

= Chuck Berry =

Charles Edward Anderson " Chuck " Berry (born October 18 , 1926) is an American guitarist , singer and songwriter and is one of the pioneers of rock and roll music . With songs such as " Maybellene " (1955) , " Roll Over Beethoven " (1956) , " Rock and Roll Music " (1957) and " Johnny B. Goode " (1958) , Berry refined and developed rhythm and blues into the major elements that made rock and roll distinctive , with lyrics focusing on teen life and consumerism and music featuring guitar solos and showmanship that were a major influence on subsequent rock music .

Born into a middle @-@ class African @-@ American family in St. Louis , Missouri , Berry had an interest in music from an early age and gave his first public performance at Sumner High School . While still a high @-@ school student he was convicted of armed robbery and was sent to a reformatory , where he was held from 1944 to 1947 . After his release , Berry settled into married life and worked at an automobile assembly plant . By early 1953 , influenced by the guitar riffs and showmanship techniques of the blues musician T @-@ Bone Walker , Berry began performing with the Johnnie Johnson Trio . His break came when he traveled to Chicago in May 1955 and met Muddy Waters , who suggested he contact Leonard Chess , of Chess Records . With Chess he recorded " Maybellene " ? Berry 's adaptation of the country song " Ida Red " ? which sold over a million copies , reaching number one on Billboard magazine 's rhythm and blues chart . By the end of the 1950s , Berry was an established star with several hit records and film appearances and a lucrative touring career . He had also established his own St. Louis nightclub , Berry 's Club Bandstand . But in January 1962 , he was sentenced to three years in prison for offenses under the Mann Act ? he had transported a 14 @-@ year @-@ old girl across state lines .

After his release in 1963 , Berry had more hits in the mid @-@ 1960s , including " No Particular Place to Go " , " You Never Can Tell " , and " Nadine " . By the mid @-@ 1970s , he was more in demand as a live performer , playing his past hits with local backup bands of variable quality . In 1979 he served 120 days in prison for tax evasion .

Berry was among the first musicians to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on its opening in 1986 ; he was cited for having " laid the groundwork for not only a rock and roll sound but a rock and roll stance . " Berry is included in several of Rolling Stone magazine 's " greatest of all time " lists ; he was ranked fifth on its 2004 list of the 100 Greatest Artists of All Time . The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 's 500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll includes three of Berry 's : " Johnny B. Goode " , " Maybellene " , and " Rock and Roll Music " . Berry 's " Johnny B. Goode " is the only rock @-@ and @-@ roll song included on the Voyager Golden Record .

= = Biography and career = =

= = = Early life and apprenticeship with Johnnie Johnson (1926 ? 1954) = = =

Born in St. Louis , Missouri , Berry was the fourth child in a family of six . He grew up in the north St. Louis neighborhood known as The Ville , an area where many middle @-@ class people lived at the time . His father , Henry , was a contractor and deacon of a nearby Baptist church ; his mother , Martha , was a certified public @-@ school principal . His middle @-@ class upbringing allowed him to pursue his interest in music from an early age . He gave his first public performance in 1941 while still a student at Sumner High School .

In 1944 , while still a student at Sumner High School , he was arrested for armed robbery after robbing three shops in Kansas City , Missouri , and then stealing a car at gunpoint with some friends . Berry 's account in his autobiography is that his car broke down and he flagged down a passing car and stole it at gunpoint with a nonfunctional pistol . He was convicted and sent to the Intermediate Reformatory for Young Men at Algoa , near Jefferson City , Missouri , where he formed a singing quartet and did some boxing . The singing group became competent enough that the authorities allowed it to perform outside the detention facility . Berry was released from the reformatory on his 21st birthday in 1947 .

Berry married Themetta " Toddy " Suggs on October 28 , 1948 , who gave birth to Darlin Ingrid Berry on October 3 , 1950 . Berry supported his family by taking various jobs in St. Louis , working briefly as a factory worker at two automobile assembly plants and as a janitor in the apartment building where he and his wife lived . Afterwards he trained as a beautician at the Poro College of Cosmetology , founded by Annie Turnbo Malone . He was doing well enough by 1950 to buy a " small three room brick cottage with a bath " on Whittier Street , which is now listed as the Chuck Berry House on the National Register of Historic Places .

By the early 1950s , Berry was working with local bands in clubs in St. Louis as an extra source of income . He had been playing blues since his teens , and he borrowed both guitar riffs and showmanship techniques from the blues musician T @-@ Bone Walker . He also took guitar lessons from his friend Ira Harris , which laid the foundation for his guitar style .

