black Slacks', the Sparkletones); and the music itself ('Rock And Roll Will Never Die', Danny & the Juniors; 'Rock And Roll Music', Chuck Berry).

## Parental Derision

But above all, the songs were about teenage emotions; first love, first quarrel, the fear of breaking up and the fear of parental derision. The first expressions of teenage love came from two ultra-teenagers, though neither could really lay claim to being 'high school' as such. Paul Anka was simply a 30-year-old crooner who happened to be 15, and Frankie Lymon's New York rhythm & blues simply took advantage of the 13-year-old's falsetto voice. But the sentiments they

sang about were what was later to be called 'high school'.

Paul Anka sold nine million copies of 'Diana', which told the now-familiar story of teenage love being dismissed simply because it was teenage:

*'I'm so young and you're so old  
This my darling I've been told  
I don't care just what they may say  
'Cos for ever I will pray  
You and Me will be as free  
As the birds up in the trees  
Oh please, stay by me, Diana'*

Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers were even younger than Paul Anka, yet Frankie would ask 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love?', answering himself 'I know, I'm a fool you see'. The group also had a hit with 'I'm Not A Juvenile Delinquent'. (Frankie himself died in Harlem in March, 1968, of a heroin overdose). The Teenagers were simply one of many black vocal groups around at the time who picked up on what was basically a white market.

### Novelty Numbers

The high turnover of performers in 'high school' was simply because the content of the songs was far more important than the performers singing them. This in turn led to 'novelty' records, the 'one-hit wonders', and the producer out to make the 'hit record'. Manufactured pop, like rock & roll, was here to stay.

'Western Movies' was a perfect example of the novelty record – complete with ricocheting bullets. A high school group called the Challengers, who had had one release on the Melatone label, 'I Can Tell/ The Mambo Beat', changed their name to the Olympics and signed up with Demon records. They added Walter Lee Hammond to their line-up of Walter Ward (lead), Eddie Frank Lewis and Melvin King, and recorded 'Western Movies' – a comment on the 32 Western series running on US TV at that time:

*'To save my soul I can't get a date  
My baby's got it tuned on channel 8  
Wyatt Earp and big Cheyenne  
Comin' through the TV, shooting up this land  
My baby loves the Western movies.'*

Although black vocal groups were singing, quite successfully, about the 'white' high school culture, they couldn't quite capture its true spirit. High school was more concerned with songs than performers, and so it is fairly difficult to name typical examples of the style, but the name which would crop up most would be Danny and the Juniors. They, more than any other single group or performer in rock music, are identified with high school. In fact, it's probably down to just the one record, 'At The Hop'. The group was often criticised for its 'carefully rehearsed spontaneity', and certainly Danny Rapp's voice is one of the most colourless in rock music – but the driving music and backing vocals of Juniors Frank Maffei, Joe Terranova and

Dave White, totally made the record. Dave White co-wrote 'At The Hop' and was the sole author of their other big hit, 'Rock And Roll Is Here To Stay':

*'Rock and roll will always be  
I'll dig it to the end  
It'll go down in history  
Just you wait my friend  
I don't care what people say  
Rock and roll is here to stay.'*

Another group, similar in style to Danny and the Juniors, were white Canadians, the Diamonds. If their major hit, 'Lil' Darlin'' sounded more black than white, it was because they had simply lifted the song and its arrangement from the black group, the Gladiolas, on Excello (who changed their name to Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs and had several hits, notably 'Stay').

Only one other white group which can join Danny and the Juniors in being called high school is Dion and the Belmonts (and only when Dion was with the Belmonts, not when he graduated as Dion Di Mucci etc). Like the Juniors, the Belmonts came from the Italian-American areas of New York. They were formed by Dion Di Mucci when he was 17, with friends Fred Milano, Angelo D'Aleo and Carlo Mastrangelo. After an audition with the New York label Laurie, they were signed up and released 'I Wonder Why'. That did moderately well, but it was Jerome 'Doc' Pomus' and Mort Shuman's 'A Teenager In Love' which really made them:

*'Each time we have a quarrel  
It almost breaks my heart  
'Cause I am so afraid  
That we will have to part  
Each night I ask the stars up above  
Why must I be a teenager in love?'*

'A Teenager In Love' pulled in over 1,000,000 sales (as had 'At The Hop' and 'Lil' Darlin') and the group followed up with another hit, 'Where Or When', before parting company in 1960. Dion went on to have a couple more million-sellers, 'Runaround Sue' and 'The Wanderer', while the Belmonts had some success with 'Tell Me Why', 'Come On Little Angel', 'Don't Get Around Much Anymore' and 'I Need Someone'.

There were just as many one-hit wonders among white groups as there were among the black ones – the Kalin Twins, Herbie and Hal, with 'When', and the Poni-Tails' 'Born Too Late' just to name two. And there were many solo artists who gave just one hit before falling into obscurity, such as Jerry Keller's 'Here Comes Summer', Mark Dinning's 'Teen Angel' and another 'death song', Ray Peterson's 'Tell Laura I Love Her'. Ritchie Valens made the classic 'Donna' before he was killed in the same aircrash as Buddy Holly and J. P. 'Big Bopper' Richardson in February 1959.

Not all high school performers went this transitory way, however. The more astute ones managed to transcend the



Above: Paul Anka sings, complete with muffler. Right: Pat Boone in the film *The Main Attraction*. Far right: the Coasters and a young admirer have a friendly beer.



SKP



Mirrorpic

category and become a part of mainstream pop. The three most outstanding examples being Eddie Cochran (before he was killed in 1960), Rick Nelson, and the Everly Brothers.

Eddie Cochran's recording career was very short – confined really to 'Sittin' In The Balcony', 'Twenty Flight Rock', 'Summertime Blues', 'C'mon Everybody', and 'Three Steps To Heaven' – the latter being a posthumous hit after he was killed on April 17th, 1960, in a road accident during a tour of Britain. He co-wrote them all except 'Sittin' In The Balcony', his first Liberty release and one which brought him a Gold Disc.

'Twenty Flight Rock' was a simple rocker about his girlfriend living on the 20th floor of an apartment block whose lift is out of order. But Cochran's real reputation was made by 'Summertime Blues' and 'C'mon Everybody'; two excellent records which he wrote with Jerry Capehart. Instrumentally and lyrically they encapsulated respectively teenage resentment and happiness.

In fact the lyrics were the work of Jerry Capehart, who usually played 'cardboard box' drums on Cochran's records, with Eddie dubbing the bass line on later. 'C'mon Everybody' is a classic Cochran/Capehart song and a simple but effective celebration:

*I've been doing my homework all week long*

*And now the house is empty and my folks are gone  
Oooh C'mon Everybody  
Well we'll really have a party but we gotta put a guard outside  
If my folks come home I'm afraid they're gonna have my hide  
Who cares? C'mon Everybody'*

'Summertime Blues' and 'C'mon Everybody' totalled only three minutes and eight seconds of record time, but it was enough to establish him as a legend in high school music and, of course, in rock & roll.

**Teenage Traumas**

At the time of Cochran's death in 1960, the Everly Brothers and Ricky Nelson had racked up nine Gold Discs each, and were the twin pillars of high school society. The Everlys' career really started when they were teamed up with songwriters Felice and Boudleaux Bryant by Archie Bleyer's New York Cadence label. The Bryants, like Jerry Capehart, could express exactly the feelings of teenagers. But where Capehart was fairly flippant, the Bryants played it for real. And when the Everly Brothers sang their songs, it came from teenage hearts.

The first six Everly Brothers/Bryants records were all Gold Discs, all dealing with teenage emotions of remorse at love lost ('Bye Bye Love'); love unfulfilled ('All I Have To Do Is Dream'); fear of parents



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('Wake Up Little Susie'); fear of losing to another guy ('Bird Dog') and the whole trauma of being a teenager ('Problems'):

*'Problems, problems, problems, all day long  
Will my problems turn out right or wrong?  
My baby don't like anything I do  
My teacher seems to feel the same way too  
Worries, worries, pile upon my head  
Woe is me, I should have stayed in bed  
Can't get the car, my marks ain't been so good  
My love life just ain't swinging like it should  
Problems, problems, problems  
They're all on account of my loving you like I do  
They won't be solved until I'm sure of you  
You can solve my problems with a love that's true.'*

They did have their more straightforward romantic side, usually on the reverse sides of their hits, songs such as 'Devoted To You' (another Bryants' song) or Don Everly's own song 'Til I Kissed You' (which made it seven Golds in a row). Most, if not all, the records they made were brilliant, sung in that harmonised whine with the two acoustic guitars pounding away underneath.

Don and Phil Everly were born into music: their parents, Ike and Margaret Everly, were established folk singers; Eric Hilliard Nelson on the other hand, was born into show business. His parents had their own radio show, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, which successfully transferred itself to TV as *The Nelsons*.

Singing in the show led to him being signed by the Los Angeles Verve label. His cover of Fats Domino's 'I'm Walkin'' sold a million, and his contract was quickly bought up by Fats' own label, Imperial – which was also based in Los Angeles. From then on Ricky's songs reflected his own generation's problems and feelings. 'Waitin' In School' was an ersatz Elvis rocker, but with high school lyrics more than similar to Chuck Berry's 'School Days':

*'I've been waitin' in school all day long  
Waiting on the bell to ring so I can go home  
Throw my books on the table, pick up the telephone  
'Hello baby, let's get something going'  
Heading down to the drug-store to get a soda-pop  
Throw a nickel in the juke-box then we start to rock'*

'Poor Little Fool', written by Eddie Cochran's fiancée, Sharon Sheeley, was about a teenager who played around, 'cheated' in high school terms, falling for a girl who 'cheated' him. That sold a million too; as did 'Lonesome Town' (where broken hearts stay), by far his most sophisticated song:

*'In the town of broken dreams  
The streets are filled with regret  
Maybe down in Lonesome Town  
I can learn to forget.'*

Like the Everlys, Rick Nelson's songbook covered the whole range of teenage emotion, culminating in his double-sided

The rigours of touring show on the faces of Sha-Na-Na.

1959 hit 'It's Late/'Never Be Anyone Else But You'. His voice was more mature than his years, and he was blessed with the art of being able to talk and yet sound like he was singing. He was also blessed with good musicians, notably James Burton, who, more than anyone, was responsible for giving the records a 'teenage sound'. He could pull off a good rock & roll guitar riff anytime at all, and quite a few of Ricky Nelson's records would have fallen into the 'insipid', 'teenager crooner' categories if he hadn't thrown in a clangy guitar break.

High school music still lives on: Danny and the Juniors recently reformed and sound as good as ever – living alongside the Columbia University all-stars, Sha Na Na; and even Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention recorded an album of high school music, on which Zappa wrote:

*'We really like this kind of music (just a bunch of old men with rock & roll clothes on sitting around the studio, mumbling about the good old days). Ten years from now you'll be sitting around with your friends someplace doing the same thing if there's anything left to sit on.'*

**NEXT WEEK IN POP** – Lonnie Donegan introduced skiffle, a home-made sound, and teenage boys everywhere latched on to it.

# The First Ladies of Pop

If she'd been a bit older in the late '50s, Brenda Lee might have become the only female star of rock & roll. As it was she probably had the most powerful voice of any woman in pop until Janis Joplin happened along in the mid-'60s, by which time Brenda was more interested in bringing up a family than making records.

But, beginnings first. She came from Atlanta, Georgia, a typical Southern teenager. Apart, that is, from her voice — which soon got her noticed and recorded. The publicity legend had it that she was just 12 when she cut her first disc. But however old she was, Brenda Lee was certainly one of the first pop stars who was no older than most of her fans — and younger than the rest of them.

That first record was 'Jambalaya', by the late '50s a standard of both country and western and rhythm & blues music. It was a song any teenager would have caught on the radio, sung by Fats Domino. But by the time Brenda really got going in Britain as well as the US, she had her own songs, carefully tailored for a teenager to sing to teenagers.

Someone at Brunswick Records had been pretty sharp. Here was this ordinary looking kid, in casual slacks, flat shoes and cardigan, only four feet eleven, but when she opened her mouth to sing . . .

