



New World Records

701 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10036; (212) 302-0460; (212) 944-1922 fax
email: info@newworldrecords.org www.newworldrecords.org

Shake, Rattle & Roll: rock 'n' roll in the 1950s

New World NW 249

In his novel *Slapstick* Kurt Vonnegut proposed a scheme for artificial families, whereby every citizen would be given a new middle name, and all of us having the same middle name would be relatives. Loneliness would be banished. The notion was inspired by Vonnegut's observation that there has long existed a limited number of artificial families, such as the American Medical Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, artists, and union members. In the middle fifties a socio-musical phenomenon called rock 'n' roll created the largest artificial family in postwar American life: the family of teenagers. Within a few years it provided an umbrella for white kids; black kids; city kids; country kids; wealthy, middle-class, and poor kids; lonely, impressionable, rebellious, and socially aspiring kids. It gave them symbols, anthems, solidarity, and codes of dress, coiffure, and romance. Above all, it gave them a beat to dance to.

This is important, because the dancing habits of the nation—which were prolific and panracial in the swing era of the thirties (see notes to New World Records NW 261, *Straighten Up and Fly Right*) - were severely altered by World War II. Blacks continued to dance to big bands and rhythm-and-blues combos led by black bandleaders, including Lucky Millinder, Lionel Hampton, Joe Morris, Count Basie, Tiny Bradshaw, Earl Bostic, Bill Doggett, Louis Jordan, Amos Milburn, Bullmoose Jackson, and even the more conscientiously artful Duke Ellington and Johnny Hodges (the latter of whom had an R&B hit with “Castle Rock”). Whites, on the other hand, had abandoned the ballrooms. The white bands had folded and were replaced by the singers once featured with them. They sang ballads and painfully trivial novelties like “How Much Is That Doggie in the

Window?,” “Shrimp Boats,” and “Come On-a My House” that white audiences placed on the Hit Parade but did not dance to.

At the same time, monumental changes in the social relationships of whites and blacks were beginning. In 1954 the Supreme Court decided that segregated schools were unconstitutional. Still, the radio airwaves were segregated, and when a New York disc jockey played a record by the black balladeer Johnny Ace, it was considered a bold step. Pop music at the time was white; anything black was considered jazz (which had moved into the realm of art and was no longer competing for Hit Parade status), blues, or rhythm and blues. A talented black songwriter like Otis Blackwell could expect only modest success if one of his songs was recorded by a black performer, because the white pop stations would not play it. Several people realized that a white singer who could convincingly render big-beat R&B could make a lot of money.

There was nothing new about white performers aping and popularizing black styles. As early as 1822, Charles Matthews, an English music-hall performer, visited America and got the idea of blacking himself up to perform the songs of southern slaves. Thus began minstrelsy, the most important medium of American popular culture in the nineteenth century. In this century we've seen Paul Whiteman self-proclaimed the King of Jazz for watering down black syncopations and Benny Goodman boosted as the King of Swing for popularizing the music of black swing bands. By the fifties a new wrinkle in minstrelsy—the “cover”—surfaced. A cover was a white version of a black song, usually one that had proved popular with a black audience. Georgia Gibbs, for example, covered LaVern Baker's

“Tweedle Dee,” Pat Boone covered several Fats Domino and Little Richard songs, Bill Haley covered Joe Turner’s “Shake, Rattle and Roll.” Usually the white version was bowdlerized and sold much better than the original.

The first white man to campaign for R&B was neither a musician nor a producer but a Cincinnati-based disc jockey named Alan Freed. Freed was obsessive about the music; he would frequently accompany records on the air by pounding the backbeat—the accented second and fourth beats—on a phone book. He coined the phrase “rock ‘n’ roll” by putting together two ubiquitous blues terms with sexual connotations. After he used the phrase repeatedly on his shows, “rock ‘n’ roll” lost its double meaning and came to categorize a dance music that whites and blacks alike were responding to. The whitening of R&B was taking place all over the country: in 1954 Bill Haley, the leader of a western-swing band in Philadelphia, started to sing R&B numbers and recorded “Rock Around the Clock”; Elvis Presley, a Mississippi country boy who liked the blues, led a trio at the Sun record studio for a rocking version of “That’s All Right”; Buddy Holly of Texas put together a “western-bop” band with a drummer and a rhythm-and-blues beat.

Black performers were also crossing cultural barriers. Several blues singers who had been trained in the church—notably Billy Ward and the Dominoes, Ray Charles, Faye Adams, and Little Richard—began adapting gospel inflections to secular performances. Chuck Berry of St. Louis wrote blues tunes with a country accent and innovated a percussive guitar style flavored with the steel-guitar effects of country music.

An amalgamation of sources was being whipped together around an uncomplicated backbeat. The sources included the black church, blues, rhythm and blues, jazz, western swing, honky-tonk or white barrelhouse dance music, boogie-woogie, and Tin Pan Alley pop music. In the days when pop music meant jazz, vaudeville-trained singers and entertainers had been dismissed as hopelessly dated, if not downright corny. But now jazz had become complicated; it was no longer the simple dance music that once gave life to Saturday-night get-togethers. The white southerners, whose music was briefly called rockabilly (from “rock” and “hillbilly”), admired the older performing style as represented by Al Jolson. It was sentimental, melodic, accessible, compelling, and popular; it offered standards of showmanship, which jazz had long ago dismissed.

Two things put rock ‘n’ roll on the map. The first was the movie “Blackboard Jungle,” which used

Haley’s “Rock Around the Clock” as theme music. The movie dealt with juvenile delinquency—a favorite theme of the fifties—and the music came to be associated with rebellious youth. More important was the rise of Elvis Presley from a local attraction to a national star through television. Presley was explosive. He looked like the symbol of a new, white-directed music—full and leering lips, a porcelain complexion, straight hair rolled back in a pompadour. He swaggered and shook and moaned, and his ability to elicit screams from girls and imitation from boys suggested a hermaphroditic force. The release of his record “Heartbreak Hotel,” a blues spiced with electronic echo and full of morbid self-pity, made “How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?” sound like the product of another century, if not another planet.

Presley had a lovely tenor, which he manipulated with a hefty use of vibrato (in yet another reversion to the methods of pre-microphone singers), but he was by no means the outstanding singer of the period. Nor is it correct to say that he gave rock ‘n’ roll its style, for Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Jackie Wilson were nothing if not stylists with mature and incomparable stage personas. Presley embodied the style for whites, however, which is something else again. (His style, disseminated in Europe, came home again in the sixties with British groups like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.) Presley had money behind him, and he consolidated his position in the entertainment world by receding from rock into the middle-American enthusiasms for country and middle-of-the-road ballads.

Most of the rock stars were conservative and professional, quite different from the hoodlum images they were said to inspire. Even Elvis’ scandalizing pelvic wiggle, which was censored when he appeared on the Ed Sullivan show, would have seemed a lot less revolutionary if it had been preceded with a clip of Al Jolson singing the last chorus of “Toot, Toot, Tootsie” in the 1927 movie *The Jazz Singer*.

Rock ‘n’ roll changed many attitudes about music, sometimes for the better, sometimes not. It opened the business to independent companies that had previously been squeezed out by the major labels. But, ironically, the most successful independents were taken over by the superlabels and became the establishment of the sixties and seventies. The industry unfortunately became more hit conscious than before. With records regularly selling in the millions, it suddenly seemed unprofitably altruistic for companies to give attention to specialized

musics. A rock-'n'-roll star was measured almost entirely by how high he had last risen on the hit charts; no other music is so full of one-shot successes. The producer who engineered successful recording sessions became the real power, and often the singer was just an arbitrarily chosen front for selling a new song or recording concept. Under-the-table deals over composing rights and radio play were rampant. One thing rock 'n' roll can claim credit for is introducing black music and musicians to huge white audiences; on the other hand, the blackness of their music was often white-washed beyond recognition with teen lyrics and fruity arrangements.

By 1960 rock 'n' roll was all but dead. It had been taken over by the Madison Avenue packagers, who could find an untalented teenager like Fabian and build him into a neo-Presley. The audi-

ence got younger and younger, and twelve-year-olds will buy anything if the pitch is persuasive enough. A music that only a few years before had audaciously combined Kansas City swing with New Orleans rhythms, and New York street harmonizing with Spanish melodies, had been blended into an innocuous soup. The radio was full of simpering love ballads and novelty songs again, until British rock, southern soul, protest-oriented folk, and free jazz revived pop music in the mid-sixties. The "'n' roll" was dropped, but the family got bigger than ever.

Gary Giddens is jazz critic for the Village Voice, New York magazine, and Hifi/Stereo Buyer's Guide. He teaches at New York University's School of Continuing Education, conducts a radio program on WBAI, and has twice won the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award for music criticism.

