

ORIGINS OF ROCK THE FIFTIES

FROM THE DEFINITIVE, ILLUSTRATED
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ROCK

SOURCES & SOUNDS

ELVIS PRESLEY

CHUCK BERRY

BUDDY HOLLY

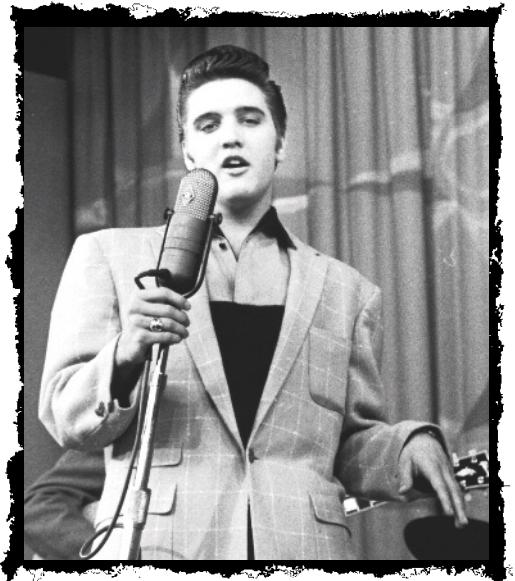
BILL HALEY

RAY CHARLES

KEY ARTISTS

Joe Cushley,
John Tobler

General Editor:
Michael Heatley



THE DEFINITIVE, ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ROCK

Richard Buskin, Alan Clayson, Joe Cushley, Rusty Cutchin, Jason Draper, Hugh Fielder, Mike Gent, Drew Heatley, Michael Heatley, Jake Kennedy, Colin Salter, Ian Shirley, John Tobler

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ORIGINS OF ROCK THE FIFTIES

FROM THE DEFINITIVE, ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ROCK

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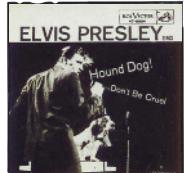
The 1950s was the decade when the straitjacket imposed by the recent world war was loosened a little – and rock took full advantage. The Sun studios in Memphis and Chess Records in Chicago were the places to be as the likes of Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry turned the existing generation gap into a chasm.

Though he did not always appear in vision, Bill Haley reaped the rewards as rock helped Hollywood bring in the younger generation – even if a few seats were slashed in the process. Television, which by the end of the decade would be well established, offered another medium by which to reach willing youth and scandalize their parents. Elvis was initially cut off at the waist by over-zealous cameramen, but the power to shock remained.

While the music publishers of Tin Pan Alley had controlled the writing and recording of music, teenage subjects were addressed in lyrics for the first time by rock's new songwriters. Chuck Berry's songs of romance, frustration and homework appealed to white and black, male and female alike, while the Brill Building turned out similar quality pop from the pens of Neil Sedaka, Carole King and others.

Britain began its rock'n'roll odyssey via skiffle, using acoustic and/or home-made instruments. Paul McCartney and John Lennon were among the followers of skiffle king Lonnie Donegan. The electric guitar was still a rarity, but when Brian Rankin got hold of a real Fender Stratocaster from the States he was on his way to becoming Britain's first guitar hero, fronting The Shadows as Hank B. Marvin.

Sources & Sounds



KEY ARTISTS

Chuck Berry
Ray Charles
Lonnie Donegan
The Everly Brothers
Bill Haley
Buddy Holly
Elvis Presley



Right and Below
Dancing, drinking and flirting in dance halls and bars, the youth of the 1950s started to strike out from the austerity of their parents' generation and were determined to have a good time.

'Let's face it – rock'n'roll is bigger than all of us.'

Alan Freed



English, the combination of minimal lyrics and driving beat swiftly made rock'n'roll universally acceptable.

Shock Around The Clock

To the world's youth, that is. The powers that be immediately smelt trouble: Indonesia and Argentina were quick to ban the new music in 1957, while South

Africa's regime employed troops with tear gas to stop rock fans rioting. The fact the music had emerged from black roots was, doubtless, coincidental.

Germany proved a fertile breeding ground for rock. The nation that lost the Second World War was now occupied by American forces, and their tastes would help make the former Fatherland an early convert to the rock cause. Though Elvis Presley's arrival in the country on national service was in a strictly non-singing capacity, the less inhibited Little Richard was one of many regular Stateside visitors. And it would not be long before The Beatles would use the clubs of Hamburg to work up their world-beating stage act.



By the end of the 1950s, however, rock'n'roll had inevitably already lost some of its shock value, with impresarios and theatre owners waking up fast to its money-making potential. In the States, Buddy Holly's ill-fated Winter Dance Party tour was drawing sizeable crowds, the 1,500 people at its last port of call, Clear Lake, Iowa, contrasting well with the town's population of 30,000.

The Teen Revolution

While traditional composers had written about romance from an adult viewpoint, teenage emotions were now taking pride of place. Other topics included the twin teenage bane of parents and school, and these caught the ear and imagination of a new generation less inclined to knuckle under to authority as their parents had been.

The previously mentioned Buddy Holly was one of rock's first singer-songwriters, penning his own breathy paeans to teen life, while The Everly Brothers had the writing team of Felice and Boudleaux Bryant to lean on. Don and Phil's charming harmonies were crucial in shaping the 1960s sounds of The Beatles and Hollies, to name just two of many groups.

A series of attractive US male singers emerged to service the new audience, such as Paul Anka, Ricky Nelson and Pat Boone. Television helped promote Nelson as a 'safer' version of Elvis, while Boone, the clean-cut, God-fearing boy-next-door, also starred in

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

- 1951 Johnny Ray: 'Cry'
- 1955 Little Richard: 'Tutti Frutti'
- 1956 Elvis Presley: 'Hound Dog'
- 1957 The Everly Brothers: 'Wake Up Little Susie'
- 1958 Chuck Berry: 'Johnny B. Goode'

Left

Dion and The Belmonts, a doo-wop band from the Bronx, had a major hit with 'A Teenager In Love'. They were characteristic of the male groups of the 1950s.

Below

The flamboyant Alan Freed was the first to coin the term rock'n'roll. He championed the vital, vibrant beat of the new sound.





Above
In the UK, skiffle groups breathed life into local bars with their guitars, tea chests and simple percussion. The home spun feel of the music gave a warmth and vitality to the songs.

several teen-orientated films. Not to be outdone, Connie Francis and Brenda Lee told of romance from a female perspective.

The Rock'n'Roll Gospel

Girl groups would not emerge until the following decade, but there were many doo-wop-influenced male vocal

combos already out there like Dion and The Belmonts and Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. Often drawn from immigrant Italian or Hispanic stock, they made the transition from street-corner harmonizing to the hit parade in style. Their black counterparts like The Drifters and Coasters successfully sanitized rhythm and blues with help from white writers Leiber and Stoller.

The rock'n'roll gospel was being spread by the likes of DJ Alan Freed, instigator of a number of 'rock exploitation' movies, and Dick Clark whose *American Bandstand* TV show, broadcast nationally from Philadelphia from 1957 onwards, was influential enough to spawn a local 'scene' from which the likes of Frankie Avalon, Fabian and Bobby Rydell sprung. All were fresh-faced Italian-American teen idols with varying degrees of natural talent. Instrumentalist Duane Eddy recorded for Philadelphia's Jamie label, proving influential with his 'twangy guitar'.

Singled Out

The 78-rpm shellac record had been the standard method of sound reproduction until Columbia Records pioneered the 12-inch album, playing at 33 1/3-rpm (revolutions per minute), in 1948. RCA offered a competing format, a 45-rpm, seven-inch disc that would come to be known as the single; this went on sale the following year. In order to make up ground on the longer-playing 12-inch, RCA also introduced the 'auto-changer' by which means several singles could be stacked over the turntable and played in succession.

Having been knocked out by Elvis Presley, Britain got off the canvas and mounted a fightback in an attempt to prove that home-grown music could stand on its own two feet. The skiffle boom, led by Lonnie Donegan, established local 'scenes' based around coffee bars. Many of Britain's most successful rock names of the late 1950s and 1960s would start their musical lives in skiffle groups, playing acoustic guitars, tea-chest bass or home-made percussion.

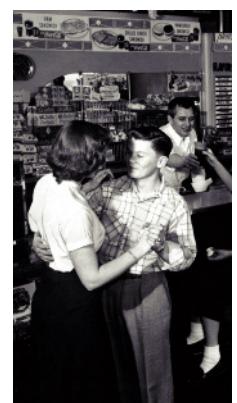
Singing For Britain

Another answer came in the shape of home-grown Elvis 'clones' like Terry Dene, Marty Wilde, Vince Eager and Dickie Pride, whose careers were launched by impresario Larry Parnes. They would enjoy brief fame before the 1960s beat boom swept everything aside.

Cliff Richard was the survivor who proved the rule. Born in Lucknow, India, but raised in Britain, his 'fairy godfather' was Jack Good, a seminal figure in the development of British rock who devised the 6.5 Special TV programme, which first aired in 1957. He encouraged Cliff to drop his guitar and shave off his Presley-esque sideburns, suggesting he move in a way the newspapers of the time considered 'depraved'.



Above
The US led the way with the rock explosion of the 1950s but there were some notable exceptions, with Johnny Kidd and his band entertaining the UK with hits such as 'Please Don't Touch'.



Above
As the 1950s ended, the dancing became more abandoned as the young generation gained confidence in their newly-realized freedom.



THE FIFTIES

Chuck Berry

Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

- 1955 'Maybellene'
- 1956 'Roll Over Beethoven', 'Too Much Monkey Business'
- 1958 'Sweet Little Sixteen', 'Johnny B Goode'
- 1963 Chuck Berry
- 1964 'Nadine', 'No Particular Place To Go', 'You Never Can Tell'
- 1965 'The Promised Land'
- 1971 San Francisco Dues
- 1972 'My Ding-A-Ling'

Right

The ingenious songs of Chuck Berry combined clever and witty lyrics with fast-moving tunes and intricate guitar playing.

[My mama] said, "You and Elvis are pretty good, but you're no Chuck Berry."

Jerry Lee Lewis



Charles Edward Anderson Berry, known to all as Chuck, was born in St Louis, Missouri, on 18 October 1926, at the family's home in Goode Avenue. The local gospel choir used it for their rehearsals and there was a well-employed piano in situ. Berry began learning the guitar in his mid-teens. At 17 he was involved in a string of robberies which led to a tough jail sentence, and he was released on his twenty-first birthday.

A Long Apprenticeship

On release, Berry played pick-up gigs wherever he could, while studying to be a hairdresser and looking after his wife and children. On 30 December 1952,

he got a call from piano-player Johnnie Johnson who had a gig at the Cosmopolitan Club in East St Louis. It soon began to live up to its name, becoming a haunt for both blacks and whites. Berry was used to playing white bars, and started to introduce country songs alongside the blues and standards that Johnson's band played. While Elvis was a hillbilly singer who sang the blues, Berry was a bluesman who sang hillbilly. They both ended up with the same result. Rock'n'roll.

In early 1955, he saw Muddy Waters in Chicago and afterwards asked his advice on getting a record deal. The great man recommended going to see Leonard Chess. Berry did just that and was asked if he had a demo. He returned to St Louis and made one with Johnson and Ebby Hardy, their regular drummer.

Chess Mate

Both Leonard Chess and bassist/fixer Willie Dixon were intrigued by the sound of Berry's 'Ida May', which he had developed from country bopper Bob Wills's 'Ida Red'. But they counselled a further bit of disguise, and the song became 'Maybellene', recorded at Chess Records on 21 May 1955. Around this time the band also stopped being the Johnnie Johnson Trio and became Chuck Berry's. The song appealed to both races, naturally, and stormed up all three American charts: pop, country and R&B, reaching No. 5 on the one that mattered most – the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart – several months before Elvis appeared as a national star.

The band soon set out on the hardly glamorous, endless rounds of touring, though sell-out residencies at one of DJ Alan Freed's promotions at the Paramount in New York, and at Harlem's legendary Apollo Theatre were highlights. It was around this time that Berry started bringing the house down with his trademark duck walk. 'Thirty Days', a hurriedly issued follow-up did not fare so well, and it was not until mid-1956 that another classic Berry composition, 'Roll Over Beethoven', breached the US Top 30. Berry's juices were in full flow. He could afford to consign the superb 'Brown Eyed Handsome Man' to the B-side of 'Too Much Monkey Business' (which became the template for Dylan's 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'). Almost unbelievably the single did not chart, though Buddy Holly soon recorded a cover of 'Brown Eyed...'. The next track, 'You Can't Catch Me' (1957), scraped into the Top 30. It was another ode to automobiles, and it inspired John Lennon's 'Come Together'. After this slew of scintillating, but hardly chart-busting singles, 'School Day' became a bona fide smash. It reached No. 3 in the US and gave Berry his first UK hit. Berry was in his thirties, but seemed to be able to describe teenage life to a tee. With his witty vignettes of American life, explored in verses dense with evocative imagery and metrical complexity, he was well on his way to becoming the first poet of the new sound; and his paean to the genre, 'Rock And Roll Music', became his next hit.

Berry Business

By this time Berry had bought his Club Bandstand and the land for Berry Park and set up Chuck Berry Music. He did not want to be cheated as he had been in the

early days, though he was not averse to making sure he paid his backing musicians as little as possible. This included the loyal, if often inebriated, Johnnie Johnson – his former boss and, some say, co-composer of many of his songs.



**Right**

Onstage, Chuck Berry had a number of popular moves, including the famous 'duck walk'.