And Brenda Lee did have an amazing voice. It wasn't just powerful and loud, it was flexible. When she had a song that gave her the chance to ring a few changes, Brenda could dip low and growl in a way that was, well, sexy, but not *too* sexy so that it would worry any anxious parents listening at their kids' bedroom door. It was playful and friendly, like high school kids were supposed to be in their romances in the days when 'goin' steady' was almost a sign of sexual depravity for a 14-year-old. And she could soar on the ballads and still hit each note while keeping that slight huskiness in her voice; which was the way you could identify any Brenda Lee record immediately.

## Sweet Nothin's

Her first big record was 'Sweet Nothin's', in 1960 easily one of the best songs of a rather drab pop year. The lyrics had everything a good teenage song



Gingham-clad Brenda Lee, with that memorable husky voice, soars into 'Sweet Nothin's'.

should, and could almost have been done by a computer programmed with every Everly Brothers hit and a lot of others besides:

*'My baby whispers in my ear —  
ooh sweet nothin's  
He knows the things I love to hear —  
ummm sweet nothin's  
Things he wouldn't tell nobody else  
A secret darlin' — I keep it to myself —  
ummm sweet nothin's'*

And on that last line she brings her voice down to almost a confidential whisper, bringing the words alive, making you think they might even mean something significant.

With 'Sweet Nothin's', Brenda Lee was away and established near the top of every 'Best Female Singer' poll for the next three years. She had a string of Top Twenty records which cleverly ran the gamut of teenage emotions. The first six of them, in fact, were alternately happy and sad.

The contrite slow ballad 'I'm Sorry' was followed by 'Let's Jump The Broomstick', the most unbuttoned of all her records. It proved that she could rock as hard as any male singer in 1961, though it turned out to be the last of the really uninhibited Brenda Lee singles.

Beginning with 'Speak To Me Pretty' (her biggest British hit, reaching no. 3), her records began to take on a certain sophistication. Something had happened, something quite simple. It was 1962 and Brenda Lee was 18. She had grown up. Whether she, or some guiding hand in the Brunswick front office had tired of the 'Little Miss Dynamite' image, it's impossible to say; but from this point on, ever so gradually, Brenda Lee followed the pop path first trodden by Elvis Presley from teen idol to 'all round entertainer', from the Gaumonts of the package shows, to the clubs of the cabaret circuit.

But it didn't all happen at once. Brenda kept on wearing her teased-out skirts with a bit of frilly petticoat showing just above her dumpty knees, and had a couple more hits that were a shade more gutsy than the stylish 'Speak To Me Pretty'/'Here Comes

That Feeling', and an inevitable seasonal special called 'Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree' that actually got to no. 7, simply because it was a chance to hear Brenda Lee attacking a song with her no-holds-barred rocking voice.

After this it was ballads all the way. They were good, especially 'All Alone Am I' and 'As Usual' (her last Top Ten record), but they were only one side of Brenda Lee. And by 1964 it was the age of Merseybeat. Along with many of her contemporaries from the early '60s, Brenda Lee disappeared from view, returning only occasionally as a night-club singer. But be that as it may, 'Sweet Nothin's' assures her of a place in anyone's history of pop.



The nearest thing the '70s has to Connie Francis is Karen Carpenter. That's not to say in the sound of her voice, so much as her place within the spectrum of pop in her time: quintessential middle-of-the-road.

In the late '50s and early '60s, Connie was the queen of soda pop; probably just about the only woman among male soda-popsters like Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Bobby Vee and Johnny Tillotson. She was a Jewish girl from New Jersey, signed up in 1958 by MGM, which never bothered much with rock & roll proper.

At first, they don't seem to have put themselves out a lot in recording Connie. For her first record a well-worn oldie was chosen – not that it mattered, because 'Who's Sorry Now' was a smash, and made the top of the Hit Parade on both sides of the Atlantic.

Looking back, it seems strange that such an ordinary-sounding record should set a girl with no more than a strong and competent voice on a career which would give her 20 hits in four years. But in the context of the '50s, Connie Francis was the ideal teenage girl.

To start with, she looked just right. The pretty, round face, the well-filled sweater. She fitted the rather limited stereotype of the girl every red-blooded male in fourth grade was supposed to be thirsting to date, plus she sang pop songs. Your older brother might rush to the movies to see Marilyn Monroe, but you could sit at home and listen to your pile of yellow and black Connie Francis singles.

And she *could* sing – much better than most of her male contemporaries who were the pin-ups of her fans' female classmates. For Connie's next big record, someone put their thinking cap on and found a more light-hearted, teenage-oriented novelty song, 'Stupid Cupid'. The pattern for her career was set. Her other records were to be either throbbing ballads à la 'Who's Sorry Now', or jollier pieces in the 'Stupid Cupid' mould.

Although Connie Francis' records had a fairly limited range of subject matter and emotions, she always approached a song with enormous enthusiasm, wringing out every possible drop of cheerfulness or tear-

fulness the lyric and melody would provide. Of the cheerful records, probably the most memorable was 'Lipstick On Your Collar'. The curious thing about it was that although the effect of the performance is a jolly one, the lyrics themselves suggested a situation more suited to darker feelings like anger or revenge:

*'Lipstick on your collar  
Told a tale on you  
Lipstick on your collar  
Said you were untrue  
Bet your bottom dollar  
You and I are through  
Lipstick on your collar  
Told a tale on you.'*

And so on, through the details of the two-timin' boy-friend's offence.

That was Connie Francis' summer record for 1959. The next year she had 'Robot Man', an equally sunny complaint about the faithlessness of men in which she (or rather some hard-pressed teen songwriter) suggested that some computerised lover would be more reliable.

The hits kept on coming throughout 1960 and 1961, mostly those lachrymose ballads like: 'Everybody's Somebody's Fool', 'Many Tears Ago', 'Together'. But gradually their impact became fainter and fainter. The last Connie Francis hit in

Britain was the appropriately titled 'Vacation', a song written like a football cheer:

V - A - C - A - T - I - O - N  
In the summertime'

With that cheerfully bellowed truism, Connie Francis made her exit. Her four years as a pop star were over. What had it all meant? In his book *AWopBopaLoo-BopLopBamBoom*, Nik Cohn wrote that she 'made her songs sound as though they had been sprayed with insecticide'. And though that's true, well-scrubbed wholesomeness was not something unique to Connie Francis, it was the dominant tone of the end of the '50s in pop. It's more relevant to see her records as the musical equivalent of 'love comics', those carefully drawn stories in which immaculately shaped high school drum-majorettes find lipstick on some feller's collar, realise that everybody's somebody's fool, and in the last frame sadly reminisce about what it was like together on vacation. All Connie could do was to leave gracefully and cut an album of favourite Yiddish songs.

**NEXT WEEK IN PROFILE:** Bobby Vee – bouncing into fame as a poor imitation of Buddy Holly.



Rex Features

Connie Francis, as we remember her.

# Alice Cooper: super-ghoul!



Without warning, an empty beer bottle comes hurtling out of the darkness, slashes through the glaring beam of the spotlight, and begins its rapid descent. With a resounding crash, the bottle misses its target, smashes into the battery of flickering footlights, and shatters into a million lethal splinters to indicate that all is not well.

'I hate ya', hollers the human missile-launcher, as with menacing glazed acid eyes, he lurches towards the stage where the rancid blood-splattered Monster is being viciously beaten-up by a gang of cheesy thugs to the sound of a savage

**Black-shirted, bare-chested Alice Cooper without his evil and satanic make-up.**

and strangely sinister rock & roll raunch.

'I hate yer, I hate yer, I hate ya all', he continues to yell, as with the strength of a team of fresh pack-horses, he bulldozes his way through the tightly packed crowd of gawking thrill-seekers.

Only 20 feet now divides this would-be assailant from the battered object of his frenzied disgust.

Venomous abuse spills from his lips, and with one violent motion he casts aside a sobbing young girl as if she were a discarded rag doll. She falls to the ground and stays there. Her one desperate attempt to restrain this madman from attacking

her plastic, fantastic, make-believe lover proving to no avail. All she can do is whimper, 'I love you Alice . . . I love you Alice . . . for God's sake, somebody stop him, don't let him kill my Alice.'

Freed of his sobbing shackle, her escort reduces the crash barrier to matchwood and begins to scale the stage which is the last remaining obstacle.

The killer is now staring up into the eyes of his intended victim. But instead of fleeing for his life, this prime cut of mortuary steak falls to his knees and goads him on.

## Gore and Decadence

Are we about to become eye-witness to a mindless slaying? Is the forever-damned spirit of Lee Harvey Oswald a rock & roll fan? Thankfully, we are never to find out, for the police pounce, secure the maniac in a strangle-hold, and drag him away pleading 'let me go, let me go . . . I wanna kill him . . . can't you see I gotta kill him.'

Granted a stay of execution, the victim staggers to his feet, laughs aloud, and addresses the 25,000 spectators: 'you're crazier than me, and that's what I like.'

Believe it or not, this is no cheap publicity hype, but the kind of response that inevitably takes place once an Alice Cooper concert has climaxed in a finale of gore and decadence.

Any guy who intentionally cavorts around under the good old apple pie 'n' ice cream pseudonym of Alice Cooper, sets himself up as Public Animal Number One by inferring that he's a stubble-chinned transvestite, beer-gutted necrophiliac, satanic baby-killer and prize rock & roll freak, has just gotta be a shrewd pro. Then, when he's seen swanning around swish night-spots with the likes of Zsa Zsa Gabor, Jack Benny, Salvadore Dali and a Richard Nixon look-a-like, you just know that's where he's at.

The facts are these. Alice Cooper has emerged from out of the mass media cess-pit to become the only true Superstar of America's instantly disposable consumer culture. Sure, the silent majority of God-fearing Americans may find everything about Cooper to be totally repugnant and un-American. but then, this is the whole object of the carefully calculated exercise.

Make no mistake about it, behind that hideously smeared make-up, Alice Cooper — leader of the first post-Charles Manson nihilistic rock band — is as All-American as

George Washington, the Ku Klux Klan, massage parlours, instant TV dinners, the Boston Strangler, topless bars, greasy cheeseburgers and Napalm.

A grotesque graven image, who in six years flat has succeeded in trampling any remaining remnants of Flower Power firmly under a tatty stacked heel, burying the spirit of Woodstock in the bottom of a stinking trash can, while callously mirroring what he considers to be the true face of America – the once beautiful – a society preoccupied with sex and violence. For love and peace substitute hate and depravity.

He's Dorian Grey branded with the mark of death and the sign of the almighty dollar on his forehead. A self-made Frankenstein's Monster, a depraved schizophrenic free of all censorship, and the most astute image-manipulating entertainer of his generation.

Though Cooper's contrived performance may lack the psychological plausibility to seriously erode the morals of the youth culture, it is nonetheless, far more effective in terms of stirring up public outrage and condemnation than the real-life catastrophe and carnage that invariably dominates every TV newscast.

## Living is Fun

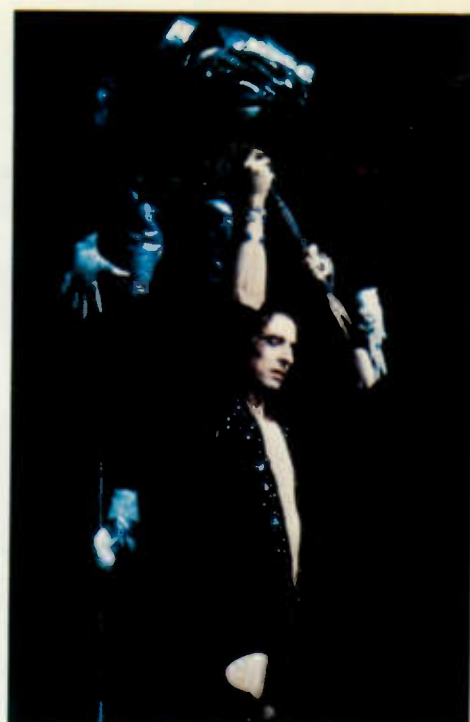
But then Cooper is the first to confirm that it's all just a charade. "On stage, I'm Bela Lugosi, but away from it, I'm just good ol' Fred McMurray. Personally, I really hate the idea of death", he reveals, "because I have so much fun living. Death is the only thing that I really fear, because like everyone else, I know nothing at all about it. That's why I play with death and make fun of it on stage. As far as I am concerned, it's not that our act plays on the idea that people like to see blood. We're just as human as everybody else. It's just that we like the idea of blood-lust just so long as it's us who are portraying it. We do it strictly for the audience. We're their outlet. We aren't condoning violence, we're relieving it. Just because I hack the head off a baby doll doesn't mean some kid has to run out and re-enact that situation with a real child."

