
HISTORY OF ROCK ‘N’ ROLL

STATS

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Solo Pursuit of Learning

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Chapter 1

Popular and Country & Western Musics

Question 1

What do we talk about when we talk about music?

- Do you talk about the lyrics?
- Do you talk about the melody?
- Do you talk about the rhythm?
- Do you talk about the harmonies?
- etcetera.

Definition 1.0.1: Conventional Popular Music History

Conventionally, before there was rock there was:

- *Mainstream and popular music (middle class whites)*
- *Rhythm and blues (black people)*
- *Country and western (lower class whites, usually in the south)*

1.1.0 Regionalism in Music

Music could be identified as belonging to a specific place. Most music was accessed by hearing it live, or playing it yourself. You could also buy sheet music and play it yourself, or know it from memory.

1.1.1 Radio & Film

Remark 1.1.1

With radio, you could live in a small town and hear the same music as someone in New York or Los Angeles, forging a National audience.

“Breaking boundaries”

Note 1

“Popular music,” aimed at the white middle class, aired on national radio.

↳ *Leaves out minorities and their music/cultures*

Remark 1.1.2

Country & Western, and Rhythm & Blues were not aired on national radio as they were associated with lower income whites and black people, respectively.

Recall that this is occurring during segregation.

1.1.2 Radio Before 1945

Remark 1.1.3

It was considered “unethical” to play records on the air.

Question 2

Why? It was thought as “fooling” people into believing a performance was live when it wasn’t.

Remark 1.1.4

Network radio programs popular in the 30s and 40s often made the jump to television in the 50s.

Example 1.1.1

“Amos ‘n’ Andy” was a radio show turned into a Sitcom. Originally Amos ‘n’ Andy involved white voice actors performing minstrelsy over radio.

Whites are depicted as educated and eloquent while a majority of black characters are played off of minstrelsy stereotypes such as being uneducated or foolish, and they were made the butt of the joke.

Question 3

What does this say about popular culture in early 1950s America?

1.2.0 Development of Popular Music at the Turn of the 20th Century (Early 1900s)

1.2.1 Tin Pan Alley

Remark 1.2.1

Tin Pan Alley was turning popular music into a commodity, selling sheet music and creating new songs to sell.

Tin Pan Alley was a sheet music business in NYC. At the time the song was perceived as separate from the performance.

The publisher wants the song to be performed by as many different artists as possible:

- Reason: economical - to increase the demand for the sheet music.

Remark 1.2.2

At this time popular forms for music began to arise:

Example 1.2.1

The **AABA** format was very popular with A = verse, and B = bridge.

Example 1.2.2

“Over the Rainbow”: The verse always starts with “Somewhere over the rainbow” while the bridge starts with “Someday I’ll wish upon a star.” Although the verses had different lyrics, they have very similar flows: long low then short high. The bridge is much more “bouncy” than the verse: short low - short high - short low etcetera, then a long drifting end.

The song was often used as a song of hope during the great depression and WWII, and even to this day.

This was an early example of repetition in music used to make a song more memorable - i.e. to make it an **ear-worm** to increase sales.

1.3.0 Big Band Era 1935-1945

Remark 1.3.1

The purpose of these groups were as dance band - to create music to dance to.

Definition 1.3.1: Instruments

Big bands often involved bass, drums, piano, guitar, and a horn section. They were typically led by an instrumentalist, and the solo would be passed around the band:

Example 1.3.1

- *Benny Goodman*
- *Tommy Dorsey*
- *Jimmy Dorsey*
- *Glen Miller*

Note 2

Vocals are not the star in these bands. Often there were no vocals or only a vocal solo.

Example 1.3.2

Tommy Dorsey with “Boogie Woogie” - 1938. Tommy Dorsey was the main instrumentalist, playing a similar role to a conductor for part. Tommy Dorsey is made to stand out (at the front, different colored clothes, etc.) The solo is “passed around” throughout the band.

1.3.1 Bing Crosby

Considered by many as the most important pop singer of the 1930s and 1940s.

Remark 1.3.2

He was a “Crooner” - a singer who sings very close to the mic to bring out a “bass” or “baritone” sound. Somewhat quiet and projective.

He was both a singer and an actor.

Note 3

Notable song: “White Christmas,” which was a chart topper in 1942 and 1945.

Bing Crosby was mated with this “Nice guy” image - the “friendly uncle.”

Example 1.3.3

“Swnging on a Star” - 1945.

Still big band, but vocal centric. Supporting background vocalists and nonsensical innoffensive lyrics.

1.3.2 Andrews Sisters & Mills Brothers

They sang in harmony and were also accompanied by a band.

THE were a pre-cursor to “Doo-Wop” and “Girl Groups” of the 60s.

Example 1.3.4

*“Rum and Coca-Cola” - 1945 by the Andrews Sisters
They sung together, adding a sense of fullness.*

1.3.3 Frank Sinatra

Note 4

Bing Crosby was an exception not the rule as a solo singer in the Big Band Era.

Sinatra built on Crosby’s accomplishments and establishes a new model:

- “The Pop Singer”

The singer is now the star. Frank Sinatra was seen as a “rebellious teen idol.”

As with Crosby he started out as a big band singer, going solo in 1943.

Example 1.3.5

*“I’ve got a crush on you” - 1948
Big band instrumentation still present, but the singer is the star.*

1.3.4 Singers In, Bands Out

Sinatra spurs a movement of imitators. The Big Band Era comes to an end with financial pressures (hard to sustain and pay such a large group) and new trends in taste take their toll.

This works in the favour of Tin Pan Alley as “singers need songs”

Remark 1.3.3

The new brand of singer-centric pop music as often family-oriented.

Example 1.3.6

*“If I knew you were comin’ I’d’ve Baked a Cake” by Eileen Barton
Portrays general trends of the time. Somewhat “silly” lyricism.*

Example 1.3.7

*Patti Page - “(How Much Is) That Doggie in the Window” - 1953
Very family oriented. Dog barking, “gimmicky”*

Note 5

This music is very much aimed at middle class white people.

1.4.0 Country & Western

Music is still “regional.” Until after 1945 country and western music remains regional, unlike popular music which benefitted from national radio exposure.

Remark 1.4.1

Country = folk styles of the southeast and appalachia.

Remark 1.4.2

Western = from the southwest and west associated with the Prairies.

1.4.1 Country

Record companies labeled it “Hillbilly music.” Recordings were often “on-site” in the fact that they would go to communities with their recording devices to get songs.

For instance, we have early “on-site” recording by Ralph Peer.

Example 1.4.1

“Can the circle be unbroken?” - 1935 by The Carter Family.

Less and simpler instrumentation than the Big Bands with Sinatra and Crosby.

Just a guitar and maybe some other stringed instruments such as a fiddle or banjo.

1.4.2 Western

Labeled as “cowboy music” by recording companies. Was popularized in Hollywood.

Example 1.4.2

Jimmie Rodgers’ Yodel Style singing in “Blue Todel” - 1927

Again simple instrumentation, with just Jimmie playing a guitar. Some more “offensive lyrics” than those found with big band singers: e.g. “I’m gonna shoot poor Thelma just to see her jump and fall.”

1.4.3 Authenticity?

In 1927 Jimmie Rodgers Entertainers (his original band) auditioned for Victor recording company in Bristol, Tennessee. The audition didn’t go well, but then Rodgers auditioned solo and Ralph Peer a talent scout for Victor “produced” Rodgers.

Remark 1.4.3

Their goal with Rodgers was to make “music that sounded old yet was original enough to be copyrighted and sold”

Note 6

Yodeling speaks to a long history of black and white interaction in the south.