By early 1953 Berry was performing with Johnnie Johnson 's trio , starting a long @-@ time collaboration with the pianist . The band played mostly blues and ballads , but the most popular music among whites in the area was country . Berry wrote , " Curiosity provoked me to lay a lot of our country stuff on our predominantly black audience and some of our black audience began whispering ' who is that black hillbilly at the Cosmo ? ' After they laughed at me a few times they began requesting the hillbilly stuff and enjoyed dancing to it . "

Berry 's calculated showmanship , along with a mix of country tunes and R & B tunes , sung in the style of Nat King Cole set to the music of Muddy Waters , brought in a wider audience , particularly affluent white people .

= = = Signing with Chess : " Maybellene " to " Come On " (1955 ? 1962) = = =

In May 1955 , Berry traveled to Chicago , where he met Muddy Waters , who suggested he contact Leonard Chess , of Chess Records . Berry thought his blues music would be of more interest to Chess , but to his surprise it was a traditional country fiddle tune , " Ida Red " , as recorded by Bob Wills , that got Chess 's attention . Chess had seen the rhythm and blues market shrink and was looking to move beyond it , and he thought Berry might be the artist for that purpose . On May 21 , 1955 , Berry recorded an adaptation of the " Ida Red " , under the title " Maybellene " , with Johnnie Johnson on the piano , Jerome Green (from Bo Diddley 's band) on the maracas , Jasper Thomas on the drums and Willie Dixon on the bass . " Maybellene " sold over a million copies , reaching number one on Billboard magazine 's rhythm and blues chart and number five on its Best Sellers in Stores chart for September 10 , 1955 .

At the end of June 1956 , his song " Roll Over Beethoven " reached number 29 on the Billboard 's Top 100 chart , and Berry toured as one of the " Top Acts of ' 56 " . He and Carl Perkins became friends . Perkins said that " I knew when I first heard Chuck that he 'd been affected by country music . I respected his writing ; his records were very , very great . " As they toured , Perkins discovered that Berry not only liked country music but also knew about as many songs as he did . Jimmie Rodgers was one of his favorites . " Chuck knew every Blue Yodel and most of Bill Monroe 's songs as well , " Perkins remembered . " He told me about how he was raised very poor , very tough . He had a hard life . He was a good guy . I really liked him . "

In late 1957 , Berry took part in Alan Freed 's " Biggest Show of Stars for 1957 " , touring the United States with the Everly Brothers , Buddy Holly , and others . He was a guest on ABC 's Guy Mitchell Show , singing his hit song " Rock ' n ' Roll Music " . The hits continued from 1957 to 1959 , with Berry scoring over a dozen chart singles during this period , including the US Top 10 hits " School Days " , " Rock and Roll Music " , " Sweet Little Sixteen " , and " Johnny B. Goode " . He appeared in two early rock @-@ and @-@ roll movies : Rock Rock Rock (1956) , in which he sang " You Can 't Catch Me " , and Go , Johnny , Go ! (1959) , in which he had a speaking role as himself and performed " Johnny B. Goode " , " Memphis , Tennessee " , and " Little Queenie " . His performance of " Sweet Little Sixteen " at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1958 was captured in the motion picture Jazz on a Summer 's Day .

By the end of the 1950s , Berry was a high @-@ profile established star with several hit records and film appearances and a lucrative touring career . He had opened a racially integrated St. Louis

nightclub , Berry 's Club Bandstand , and invested in real estate . But in December 1959 , he was arrested under the Mann Act after questionable allegations that he had sexual intercourse with a 14 @-@ year @-@ old Apache waitress , Janice Escalante , whom he had transported across state lines to work as a hatcheck girl at his club . After a two @-@ week trial in March 1960 , he was convicted , fined \$ 5 @,@ 000 , and sentenced to five years in prison . He appealed the decision , arguing that the judge 's comments and attitude were racist and prejudiced the jury against him . The appeal was upheld , and a second trial was heard in May and June 1961 , resulting in another conviction and a three @-@ year prison sentence . After another appeal failed , Berry served one and one @-@ half years in prison , from February 1962 to October 1963 . He had continued recording and performing during the trials , but his output had slowed as his popularity declined ; his final single released before he was imprisoned was " Come On " .