A responsibility towards one's audience is the least thing Cooper is concerned with. "I never get repulsed by an audience's behaviour", he insists. "In fact, I often think that it's real healthy. When I'm down on my knees hacking that baby doll's head off I imagine that the girls out there, screamin' for the bits, would secretly like to change places with me. To be quite honest", continues the mock bi-sexual bogey man, "I think I'm doing an artistic thing on stage . . . something that's never been done in rock until I came along. Not only am I giving them music, but also an image for them to think about."

With the second coming of rock Americana in the mid-'60s, there was a bumper sticker that circulated for a relatively short period, which announced: 'We Are The People Your Parents Warned You About'. Had it been conceived a couple of years



Robert Ellis



Robert Ellis



SKR





Alice Cooper resplendent in silver-studded catsuit (not to mention the gaping hole at thigh level) nearly manages to look attractive.

later, it could have been utilised as the holly in Alice Cooper's Christmas crackers. For despite his admissions of innocence, in the eyes of middle-class America Alice Cooper will always be hounded as a pervert, renegade, and blatant purveyor of bad taste. He accepts this with pride and satisfaction:

"Bad taste", says Cooper, "believe me, there's not such a thing nowadays as bad taste." Like a Vampire drawn to the warm life-giving blood of his victim, he establishes, "I ask you, how the hell can there be such a thing as bad taste when the top box-office draws are movies like *Straw Dogs*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Deep Throat*."

Not since the Kama Sutra pelvic thrusts of Presley and the posturing bum wiggling of rubber-lipped Jagger has any one individual managed to totally alienate his elders, win over the youth market, and blatantly rake in a few million dollars in the process.

Whether the public wish to admit it, or for that fact are aware of it, Alice Cooper is the Patron Saint of materialistic America. He is showing them their worst side, rubbing their nose in it and then charging admission for the pleasure of such experience.

### Lullabies of Homicide

You can sell the public anything, and Alice Cooper is a shrewd enough cookie to realise that as long as he continues – with snake, axe, make-up, guillotines, gallows, lullabies of homicide, and the rape of both the living and the dead – to aggravate the acute paranoia rampant amongst the over-protective Mothers of America, his success is guaranteed.

The image may well be an explicit sick one, but one that has paid off most handsomely. Perhaps, the whole Alice Cooper phenomenon can be summed up by the photo on the inside sleeve of his 'Billion Dollar Babies' album, which depicts Alice and his band decked out in expensive white satin suits and wallowing in heaps of Uncle Sam's freshly-minted Greenbacks. The story that this picture tells, is that it's his money in our pockets, and he wants it back. Every red cent of it.

Like virtually all of America's second generation rocksters, young Vince Furnier – the son of a Preacherman – was immediately inspired beyond belief by the Fab Four.

The year was 1964, and it didn't take but a few minutes for this bratty, skinny sophomore attending high school in Tucson, Arizona, to round up a bunch of his punko pals to terrorise the Top 40. It was his idea to form the band, so natch' he was

Robert Ellis

the one who became the front man.

Resplendent in their bright yellow corduroy Carnaby Street-styled jackets, the Earwigs – as they called themselves – were the hit of the local Catholic Youth Club hop.

Along with acquiring Beatle caps they changed their name to the Spiders, and then after hearing a Yardbirds' record, the Nazz. They cut a couple of records, but nothing happened.

They moved to California where they starved in one room. The only gigs they could get were accompanying the fist-fights that broke out between the Blacks and the Mexicans in tatty gin-mills around L.A. Then one night out of sheer frustration Vince changed his name to Alice, applied lipstick, powder and paint to his face, and staggered on stage.

"We wanted to draw attention to ourselves", Cooper states with almost total recall, "because we just weren't getting anywhere fast."

Breaking into a laugh, he continues, 'we had bruises all over our bodies from the foot-poles . . . that's how much

promoters refused to touch us. So we decided to go on stage and do anything that we wanted. Some nights we used to stagger on stage so drunk, I'd pass out at least three times during a set. Surprise . . . surprise, people dug it and quite often they used to come along just to see what would happen to us. I'd just stand in the middle of the stage and pass right out and the crowd would cheer. The band would pick me up, I'd get back together again – take a swig of this gawdamawful cheap Ripple wine – and crash out once again."

However, not all audiences responded so positively. At one gig, two thousand people walked out and the only person who stayed was Frank Zappa. It was Zappa's opinion that anyone who could induce such a strong audience response, be it positive or negative, must have something going for them. They signed to his Straight label, cut two albums and split. It wasn't until they cut their 'Love It To Death' album which contains their own little masterpiece 'I'm Eighteen' that people suddenly realised that they were more than some kind of boozed-up pseudo-

faggy freak band with badly twisted minds.

But though the simulated sexuality in their act was never ever more than tongue-in-cheek, they continued to upset the community.

"People are both male and female biologically", Cooper pronounces, "yet the typical male American thinks that he's all-male . . . 100%. What he's gotta realise is that he has got a female side." Because as Alice Cooper, Vince Furnier chooses to display both sides of the coin, it only adds to the confusion.

So when the last words of abuse have been screamed, the dolls hacked beyond recognition, the snakes put back in the baskets, and Cooper has paid the supreme penalty of being publicly executed, how do you expect people to react when, with a gleam in his mascaraed eye, he casually infers: "actually, there's no point whatsoever to our act."

And that's when the dollars come pouring in. It's Cooper's money in our pockets and he'll do anything you ask just to grab it back. Now that's what you could call real smart.



## BACK TRACK

Born Vince Furnier in 1948, son of a Pennsylvanian minister.

SKR

1964–68: Played in a group calling themselves first the Earwigs, then the Spiders, then the Nazz – based in Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona.

1968: Moved to Los Angeles and later in the year met Frank Zappa. Was given a recording contract and had become Alice Cooper by early '69.

1969: Moved to Detroit.

1970: Albums 'Pretties For You' (Straight) and 'Easy Action' (Straight) released.

1971: Moved to New York and then to Connecticut. Recorded 'Love It To Death' (Warners) which was produced by Bob Ezrin and reached no. 32 in the album charts. In November 'Killer' (Warners) was released and reached no. 28. Also two singles, 'Desperado' and 'Under My Wheels'.

1972: 'School's Out' (Warners) reached no. 4 in the album charts. 'Be My Lover' released in March. 'School's Out' (single) released in June and soared to no. 1 in the Top Twenty. 'Elected' was released in November and made no. 4.

1973: 'Billion Dollar Babies' (Warners) got to no. 1 in the album charts.

'Hello Hurray' made no. 5 in the singles charts and 'No More Mr Nice Guy' reached no. 9. 'Special' single issued through NME, 'Slick Black Limousine'.

'Pretties For You' and 'Easy Action' were re-issued by Warners as a double-album, 'Schooldays: Alice Cooper The Early Recordings'.

**NEXT WEEK'S SUPERSTAR:** David Cassidy – for whom teenagers everywhere have coined a new phrase – bum-rock.



From left to right: T-Bone Walker strains with emotion; Clifton Chenier plays accordion; a beautifully happy Buddy Guy.

# Blues go West

"Then I see it," said one of the Chicago bluesmen, looking back on the late '40s: "if you didn't play some blues, you's goin' to starve to death." Of course, that was true of other cities besides Chicago. Out on the West Coast, in huge urban sprawls around Los Angeles and San Francisco, there was a black audience eager for music. And; just as in Chicago, it gave birth to a healthy family of record companies, clubs and radio shows, which scattered the Blues up and down the coast and sent them echoing across the waters of 'Frisco Bay.

The initial impetus came in the last days of World War Two, or thereabouts, when a singer/pianist called Cecil Gant had a runaway hit with a slow pop ballad, 'I Wonder'. He was an Army entertainer who had been playing for war-bond drives, and his record billed him 'The G.I. Sing-Sation'. In his ballad mood he sounded like a funkier Nat 'King' Cole, but the flip-side of his hit was a romping piano boogie, and the wide sales-appeal of the two-sider had pressing-plants working overtime to maintain supplies. As much as anything else, this disc revived the black record

business, and the energised companies looked about for more talent to keep the presses rolling.

## Bayside Boogie

The first hit-makers were T-Bone Walker, a Texas-born electric guitarist and singer who scored with the now-standard 'Stormy Monday Blues'; and Lowell Fulson from Oklahoma, also an electric guitarist, who made the original 'Every Day I Have The Blues'. Walker and Fulson – both active bluesmen still – defined two of the major West Coast styles.

Walker came from a Big Band background, and had learned from the innovative jazz guitarist Charley Christian. His records with punchy groups including brass and reeds practically created the style in which most present-day bluesmen perform. Using amplification for a singing tone and plenty of volume, and employing sophisticated chords, Walker pioneered a blues form radically different from Chicago's. The front man – typically, a singer/guitarist – dominated; the harmonica or slide guitar gave place to tenor sax or piano as secondary solo voice; and the singing was freer, more jazz-inflected, less tied to a hard beat.

Lowell Fulson brought a similar approach to a different format, using just a rhythm section and obtaining a quieter, more inti-

mate sound. There was an easy, understated beat; the drummer using brushes rather than sticks. The atmosphere of Fulson's blues was ideal for small bars, and it was echoed in the work of several West Coast singers. Charles Brown and Floyd Dixon – both eminent in their day – adopted a pleading, wistful vocal style; Brown's 'Drifting Blues' – 'I'm drifting and drifting, like a ship out on the sea' – quickly joined 'Stormy Monday' as a standard. The suave, pipe-smoking Ivory Joe Hunter had success with the reflective blues 'Since I Lost My Baby' and 'I Almost Lost My Mind'. San Francisco's Oakland ghetto was flooded with such hypnotic 'wee, wee hours' music.

## Good Rockin' Tonight

For the more energetic enthusiast, there was plenty of brasher music. The jump bands of Tiny Bradshaw, Roy Milton, and tenor-player Illinois Jacquet filled the Oakland Auditorium or the Primalon Ballroom. DJ Jumpin' George Oxford of station KWBR held 'Quests for Stars' before audiences of 2,000 or more at the Melody Lane Ballroom. Popular blues-shouters Wynonie Harris and Roy Brown came to town, vying over their joint hit 'Good Rockin' Tonight'. Another creative guitarist appeared on the scene, Pee Wee

Crayton, to enjoy a hit with the instrumental 'After Hours', which had a memorable bass line that was copied throughout the blues world (and beyond) for years. Jimmy Wilson, an Oakland-based singer in the cry-blues style, scored with the ominous street song 'Tin Pan Alley':

*'Tin Pan Alley, roughest place in town,  
They start cuttin' and shootin', soon as  
the sun goes down ...'*

And the pianist from Lowell Fulson's road band emerged as an appealing singer of blues and novelty numbers; his name was Ray Charles.

Most of these performers had roots – as did their audience – in the South-West:

Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana. Some of them stuck with the country blues, and their records sold both to the stay-at-homes, the ghetto-dwellers of Houston, Dallas and San Antonio, and to the Texans who had made the westward trek to the coast – Lightnin' Hopkins was one, the quirky singer/guitarist Smokey Hogg another. Playing amplified, with rhythm sections, they offered a rural equivalent of the quieter West Coast sounds. But the artists who severed their Southern roots quickly moved on, up and away from the root blues too. As Lowell Fulson has put it, "... I began to kind of clean up a little bit, you know. I mean get away from them old cigarette-smokin' barrelhouse blues, them type of blues that nobody can play with you hardly." You could scarcely ask for a more concise description of what happened to the blues in the first decade after World War Two – and you could hardly find a better example of it happening than the work of B. B. King.