Note 7

Rodgers understood if he went along with Peers' idea of the new old-time craze, he would make considerable money.

1.4.4 The Spread of Country & Western

There was some national airplay by the mid to late 1930s. The war also boosted the spread as soldiers from the north and south shared music.

During the war southerners often moved north to find work, bringing their music with them.

Remark 1.4.4

After WWII, Nashville TN became the C&W center.

1.4.5 Hank Williams

Hank Williams was thought of as a “pure country” singer.

He had tremendous success until his early death at the age of 33.

Example 1.4.3

“Hey Good Looking” - 1951

Follows the AABA formula. Instrumentation very string focused, with singer and guitarist one and the same.

1.4.6 Bluegrass

Example 1.4.4

Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys:

First performed at the Grand Old Opry in 1939, but popularity didn't follow until the late 1940s.

They were virtuosos (experts) on their respective instruments:

- *Earl Scruggs on Banjo*
- *Bill Monroe on Mandolin*
- *Robert “Chubby” Wise on Fiddle*

Example 1.4.5

“Bluegrass Breakdown” - approximately 1945

Very fast and precise picking.

Question 4

What have we learned so far?

- Music made by white people in the first half of the twentieth century?

1.5.0 Amos ‘N’ Andy Article

The primary argument in favor of Amos ‘n’ Andy is that it depicts a richly textured Harlem community as its center, filled with all types of black people.

Much of the controversy surrounding the show stems from its original radio show, where Correll and Gosden were white actors using their facility with doing voices based on stereotypes from minstrel shows to fill Amos ‘n’ Andy. Andy was seen as a dumb, shiftless layabout, Kingfish a greedy two-bit hustler, and Lightnin’ a goofball “naif.”

Question 5

Is representation worth anything if it’s primarily being used to prop up the majority’s belief in its own superiority?

The NAACP eventually got the show removed from the airwaves. Even with its drawbacks and reliance on stereotypes, the show was the only one on TV at the time where black people were shown in any position other than servitude.

1.6.0 Somewhere Over the Rainbow Significance

From the moment it was written, for the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, *Over the Rainbow* took on a significance greater than the moment it was intended to soundtrack. This can be attributed to the composer Harold Arlen and lyricist Yip Harburg who had experienced quite hard times, Harburg being born poor as the son of Jewish immigrants. His business was wiped out in the Great Depression, but this gave an opportunity for his writing to shine through.

A special recording of the song by Judy Garland and the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra was pressed and sent to American soldiers as a promise of better times to come during WWII. Garland’s version also became an anthem for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Chapter 2

Rhythm & Blues Musics

Question 6: Motivating Question

Is there such a thing as white music? Black music?

2.1.0 What is R&B?

Recall R&B stands for Rhythm and Blues.

2.1.1 Early R&B

Arising as a by product of racial segregation, most white listeners had no familiarity with rhythm and blues in the 1940s and 1950s.

The idea is that if two groups remain separated, their music and culture cannot intermingle, so the music stays regional.

Remark 2.1.1

*However, in 1923 **Bessie Smith's** "Down Hearted Blues" sold a million copies, putting blues in the mainstream, but hthis did not last long.*

This implies there would be some intermingling of music.

Remark 2.1.2

*Record companies wanted to repeat or piggy back on Smith's success, and hence searched for other artists with her style.
They called this genre "Rural blues."*

Note 8

In Smith's 1923 recording, it is quite granny and the treble/bass cannot shine through due to the limitations of the equipment (before electric recording).

2.1.2 Robert Johnson (1930s blues)

Example 2.1.1

“Cross Road Blues” - 1936

Note 9

Johnson sang to his own accompaniment (guitar). This was advantageous as it gave a flexible style which allowed for structural changes on the fly (because it’s just you, there’s no one following yhou)

Remark 2.1.3

*His take on the blues would become the bedrock model for many future popular musicians (see for example Eric Clampton)/
That is, Johnson’s way of doing R&B would become the way of doing rock. Became the model for people to follow in terms of his way of playing blues.*

Remark 2.1.4

Johnson recorded “Cross Road Blues” and 26 other songs over 5 days in 1936 and 1937 in Texas.

In 1941 Alan Lomax (a song hunter/collector) came looking for Johnson only to find out Johnson died in 1938 (at 27). Legend has it that Johnson sold his soul for musical prowess.

Local people told Lomax to go find Muddy Waters instead.

2.2.0 Muddy Waters

Muddy built his own guitar at age 17 using a box and a stick: “Couldn’t do much with it, but that’s how you learn”

A couple years later he bought a Stella guitar for \$2.50, and learned to play listening to the radio.

His first ‘real’ guitar was a Silvertone (sears catalogue) bought for \$11.

Note 10

He only made 22 cents/hour driving a tractor on a plantation. ALthough slavery had been abolished, its effects are still very prominent.

Remark 2.2.1

He was said to play all night from “can to can’t” in his shack.

2.2.1 Chess & Muddy

In the fields behind his shack, Muddy was recorded by Lomax. This is the first time Muddy hears himself, and he realizes that he could be a musician.

In 1947 Muddy records under a label called *Aristocrat records*, and the resulting record sells over 60,000 copies - the most ever by an artist on this label.

Leonard Chess buys Aristocrat, and soon thereafter Chess becomes the premiere independent blues label.

Note 11

This is happening in Chicago.

Many plantation workers migrated north in hopes of better prospects, and this is what Muddy did.

Remark 2.2.2

Muddy was said to have had the first electric band on the South side of Chicago with Jimmy Rogers and Little Walter.

2.2.2 Chess Records

Remark 2.2.3

Artists at Chess: Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Jimmy Rogers, Little Walter, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, Elmore James, Sonny Boy Williamson, Clarence Gatemouth, Koko Taydor, Buddy Guy, Otis Rush, John Lee Hooker, Robert Nighthawk, Billy Boy Arnold, Etta James.

Leonard Chess did everything at the label, including fixing the toilets - very much a D.I.U type of operation

Remark 2.2.4

*To singers and songwriters the company was "Plantation Chess" with Leonard as master (reminded them of plantations in the South)
Note most if not all artists were black while Leonard was white.*

Like "sharecropping," artists were often not paid in cash but in goods and services. Leonard may pay their medical bills, or buy them a car, etcetera. Not terrible, but was definitely not good either.

Remark 2.2.5: Documentary

It all started with money - "money was the magnet." Buddy Guy started out picking cotton in New Orleans. Chicago was where many immigrants and southerners went to start a new life and make money. In particular, black southerners wanting to leave plantations.

Muddy's style changed quite clearly after he arrived in Chicago.

Definition 2.2.1: Focused Listening

1. *Lyrics: Is the message to be taken literally, or does it have some other meaning?*
2. *The music: What is in the instrumentation? Is it fast? Is it slow? How does it make you feel?*

3. *How do these things go together?*

2.3.0 Black Radio

Note 12

In Urban areas, blues musicians stuck to a more prearranged structure because they played in bands (electric guitar, bass, drums, piano, harmonica, and vocals) This gives the Chicago blues a structure and establishes the Chicago blues style.

This was unlike Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson when in the south - they're playing by themselves.

Remark 2.3.1

Major blues scenes were in both Memphis and Chicago.

As television took away radio listeners, radio adapted by reverting to a regional approach and creating black stations (which white kids could hear!)

2.4.0 Atlantic R&B

Was a record company in NYC with artists such as Ruth Brown, aka "The Queen of R&B," and Big Joe Turner.

Note 13

The instrumentation of Chess in comparison to Atlantic is quite stripped down.