T H E R E C O R D I N G S

Permissions for using recordings by Elvis Presley on RCA and Little Richard on Specialty were unobtainable; we regret these omissions. The lyrics are given as performed here, not necessarily as published.

Side One

Band 1

Shake, Rattle and Roll

(Charles E. Calhoun [Jesse Stone])

Joe Turner, vocal; other personnel unknown. *Recorded February 15, 1954, in New York. Originally issued on Atlantic 1026.*

When in 1941 Joe Turner sang, "I feel like rockin' till the rooster crows for day, / I ain't jivin', I mean just what I say," it wasn't music he had on his mind. The world changed drastically between the years when "rockin'" and "rollin'" meant weekend partying in general and sex in particular and when they came to define a musical style that, paradoxically, was usually associated with white adolescents. But Turner's style changed not a whit. His elemental, hand-

somely disdainful voice had shouted away the blues with territory jazz bands, boogie-woogie pianists, and rhythm-and-blues groups. The early trappings of rock 'n' roll were just another suit of clothes for him.

Turner was born in 1911 in Kansas City, Missouri, and became, with Oklahoman Jimmy Rushing, one of the two laureate vocalists of Kansas City jazz. In 1938 he recorded the popular "Roll 'Em, Pete" with pianist Pete Johnson (reissued on NW 261); they performed together that year at Carnegie Hall and began a five-year engagement with pianists Albert Ammons and Meade "Lux" Lewis (see NW 259, *Cuttin' the Boogie: Piano Blues and Boogie Woogie 1926-1941*) at New York's Café Society that started a craze for boogie-woogie. Turner recorded for several labels during the forties, usually with rhythm-and-blues accompaniment, but achieved little success. Ahmet Ertegun of Atlantic Records signed him in 1951 and recorded him in several contexts; the two most important

were with R&B-oriented studio musicians in New York, Chicago, and New Orleans and with some of the most celebrated names in jazz in New York.

Turner's biggest hit was "Shake, Rattle and Roll," which was covered by Bill Haley in a heavily bowdlerized workmanlike version. The song was written under a pseudonym by Jesse Stone (born 1901), a Kansas City band-leader since 1920 and the composer and lyricist of "Idaho" (1942). The form of "Shake, Rattle and Roll" is a twelve-bar blues with a refrain; there is a steady 4/4 rhythm, a constant piano lick, and simple band riffs. About the only thing that distinguishes the performance from one Turner might have made in Kansas City fifteen years earlier is the ineptness of the tenor-sax solo. Notice the quiver in Turner's voice during the third stanza and the characteristic glider he makes of the last note.

The lyrics to this song are available from the publisher.

Band 2

The Clock

(David J. Mattis)

Johnny Ace, vocal and piano; the Beale Streeters, vocals: personnel unknown. *Recorded 1952 in Memphis. Originally issued on Duke 112.*

The sentimental ballad of unrequited love was a rock-'n'-roll staple. Johnny Ace died in 1954, a year before the shock waves of R&R were felt, but a series of hit records that made him the most popular R&B performer of 1954 served as prototypes for the genre. He was born John Marshall Alexander, Jr., in Memphis in 1929. In the late forties he played piano with a local band led by Adolf Duncan that included singer Bobby Bland (born 1930). Memphis was brimming with sophisticated blues talent in the postwar years, and a local movement was given impetus by a Mississippi-born disc jockey turned bluesman, B. B. King (horn 1925). Ace, King, Bland, and several others often worked together as the Beale Streeters.

In 1952 Don D. Robey (1904-1975), a sharp-tempered, hustling businessman from Houston, bought Duke Records and signed several Memphis musicians, including Ace. Among Ace's hits were "My Song," "The Clock," and "Saving My Love for You," songs that made him a black teenage heartthrob in the same years that Johnnie Ray was shedding tears on the white market. Ace's style owes something to the plaintive phrasing of Charles Brown (born 1920) and the heartier shouting of Joe Turner, especially on a blues like "Don't You Know," but his material and delivery were his own.

The time Ace sings of in "The Clock" ran out early when he lost a game of Russian roulette on Christmas Eve 1954, backstage after a concert in Houston. The posthumously released "Pledging My Love" proved to be his biggest-selling record.

"The Clock" was written by (David J.) James Mattis, a Memphis disc jockey who had founded Duke Records. The performance is typically very slow (the whole piece is twenty-eight bars) and spare. There is a mesmeric quality to the rhythm, established by piano and drums in the introduction. The horns are confined to organ chords, except for the tenor saxophonist, who plays a pretty obbligato during the chorus and a rather lachrymose four-bar solo.

I looked at the face of the clock on the wall,
And it doesn't tell me nothin' at all.
That face of the clock just stares at me;
It knows I'm lonely and always will be.

Refrain

I want to cry my heart out,
Want my baby back to me,
Got nothin' but time to step out,
But time means nothin' to me.
If you hear me, please come back real soon,
'Cause the clock and I are so lonely in this room.

(Repeat)

Copyright © April 9, 1953 by Lion Music Publishing Co., Inc., a Division of ABC/Dunhill Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Band 3

Have Mercy, Baby

(Billy Ward)

Billy Ward and his Dominoes: vocals: Clyde McPhatter, lead tenor; James Van Loan, second tenor; Joe Lamont, baritone; and Bill Brown, bass; Billy Ward, piano; other personnel unknown.

Recorded 1953 in New York. Originally issued on Federal 12068.

Billy Ward was a prophet of rock 'n' roll. He was one of the first backstage auteurs—he handpicked the Dominoes from among his music students—and a force in bringing gospel techniques to R&B, even before Ray Charles. Despite the many similarities between blues and gospel vocal styles, it was long considered a sacrilege to mix the two. Albert Murray points out in *Stomping the Blues*:

Downhome church music (by which is meant the conventional music of southern U.S. Negro Protestants) is not of its nature fundamentally less dance-beat-oriented; it simply inspires a different mode of dance, a sacred or holy as opposed to a secular or profane movement, a difference which is sometimes a matter of very delicate nuance.

Ward originally rehearsed the Dominoes in a style indebted to the Ink Spots, even using some of their material.

In 1950 he discovered a young gospel singer named Clyde McPhatter (1933-1972) and made him lead tenor. McPhatter had a high, piercing, slightly nasal voice; he would shake notes in a way that recalled Little Willie John (1937-1968) and foreshadowed Little Richard, and his time was infallible. In 1952 the Dominoes had a huge success with "Sixty-Minute Man," one of the first R&B hits to get a stronghold on the pop charts; Bill Brown sang lead. Ward followed it with "Have Mercy, Baby," a masterfully effusive church-inspired performance, built on a simple twelve-bar blues form and featuring McPhatter at his best. It was the number-one R&B hit of 1953. Shortly afterward McPhatter left the group to form

the Drifters, one of the finest male quartets in American music, and had several big records under his own name. He was replaced by another gospel-trained lead, Jackie Wilson.

“Have Mercy, Baby” begins with a four-bar tenor intro, with an accent on the third beat of the first two measures. McPhatter sings four choruses, taking increasing liberties as he progresses, and is echoed constantly by the other singers. There are two well-played if unimaginative choruses by a tenor saxophonist; his second chorus is augmented by the chanting of the singers. At the end McPhatter breaks down and cries, which became something of a trademark for him.

Have mercy, mercy, baby, I know I done
you wrong. *(Repeat)*
Now my heart is full of sorrow, so take
me back where I belong.

I've been a good-for-nothin', I've lied and
cheated too. *(Repeat)*
But I reaped it all, my darlin', and I don't
know what to do.

So have mercy, mercy, baby, please don't
slam that door.
Ha-ha-ha-have mercy, mercy, baby, please
don't slam that door.
'Cause I know if you refuse me, I'll never
be the same no more.

(Repeat first chorus)

Copyright © 1952 (unpublished) and ©
1965 by Billy Ward Music co. All rights
reserved. Used by permission.

Band 4

Shake a Hand (Joe Morris)

Faye Adams, vocal; Joe Morris
and His Orchestra: personnel
unknown. *Recorded 1953 in
New York. Originally issued on
Herald 416.*

Joe Morris (1922-1958) was a
trumpeter who had worked with
Erskine Hawkins (born 1914)

and Lionel Hampton (born 1913)
before starting his own band. He
was one of several black band-
leaders who managed to ride the
wave of R&B popularity in the
forties, when the more swing-ori-
ented bands were folding right
and left. His blues-riff recordings
were a training ground for both
jazz players like Johnny Griffin
and Elmo Hope and R&B singers
like Laurie Tate and Faye Scruggs.