### Blues Crown

Appropriately for a man now wearing the blues crown, King can be talked about under almost any heading. Born in Mississippi, musically raised round Memphis, he nevertheless can be fitted into a West Coast chapter because his heritage was mostly there, in the formative work of T-Bone Walker. From the start of his prolific career King used bands like the West Coast artists, and from the mid-'50s he was recording chiefly in Los Angeles. Even one of his earliest hits, the 1952 'Three O'Clock Blues', went back to a Lowell Fulson original. Plainly B. B. is more of a West Coaster than a Chicagoan – but because of his massive influence on younger

Chicago artists like Buddy Guy or Luther Allison, he has done more than anyone else to break down the distinction between the two approaches.

### New Orleans Bounce

Not all the Texas/Louisiana musicians made the western journey – some found a satisfactory working base in New Orleans. In the '40s and '50s N.O. was jumping as much as Oakland or L.A., the dominant sound being the ebullient Fats Domino and his band. Like the West Coast, and unlike Chicago, New Orleans looked away from the country band format of harmonica and guitars, and testified (though perhaps only by chance) to the city's jazz heritage by using pianists and saxophonists. The most colourful of the keyboard men were Archibald (Leon Gross) and Professor Longhair (Roy Byrd). Longhair's romp-and-stomp '50s records like 'Ball The Wall' and 'Tipitina', which capitalised on rumba rhythms, are among the least time-dulled creations of their era.

Also based in New Orleans was the extraordinary shouter and crier of blues, Roy Brown. As an early press-release describes him:

*'New Orleans born and bred, Roy Brown made his decision in favor of Jazz and shouting blues at the age of twelve when he was hide-tanned one Sunday for jazzing up the spirituals in church.'*

and in his big-voiced, theatrical singing there is a clear gospel echo. Losing out in the battle over 'Good Rockin' Tonight' to Wynonie Harris – who performed in a similar, but hoarser and less subtle manner – Brown retorted with the climactic 'Hard Luck Blues', which, with other exercises in the same vein, was to influence singers as diverse as Little Milton and Johnny Ray. He also recorded, with his 'Mighty Mighty Men', a succession of cheerfully smutty blues about 'Fannie Brown' – pre-figuring the course of Buddy Holly's 'Peggy Sue' saga by taking the story up to 'Fannie Brown Got Married'.

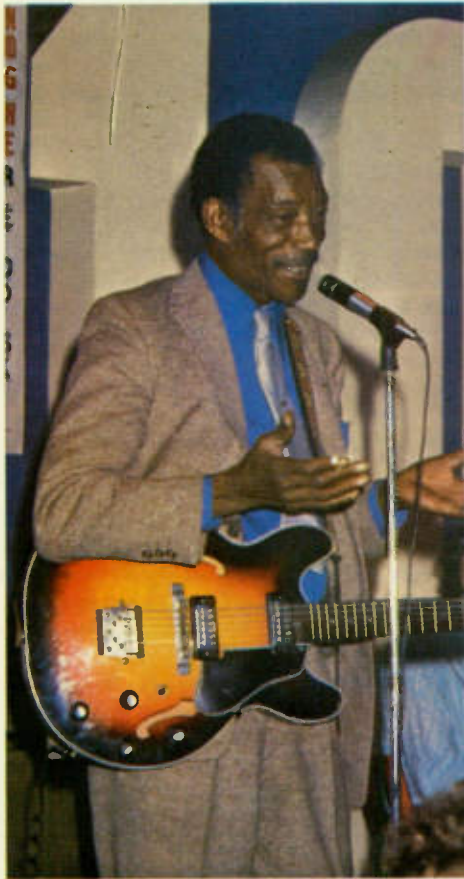
### Lazy Boogie Blues

But the story of New Orleans in the '50s is very much that of backroom boys. Band-leader Dave Bartholomew, the power behind Fats Domino. Recording engineer Cosimo Matassa, who mastered many of the great Specialty-label hits by Little Richard, Lloyd Price and others. Producer Bumps Blackwell, who to a great extent was the Specialty label. Not to mention the session-men: tenor-players Plas Johnson, Red Tyler, Lee Allen (the last two regulars in Domino's band); pianist/song-writer Mac Rebennack, subsequently Dr John.

The appearance here of names like Little Richard and Dr John gives you an important clue about New Orleans: the musical activity among its black artists was keyed to the sound-to-come as the West Coast's hardly was and Chicago's wasn't at all.



B. B. King squeezing the blues out of Lucille, his guitar.



Sylvia Pitcher

hits or better – Slim Harpo's 'I'm A King Bee' and 'Rainin' In My Heart', Lightnin' Slim's 'My Starter Won't Work', Lonesome Sundown's 'My Home Is A Prison', Lazy Lester's 'I'm A Lover, Not A Fighter'. Coming at the time they did, they were just right for the overseas R&B renaissance, and many of these hits reappeared in the repertoires of British bands.

Also flourishing in the bayou country of southern Louisiana was a local music that, barring a couple of accidents of history, might never have got much further than its locality. The white Cajun population, which had found its way to the swamplands in the 18th Century, was French in origin, and speaks its own kind of French to this day. It has preserved a dance-music all its own, which calls for fiddles and accordions, and this has been shared with the blacks of the region, who call the music Zydeco. In the '40s and '50s both (white) Cajun and (black) Zydeco music began to be heard outside the bayous – the former because a fiddler named Harry Choates had a hit called 'Jole Blon', and the latter because of a powerful singer and electric accordion-player, Clifton Chenier, who rolled up alongside Little Richard and the rest in the Specialty catalogue.

There are occasional revivals of interest in Cajun music, but it's still minority stuff. Zydeco, however, has been given a one-man promotion by Clifton Chenier, who's played it in his native Louisiana, in the transplanted Cajun communities of California, and even in Europe. Blues, dance-tunes, pops – anything comes naturally to Chenier, from the Zydeco anthem 'Zydeco Et Pas Sale' (means 'No Salt On Your Snap-beans'!) to Humperdinck's 'Release Me'.

What will happen to Zydeco music after Chenier? Impossible to predict – it was weird enough that he appeared at all. And so it is with blues – with all the kinds of blues that have come up in the course of these sketches of the music's history. What paths they'll take next, nobody can say. Which is, of course, one of the endlessly fascinating things about the Blues. Styles come and go, and some of those described in these pages have doubtless gone for good, but the house stands firm however many refurbishings it has to undergo. We met T-Bone Walker earlier on in this chapter – we can go out with him too, recording his succinct answer to an interviewer's familiar question:

**INTERVIEWER:** "Do you think that black people are really getting away from the blues nowadays?"

**WALKER:** "No, they'll never get away from it. The blues will be in the blues until I die, or you die."

**Far left: Lightnin' Slim at the mike. Left: Whispering Smith plays harmonica.**

Solid blues was fading in Chicago in the late '50s, and the West Coast scene had somehow fragmented, but in New Orleans rhythm & blues and rock & roll grew naturally out of the more straightforward blues tradition before them, and out of the producing, arranging and engineering techniques that had been devised to handle it. As the continued activities of artists like Dr John bear witness, there has been a rare continuity in the New Orleans music circle.

### Blue Bayou

If the late '50s were beginning to offer a bleakish picture to Chicago bluesmen, and something of the same prospect on the West Coast, they revealed a compensating dawn in Louisiana. Apparently inspired by the lazy boogie-blues of Jimmy Reed, but perhaps deriving something too from an unknown earlier style, artists began to show up in the Crowley, Louisiana, studios of recording-man Jay Miller, there to produce blues of an individual quality. The main men were singer/guitarists Lightnin' Slim and Lonesome Sundown, and singer/harp-players Slim Harpo, Lazy Lester and Whispering Smith. What they came up with was a sort of country nephew of Chicago Blues, to which Miller's clever engineering lent a 'swamp' sound very appropriate to the music. The later '50s and early '60s saw a series of tight, infectious recordings, several of them regional



Sylvia Pitcher

**NEXT WEEK IN BLACK MUSIC:**  
Ray Charles – the High Priest of Soul.

# Chuck Berry: Poet of Rock

There's a lot of talk these days about the poetry of rock. Academics write books about Bob Dylan's lyrics. Culture vultures everywhere have started taking rock & roll very seriously. After all, it's a respectable art form now. Unfortunately, there's a growing tendency to over-simplify the history of rock's development.

It's widely accepted that Dylan, Lennon/McCartney, Jagger/Richards, Townshend and the other heroes of the '60s did an enormous amount to increase the scope and complexity of rock lyrics, but it's dangerous to assume that all pre-Dylan/Beatles lyrics were totally moronic. True, a lot of the words to the hits of the '50s were pretty dumb. The Silhouettes' 'Get A Job', recorded in 1957, contains a grand total of 117 'da's, 32 'sha's, 24 'yip's and 18 'mum's - hardly Nobel Prize winning material. 'Get A Job' is typical of many of the songs of the '50s and early '60s, but that period also produced one songwriter who deserves to be on any short list of the all-time greats. Between 1955 and 1964 he produced a succession of dazzling songs that created and reflected the then current attitudes and obsessions of the young as effectively as anything that Dylan or the Beatles ever wrote. His name is Chuck Berry.

To a generation growing up now, Chuck Berry is probably best known as the man who wrote 'My Ding-A-Ling'. It's sad in a way that his first million-selling single after 20 years in the music business should be the odd little novelty song that Chess Records refused to release 20 years ago because it was too dirty. It's sad because Chuck Berry was *the* great pioneer of rock & roll, the man who defined the '50s, and the man who did more than anyone else to pave the way for Dylan, the Beatles, Bowie and the rest.

It's impossible to overstate the importance of Chuck Berry in the history of rock. He was the biggest single influence on the '60s and his influence is still being felt today. His songs helped launch the Beatles, the Stones, the Animals, the Yardbirds and countless others. When Dylan started playing electric music he didn't have to look far for a tune. He just took an old Chuck Berry number called 'Too Much Monkey Business', added his own words, and out came 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'. Dylan, as always, knew just where to pay his dues. The sound of Mark Bolan's 'Jeepster' is modern enough, but the message of sex, speed and jive is pure Chuck Berry.

## Why so Important?

What makes Chuck Berry that important? Quite simply he was the first rock & roller to understand that teenagers live in a world quite different to the world of which their parents are aware. In the mid-'50s teenagers were a lot poorer than they are now. Because they hadn't got the spending power, they weren't recognised as a consumer group with a separate identity and separate needs. Many of them were frustrated, many of them felt they were being ignored. Berry wasn't a teenager when he started recording (he was roughly 24 when 'Mabellene' was released in 1955) but he was black and he knew what it was like to be part of an oppressed, poverty-stricken minority group. However he had one major advantage that most teenagers lacked. He was self-aware enough to recognise exactly what he had going for him. He had style and energy, intensity and enthusiasm. It's easy to forget just how unfashionable those qualities were 20 years ago. The America of 1955 was the America of McCarthyism, a subdued, exhausted country where most people led cautious lives. Chuck Berry, with all his flashiness and his aggression and his willingness to take chances, represented almost everything that responsible American citizens loathed. He also represented almost everything that their children had been sitting around waiting for.

Until Chuck Berry came along, the adult attitude to teenagers had always been 'don't worry, you'll grow out of it'. His atti-

tude was totally different. He showed a generation the way to stop feeling guilty and start feeling good. He turned traditional adult values upside down. Adults had always excluded teenagers from their world. He reversed the process and set out to create a world that was exclusively teenage, a world that was baffling and alien to adults but welcomed anyone who was young enough and alive enough to enjoy it. He gave teenagers exactly what they wanted, a private area of experience where they belonged and adults didn't. He showed young people how to celebrate, how to get moving and start digging themselves.

Berry's songs had three main virtues as far as the teenagers were concerned. First, he chose his subject matter from his own experience. Because his world was like the world of most teenagers, the subjects of his songs (dancing, school, girls, cars) were subjects that were immediately accessible to the teenagers and almost totally inaccessible to their parents. Second, he was always unpretentious in the way he handled his material. His songs were simple and direct. He underplayed the drama and emphasised the humour in the situations he described. He made poverty and repression less frightening by making them funnier. Third, and most important, it was impossible to doubt his intense enthusiasm for the life-style he was describing. His songs overflowed with energy.