Example 2.4.1

Ruth Brown: More instruments, akin to Big Bands. Faster pace than Muddy Waters, with lots of energy. Bass, drums, piano, trumpet, and other brass instruments.

Her eyes go wide open at certain parts in the song, looking right at the audience.

Lots of repetition.

2.4.1 Hokum Blues

Lots of sexual double-entendres:

Example 2.4.2

- *"Let me play with your poodle"*
- *"Hound Dog" featuring lyrics "snooping" round my door," "wag your tail," and "feed you."*
- *"Shake, rattle, and roll" by Big Joe Turner follows the Hokum Blues tradition.*

Example 2.4.3*Big Joe Turner:*

- “*Get outta that bed, wash your face and hands*”
- “*Shake, Rattle, and roll*”
- “*One eyed cat peepin’ in a seafood store*”
- *over the hill and way down underneath*”

2.5.0 Karl Hagstrom Miller’s Analysis of Regionalism

He says southern musicians performed a very large variety of music in the early 1900s. This included not only blues, ballads, ragtime, and string band music, but also music popular throughout the nation: sentimental ballads, Tin Pan Alley tunes, and Broadway hits.

They embraced pop music. That is, he is suggesting regionalism of sound doesn’t really exist.

He says we see the segregating of sound in the 1880s to 1920s:

Remark 2.5.1: Contributing Factors

- *Segregation legislation*
- *American Folklore Society (est. 1888) as authority on “racial and cultural authenticity”*
- *Mass production of sheet music and then recordings.*

Quote: “at the beginning of my story black and white performers regularly employed racialized sounds. By the end most listeners expected artists to embody them”

That is, musicians would play a part, but this would be done for so long that people expected them to actually be these parts. Akin to expecting someone act in a role to be that person.

He says it literally payed to be able to play anything and everything. A musician wouldn’t really be just a say blues musician but would rather be able to play many styles as it was more economical.

Conforming to a stereotype was a successful strategy for those coming from the south to the north. It was also profitable for record companies to sell “race” (code for black) and “old-time” (code for C&W) records.

This strategy assumed musical tastes to be quite narrow as opposed to broad.

Note 14

Miller says race and old-time records corresponded to the musical lives of no particular sets of artists or audiences. This was an invention of white corporate men.

Record companies made up styles and genres, and presumed people would listen to them based on their skin colour or economic class - this still happens.

This took advantage of the fact that people could “buy local” and made it a selling strategy:

Note 15

Access: Think of the fact that if you only have access to a certain kind of music that's all you're going to listen to.

It forces a stereotype upon people by companies.

Remark 2.5.2

Both the Carters and Jimmie Rodgers listened to records of a wide variety of music.

Distinctions in styles often had more to do with marketing than the music itself.

2.6.0 Toward Rock ‘n’ Roll

The strongest ingredient to rock ‘n’ roll is R&B.

2.6.1 Ahmet Ertegun and Jerry Wexler

Executives of Atlantic records. In *Cashbox* (music trades magazine) they predicted the rise of the blues. They called it “Cat music”

Quote: “Up to date blues with a beat, and infectious catch phrases, and danceable rhythms .. It has to kick and it has to have a message for the sharp youngsters who dig it.”

2.6.2 Rich Cohen

Quote: “For years, in the black community rock and roll had been slang for fucking. It appeared on race records as early as the 1920s.”

Example 2.6.1

1922: *Trixie Smith with “My Daddy Rocks Me”*

Example 2.6.2

1951: *The Dominoes with “Sixty Minute Man”:*

“They call me loving Dom, I rock and roll ‘em all night long, I’m the sixty minute man.”

Another example is the “Ann Powers, Good Booty Love and Sex, Black and White, Body

and Soul in American Music” magazine.

2.7.0 Robert Johnson Article

Remark 2.7.1

Robert Johnson was a musician fabled to have traveled to a local crossroads and made a deal with the devil: sell his soul, and achieve untold musical success.

For the most part during his life Johnson played street corners, juke joints, and Saturday night dances, receiving little recognition.

Johnson had two known recording sessions: one in San Antonio in 1936, and one in Dallas in 1937 - producing 29 songs. At the age of 27 he died due to poisoning.

Note 16

A 1961 release of Johnson’s music by Columbia Records brought it to the fore front. Numerous important and influential musicians covered his songs including Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, and Eric Clapton.

Johnson’s family has long been frustrated by the mythology surrounding the musician.

Annye Anderson, Johnson’s step-sister, describes Johnson as a “cool older sibling.” She remembers Johnson helping her learn to read and play music.

Lauterbach says that the mythology around Johnson arose as a combination of people seeing how quickly he acquired his exceptional guitar skills, and the lyrics of his songs, among them *Hellhound on my Trail*, *Me and the Devil Blues* and *Crossroad Blues*.

Example 2.7.1

Me and the Devil Blues: “I said hello satan, I believe it’s time to go,” “Me and the devil were walking side by side,”

Lauterbach says “just simply that view of playing the blues was looked at, metaphorically, as selling your soul to the devil.”

Note 17

Lauterbach remarks, “... when you get into the literal aspect of it, I just find it a bit weird and racist that so many people can run with this idea that this talented, ingenious guy must have been endowed with these powers supernaturally instead of being great and working really hard at it.”

Anderson says her family lost Johnson twice - once when he died, and again when the mythology surrounding him was created.

2.8.0 Muddy Waters, 1915-1983, Article

Muddy Waters was known for transforming the Delta's back-country blues into electric blues. Muddy Waters nickname came partially from his grandmother for his love to play in the mud, and later the Waters portion came from playmates.

Remark 2.8.1

Muddy Waters original band, considered the first electric band, had deep "Delta" roots and two brilliant musicians in a harp player Little Walter Jacobs and guitarist Jimmy Rogers. However, Muddy Waters is possibly most famous for the blues he played alone.

Many musicians tried to reproduce Muddy's sound, none succeeding, but many found their own sound in that process. Otis Rush is an example of such a musician, as well as other Chicagoans including Son Seals and Jummy Johnson, who like Muddy came from the south, but this time inspired by Muddy's work with blues label Chess records.

Muddy's music even reached England, inspiring Brian Jones to learn the slide guitar, and from Muddy's single "Rollin' Stone," Jones named his band formed with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. This song also inspired Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone."

Remark 2.8.2

Eric Clapton called Muddy Waters his father, arranging for him to come along on his 1979 cross-country stadium tour. Muddy also felt fondly of Clapton.

Johnny Winter also made payments on the debt he owed Muddy Waters by producing Muddy's commercially successful albums for Blue Sky in the late 1970s.

Note 18

Muddy's timing, his phrasing, his razorsharp intonation and command of the subtlest shadings of pitch, and his vocabulary of vocal effects, from the purest falsetto to the grittiest roar, put him in a class by himself.

Remark 2.8.3

It is important to note that Muddy Waters learned blues in the back country, brought his down-home blues to the city and added electricity and a solid backbeat, thereby laying the groundwork for rock & roll.

Muddy's story began in Rolling Fork, in the Southern Mississippi Delta near Highway 61, where he was born on April 4th, 1915. After his parents separated at six months old Muddy went with his grandmother to the north to live with her on Stovall Plantation near Clarksdale Mississippi. This is precisely where John Lee Hooker and many other future blues stars grew to maturity.

Muddy started on the harmonica, but was drawn to the guitar and the music men like Son House and Robert Johnson were making with it. At the age of 17 Muddy sold a horse to buy his first guitar, a Stella.