In 1953 Morris switched from
Atlantic to Herald Records, and
his vocalist, Faye Scruggs,
changed her name to Adams. She
had a stark, take-your-time style,
with an effective, maternal cry in
her voice not unlike that of her
contemporaries Ruth Brown
(born 1928), Big Maybelle (1926-
1972), and LaVern Baker (born
1929). Adams' version of Morris'
“Shake a Hand” was Herald's first
successful record and was subse-
quently covered by Little
Richard, LaVern Baker, and Jackie
Wilson. It is a remarkable song,
cast in a gospel mode yet alter-
nating religious and secular sen-
timents. With phrases like “I'm in
love with you so” and “don't for-
get to pray, the lyric is open to
interpretation. Adams' earthy
reading is flawless, and she's
abetted by a deaconlike male
voice on the refrain. The arrange-
ment is simple, relying chiefly on
a saxophone bottom and piano
obbligato. The a-cappella open-
ing of each stanza adds tension.

Adams had two later hits for
Herald—“I'll Be True” and “Hurts
Me to My Heart”—but she was
unable to make the crossover
from R&B to R&R. In the sixties
she recorded for Warwick and
Prestige.

Just leave it to me,
Don't ever be ashamed;
Just give me a chance,
I'll take care of everything.

Your troubles I'll share,
Let me know and I'll be there;

I'll take care of you
Anyplace and anywhere.

Refrain

Shake a hand, shake a hand, *(Repeat
twice)*
Shake a hand if you can.

Be truthful to me,
I'll be truthful to you;
I'm in love with you so
Till I don't know what to do.

So let's call it a day;
I've said all I had to say,
Except don't forget to pray,
And shake a hand every day.

(Refrain)

Copyright © 1953 by Merrimac Music
Corp. Used by permission.

Band 5

See You Later, Alligator (Robert Guidry)

Bill Haley and the Comets: Bill
Haley, vocal and guitar; Rudy
Pompelli, tenor saxophone; John
Grande, piano; Billy Williamson,
steel guitar; Francis Beecher, gui-
tar; Al Reed, bass; Don Raymond,
drums. *Recorded 1955 in New
York. Originally issued on
Decca 9-29791.*

Bill Haley was a pivotal if
unwitting figure in the growth of
rock 'n' roll. Born in 1925 in
Michigan, he grew up in Chester,
Pennsylvania, where he led a
series of western-swing and hill-
billy bands. He credits Hank
Williams (1923-1953) and Joe
Turner as direct influences and
has pointed out that Williams
started him listening to race
records and Dixieland jazz. Black
music appealed to him, and his
country-and-western band start-
ed performing R&B material on a
local radio station. Haley landed
a recording contract with Essex,
changed the name of his group
from the Saddlemen to the
Comets, and exchanged his cow-

boy boots and sideburns for a tuxedo and a spit curl.

Sam Phillips is frequently credited as the first producer to seek a white boy who could sing black R&B, but Milt Gabler of Decca had the same idea. Decca had been recording the highly popular Louis Jordan (1908-1975) for more than a decade when Gabler got the chance to sign Haley as a white counterpart. Haley recorded “Rock Around the Clock” at his first session for Decca. It did less well than his cover of “Shake, Rattle and Roll.” Then the movie *Blackboard Jungle* came out, with “Clock” dubbed over the credits; the song was identified with teenage rebellion and became the first international rock-'n'-roll hit. It has sold almost twenty-three million copies.

The Comets had a raucous, jumping dance-beat style but were in no way outstanding. Rudy Pompelli, the band's musical director, played honking tenor, and Haley's articulate shouting had a brusque, defiant quality quite contrary to his conservative personality. Haley was simply at the right place at the right time; he trimmed the blues of eroticism, complications, and esoteric black metaphor, popularizing instead the pop jive lingo of the day, as in “Crazy, Man, Crazy” or “See You Later, Alligator,” the latter his second-biggest hit. By the late fifties he had fallen out of favor, though he managed to retain a following in Europe. His recordings have greater sociological than musical interest.

Well, I saw my baby walkin' with another man today. *(Repeat)*

When I asked her what's the matter, this is what I heard her say:

Refrain

“See ya later, alligator, after while, crocodile. *(Repeat)*”

Cain't you see you're in my way now,

Don't you know you cramp my style.”

When I thought of what she told me,
nearly made me lose my head,
(Repeat)

But the next time that I saw her, reminded her of what she said.
(Refrain)

She said, “I'm sorry, pretty daddy, you know my love is just for you.
(Repeat)”

Won't you say that you'll forgive me, and say your love for me is true?”

I said, “Uh-wait a minute, 'gator, I know you mean it just for play.
Don't you know you really hurt me, and this is what I have to say:
(Refrain)”

“See ya later, alligator, after while, crocodile.
So long, that's all, goodbye.”

Copyright © 1955 by Arc Music Corp. Used by permission.

Band 6

Maybellene

(Chuck Berry, Russ Fratto, and Alan Freed)

Chuck Berry, vocal and guitar; Johnny Johnson, piano; Willie Dixon, bass; Jasper Thomas, drums; Jerome Green, maracas. *Recorded 1955 in Chicago. Originally issued on Chess 1604.*

If there was genius at the center of rock 'n' roll, it radiated from the remarkable Charles Edward Berry (born 1931 in St. Louis). Of the best R&R songwriters—Berry, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Otis Blackwell, Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew—Berry wrote the largest number of memorable and genuinely diverse songs; moreover, he innovated variations and stylings on the twelve-bar blues framework, of which the variously spelled “Maybellene” is a good example. He was the music's one great lyricist, a versifier for a generation ten years removed from him

but which he celebrated with knowing empathy and benign wit. He was an inspired band-leader who could turn a rhythm section into a rocking monolith, and the most influential guitarist of rock's first decade. He had an original vocal style—articulate, shorn of melismatic blues conventions, and entirely appropriate to his material: no one sings or plays a Chuck Berry song as well as Chuck Berry.

In those days of cross-cultural musical borrowings—between blues and country, blues and gospel, gospel and country, country and pop, pop and blues—Berry was sometimes thought to be white, just as Presley was occasionally thought to be black. Berry wrote songs that any teenager caught in the throes of rock fandom could identify with (“Sweet Little Sixteen”), surveyed the country with a generous ear for its rhythms and names (“All Aboard,” “Back in the U.S.A.”), and dismissed high-art orthodoxies with unperturbed high spirits (“Roll Over, Beethoven”). He was a bluesman who had grown up with the country music of the South but came to admire the smooth stars of pop-jazz. In this he was not unique—the same brew of influences operated in the music of the Beale Streeters, especially B. B. King. What Berry did with them *was* unique.

He joined Muddy Waters (born 1915) briefly in 1955 and at Waters' suggestion auditioned for Chess Records in Chicago. “Maybellene” (originally called “Ida Red”), made at the first session, was given a countryish feeling over Berry's halfhearted opposition. Two disc jockeys wrangled composer credits in exchange for playing the record. It sold over a million copies, despite limited play on white country sta-

tions. Berry has said, "It's obvious that Presley's road was free and mine had to be paved." It's certainly true that his records never received promotion equal to their influence on such subsequent pop stars as the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan, and the Rolling Stones. In 1962 Berry was convicted on a probably trumped-up Mann Act charge and served two years in jail. His career has blossomed intermittently since then, but less as a composer than as an ageless performer of his already classic songs. These include "School Days," "Too Much Monkey Business," "Memphis," "Johnny B. Goode," "Go, Go, Go," "Nadine," "Rock and Roll Music," "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man," "Thirty Days," "Wee Wee Hours," and "The Man with the Donkey," an odd harbinger of reggae.

"Maybellene," a hot-rod-and-sex opus in the tradition of Hank Williams' "Hey, Good Lookin'," is played with a heady accent on the backbeats, underscored by the constant alternating of augmented chords. The rural flavor of the piece is complemented by Berry's accent—the slightly Creole inflections and the long "a" in "can'tcha." Essentially "Maybellene" is a blues, but with a difference. The refrain is in typical AAB form, but the verses, though still confined to the twelve-bar frame, are chanted without subdominant and dominant modulations. Berry plays two characteristic choruses on guitar.

Refrain

Maybellene, why can'tcha be true?
Oh, Maybellene, why can'tcha be true?
You done started doin' the things you
used to do.

As I was motivatin' over the hill,
I saw Maybellene in a coupe de ville,
A Cadillac a-rollin' on the open road.
Nothin' outrun my V-eight Ford.
The Cadillac doin' 'bout ninety-five,
She's bumper to bumper, rollin' side by
side.