After School Sessions was both Berry and Chess Records' first LP, released in 1958, his best chart year by far. It also saw 'Sweet Little Sixteen' – with its list of place names guaranteeing sales in those locations – attaining No. 2 in the US, and No. 16, appropriately enough, in the UK. The semi-autobiographical 'Johnny B Goode' (the surname in honour of his birthplace) came next, strolling to No. 8 in America. Berry borrowed heavily for this one. Carl Hogan, a guitarist with Louis Jordan, played an intro on the 1946 song, 'Ain't That Just Like A Woman', that is practically note for note the drive Berry used.

In 1959, his standards were just as high, but his chart placings began to slip. The extraordinarily strong pairing of 'Back In The USA' and 'Memphis, Tennessee' barely scraped into the Top 40. The answer to his own 'Johnny B Goode', entitled 'Bye Bye Johnny', had a prophetic ring. Berry had been harassed

by the police for the last few years, but he did not help matters by bringing a 14-year-old Apache girl from Mexico to work at his St Louis club. A racist judge added to the problems, and after legal delays, Berry spent two more years in jail for transporting a minor for immoral purposes. However, his time inside from February 1962 to October 1963 was put to good use: studying law and writing the string of hits that would re-establish him.

Back In The UK

The Beatles, whose Hamburg sets were crammed with Berry originals, and The Rolling Stones, whose first single 'Come On' was a Chuck original, already knew all about him. 1963's eponymous compilation spread the word further, going to No. 12 in Britain. 'Memphis, Tennessee' went to No. 6, and 'No Particular Place To Go' to No. 3. 'Nadine', 'Run, Rudolph, Run' and 'You

'Never Can Tell' (later to be used so effectively on the *Pulp Fiction* (1994) soundtrack by Quentin Tarantino), also scored. This burst of brilliance also revitalized his career in his homeland. In May 1964, Berry toured the UK to a tumultuous reception. His return trip in early 1965 was a different matter, plagued by the clock-watching indifference that would mar a lot of future performances.

In June 1966, Berry signed with Mercury Records and the decline in his output was obvious. In fact, all the company really wanted him to do was re-record his classics so they had rights to the titles, though *Chuck Berry In Memphis* (1967) was a half-decent set.

Berry began to play rock'n'roll revival shows, including Toronto, where Lennon and the Plastic Ono Band headlined. In 1972, Lennon invited Berry to be a guest on American TV's *The Mike Douglas Show* which he was co-hosting. He introduced him by saying: 'If you ever tried to give rock'n'roll another name, you might call it Chuck Berry.'

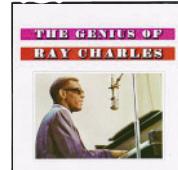
In 1970, Berry returned to Chess and came up with 'Tulane' and *San Francisco Dues* (1971), his finest work for years. In 1972, he recorded a live gig at the Lanchester Arts Festival in Coventry which resulted in his biggest, but by no stretch, finest hit. 'My Ding A Ling', a risqué novelty number, was a transatlantic No. 1. In the same year Berry played a triumphant gig at Wembley Stadium with many of his fellow rock'n'roll pioneers.

Hail! Hail! Rock'n'Roll!

Berry produced little new material in the 1970s and ended the decade in jail again on tax charges. Despite a bizarre collaboration with Shabba Ranks in 1994 on 'Go Shabba Go' his long promised new album has not materialized. In 1986, he was in the first rank of artists to be inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. The man who inducted him, Keith Richards, based a career on Berry's guitar style, though that style, in turn, had been based on forefathers such as Charlie Christian and T-Bone Walker. 1986 coincided with Berry's sixtieth birthday, and Richards organized a huge celebratory bash, filmed in its entirety, in the documentary *Hail! Hail! Rock'n'Roll*; a fascinating tribute to a great showman (when he felt like it), the greatest lyricist of his era and a huge influence on all who followed.

**Far Right**

Chuck Berry said of his music, 'Everything I wrote about wasn't about me, but about the people listening.'



Ray Charles

THE FIFTIES

Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

- 1954 'I Got A Woman'
- 1955 'Hallelujah, I Love Her So'
- 1959 'What'd I Say'
The Genius Of Ray Charles
- 1960 'Georgia On My Mind'
- 1961 'Unchain My Heart',
'Hit The Road Jack'
Genius + Soul/Jazz
- 1962 *Modern Sounds In Country & Western Music*
'I Can't Stop Lovin' You'
- 1967 'In The Heat Of The Night'
- 1969 'Eleanor Rigby'



I was born with music inside me. That's the only explanation I know of.'

Ray Charles

Born Ray Charles Robinson on 23 September 1930 in Albany, Georgia, Charles suffered from glaucoma from the age of five and was blind by the time he was seven. His mother was unable to look after him and he moved away to the Institute for the Blind,

Deaf and Dumb in St Augustine, Florida. He learned to play piano (he had already been taught some basics by local musician Wylie Pitman), organ, clarinet and saxophone and to read music in Braille. When he was 14 his mother died, and the following year he went to live with friends of hers in Jacksonville.

From Florida To Seattle

Charles started finding gigs around Jacksonville, then moved to Orlando and Tampa, playing piano or sax and working out arrangements for whoever would hire him; he even learned to yodel with country

outfit The Florida Playboys. At the time he was obsessed with Nat 'King' Cole's smooth vocals and jazzy piano, and modelled himself pretty wholeheartedly on his style.

He then chose to move to Seattle, as it was diametrically across the US from Florida. He arrived in March 1948, and the trio he assembled soon had a residency at the Rocking Chair nightclub, where Jack Lauderdale signed him to his Downbeat label. His debut single, 'Confession Blues' (1949) became an R&B hit. Around this time he started using the surname Charles, to avoid confusion with the boxer Sugar Ray Robinson. Downbeat became Swingtime and Ray joined up with the imprint's premier draw: sophisticated bluesman, Lowell Fulson. He sang and played piano in his band between 1950 and 1952, but was increasingly restless in this subordinate position. As luck would have it, Lauderdale sold Ray's contract to Atlantic Records.

Above
As well as R&B, Ray Charles has successfully turned his hand to a number of musical styles, including blues, gospel, pop, country, jazz and early rock'n'roll.



From Cole To Soul

Atlantic had been set up by Ahmet Ertegun in 1947 and had a good reputation for R&B, scoring hits with Ruth Brown, Joe Turner and the original Drifters. Ray's first recording session came in 1952. He was still very much beholden to Cole and only minor hits ensued with 'Mess Around' and 'It Should've Been Me'. Around this time he played with the highly emotive blues guitarist Guitar Slim, on the now classic 'The Things I Used To Do', and some of Slim's raw emotion seemed to rub off on Charles.

He recorded 'I Got A Woman', on 18 November 1954. The tune was based on a gospel song, but, in singing his mildly raunchy lyrics in an unfettered, 'churchy' fashion, he laid the groundwork for soul music. Tracks such as 'Hallelujah I Love Her So' and 1959's 'What'd I Say' – with his female backing singers The Raelettes very much a feature – built on this foundation.

The Genius

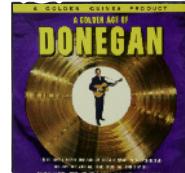
Ray Charles was not to be confined by genre, however. He recorded jazz using Duke Ellington and Count Basie's musicians – with his friend Quincy Jones arranging – on one side of *The Genius Of Ray Charles* (1959), and string-laden pop on the other. In 1960, he signed to

ABC-Paramount. The strong-willed Charles had wanted more control over his career and his new contract gave him just that. He founded his own record label, Tangerine, and achieved chart success with a pair of US No. 1s, 'Georgia On My Mind' and 'Hit The Road Jack'.

Not content with his achievements, Ray returned to the country sounds he had heard on the Grand Ole Opry radio show as a child, and produced the crossover classic *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* (1962), which became his only US No. 1 album, and yielded another chart-topper in 'I Can't Stop Loving You'. He recorded further country and pop albums throughout the decade. Charles reacted to soul's rising social awareness with fine albums *A Message From The People* (1972) and *Renaissance* (1975), and nearly stole the film *The Blues Brothers* (1980) with a stunning street performance of 'Shake Your Tail Feather'. He was also prominent on 1985's USA For Africa single 'We Are The World'.

Charles died on 10 June 2004, and tributes poured in. His posthumous album *Genius Loves Company* (2004), featured duets with the likes of Gladys Knight, Willie Nelson and Norah Jones, while Jamie Foxx won a deserved Oscar for his uncannily accurate portrayal in the Hollywood biopic, *Ray* (2004).

Above
During his prodigious career, Charles won 12 Grammy Awards and a Lifetime Achievement Award.



14

THE FIFTIES

Lonnie Donegan Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

1955
'Rock Island Line'

1956
Lonnie Donegan
Showcase LP

1958
'The Grand Coolee Dam'

1962
'I'll Never Fall In Love
Again'

1999
Muleskinner Blues

2000
The Skiffle Sessions:
Live In Belfast



'The shows weren't
organized at all.
They just happened.'

Lonnie Donegan

Above Right
Lonnie Donegan was the first
major star of British pop,
notching up 28 Top 30 hits
during the early 1950s.

Donegan was born in Glasgow, the son of a professional violinist, on 29 April 1931. The family moved to the east end of London when Tony, as he was then known, was two. He finally got the guitar he craved in his early teens. He attended his first jazz club soon after and was smitten by singer Beryl Bryden – their paths would cross again. He was also influenced by seeing black American singer, Josh White, in concert. Donegan began playing in various bands, but was interrupted by his national service in 1949. His spell abroad exposed him to American forces radio, and broadened his knowledge of jazz, blues and folk.

The Birth Of The Beat

Donegan fell in with fellow musician Chris Barber. They performed together in Ken Colyer's trad outfit,

but Colyer was a purist and essentially ousted himself from his own band. Barber took charge. Lonnie (who had got his nickname when a compere mixed him up with one of Donegan's heroes, blues musician Lonnie Johnson), was encouraged to develop an act based around his exuberant performance of various American roots songs, often employing improvised instruments such as a tea-chest bass and washboard. These cameos became extremely popular in the band's breaks between sets; Donegan called it 'mongrel music'. On 13 July 1954, just a few days after Elvis's first Sun Studios session, he recorded a couple of tracks for the Barber band's Decca debut album, *New Orleans Joys*, with Beryl Bryden on washboard. 'Rock Island Line', an old Leadbelly number, and 'John Henry' a traditional Afro-American ballad, were released as a single in late 1955, and went to No. 8 in the UK, and

to the same position in the US charts, when it was issued there the following February. He was a US Top 10 artist before Presley! The effect on the youth of Britain was electrifying. This was do-it-yourself music, and sales of acoustic guitars went through the roof. John Lennon formed The Quarrymen skiffle band in Liverpool in 1957, Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey became The Detours. Homegrown British rock music began in Lonnie's wake.

The King Of Skiffle

Follow-up single, 'Digging My Potatoes', (another Leadbelly cover), was banned by the BBC for its supposed innuendo, and Donegan's cachet rose even higher. Now signed to Pye, 'Lost John' backed with 'Stewball', repeated the formula, and his enthusiastic, expressive vocals took it to No. 2. He toured to America, releasing an album entitled *An Englishman Sings American Folk Songs* (he was actually Scottish-Irish by birth), and appeared on the Perry Como show in a skit with then-actor Ronald Reagan. Woody Allen debuted on the same programme. Essentially, he was making the Americans aware of their own heritage.

Lonnie chalked up his first No. 1 with 'Cumberland Gap' and followed it with another, 'Gamblin' Man' (both 1957). The hits kept flowing with the likes of 'The Grand Coolee Dam' and 'Tom Dooley' (both 1958), but he started introducing numbers that had more to do with British music-hall traditions into his repertoire, such as 'Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour On The Bedpost Overnight?' and 'My Old Man's A Dustman' (1960, another chart-topper). Some saw this as a cheapening of his act, though he finished his chart career with a nice symmetry. He released another Leadbelly number, 'Pick A Bale Of Cotton' in autumn 1962, a handful of weeks before The Beatles, who had been so inspired by him, took over the decade.

Putting On The Style

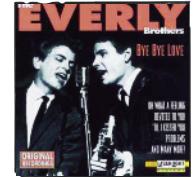
Donegan worked through the next 15 years, singing and acting, but the new folk revival did not take to him, and his old popular fanbase had grown-up. Then in 1978, Adam Faith organized a line-up of his fans including Ringo Starr, Brian May, Ronnie Wood and Elton John, who contributed to a Donegan album

called, *Putting On The Style*. Lonnie had a flourishing final few years. He toured again with Chris Barber; British DJ John Peel booked him as one of his favourite artists for his Meltdown Festival in 1998, and in 1999, he released *Muleskinner Blues*, with special guest Van Morrison, another long-time aficionado. Donegan, Barber and Morrison reconvened for *The Skiffle Sessions: Live In Belfast* (2000), which went to No. 14. Donegan died on 3 November 2002 in the middle of another stint on the road.

Below
Donegan's 1955 hit, 'Rock Island Line', was the first debut record to go gold in Britain.



15



16

The Everly Brothers

Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

1957
'Bye Bye Love', 'Wake Up Little Susie'

1958
'All I Have To Do Dream'
The Everly Brothers

1960
'Cathy's Clown'

1961
'Temptation'

1965
'The Price Of Love'

1968
Roots

1983
Everly Brothers Reunion Concert



The Everlys were born into a country music family; Don on 1 February 1937 in Brownie, Kentucky; Phil in Chicago – where father Ike had moved to play in bands with his brothers – on 19 January 1939. The family moved to Shenandoah, Iowa, to a regular slot on a local radio station, and Ike and Margaret's young sons soon started performing with them on the Everly Family Radio Show. Their career choice had been made.

'Don and Phil used proper English and I just thought they were a cut above ... intellectually and education-wise.'