## Never Just Interested...

Chuck Berry was never just interested in things. He was always obsessive. His songs conveyed total involvement. There was nothing half-hearted in the way that songs like 'Mabellene', 'The Jaguar And The Thunderbird', 'No Money Down' and 'You Can't Catch Me' got right into the whole car mystique, the love of gadgetry, and the edgy craziness of pushing big, beat-up American cars down endless highways at death-defying speeds. 'Mabellene' is often described as the first rock & roll hit, it's certainly Berry at his vintage best.

The story-line is typically straight forward. Faithless girlfriend Mabellene has run off, and Chuck jumps into his V-8 Ford and burns off in hot pursuit:



*'As I was motorvatin' over the hill  
I saw Mablennene in a Coupe De Ville  
Cadillac rollin' on the open road  
Nothin' outrun my V-8 Ford  
The Cadillac going 'bout ninety-five  
We was bumper to bumper, rollin' side by  
side*

*The Cadillac pulled up to a hundred and four  
The Ford 'got hot and wouldn't do no more  
It done got cloudy and started to rain  
I tooted my horn for a passing lane  
Rainwater blowin' all under my hood  
I knew that was doing my motor good*

*The motor cooled down, the heat went  
down  
That's when I heard that highway sound  
The Cadillac sittin' like a ton of lead  
A hundred and ten a half mile ahead  
The Cadillac looking like its sittin' still  
And I caught Mablennene at the top of the  
hill*

*Mablennene, why can't you be true*

*You've started back doing the things you  
used to do'*

What exactly happens in the car chase isn't very clear. We know that he finally catches Mablennene at the top of the hill and the plaintive chorus line ('you've started back doing the things you used to do') tells us it isn't the first time she's been carrying on like this. There's no indication that she's going to mend her ways either. None of this is very important. All that matters is that the driving is fast, dangerous and exciting. For Berry, action is everything, energy and style the only essentials.

In 'Mablennene' it's difficult at times to tell the car from the girl. This ambiguity recurs in many of his songs. Berry didn't need a psychology degree to realise that cars were sex objects, and he loved them for it – almost as much as he loved the women he wrote about so often and in such fascinating detail. The girls in 'Carol', 'Sweet Little Rock And Roller' and 'Little Queenie' are young, rock & roll mad, and

totally adorable. When we first meet Little Queenie she's 'standing over by the record machine' and 'she looks too cute to be a minute over seventeen'. No doubt about it, the way to her heart is rock & roll music. But Little Queenie and the rest are all pale shadows of Sweet Little Sixteen, the ultimate Chuck Berry heroine.

It's pictures and autographs, rock & roll music and sharp clothes that really matter in the world of Sweet Little Sixteen, the original teenybopper. Maybe she will have to change her trend when she gets back in class again but Berry knew just what most kids thought of school, and he wasn't afraid to lay it down. In 'School Days' he describes the frustration that was crystallised in the contrast between the joyless repression of the classroom and the sheer exhilaration of getting out of school and back into the *real* world of rock & roll:

*'Up in the morning and out to school  
The teacher is teaching the golden rule  
American history, practical math.  
You're studying hard and hoping to pass  
Working your fingers right down to the bone  
But the guy behind you won't leave you  
alone*

*Ring ring goes the bell  
The cook in the lunchroom's ready to sell  
You're lucky if you can find a seat  
You're fortunate if you have time to eat  
Back in the classroom, open your books  
Bet the teacher don't know how mean she  
looks*

*Soon as three o'clock rolls around  
You finally lay your burden down  
Close up your books, get out of your seat  
Down the hall and into the street  
Up to the corner and round the bend  
Right to the juke joint you go in*

*Drop the coin right into the slot  
You've got to hear something that's really  
hot  
With the one you love you're making  
romance  
All day long you've been wanting to dance  
Feeling the music from head to toe  
Round and round and round you go'*

Berry knew just how it felt to be young, to resent authority and adult demands. Generally he uses his sense of humour to stay cool, but in 'Almost Grown' the resentment is there all right –

*'Yeah I'm doing alright in school  
They ain't said I broke no rule  
I ain't never been in Dutch  
I don't browse around too much  
I don't run around with no mob  
I got myself a little job  
I'm gonna buy myself a little car  
I'll drive my girl in the park  
Don't bother me leave me alone  
Anyway I'm almost grown'*

– and it breaks out in the angry demand to be left alone. Berry knew just how little the adult world had to offer him. He'd paid enough dues in dead-end jobs and felt the



whole weight of the pressures on him to settle down, marry and conform. In 'Too Much Monkey Business' he catalogues the whole frustrating experience:

*'Running to and fro  
Hard workin' at the mill  
Never fail, in the mail  
Here comes a rotten bill*

*Salesman talkin' to me  
Tryin to run me up a creek  
Says 'you can buy it, go on try it  
You can pay me next week'*

*Blonde haired, good looking  
Trying to get me hooked  
Wants me to marry, settle down  
Get a home, write a book*

*Workin' in the fillin' station  
Too many tasks  
'Wipe the windows, check the tyres  
Check the oil, dollar gas'?!?!  
Huh  
Too much monkey business  
For me to be involved in  
I don't want your botheration  
Get away, leave me be'*

There's no mistaking his reaction. As far as he (and a few million teenagers) could see, it was just a dumb game so why bother to get involved at all?

It was only rarely that he moved out of his chosen territory, but when he did the effect was devastating. 'Memphis, Tennessee', perhaps the best song he ever wrote, is a sad, mysterious account of his efforts to make a long-distance phone call to a girl called Marie:

*'Long distance Information  
Give me Memphis, Tennessee  
Help me find the party  
Trying to get in touch with me  
She could not leave her number  
But I know who placed the call  
Because my uncle took the message  
And he wrote it on the wall*

*Help me, information  
Get in touch with my Marie  
She's the only one who'd phone me here  
From Memphis, Tennessee  
Her home is in the South Side  
High up on a ridge  
Just a half a mile  
From the Mississippi Bridge*

*Help me, Information  
More than that I cannot add  
Only that I miss her  
And all the fun we had  
But we were pulled apart  
Because her mom did not agree  
And tore apart our happy home  
In Memphis, Tennessee*

*Last time I saw Marie  
She was waving me goodbye  
With hurry home drops on her cheek  
That trickled from her eye  
Marie is only six years old  
Information please*

*Try to put me through to her  
In Memphis, Tennessee.'*

It is never directly stated, but the implication that Marie is his daughter and her mother his estranged wife is inescapable. 'Memphis, Tennessee' touchingly evokes the atmosphere of a man's loneliness as he attempts to contact the daughter that he just saw 'waving me goodbye/With hurry home drops on her cheek/That trickled from her eye'. The way that he conceals Marie's age right up until the end of the song only serves to heighten the sense of shocked desolation.

But sad songs are definitely exceptions. Most of the time Chuck Berry was too busy celebrating to get very sad about anything – celebrating girls, cars and, above all, rock & roll music. Perhaps his greatest claim to immortality is that he was the man who first defined rock music, who gave it an identity that was unashamedly different both from classical music and from the popular music that had come before. Songs like 'Reeling And Rocking', 'Around And Around', 'Rock And Roll Music', 'Go Go Go' and 'Roll Over Beethoven' perfectly expressed the pure joy of getting out on a dance floor, picking up the rhythm and rocking on through. As far as he was concerned music was something to dance to, and if it didn't fulfil that function it was totally useless. The advice he gave Ludwig Van B. in 'Roll Over Beethoven' was clear and to the point:

*'Well if you're feeling like it  
Go get your lover  
Then reel and rock it  
Roll it over  
Then move on up just a trifle further  
And reel and rock with one another  
Roll over Beethoven  
Dig these rhythm and blues'*

In 'Rock And Roll Music' he made his standards clearer still:

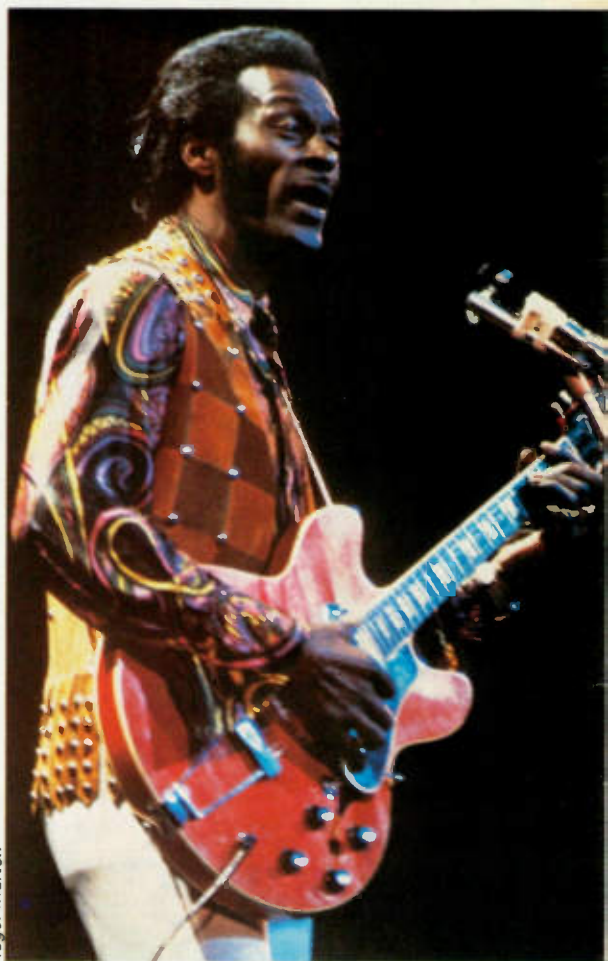
*'I have no kick against modern jazz  
Unless they try and play it too darn fast  
And change the beauty of the melody  
Until it sounds just like a symphony  
That's why I go for that rock and roll music  
Any old way you choose it  
It's got a back beat, you can't lose it  
Any old time you use it  
Got to be rock and roll music  
If you want to dance with me'*

It's easy enough to see why Chuck Berry has had such a devoted following through the years, why he has been such an enormous influence on the whole development of rock & roll and its ideology. Nowadays the generation gap is taken for granted. Style has become just another marketable commodity. Teenagers in Western society now enjoy an enormous amount of freedom and their cultural values are no longer rejected as trivial and immature. The situation was quite different 20 years ago. Teenagers were restricted, exploited, and generally put down by the adult world. Chuck Berry showed the young how to

escape from mediocrity, how to develop a style of life at which they – and only they – could excel.

In the safe, materialistic world of the '50s, his explosive insistence on style and energy was revolutionary. By giving the teenagers heroes and heroines (like Johnny B. Goode and Sweet Little Sixteen) with whom they could easily identify, he gave them a way of identifying with each other – a way of realising that their youth alone gave them a common cause – that they carried within themselves the potential for united solidarity that was to help them become an unstoppable force for social change. Chuck Berry was the first great prophet of rock – the man who gave the rock revolution its anthems, its battle hymns and its rallying cries – the man who showed that style could be both a real means of self-expression and a statement of a political position.

The young folks bopping away at the end of his recent Rainbow concert in London may have been surprised to hear his delighted shouts of "Look at my children, look at my children go!" But he was right. We are his children. The world we live in is a world he did a lot to create. Nobody's going to forget Chuck Berry, the Big Daddy of rock & roll.