(Refrain)

The Cadillac pulled up to a hundred and
four,
The Ford got hot and wouldn't do no
more.

It then got cloudy and started to rain,
I tooted my horn for a passin' lane.
The rainwater blowin' all under my
hood,

I know that was doin' my motor good.

(Refrain twice)

The motor cooled down, the heat went
down,
And that's when I heard that highway
sound,

The Cadillac settin' like a ton of lead,
A hundred and ten half a mile ahead.
Cadillac look like it's settin' still,
And I caught Maybellene at the top of
the hill.

(Refrain)

Copyright © 1955 by Arc Music Corp. Used
by permission.

Band 7

Mailman Blues

(Lloyd Price)

Lloyd Price, vocal; other personnel unknown. *Recorded 1958 in New York. Reissued on ABC AC-30006.*

Lloyd Price (born 1933) was a natural shouter, his declamatory voice ululating with the craggy cry of a tenor sax. Given an environment in which his uncluttered and convincing phrasing could have matured by its own logic, he might have become a kind of rumba-tinged New Orleans counterpart to Joe Turner. Instead he crossed over to the white teen market with songs like "Personality" and "I'm Gonna Get Married." He achieved great success, but the New Orleans qualities were rinsed out of his music. This is ironic, because his two biggest successes—"Lawdy, Miss Clawdy" and "Stagger Lee"—were among his most authentic records.

Price was discovered in 195,

when Specialty Records was looking for a singer in the style of Fats Domino. He wrote "Clawdy," and it was produced by Dave Bartholomew, with Domino on piano. Price made several other records for Specialty, including "Mailman Blues," his response to getting drafted. After being released from the army in 1956, he recorded the ballad "Just Because," which has some of the Creole feeling of his early work, and sold the demo to ABC. In 1959 he had the number-one record with "Stagger Lee." In addition to recording new material, usually saturated with vocal choirs and the like, he made new versions of his earlier hits. The "Mailman Blues" here is the remake and is far more exciting than the original.

The first eight bars of the intro use a Charlie Parker lick from "Now's the Time" that subsequently became an R&B standard, "The Hucklebuck." Otherwise the performance follows the routine of the Specialty version—even the tenor-sax solo is the same. But Price is far more vigorous, and the hooting riffs from the band help pilot this slightly Kafkaesque 1-A blues.

Well, the night before last the mailman
knocked at my door. *(Repeat)*
He said, "Get ready, brother, this time
you got to go."

O mailman, mailman, tell me whatcha
got for me. *(Repeat)*
He said, "A long letter, brother, we need
you across the sea."

Well, all day long it's a one, two, three,
and four. *(Repeat)*
You know I'll so unhappy I can't see
m'baby no more.

No great big city, just a little old raggedy
town. *(Repeat)*
Well, this army boogie, I believe I'll put
it down.

©Copyright 1952 by Venice Music, Inc.,
Hollywood, CA, 90069. All rights reserved.
Printed with permission of Venice Music, Inc.

Band 8

I Can't Go On

(Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew)

Fats Domino, vocal and piano; Clarence Ford, alto saxophone; Lee Allen and Herb Hardesty, tenor saxophones; Ernest McLean, guitar; Frank Fields, bass; Cornelius Coleman, drums. *Recorded 1955 in New Orleans. Originally issued on Imperial 5369.*

New Orleans, long thought of as the birthplace of jazz, was again in the country's musical consciousness in the forties. Bunk Johnson (1879-1949), a much mythologized cornetist, had been rediscovered, given a new set of teeth and a horn, and made the focal point of a "New Orleans revival." The revivalists' motives were not altogether altruistic—they were representing Johnson as a symbol of the real jazz as opposed to the spurious modernism of bop and even swing. In retrospect we can see that even if jazz had long since calcified in New Orleans, a new music was being born: a lyric, buoyant kind of rhythm and blues built on piano-stomping triplets, Creole melodies, Spanish rhythms, and low-keyed blues wailing. Professor Longhair (Roy Byrd, born 1919) popularized the style locally, but Antoine "Fats" Domino (born 1928) took it around the world.

Between 1949 and 1962 Domino recorded more than two hundred sides for Imperial (the first was the million-selling "Fat Man"), of which nearly a third made the record charts. He remains the best-selling international record artist, after Presley and the Beatles. Dave Bartholomew, his trumpeter, music director, and collaborator,

played a large part in his success. Together they turned out dozens of variations on the blues, modifying the Domino style only slightly to accommodate the coming of rock 'n' roll. Domino's laid-back moaning style and velvet voice could seemingly adapt any song, and he recorded such unlikely material as "Easter Parade" and "Blueberry Hill," the latter of which became his biggest record. His many originals include "Let the Four Winds Blow," "I'm Walkin'," "My Girl Josephine," "Goin' Home," "Ain't It a Shame," "I'm Gonna Be a Wheel Someday," "The Big Beat," and "Walking to New Orleans," which made effective use of strings. His lyrics are simple, colloquial, and direct, and the consistency of his output is astonishing.

"I Can't Go On" was not a hit and is included partly for that reason—to show how consistent the Imperial recordings were. The rhythm is typical of Domino but unusual in that the accents are on the first and third beats of the measure, as they would be in a march. The form is basically the blues, but there is a middle section—"I can't sleep day or night"—built on one chord, not unlike the verses in "Maybellene." Also, though the rest of the vocal consists of twelve-bar blues choruses, the melodic tenor-sax solo consists of two sixteen-bar blues choruses. Domino's free-spirited approach to rhythm is shown by the varying number of beats between each chorus—he comes in when he likes, and the rhythm section is always there to accommodate him.

Rosalie, come back to me, (*Repeat*)
I'll reelin' and I'm rockin' like a willow tree.

Rosalie, come back home,
Rosalie-he, come back home,
I might as well confess, I'm blue and all alone.

I can't sleep day or night,
'Cause I know you're not doin' me right.
Please come back, try to stay,
Can't go on this a-way.
Rosalie, come back to me,
I'm reelin' and I'm rockin' like a willow tree.
(Repeat first and second stanzas)

©1955 Unart Music Corporation. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Band 9

Every Hour

(Richard Penniman)

Little Richard, vocal; Willie Mays, trumpet; A. Dobbins, alto saxophone; Fred Jackson, tenor saxophone; J. Hudson, baritone saxophone; Julius Wimby, piano; Charles Holloway, bass; Donald Clark, drums. *Recorded 1951 in Atlanta. Originally issued on Victor 20/50-5025.*

Little Richard (born Richard Penniman in 1932), of Macon, Georgia, was the most exhilarating, explosive, unpredictable performer in rock 'a' roll. If Elvis Presley (1935-1977) stylized R&B for whites, Richard embodied its raw viscera. Leaping around stage in a loose-fitting suit, sporting a six-inch pompadour and a pencil-thin mustache, he proffered a seeming chaos that was effective precisely because it was so totally and brilliantly controlled. And if Presley achieved the rockabilly synthesis with "That's All Right," Richard's "A wop bop alu bop, a lop bom boom," chanted at the outset of his 1955 Specialty debut, "Tutti Frutti," most vitally proclaimed a new musical sensibility, much as Louis Armstrong's "West End Blues" cadenza is said to have heralded the arrival of jazz. Richard is arguably rock 'n' roll's greatest interpreter, and his mercurial phrasing even influenced

members of the jazz avant-garde in the sixties.

Richard's best records were made for Specialty between 1955 and 1958 and fall into two groups, the punishing R&R shouters like "Slippin' and Slidin," "Jenny Jenny," "Good Golly, Miss Molly," and "Long Tall Sally" and the insinuating ballads like "Lonesome and Blue," "Directly from My Heart," "Wonderin'," and "I'm Just a Lonely Guy." These weren't released until after Richard gave up rock 'n' roll for gospel in 1958 (the fine Mercury album *It's Real* was a notable result of his conversion), at which time it became clear that his producers were augmenting his sessions with voices to make the records more accessible to the white market. It didn't much matter; if anything, the voices seemed to spur him on to ever more fanciful flights of melisma. One example is "Shake a Hand" (Side One, Band 4), which in some respects is his masterpiece. All his expressive techniques are primed for its medium uptempo, and the force he gives to the word "be" after a lugubrious tenor-sax solo is breathtaking. In the sixties Specialty released a compilation (*Well Alright!*) that substituted alternate takes for the originals (without always pointing this out). Though the alternates are inferior, they do show the extent to which Richard improvised in the studio (compare his two versions of "Kansas City"). The "Shake a Hand" alternate was made with a band arrangement instead of the "shat 'n dat wo ho" vocal accompaniment of the original.

