

American Popular Music

# Tutti Frutti

# Sister Rosetta Tharpe



- “Up Above My Head” - 1948
  - Blends electric blues and gospel
  - Electric guitar style is precursor to rock n roll
  - Gibson Les Paul guitar

# Post WWII

- Economic Boom
- Teens have disposable income
- Generation Gap
- Teen culture identity
  - Rock n Roll and Rhythm & Blues epitomize new attitude

# Alan Freed

- Most important DJ in R&R era
  - First used term “rock ‘n’ roll” commercially
  - References to “rockin’ and rollin’ ” in many R&B songs
- Promoted black musicians and their concerts to mixed audiences



# Bill Haley and the Comets

- "Rock Around the Clock" - 1954
  - First No. 1 pop hit as rock n roll record
  - Featured in film *Blackboard Jungle*
    - Inner city teens and juvenile delinquents
  - Music for and about teens- not parents!



# Chuck Berry

- “Architect of Rock and Roll”
- Crafted the style that would lead to rock
- “Johnny B. Goode” – 1958
  - Music captured teen spirit
  - Cars, romance, dancing
  - Amazing showmanship, “duck walk”



# Little Richard



# Little Richard

- Over the top sound and persona
- Gender performance scared White America
  - Cross dressing, drag
  - Makeup, hair, sexuality
- Brown v. Board of Education- 1954
- Cold War era context
  - Patriarchal society
  - Strict rules/boundaries
  - “Leave it to Beaver” households



# Little Richard

## ■ “Long Tall Sally” – 1956

- Built on 12 bar blues
- Fast lyrics to avoid cover

## ■ “Tutti Frutti” – 1955

- Nonsense lyrics
- Showmanship
- Pat Boone covers



# Pat Boone

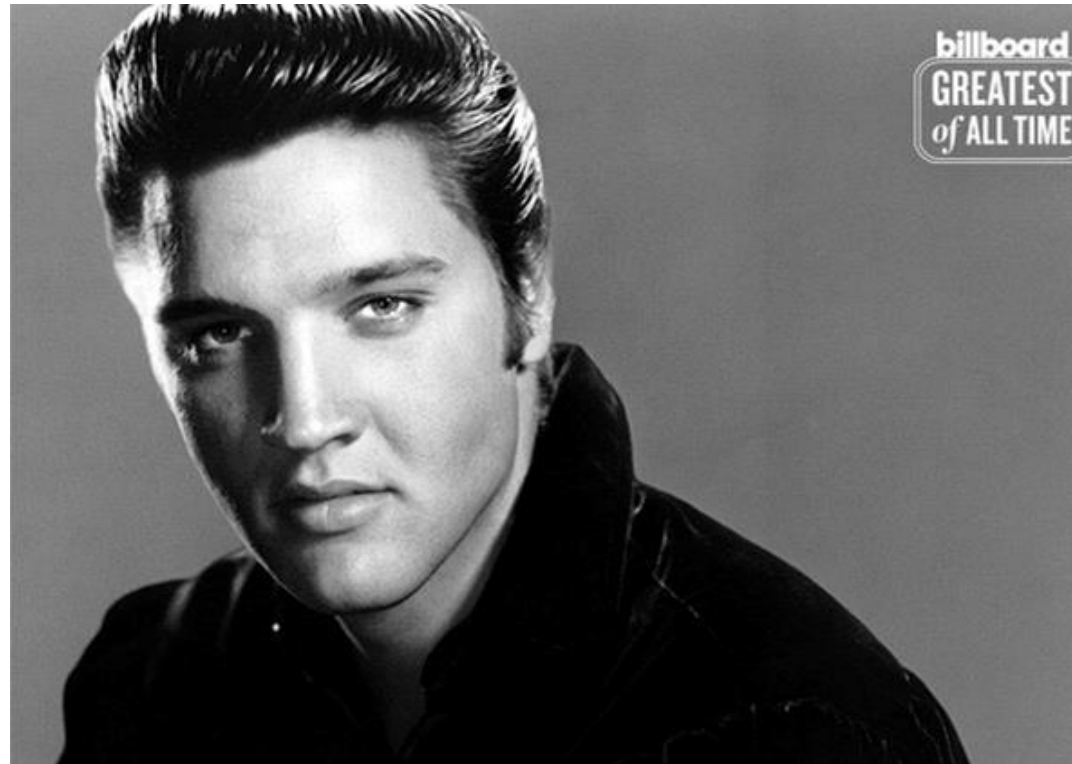


# Rockabilly

- Rock + Hillbilly
- Home in Memphis at Sun Records
  - Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Elvis
- The “white take” on a black style
  - *“Rockabilly was a country man’s song with a black man’s rhythm” – Carl Perkins*

# Elvis Presley

- Symbol of Rock n Roll
  - Uninhibited moves
  - Tough teen dress
  - Greased hair
  - Energetic singing
  - Rebellious attitude
- "I don't sound like nobody"



# Elvis Presley

- King of Rock n Roll
- “That’s All Right” – 1955
  - First song at Sun Records with Sam Phillips
  - Played on country & western radio
  - Some wouldn’t play because “too black”
  - Blues and country vocals



# TV appearances

- Colonel Tom Parker influence
  - Arranged RCA contract for Elvis
  - Bought out Sun Records contract for \$35K
  - Arranged TV appearances
- Ed Sullivan show- 1956
  - "Hound Dog"
  - National exposure
  - "Vulgar" dance moves

# The Girls



# The Parents





# Buddy Holly



# Buddy Holly

- Opposite image of Elvis
  - Clean cut, lanky, glasses
  - Safer, but still R&R
  - Formed band *The Crickets*
- “That’ll Be the Day” - 1957
  - Country, R&B, pop
  - 12 bar blues
  - Twangy vocals
  - Signature hiccup



# Latin Side of R&R

## ■ Ritchie Valens

- Born Richard Valenzuela in Los Angeles
- Mexican American

## ■ "La Bamba" - 1958

- 3 chord sequence heard later in many rock songs
  - One of most enduring riffs in popular music history
- Woodblock!



# The Day the Music Died

- By 1959...
  - Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, the Big Bopper die in plane crash
  - Little Richard left music for ministry
  - Jerry Lee Lewis married 13 year old cousin
  - Elvis drafted into the army
  - Chuck Berry incarcerated