

EARLY ROCK 'N' ROLL

THE ELECTRIC GUITAR

- Rock 'n' roll elevated the electric guitar to a central position in American popular music.
- Engineers began to experiment with electronically amplified guitars in the 1920s.
- The solid-body electric guitar
 - Developed after World War II
 - First used in R&B, blues, and country bands
- Came into the mainstream with a somewhat dubious reputation
 - Carryover from the medieval European association of stringed instruments with the Devil
 - Associated with the music of marginalized regions and people



CHICAGO ELECTRIC BLUES

- Urban blues tradition of the postwar era
 - Derived more directly from the Mississippi Delta tradition of Robert Johnson
- The rural blues tradition had almost completely died out as a commercial phenomenon by World War II.
- The old Delta blues emerged in a reinvigorated, electronically amplified form.

MUDDY WATERS (MCKINLEY MORGANFIELD) (1915–83)

- “Discovered” in the Mississippi Delta by Allan Lomax in 1941
- Moved to Chicago in 1943
- Played both acoustic and electric slide guitar
- The single greatest influence on the British blues boom in the 1960s



LISTENING: “HOOTCHIE COOTCHIE MAN”



- Muddy Waters, 1953
- Features Muddy’s lineup in the early 1950s:
 - Two electric guitars
 - Bass, drums
 - Amplified harmonica
- Combines blues form with strophic verse-chorus structure
- Typical Chicago electric/urban blues

ROCK ' N' ROLL, 1954–1959

- The advent of rock ' n' roll during the mid-1950s brought about enormous changes in American popular music.
- Styles previously considered on the margins of mainstream popular music were infiltrating the center and eventually came to dominate it.
- R&B and country music recordings were no longer geared toward a specialized market.
- The target audience for rock ' n' roll during the 1950s consisted of baby boomers, Americans born after World War II.
- Much younger target audience

COVER VERSIONS AND EARLY ROCK ' N' ROLL

- Cover versions
 - Copies of previously recorded performances; often adaptations of the originals' style and sensibility, and usually aimed at cashing in on their success
 - Often bowdlerized imitations of R&B songs
 - Helped fuel the market for rock ' n' roll

BIG JOE TURNER AND “SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL”



- Big Joe Turner (1911–85)
- Called a “blues shouter” because of his spirited, sometimes raucous vocal delivery
- Born in Kansas City, started out singing with local bands
- “Shake Rattle, and Roll” was Turner’s biggest rock ‘n’ roll record for Atlantic.



LISTENING: “SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL,” BILL HALEY AND THE COMETS (JUNE 1954)



- The lyrics were bowdlerized by producer Milt Gabler to ensure airplay on white radio stations.
- This song was only a minor hit when it was released.

BILL HALEY (1925–81)

- Former DJ and western swing bandleader from Pennsylvania
- Dropped his cowboy image, changed the name of his accompanying group from the Saddlemen to the Comets
- In 1954, the Comets were signed by Decca Records.
- Moved toward the R&B jump band sound
 - Encouraged by A&R man Milt Gabler



BILL HALEY AND THE COMETS

- Recorded commercially successful cover versions of R&B hits in the mid-1950s
- Largest success came in 1955 with “Rock around the Clock”, the first record to become a #1 pop hit
- Recorded in 1954 and not a big hit when first released
 - Popularized in 1955’s *Blackboard Jungle*, a film about inner-city teenagers and juvenile delinquency
- Rock Around The Clock

EARLY ROCK AND ROLL
STARS: THE RHYTHM AND
BLUES SIDE

CHARLES EDWARD ANDERSON ("CHUCK") BERRY (B. 1926)

- Born in St. Louis, Missouri
 - Absorbed blues and R&B styles
 - One of the first and most successful black musicians to consciously forge his own version of blues and R&B styles for appeal to the mass market



LISTENING AND ANALYSIS: “MAYBELLENE”



- Verse-chorus form based on the twelve-bar blues
- Chorus: “Maybellene, why can’t you be true” — follows twelve-bar blues chord pattern
- Verse—no chord changes—all on the “home” (or tonic) chord
- Verses build enormous tension, so that when the choruses and chord changes return, there is a feeling of release and expansion.

RICHARD WAYNE PENNIMAN (“LITTLE RICHARD”) (B. 1932)

- Early career as an R&B performer
 - Hit the pop charts in 1956 with the song “Tutti-Frutti”
 - Delivered in an uninhibited shouting style, complete with falsetto whoops
- Epitomized the abandon celebrated in rock ‘n’ roll lyrics and music
 - The sound of his recordings and the visual characteristics of his performances made Little Richard a strong influence on later performers.



