Other Rockabilly Artists

• Elvis’ Sun recordings helped establish a style later called “rockabilly”
  – Mostly without drums (a nod to earlier country recordings)
  – Acoustic and electric guitars, and stand-up bass
  – Slap Back echo/Tape Delay echo

Video Ex: Elvis Presley
  – The Story Behind Sun Studio's Famous "Slap Back" Echo
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuStmPbG528

Ex: Elvis Presley – “Mystery Train” (1955)
• At Sun: Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash (both later signed with major label, Columbia); Roy Orbison, and Jerry Lee Lewis...
Jerry Lee Lewis

Video Ex: Jerry Lee Lewis
  – Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On (Steve Allen Show, 1957)

  • https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xs_bkhqJmRI

• Little Richard influence

• Quick downfall:
  – On tour in UK, told press about his new bride

• Other non-Sun rockabilly artists...
Wanda Jackson
• One of only a few 1950s female rock and rollers
  – Where were the women?

Ex: Wanda Jackson
  – “Let’s Have a Party” (1958)

• Album with Jack White, 2011
• Current tours
Buddy Holly

- Often considered “second wave” of early rock and roll
  - Took elements of Chuck Berry, Elvis, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis as point of departure and did new things

- Songwriter
  - Unlike many other Rockabilly artists

- National star from August 1957 to his death in February 1959

- Seven Top 40 hits
  - Plus R&B crossover

- Image: average guy, clean cut
Ex: Buddy Holly – “Oh Boy!” (1958)

- open country-style strummed guitar (country)
- AABA form (pop)
- 12 bar blues A sections (blues)

**AABA Form**

- Two contrasting sections of music
  - Old pop song form, very common
- Each A section is a 12 bar blues form
- B section: 8 bars (middle eight)
- Different from verse-chorus form
  - There is no repeated chorus, just a hook at the end of each A section
“Oh Boy” lyrics and formal structure

A section
All of my love, all of my kissin'
You don't know what you've been a-missin'
Oh boy, when you're with me
Oh boy, the world can see
That you, were meant, for me

A section
All of my life, I've been a-waitin'
Tonight there'll be no, hesitatin'
Oh boy, when you're with me
Oh boy, the world can see
That you, were meant, for me

B section
Stars appear and shadows a-falling
You can hear my heart a-calling
A little bit a-lovin' makes everything right
And I'm gonna see my baby tonight

A section
All of my love, all of my kissin'
You don't know what you've been a-missin'
Oh boy, when you're with me
Oh boy, the world can see
That you, were meant, for me

(Guitar Solo, A form)
Repeat AABA form, same lyrics
Modern Rockabilly

- 1980s rockabilly revival: The Stray Cats
  Ex: The Stray Cats
  – “Fishnet Stockings” (1981)

- 1990s/2000s:
  Ex: Reverend Horton Heat
  – Big Red Rocket of Love” (1999)
  • “Psychobilly”
4. Chicago Rhythm and Blues

• Migration from rural South (Mississippi, Arkansas, etc.), Memphis

• Loud **Chicago blues** style:
  – Heavily amplified guitar and harmonica (distorted)
  – Often shouted vocals
  – Aggressive drum beat

• In 1955, **Chess Records** becomes the first R&B label to crossover to pop market with Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley
  – Both were guitarist/singers who recorded with blues musicians, but wrote lyrics/songs aimed at a teen audience
Chuck Berry

• Chess Records, Chicago
• Foundational rock and roll figure
  – Musically and lyrically
• Songwriter
  – Becomes the norm in rock music
• Songs directly relating to youth/popular culture: school, parents, dances, cars, etc.
  – This was his intent in writing these songs: pop lyrics
Ex: Chuck Berry – “Maybellene” (1955)

• Crossover hit
  – Clear enunciation could have helped him “pass for white” on radio stations that generally wouldn’t play black music
  – Car race, allusions to sexuality in lyrics, but thickly veiled

• Talking blues style vocal

• Rockabilly style (closest equivalent among African American singers)
  – What country/folk elements are present?
  – What elements here are the same as Elvis’ Sun recordings?
“Maybellene” Lyrics

Chorus
Maybellene, why can't you be true?
Oh Maybellene, why can't you be true?
You've started back doing 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' will outrun my V8 Ford,
The Cadillac doin' 'bout ninety-five,
She's bumper to bumper rollin' side by side

Repeat Chorus

Pink in the mirror on top of the hill,
It's just like swallowin' up a medicine pill,
First thing I saw that Cadillac grille
Doin' a hundred and ten gallopin' over that hill,
Offhill curve, a downhill stretch,
Me and that Cadillac neck by neck

Repeat Chorus

The Cadillac pulled up ahead of the Ford,
The Ford got hot and wouldn't do no more.
It then got cloudy and it started to rain,
I tooted my horn for a passin' lead
The rain water blowin' all under my hood,
I knew that was doin' my motor good