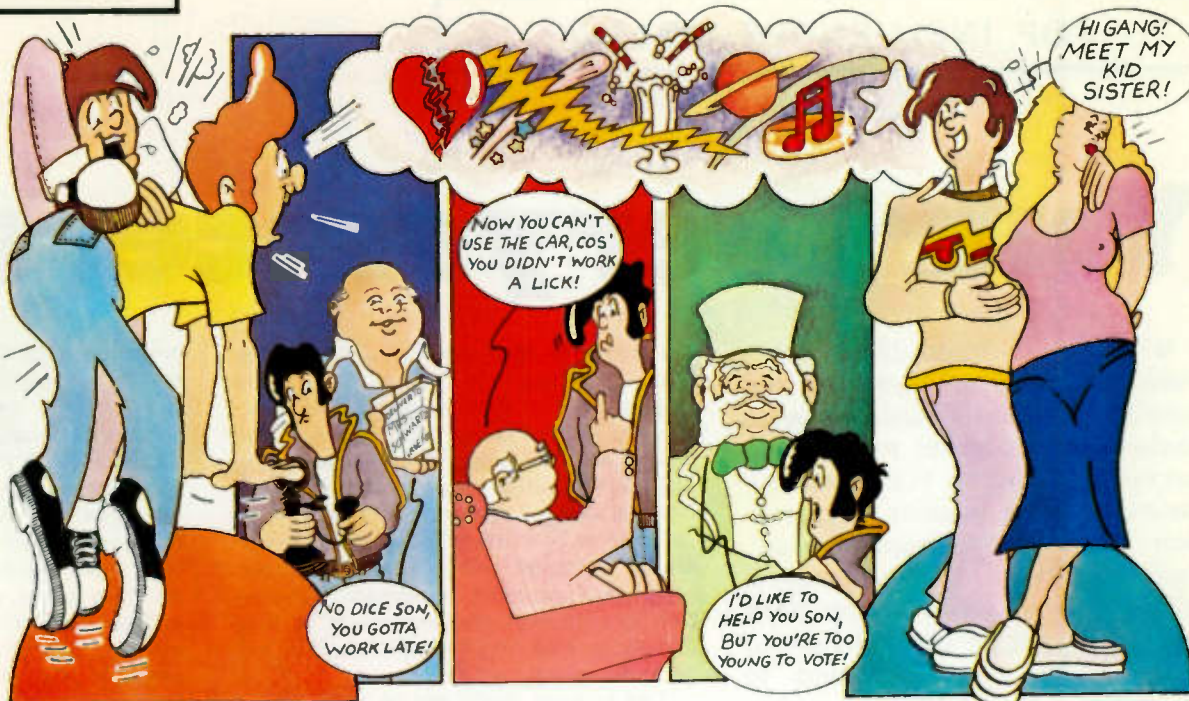


Roger Morton

**NEXT WEEK IN THE  
MUSIC: The Denmark  
Street Doldrums.**



# Talking 'bout my generation



Mick Wells

## SUMMERTIME BLUES

*I'm gonna raise a fuss,  
I'm gonna raise a holler,  
About a-workin' all summer just to try to  
earn a dollar,  
Ev'ry time I call my Baby,  
Try to get a date,  
My Boss says,  
"No dice, Son, you gotta work late"  
Sometimes I wonder what I'm a-gonna do,  
But there ain't no cure for the Summertime  
Blues.*

*A well my Mom'n'Papa told me,  
"Son, you gotta make some money,  
If you wanna use the car to a-ridin' next  
Sunday",  
Well, I didn't go to work  
Told the Boss I was sick  
"Now you can't use the car 'cause you  
didn't work a lick"  
Sometimes I wonder what I'm a-gonna do,  
But there ain't no cure for the Summertime  
Blues.*

*I'm gonna take two weeks*

*Gonna have a fine vacation,  
I'm gonna take my problem to the United  
Nations!  
Well, I called my Congressman and  
He said (quote)  
"I'd like to help you, Son, but you're too  
young to vote"  
Sometimes I wonder what I'm a-gonna do,  
But there ain't no cure for the Summertime  
Blues.*

Eddie Cochran & Jerry Capehart.  
© 1958 by American Music Inc. Reproduced by  
permission of Cinephonic Music Co. Ltd.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY SWEET SIXTEEN

*Tra la la la la . . . la la la  
Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen . . .*

*Tonight's the night I've waited for  
Because you're not a baby any more  
You've turned into the prettiest girl I've  
ever seen  
Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen  
What happened to that funny face  
My little tomboy now wears satins and lace*

*I can't believe my eyes you're just a  
teenage dream  
Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen.  
When you were only six I was your big  
brother  
Then when you were ten we didn't like  
each other  
When you were thirteen you were my  
funny Valentine  
But since you've grown up, your future is  
sewn up  
From now on you're gonna be mine  
So if I should smile with sweet surprise  
It's just you've grown up before my very  
eyes  
You've turned into the prettiest girl I've  
ever seen  
Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen.*

Neil Sedaka & Howard Greenfield.  
Used by permission of Screen Gems/Columbia  
Music, Inc.

**NEXT WEEK:** The lyrics to  
'What Do You Want?' and  
'Shaking All Over'.

And suddenly there were teens! Teen idols, teen angels, teen culture, teen agonies, teen love, teen depression. Pop, being a mirror of the young, celebrated the yearnings and aspirations, heartbreak and sorrows of its audience. The late '50s and pre-Beatle '60s were rife with songs about young love, dates, and even deaths. The songs were highly romanticised reflections of teenage emotions and consequently many were mawkish in the extreme. Themes that were particularly popular centred on the generation gap and the first stirrings of adolescent sexuality. Both were chronicled many times in different songs; the first, for instance, in the Coasters' 'Yakety Yak' and others; the latter in the particularly grisley 'When A Girl Changes From Bobbysox To Stockings' (the title says all that needs to be said!). Two of the very best in these genres were 'Summertime Blues' and 'Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen'.

Eddie Cochran's 'Summertime Blues' (1958) is surely one of THE definitive songs from the past 20 years. The music is instantly recognised as a pure pop form, and the words beautifully crystallise the dilemma of youth at odds with figures of authority. Although a quintessentially American song, its

appeal is global, and summarizes the situation that teens found themselves in all over the world. In addition, it is unusually literate; with Cochran's tongue-in-cheek digs at the establishment from the Boss through Dad to politicians. He is irked by the need to work when you are young, in love, and have a summer to enjoy; why hurry your youth?

And youth figures prominently in Neil Sedaka's offering. 'Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen' (1961). Here, of course, romance is all. Teen love was something that adults smiled indulgently on but never took seriously. The young lovers, on the other hand, considered it a matter of extreme gravity and no laughing matter. Suddenly the sexes took notice of each other and there were any number of songwriters present, pen in hand, to record the event. Sedaka's song has, in addition to an excellent melody, a particular charm. It heralds the onset of sexual awakening in an innocent and beguiling manner, so at odds with the sort of approach one would expect today. Both the songs are, lyrically, nostalgic period pieces, but both survive and stand up today because of their craftsmanship, whereas the hundreds like them are now all but forgotten.

# Yours very sincerely...

It is almost impossible for anybody in Britain to appreciate the contribution country music makes to contemporary popular music without visiting America. In this country, the mass media presents an impression of an old-fashioned music, supported by a slightly fanatical following, and played by musicians who might not be good enough to do anything else. Relegated to 'specialist' programmes on the radio, a condescending 'good-time' slot on TV, and pubs with sing-along clienteles, the music rarely gets played on Radio One and only occasionally breaks into the Top 50 in the disguise of a novelty song.

In America, the visitor soon gains a different impression. There are more radio stations playing country music than any other kind, and these aren't specialist backwaters with small audiences, but full-blown commercial enterprises competing for high advertising revenues. 'Country-politan' radio, they call it, a clumsy phrase which serves to ram home the point that despite the tag, 'country' music has its biggest audience in cities.

To meet this huge but unseen audience, a big industry has grown up, centred in Nashville, and attracting ambitious songwriters, singers, and musicians from all parts of the South (and from other regions of the States too). These men search desperately for a publisher or producer who will recognise their talent, praying for that day when their creativity will be accepted into the conveyor belt process which translates a song and a voice into a sound on the radio. The biography of every famous singer begins with a chapter or two detailing the agony of that wait. The later chapters might usually be more honest if they would admit the pain of being absorbed into a music-producing process which too often ends up with a stereotyped record.

## Assembly-Line

Country music today is big business. Big business today is centralisation, standardisation, and mass production. To a greater extent than any other kind of music, country music has been adapted to the assembly-line system of production, in which expensively-dressed musicians take

turns to play their licks on miles of 16-track recording tape, over which the singers overdub their voices. Unavoidably, the music becomes monotonous and repetitive, with new ideas degenerating into clichés within hours of their creation. Songwriters and session musicians re-work old themes until every conceivable permutation of notes and phrases has been tried and repeated, nervously guarding rare moments of real inspiration in case somebody else might hear it, steal it, and get it out on a record first.

This process might not be so stultifying if the producers were more ambitious. But a paradox of country music is that the more popular a singer becomes with the public-at-large, the less he or she tends to appeal to the people who buy country music records. As Chet Atkins, head of RCA's Nashville A&R department, succinctly puts it, "country music is very conservative."

## No Wah-Wah

The conservatism spreads in several directions, affecting instrumentation, subject matter of songs, style of performance, and the public image of the performer. At various times, country records 'were not allowed' to have drums, strings, vocal chorus, wah-wah guitar, or saxophone. If a record featuring such instruments was made, many country stations simply refused to play it, leaving the record to fight it out in the pop market.

That pop market is a constant temptation to Nashville producers, and some of the best country records have in fact 'crossed over' to it. The immediate financial effect of such a cross-over is exciting to the company concerned. A big hit in the country market does well to exceed 100,000 copies in America, more than half of which go to juke boxes. A big pop hit can sell anything up to 10 times as many.

But the sale of a million copies of a record in the pop market can create problems for the country producer. Striving to follow up with an interesting, similar-yet-different record, producers may introduce elements which alienate the purist standards of country DJs and fans; if the record doesn't meet the fickle tastes of the pop market either, the artist has lost out altogether.

The framework within which country singers can work was set out by Hank Williams between 1947 and 1953, although at the time he was fighting

preconceptions which derived from an earlier period. The arbiter of country standards is the Grand Ole Opry, an anachronistic stage show at which a long succession of singers recite a couple of songs and make way for others who do the same. Until the early 1960s, no singer could use a drummer, and even after that only a simple snare drum was allowed – no bass drum. That prejudice extended to Nashville recordings too, and for some years producers were obliged to obtain the effect of a drum by hitting the stand-up bass with a stick or, as on Hank Williams' records, by striking the strings of an electric guitar which had been turned off.

Despite his unquestioned and unparalleled popularity, Hank Williams was not accepted by the country music establishment of the time because he used more rhythmic assistance than was considered necessary. But it was that very dynamism which contributed to his appeal, both during his lifetime and on record since. Several of his own songs have become standards which pop, as well as country



Marty Robbins, and well-known smile.

singers, have built into their regular repertoires; both fast songs such as 'Hey Good Lookin'', 'Honky Tonkin', and 'Jambalaya', and slow ones including 'I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry' and 'You Cheatin' Heart'. Infectious and unforgettable melodies helped to make the simple songs particularly believable, and on the slow songs Hank's unusual phrasing made the records bear infinite replays. By defying the standards of the time, he avoided the banality which always lies close to the simple truths of country lyrics.

Eventually, the country music industry used the songs and style of Hank Williams as pivot and focus for its activities, but before that Elvis Presley almost pulled the foundations out from under the music. With a similar instinct for creativity to Hank Williams, Elvis did what felt right to him, which in 1954 and 1955 was to sing with as much rhythm as he could get across with voice, bass, and guitar. His records for Sun in those years didn't sell remarkably well, but combined with his impact on stage drew attention to this new style, and inspired a few imitations from Nashville producers. After the first Nashville-produced record for RCA, 'Heartbreak Hotel', hit the top of the pop charts, other country singers reeled back, took stock, and went after that sound. "Suddenly", recalled Chet Atkins, "everybody started wanting that back-beat, those piano triplets, everything that went into a 1950s R&B record." But what was natural to Elvis was alien to most of his imitators, and the public preferred other rock & roll. Meanwhile, the country stations

began losing their audience to the stations with more authentic teen-oriented music.

It took three years for Nashville to recover its own standards, incorporating one permanent change: you could use drums on country records, even if the Opry wouldn't let them in the door. The shock did Nashville good, and during the period 1958-62 several singers had hits which went 'both ways' - making the pop charts and still getting play on country stations. The Everly Brothers, Don Gibson, John D. Loudermilk, Johnny Horton, Jimmy Dean, and Marty Robbins were among them, with Marty Robbins' career typifying what happened to the music.