By 1941, when Alan Lomax showed up in Clarksdale and recorded Muddy for the Library

of Congress, Muddy was the most esteemed guitarist in his part of the Delta. Lomax returned in 1942 and recorded Muddy again. In 1943, Muddy left Mississippi for Chicago.

Muddy bought his first electric gitar in 1944, and by 1946 he was gigging regular with **Jimmy Rogers** and **Little Walter**. By 1949 Muddy and his band, including now **Baby Face Leroy Foster**, were packing crowds in Chicago's South Side and recording for Aristocrat Records. Leonard and Phil Chess who were owners of Aristocrat records soon bought it out, making Chess recors, which had Muddy's "Roling' Stone" as its first release.

Remark 2.8.4

In 1958 Muddy played the first electric blues heard in England and launched a rhythm and blues movement that gave birth to groups like the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds. Moreover, in 1960 at a Newport Folk Festival, Muddy introduced young white America to his music.

2.8.1 Eric Clapton Quote

"I'd never heard electric Delta blues before, I couldn't believe it. It changed everything." "I never heard anyone who even attempted to play like Muddy Waters, It was impossible because it was the subtlest of them all: it wasn't very fancy or fast. It was just the deepest"

2.8.2 Marshal Chess Quote

White people started packing blues as "folk music," and appropriating it.

"Muddy's music always makes you feel something ... it's definitely music that cuts through and makes you feel."

2.8.3 Keith Richards Quote

"He was more than a guitar player, more than a signer, more than a writer. It was all him. It's the hoochie-coochie man."

2.8.4 Peter Wolf Quote

After driving Muddy and his band to their apartment, and seeing that it was stationed at the end of town in the red-light district Wolf said "I'll never forget that. That's when I started to get a sense of the great injustice that was going on in music ... to see the plaster falling off the walls and the creaky old beds in this flea-bitten hotel, and here were these heroic men, these great, great artists."

2.9.0 Rosetta Tharpe: “A queer black woman invented rock-and-roll” Article

Remark 2.9.1

Sister Rosetta Tharpe (1915-1973) was an innovative but underappreciated 20th-century gospel singer and guitarist.

In 2013, **Brittany Howard**, backed by the singer-guitarist **Felicia Collins** and the drummer **Questlove**, inducted Tharpe into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Definition 2.9.1

The **Tharpe meme** commonly appears as an image of Tharpe juxtaposed with a phrase identifying her as a “queer black woman” who “invented rock and roll.”

The Tharpe meme responds to the erasures of both black queers and black women from rock-and-roll history. It succinctly challenges the “organized forgetting” that enabled Americans in the 1950s to embrace Elvis Presley as the “King of Rock and Roll” and in the 1970s to identify “rock” with white British bands such as the Beatles, the Who, and the Rolling Stones, even as these musicians were themselves citing African American influences.

The Tharpe meme is part of the larger Black Rock counternarrative, but it also articulates U.S. pop music history to political and social agendas that coalesce around the intersection of issues of cultural appropriation, anti-black racism, and non-normative sexualities.

Definition 2.9.2

*Lipsitz defines **counter-memory** as “a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal,” looking “to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives”*

In naming Tharpe as rock and roll’s (singular) inventor, the meme jettisons historiographical nuance in favor of a performative hyperbole that both secures its shareability and serves users’ political and aesthetic ends.

Tharpe’s gendered exclusion from the popular notion of guitar virtuosity was something she confronted in her lifetime, as both men and women understood her as extraordinary for her ability to play the instrument “like a man.” In the counter-history it was revealed that it was not Tharpe who played like a man, but men who played like Tharpe.

Remark 2.9.2

Rosetta Tharpe rose from humble origins in Cotton Plant, Arkansas to become the U.S.’ first gospel superstar and one of its most influential and innovative guitarists.

In 1938 Tharpe pivoted to a secular career that involved a deal with Decca Records that would last into the 1950s.

Tharpe performed regularly in the UK and Europe beginning in 1957, influencing the youthful musicians, and was a musical hero to the likes of Little Richard, Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan,

Etta James, and Elvis Presley.

Tharpe died in Philadelphia in 1973, and rested in an unmarked grave until 2009, following a benefit concert that raised funds for a headstone.

Remark 2.9.3

Quote: “The rock-and-roll past haunst and shapes the present, just as the present is the dilating lens through which the meaning of the past comes into focus”

Chapter 3

The First Wave of Rock and Roll

3.1.0 Making Waves: Early Rock and Roll

Remark 3.1.1

Rhythm and blues is undoubtedly the largest influence on what would become rock and roll.

Recall 3.1.2

America emerged from WWII as the new world leader, both economically and politically. It had fared much better than the previous world leader, England, in the war, only suffering one on soil attack - pearl Harbour.

Many white middle class Americans experienced an improved standard of living following the war.

Remark 3.1.3: Excerpt: The Fabulous 50s

Large postwar economic boom due to seeling to European countries who needed aid post war.

An emphasis on women as “homemakers” during the period. With middle class whites moving to new suburbs, funding for civic improvements fell.

Those outside the financial boom remained in declining urban areas with increasing poverty and crime.

Example 3.1.1

1950s - “Leave it to Beaver” Suburban life sitcom

Focus on family suburban life, with white suburban teens going through their daily lives.

3.1.1 A New Normalcy

Post WWII we see a movement to return to normal - focus on family life, health, education, happiness, leisure, and luxuries.

Note 19

Most notably adult responsibilities were put off, making a new stage of life: the teenager.

Question 7

What are the characteristics of a “teenager”?

- Puberty and hormones, which came fast bodily and mental changes.

3.1.2 Teenagers

From this new phase of life came a pop culture dedicated solely to teenagers:

- Fashion
- Magazing
- Movies
- Slang (Daddy-O!)
- Dancing
- Music (that isn't their parents)

We see films with characters who portray teenage frustration:

Example 3.1.2

Johnny in the Wild One (1953)

“What are you rebelling against” - “What do yah got”

Example 3.1.3

James Dean in Rebel Without a Cause (1955)

Represents “all-american teenager”

A teen rebelling by drinking

Example 3.1.4

Blackboard Jungle (1955)

Portrays antisocial behaviours of youth

3.2.0 1950s America

Conservative (puritanical) values. An absence of sexuality on TV. Suburbs and suburban lifem along with cars (and their radios for listening to music). The Cold War and sniffing out communism. The space race. Science fiction. Modern Civil Rights. Rock ‘n’ Roll. The red scare and Macarthyism - promoted “snitching” and suspicion of one’s neighbor.

Science fiction played often on public interest in the possibility of extraterrestrial life - eg. “Invasion of the Body Snatchers”

3.3.0 White Teens and ‘Black Radio’

Two key radio shows played a pivotal role in getting black music into the ears of white teens:

1. Alan Freed’s “The Moondog Show” on WJW in Cleveland launched in 1951
2. Dewey Phillip’s ‘Red, Hot, and Blue’ on WHBQ in Memphis established in 1949

This was easily accessible through the wide availability of the small transistor radio. It was seen as “exotic, dangerous, and sexual” to listen to among white teens. An act of social rebellion especially from their parents. Also a way to resist assimilation.

3.3.1 Major Labels

- Decca
- Mercury
- RCA-Victor
- Columbia
- Capital
- MGM

All had their own manufacturing plants and distribution networks.

Note 20

At this time what soon would be rock ‘n’ roll was regulated to independent labels. A mechanism to break into the boardrooms of the big labels was needed in order for rock to spread.

3.3.2 Independent Labels

They had to “farm out” production. That is they needed reciprocal distribution agreements with other indie regional labels to have their recordings produced and distributed.