Chet Atkins

Nashville Next

With the family settled in Knoxville, Tennessee, Ike used his friendship with legendary guitarist Chet Atkins to get his boys a foothold in the Nashville music business. Atkins introduced them to Wesley Rose of the influential Acuff-Rose

publishing partnership. Don managed to place a song with Kitty Wells, which sold reasonably well, but times were tough. They released a straight country single in early 1956 on Columbia, but it flopped, and it was not until Rose persuaded Archie Bleyer at Cadence to take them on that their star rose.

He teamed them with the songwriting couple Felice and Boudleaux Bryant, and in mid-1957 the pop-rockabilly of 'Bye Bye Love' zoomed to No. 2 in the US,

Above Right
The Everly Brothers' approach to harmony singing was to influence nearly every rock'n'roll group of the 1960s.

in the UK. It contained all the elements that made the Everlys. The audience could hear the Kentucky/Appalachian deep country origins of the close harmonies – with Don taking the melody. These had been handed down from other sibling groups such as The Delmore and Louvin Brothers; and yet there was a freshness to their approach, and a strong acknowledgement of rock'n'roll that pointed forwards.

This is evident in the fine Little Richard and Gene Vincent covers on their excellent self-titled debut album (1958). It is interesting to note that when Vincent re-recorded 'Be-Bop-A-Lula' he followed the Everly's up-tempo arrangement to a tee. Their influence on The Beatles (The Everlys' version of Ray Charles' 'Leave My Woman Alone' is a prime example), The Byrds, The Beach Boys, and Simon & Garfunkel is obvious from the earliest days, as hit followed hit; the mildly risqué 'Wake Up Little Susie' (1957), the heavenly ballad 'All I Have To Do Dream', the humorous 'Bird Dog' (both 1958) and the first self-penned smash '(Til) I Kissed You (1959)'. But a bitter split with manager Wesley Rose, however, heralded a move to the newly founded Warner Brothers recording wing on a much-trumpeted, million-dollar 10-year contract.

Brothers With Warner

Their first offering at the new label was the moody psychodrama of 'Cathy's Clown' (1960), fleshed out by far more echo than they had used previously. Further big sellers ensued, 'Lucille' (1960), 'Walk Right Back', innovative pop epic 'Temptation' (both 1961) and albums *It's Everly Time!* (1960) and *A Date With The Everly Brothers* (1961). But troubles loomed.

They aborted their projected film career; had to serve a six-month stint in the US Marines; Don became reliant on drugs (and collapsed before a gig at one point); the British Invasion stole their chart thunder; and their bust-up with the powerful Rose meant that they had trouble getting hold of songs from the best Nashville writers.



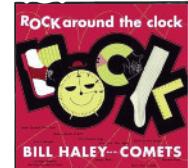
Appropriately, since they had inspired many British groups, they still had hits in the UK ('The Price Of Love' and 'Love Is Strange', both 1965) and recorded an album, *Two Yanks In England* with The Hollies, whose sound had essentially been shaped by the brothers.

Another album, *Roots* (1968) was a trailblazing country rock collection, but at that time nothing of theirs would shift. They drifted on until a gig at Knotts Berry Farm California, in July 1973, when a drunken Don insulted his brother. Long-running grievances erupted, and the normally placid Phil stormed off. They did not play together again for 10 years.

Solo And Reunited

Both did some good solo work; Phil his *Star Spangled Springer* (1973) set, and Don his *Brother Juke Box* (1977). It took their father's funeral to reconcile them. Their emotional, live double album *The Everly Brothers' Reunion Concert* recorded at the Royal Albert Hall in September 1983, saw them back in the charts. An eponymous follow-up LP (EB 84 in the US) with a Paul McCartney-written single, 'On The Wings Of A Nightingale', was also successful. They continued to tour and record, their considerable powers pretty much undiminished, until 2001.

Above
The brothers' music helped bridge the gap between rock and country music in a way that appealed to fans of both genres.



18

Bill Haley

THE FIFTIES

Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

- 1952 'Rock The Joint'
- 1953 'Crazy, Man, Crazy'
- 1954 'Shake, Rattle And Roll', 'Rock Around The Clock'
- 1955 'Razzle Dazzle'
- 1956 'See You Later, Alligator'
- 1971 'Rock Around The Country'



'The music is the main thing and it's just as easy to write acceptable words.'

Bill Haley

William John Clifton Haley was born on 6 July 1925 in Highland Park, Detroit, and raised near Chester, Pennsylvania. His parents were both musical, and he got his first proper guitar when he was 13. Even though he was blind in one eye and shy about his disability (he later tried to distract from it with his trademark kiss-curl), he started playing local shows.

A Professional Yodeller

In his late teens he joined a working country and western band, The Downhomers, and was styled Yodeling Bill Haley. He then fronted The Four Aces Of Western Swing, and landed a job back home on radio station WPWA in Chester, forming the

Above Right

The curl Haley wore to draw people's attention from his blind eye sparked a kiss-curl craze during the 1950s.

Saddlemen there. His show was scheduled after a black R&B programme called Judge Rhythm's Court. Here he first heard 'Rocket 88' by Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats – which was actually Ike Turner's band – and recorded it in 1951 with the Saddlemen: the first cover of what is often considered the first rock'n'roll record. Haley started working R&B songs into his set alongside the rocking (but white) country boogie styles they already played. In April 1952, they released a version of Jimmy Preston's R&B hit 'Rock The Joint'. They signed to Dave Miller's Essex label where, under the name Bill Haley with Haley's Comets, 'Crazy Man Crazy,' a Haley original, became the first charting rock'n'roll record in history, going to No. 15. But the follow-ups were weak, and Miller did not like a song that Haley kept pushing....

The Father Of Rock'n'Roll

Milt Gabler at Decca had overseen the career of Louis Jordan whose jump-jive style has a strong claim as an ancestor of rock'n'roll. He signed Haley and set a recording date for 12 April 1954. They spent most of the session working on 'Thirteen Women', allowing only two takes of 'Rock Around The Clock' by Jimmy DeKnight and Max C. Freedman. Time enough for Danny Cedrone to lay down the exact same – but still scintillating – guitar solo he had played on 'Rock The Joint' two years previously. The track was more popular than the A-side but hardly set the world alight. Instead the genial, and let us not forget, talented Haley went to No. 12 in summer 1954 with a raucous version of Big Joe Turner's 'Shake Rattle And Roll' (this became his first UK hit in late 1954).

But the wheels of fate were turning. The actor Glen Ford's son had bought 'Thirteen Women'. His father's producer was looking for a song to capture the mood of disaffected youth in a new film, *Blackboard Jungle*. 'Rock Around The Clock' fitted the bill. When the movie came out in 1955, the track stormed to No. 1 – and stayed there.

Haley and his band appeared in films, *Rock Around The Clock* and *Don't Knock The Rock* (both 1956), and had further big hits with 'Rock-A-Beatin' Boogie' (1955), 'See You Later, Alligator' and 'The Saints Rock'n'Roll' (both 1956), and they toured Britain to a riotous (literally) reception in 1957. (UK fans sent 'Rock Around The Clock' into the charts on its three different issues, 1954, 1968 and 1974). But, there was a new generation – the Presleys, Cochranes and Berrys – following in his pioneering footsteps. The Comets goofed around wildly on stage, but they were not exactly sexy; and some of Haley's repertoire was not the strongest.

Rocking Around The World

Haley's last US hit came in late 1959 with 'Skokiaan (The South African Song)'. He then decamped to Mexico, where he scored hits as the King of Twist! He spent the next years touring, finding some success with Richard Nader's Rock'n'Roll Revival Shows.

In 1971, a deal with Swedish label Sonet linked Haley with blues historian Samuel Charters as his producer, and he delivered a superb album.

Rock Around The Country showcased excellent versions of 'Me And Bobby McGhee', Joe South's 'Games That People Play' and Creedence's 'Travelin' Band'. Unfortunately it did not sell.

Haley managed a final British gig at the Royal Variety Performance in late 1979, but he was not a well man. After a difficult illness – he was suffering from a brain tumour – he died on 9 February 1981 in Harlingen, Texas.

Below
Haley and His Comets succeeded in translating black rhythm and blues into a form that adolescent white audiences could understand.





Buddy Holly

THE FIFTIES

Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

1957
'That'll Be The Day',
'Peggy Sue',
'Not Fade Away'

1958
The Chirping Crickets,
'Words Of Love'

1959
'It Doesn't Matter Anymore',
'Crying',
'Waiting', 'Hoping'

1960
'True Love Ways'

Buddy Holly was born Charles Hardin Holley in Lubbock, Texas, on 7 September 1936. Buddy got a guitar in his mid-teens and started practising with friend, Bob Montgomery. They liked country and western but also had predilection for the blues. An Elvis gig in Lubbock in early 1955 alerted them to new possibilities. Buddy and Bob, as they called themselves, played local radio stations and were making a reputation; but when agent Eddie Crandall managed to get Holly a deal with Decca in Nashville, after seeing him support Bill Haley, Bob was not included. Guitarist Sonny Curtis, bassist Don Guess and drummer Jerry Allison joined the line-up.

A False Start And A New Dawn

Holly recorded under the auspices of legendary producer Owen Bradley, and released 'Blue Days, Black Nights' in July 1956. It did well enough to earn another couple of dates in the studio.

'Modern Don Juan' appeared in late 1956 to a muted response. Bradley, steeped in country, did not quite know what to do with this new rock'n'roll sound.

Holly returned to Norman Petty's studio in Clovis, New Mexico, where he had previously recorded some demos. Petty had a well-equipped operation. As at Sun Studio in Memphis there was no time-limit on sessions, and as at Sun, Petty had developed his own echo technology.

Buddy had apparently been talking about their future fame, and Allison, quoting from the recent film, *The Searchers*, had answered with the catchphrase of John Wayne's character – 'That'll be the day...'. This became the title of The Crickets' first hit, released in its demo form by Coral. It went to the US No. 1 in summer 1957.

Hitting the market with songs under the band's moniker and with his own name became the norm. It doubled the chance of airplay. This dual success continued with 'Peggy Sue', a Holly track; then a couple of Crickets' releases, 'Oh Boy' backed with



'We like this kind of music. Jazz is strictly for stay-at-homes.'

Buddy Holly on rock'n'roll music

Above

Holly with The Crickets, with whom he co-wrote several of his most memorable songs.

The Star Shines On

In March 1958, Buddy and The Crickets toured Britain, and two avid spectators at their Liverpool gig were teenagers John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Several years on their compositions rang with Holly's influence. McCartney would later buy the publishing rights to Holly's song catalogue.

On their return things began to change. In the summer Holly recorded without The Crickets for the first time, and also taped demos of songs he wanted The Everly Brothers to use. In August, he married Maria Elena Santiago. Around this time he also helped out on the unknown Waylon Jennings' first single. Holly then acquiesced to a session with a string accompaniment that Petty had been badgering him to do. This took place in New York in October and resulted in 'True Love Ways',



and the two songs which would make up his final single, 'It Doesn't Matter Anymore' and 'Raining In My Heart'. Later in October, tensions came to a head between Holly and Petty over various matters, including royalties, and they went their separate ways. The Crickets stayed with Norman, to Holly's surprise and disappointment.

In the new year, Buddy got a band together to headline the 'Winter Dance Party' tour. After a gig at Clear Lake Iowa, Buddy had chartered a plane, as the tour bus was proving unreliable. Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper died when the flight crashed in snowy conditions on 3 February 1959.

So much potential unfulfilled, but a legacy left that would influence rockers and singer/songwriters alike, from Bob Dylan to Elvis Costello, from The Rolling Stones to Paul Simon.

Below

Buddy Holly was probably the first rock'n'roll artist to concern himself with virtually every aspect of his music including arranging and record production.



Elvis Presley

THE FIFTIES Key Artists

CLASSIC RECORDINGS

1954
'That's All Right'

1955
'Mystery Train'

1956
'Heartbreak Hotel'
Elvis

1958
'Jailhouse Rock'

1960
Elvis Is Back!

1969
'In The Ghetto'
From Elvis In Memphis
'Suspicious Minds'

1972
'American Trilogy'

1998
Memories: '68 Comeback Special

1999
Sunrise
(all the Sun recordings)

*'There have been a lotta
tough guys. There have
been pretenders. And there
have been contenders.
But there is only one king.'*

Bruce Springsteen

Right

Perhaps the ultimate pop icon, Elvis Presley brought attitude and sexuality into the mainstream at a time when it was far from acceptable.

Elvis Aaron Presley was born in his family's shot-gun shack in Tupelo, Mississippi, on 8 January 1935. His twin brother died at birth, and his mother doted on her sole son. He showed musical aptitude early, and loved to sing at the local First Assembly of God church. His mother, Gladys and father, Vernon, moved to Memphis when Elvis was 13, first to a run-down area, then to good public housing at Lauderdale Courts. Throughout his childhood and adolescence, Elvis would drink in music of every variety, anything from Dean Martin to Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup, from the Blackwood Brothers Quartet to Mario Lanza; and, according to some stories, he secretly frequented the black clubs on Beale Street. Ike Turner for one, remembers sneaking him into a West Memphis night-spot and hiding him behind his piano.

The Rising Son

Presley graduated from Humes High School and went to work first at M.B. Parker Machinists' shop. He may have heard about Sam Phillips's Sun Studio from an

article in the local paper about The Prisonaires, a group of convicts who had recorded there in mid-1953. In summer 1953, he presented himself at 706 Union Avenue, and taking advantage of their \$3.98 offer, recorded 'My Happiness' and 'That's When Your Heartaches Begin'. He returned in January 1954, obviously trying to catch the ear of Mr Phillips.