= = = " Nadine " and move to Mercury (1963 ? 1969) = = =

When Berry was released from prison in 1963 , his return to recording and performing was made easier because British invasion bands ? notably the Beatles and the Rolling Stones ? had sustained interest in his music by releasing cover versions of his songs , and other bands had reworked some of them , such as the Beach Boys ' 1963 hit " Surfin ' U.S.A. " , which used the melody of Berry 's " Sweet Little Sixteen " . In 1964 and 1965 Berry released eight singles , including three that were commercially succesful , reaching the top 20 of the Billboard 100 : " No Particular Place to Go " (a humorous reworking of " School Days " , concerning the introduction of seat belts in cars) , " You Never Can Tell " , and the rocking " Nadine " . Between 1966 and 1969 Berry released five albums for Mercury Records , including his first live album , Live at Fillmore Auditorium , in which he was backed by the Steve Miller Band .

While this was not a successful period for studio work , Berry was still a top concert draw . In May 1964 , he had made a successful tour of the UK , but when he returned in January 1965 his behavior was erratic and moody , and his touring style of using unrehearsed local backing bands and a strict nonnegotiable contract was earning him a reputation as a difficult and unexciting performer . He also played at large events in North America , such as the Schaefer Music Festival , in New York City 's Central Park in July 1969 , and the Toronto Rock and Roll Revival festival in October .

= = = Back to Chess : " My Ding @-@ a @-@ Ling " to White House concert (1970 ? 1979) = = =

Berry returned to Chess from 1970 to 1973 . There were no hit singles from the 1970 album Back Home , but in 1972 Chess released a live recording of " My Ding @-@ a @-@ Ling " , a novelty song which he had recorded in a different version as " My Tambourine " on his 1968 LP From St. Louie to Frisco . The track became his only number @-@ one single . A live recording of " Reelin ' and Rockin ' " , issued as a followup single in the same year , was his last Top 40 hit in both the US and the UK . Both singles were included on the part @-@ live , part @-@ studio album The London Chuck Berry Sessions (other albums of London sessions were recorded by Chess 's mainstay artists Muddy Waters and Howlin ' Wolf) . Berry 's second tenure with Chess ended with the 1975 album Chuck Berry , after which he did not make a studio record until Rock It for Atco Records in 1979 , his last studio album to date .

In the 1970s Berry toured on the strength of his earlier successes . He was on the road for many years , carrying only his Gibson guitar , confident that he could hire a band that already knew his music no matter where he went . AllMusic said that in this period his " live performances became increasingly erratic , ... working with terrible backup bands and turning in sloppy , out @-@ of @-@ tune performances " which " tarnished his reputation with younger fans and oldtimers " alike . Among the many bandleaders performing a backup role with Berry were Bruce Springsteen and Steve Miller when each was just starting his career . Springsteen related in the documentary film Hail ! Hail ! Rock ' n ' Roll that Berry did not give the band a set list and expected the musicians to follow his lead after each guitar intro . Berry neither spoke to nor thanked the band after the show .

Nevertheless , Springsteen backed Berry again when he appeared at the concert for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995 . At the request of Jimmy Carter , Berry performed at the White House on June 1 , 1979 .

Berry 's touring style , traveling the " oldies " circuit in the 1970s (often being paid in cash by local promoters) added ammunition to the Internal Revenue Service 's accusations that Berry had evaded paying income taxes . Facing criminal sanction for the third time , Berry pled guilty to tax evasion and was sentenced to four months in prison and 1 @,@ 000 hours of community service ? performing benefit concerts ? in 1979 .

= = = Still on the road (1980 ? 2014) = = =

Berry continued to play 70 to 100 one @-@ nighters per year in the 1980s , still traveling solo and requiring a local band to back him at each stop . In 1986 , Taylor Hackford made a documentary film , Hail ! Hail ! Rock ' n ' Roll , of a celebration concert for Berry 's sixtieth birthday , organized by Keith Richards . Eric Clapton , Etta James , Julian Lennon , Robert Cray and Linda Ronstadt , among others , appeared with Berry on stage and in the film . During the concert , Berry played a Gibson ES @-@ 355 , the luxury version of the ES @-@ 335 that he favored on his 1970s tours . Richards played a black Fender Telecaster Custom , Cray a Fender Stratocaster and Clapton a Gibson ES 350T , the same model that Berry used on his early recordings .

In the late 1980s , Berry bought The Southern Air , a restaurant in Wentzville , Missouri . In 1990 he was sued by several women who claimed that he had installed a video camera in the ladies ' bathroom . Berry claimed that he had the camera installed to catch red @-@ handed a worker who was suspected of stealing from the restaurant . Though his guilt was never proved in court , Berry opted for a class action settlement with 59 women . His biographer , Bruce Pegg , estimated that it cost Berry over \$ 1 @.@ 2 million plus legal fees . During this time Berry began using Wayne T. Schoeneberg as his legal counsel . Reportedly , a police raid on his house found videotapes of women using the restroom , and one of the women was a minor . Also found in the raid were 62 grams of marijuana . Felony drug and child @-@ abuse charges were filed . In order to avoid the child @-@ abuse charges , Berry agreed to plead guilty to misdemeanor possession of marijuana . He was given a six @-@ month suspended jail sentence and two years ' unsupervised probation and was ordered to donate \$ 5 @,@ 000 to a local hospital .