They also needed to partake in aggressive marketing:

Example 3.3.1

Payola - *paying DJs to get their music played on the radio*

Often these labels were promoting R&B

3.3.3 Charting Success

Recall 3.3.1

Roots of rock: Pop, C&W, R&B

Means to track success:

- Cashbox (for jukeboxes): track what is getting played
- Billboard: track radio plays

Recall 3.3.2

Intended audience of certain genres:

- R&B = 'race' records directed at black urban audiences
- C&W = 'hillbilly' records directed at rural or urban low income whites
- Pop = mainstream for the white middle class

3.4.0 Crossover

Non-mainstream recordings needed to crossover and land on the popular chart to garner success. That is, charting in R&B or C&W AND Pop

Can apply to a song or the recording itself

Recall 3.4.1

A song is the music on paper that can be performed by anyone

Recall 3.4.2

A recording is the whole package - the performance on the record that one can listen to

From 1950-1953: 10% of R&B crosses over

In 1954 25% of R&B crosses over

Finally in 1958 94% of R&B crosses over. That is R&B becomes popular as measured by the charts of success.

3.5.0 The First Waves

3.5.1 characteristics

Remark 3.5.1: Rhythm

There is an emphasis on beats 2 and 4 (one - TWO - three - FOUR)

Remark 3.5.2: Lyrically

Focused on romance, dance, school, music, sex (which was often sanitized by the white artists who covered black artists)

Remark 3.5.3

Rock 'n' roll can be essentially said to be R&B with some added elements from other traditions, i.e. C&W and pop

Remark 3.5.4: Form

Many early rock songs resembled 12-bar blues or verse-chorus-verse-chorus, etcetera etcetera, structure.

3.5.2 Four Common Formal Types

1. **Simple verse** - all verses based on the same music; no chorus (essentially same thing over and over)
2. **Simple verse-chorus** - verse and choruses based on the same music, so you have different lyrics, but the underlying music is the same
3. **Contrasting verse-chorus** - verses and choruses based on different music. A clear difference, musically, between the verse and chorus
4. **AABA** - verses and bridge based on different music

Note 21

The 12-bar blues may be a basis for any of the sections in any of the above forms.

3.5.3 Rock 'n' Roll?

- Fats Domino and his “Blueberry Hill” - he played piano and was the main singer
- Chuck Berry and his “Maybelline” - guitar soloist and singer with extensive virtuosity with the guitar
- Little Richard with “Lucille” - fast piano playing and energetic vocals

- Bill Haley and His Comets with “Rock around the Clock TOnight” - quite a few instruments, almost big band esque

Quote: “Rock and roll is just rhythm and blues. It’s the same music I’ve been playing for 15 years in New Orleans” - Fats Domino

3.5.4 Chuck Berry

One of the most imitated guitarists in rock - characterized by jumping up and down, bending back and forth, etc.

Used double stops in guitar solos (pioneered it): playing two notes simultaneously

He used both blues’ bends and country’s speed combined in his guitar style

Blue grass and R&B influences.

3.5.5 Little Richard

Said, even from himself, to be the originator of rock and roll: “I am the architect of rock and roll,” “I feel from the bottom of my heart that I’m the original inventor and architect of rock and roll”

“Rock and roll is really boogie-woogie, it’s rhythm & blues up tempo”

“Older people didn’t like it - they simply said it was bad for the children”

Little Richard was the only musically inclined of 12 children. He made a contract with RCA-Victor, and was with them before Elvis, but if you were black it was called “Camden”(?) They didn’t push black records, unlike white records.

He worked at a restaurant that he wasn’t allowed to eat at or go to the restroom in

Little Richard’s song “Tootie Frootie” is said to be the first rock ‘n’ roll song - lots of double-entendres, called n-word music by white people.

They gave it to a white artist to “clean up” and because they didn’t like the popularity Little Richard was having with white youth

He took a break to be “closer to god” in the late 1950s.

Little Richard in fact inspired the Beatles.

Note 22

Little Richard initiated gospel styles into R&B

Remark 3.5.5

Little Richard made the mold for rock and roll which was co-opted by many white musicians.

Many things recorded at J&M record.

Little Richard's charisma was clear in his music.

Rock and roll was more than music, it was a way of being.

3.6.0 Little Richard Is Everywhere: Article

Commonly, Little Richard performed with a dense horn section as well as *two* drummers.

Little Richard was born Richard Penniman in Macon, Georgia, and later died in Tullahoma Tennessee at the age of 87 from bone cancer.

Remark 3.6.1

Little Richard fused together New Orleans R&B, boogie woogie's driving left handed bass shuffle rhythm, and pyrotechnical gospel, to deliver rock 'n' roll.

Little Richard's breakout 1955 single was "Tuttie Frutti." It is said that Little Richard's exuberant piano went on to inspire the likes of Jerry Lee Lewis and Elton John.

Little Richard's singing beared the influence of gospel dynamos like Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Mahalia Jackson, and Brother Joe May. Moreover, his singing would inspire vocalists such as Otis Redding and Sam Cooke.

Richard often performed with a saxophonist Lee Allen and a drummer Earl Palmer. Palmer's swinging on the kick drum against the 4/4 snare in 1957's "Lucille" would become the inspiration to the advent of much 1960s rock music.

Even with the suppression Little Richard faced due to his race, by 1959 when he parted from his label Specialty Records, he had nine Top 40 pop singles and at least 17 singles on the Top 40 R&B chart.

Remark 3.6.2

It can not be overstated that Little Richard contributed to the desegregation of popular music in the 1950s, inspiring black and white teenagers to buy his records and to attend his concerts in the same venue, sometimes even in the segregated south.

Often Little Richard liked to sing about graphic sex. But because of the repressive conservatism of the era, Richard's subject matter was often restricted and hemmed in.

It is important to note that although the names in Little Richard's songs were feminine, and he used female pronouns for them, Little Richard was gay and overtly femme. He spent some of his teenage years on the underground drag revues in the persona of Princess LaVonne.

Note 23

*Little Richard's gender non-conformism was truly remarkable due to the profound risk and stigmatization in the 1950s - Cold War conservatism, racism, and homophobia. It should be noted that Richard drew on a long line of queer and lesbian black female performers who preceded him, from blues women like **Bessie Smith**, to gospel figures like **Rosetta Tharpe**.*

Little Richard sometimes played up being effeminate to make himself *non-threatening* to white audiences, and thereby ensure his commercial survival.

The danger of Richard's larger-than-life queeny excess was that he could come off as a racial caricature that reaffirmed the terms of white supremacy, rather than rebel against it. Though Richard's records made millions in the 1950s, the music industry defiled his work by endorsing tepid, white-bread covers of his hits, sung by mediocre artists like Pat Boone, that often earned more than the originals.

Riddled by personal demons that partly stemmed from the internalized homophobic residue of growing up in the South and being stigmatized as a freak, Richard would take himself in and out of the closet throughout his professional career, careening between poles of sin and salvation.

Chapter 4

The Second Wave of Rock and Roll

Quote: “If I could find a white man who had the [sic] sound and the [sic] feel, I could make a billion dollars” - Sam Phillips, Sun Records

4.1.0 Elvis’ Early Years

Quote: “We were a religious family going around together to sing at camp meetings and revivals” - Elvis’ musical upbringing in gospel singing.

Elvis was an avid listener of Black radio stations in Memphis - R&B influence. Elvis was also a country fan, and loved Jimmi Rodgers

As a teenager he bought his clothes from Memphis leading clothing store, Lonsky Brothers. All together Elvis’ musical and cultural influences are diverse.

