

Starr-Waterman

American Popular Music

Chapter 8: “Rock Around the Clock”: Rock’n’Roll, 1954–1959

Student Study Outline

- I. Rock’n’Roll: enormous changes to American popular music
 1. Styles previously on the margins of pop music began to infiltrate and eventually dominate the center
 2. Emergence of rock’n’roll significant in cultural terms
 3. New audience
 - i. Baby boom generation born at the end of and in the years immediately following World War II
 - ii. 1950s: period characterized by political and cultural traumas
 1. Cold War tension
 2. Racial tension
 3. Identification by the larger culture as a unique generational group
 4. **Rock’n’roll**
 - i. **Alan Freed** (1922–1965)
 5. Purchase of records by kids in the 1950s: safe and affordable way for kids to assert generational identity through rebellion against previous adult standards and restrictions of musical style and taste
 - i. **Ricky Nelson** (1940–1985)
- II. Cover Versions and Early Rock’n’Roll
 1. Cover version
- III. Listening Guide: “Sh-Boom” and Its Cover Version
 1. “Sh-Boom,” original version performed by the Chords (number two R&B, number 5 pop, released 1954); cover version performed by the Crew Cuts (number one pop for nine weeks, released 1954)
- IV. The Rock’n’Roll Business
 1. Music business 1950s
 - i. Overall vitality of the American economy after WWII: entertainment industry’s profits reach a new level
 - ii. Expansion accompanied by gradual diversification of mainstream popular taste
 1. Reemergence of independent (“indie”) record companies
 - a. **Rockabilly**
- V. Bill Haley and “Rock Around the Clock” (1955)
 1. Bill Haley (1925–1981)
- VI. Listening Guide: Chuck Berry’s “Maybellene”
 1. Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry (also credited to disc jockeys Russel Fratto and Alan Freed); performed by Chuck Berry and His Combo; recorded 1955
 2. **Charles Edward Anderson (“Chuck”) Berry** (1926–2017)
- VII. Early Rock’n’Roll Stars on the R&B Side

1. Three most prominent African Americans to be identified with the new music
 - i. Chuck Berry
 - ii. Little Richard
 1. **“Little Richard” (Richard Wayne Penniman)** (b. 1932)
 2. Listening Guide: “Long Tall Sally”
 - a. Music and Lyrics credited to Enotris Johnson, Richard Penniman, and Robert Blackwell; performed by Little Richard and unidentified band; recorded 1956
 - iii. Fats Domino
 1. **Antoine “Fats” Domino** (b. 1928)
 - a. **Professor Longhair (born Henry Roeland Byrd)** (1918–1980)
- VIII. Early Rock’n’Roll Stars on the Country Side
1. **Elvis Presley** (1935–1977)
 - i. Listening Guide: “Mystery Train,” original version written and performed by Junior Parker (no chart appearance, released 1953); cover version performed by Elvis Presley (number 11 country and western, released 1955)
 1. Original version: **Herman “Little Junior Parker”** (1927–1971)
 - ii. Listening Guide: “Don’t Be Cruel”
 1. Music and lyrics by Otis Blackwell and Elvis Presley; performed by Elvis Presley, vocal and guitar, with the Jordanaires and backing instrumentalists; recorded 1956
 2. **Reverb**: electronically produced by engineers at RCA to emulate the distinctive (low-tech) **slap-back**
 2. Buddy Holly
 - i. **Buddy Holly (Charles Hardin Holley)** (1936–1959)
 - ii. **Double-tracking**
- IX. Box 8.2: The Electric Guitar
1. Electric guitar: elevation of the instrument to the position of centrality was one of the most significant effects on popular music
 2. Development of the instrument
- X. Wild, Wild Young Women: The Lady Vanishes
1. Male-dominated account of early history of rock’n’roll
 2. Box 8.3: **Wanda Jackson** (b. 1937)
 3. **Janis Martin** (1940–2007)
 4. **Jo-Ann Campbell** (b. 1938)
 5. **Lorrie (Lawrencine) Collins** (b. 1942)
 6. **Connie Francis (Concetta Rosa Maria Franconero)** (b. 1938)
 7. **Brenda Lee (Brenda Mae Tarpley)** (b. 1944)
- XI. The Latin Side of Rock’n’Roll
1. Latin American music: important influence on popular genres that contributed to the rise of rock’n’roll

2. **Ritchie Valens (Richard Valenzuela)** (1941–1959)
- XII. Listening Guide: Ritchie Valen’s “La Bamba”
1. Traditional Mexican folk song; adapted and performed by Ritchie Valens; recorded 1958
- XIII. Songwriters and Producers of Early Rock’n’Roll
1. Increasing importance of recording itself as the basic document of rock’n’roll
 - i. Producer’s role grew in importance
 - ii. Innovative songwriting/producing team of early rock’n’roll years:
 1. **Jerry Lieber** (1933–2011) and **Mike Stoller** (b. 1933)
- XIV. Listening Guide: “Charlie Brown”
1. Music and Lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller; performed by the Coasters with accompanying band (King Curtis, sax solo); recorded 1958
- XV. Other Currents: The Standard and Folk Music in the Rock’n’Roll Era
1. Advent of rock’n’roll often viewed as the death of Tin Pan Alley
 - i. **Johnny Mathis** (b. 1935)
 2. Folk music
 - i. “Tom Dooley”
 1. **The Kingston Trio**
- XVI. Box 8.4 Singles vs. Albums: A Case of Not-So-Parallel Universes
1. **Harry Belafonte** (b. 1927)
 2. **Barbara Streisand** (b. 1942)

XVII. Key Terms

Double-tracking Reverb	Rockabilly Rock’n’roll	Slap-back
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XVIII. Key People

Alan Freed Antoine “Fats” Domino Barbara Streisand Big Joe Turner Bill Black Bill Haley and the Comets Brenda Lee Buddy Holly (Charles Hardin Holley) Charles Edward Anderson (“Chuck”) Berry	Connie Francis Elvis Presley Harry Belafonte Herman (“Little Junior”) Parker Janis Martin Jerry Leiber Jo-Ann Campbell Johnny Mathis The Kingston Trio	Little Richard (Richard Wayne Penniman) Lorrie (Lawrencine) Collins Mike Stoller Professor Longhair Ricky Nelson Ritchie Valens Scotty Moore Wanda Jackson
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