In November 2000 , Berry again faced legal charges when he was sued by his former pianist Johnnie Johnson , who claimed that he co @-@ wrote over 50 songs , including " No Particular Place to Go " , " Sweet Little Sixteen " and " Roll Over Beethoven " , that credit Berry alone . The case was dismissed when the judge ruled that too much time had passed since the songs were written .

In 2008 , Berry toured Europe , with stops in Sweden , Norway , Finland , the United Kingdom , the Netherlands , Ireland , Switzerland , Poland and Spain . In mid @-@ 2008 , he played at the Virgin Festival in Baltimore , Maryland .

During a concert on New Year 's Day 2011 in Chicago , Berry , suffering from exhaustion , passed out and had to be helped off stage .

Berry lives in Ladue , Missouri , approximately 10 miles west of St. Louis . Berry regularly performed one Wednesday each month at Blueberry Hill , a restaurant and bar located in the Delmar Loop neighborhood of St. Louis , from 1996 to 2014 .

= = Legacy = =

A pioneer of rock and roll , Berry was a significant influence on the development of both the music and the attitude associated with the rock music lifestyle . With songs such as " Maybellene " (1955) , " Roll Over Beethoven " (1956) , " Rock and Roll Music " (1957) and " Johnny B. Goode " (1958) , Berry refined and developed rhythm and blues into the major elements that made rock and roll distinctive , with lyrics successfully aimed to appeal to the early teenage market by using graphic and humorous descriptions of teen dances , fast cars , high @-@ school life , and consumer culture

, and utilizing guitar solos and showmanship that would be a major influence on subsequent rock music . His records are a rich storehouse of the essential lyrical , showmanship and musical components of rock and roll . In addition to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones , a large number of significant popular @-@ music performers have recorded Berry 's songs . Though not technically accomplished , his guitar style is distinctive ? he incorporated electronic effects to mimic the sound of bottleneck blues guitarists and drew on the influence of guitar players such as Carl Hogan , and T @-@ Bone Walker to produce a clear and exciting sound that many later guitarists would acknowledge as an influence in their own style . Berry 's showmanship has been influential on other rock guitarists , particularly his one @-@ legged hop routine , and the " duck walk " , which he first used as a child when he walked " stooping with full @-@ bended knees , but with my back and head vertical " under a table to retrieve a ball and his family found it entertaining ; he used it when " performing in New York for the first time and some journalist branded it the duck walk . "

The rock critic Robert Christgau considers Berry " the greatest of the rock and rollers , " while John Lennon said , " if you tried to give rock and roll another name , you might call it ' Chuck Berry ' . " Ted Nugent said , " If you don 't know every Chuck Berry lick , you can 't play rock guitar . "

Among the honors Berry has received are the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1984 and the Kennedy Center Honors in 2000 . He was ranked seventh on Time magazine 's 2009 list of the 10 best electric guitar players of all time . On May 14 , 2002 , Berry was honored as one of the first BMI Icons at the 50th annual BMI Pop Awards . He was presented the award along with BMI affiliates Bo Diddley and Little Richard . In August 2014 , Berry was made a laureate of the Polar Music Prize .

Berry is included in several of Rolling Stone magazine 's " Greatest of All Time " lists . In September 2003 , the magazine ranked him number 6 in its list of the " 100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time " . In November his compilation album The Great Twenty @-@ Eight was ranked 21st in Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time . In March 2004 , Berry was ranked fifth on the list of " The Immortals ? The 100 Greatest Artists of All Time " . In December 2004 , six of his songs were included in " Rolling Stone 's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time " : " Johnny B. Goode " (# 7) , " Maybellene " (# 18) , " Roll Over Beethoven " (# 97) , " Rock and Roll Music " (# 128) , " Sweet Little Sixteen " (# 272) and " Brown Eyed Handsome Man " (# 374) . In June 2008 , his song " Johnny B. Goode " ranked first in the " 100 Greatest Guitar Songs of All Time " .

The journalist Chuck Klosterman has argued that in 300 years Berry will still be remembered as the rock musician who most closely captured the essence of rock and roll .

= = Discography = =