Remark 4.1.1

According to Elvis’ drummer, their breakout hit “That’s All Right (Mama)” (1954), was what cemented their signature sound - he describes it as a happy accident.

4.1.1 Sam Phillips and Elvis

Sam Phillips was looking for individualism to the extreme. “I knew I was going to get some black folks in that studio one way or the other”

Memphis in the mid 50s was a black house town. “[Sam Phillips] was to pull out whatever was inside [insecure musicians]”

Remark 4.1.2

*Elvis’ rise coincided with the proliferation of TV. He took advantage of this with his appearance on the Milton Birle show.
How he gained the moniker “Elvis the Pelvis”*

After airing the Hound Dog Milton received 700,000 “pan letters” - painmail of parents against Elvis’ “provocative” dancing, the way he gyrates his hips.

4.2.0 Anatomically Correct Rock Doll Method

Definition 4.2.1: Method

The idea of this analysis method is to consider how you respond to music when you listen to it. What responses does the song elicit?

- *Mind (intellectual)*
- *Heart (emotional)*
- *Genitalia (sexual)*
- *Feet (dancing/movement)*

4.3.0 Elvis

Question 8

Why is Elvis considered “the king of rock and roll”?

- Was the first to repeatedly have hits on all three charts simultaneously - Pop, C&W, and R&B
- The first rock and roll artist to draw attention from major labels - previously rock and roll was relegated to individual labels causing limited circulation
- As a measure of his importance, Sun Records sold his rights for \$35,000 to RCA

4.3.1 Elvis’ Team

- Guitar: Scotty Moore
- Bass: Bill Black
- RCA production including guitarist Chet Atkins
- Manager: Colonel Tom Parker (took 20%-50% cut)
- He had an entourage called the *Memphis mafia*

Elvis was also frequently in movies (four before 1958), so he crossed between mediums

4.3.2 The Comeback

From 1961-1967 Elvis had no public performances, but was in 2 to 3 movies per year. In 1968 the “King” returns with a live TV special from Las Vegas. However, this comeback was short lived as in the 1970s Elvis developed some self-destructive behaviour, such as a drug addiction.

Elvis then died on AUGust 16th, 1977 - he had died not of a heart attack but of a drug overdose; these were legally obtained from his doctors.

Remark 4.3.1

Elvis had 107 top 40 singles (approximately)*

Quote: “I didn’t think Presley was as good as the Everly boys” - Chuck Berry

Quote: “I felt the music wasn’t that goot to care about. [Elvis] caused a lot of the populace (white people) to start listening to a lot of music they probably wouldn’t have” ... “All Elvis was doing was copying our kind of music” - Ray Charles

4.4.0 Rockabilly

Influences of R&B, Country, and gospel. Rockabilly often excluded drums and vocals were less ‘gritty.’

Example 4.4.1

- *The Everly Brothers with “All I have to do is dream” (1958)*
- *Jerry Lee Lewis with “Great Balls of Fire” (1957)*
- *Ricky Nelson with “Lonesome Town” (1958)*
- *Buddy Holly with “Everyday” (1957)*
- *Roy Orbison with “Crying” (1961)*

Many of these were seen as teen heart throbes.

4.5.0 Other Parallel Movements

- Doo-Wop
- Teen Idols
- Sweet Soul
- Folk Revival

- Girl Groups
- Surf Music

Note 24: F

llowing stylistic differences is more like adhering to rough guidelines rather than hard rules.

Remark 4.5.1

Lyrically and musically many of these styles may overlap.

Moreover, one can't help but to have influences between styles. What's happening in one style may influence another.

Recall 4.5.2

Recall that style labels are largely used to aid in marketing.

Sometimes may depend on the groups name as to which style they are labelled as.

Remark 4.5.3

Contextualized listening involves recognizing what sounds are, what they're doing, and making connections to previous lived experiences and music history knowledge.

4.5.1 Doo-Wop

Generally speaking, it fuses gospel and R&B. Groups were informally formed on the street using no instruments, and instead their voices to mimic instruments.

However, it was common for them to be recorded in a studio with a professional band as a backing track.

There were two types of bands:

1. up-tempo - usually happy
2. romantic ballad - usually slower

Remark 4.5.4

Curiously, many bands were named after birds:

e.g. The Orioles, the Raves, the Flamingos, the Swallows, the Crows, the Cardinals, the Robins, the Penguins, the Larks, the Pelicans, the Swans, the Wrens, and the Sparrows.

Note 25

Music is a two way street - influence can go both ways.

Bands often used onomatopoeias to simulate instruments. Often used by black musicians who could not afford proper instruments. Many were very badly exploited by record labels: e.g. Sunny Till

The music was often slow and "jazzy." A very popular Doo-Wop group was "The Teenagers"

4.5.2 Crossing over the the Mainstream

Example 4.5.1

*The Platters: the first doo-wop act to have lasting pop-chart success:
18 top 40 hits from 1955-1960, with “The Great Pretender” hitting #1 in December 1955*

Example 4.5.2

The Coasters - “Yakety Yak” hits #1 in June 1958

Example 4.5.3

The Chords’ 1954 “Sh-Boom” was whitewashed by the Crew Cuts and became #1 for both

The whitewashing of a song by an African American group to make it more marketable to white audiences was very common.

Remark 4.5.5: Excerpt

*A few white DJs began to play R&B music for white teen audiences using rock and roll to hide its black origins. E.g. Alan Freed
He mainly played black vocal groups (e.g. Doo-wop), causing it to gain vast popularity with white audiences. Record companies decided to hire white bands to do covers as they would be more marketable rather than paying these black groups.
Known as cover versions - almost always surpassed the original recordings due to the amount of promotions they had.*

Example 4.5.4

*The Del-Vikings (a mixed race group during segregation) “Come go with me” (1956)
A mix between an emotional and dancing/movement song.*

4.6.0 Analysis Tips

- Identify instrumentation: i.e. drums, guitar, bass, piano, sax
- What are these instruments doing and how do they effect you the listener:
 - Singing: Are they whispering? Yelling? Somewhere in between?
 - Does it sound like they’re labouring or in pain? Or, like it’s easy for them?
 - Melody: Is it catchy? Memorable? Something you can sing along to?
 - Each Instrument: What are they doing? Why?
- Tempo: Is it fast? Slow? Somewhere in between? How does it make you feel?
- Dynamics: Really loud? Quiet? Somewhere in between? Does it change throughout?
- Structures: Is there a repeated catchy part of the song? (maybe the chorus?)

Question 9

What might we find if we used this method to analyze, say, ten doo-wop songs from this period?

Example 4.6.1

Ben E. King's "Stand by Me"

Note 26

A trademark of the "sweet soul" style is the addition of a string section to what otherwise would be a slower R&B song

Singer straining slightly/sounds sad/pained. Lyrics express longing and love. Music not too suitable for dancing, nor very erotic. String playing and vibrato emphasizing the emotion.

Example 4.6.2

Ray Charles "Hit the Road Jack"

Up beat catchy tune. Dancy with a very bouncy beat. Piano playing in a bouncing style. Singer up spirited voice, king of jokey.

Example 4.6.3

Sam Cook "Bring it hom to me"

Slower tempo. Lyrics drawn out and slightly pained. Longing - string instruments draw it out.

4.6.1 Girl Groups

- The Crystals with "Do Doo Ron Ron"
- The Shirelles with "Will you love me tomorrow"
- The Chiffons with "One fine day"
- The Ronettes with "Be my baby"
- The shangri-las with "Walkin' in the sand"

Example 4.6.4

The Ronettes and "Be my baby"

Lyrics are about love, loudish music, and slightly dancy

4.6.2 The Beach Boys

Front man **Brian Wilson** was a big fan of producer Phil Spector. Influenced by "Be my baby," with "Don't worry baby" being his take on Spector's style.