Sam's secretary, Marion Keisker, suggested Presley to Phillips when Sam was looking for someone to demo a particular song, and the man who had already taped Howlin' Wolf and B.B. King on the premises agreed to give him a try. It did not go smoothly but Phillips persevered, putting him together with two other hungry, if slightly older musicians; guitarist Scotty Moore, serious but talented, and Bill Black, a bassist and natural clown.

Their session on 5 July 1954, seemed to be going nowhere until Elvis started messing around on an old

Arthur Crudup blues number, 'That's All Right'; attacking it with punky vigour. Phillips knew that this was the combination of country and blues, sung by a charismatic young white man, he had been searching for. They recorded a hopped-up version of Bill Monroe's bluegrass classic 'Blue Moon Of Kentucky' to complete the single and rush-released it as Sun 209



on 17 July 1954. It lit up the Memphis area, and it soon became apparent that Elvis had the live act to promote this new and exhilarating hybrid. Four more Sun records followed the same blueprint over the next year; country song one side, R&B the other, all backed by Moore's fine rockabilly guitar and Black's slapped bass. Excitement grew exponentially amongst fans – helped immensely by the band's weekly slot on the *Louisiana Hayride* radio show. 'I Forgot To Remember To Forget', the flip side to the awesome blues power of 'Mystery Train' – the final Sun single, even made the Top 10 of the national country charts. The calculating Colonel Tom Parker, who already looked after country star Hank Snow, became Presley's manager, and Elvis's contract with Sun was sold on to RCA in late 1955 for \$35,000 – a large amount of money for a struggling concern such as Sam's.

The King Of Rock'n'Roll

Elvis went into RCA's Nashville Studios on 10 January 1956, two days after he officially entered adulthood. Black and Moore were there with him, a star in his own right, alongside session-men, Floyd Cramer on piano and guitarist Chet Atkins. Presley was unfazed and laid down the charged melancholia of 'Heartbreak Hotel', which became his first No. 1, and several tracks for his self-titled first album. His appearance on Tommy Dorsey's national TV show fuelled the fire, and a stream of high quality rock'n'roll, leavened with a slightly more poppy approach, hit the singles charts: 'I Want You I Need You, I Love You', 'Hound Dog', 'Too Much' and 'All Shook Up', all went to the US No. 1 slot within a year and a half of his RCA debut. And that is without including 'Love Me Tender' (1956) from the film of the same name and '(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear' from *Loving You* (1957), his first two movies. He completed a celluloid quartet, with the more than passable *Jailhouse Rock* (1957) and *King Creole* (1958), before a turn of events that would redefine Presley as an all-American hero, or mark the end of his career as a rebel figure, depending on your viewpoint. Elvis was drafted into the US Army in March 1958.

Films, Films, Films

While he was serving in Germany, Elvis suffered the loss of his beloved mother. When he was demobbed

in March 1960, he seemed to have grown-up, but that was not all to the good. He guested on Frank Sinatra's ABC TV show, proving that he could handle Ol' Blue Eyes's material, 'Witchcraft', but Frank was not quite so good with Elvis' new single, 'Stuck On You'. This was a far cry from his appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show* when cameras were ordered to cut his youth-corrupting, pelvis-swivels from the shot. In April 1961, he appeared at a benefit gig for the US Navy, his last public appearance for seven years. Estimable tracks still



emerged – 'Mess Of Blues' (1960), 'Return To Sender' (1962) – (and *Elvis Is Back!* (1960) is a very good album), but they were outnumbered by the tracks from the often awful films he made – 'Wooden Heart' (1964), 'Do The Clam' (1965), and average orchestral pop. In May 1967, he married Priscilla Beaulieu, and in February 1968, their daughter Lisa Marie was born.

Return Of The King

Elvis was not entirely happy with his career at this point and neither were his public. The hits were getting smaller. His return to form can be traced to his gospel album, *How Great Thou Art* (1967), which reached

Above

Presley was able to sound alternately raucous, gospel-tinged, crooner-like, countrified and bluesy.



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back to his roots, and the superb 'Guitar Man' (1968). But it was the June NBC TV show, which became known as the 1968 *Comeback Special* that relaunched his career. Dressed in a stunning black leather outfit and reunited with Scotty Moore, he seemed on top of his game, running through gems from his back catalogue with a fervour he had not mustered for years.

Above and Right
Despite Presley's risqué onstage moves, he was really a sweet, home-loving boy; the fact he was considered corruptive only furthered his iconic status.

His white-suited finale singing 'If I Can Dream' is one of the great moments in rock performance. Elvis moved straight on to some of his finest recorded work at producer Chip Moman's American studio in Memphis. *From Elvis In Memphis* (1969) yielded the surprisingly political, 'In The Ghetto'. The glorious 'Suspicious Minds' (1969) then gave him his first No. 1 for over four years. In 1971, he continued his golden run by issuing one of his very best collections, *Elvis Country*, which revisited some of his downhome musical influences.

Presley returned to regular live performance, first at the International Hotel in Las Vegas, where he opened an incredibly successful season of shows on 31 July 1969 with a classy line-up of backing musicians who included James Burton (guitar), Jerry Scheff (bass), Ronnie Tutt (drums) and The Sweet Inspirations (backing vocals). This period of spell-binding live shows was captured on the documentary, *Elvis: That's The Way It Is* (1970); the live satellite broadcast, *Aloha From Hawaii* (1973); and on the album, *Elvis: As Recorded At Madison Square Garden* (1972).

The Final Years

Priscilla left Graceland in late 1971, and it affected Elvis badly. His consumption of prescription drugs increased massively, and his live shows often suffered; and he was doing a lot of them. He had financial worries as well as personal ones, and so had to keep on the touring treadmill. Presley had his last Top 20 US hit – before the posthumous triumph of 'Way Down' – with 'Promised Land' in late 1974. He was admitted to hospital at least three times in 1975, which also marked his last session in a recording studio. From then on he laid down his tracks at Graceland. But he kept performing on the road, taping a final pair of shows for a CBS *Elvis In Concert* special in June 1977. His drug-ravaged body, however, had had enough, and on 16 August 1977, he died of heart failure at his Graceland home.

Elvis was the first and ultimate rock star, as well as playing a massive part in creating the 'rock' that he was 'star' of. He was the most charismatic performer in popular music history, and one of the most talented; and his latest number one, a 2005 remix of 1968's 'A Little Less Conversation', proves that he still lives.





A-Z of Artists

Paul Anka

(Singer/songwriter, b. 1941)

Born in Canada of Lebanese parents, Anka was a child prodigy, whose chart career started with 1957's multi-



million selling UK/US No. 1, 'Diana' (written about the family babysitter). 1959's 'Lonely Boy', another US No. 1 was another of his 53 US hit singles by 1983. Rarely a rocker, he duetted with protégée Odia Coates on his third US chart-topper, 1974's sentimental '(You're) Having My Baby'. Anka also wrote 'It Doesn't Matter Anymore', a big Buddy Holly hit, and British lyrics to Frank Sinatra's 'My Way' signature tune.

Chet Atkins

(Guitar, producer, 1924–2001)

Tennessee-born Chester Burton Atkins, whose father was a music teacher, was one of the most influential twentieth-century guitarists, and was initially influenced by the finger and thumb-picking country-style playing of Merle Travis. Signed to RCA from 1947, he made scores of mainly instrumental albums, and in 1955 became the head of RCA's new Nashville studio, producing artists signed to the label, and working with numerous country artists, including Don Gibson, Waylon Jennings, Elvis Presley and Jim Reeves. He also produced for pop artists such as Perry Como, and was recognized by Gretsch guitars, who named their Chet Atkins Country Gentleman model after him. One of his most significant signings to RCA was successful black country singer Charley Pride, as few black acts were tolerated in Nashville. Atkins also made duet albums with notable pickers like Les Paul, Jerry Reed and Mark Knopfler (1992's 'Neck And Neck').

Frankie Avalon

(Trumpet, vocals, b. 1939)

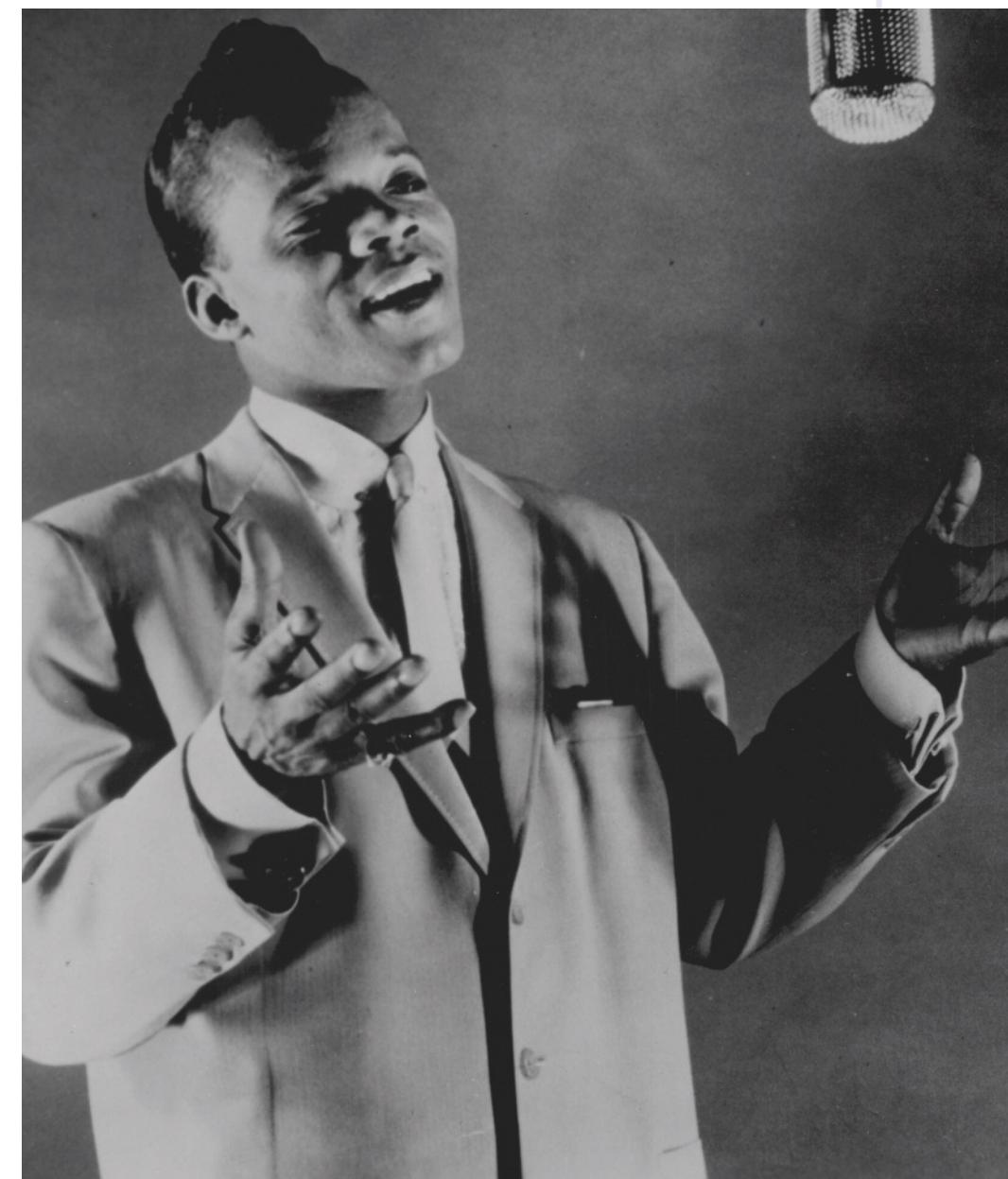
As rock'n'roll lost its way in the late 1950s, good looks replaced musical ability and Philadelphia-born Francis Avalon became a teen idol via a series of forgettable pop hits like 1959's million-selling US No. 1, 'Venus'. Frequent exposure on the *American Bandstand* TV show produced two dozen US hits by 1962, and Avalon co-starred with Annette Funicello in teenage beach movies, later guesting in 1978's *Grease*.



Harry Belafonte

(Vocals, b. 1927)

Born in Harlem to Caribbean parents, the young Belafonte lived in Jamaica for five years. Multi-talented, he starred on stage and screen (in *Carmen Jones*, 1954), becoming a folk singer in 1955. He led a brief calypso craze with 'Jamaica Farewell', 'Mary's Boy Child' and the million-selling 'Banana Boat (Day-O)'. The title song from 1957's *Island In The Sun*, in which he starred, was his final hit single. However, he sold millions of LPs: *Belafonte and Calypso* (both 1956) topped the US chart. Regarded as a black elder statesman, he was behind 1985's USA For Africa single, 'We Are The World'.



LaVern Baker

(Vocals, b. 1929)

Chicago-born Delores Williams sang in church choirs, but after bandleader Fletcher Henderson discovered her, she became the first black torch singer of the rock era, and in 1953, was one of the early artists signed to Atlantic Records. Many of her 20 US R&B hits were novelty items, including her 1957 No. 1, 'Jim Dandy', but several, like 1955's 'Tweedle Dee', were successfully covered for white audiences by Georgia Gibbs, and Baker unjustly lost out.

Hank Ballard

(Bandleader, vocals, 1936–2003)

Alabama-raised Henry 'Hank' Ballard fronted The Midnighers (previously The Royals). 1954 brought the Detroit group four big US R&B hits with risqué lyrics about a fictitious 'Annie'. In 1960, the group released the original version of 'The Twist', written by Ballard, but the younger, more photogenic Chubby Checker took the million sales and the glory. It is said that James Brown's wild stage show was influenced by Ballard, who later worked in Brown's revue.