Because the Specialty catalogue was not available to us, we've chosen a cut from Richard's first session, made for RCA when he was eighteen. He

had not yet found his own style, and his borrowings from Roy Brown (born 1925) and Wynonie Harris (1915-1969) are obvious. (It's significant that the Specialty recordings were made in New Orleans with some of the finest session men in that city.) "Every Hour," however, shows that the Little Richard style was forming even in the beginning. His floating use of melisma is readily apparent, as is the cutting timbre of his later work. The song is a twelve-bar blues with insubstantial band riffs and a piano accompaniment that barely goes beyond tremolos. It makes an interesting comparison with his mature blues of 1957, "All Night Long."

Every hour, every hour in the day,
(Repeat)

Well, you know I miss you, baby, ever
since you went away.

Well, I'm cryin' have mercy, please have
mercy on me. (Repeat)

Well, you know I love you, baby, can't
you see what you're doin' to me?

Well, I love you, pretty baby, and I loved
you from the start. (Repeat)

Well, you took all my money, and you
'wanna break my heart.

Well, come back, baby, baby, please don't
leave me alone. (Repeat)

Well, I'm just a friendless boy, and I
haven't got no home.

Copyright © 1951 Richard Penniman. All
rights Reserved.

Side Two Band 1

Get a Job

(The Silhouettes)

The Silhouettes, vocals: Earl Beal, Raymond Edwards, Billy Horton, and Richard Lewis; accompaniment unknown. *Recorded 1957 in Philadelphia. Originally issued on Ember 1029.*

The black male vocal group has

been a staple in popular music since the thirties, when the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers became international successes. The Mills Brothers were renowned for their close harmonization (the Boswell Sisters provided a white female counterpart) and their imitations of instruments; the Ink Spots' trademark was a high tenor lead and a somber talking bass. Though they were essentially "sweet" groups, they combined influences from gospel, vaudeville, and jazz. By the early fifties there were hundreds—some say thousands—of urban street-corner vocal groups specializing in tricky harmonies and rhythmic scat syllables (the do-wop sound) that replaced instrumental accompaniment. They became known as bird groups because several of them used bird names, like the Orioles (see NW 261).

The Dominoes (Side One, Band 3) are an example of a group using its gospel training to enliven rhythm and blues. The Silhouettes, originally from Philadelphia, took the do-wop style to a giddy—but not frivolous—extreme. For while the lead vocalist seems unintelligible at first hearing, he's singing about the unexpectedly relevant problems of joblessness and his wife's relentless nagging. "Get a Job" was the number-one record early in 1958, but the Silhouettes never repeated their success. The record was distributed by Al Silver's Herald/Ember company, which in 1956 had recorded the best-known do-wop ballad, the Five Satins' "In the Still of the Night."

The form of "Get a Job" is varied in an odd way: the "sha da da da" refrain is a twelve-bar blues, as is the fairly decent tenor-sax solo; the first verse is eight bars, and the second verse is divided

into two parts—a nine-and-a-half-measure melody followed by a six-measure voice-and-drums break (which prefigures Bobby Bland's 1961 blues, "Turn On Your Love Light"). There has been much discussion over whether the main scat figure is "sha da da da" or "sha na na na": actually, the singers use both, sometimes simultaneously.

Yip yip yip yip
Yip yip yeah

Refrain

Sha da da da
Sha da da da da (ba-dum)
(Repeat twice)
Sha da da da
Sha da da da da
Ah, yip yip yip yip
Yip yip yip yip-
Mum mum mum mum mum mum,
Get a job.
Sha da da da
Sha da da da da.

Every mornin' about this time,
She gets me out of my bed,
A-cryin', "Get a job."
After breakfast every day,
She throws the want ads right my way
And never fails to say,
"Get a job."
(Refrain)

Woah, Lord, and when I get the paper
I read it through and through,
And my girl never fails to see
If there is any work for me.
And when I go back to the house,
Hear the woman's mouth
Preachin' and a-cryin',
Tells me that I'm lyin'
About a job that I never could find.
(Refrain)

Uh oh, ba-dum
Sha da da da
Sha da da da da
(Repeat)
Uh oh.

Copyright ©1957 Dandelion Music Co. and Wildcat Music, Inc. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission.

Band 2

That'll Be the Day

(Jerry Allison, Norman Petty,
and Buddy Holly)

Buddy Holly and the Crickets: Buddy Holly, vocal and guitar; Niki Sullivan, guitar; Larry Welborn, bass; Jerry Allison, drums. *Recorded 1957 in New Mexico. Originally issued on Brunswick 55009.*

Buddy Holly was born Charles Hardin Holley in Lubbock, Texas, in 1936, and in a tragically brief career—he was killed in a plane crash at the age of twenty-two—exerted considerable influence on pop music. As a teenager he formed a "western-bop" band and worked largely within the country idiom. It was as the opening act for a Bill Haley concert that he was heard by a Decca representative and encouraged to make some demonstration records in Nashville. They were not successful, but a year later he and drummer Jerry Allison and producer Norman Petty wrote "That'll Be the Day," which was released by Brunswick and became a big hit for the Crickets. It was followed by "Oh Boy," "Not Fade Away," and "Peggy Sue," which was issued under Holly's name ("It's the same group, but it's out under my name," Holly said. "I don't know why they did it that way"). Several months later Holly broke up with the Crickets and moved to New York. At the time of his death his popularity seemed to be waning, but his musical self-assurance was growing.

Holly was unusual among the southern white rock stars who combined rhythm and blues with country and western in that he wrote much of his best material and used aggressively percussive rhythm. But his chief contribution was the way he used his voice. He could sound adolescent one moment and strangely mature the next; his voice quivered so rapidly at

times that it seemed the record was speeded up. And he made hiccupping part of his style, something a New Orleans R&B performer, Tommy Ridgley, had introduced with his 1953 "Looped." Holly was not a consistent performer—he sometimes rushed the tempo—but his best records are beguiling. These include "Peggy Sue," "Peggy Sue Got Married," "You're So Square," "Oh Boy," "Tell Me How" (which reflects the influence of the Mexican music he heard as a kid), and his first record, "That'll Be the Day." The last is based on an eight-bar blues form (though the cliché-ridden guitar solo is twelve bars) and builds with tantalizing tension, thanks to the breathless repetition of the refrain and Holly's expert phrasing. He concludes with a modest rhythmic twist by placing the "hoo hoo" on the third and fourth beats.

Refrain

Well, that'll be the day, when you say
goodbye.
Yes, that'll be the day when you make
me cry-hy.
You say you're gonna leave, you know
it's a lie,
'Cause that'll be the day-ay-ay when I die.

Well, you give me all your lovin'
And your t-urtle dovin',
A-all your hugs and kisses, and your
money too.
We-hell, you know you love me, baby,
Sti-hill you tell me, maybe,
That some day, well, I'll be blue.
(Refrain)

Well, when Cupid shot his dart,
He shot it at your heart.
So if we ever part, then I'll leave you.
You sit and hold me,
And you tell me boldly
That someday, well, I'll be blue.
(Refrain)

Well, that'll be the day, hoo hoo,
That'll be the day, hoo hoo,
That'll be the day, hoo hoo,
That'll be the day.

© Copyright 1957 by MPL Communications, Inc. Used by permission.

Band 3

Good Golly Miss Molly

(Robert A. Blackwell and John Marascalco)

Jerry Lee Lewis, vocal and piano; other personnel unknown. *Recorded 1962 in Memphis. Originally issued on Sun 485.*

The rockabilly style—an amalgamation of honky-tonk, country, blues, gospel, and boogie-woogie jackhammered by white southern performers—was largely the creation of Sun Records, operated by Sam Phillips. The company had been recording traditional blues performers until 1954, when nineteen-year-old Elvis Presley came in and stomped out an electrifying version of “That’s All Right,” a blues by the black singer-guitarist Arthur Crudup (1905-1973). Each Presley record that followed had a rhythm number on one side and a country ballad on the other. Phillips had been looking for a white performer who could sing black, and once he found the combination he encouraged others to record in a similar style. Sun also recorded Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis, the most musically accomplished of them all.

Lewis was born in Louisiana in 1935 and started playing locally in his early teens. He once listed his favorite performers as: 1) Al Jolson, 2) Jimmie Rodgers, 3) Hank Williams, and 4) Jerry Lee Lewis. His admiration for Jolson underscores his obsession with being the kind of entertainer who could keep an audience enthralled. This he did with wild stage antics that mimicked Little Richard, a percussive ersatz boogie piano style, a studied arrogance that defied the audience to find him less than compelling,

and, above all, a masterful vocal technique. None of the other rockabilly singers was as versatile or sure in handling R&B numbers; Lewis had an excellent sense of time and the elusive quality of authenticity. His first big record was “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On,” an immense hit in 1957; he was accompanied only by his piano, a drummer, and a technical trick known as flutter echo. He followed it with two rather gimmicky but equally popular songs by Otis Blackwell (born 1931), “Great Balls of Fire” and “Breathless.” Lewis’ career came to an abrupt halt in 1958 when it was learned that he had married his thirteen-year-old cousin. He made a comeback of sorts in the early sixties with often imaginative versions of rock hits but achieved a real commercial breakthrough only after committing himself to a country repertoire.

