# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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

# 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* ignited dance craze, reinforced idea of youth culture
  + Made R&R more acceptable to adults, R&R more established within culture

# 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

# 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

# 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