Far Left

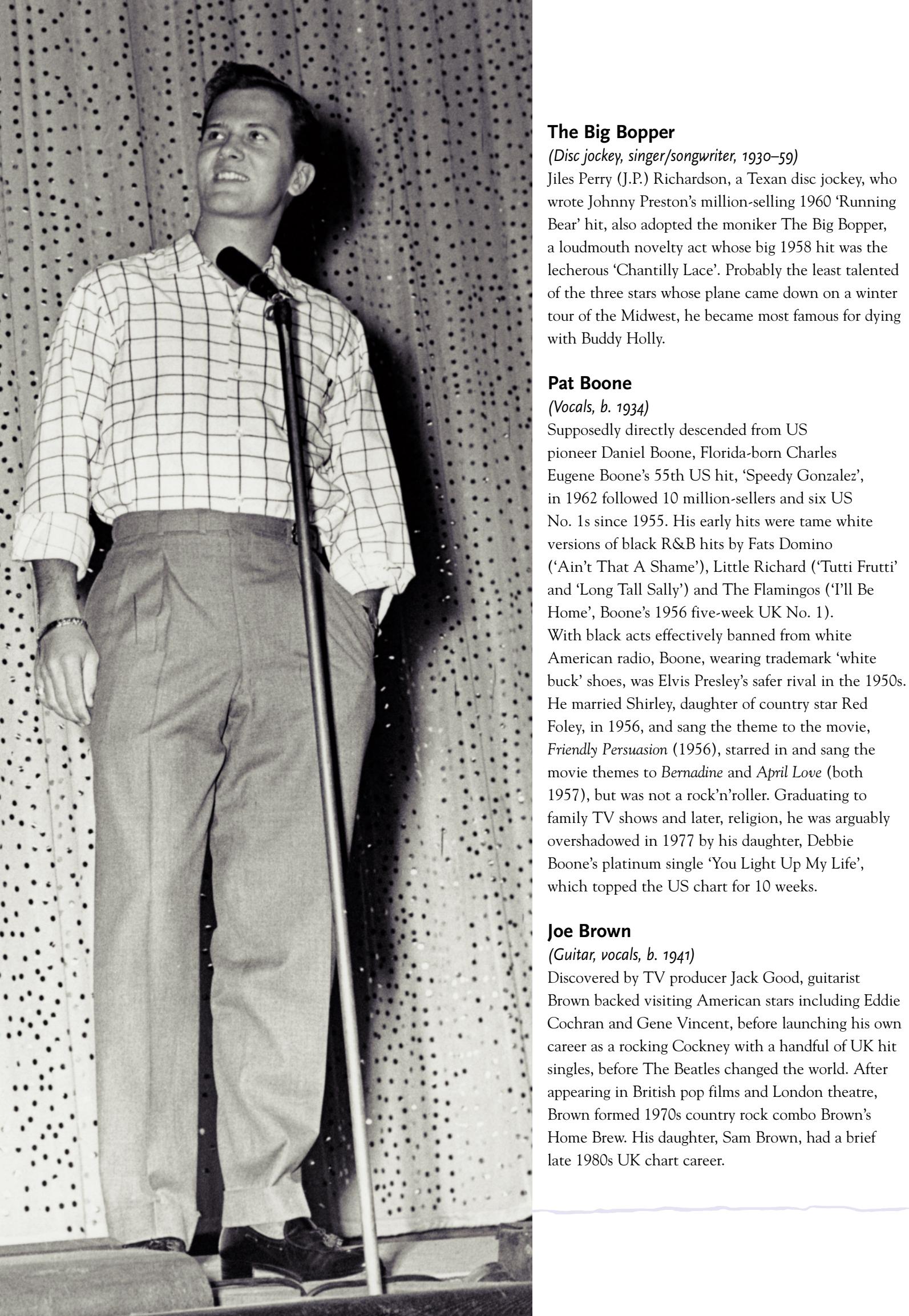
Mark Knopfler and George Harrison are among those influenced by Chet Atkins.

Far Left

Clean-cut smoothie Frankie Avalon.

Below

Doo-wopper Hank Ballard brought a mixture of gospel influences and raunchy R&B to the vocal group that he joined in 1953.



The Big Bopper

(Disc jockey, singer/songwriter, 1930–59)

Jiles Perry (J.P.) Richardson, a Texan disc jockey, who wrote Johnny Preston's million-selling 1960 'Running Bear' hit, also adopted the moniker The Big Bopper, a loudmouth novelty act whose big 1958 hit was the lecherous 'Chantilly Lace'. Probably the least talented of the three stars whose plane came down on a winter tour of the Midwest, he became most famous for dying with Buddy Holly.

Pat Boone

(Vocals, b. 1934)

Supposedly directly descended from US pioneer Daniel Boone, Florida-born Charles Eugene Boone's 55th US hit, 'Speedy Gonzalez', in 1962 followed 10 million-sellers and six US No. 1s since 1955. His early hits were tame white versions of black R&B hits by Fats Domino ('Ain't That A Shame'), Little Richard ('Tutti Frutti' and 'Long Tall Sally') and The Flamingos ('I'll Be Home', Boone's 1956 five-week UK No. 1). With black acts effectively banned from white American radio, Boone, wearing trademark 'white buck' shoes, was Elvis Presley's safer rival in the 1950s. He married Shirley, daughter of country star Red Foley, in 1956, and sang the theme to the movie, *Friendly Persuasion* (1956), starred in and sang the movie themes to *Bernadine* and *April Love* (both 1957), but was not a rock'n'roller. Graduating to family TV shows and later, religion, he was arguably overshadowed in 1977 by his daughter, Debbie Boone's platinum single 'You Light Up My Life', which topped the US chart for 10 weeks.

Joe Brown

(Guitar, vocals, b. 1941)

Discovered by TV producer Jack Good, guitarist Brown backed visiting American stars including Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent, before launching his own career as a rocking Cockney with a handful of UK hit singles, before The Beatles changed the world. After appearing in British pop films and London theatre, Brown formed 1970s country rock combo Brown's Home Brew. His daughter, Sam Brown, had a brief late 1980s UK chart career.

Johnny and Dorsey Burnette

(Vocal duo, 1958–61)

The Memphis-born brothers Dorsey (1932–79) and Johnny (1934–64) were both successful amateur boxers and formed the Rock And Roll Trio c. 1953 with guitarist Paul Burlison. Their rockabilly, too wild for the time, was later regarded as seminal, and the Burnettes moved to California, where they began songwriting (Ricky Nelson scored hits with their songs, 'It's Late' and 'Waitin' In School') and restarted recording careers. Dorsey sang country, Johnny pop with four US Top 20 hits in 1960–61 before he died in a boating accident.

Freddie Cannon

(Vocals, b. 1940)

Massachusetts-born Frederick Picariello got his nickname Freddy 'Boom Boom' Cannon from the bass drum sound on his hits, which began in 1959 with 'Tallahassee Lassie', a US Top 10 item written by his mother. His only million-seller, the same year's 'Way Down Yonder In New Orleans', continued his place-name fixation, but thereafter his hits became smaller until 1962's 'Palisades Park' restored him to the US Top 3. With over 20 hits by 1965, Cannon was respected, but ultimately unable to change with musical tastes.

Johnny Cash

(Guitar, singer/songwriter, 1932–2003)

Arkansas-born Cash enjoyed a 49-year career involving several periods of huge popularity. After USAF service, he formed a trio with Luther Perkins (guitar) and Marshall Chapman (bass). Auditioning for Sam Phillips at Sun Records in Memphis, Cash played rockabilly, scoring more than 20 US country hits and several US pop hits before signing with Columbia/CBS in late 1958, when he became among the biggest country music attractions, remaining with the label until 1987. Cash became an American treasure during the 1960s, particularly after recording live albums at *Folsom Prison* (1968) and *San Quentin* (1969), which both went triple platinum.

In 1968, he married June Carter (of The Carter Family), and they fronted a hugely popular live revue for many years. After 1976, further mainstream success seemed an impossibility, until producer Rick



Rubin offered to produce him; 1994's *American Recordings* was the first of four Grammy-winning albums on Rubin's label. Cash's daughter, Rosanne, keeps the Cash name popular.

Above

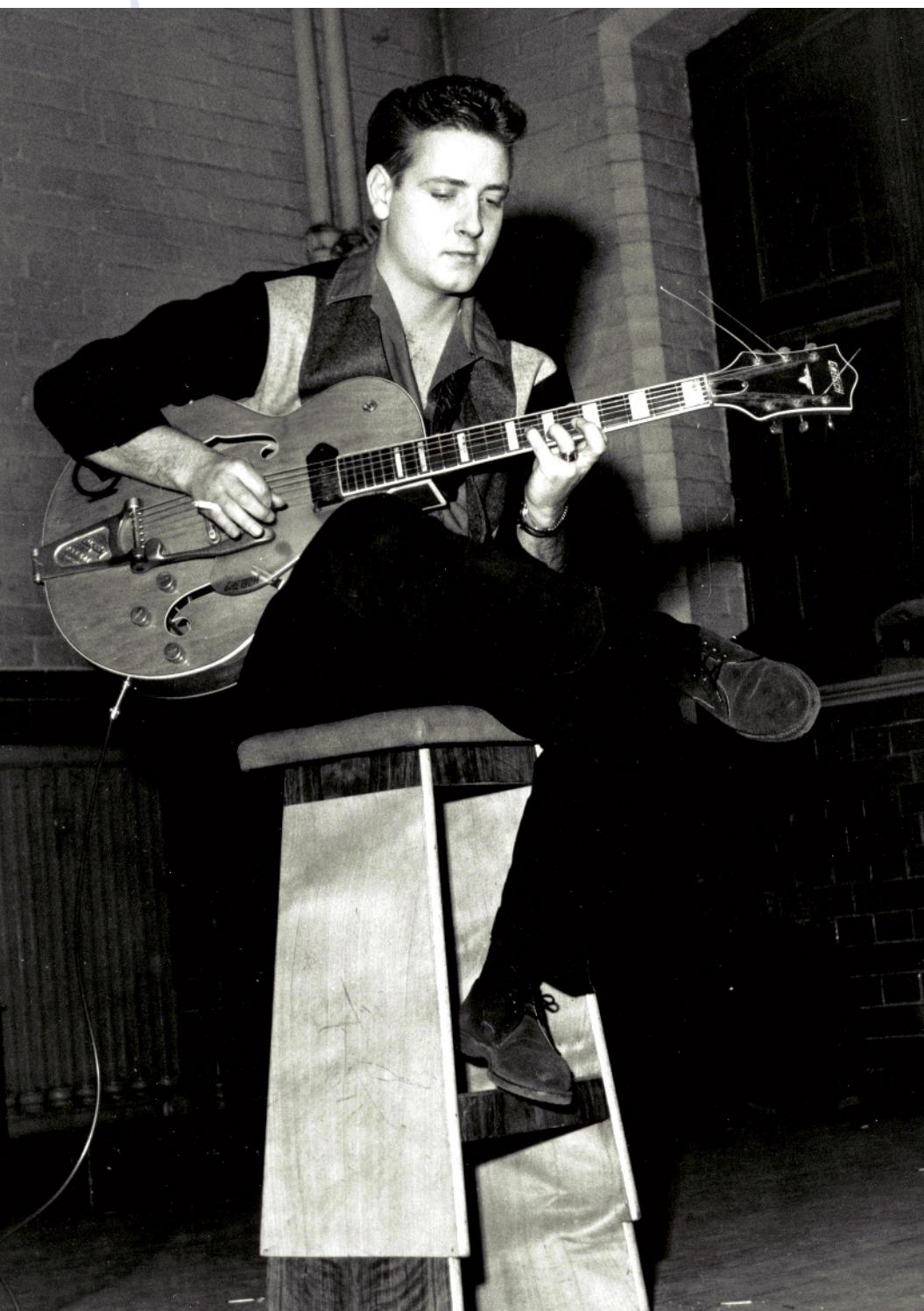
Johnny Cash, the 'Man In Black'.

Far Left

Crooner Pat Boone sold more

records than anyone except

Elvis in the 1950s.



Above
Influential rockabilly guitarist Eddie Cochran had a brief but prolific career, and his record label Rockstar Records has released more of his music posthumously than was released during his life.

The Coasters

(Vocal group, 1955–61)

Formed in 1955 in Los Angeles by ex-members of The Robins: Carl Gardner and Bobby Nunn, with Billy Guy and Leon Hughes, plus Adolph Jacobs (guitar), The Coasters were a black act enjoying popularity across the colour divide. Produced by white New Yorkers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who also wrote their often humorous hits, they scored with million-sellers

'Searchin" (1957, US Top 3), 'Yakety Yak' (1958, US No. 1/UK Top 20), 'Charlie Brown' (1959, US Top 3/UK Top 10) and 'Poison Ivy' (US Top 10/ UK Top 20, later covered by The Rolling Stones). Tracks featured sax player King Curtis. Hits ended in early 1960s.

Eddie Cochran

(Guitar, singer/songwriter, 1938–60)

Oklahoma-born Cochran was a rising star of rock'n'roll, guest-starring in 1956's 'The Girl Can't Help It', the best ever rock movie. He wrote songs with lyrics that spoke to teenagers like 1958's 'Summertime Blues' (US Top 10/UK Top 20) and 1959's 'C'mon Everybody' (UK Top 10). After dying in a car crash while on tour in Britain with Gene Vincent, his UK popularity increased, with 1960's 'Three Steps To Heaven' topping the UK charts. After Presley and Holly, Cochran is probably the best-loved US rock'n'roll star in Britain, and among his other hits were 1959's 'Teenage Heaven' and 'Something Else' and his excellent cover of the Ray Charles classic, 'Hallelujah I Love Her So'. 1960's *Eddie Cochran Memorial Album* made the Top 10 of the UK album chart.

