



THE KING OF ROCK & ROLL AND THE 1950'S

BILL HALEY & THE COMETS

- From Detroit, MI
- His musical career swept across the three music markets – Pop, C&W, R&B. Fully illustrated the musical integration that occurred within Rock and Roll during the 1950s
- Began playing C&W and would occasionally slip in a R&B in a Country style to avoid upsetting his audience



James V.
Swan

FIVE PIVOTAL FIGURES IN 1950S ROCK:

- Little Richard – Pivotal Figure
- Jerry Lee Lewis – Comparable Figure to Elvis
- Fats Domino – 8 Bar Blues into Rock
- Chuck Berry – Introduced the Guitar
- Buddy Holly – Unique style

ELVIS PRESLEY

- The most central figure in the early development of Rock and Roll.
- Popularized the new style, disseminating it throughout society.

EARLY LIFE

- Born in Tupelo, Mississippi, Presley was in a position to absorb a wide variety of musical influences despite the segregation of the deep south.
- Influenced by R&B, White & Black Gospel Music, Country & Western, Bluegrass, Western Swing, and pop.
- One of the most Musically Integrated musicians of the 1950s

- Moved to Memphis in 1948
- Started forming the clothing style of the 1950 Rock era during this time – Black Leather Jacket, open shirt, upturned collar, long sideburns

- In 1953 – Presley recorded at a small local recording company. Memphis Recording Service. He paid \$4.
- The owner – Sam Phillips signed him with Sun Records (produced both R&B and C&W albums)
- Elvis released 5 singles on the Sun label between mid-1954 to 1955. These first releases illustrated the musical integration of Rock & Roll

FIRST SUN RECORDS RELEASES BY ELVIS PRESLEY

- “That’s All Right (Mama)”
- “Blue Moon of Kentucky”
- “Mystery Train”
- “I Forgot to Remember to Forget”

- Started out as an important figure in the C&W world and was the named number 1 “Up and Coming” C&W Artist in a 1955 DJ poll.
- “Package Shows” – a show including a roster of different artists.
- Audience was younger than the rest of the package - began his separation from the C&W scene.

1956

- Two important events occurred that would expand Elvis Presley's national impact.
 - - "Colonel" Tom Parker took over the personal management of Presley.
 - - Presley left Sun Records and signed with RCA Victor for \$40K

THE RCA VICTOR YEARS

- Heartbreak Hotel – 1 million records
- Hound Dog/Don't Be Cruel – 3 million records
- Love Me Tender – Pre-sold 1 million records
- One of the first musicians to surpass the 10 million mark.
- Both sides of single releases were popular

1958 – 1960S

- 1958 – Elvis was inducted into the Army
 - Met Priscilla (future wife)
- Transitioned into movies as Rock and Roll moved on to newer styles.
 - 33 films over the next 16 years.

1968 TO THE 1970S

- Returned to performing live music with a television special in December 1968 (The Comeback Special)
- Began to tour major cities – Las Vegas.
- Personal Problems began his decline
 - - Weight Issue
 - - Divorce
 - - Drug Use

- Elvis died of Heart Related Problems in Memphis on August 16, 1977

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESLEY

- He Personified Rock & Roll
- His multifaceted personality and his musical versatility gave him an appeal beyond that of the typical rock and roll star.
- Elvis was an overwhelming commercial success

MULTIFACETED

- He was many things to many people.
 - Sexy
 - Rebellious
 - God-Fearing
 - Patriotic
 - Respectful

COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

- Sold over 500 million records by the time of his death
- Estimated that over 1 Billion records have sold worldwide and continues to grow.

THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE MARKET

- By the early 1960s, much of the power of the first rock & roll shockwave had dissipated.
- Little Richard – Found Religion
- Jerry Lee Lewis – Marital Scandal
- Chuck Berry – In Jail (Violation of the Mann Act)
- Fats Domino – Went into obscurity

THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED

- February 3, 1959
- Deaths of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens,
and The Big Bopper

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

- 1960 to 1963 fails to show to any true dominant new style.
- Pop charts showed examples of the late 1950s but again it was extremely varied between the three trends – mainstream, soft rock, rockabilly