Repeat Chorus

The motor cooled down, the heat went down
And that's when I heard that highway sound.
The Cadillac a-sittin' like a ton of lead
A hundred and ten a half a mile ahead.
The Cadillac lookin' like it's sittin' still
And I caught Maybellene at the top of the hill

Repeat Chorus
Comparison with Buddy Holly:

• Both were guitarists who wrote their own songs and played in a distinctive manner
  – This songwriter-performer model was the norm, post-Beatles
• Both wrote music for a pop audience, with country and R&B influences
• Holly: country twang and vocal hiccups

Ex: Chuck Berry – “Johnny B. Goode” (1957)

• John Lennon: “If you had to try and give rock ‘n’ roll another name, you might call it Chuck Berry”
Bo Diddley

• Another influential blues-to-rock and roll figure
• Chess Records

Ex: Bo Diddley – “I’m A Man” (1955)

• Hyper-masculinity
• see lyrics next slide
Bo Diddley – “I’m A Man” (1955)

Now when I was a little boy
At the age of five
I had somethin' in my pocket
Keep a lot of folks alive
Now I'm a man
Made twenty-one
You know baby
We can have a lot of fun

I'm a man
I spell M A N

I goin' back down
To Kansas Stew
Bring back the second cousin
Little John the conqueroo

I'm a man
Spell M A N
Ohh, ohh, ohh, ohh

The line I shoot
Will never miss
The way I make love to 'em
They can't resist

All you pretty women
Stand in line
I can make love to you baby
In an hour's time

I'm a man
I spell M A N

Ohh, ohh, ohh, ohh,
The Bo Diddley Beat:
Clave (Sub-Saharan Africa and Afro-Cuban music)

Ex: Bo Diddley – “Bo Diddley” (1955)

• Bump and grind shuffle
• One in a series of self-mythologizing songs
• Beatles and Rolling Stones covers
5. Vocal Group Rock and Roll

- The other four early rock and roll styles used heavily amplified electric guitar and a strong back beat
- Vocal groups were almost a throwback to earlier styles
- Vocal harmony groups had a big influence on later rock groups
- Black doo wop groups
  - Street corner music, all vocal (a capella)
    - Gospel harmonies, but also replacing instruments with voices
      - I.e. walking bass line
  - Big in cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York City
Harmonizing

• What is harmonizing?
  – Vocals, guitars

Ex: The Beach Boys – “Unreleased Backgrounds” (1966)

Doo Wop:
Ex: The Zircons – “Lonely Way” (1964)
Ex: The Chords – "Sh-Boom" (1954)
• Original version

Ex: The Crew Cuts – "Sh-Boom" (1954)
• One of first white groups to succeed in the doo-wop style
• Part of the 1950s cover phenomenon
• Their biggest hit was this cover

• Discuss similarities and differences between these recordings
Ex: Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers – “Why Do Fools Fall in Love” (1956)
• Intro: doo wop vocal bass line and harmonies
• An example of a fast vocal group song
Payola Investigations

- Record labels and distributors often paid radio DJs to play their records (cash, presents, trips, etc.)
  - Pay-to-play was not a new idea; goes back to 19th century in US
- By the end of the 1950s, there had been a major shake-up in the music industry
  - Challenge from indie record labels
  - Performing rights organizations: ASCAP vs. BMI
- Payola was largely about the old power (major labels and ASCAP) attacking the new (indies/BMI)
• An argument presented to the public:
• How could this garbage music be so popular? The indies MUST be paying to have RnR played
  – That’s why people are buying it
• Interesting assumption that people will like/buy what they are fed
  – Assumes no agency on part of (mainly teen) record buyers
• Late 1959: Congressional Committee began taking testimony
• Focus on stations/DJs who played rock and roll
• No significant acknowledgement that Payola had existed in the industry for decades
  – Interesting note: gifts and money to play records was not actually illegal at this time
• Plays on racial stereotypes
• Result: many DJs fired and radio station formats changed

• Highest profile subjects were Alan Freed and Dick Clark
  – Clark: cooperative, remained in music biz, good reputation
  – Freed: didn’t admit fault, ended his career
End of first wave of rock n roll

• 1957: at height of popularity, Little Richard joins the ministry
  – Became an ordained minister
• 1958: Elvis joins the Army (draft notice Dec. 1957, not voluntary)
  – Stationed in Germany in September 1958
• May 1958: British press breaks story of Jerry Lee Lewis’ child-cousin-bride
• Feb 1959 – Buddy Holly dies in a plane crash
• 1959: Chuck Berry charged with violating the Mann Act
  – “transporting a minor across state lines for immoral purposes”
  – After appeals, he ultimately received a 3 year sentence, served 2 years
• Thus most stars were out of the public eye and rock and roll as a fad was seen by many to be dead