

1 THE CONTROVERSY OVER COVER VERSIONS

- Common practice to watch for R&B hits and then cover them for pop
 - Reduced crossover potential for original makers, who were almost always black
 - R&B artists often paid a flat fee but frequently signed away any rights thereafter
 - Only beneficiaries of cover versions were record people, who were mostly white
- 1955: Top 30 records are 3 versions of the same song, “The Ballad of Davy Crockett”
 - “Cover version”: The idea that a recording is the primary source of reference
 - Record labels in prerock music invested in distinctive singers, “brand loyalty”
- Pat Boone and Bill Haley records weren’t replicas, but changed for a white audience
 - Both topped pop charts, but also placed well on R&B charts

2 ROCKABILITY IN THE WAKE OF PRESLEY

- Weeks after signing out Elvis, Phillips recorded Tennessee guitarist-vocalist Carl Perkins
 - “Blue Suede Shoes” → #2 pop, hit on all charts, 1st million-selling single for Sun
 - Perkin’s career was dealt a blow when involved in an auto accident
- 1956: Johnny Cash, another one of Sam’s, appeared on *Louisiana Hayride* broadcasts
 - “Folsom Prison Blues” → C&W charts
 - “I Walk the Line” → #17 pop, 1st Top 40 pop single under Sun Records
 - End of 1957: Signed new contracts with the same major label, Columbia
- July 1957: Jerry Lee Lewis, string of hits, but fell when discovery of 13-year-old wife

3 THE PAYOLA INVESTIGATIONS

- Record labels often paid disc jockeys to play records on the radio
 - Certain professionals were “gatekeepers”, can choose which records to play
 - Publishers resented having to pay fees, or because they paid but it didn’t play
- 1958: Independent labels presented competition to major labels
 - ASCAP → Traditional pop composers, very selective, rejected R&B and C&W
 - BMI → Embraced all kinds of songwriters and ASCAP rejects
- Late 1950’s: R&R had little respect, seen as crude and unrefined
- Committee investigating payola had stereotypes, saw R&R people as dishonest

- FTC and FCC involvement, disc jockeys fired, formats changed
- Nothing illegal, but jockeys had to acknowledge their gifts on the air
- 2 highest profiles, Alan Freed and Dick Clark → Clark cooperative, Freed resisted
 - He wouldn't take money to play a record he didn't like, but would for ones he did
 - Dec 1962: Pleaded guilty to bribery, driven out of business, R&R was over
- 1955: R&R re-emerged, with big names, but posed a threat to established businesses
 - By 1960: Due to political strings, this caused the first wave of R&R to end

4 SPLITTING UP THE MARKET / ADULTS IN THE ROOM

- 1959-1963: Transition in the history of rock, kids getting older
 - Created 2 distinct markets: 1 on new generation of teens, 1 on former R&R
- Early 1960s: Brill Building, Manhattan, housed many important publishers
 - Aldon offices had several small rooms, teams work all day writing new pop songs
 - Once a song is selected, matched with appropriate group, recorded, released
 - Methodical, more control for R&R, predictable, typical business practices

5 THE DANCE CRAZE, AMERICAN BANDSTAND, “THE TWIST”

- Early 1960's: *American Bandstand* was a bunch of teens together in a studio
 - Bob Horn was 1st host on WFIL in 1952, but fired in 1956 over personal issues
 - *Bandstand* was only successful R&R TV show, good clean fun and dancing
- Dance became the focus for teens, “The Twist” (1960, #1 Pop), dance craze
- *American Bandstand* ignite dance craze, reinforced idea of youth culture
 - Made R&R more acceptable to adults, R&R more established within culture

6 AMBITIOUS POP: THE RISE OF THE PRODUCER

- Well known producers: Leiber and Stoller and Phil Spector
 - Early producer: A&R, organize and coordinate the work, left artists powerless
 - Modern producer: Specialist in charge of shaping the sound, detailing, vision
- Increased sophistication, drew from classical music and theatre, trademark “sound”
 - Shift to a concept of a record as its own thing rather than a recorded version

7 SWEET SOUL ON THE RISE

- Sam Cooke was strongly influenced by gospel, like Ray Charles
 - Combined this sensibility with a sweet soul style to create his own sound
 - After a string of hits, including “You Send Me,” was murdered at a motel in 1964

8 TEENAGE ROMANTICIZATION OF DEATH

- 1959-1964: Number of songs dramatically portraying teenage death
 - Maudlin at best, downright tasteless at worst, death discs, splatter platters
- 1963: 1st move that spelled end of Brill Building, Aldon Music sold to Columbia Pictures
- “Leader of the Pack,” produced by Barry and Morton, death-disc genre
 - Johnny, motorbike death, taped crash sounds and screams, caused parent concerns
 - Among the last records to come out of the Brill Building due to 1964 invasion
- 1964: “Dead Man’s Curve,” by Jan and Dean, about a car crash on the road
 - 1966: Jan was involved in a car crash that left him injured, ending his career
- Period between first wave of R&R and the Beatles → A divide between good or bad era
 - Some saw it as a decline, “dark age,” while others saw it as a great era of music
 - Regardless, it’s clear these years saw music business gain control of youth market
 - With R&R business booming, established music businesses were frustrated