### This Much a Man

An early admirer of Hank Williams, Marty had a couple of Top Ten country hits in 1953 in that style, but then adapted to Elvis' innovations by covering 'That's All Right' in 1955 in a more countrified style than Elvis had used on his Sun version. Marty also covered 'Maybellene' and 'Long Tall Sally' before meeting the new teen

audience with his own compositions, 'Story Of My Life' and 'White Sports Coat'. He then moved into the western ballad idiom, singing epics which could have served as scenarios for films starring Glenn Ford, 'El Paso' and 'Big Iron'. Since 1963 most of Marty's records have been more conventional love ballads, some of which occasionally crossed over into the pop market. He has recently had a country hit with 'This Much A Man', in which he half-heartedly but movingly tries to tell a girl 20 years younger than him that she should get up from his bed and leave him, because 'you'll wake up some morning and be looking in some old and wrinkled face'.

"Country music reeks of honesty and sincerity", Chet Atkins once dryly observed, and although most of the time the operative term is 'reeks', when a country song works, it can describe situations more accurately and evocatively than any other idiom in popular music. From 1963 to 1968, country music developed almost unseen by the wider world of music, with the notable exception of Roger

Left: Deep in concentration, Buck Owens plays.



Above: Hank Williams, in classic country & western outfit.

Miller. This was a period of conservatism, typified to the wider public in the maudlin sincerity of Jim Reeves, and represented to the country audience by several comparable country crooners including Eddie Arnold, Ray Price, Porter Wagoner, and Bill Anderson.

But during that same period, more interesting music was being made, much of which has yet to be appreciated outside the already committed country field. George Jones, Buck Owens, and Jerry Lee Lewis pursued the expressiveness which Hank Williams had shown could be gained from strange pronunciations and phrasing, while Merle Haggard and Tom T. Hall wrote songs of considerable sophistication – which they were obliged to disguise in order to sneak past the biases of their audience.

### Prime-Time TV

Ironically, the people who emerged out of that fallow period into public acclaim had neither the stylistic ingenuity nor the verbal dexterity of those singers, but Johnny Cash and Glen Campbell did help to make country music more accessible to an audience which had previously ignored it – acting as hosts, and presenting guests on prime-time TV shows in the States. Coinciding with Bob Dylan's widely-publicised Nashville recording sessions in 1969, the albums that Johnny Cash recorded at Folsom and San Quentin prisons, and the hit single interpretations of 'By The Time I Got To Phoenix' and 'Wichita Linesman' by Glen Campbell served to draw belated attention to the strength of country music.

For many connoisseurs of country music, George Jones is the finest stylist among contemporary performers. His specialities are songs describing loss and regret, in which he vividly evokes the loneliness of a deserted man in an empty room, notably in 'Things Have Gone To Pieces', a 1965 hit. In the '50s he sang more lively novelty songs, including 'White Lightning' (written by J. P. 'The Big Bopper' Richardson), and often used Roger Miller as a support singer. In duets, his wife Tammy Wynette often acts as an effective foil to his impeccable tone.

Buck Owens and Jerry Lee Lewis also excel at evoking desolation, although they are best known to the non-country audiences as singers of quick-tempo songs. Buck's 'I've Got A Tiger By The Tail' was a pop hit in 1965, a year or so after Ringo Starr had sung his 'Act Naturally' on a Beatles LP. A good guitarist, Buck first drew attention as a session musician, and then graduated to making vocal records for Capitol on the West Coast in the late '50s. Since then he has been the leading force in establishing Bakersfield, California, as an authentic focus for recording country music, and his own records have benefited from his decision to record with his own group, the Buckaroos, rather than with session musicians. Fiddle-player Don Rich has helped to give many of Buck's records a distinctive sound.

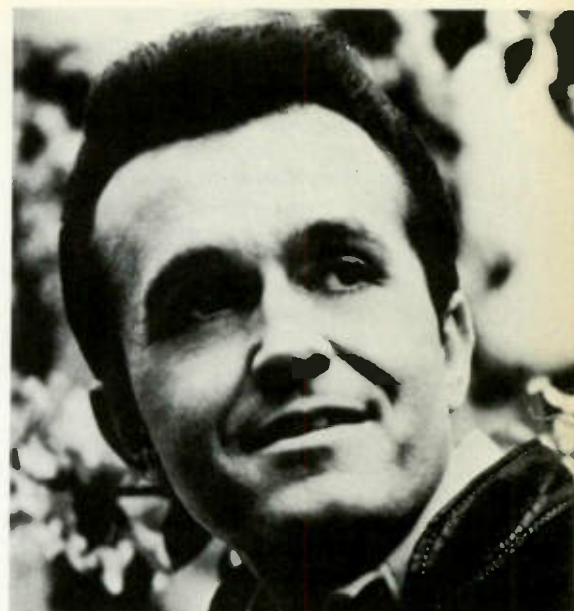
Jerry Lee Lewis is very rare among major country singers in not writing his own songs. But because he therefore has to interpret other people's material, he serves as a useful introduction for an outsider to country material. Unfortunately, Jerry Lee's studio recordings don't often convey the magnetic hold his live performances have, and probably the best place to start is with his 1970 album, 'Live At The International, Las Vegas', where his versions of 'She Even Woke Me Up To Say Goodbye' and 'She Still Comes Round To Love What's Left Of Me', show how country music can present situations from adult life with a conviction that is beyond pop music. In this live performance, Jerry Lee allows his voice to experiment with the melody and phrasing of the songs, confident that his backing musicians, notably fiddle-player Kenny Lovelace, will keep up with his improvisations.

If Jerry Lee Lewis succeeds in drawing sceptics into country music, Merle Haggard and Tom T. Hall are among the songwriters who will reward curiosity. 36 years old and born in California, Merle is among the youngest major stars of country music, where talented singers and writers often work for up to 15 years in relative obscurity before securing a contract with a major label. If Merle Haggard is known outside the country market, it is probably through his red-neck anthem, 'Okie From Muskogee'. In the song, Merle lists all the things that the good people of Muskogee, Oklahoma, never get up (or down) to – such as smoking dope, burning flags, and wearing sandals. The song has such a good melody and chorus, it invites a sing-along involvement from an audience which might strongly disagree with its sentiments, and has become a standard in the repertoire of many San Francisco rock groups, as well as the more obvious country groups.

### Society's Outsiders

But in the long run, Merle Haggard will be known as the writer of some of the best love songs of his time, particularly 'Today I Started Loving You Again'; and for depicting society's outsiders – criminals, winos, migrant workers – with such sympathy and understanding, as in 'Mama Tried', and 'I'm A Lonesome Fugitive' (the last of which he didn't write, but was the first to record). And while his hit country singles tend to share a sombre attitude to life, Merle's LP tracks betray a mischievous sense of humour, both in his interpretations of some Tommy Collins songs, and in his own song 'Big Time Annie's Square', in which the narrator tells of a trip he made to the West Coast in search of his girlfriend, who had migrated to a commune which named the newcomer 'Big Time Annie's Square'.

In contrast to Merle Haggard, Tom T. Hall is hemmed in by the conventions of country music. Originally from Kentucky, Tom writes songs about situations which can be limited to the South, or stretched to apply anywhere. It depends on the musical



The conservative country crooner, Bill Anderson.

arrangement, and invariably Tom T. Hall's arrangements limit his potential. The blame must lie equally on his own lack of melodic flair – and on the stereotyped accompaniment provided by the Nashville musicians under Jerry Kennedy's supervision.

Occasionally, a song by Tom T. Hall has escaped the country boundaries – most spectacularly in the case of 'Harper Valley P.T.A.'. But more often, the listener must accept the conventions of a country record, and enjoy Tom's mastery with words. Several of his finest songs appear together on the LP 'In Search Of A Song', including one of his biggest hits, 'The Year That Clayton Delaney Died', and one of his funniest songs, 'The Little Lady Preacher'.

At the time of writing, there are signs that country music is beginning to blur the distinctions which have traditionally separated pop from country, notably in the success in both fields of Charlie Rich, a singer with a wonderful voice but no special commitment to country music. If this development continues, it should be possible for a number of country artists – particularly Merle Haggard and Tom T. Hall – to show to the pop audience just what kind of depth of experience a singer/songwriter needs to have, if he is to make more than one interesting LP. One ironical side-effect of such a change would be that the country session musicians would welcome the opportunity to break out of country definitions of music, and show that they are fully-developed musicians who can play in any idiom. The restrictions on true expression and communication have for too long been kept in place.

**NEXT WEEK IN POP INFLUENCES:** All-Time Greats – a comprehensive (2-part) list of memorable records, including singles and albums.

# POP FILE

... the Who's Who of Pop. Week by week the A-Z of who did what and when.



Robert Ellis

**CANNED HEAT** started out as a Los Angeles blues band in 1965, and were one of the first American white blues bands to get across to a rock audience. The original line-up was: Bob 'The Bear' Hite (vocals), Al Wilson (guitar), Henry Vestine (lead guitar), Larry Taylor (bass) and Adolfo De La Parra (drums). By no means a purist blues band, Canned Heat featured a gutsy boogie element as on 'Rollin' And Tumblin'' from their first album 'Canned Heat' (1967); and their biggest hit in 1968 'On The Road Again', which was from their album 'Boogie With Canned Heat'. 'Going Up Country' from the third album 'Living The Blues' was a hit in 1969. In 1970 Tony Olaff (Antonio De La Barreda) replaced Larry Taylor - who left to play with John Mayall - and Joel Scott Hill came in on guitar when Al 'The Owl' Wilson died. Despite frequent European tours, the group has never made it in a big way outside the USA.

**FREDDY CANNON** was born Freddy Picariello in Boston, Mass., in December 1939. Signed by producer/songwriters Frank Slay and Bob Crewe to Swan Records in 1959, Freddy hit the charts in Britain and the US that year with 'Tallahassie Lassie' following heavy promotion and a good gimmick - a whooping scream that featured in many of his records. He followed up with 'Okefenokee' and his biggest hit 'Way Down Yonder In New Orleans', which earned him a second Gold Disc in 1960. He had further hits with 'California Here I Come', 'Pallisades Park' and 'The Urge', but never developed beyond the initial impact of 'Tallahassie Lassie'.

**THE CARPENTERS**, Richard and Karen, hit upon a wholesome boy-and-girl-next-door image to counter the wave of heavy rock of the late '60s. Since signing to A&M in 1969, they have had hits with 'We've Only Just Begun', 'For All We Know' and 'Rainy Days And Mondays' among others, and have totalled 10 Gold Discs. Says their press biography: 'Loyal and sincere as two kids can be, the Carpenters ... both still live with Mom and Dad in the beautiful Downey home they built.' They're clean-cut kids and they bin to college too! Their latest US and British success is the album 'Now And Then', and the single 'Yesterday Once More'.

**BRUCE CHANNEL** hit the charts in 1962 on Mercury with 'Hey Baby', one of the most perfect singles ever made. It had the simplest of words and tunes, was instantly unforgettable, and featured a then popular instrument ... the harmonica. Following that record a lot of groups used the instrument, and the sound

of the Beatles' first release 'Love Me Do' owed a lot to 'Hey Baby'. Bruce had a second hit in 1968 with 'Keep On' for Bell when he re-recorded 'Hey Baby', but failed to make the charts.

**THE CHANTELS** sang meepie-weepies about the heartbreaks of teenage romance. Their lead singer Arlene Smith either made you cry or puke on 'Maybe', 'Every Night I Pray' and 'There's Our Song Again', produced by Alan Freed for George Goldner's Rama group of labels. This was the 'high school' school of pop at its most intense.

**CHEECH AND CHONG** found fame in 1972 as the comics of the dope scene. Both had been working for some time in mime troupes, rock groups, and improvising theatre groups in Canada and the US, before signing to Ode Records. By poking fun at



Robert Ellis

their freak audience Cheech and Chong were hailed as counter-culture comedians. They may not be particularly funny, but they're one of the few acts even attempting humour, in a scene that takes itself too seriously.

**LEONARD CHESSE** and his brother Phil founded Aristocrat Records in Chicago in 1947, which they renamed Chess two years later. Chess, and its subsidiary Checker, have released the most extensive and influential rhythm & blues catalogue ever. Their artists include Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Bo Diddley, Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson, John Lee Hooker, and Jimmy Rodgers - as well as vocal groups the Moonglows and Flamingos. Leonard Chess must take credit for making a massive contribution to city blues and rock through his record labels. The company, later managed by his son Marshall Chess, still records many of these artists today, as well as acting as parent company to Rolling Stones Records.