Danny and The Juniors

(Vocal group, 1955–present)

Originally known as The Juvenaires, this doo-wop group was formed in 1955 while members Danny Rapp, Frank Maffei, Joe Terranova and Dave White were still at high school in Philadelphia. They signed to Singular Records, owned by Artie Singer, and made the 1957 million-seller 'At The Hop', which topped the US singles chart for seven weeks on ABC-Paramount, and made the UK Top 3. Originally titled 'Do The Bop', it was written by Singer, White and Joe Madara. A similar 1958 follow-up, 'Rock & Roll Is Here To Stay', made the US Top 20. Rapp apparently committed suicide in 1983, but the group continued billed as Danny and The Juniors Featuring Joe Terry.

Bobby Darin

(Singer/songwriter, 1936–73)

Aged 20, New York-born Walden Robert Cassotto's chart career started with the novelty million-seller, 'Splish Splash'. Leading The Rinky Dinks, he next charted with 'Early In The Morning' (later a hit for

Buddy Holly), and in 1957 'Queen Of The Hop' also sold a million. His major breakthrough was 1959's million-selling 'Dream Lover', followed by his Sinatra-esque US/UK No. 1 cover of 'Mack The Knife', the first of several revamped oldies and novelties. He starred in *Come September* (1961) with his wife, Sandra Dee. When his popularity fell as British beat predominated, he became a troubadour, singing Tim Hardin songs from 1966–67, but died during heart surgery. Kevin Spacey's 2004 biopic *Beyond The Sea* helped keep the memory alive.



1975's Phil Spector-produced 'Born To Be With You' and 1989's Dave Edmunds-produced 'Yo Frankie' confirmed his legendary status.

Fats Domino

(Piano, singer/songwriter, b. 1928)

Signed to Imperial Records, New Orleans-born Antoine Domino's first million-seller, 'The Fat Man' (1949) began a run of over 60 US pop and R&B hits by 1964, many written by Domino with Dave Bartholomew. Other million-selling classics included 'Ain't That A Shame' (1955), 'Bo Weevil', 'I'm In Love Again' and 'Blueberry Hill' (all 1956), 'Blue Monday' (featured in *The Girl Can't Help It*) and 'I'm Walkin'" (both 1957) and 'Whole Lotta Loving' (1958). Domino's secret appears to be that he has never changed, his smoky Louisiana accent above his percussive piano-playing, making him instantly recognizable. Twist king Ernest Evans used the name Chubby Checker in polite emulation. Domino's last US hit was a 1968 cover of 'Lady Madonna' by The Beatles, who apparently wrote the song in Domino's style. In September 2005, Domino made international news bulletins when his house was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, but happily survived.

Left
As well as being one of the most popular rock'n'roll teen idols of the decade, Bobby Darin was a versatile performer and actor, who was successful in other musical genres such as, folk, country, pop and jazz.

Below
The best-selling African-American singer of the 1950s and early 1960s, Fats Domino is renowned for his individualistic piano playing with its boogie-woogie influences.



Dion and The Belmonts

(Vocal group, 1958–present)

Formed in New York's Bronx in 1958 by Dion DiMucci, Angelo D'Aleo, Carlo Mastangelo and Fred Milano, this doo-wop group had had several US hits by 1960, including 1959's 'A Teenager In Love', also a UK hit. Dion went solo in 1960, scoring more US hits, the biggest 1961's million-selling US No. 1, 'Runaround Sue', but label changes and drug addiction limited his big hits to the million-selling 1968 hit, 'Abraham, Martin & John'. Periodic reunions with The Belmonts,



Above
Duane Eddy was one of the most successful instrumentalists of the decade. His twangy style was unique to rock'n'roll, and was inspired by his childhood hero, cowboy Gene Autry.

The Drifters

(Vocal group, 1953–present)

Formed in 1953, various versions of The Drifters have existed ever since. Among the significant members of the group among the dozens who have been involved are Clyde McPhatter (lead vocalist 1953–54), Johnny Moore (lead vocalist 1955–57, 1963–78, 1985–98), Ben E. King (lead vocalist 1958–60, 1981–85) and Rudy Lewis (lead vocalist 1960–64). Signed to Atlantic Records from 1953–72, The Drifters' biggest hits with McPhatter were 'Money Honey' (1953) and 'Honey Love' (1954). Manager George Treadwell owned the group name, and after Moore left in 1957, disbanded the group, replacing them with The Five Crowns (including Ben E. King), which he renamed The Drifters, who released 1959's million-sellers 'There Goes My Baby' and 'Dance With Me' (produced by Leiber and Stoller) and 1960's US No. 1 'Save The Last Dance For Me'. Leiber and Stoller also produced the group with Rudy Lewis singing lead, and hits continued with 1962's 'Up On The Roof' and 1964's 'Under The Boardwalk', until Lewis died of a heart attack. Moore took over lead vocals for less soulful hits

including 'Saturday Night At The Movies' (1964), but US pop hits ended in 1966. When Treadwell died, his wife, Faye, took control, and signed the group to Bell Records, for whom they made several ersatz UK soul hits from 1972. King's return restored some credibility.

Duane Eddy

(Guitar, b. 1938)

With producer/co-writer Lee Hazlewood, Eddy scored 20 US hits between 1958 and 1961, showcasing his 'twangy' guitar on the Jamie label, part-owned by Hazlewood. Eddy's US Top 10 hits were 1958's 'Rebel Rouser', 1959's 'Forty Miles Of Bad Road' and 1960's 'Because They're Young'. After signing with RCA in 1962, his appeal largely left him, his biggest hit being 1962's US Top 20 '(Dance With The) Guitar Man'. After a 20-year plus US chart absence, he returned as featured instrumentalist on a revival of his 1960 'Peter Gunn' hit by The Art Of Noise.

Adam Faith

(Vocals, 1940–2003)

London-born Terence Nelhams sang in skiffle group The Worried Men, before changing his name at UK TV guru Jack Good's suggestion. After early flops, arranger John Barry provided string backing for 1959's UK No. 1 'What Do You Want', while 1960's follow-up 'Poor Me' also topped the chart, and Faith accumulated 22 more hits by 1966. In 1972, he discovered Leo Sayer, and in 1974, starred with David



Right
With his good looks and catchy pop numbers, Adam Faith proved to be a serious rival to Cliff Richard, offering the latter's army of teenage fans an alternative idol.



Essex in *Stardust*. 1988 brought TV stardom as Budgie, and in 1993, he starred with Zoe Wanamaker in the *Love Hurts* TV series. During the early 1990s, he provided investment advice in the *Daily Mail*.

Connie Francis

(Vocals, b. 1938)

New Jersey-born Concetta Franconero appeared on Arthur Godfrey's TV talent show, and while still at university, signed to MGM Records. 1958's UK chart topper, 'Who's Sorry Now' was the first of eight mainly sentimental million-selling US hits, including 1959's 'Among My Souvenirs', and 1960's 'Everybody's Somebody's Fool', the first of three US No. 1s. Her second UK No. 1, 1958's 'Stupid Cupid', only made the US Top 20, but was one of 56 US hits before 1970. Her career was interrupted in 1974, when she was victim of a sex attack, but she returned to performing in 1978.

Alan Freed

(Disc jockey, 1922–65)

Freed, the DJ who gave rock'n'roll its name, fronted Moondog's Rock'n'Roll Party at Cleveland's WJW radio station, where he programmed mainly black R&B

plus some early white rock'n'roll records. His vocal jive delighted his audience, and he also appeared in several early rock'n'roll exploitation movies, including *Rock Around The Clock*, *Rock, Rock, Rock* (both 1956) and others. He accepted a songwriting credit on Chuck Berry's 'Maybellene' in exchange for helping to make it a hit, and was accused of payola, after which he died an alcoholic accused of income tax evasion.

Etta James

(Vocals, b. 1938)

Los Angeles-born Jamesetta Hawkins was discovered by Johnny Otis, who helped her write her first US R&B hit (and four-week chart-topper), 1955's 'The Wallflower', an 'answer record' to Hank Ballard's 'Work With Me Annie'. Her 1960 breakthrough came with four US Hot 100 singles, including two duets with Harvey Fuqua of The Moonglows. Crossover R&B hits continued through the 1960s, but heroin addiction cramped her style. Her biggest hit was 1967's 'Tell Mama' (US Top 30), and the same year's 'I'd Rather Go Blind' (covered by Britain's Chicken Shack) is arguably this latter-day anti-drug campaigner's best-known song.

**Above**

Surf-pop duo Jan and Dean first began singing together after football practice at high school, and their first stage performance was as The Barons at a school dance.

Jan and Dean

(Vocal duo, 1957–66)

In 1957, at Los Angeles high school, Jan Berry (1941–2004) and Dean Torrence (b. 1940), together with Bruce Johnston (later of The Beach Boys), drummer Sandy Nelson and Arnie Ginsburg, formed The Barons. Berry, Torrence and Ginsburg recorded 'Jennie Lee' (about a local stripper), which was released in 1958 and credited to Jan and Arnie, as Torrence was in the US Army reserves. Although it made the US Top 10, other Jan and Arnie singles flopped, and as Torrence returned, Ginsburg departed. With initial help from Lou Adler and Herb Alpert, Jan and Dean made surfing-style records. Their biggest hit was 1963 US No. 1, 'Surf City', co-written by Berry and Beach Boy Brian Wilson, while Torrence sang on 1966 Beach Boys hit, 'Barbara Ann'. Also in 1966, Berry was seriously injured in a car crash, signalling the end of the duo as chart contenders.

Right

Johnny and The Hurricanes developed a strong following in Europe, and in the early 1960s were supported at a show at the Star Club in Hamburg by a little-known band named The Beatles.

Little Willie John

(Vocals, 1937–68)

Arkansas-born William Edgar John, who moved to Detroit as a child, was signed to King Records from 1955. A string of US R&B Top 20 hits followed, several of which crossed over to the US pop chart. He is said to have influenced many major soul singers of the 1960s, and his best-known hits included 'Need Your Love So Bad' (1956, covered by Fleetwood Mac), and 'Fever' (1956, US R&B No. 1/US pop Top 30, later covered with great success by Peggy Lee). John, whose sister was Mable John (once of The Raelettes, Ray Charles' vocal backing group), was convicted of manslaughter in 1966, and died of a heart attack in Washington State Prison.

Johnny and The Hurricanes

(Vocal/instrumental group, 1958–61)

Formed in Ohio in 1958 by John Pocisk (aka Johnny Paris, saxophone), Paul Tesluk (organ), Dave Yorko (guitar), Lionel Mattice (bass) and Tony Kaye (drums, replaced by Don Staczek on 'Red River Rock' and by Bo Savich), the group accumulated nine US hits between 1959 and 1961, the biggest of which was 1959's 'Red River Rock', a rocked-up version of 'Red River Valley'. The formula for their hits, most of which were dominated by Tesluk's organ, was to play well-known tunes in rock'n'roll style (e.g. 'Blue Tail Fly' became 1960's US Top 20 hit, 'Beatnik Fly'). The group disbanded in 1961, reputedly due to exhaustion from continual touring. John Pocisk, who performed until 2005, died in 2006.

**Johnny Kidd and The Pirates**

(Vocal/instrumental group, 1959–67)

Londoner Frederick Heath was vocalist/leader of one of the first credible UK beat groups. Wearing a patch over a defective eye, he became Johnny Kidd, and his backing group (guitarist Alan Caddy, Brian Gregg on bass and drummer Clem Cattini) The Pirates. Ten UK hits between 1959 and 1964 included chart-topping 'Shakin' All Over' (1960) and 'I'll Never Get Over You' (1963, Top 5). When The Pirates left Kidd in 1961, later joining The Tornados, they were replaced by Frank Farley (drums), John Spence (bass) and Mick Green (guitar). Kidd died in a car crash, and became a cult hero.

B.B. King

(Guitar, vocals, b. 1925)

Riley B. King, from Indianola, Mississippi, is arguably the last surviving authentic blues artist. Orphaned, he took up guitar aged 15, turning professional after US military service. In 1947, he moved to Memphis and lived with cousin Bukka White. There, he worked on a local radio station, acquiring his B.B. ('Blues Boy') epithet, also working with Bobby Bland and Johnny Ace. First recording in 1949, his breakthrough came with 1951's four-week US R&B chart-topper 'Three O'Clock Blues'. R&B hits continued, but after signing with ABC-Paramount circa 1964, he regularly crossed over to the US pop singles chart, also making the US pop album chart from 1968, with big albums like *Live And Well* and *Completely Well* (both 1959), *Live In Cook County Jail* (1971) and 1974's gold-certified *Together For The First Time ... Live with Bobby Bland*. King toured relentlessly, and was said to have played 300 gigs per year between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s. Widely regarded as a true legend, King still performs and records, and has frequently guested with younger blues guitarists such as Eric Clapton, even sharing a 1989 minor US hit single, 'When Love Comes To Town', with U2.

The Kingston Trio

(Vocal/instrumental group, 1958–67)

Between 1958, when they formed, and 1963, The Kingston Trio, comprising Dave Guard (vocals, banjo) and vocalists/guitarists Bob Shane and Nick Reynolds released 17 albums, 10 of which made the US Top 3,



and seven of which were certified gold. Wearing matching striped shirts and with short hair, parents and middle-class kids in America saw them as the acceptable and non-threatening face of popular music. The career of the trio, who regarded their music as folk, even if it somehow lacked the political bite of The Weavers, took off in late 1958 with the US No. 1 'Tom Dooley', although later hit singles were few, but LPs were another story. Guard left in 1961, and was replaced by John Stewart (1939–2008). The arrival of The Beatles pushed them down the ladder and the group disbanded in 1967.