Interpreted as surf rock

Example 4.6.5

"Don't worry baby"

Long drawn out vocals. Slightly strained high singing with supporting harmonies.

4.6.3 Peter Paul and Mary

Remark 4.6.1

Often in folk the music is a vehicle for a social justice message

Example 4.6.6

“If I had a Hammer”

Lyrics carry a warning of “danger” and talk about promoting love between all people of the land.

4.7.0 Sanitizing Rock in the Early 1960s

Generally a whitening of rock and roll. The Teen Idol arose out of this sanitization: “well-dressed, well-behaved rock”

An example of which was Chubby Checker’s 1960 “The Twist”: Fun, wholesome, lacking any edge.

Mainstays of the Dick Clark’s American Bandstand were artists like Chubby: a dance centric TV show.

Considered the era of “Payola”: pay for play on the radio. Demonstrates the power of bigger players with bigger budgets to dictate what becomes popular.

Teen idols rose to popularity in the late 50s early 60s as they fit the mold of well dressed well behaved rock.

Example 4.7.1

Paul Anka, Bobby Vee, Bobby Vinton, Tommy Sands, Brenda Lee, Leslie Gore, Conrie Francis.

Example 4.7.2

Paul Anka with “Diana”

Lyrics about loving a girl - emotional. No movement on stage, no presence.

4.8.0 The End of An Era

Little Richard left rock in the late 50s to be with God. Jerry Lee Lewis had a relationship scandal with his 13 year old cousin causing him to be shunned - forced to cancel tour early, and was boycotted by records.

Elvis leaves for the military in the late 50s. Buddy Holly left his band the Crickets and got married before dying in a plane crash during his last tour. Paul Anka was brought in to finish the tour - hard edges of rock and roll were flattened.

4.8.1 1960: The End of Classic Rock

- Chuck Berry in Jail (1961)
- Jerry Lee Lewis in scandal after marrying his young cousin (1958)
- Little Richard decides to become a minister (1957)
- Elvis enlists in the army (1958)
- Buddy Holly dies in airplane accident (1959)
- Bill Haley, Fats Domino, Every Brothers, fade from the spotlight.

4.9.0 Elvis' Top 40 Hits

1. "Heartbreak Hotel" 03/10/56, Position 1
2. "I Was the One" 03/17/56, Position 19
3. "Blue Suede Shoes" 04/28/56, Position 20
4. "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You" 06/02/56, Position 1
5. "My Baby Left Me" 06/09/56, Position 31
6. "Don't Be Cruel" 08/04/56, Position 1
7. "Hound Dog" 08/04/56, Position 1
8. "Love Me Tender" 10/20/56, Position 1
9. "Anyway You Want Me (That's How I Will Be)" 11/10/56, Position 20
10. "Love Me" 11/34/56, Position 2
11. "When My Blue Moon Turns to Gold Again" 12/29/56, Position 19
12. "Poor Boy" 01/05/57, Position 24
13. "Too Much" 01/26/57, Position 1
14. "Playing for Keeps" 02/09/57, Position 21
15. "All Shook Up" 04/06/57, Position 1
16. "(There'll be) Peace in the Valley (for Me)" 04/29/57, Position 25
17. "(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear" 06/24/57, Position 1
18. "Loving You" 07/08/57, Position 20
19. "Jailhouse Rock" 10/14/57, Position 1

20. “Treat Me Nice” 10/21/57, Position 18
21. “Don’t” 01/27/58, Position 1
22. “I Beg of You” 02/03/58, Position 8
23. “Wear My Ring Around Your Neck” 04/21/58, Position 2
24. “Doncha’ Think It’s Time” 05/05/58, Position 15
25. “Hard Headed Woman” 06/30/58, Position 1
26. “Don’t Ask Me Why” 07/14/58, Position 25
27. “One Night” 11/10/58, Position 4
28. “I Got Stung” 11/10/58, Position 8
29. “(Now and Then There’s) a Fool Such as I” 03/30/59, Position 2
30. “I Need Your Love Tonight” 03/30/59, Position 4
31. “A Big Hunk o’ Love” 07/13/59, Position 1
32. And more

4.10.0 Chubby Checker’s “The Twist” Article

Checker’s “The Twist” was the number 1 single in the Billboard Hot 100 in 1960 and stayed there for 3 weeks.

“The Twist” is an example of a foundational record of the “dance-craze.” The Twist’s only goal/purpose was to pound hard and communicate excitement.

Remark 4.10.1

*The Twist was originally written by **Hank Ballard** and recorded by his band **Hank Ballard And The Midnighters**. Dick Clark liked the song but didn’t think Ballard was “approachable” enough to feature on American Bandstand. In auditions for the part Clark found Ernest Evens (Chubby Checker) who he recorded the song with which shortly hit #1 a week after it was performed live for the first time.*

The Twist was later remixed and rereleased multiple times, even having a rab release in the 1980s.

4.11.0 Ray Charles’ “Hit the Road Jack” Article”

Ray Charles’ “Hit the Road Jack” Hit #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1961 for 2 weeks.

The song involves a woman who knows she's stuck with someone who is worthless, and she's kicking him out. The guy begs and pleads for another chance, but he knows it's hopeless. They're following a script and they know it. (Maybe they've had this argument before. Maybe this really is the end. But the contours of it will always be familiar).

The star of the song isn't Charles by Margie Hendrix leader of the Raelettes, Charles' trio of backup singers. A few years later Charles fired Hendrix, and although Charles survived his addictions Hendrix did not, dying in 1973.

4.12.0 The Marcels' "Blue Moon" Article

The Marcels' "Blue Moon" Hit #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1961 for 3 weeks.

Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart had written it for a never-released Hollywood musical in 1934. It had been a hit for Billy Eckstine in 1947, for Mel Torme in 1949, and for Elvis Presley in 1956. All of these versions of the song were sad and tender and romantic.

The Marcels performed it as a dizzy cartoon burp. The Marcels' version is an act of "beautiful vandalism."

Remark 4.12.1

The Marcels was a mixed race doo-wop quintet from Pittsburgh. They had never recorded anything before "Blue Moon," and they'd never go on to have another real hit.

None of the Marcels gives any consideration to the song's emotional focus. They just mine the song for hooks.

Elvis Presley's cover of Blue Moon is much slower and more somber. The lyrics are drawn out and the instrumentation quiet and controlled. An emotional song (under this interpretation). The instrumentation is very minimalist, with muted picking in the background to provide a beat.

Billie Holiday's cover of Blue Moon is slow with piano accompaniment and other backing instruments. Evidently an emotional rendition. Saxophone solo. Lots of vibrato in the singing.

Chapter 5

The British Invasion

5.1.0 “I Want To Hold Your Hand” Stereogum article

On February 1st, 1964, The Beatles’ “I Want to Hold Your Hand” hit number #1 on the charts, and stayed there for seven weeks.

Between 1964 (when they first showed up on American shores) and 1970 (when they broke up), the Beatles had 20 singles that appeared at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100. They spent a grand total of 59 weeks at #1. As a commercial entity in America they really only lasted six years, but they spent more than a year of that time at #1.

After they broke up, every member of the band had multiple solo songs that made it to #1. As solo artists they continued hitting #1 on the charts into the late 1980s.