LISTENING: “LONG TALL SALLY”

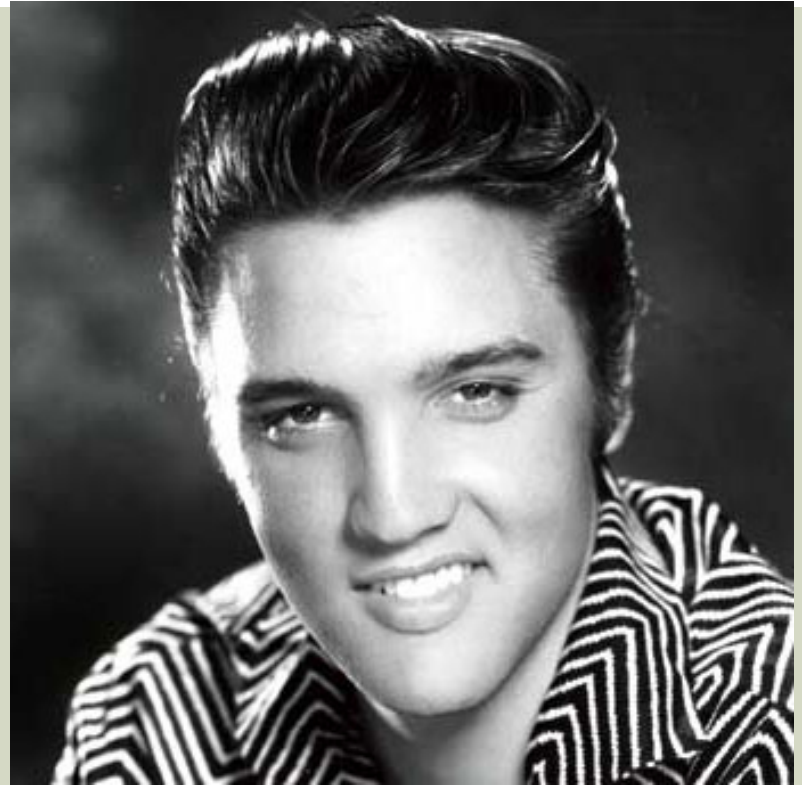


- Built on the twelve-bar blues, adapted to reflect the more traditionally pop-friendly format of verse-chorus
- The first four bars of each blues stanza are set to changing words—verses—while the remaining eight bars, with unchanging words, function as a repeated chorus.

EARLY ROCK AND ROLL
STARS: THE COUNTRY
SIDE

ELVIS PRESLEY (1935-77)

- Born in Tupelo, Mississippi
 - Moved to Memphis, Tennessee as a teenager
- The biggest rock 'n' roll star to come from the country side of the music
- Presley's extraordinary popularity established rock'n'roll as an unprecedented mass-market phenomenon.
- Known as the “**King of Rock and Roll**”
- Elvis is the best selling solo artist in the history of popular music



LISTENING: “DON’ T BE CRUEL”

- Based on the twelve-bar blues
- Presley’ s vocal is heavy with blues-derived and country inflections.
 - Striking regional accent
 - “Hiccupping” effect on “please”
 - Strong backbeat from R&B
 - Opening electric guitar figure from western swing bands
- Imposed on all these diverse and intense stylistic elements is a wash of electronic reverb

Don't Be Cruel

BUDDY HOLLY (CHARLES HARDIN HOLLEY) (1936–59)

- Clean-cut, lanky, bespectacled
- Began his career with country music, fell under the influence of Presley's and formed a rock'n'roll band, the Crickets
- "That'll Be the Day," rose to Number One on the pop charts in late 1957 and established his sound.
 - Combined elements of country, R&B, and mainstream pop



BUDDY HOLLY (CHARLES HARDIN HOLLEY) (1936–59)

- Holly's vocal style exhibits elements of both fine country singing and fine blues singing, full of country twang and hiccups.
- Mixture of toughness and vulnerability
- The Crickets' instrumental lineup
 - Two electric guitars (lead and rhythm), bass, and drums provided strong support for Holly's voice.
 - During instrumental breaks, Holly's lead guitar playing was active, riff-based, and hard-edged in a way that reflected the influence of Chuck Berry.

LISTENING: “THAT’ LL BE THE DAY”

- Form
 - Structured like a typical pop song, alternating verses and choruses of eight bars each
 - At the instrumental break, the Crickets play a twelve-bar blues pattern
- On some later records, like “Oh, Boy!” and “Peggy Sue,” Holly used a twelve-bar blues structure for the song itself
- That'll Be The Day