Lewis was a gifted bluesman; his phrasing was loose and savage in a way that Presley and the other white rockers rarely achieved. “Good Golly Miss Molly” is taken at a fast tempo with a whiplash backbeat, like a train rhythm. There is a time suspension at the outset of the second chorus, where he plays a chord only on the first beat of the first three measures. His voice and piano are in perfect accord with the fine drumming, and he almost always varies the refrain.

Good golly, Miss Molly, you sure like to ball (oooooh),
Good golly, Miss Molly, honey, you sure like to ball.
Uh-when you rockin' and you rollin',
you can't hear your mama call.

Now from the early early mornin' to the early early night,
You can hear Miss Molly comin', and she's runnin' for her life.
Good golly, Miss Molly, you sure like to

ball.

When you rockin' and you rollin', you can't hear your ma-ma-mama call.
Yeah.

Woah, good golly, Miss Molly, you sure do like to ball,
Yeah, good golly, Miss Molly, mama, you sure do like to throw a ball.
When you rockin' and you rollin', you can't hear your mama call.

Well now, mama, papa told me, “Son, now don't you buy that diamond ring
Because that huggin' and a-kissin' makes you ting-a-ling-a-ling.”
Good golly, Miss Molly, oooooh, you sure like to ball.
When you rockin' and a-rollin', you can't hear your mama call.

Woah, good golly, Miss Molly,
Good golly, Miss Molly, (*Repeat 3 times*)
Oh, honey, you sure like to ball. Ho!

© 1957, 1964 Argosy Venture. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Band 4

Reet Petite

(Tyran Carlo and Barry Gordy, Jr.)

Jackie Wilson, vocal; Dick Jacobs, arranger; probably Panama Francis, drums; other personnel unknown. *Recorded 1957 in New York. Originally issued on Brunswick 55024.*

Between 1957 and 1961 Jackie Wilson was one of the finest entertainers in the country. Always impeccably coiffed and dressed (he seemed never to wear the same tuxedo twice), he was a consummate performer—tearing off his tie, twirling his jacket overhead, strutting on his knees, leaping into the air and descending for a perfect split. And the range of his voice, with its histrionic cry and its high notes like trumpet blasts, is unmatched in rock 'n' roll. In a sense, Wilson was an atavism; at a time when rock performers like Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis cultivated the maniacal, Wilson's

vocal trickery was traceable directly to early-twentieth-century performers like Al Jolson, to whom he paid homage with an early album (*You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet*), and John Charles Thomas. Like Clyde McPhatter, whom he replaced as lead singer with the Dominoes, Wilson had a gospel background; but unlike McPhatter or any other contemporary, he trilled consonants, perfected large vocal leaps, sang trite ballads as though they were operatic arias, and turned rocking chants—of a type that came to be associated with him (like “Talk That Talk,” “Am I the Man?” “I’ll Be Satisfied,” and “That’s Why”)—into lavish production numbers with voices, piccolos, organ, strings, and timpani.

Wilson was born in 1934 in Detroit, where he auditioned for the Dominoes. He achieved his first success as a solo act with the 1957 “Reet Petite” and was at the peak of his popularity in 1961, when he was shot in the stomach while aborting a woman’s suicide attempt. His voice was never the same, although there were a couple of subsequent hits. While most of his recordings from the late fifties were overarranged, Wilson frequently transcended the material with the hypnotic energy of his singing. (He was almost always aided in this regard by superior rhythm sections.) Similarly, his emotional wallop and incredible range could turn pap ballads like “To Be Loved” into effective vehicles.

“Reet Petite” is Wilson at his best, in a typically large setting, with a choir, an orchestra (the trombone section is conspicuous), and complicated material. The piece is a twelve-bar blues with an eight-bar refrain, but the difficult lyrics, taken at a demanding tempo, a stop-time

section, and the sheer number of people involved—all, let us remember in this day of overdubbing, in the studio at the same time—make his performance a tour de force; he tongues the “r” in reet,” articulates every word, groans at the right places, stutters, and closes with a falsetto flourish. The title, incidentally, comes from an all-black 1947 movie starring Louis Jordan (see NW 261) called *Reet, Petite and Gone*.

Well, look about, look about, look about,
look about, oooooweeee,
Look about, look about, look about, look
about, oooooweeee,
Ooh ah ooh ah ooooowee.

Well, she's so fine, fine, fine,
She's so fine, ff-fine,
She's so fi-yi-yi-yi-yine,
She's so fine, fine, fine, she's really sweet,
The finest girl ya ever wanna meet.

Refrain

Oh oh oh oh,
Uh-oh oh oh oh,
R-r-r-reet Petite,
The finest girl ya ever wanna meet.

Well, have you ever seen a girl for whom
your soul you'd give,
For whom you'd fight for, die for, pray to
God you live?
Cause she's so fine, she's so fine, she's
really sweet,
The finest girl ya ever wanna meet.

Well, she really fills the clothes from her
head to toe.
I want the world to know I love her,
love her so.
She's all right, she's all right, she's all
right,
She loves me both a-day and night.

(Refrain)

Well, she's like honey from a bee, like
peaches from a tree.
I love her, need her, she means so much
to me.
She's all right, she's got what it takes,
She's got what it takes, and with me she
really rates.

Well now, she's my cutie, my tutti-frutti,
My heart, my love, my bathin' beauty.
She's all right, she's got just what it
takes,
She's got what it takes, and with me she
a-really rates.

(Refrain)

R-r-r-reet Petite,
The finest girl ya ever wanna meet.
(Repeat)

Copyright © 1957 Tyran Carlo and Barry
Gordy, Jr. All rights reserved.

Band 5

I Met Him on a Sunday
(The Shirelles)

The Shirelles, vocals: Shirley Alston, Beverly Lee, Addie Harris, and Doris Kenner; Budd Johnson, tenor saxophone; unknown rhythm section. *Recorded 1958 in New York. Originally issued on Decca 25506.*

There were some fine female solo singers in the years when rhythm and blues was being honky-tonked into rock 'n' roll, but the biggest impact made by women at that time was in all-girl groups. The first of these was the Chantels, but the most famous and prolific was the Shirelles, who had a dozen records in the Top 40. They began singing in high school in New Jersey. A friend made them audition for her mother, Florence Greenberg, the founder of Scepter Records, who recorded their “I Met Him on a Sunday.” The disc was sold to Decca to get better exposure, and it took off. The girls returned to Scepter, where they made such romantic, occasionally sentimental classics as “Tonight’s the Night,” “Dedicated to the One I Love,” “Will You Love Me Tomorrow?” “Boys,” and a bathetic but curiously effective waltz, “Tonight at the Prom.”

The group was also capable of a tough, rhythmic sound, despite lead singer Shirley Alston’s seemingly willful off-key singing. Their more declamatory performances

influenced several later developments, including the dense “wall-of-sound” approach of Phil Spector (born 1940), who produced the Crystals, the Ronettes, and the riffing, high-decibel U. S. Bonds.

The engaging refrain in “I Met Him on a Sunday”—“do ronde”—is appropriate to the “La Ronde”-type lyric. (Vindictive rejection is a sentiment we already encountered in “See You Later, Alligator,” Side One, Band 5.) The form is highly unorthodox: the refrain is eight measures the first time we hear it but is stretched out to twelve measures the second time by the repeated instrumental riff. The one-chord chanting section, which lists the week’s events, consists of two-measure vocal lines followed by three-measure instrumental responses. In 1959 the Shirelles used a similar structure for the propulsive “Doin’ the Rondie,” in which they celebrate a Jamaican dance of their own invention.

Met him on a Sunday (*Repeat twice*)

Refrain

Do ronde ronde ronde, papa, (*Repeat twice*)

Do ooh ooh ooh ooh.

And I missed him on Monday,
And I phoned him on Tuesday,
And I dated him on Wednesday,
And I kissed him on Thursday,
And he didn't come Friday,
But he showed up Saturday.
I said, “Bye bye, baby.”

(*Refrain*)

Do ronde ronde ronde ronde, papa,

(*Repeat twice*)

Do ooh ooh ooh ooh.

(*Repeat from* “And I kissed him on Thursday.”)