**CHICAGO** have taken the rock-jazz approach of Blood Sweat and Tears a stage further by allowing more improvisation within more subtle arrangements, and a generally more gutsy, blowing sound. While their albums allow plenty of time for free-ranging solos, they have also recorded some excellent tightly arranged singles, notably Stevie Winwood's 'I'm A Man', from their first album 'Chicago Transit Authority' (1969). If anyone can claim to have established an exciting jazz-rock sound it is Chicago, whose last-reported line-up was Robert Lamm (keyboards and vocals), Terry Kath (guitar and vocals), Pete Cetera (bass and vocals), Jim Pankow (trombone), Walt Parazaider (sax and flute), Lee Loughnane (trumpet) and Danny Seraphine (drums).

**THE CHIFFONS** hit the charts in 1963 with their classic 'He's So Fine' which they followed with 'One Fine Day', at a time when all-girl vocal groups were enjoying popularity. Their sound was a haunting mixture of mid-'50s vocalising and the approaching Motown sound. 'He's So Fine', on which George Harrison's 'My

Sweet Lord' was based, added a new phrase to the English language . . . 'doo-lang doo-lang doo-lang'.

**THE DAVE CLARK FIVE** had the first of a whole string of hits at the end of 1963 with 'I'm Glad All Over'. The record replaced the Beatles' 'I Want To Hold Your Hand' at no. 1 in the charts, and was hailed by the press as victory for the non-existent



Syndication International

'Tottenham Sound' (Clark comes from Tottenham, North London). A classic example of pre-packed rock, the Dave Clark Five stormed to success in the US in the wake of the Beatles, and had further hits on both sides of the Atlantic with 'Bits And Pieces' (1964), 'Catch Us If You Can' (1965), 'Everybody Knows' (1967), 'Red Balloon' (1968) and 'Good Old Rock And Roll' (1970). A clean-cut happy image and Beatle haircuts for the group ensured that the astute Dave Clark cleaned up while the going was good, despite resentment from other musicians who unkindly suggested that Dave Clark never played on his records.

**DICK CLARK** became one of the most influential men in pop in the late '50s through his *American Bandstand* TV shows first broadcast in July 1956 from WFIL-TV in Philadelphia. A clean-cut, God-fearing DJ in his thirties, Clark spread the synthetic fantasy world of teenage high-school America to the nation's teenagers and quickly became the object of massive payola offers from artists seeking exposure on his show. Philadelphia became the focus of attention for record companies and the local labels were particularly well placed to promote their artists. Bobby Rydell, Frankie Avalon, Fabian and Freddie Cannon were among those to benefit from *American Bandstand*. The show set the basic formula for most subsequent TV rock production - teenagers dancing in the studio and guest appearances by singers. Through the show more attention was paid to dancing, and it was instrumental in getting the twist craze underway in 1960.

Syndication International



**PETULA CLARK** was a child star in 1943 at the age of nine. After making some 30 films she went into recording in 1950. Unlike many of her contemporaries she wasn't washed away by the advancing tide of rock but rather benefited from it, incorporating watered-down and slicked-up rock arrangements in her own easy-going records. She has sold more than 20 million records with songs like 'Romeo', 'Ya Ya Twist', 'Downtown', 'I Couldn't Live Without Your Love', 'Don't Sleep In The Subway' and many others.

**JIMMY CLIFF** left Jamaica, where he was no. 1 local star, to try and make it in Britain in 1964. He spent five years playing clubs in Britain and Europe with his soul/blues/West Indian band the Shakedown Sound, before making the Top Ten all over Europe with 'Wonderful World, Beautiful People' in 1969. The record stayed at no. 1 for four months in Brazil. Jimmy found himself in demand as a producer and songwriter. Desmond Dekker had a hit with his 'You Can Get It If You Really Want', and Bob Dylan reportedly said Jimmy's 'Vietnam' was the best anti-war song he'd ever heard. In 1972 Jimmy starred in the highly-successful West Indian movie *The Harder They Come* and had a hit with the title song. Jimmy then parted company with Island Records and manager Chris Blackwell and signed with EMI.

**THE CLOVERS** from Washington D.C., signed with Atlantic Records in 1951 and, under the guidance of producer Ahmet Ertegun, had a series of hits in the black R & B market during the '50s, including 'One Mint Julep', 'Your Cash Ain't Nothin' But Trash' and 'Lovey Dovey'. Success in the white charts eluded them until they left Atlantic in 1957 and signed with Liberty, to score with the classic 'Love Potion Number Nine' in 1959. The song was also a hit for the Coasters in 1971.

**THE COASTERS** were formed in 1955, and after some personnel changes hit the US charts with their second release 'Down In Mexico' (1956). That started a string of classic and usually highly amusing hits for the group (Billy Guy, Carl Gardner, Bill Jones and Cornelius Gunter) and for songwriters Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Their other hits include 'Searchin'/'Young Blood' (1957), 'Yakety Yak' (1958, and their first UK hit), 'Charlie Brown', 'Along Came Jones' and 'Poison Ivy' (all 1959). Their next records 'Run Red Run' and the fine 'Little Egypt' did not make the charts, and the group went into decline. In 1971 they returned with a hit revival of 'Love Potion Number Nine', which was a hit for the Clovers in 1959 in a style based closely on the Coasters.

**JOE COCKER**, an ex-gas fitter from Sheffield, reached the British Top Thirty with his first record 'Marjorine' in 1968. Six months later he recorded the Beatles' 'With A Little Help From My Friends' which caused a sensation both sides of the Atlantic. Cocker achieved a rare thing with that record - taking a Lennon/McCartney song and improving on the Beatles' version so much that Cocker's is now considered the classic recording. In 1969 Cocker and the Grease Band (Henry McCullough, Chris Stainton, Alan Spenner and Bruce Rowland) crossed the Atlantic to establish 'Cocker Power' in the US, where they made a star appearance at the Woodstock Festival. In September that year Cocker hit the charts again with 'Delta Lady', written by Leon Russell with whom Joe teamed up the following year for a US tour by Mad Dogs And Englishmen. This rock & roll circus produced a live album and a film, but left Cocker exhausted and confused. "There seemed no point in going on," he said, and retired home to Sheffield. In 1972 Cocker went on the road again with a new band formed by Chris Stainton, but unfortunately hasn't yet improved on his performances of a few years ago. At his best Cocker sang with power and feel that equalled Ray Charles, and his first album 'With A Little Help From My Friends' recorded with the Grease Band and session musicians that included Jimmy Page, Stevie Winwood and Matthew Fisher, stands as one of the best rock albums ever recorded.



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### THE SUPERSTARS

**David Cassidy:** Began as the all-white child who ran an all-white television family. Progressed to a youthful, feline, machine-made rock star who promised to thrill but never to harm.

### POP INFLUENCES

**All-Time Greats:** A selection in two parts (singles and albums) of the milestone records that have shaped the course of pop music: the basis of an archive record collection.

### THE MUSIC

**The Denmark Street Doldrums:** In the days before the Beatles, the British music industry was suckled by America, and showed no signs of being weaned and developing its own music style.

### BLACK MUSIC

**Ray Charles: 'The High Priest of Soul':** More a man of the people than a star to be idolised, he found the elusive formula in a fusion of the gospel and blues traditions.

### POP

**Skiffle – How The Three Chord Trick Saved Rock & Roll:** Lonnie Donegan introduced a generation of teenage boys to two new categories of music – the folk-blues of Leadbelly, and the social protest songs of Woody Guthrie. His was the home-made sound and it lasted, appropriately enough, until he recorded 'The Party's Over' in 1962.

### POP CULTURE

**Rock Sex Symbols:** Rock and sex have long gone hand-in-hand, and in this article we take a look at the appeals of stars as varied as Johnny Ray, David Cassidy, the Osmonds, James Brown, Janis Joplin, Mick Jagger, David Bowie and Lou Reed.

### ROCK

**British Rock & Roll – The Tommy Steele Story:** Someone had to lift rock & roll from the Teddy Boy rut and give it 'class'; and this someone was Tommy Steele. Luckily he had the talent to back up the hype, but in the end he abandoned rock & roll for his Bermondsey music-hall roots.

### PROFILE

**Bobby Vee:** He admired and glorified the unbeatable Buddy Holly, but only came up with songs like 'Rubber Ball' until he found songwriters Carole King and Jerry Goffin and finally bounced home with classic records like 'Run To Him'.

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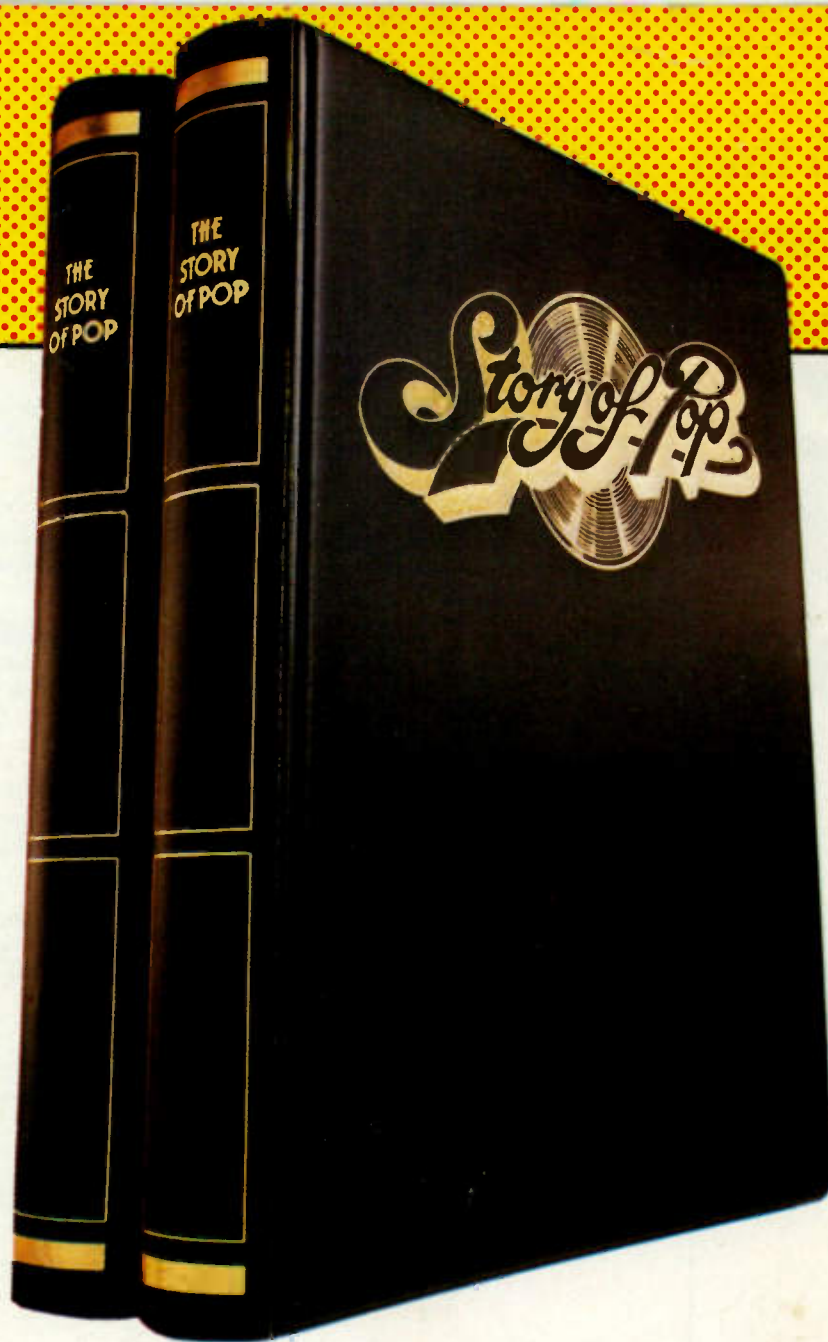
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