Remark 5.1.1

*The band was very popular in the UK through 1963, but **Capitol** (the American branch of their label) didn’t want to release their music in the US. Instead the band released a couple of singles on smaller labels in the US in 1963. The real start was when a Washington DC radio DJ started playing “I Want To Hold Your Hand” on the request of a fan. Following suit Capitol rush released “I Want To Hold Your Hand” the day after Christmas 1963.*

By February, 1964, when the band flew to NY, thousands of fans were waiting for them at the airport. Moreover, when they played the song on the Ed Sullivan Show, 73 million people (34% of the entire US at the time) watched them.

5.2.0 “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” Stereogum article

The Rolling Stones’ “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” hit #1 on the Billboard’s hot 100 on July 10, 1965, and stayed there for 4 weeks.

Note 27

The guitar riff in the song was supposed to be horns. It is said that Keith Richards slept next to a guitar and a tape recorder, and when he woke up he saw that a whole side of tape had been recorded containing the legendary riff, and a lot of snoring.

When he wrote the riff Richards, who was obsessed with electric Chicago blues, thought it would work better on horns than guitar. He used a Gibson Fuzz Box for the distorted sound, and used it because he wanted to show horn players how the riff should sound.

The Rolling Stones were on tour in America when Richards and Mick Jagger got together to write “Satisfaction.” Originally they could not compete with their British Invasion peers, only hitting #1 a few times in the UK.

Their manager was **Andrew Loog Oldham**. He instructed them to write their own songs, since previously the Stones mainly wanted to cover songs from American bluesmen (Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, etc.). “Satisfaction” was seen as shaggy and unkempt, not exactly the work of professional songwriters.

Almost from the start the Stones had been marketed as a rowdier, more dangerous alternative to the Beatles. “Satisfaction is a song about not getting laid.

Chapter 6

America's Ambassadors of Rock, Part 1

6.1.0 “Good Vibrations” Stereogum article

On December 10, 1966, the Beach Boys’ “Good Vibrations” hit #1 on the Billboard’s Hot 100, and remained there for one week. “Good Vibrations” was a triumph of one man’s single-minded possibly self-destructive obsession. The Beach Boys’ Brian Wilson has this song idea, but he hadn’t finished it in his head when he started writing it. So he spent months in studios, finding sounds and discovering new ways to patch them together. Consequently he spent tons of money, tracked down obscure electronic instruments, and alienated some of the people in his life.

“Good Vibrations” was one of the most expensive songs ever recorded for a long period of time, with an estimated cost between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

Note 28

Brian Wilson shaped the song as he was recording it, using tape-splicing to edit pieces of tracks together. The song begins verse-chorus-verse, but then explodes into a number of different mini-movements.

Remark 6.1.1

On the song you can hear seesawing staccato cello hums, reverb-drowned harpsichords, the eerie whine of the primitive synth known as the electro-theremin, as well as many others.

The group is singing about being newly and deliriously in love, so the song’s atomized structure mirrors that feeling. The lyrics were done by Mike Love, Wilson’s cousin and bandmate.

Chapter 7

America's Ambassadors of Rock, Part 2: Motown and Southern Soul

7.1.0 Horn Section in a Motown Band

Music express horn section: lead trumpet player Dan, second trumpet player Larry, trombone player Nick, sax and woodwind specialist Don.

The trumpets role in Motown is to enhance the music with riffs and such, as well as longer notes to harmonize with chords and create “color.” Provide harmony and make it more exciting.

A lot of bands had two or more trumpet players. The second trumpet provides some additional punch and harmony, following the lead player.

Dan started playing trumpet at 11 and Larry started trumpet at 10 (with piano before that). Dan toured with Munford and Suns, and Kayne West. Larry played lots of Broadway musicals.

The role of a trombone player is as part of the horn section to give it power. It usually plays in octaves with the trumpet.

Saxophone for solos were somewhat a tradition in the beginning of Motown. In a Motown section the two main saxophones would be a Baritone and a Tenor. The Baritone is the “bottom” of the section, giving the punch and supplying support. Tenor usually plays the harmonics of the chords, playing similar to what the trombone/trumpets are playing to beef it up.

7.2.0 Can We Recreate the Motown Sound?

Tamla records was founded in Detroit by Berry Gordy in 1959, and was changed to Motown Records a year later. Motown became an assembly line for hit records, running nearly 24/7, with it being inspired by Gordy's work in automotive factories in Detroit. Between 1959 to 1972, The Funk Brothers (the Motown House Band) played on more hit records than the Beatles, the Beach Boys, and Elvis combined.

7.2.1 The Studio

The live room was a small rectangular room with cables hanging down from the ceiling (giving it the nickname the Snake Pit). The walls in Motown's room were covered in peg board.

The Echo chamber had a speaker at one end of the attic and a mic at the other, to produce the echo effect on vocals ran through the speaker.

7.2.2 Drums and Percussion

The drum kit was a piece made kit of several brands. Blankets were sometimes placed in the bass drum to experiment, and the snares and other heads were sometimes taped to the bass head.

Many Motown songs emphasize beats 2 and 4 heavily, and this would be added by other auxillary percussion such as tambourines.

7.2.3 Piano and Keyboards

The piano often dictated the harmonic structure of motown songs. Often multiple keyboards would be playing the same part to get an orchestral feel.

The piano in Motown was an 1800s steinway.

7.2.4 Bass and Guitar

The Motown bass was a p-bass strung with flat wounds and a foam piece at the base.

7.2.5 Electric Guitar

Most Motown tracks have multiple electronic guitars. The Motown guitar sound had zero amplifiers. They went into a DI box, went into a mixer, and came out a speaker in the live room which played all the instruments together.

7.2.6 Strings, Horns, and Overdubs

Strings, horns, and winds are a huge part of the Motown sound. The would often record the strings section in a different studio as an overdub over the rhythm section.

7.2.7 Vocals

Early on the vocalists would often sing in the room with the rhythm section, or in an isolated room. Later they found that recording the vocalists separately and doing an overdubbing made for a cleaner recording.

After the vocals were recorded they would use a fader to edit it. Another trick they would do (for dynamics and character) is they would duplicate it to two channels, leaving one along and compressing the other quite heavily with a high end.

Oftentimes there were distortion on the vocals, caused by hitting the tape machine too hard (singing too loud).

7.2.8 Mixing

Initially Motown had 8 tracks, though they later upgraded to 16.

7.3.0 “Where Did Our Love Go” Stereogum article

The Supremes were Motown in microcosm: three girls from Detroit who forced their way into music through sheer charm and determination and who then made themselves over. They came from the same Detroit housing project. They started out as the Primettes, a sister group to a male singing group the Primes. Berry Gordy initially turned them down as they were still in high school, but they stuck around.

When they got their shot, none of their singles landed at the start. Their nickname was the “No-Hit Supremes” at Motown. The story goes that “Where Did Our Love Go” was initially written by Eddie Holland, Lamont Dozier, and Brian Holland for the Marvelettes. The Marvelettes hated it, and the Supremes didn't much like it either, but they couldn't refuse.

Then “Where Did Our Love Go” hit number 1 only a few weeks after Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, with it hitting number 1 on August 22, 1964, and staying there for two weeks. “Where Did Our Love Go” is a song for dancing.

7.4.0 “My Girl” Stereogum article

The Temptations' “My Girl” hit number 1 on March 6, 1965, staying there for 1 week.

The Temptations formed when members of two rival Detroit singing groups joined forces. They also weren't scoring any hits early on in the Motown system. The song was written by Smokey Robinson and Ronald White for Temptations replacement David Ruffin and his raspy voice.

“My Girl” was really the start for the Temptations.