Above

B.B. King has called each of his guitars 'Lucille' since the day in 1949 when he nearly lost his precious Gibson L-30 guitar in a fire allegedly started by a woman named Lucille.

Buddy Knox*(Guitar, vocals, 1933–99)*

Texas-born Knox formed The Rhythm Orchids at West Texas State high school with Jimmy Bowen (bass, vocals). 'Party Doll' (by Knox) and 'I'm Stickin' With You' (by Bowen), recorded by Norman Petty, which possibly influenced Buddy Holly to choose Petty as his producer, were released as the two sides of a 1957 million-selling single. Thereafter, Knox managed lesser hits until 1961, but Bowen became a label executive and remains a much in-demand record producer.

Brenda Lee*(Vocals, b. 1944)*

The diminutive Georgia-born Brenda Tarpley turned professional aged six, and was known as 'Little Miss Dynamite', debuting on the US pop and country charts in early 1957. 1959's 'Sweet Nothin's', a sexy rocker, was her first US Top 5 hit, and her biggest success came with 1960's million-selling US No. 1 ballad, 'I'm Sorry'. 'Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree' was another 1960 million-seller, and she accumulated over 50 US pop hits by the end of the decade, also releasing 20 UK hits by 1965.

**Jerry Lee Lewis***(Piano, vocals, b. 1935)*

After signing to Sun Records in 1957, Louisiana-born rock'n'roller Lewis, noted for his percussive piano style, opened his account with two million-selling US Top 3 hits, 'Whole Lot Of Shakin' Going On' and 'Great Balls Of Fire' (both 1957), but caused major media controversy during a 1958 UK tour when it was discovered that his wife, who was also his cousin, was 13 years old (legal in parts of the US, unacceptable in the UK). This blighted his pop career, but from the late 1960s onwards, he combined the rockabilly that made him

famous with country music, becoming a major US star with over 60 US country hits, many making the Top 10, including his chart-topping 1972 revival of 'Chantilly Lace'. Now over 70, Lewis continues to tour, and remains one of the greatest early rock'n'rollers. Dennis Quaid played him in 1989's *Great Balls Of Fire* movie.

Little Richard*(Piano, vocals, b. 1932)*

Georgia-born Richard Penniman, who combines frantic vocals with uninhibited pianistics, was one of 12 children. Raised in a religious family, he started recording for RCA in 1951 after winning a talent contest. Chart success followed his signing with Specialty Records, where Bumps Blackwell produced a series of classic rock'n'roll tracks between 1955 and 1958, including 1955's 'Tutti Frutti', 1956's million-selling 'Long Tall Sally' and 'Rip It Up', 1957's 'Lucille' and 'Keep A Knockin'' and 1958's 'Good Golly Miss Molly',



among others. While touring Australia in 1957, he abandoned the music business, apparently after seeing the Russian Sputnik space rocket, which he felt was a divine sign to change his behaviour. He studied to become a preacher, only recording gospel music but returned to the fray in the mid-1960s. While he remained a dynamic live performer and an undoubted legend, his records rarely matched his 1950s rock'n'roll hits.

Frankie Lymon and The Teenagers*(Vocal group, 1955–65)*

New Yorker Lymon (1942–68) was invited to join a school vocal group with Sherman Gaines (1940–78), Jimmy Merchant, Joe Negroni and Herman Santiago. Before finding Lymon, the others, who were known as The Premiers, were working on a song they had written, but needed a soprano lead voice, a vacancy Lymon filled. The result was the 1956 million-selling US Top 10 hit, 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love', which also topped the UK chart. The group managed a few more minor hits from 1956–57, the best being 1957's UK Top 5 hit, 'Baby Baby', but without the novelty aspect, the group were in decline. Lymon made the US chart with 1960's 'Little Bitty Pretty One', but drug problems resulted in his early death. Later, both The Beach Boys and Diana Ross recorded 'Why Do Fools Fall In Love', and clearly The Jackson Five were strongly influenced by The Teenagers.

The Moonglows*(Vocal group, 1952–60, 1972–present)*

Formed in 1952 in Cleveland, Ohio, this doo-wop outfit comprised Harvey Fuqua, Bobby Lester, Alexander 'Pete' Graves, Prentiss Barnes and guitarist Billy Johnson. Originally called The Crazy Sounds, they changed their name at Alan Freed's suggestion. After several minor singles, they signed with Chess Records in 1954, when they released their first hit, 'Sincerely', which credited Freed as co-writer of the song. Six further US R&B Top 20 hits followed by 1958, the last of which, 'Ten Commandments Of Love', is regarded as their classic. Fuqua, whose uncle, Charlie Fuqua, was a member of the Ink Spots, left in 1958. He then joined Motown as producer and songwriter for The (Detroit) Spinners, among others.



**Above**

Ricky Nelson
(*Vocals, 1940–85*)

Despite being a teenage idol, Ricky Nelson had a strong musical background, and enjoyed working with a variety of highly regarded musicians, such as The Jordanaires and Johnny and Dorsey Burnette.

Born into a showbiz family – his father was bandleader Ozzie Nelson – Eric Hilliard Nelson starred in the radio show and TV sitcom, *The Adventures Of Ozzie & Harriet*, with his family. In 1956, a girlfriend told him she preferred Elvis Presley, so he made a record. 1957's million-selling 'I'm Walking'/'A Teenager's Romance' started a career that produced over 50 US hits by 1973, including more million-sellers: 1957's 'Be-Bop Baby' and 'Stood Up', 1958's 'Believe What You Say', US No. 1 'Poor Little Fool' and 'Lonesome Tears' and 1961's 'Travelin' Man'. A 1963 label change brought fewer and smaller hits, as the teenage pop star Ricky became the grown-up country rock star Rick. His last million-seller was 1972's 'Garden Party' and he died in a plane crash.

Roy Orbison

(*Singer/songwriter, 1936–88*)

Right
Johnny Otis was an A&R man and an influential disk jockey as well as a performer and composer; and as well as 'discovering' many artists, his 'Every Beat Of My Heart' would go on to be a huge hit for Gladys Knight.

he joined The Traveling Wilburys with George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne, who all held him in high esteem, but he died of a heart attack before he could take real advantage of his restored popularity.

Johnny Otis

(*Bandleader, singer/songwriter, b. 1921*)

Of Greek parentage, California-born John Veliotis topped the US R&B chart twice in 1950 with 'Double Crossing Blues' and 'Mistrustin' Blues', both credited to The Johnny Otis Orchestra. After moving from Berkeley to Los Angeles, he supposedly discovered such notable R&B vocalists as 'Little' Esther Phillips, Willie Mae 'Big Mama' Thornton, Etta James, Sugar Pie DeSanto, Hank Ballard, Jackie Wilson and Little Willie John, as well as The Robins (who became The Coasters), all of whom were featured vocalists in his band. More US R&B hits followed, the first one to cross over being 1958's 'Willie And The Hand Jive' (US Top 10). Cliff Richard covered the song in the UK where Otis was already known for his noisy 1957 UK Top 3 hit, 'Ma, He's Making Eyes At Me', featuring vocalist Marie Adams. A veritable R&B pioneer, the Otis tradition is being maintained by his singer/guitarist son, Shuggie Otis (b. 1953).

**Carl Perkins**

(*Guitar, vocals, 1932–88*)

Tennessee-born Perkins was a rockabilly pioneer. Signed to Sun Records in 1955, he is most famous for 1956's US country chart-topper/US Pop Top 3/UK Top 10 'Blue Suede Shoes'. On his way to New York for a

TV appearance, Perkins was involved in a serious car crash, and a 1956 Elvis Presley cover version of the song was a million-seller. Perkins was sidelined and despite continuing to record, never again reached the US Top 50. As George Harrison was a big fan, The Beatles covered the Perkins compositions 'Honey Don't', 'Matchbox' and 'Everybody's Trying To Be My Baby', but attempts to revive his career were generally fruitless, and he played in the Johnny Cash touring show for 10 years from 1965, eventually dying of throat cancer.

**The Platters**

(*Vocal group, 1953–present*)

Manager/producer Buck Ram formed The Platters in Los Angeles in 1953 with original members Tony Williams (lead vocalist), David Lynch (tenor), Alex Hodge (baritone), replaced by Paul Robi, Herb Reed (bass) and Zola Taylor. Signed to Mercury Records, their smooth harmonies brought hits with 1955's million-selling 'Only You (And You Alone)', followed two months later by a second US chart-topper, 'The Great Pretender'. Appearing in several rock'n'roll exploitation movies, the group released 'My Prayer' (1956), which also topped the US chart, and 1958 brought two more US No. 1s, 'Twilight Time' and 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes'. After 40 US hits by 1967 and numerous personnel changes, many Platters line-ups with few, if any, original members remain active.

Cliff Richard

(*Vocals, b. 1940*)

Born Harry Webb in India, Cliff Richard is the ultimate British pop star, with over 100 UK hit singles to his

credit since 1958, when 'Move It', widely regarded as the first credible British rock'n'roll record, reached the UK Top 3. More than a dozen UK No. 1s include 1959's 'Living Doll' and 'Travellin' Light', 'The Young Ones' (1962) and 'Summer Holiday' (1963), both title songs of movies in which Richard starred with The Shadows, his backing group until 1968. Circa 1966, he publicly proclaimed that he was a Christian, and has since released both religious and secular records. After a number of his singles failed to chart during the 1970s, he returned in 1979 with his 11th UK No. 1, 'We Don't Talk Anymore'. More recent chart-toppers include the Christmas singles: 1988's 'Mistletoe And Wine' and 1999's 'The Millennium Prayer'. Cliff Richard, initially the British answer to Elvis Presley, remains Britain's foremost domestic pop star, but remains largely unknown in the US.

Left

The Platters were one of the most successful vocal groups of the early 1950s and were the first rock'n'roll group to have a Top 10 US album.

Below

Cliff Richard was the first artist in Britain to emulate the Presley look. His hair- and dress-style mimicked the teen-idol's, and he adopted a rock attitude when performing: rarely looking directly at the camera or audience, or even smiling.



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Above
Prolific songwriter Neil Sedaka

Right
Screamin' Jay Hawkins originally intended to become an opera singer, but his lack of success led him to the career of blues pianist, singer and wildly theatrical performer.

Far Right
Many considered Tommy Steele Britain's answer to Elvis Presley.

Bobby Rydell (*Vocals, b. 1942*)

Philadelphia-born Robert Ridarelli regularly appeared on Paul Whiteman's TV talent show, and played with Frankie Avalon in *Rocco and The Saints*, before signing with the local Cameo label in 1959. His biggest success was 1960's million-selling US Top 3 hit, 'Wild One', although the same year's 'Volare' (US Top 5) has aged better. Probably appreciated more for his good looks than his vocal prowess, Rydell accumulated 30 US hits by 1965.



Jack Scott

(*Singer/songwriter, b. 1936*)

Canadian Jack Scafone Jr. has enjoyed hits on three record labels since his 1958 breakthrough with the US Top 3 rock ballad, 'My True Love', whose full throttle rock'n'roll flipside, 'Leroy', also peaked just outside the US Top 10. When Scott left Carlton Records in 1959, after nine US hits in 18 months, he signed with Top Rank Records, instantly producing another US Top 5, 'What In The World's Come Over You'. He signed with Capitol Records in 1961 and was subsequently regarded as a country artist, although his early classics remain timeless.

Screamin' Jay Hawkins

(*Vocals, 1929–2000*)

Ohio-born ex-Golden Gloves champion boxer Jalacy Hawkins evolved a stage show in which his props included a coffin and a skull, and although he never actually achieved any hit records, his larger-than-life stage show brought him great popularity. He also co-wrote 'I Put A Spell On You', a song which was a UK hit for Nina Simone, Alan Price (ex-The Animals) and Bryan Ferry. Hawkins was surely a role model for Screaming Lord Sutch, Arthur Brown and others.

Neil Sedaka

(*Piano, singer/songwriter, b. 1939*)

New York-born Sedaka started writing songs as a teenager with lyricist Howard Greenfield. They wrote many hits for Sedaka, including 1959's 'Oh Carol', 1961's 'Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen' and 1962's US No. 1, 'Breaking Up Is Hard To Do'. The early 1970s saw a Sedaka renaissance when he made two albums

with what would become 10CC, followed with another US No. 1, 'Laughter In The Rain' (1974). 1975 brought a third US chart-topper, 'Bad Blood'. Sedaka and Greenfield also wrote 'Is This The Way To Amarillo', a major hit for Tony Christie.

The Shadows

(*Instrumental/vocal group, 1958–present*)

Formed in 1958 by Newcastle teenagers Hank B. Marvin (lead guitar) and Bruce Welch (rhythm guitar), the friends became the backbone of Cliff Richard's backing group, The Drifters, who were joined later in 1958 by Terence 'Jet' Harris (bass guitar) and Tony Meehan (drums). In 1959, the group became The Shadows and continued to back Richard until 1968, when the line-up included John Rostill (bass) and Brian Bennett (drums). By this time they had accumulated 26 UK hits including five UK No. 1s, among them 1961's 'Kon-Tiki', and 1962's 'Wonderful Land'. The Shadows have reformed spasmodically since 1974, but performed farewell tours in the twenty-first century.