TRO—© Copyright 1958 Ludlow Music, Inc., New York, N.Y. Used by Permission.

Band 6

At My Front Door

(John C. Moore and Ewart G. Abner, Jr.)

Dee Clark, vocal; other personnel unknown. *Recorded 1960 in Chicago. Originally issued on Abner LP-2002.*

Clyde McPhatter’s success paved the way for several high-voiced male singers, including Bobby Day (“Rockin’ Robin”), Marv Johnson (“You’ve Got What It Takes”), and Jimmy Jones (“Handy Man”). The most original was Delectus Clark (born 1938), whose family moved from Blytheville, Arkansas, to Chicago when he was a child. At the age of fourteen, he was singing with the Hambone Kids on an R&B hit, “Hambone,” by veteran Chicago drummer Red Saunders. Clark signed with a subsidiary of Vee Jay in 1955, at which time he fluctuated between sounding like McPhatter and Little Richard.

When Richard switched to gospel, Clark took over his band and had a minor success in the Little Richard mode with “Kangaroo Hop.” In 1958 he recorded the first of several originals, “Nobody but You,” and revealed a singing and songwriting style of his own. He followed it with two Otis Blackwell songs, “Just Keep It Up” and the rollicking “Hey, Little Girl.”

Dee Clark’s records were handsomely but excessively produced by Calvin Carter of Vee Jay. They reflect the Chicago sound in their swing rhythms and jazz-styled orchestrations. Few singers of the period were as versatile as Clark; his second album, for example, included pop hits, blues, jazz standards, a duet with soul singer Jerry Butler (born 1939), a rock-'n'-roll parody, and a few original

compositions. Many of his records suffered from overripe arrangements, white-sounding choirs, and corny instrumental touches but usually had superior honking tenor-sax solos, good rhythm sections, and full band riffs. Clark’s own songs include “Just like a Fool,” “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Your Friends Gloria,” “When I Call on You,” and “Raindrop’s At My Front Door” is a twelve-bar blues arranged for full orchestra, with a rhythm that combines jazz and rock. There is a fulsome vocal choir and simplistic touch at the end of the riffing out-chorus but Clark’s phrasing, his use of melisma and falsetto, and the call-and-response episode between him and the choir are effective.

Knock knock, knock knock, (*Repeat*)
Knock.

Crazy little mama comes a-knockin',
knockin' at my front door.

Crazy little mama comes a-knockin',
knockin' at my front door.

Crazy little mama come a-knock-knock-knockin',
Just like she did before.

Verse

If you got a little mama and you want to
keep her neat,

Keep your mama off my street.

Same thing'll happen like it did before,
She'll come a-knock-knock-knockin' at
my door.

Crazy little mama come a knock-
knockin',

Just like she did before.

(*Repeat*)

Ooooh, she come a-knockin' (*Repeat*)
That crazy little mama, she comes back
knockin',

Knockin' at my front door.

Copyright © 1955 by Conrad Music. Used by permission.

Band 7

I'm Movin' On

(Hank Snow)

Ray Charles, vocal and piano; the Raelets, vocal. Marcus Belgrave and John Hunt, trumpets; David

Newman, tenor saxophone; Hank Crawford, baritone saxophone; Edgar Willis, bass; Teagle Fleming, drums. *Recorded 1959 in New York. Originally issued on Atlantic 2043.*

Ray Charles was born in Albany, Georgia, in 1932 and has been blind since the age of six. He is the only figure in American music who has been prominent in rock 'n' roll, jazz, rhythm and blues, country, and pop. One of the few types of music he hasn't sung is gospel, which is ironic when one remembers that Charles, more than anyone else, was responsible for the dissemination of gospel techniques in popular music. He wasn't the first to exploit the syncretic ties between religious and secular black music (see the Dominoes, Side One, Band 3), but he was the most brilliant and influential. Vocal groups like the Dominoes, and later the Drifters, sanded down the gospel inflections; they had more in common with the formal tradition of gospel singing—from the nineteenth-century Fisk Jubilee Singers to the Golden Gate Quartet of the forties—than with the exhilarating services of the southern Baptist church. Charles retained the whooping and shouting, the freewheeling call-and-response invocations, the holy-roller fervor. In the early years his music was often attacked as a sacrilege, but no other singer has had as far-reaching an effect on the present shape of popular music.

Charles' first trio was frankly modeled after one led by Nat King Cole (1919-1965), but after signing with Atlantic Records in 1952 he began recording R&B-converted spirituals while exploiting the rougher edges of his voice. At the same time, he recorded several jazz instrumen-

tals that helped to reintroduce an element of earthiness into jazz. His biggest hit for Atlantic was the two-part "What I Say," a highly secularized church miniservice that substituted the joyful moans of the sex act for the shouts of religious ecstasy. A few months later he signed with ABC Paramount and began applying his style almost exclusively to popular material from Tin Pan Alley and Nashville. His first rock-styled interpretation of a country-music standard had attracted little attention when first issued; it was Hank Snow's "I'm Movin' On," and it exemplified all Charles' strengths in adapting unlikely material to his own vision.

This blues performance begins with a simulated train whistle and a shuffle rhythm, maintains a furious tempo, and employs both a steel-guitar sound (borrowed from country music) and a vocal trio, the Raelets, that echoes Charles' phrases with gospel-style responses.

The lyrics to this song are available from the publisher.

Band 8

What About Us?

(Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller)

The Coasters, vocals: Billy Guy, Carl Gardner, Cornell Gunter, and Will "Dub" Jones; King Curtis, tenor saxophone; other personnel unknown. *Recorded 1959 in New York. Originally issued on Atlantic 6153.*

As the fifties came to a close the three most important male vocal groups were the Drifters, who sang relatively straight material, often with Latin accompaniment; the Isley Brothers, who in both their singing and stage style came

across like Jackie Wilson in triplicate; and the Coasters, whose material was usually comedic and frequently satiric (as rhythm and bluesman Louis Jordan's had been). The Coasters were largely the creation of two white songwriter-producers, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who provided them with some of the most memorable songs of the era and functional, tasteful arrangements. Leiber and Stoller, who had also produced for the Drifters, Elvis Presley, Sammy Turner, Ben E. King, and many others, originally signed a group called the Robins. When they became independent producers for Atlantic, they convinced two members of the Robins to start the Coasters.

No other group sounded quite like them, though there were imitators. Their ensemble singing had a loose, rowdy feeling, and each of the solo voices was notably different from the others: Gunter was a flamboyant tenor who sounded like the great jazz singer Dinah Washington (1924-1963); Jones was the best bass singer in the business since Orville Jones (no relation) of the original Ink Spots; Guy was the soulful, growling baritone lead; and Gardner was the more erotic, cleaner-voiced lead tenor. Each was too eccentric to make it as a solo, but together their blend was irresistible. In addition, they had excellent guitar support—usually from Adolph Jacobs, George Barnes, or Mickey Baker—and King Curtis' famous tenor-sax breaks, which set standards for sixteen-bar solos in rock-'n'-roll records. The subject matter of their songs included a Mexican brothel ("Down in Mexico"), parental tyranny ("Yakety Yak"), television westerns ("Along Came Jones"), the high-school cutup ("Charley

Brown”), detective stories (“Searchin’”), and rock ‘n’ roll itself (“That Is Rock and Roll”), as well as “Poison Ivy,” “Little Egypt,” and “Shoppin’ for Clothes.”

“What About Us?” was not a hit, primarily because of the subject; it is a humorous treatment of class consciousness and, by extension, racism. It received a little air play when first released, but soon the jocks turned it over and played the reverse side, “Run, Red, Run,” a trite song about a gambler and his monkey.

Whether or not “What About Us?” was rock’s first protest song, its poetic form can be traced back to slave days. Frederick Douglass, for instance, preserved this lyric from the antebellum South:

We raise de wheat,
Dey gib us de corn;
We bake de bread,
Dey gib us de crust;
We sif de meal,
Dey give us de huss.

Leiber and Stoller adapted this idea with contemporary comic references, which the Coasters milked in their usual style. The song is a thirty-two bar AABA form with a refrain attached to each A part.

The lyrics to this song are available from the publisher.

Band 9

New Orleans

(Frank Guida *and* Joseph F. Royster)

Gary U. S. Bonds, vocal; other personnel unknown. *Recorded 1960 in Virginia. Originally issued on Legrand 1003.*

By 1960 rock ‘n’ roll appeared to be fatally whitewashed. Elvis Presley was in the army and about to undergo a softening of image; Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis were temporarily destroyed by scandals; Little Richard retired into the church; Buddy Holly was dead. The airwaves had been given over to white teen idols who reduced the symbols of the music to absurd posturing and the music itself to a childish parody of its original energies. Until the 1964 invasion of British groups who had been shaped by the early R&R stars, it seemed as though the music business, which at first had resisted rock, had succeeded in co-opting it. Still, there were occasional bursts of the real thing, including a handful of records by U.S. Bonds made from 1960 to 1962.

