

Starr-Waterman

American Popular Music

Chapter 7: “Choo Choo Ch’Boogie”: The Postwar Era, 1946–1954

Key People

“Big Mama” Thornton (1926–1984): Singer, drummer, harmonica player, and comic on the black vaudeville circuit who worked with Johnny Otis in Los Angeles and was the artist for whom Lieber and Stoller composed the rock ’n’ roll classic “Hound Dog.”

Bill Monroe (1911–1997): Pioneer of bluegrass music who led the Blue Grass Boys and joined the cast of the *Grand Ole Opry* in 1939.

Cecil Gant (1913–1951): Black GI and blues crooner from Nashville, Tennessee, who recorded the number one song “I Wonder.”

Charles Brown (1922–1999): The most successful blues crooner of the late 1940s and early 1950s who recorded influential songs like “Black Night” and semiclassical numbers such as the *Warsaw Concerto*.

Clyde McPhatter (1932–1972): Influential lead tenor of the vocal harmony group the Dominos who later formed the Drifters.

Damaso Perez Prado (1916–1989): Pianist, organist, and bandleader who recorded a series of mambo singles for the Mexican branch of RCA Victor, including “Mambo No. 5” (1949), that crossed over to a non-Latin audience.

Eddy Arnold (1918–2008): The most popular country crooner, who dominated the country charts from 1947 to 1954 and was known for a smooth, warm baritone voice, and a propensity for sentimental songs.

Ernest Tubb (1914–1984): One of the first honky-tonk musicians to move toward a harder-edged country sound and to switch to amplified instruments known for hits like “Walking the Floor over You” (1941).

Frank (Frances Albert) Sinatra (1915–1998): Influential crooner known for long, fluid musical lines in the Italian bel canto tradition who initially came to fame as a member of the Tommy Dorsey Band and later had an enormously successful solo career.

Hank Thompson (1925–2007): Creator of a popular variation on honky-tonk music mixed with elements of western swing whose biggest hit was “The Wild Side of Life.”

Hank Williams (1923–53): The most significant single figure to emerge in country music during the immediate post–World War II period.

Johnnie Ray (1927–1990): One of the biggest international pop stars of the early 1950s who developed a highly emotional performance style that involved sighing, sobbing, and

melisma.

Kitty Wells (1918–2012): The first female superstar of country.

Leroy Carr (1905–1935): Indianapolis-born blues pianist who developed a smooth, laid-back approach to blues singing that contrasted sharply with the rough-edged rural blues recordings of Charley Patton and Blind Lemon Jefferson.

Louis Jordan (1908–1975): Leader of the most successful and influential jump band the Tympani Five whose popularity was reinforced by a series of films featuring the band.

Milt Gabler (1911–2001): Record producer and songwriter known for his work with Louis Jordan and the Tympani Five.

Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield) (1915–1983): Guitarist, singer, and most popular blues musician in Chicago during the late 1940s and early 1950s who reinvigorated the Delta blues tradition by adapting it to electronically amplified instruments.

Nat “King” Cole (1917–1965): The most successful black recording artist of the postwar era, known for his skill as a jazz pianist and sentimental ballads accompanied by elaborate orchestral arrangements featuring his warm, silky voice.

Patti Page (1927–2013): Country performer who sold more records than any other female singer of the early 1950s, known for love songs like “All My Love,” novelty numbers like “The Doggie in the Window,” and sentimental songs like “The Tennessee Waltz.”

Pete Seeger (1919–2014): Singer, banjo player, and political activist who led the Weavers in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Rosemary Clooney (1928–2002): Big band singer who recorded “Mambo Italiano.”

Ruth Brown (1928–2006): Also known as “Miss Rhythm,” she was the most popular black female vocalist in America between 1951 and 1954 and won a Tony award in 1989 for her appearance in the Broadway show *Black and Blue*

Scrapper Blackwell (1903–1962): Guitarist who made a series of race recordings in the 1920s and 1930s that were influential in the blues crooner style.

Willie Dixon (1915–1992): Chess Records’ house songwriter, bass player, producer, and arranger.