Tommy Steele

(*Vocals, b. 1936*)

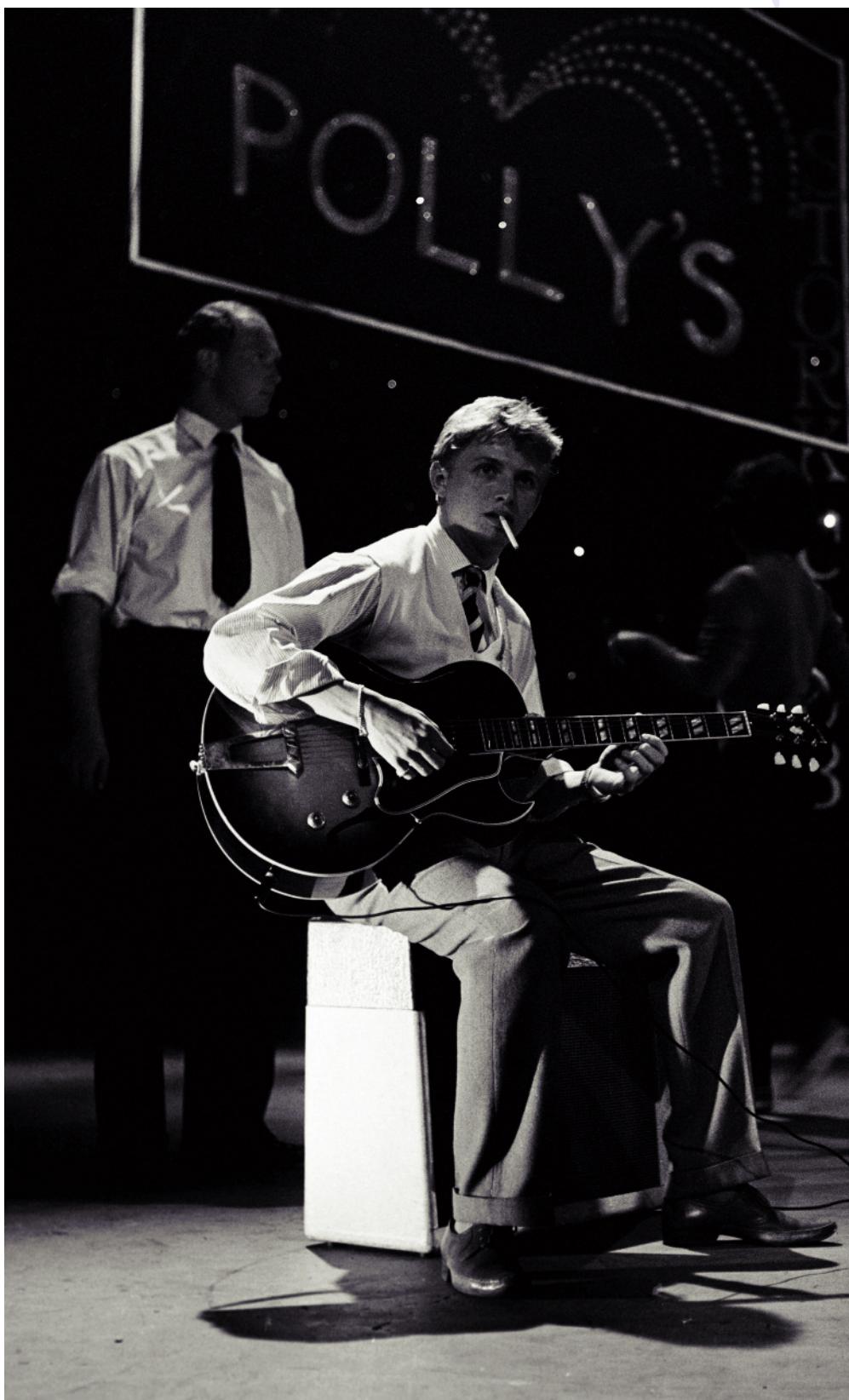
Born Thomas Hicks, Steele began playing ersatz British rock'n'roll at the London 2I's coffee bar. Spotted by Fleet Street photographer John Kennedy, who became his manager, Steele co-wrote 'Rock With The Caveman' with Lionel Bart, and the single made the UK Top 20. In 1957, Steele covered 'Singing The Blues', which topped the UK chart. Later that year the biopic, *The Tommy Steele Story*, was released, and Steele released more hits until 1961, when he moved into the thespian world, starring in stage and screen hits such as *Half A Sixpence* (1965), *The Happiest Millionaire* (1967) and *Finian's Rainbow* (1968).

Conway Twitty

(*Vocals, 1933–93*)

Mississippi-born Harold Jenkins, who changed his name in 1957 to reflect the place names of Conway, Arkansas, and Twitty, Texas, started his career as a rock'n'roll singer in the late 1950s, scoring his biggest hit in 1958 with 'It's Only Make Believe', continuing in 1959 with 'Mona Lisa' and a second US million-

seller, 'Lonely Blue Boy'. In 1965, Twitty moved into country music and became one of the most successful country acts of all time with 40 US country No. 1s, including five duets with Loretta Lynn.





Above
Ritchie Valens was a completely self-taught musician whose playing was full of improvisation and exciting riffs.

Far Right
Jackie Wilson had a unique singing voice that enabled him to cross easily into the pop charts.

Right
Gene Vincent grew up listening to country, R&B and gospel, and by the time he received his first guitar aged 12 was playing along with his black neighbours on his parents' porch.

Ritchie Valens

(Guitar, vocals, 1941–59)

In 1958, California-born Richard Valenzuela had already released the million-selling 'Donna' as well as two other US hits, 'Come On Let's Go' and 'La Bamba', and was close to becoming a major star when he died in the air crash that also killed Buddy Holly and The Big Bopper. In the 1980s, Hispanic-American quintet Los Lobos topped the US chart with their revival of 'La Bamba', the title tune of the feature film of the life of Valens.

The Ventures

(Instrumental group, 1960–present)

Formed in Seattle by Nokie Edwards (lead guitar),

Bob Bogle (bass), Don Wilson (guitar) and Howie Johnson (drums), the group's first and best-known hit was 'Walk Don't Run', which they heard played by Chet Atkins and was written by jazz guitarist Johnny Smith. Two more US Top 10 hits, 1964's 'Walk Don't Run '64' and 1969's 'Hawaii Five-O', were almost irrelevant, as The Ventures were superstars in Japan, where they have reputedly released over 100 original albums. The current line-up is McGee (lead guitar), Wilson (guitar), Bogle (bass) and Leon Taylor.

Gene Vincent

(Vocals, 1935–71)

Virginia-born Eugene Vincent Craddock, who wore a steel leg brace after a 1953 motorcycle crash and used it as a stage prop, fronted The Blue Caps: Cliff Gallup (lead guitar), Willie Williams (rhythm guitar), Jack Neal (double bass), and Dickie Harrell (drums). Gallup's lead guitar work on Vincent's early recordings has been admired by innumerable rock'n'roll players. Vincent's classic is his 1956 debut hit, 'Be-Bop-A-Lula', which he and the Blue Caps memorably performed in the 1956 rock'n'roll movie *The Girl Can't Help It*. Surprisingly, Vincent released more hits in the UK than the US, and he suffered further injury in the 1960 car crash in Britain that killed Eddie Cochran. This led to alcohol problems, and a once-great rocker turned to country music in the last decade of his life.



Marty Wilde

(Singer/songwriter, b. 1939)

London-born Reginald Smith enjoyed 15 UK hit singles between 1958 and 1962. He appeared regularly on early British TV pop shows: 6.5 Special and Oh Boy, and was the star of Boy Meets Girls, where he met and married his wife, a member of The Vernons Girls, but marriage affected his popularity. Arguably the closest home-grown rival to Cliff Richard at the time, Wilde appeared in the West End musical, Bye Bye Birdie, before success as a songwriter with three 1968 UK hits: The Casuals' 'Jesamine', Status Quo's 'Ice In The Sun' and Lulu's 'I'm A Tiger'. In the early 1980s, his daughter, Kim Wilde, was successful with the assistance of dad and brother Ricky.

Chuck Willis

(Singer/songwriter, 1928–58)

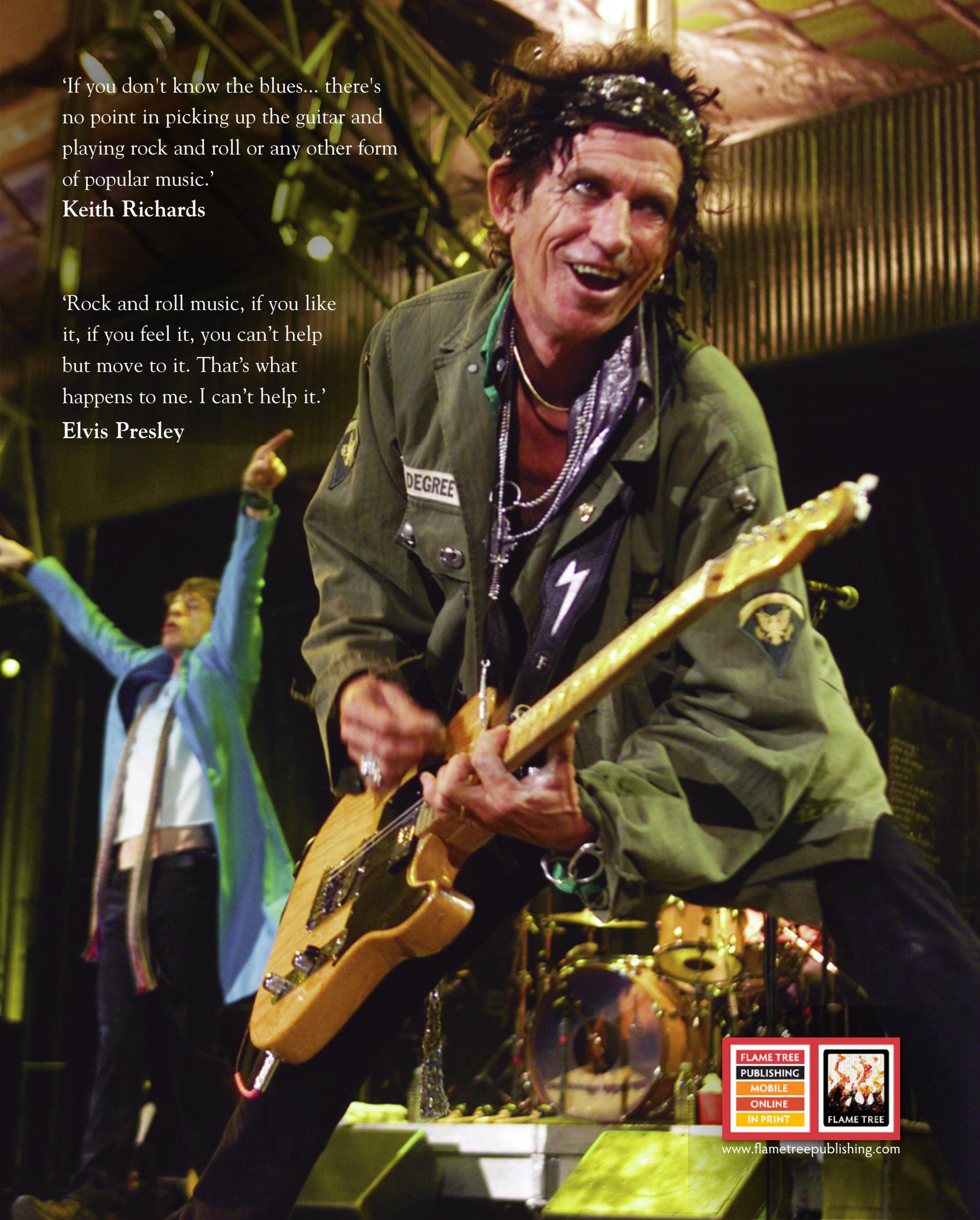
Known as 'The Sheik Of The Stroll', Atlanta-born Harold Willis was a rising star, with a string of US R&B hits to his credit, the biggest 1957's R&B No. 1, 'C.C. Rider', which also made the US pop Top 20. Signed to Okeh Records between 1952 and 1954, his career took off in 1956, when he signed with Atlantic, for whom he made a second posthumous R&B chart-topper, 1958's ironically titled 'What Am I Living For', dying of peritonitis after a stomach ulcer.

Jackie Wilson

(Singer/songwriter 1934–84)

Detroit-born Jackie Wilson, an ex-amateur boxer, sang with gospel groups before replacing Clyde McPhatter in Billy Ward & The Dominoes in 1953. His first solo success came with 1957's UK and US hit, 'Reet Petite', co-written by Berry Gordy Jr., who went on to found Motown Records. His first US Top 40 hit was 1958's 'To Be Loved', and his first US Top 10 single was 1958's 'Lonely Teardrops', also co-written by Gordy. Wilson's dynamic stage show vastly increased his popularity, and by 1972, he had accumulated over 50 US pop hits, the biggest being 1960's 'Night', while arguably the best-known was 1967's '(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher And Higher'. By 1970, the hits had diminished, and in 1972, he suffered a massive heart attack while on stage in New Jersey, and remained hospitalized in a coma for the rest of his life. The same year, Van Morrison had a minor hit single with a tribute song titled 'Jackie Wilson Said (I'm In Heaven When You Smile)'.



A dynamic photograph of Keith Richards and Mick Jagger performing on stage. Keith Richards, in the foreground, is laughing heartily, wearing a green military-style jacket with patches that read 'DEGREE' and '101'. He is playing a light-colored Fender Stratocaster guitar. Mick Jagger is visible behind him, wearing a blue and green patterned jacket, with his right arm raised in a 'V' sign. The stage is dimly lit with green and yellow lights, and a drum set is visible in the background.

'If you don't know the blues... there's no point in picking up the guitar and playing rock and roll or any other form of popular music.'

Keith Richards

'Rock and roll music, if you like it, if you feel it, you can't help but move to it. That's what happens to me. I can't help it.'

Elvis Presley

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