Bonds was born Gary Anderson in 1939 in Jacksonville, Florida, but grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, where he met producer Frank Guida of Legrand Records. He sang ballads in the Johnny Ace manner, but he won acclaim with wildly spluttering rhythmic chants. A few saxophones played strident figures, the rhythm was augmented by hand clapping, and the empty spaces were filled with

crackling electricity. Bonds had a cry in his voice and managed to convey the vibrancy, rawness, and jubilation of rock ‘n’ roll.

“New Orleans” has an unusual form. The refrain is eight measures, but while the chant sections follow the harmonic pattern of the traditional twelve-bar blues, they are stretched out to twenty bars by the instrumental riffs. Rhythmic suspension is used to heighten the excitement.

Refrain

I said a-hey hey hey yeah. (I said a-hey
hey hey yeah.)
I said hey a-hey hey yeah. (I said hey a-
hey hey yeah.)

Well, c'mon, everybody, take a trip with
me,
Well, down the Mississippi down to
New Orleans,
Where the honeysuckle's bloomin' on
the honeysuckle vine,
And the love is a-bloomin' there all the
time.
You know every southern belle is a
Mississippi queen,
Down the Mississippi down in New
Orleans.
(Refrain)

Well, c'mon, take a stroll down to Basin
Street
And listen to the music with the
Dixieland beat,
A-where the magnolia blossoms fill the
air,
Yeah, and you ain't been to heaven if
you ain't been there.
They got rich moss hangin' from a big
oak tree,
Down the Mississippi down in New
Orleans. *(Refrain)*

(Repeat first verse)

(Refrain)

Well, I said a-hey hey hey yeah.
I said a-look out, child, yay yay yeah.

Copyright © 1960. Rockmasters, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Anthology of Rhythm and Blues*, Vol.1. Columbia CS-9802.
Berry, Chuck. *Golden Decade*. Chess 1514D.
Charles, Ray. *Live*. Atlantic SD2-503.
The Very Best of Fats Domino. United Artists UA-La380-E.
Dominoes. *All Their Hits*. King 5005X.
Fourteen Golden Recordings from the Historic Vaults of Duke/Peacock Records. ABC X-784.
History of Rhythm and Blues: Rock & Roll 1956-57. Atlantic SD-8163.
History of Rhythm and Blues: The Big Beat 1958-60. Atlantic SD-8164.
Holly, Buddy. *A Rock & Roll Collection*. MCA2-4009.
Lewis, Jerry Lee. *The Original*. Charlie 30111.
Little Richard. *Grooviest 17 Original Hits*. Specialty SPS-2113.
Presley, Elvis. *The Sun Sessions*. RCA APM1-1675.
Price, Lloyd. *Original Hits*. Specialty SNTF-5007.
Spector, Phil. *Greatest Hits*. Warner Brothers 2SP-9104.
Turner, Joe. *His Greatest Recordings*. Atco SD-33-376.
Wilson, Jackie. *My Golden Favorites*. Decca BL-754058.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Christgau, Robert. *Any Old Way You Choose It*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1973.
Escott, Colin, and Hawkins, Martin. *Catalyst: The Sun Records Story*. London: Aquarius, 1975.
Gillett, Charlie. *Making Tracks*. New York: Dutton, 1974.
_____. *Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock & Roll*. New York: Dell, 1972.
Groia, Philip. *They All Sang on the Corner: New York City's Rhythm and Blues Vocal Groups of the 1950s*. Setauket, N.Y.: Edmund, 1973.
Guralnick, Peter. *Feel Like Going Home*. New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1971.
Hardy, Phil, and Laing, David. *The Age of Rock 'n' Roll (The Encyclopedia of Rock, Vol.1)*. London: Panther, 1976.
Keil, Charles. *Urban Blues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.
Levine, Lawrence W. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
Marcus, Greil. *Mystery Train*. New York: Dutton, 1976.
Miller, Jim (ed.). *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*. New York: Random House, 1977.
Murray, Albert. *Stomping the Blues*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.
Nite, Norm N. *Rock On: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock 'n' Roll*. New York: Crowell, 1974.
Shaw, Arnold. *The Rockin' '50s*. New York: Hawthorne, 1975.
Stearns, Marshall W. *The Story of Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Side One Total time 24:54

- 1 Shake, Rattle and Roll (Charles E. Calhoun [Jesse Stone])2:59
(publ. Unichappell Music, Inc.)
Joe Turner, vocal
- 2 The Clock (David J. Mattis)2:55
(publ. Lion Music Publishing Co., Inc.)
Johnny Ace, vocal and piano; the Beale Streeters, vocals
- 3 Have Mercy, Baby (Billy Ward)2:23
(publ. Billy Ward Music Co.)
Billy Ward and His Dominoes
- 4 Shake a Hand (Joe Morris)2:29
(publ. Merrimac Music Corp.)
Faye Adams, vocal; Joe Morris and His Orchestra

5 See You Later, Alligator (Robert Guidry)	2:44
(publ. Arc Music Corp.)	
Bill Haley and the Comets	
6 Maybellene (Chuck Berry, Russ Fratto, and Alan Freed)	2:16
(publ. Arc Music Corp.)	
Chuck Berry, vocal and guitar	
7 Mailman Blues (Lloyd Price)	2:09
(publ. Venice Music, Inc.)	
Lloyd Price, vocal	
8 I Can't Go On (Fats Domino and Dave Bartholomew)	2:12
(publ. Unart Music Corp.)	
Fats Domino, vocal and piano	
9 Every Hour (Richard Penniman)	2:55
(Copyright held by composer)	
Little Richard, vocal	

Side Two Total time 22:32

1 Get a Job (The Silhouettes)	2:43
(publ. Dandelion Music Co.)	
The Silhouettes, vocals	
2 That'll Be The Day (Jerry Allison, Norman Petty, and Buddy Holly)	2:16
(publ. M P L Communications, Inc.)	
Buddy Holly and the Crickets	
3 Good Golly Miss Molly (Robert A. Blackwell and John Marascalco)	2:17
(publ. Jondora Music)	
Jerry Lee Lewis, vocal and piano	
4 Reet Petite (Tyran Carlo and Barry Gordy, Jr.)	2:44
(Copyright held by composers)	
Jackie Wilson, vocal	
5 I Met Him On A Sunday (The Shirelles)	2:19
(publ. Ludlow Music, Inc.)	
The Shirelles, vocals	
6 At My Front Door (John C. Moore and Ewart G. Abner, Jr.)	1:49
(publ. Conrad Music)	
Dee Clark, vocal	
7 I'm Movin' On (Hank Snow)	2:17
(publ. Hill & Range Songs, Inc.)	
Ray Charles, vocal and piano; the Raelets, vocals	
8 What About Us? (Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller)	2:48
(publ. Chappell Music Co.)	
The Coasters, vocals	
9 New Orleans (Frank Guida and Joseph F. Royster)	2:47
(publ. Rockmasters, Inc.)	
Gary U. S. Bonds, vocal	

Full discographic information and a list of the performers for each selection may be found within the individual discussions of the works in the liner notes.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to Atlantic Records for “Shake, Rattle and Roll”; “I’m Movin’ On”; and “What About Us?”; to ABC Records for “The Clock”; “Mailman Blues”; and “At My Front Door”; to CBS Records for “Have Mercy, Baby”; to MCA Records for “See You Later, Alligator”; “That’ll Be the Day”; and “I Met Him on a Sunday”; to Platinum Record Co., Inc. for “Maybellene”; to RCA Records for “Every Hour” and to Rockmasters, Inc. for “New Orleans.” “Good Golly Miss Molly” appears courtesy of Sun International Corporation. “New Orleans” was originally produced by Frank Guida.

Our thanks to Robert Altshuler for making his record collection available to us and to Sam Parkins for his invaluable help.

Program consultant: Gary Giddins
Rerecording engineer: Art Shifrin
Mastering: Lee Hulko, Sterling Sound
Cover art: Nicholas Krushenick, “Godzilla.”
Acrylic on canvas. Private collection.
Cover design: Elaine Sherer Cox
Library of Congress Card No. 78-750037

LINER NOTES © Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.

© 1978 © 1978 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. All rights reserved.

For additional information and a catalogue, please contact:

New World Records
701 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10036
(212) 302-0460 • (212) 944-1922 fax
email: info@newworldrecords.org

www.newworldrecords.org