

# SOUND OF THE CITY 1959-1965



THE TIME-LIFE HISTORY OF

ROCK 'N' ROLL

# Sound of the City 1959-1965

1. **The Loco-Motion** ♣ Little Eva
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21. **Hey, Girl** ♣ Freddie Scott



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THE TIME-LIFE HISTORY OF

# ROCK 'N' ROLL

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R962-08  
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## SOUND OF THE CITY 1959-1965

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# Johnny Thunder

*Loop De Loop*

**JOHNNY THUNDER**



**Johnny Thunder dances the *Loop De Loop*,  
his sole moment of glory.**

# Chuck Jackson

A black and white photograph of a young man, Chuck Jackson, singing passionately into a vintage microphone. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark tie. His eyes are closed, and his mouth is open in a wide, expressive note. His hands are clasped together in front of his chest. The background is dark and out of focus.

Foreshadowing mainstream black pop, Chuck Jackson uses his soulful baritone to full effect.

**T**he story of New York City pop— notable for its rich melodies and acute lyrics—is likewise the story of the Brill Building, which is both a real structure and a distinct musical culture. The Brill Building is located at 1619 Broadway, in the heart of Tin Pan Alley, and it symbolized the old guard pop music of cocktail society and classy cabarets—until the early '60s, when it came to stand for a new breed of rock 'n' roll songwriters, arrangers and producers.

Actually most of this new breed worked in offices across the street from the Brill Building. However, their work was quickly dubbed “Brill Building pop” because they were dedicated to the kind of sophisticated, disciplined craftsmanship Brill’s earlier tenants—Noel Coward, the Gershwins, Cole Porter—represented, to say nothing of sharing their savvy when it came to reading the market.

Brill Building pop was more self-referential than the earliest rock. Recording songs richer in blues and country conventions, the first wave of rockers—with a few exceptions such as Chuck Berry—did not always

address their lyrics explicitly to teenagers: It was just understood that teens were the most likely audience for *That'll Be the Day* or *Tutti-Frutti*. But by the early '60s, as the audience expanded from its working-class beginnings into middle-class suburbia, writers and artists were literally calling teens into the fold via their lyrics. They wrote about distinctly teen situations in sing-along songs with simple, direct emotions and imagery that could not possibly speak to anyone else. But neither were they cynical about it, because they were roughly the same age as their audience and they, too, *believed*—listeners understood that lyricist Gerry Goffin had spent anxious moments “up on the roof,” that the 4 Seasons could hide their hurt at any cost or that Little Eva knew what to do with her own sweet self when the dance was over.

What had happened is that while the pop music establishment continued to insist that rock 'n' roll was a barbarous, passing fad and that the kids would soon come to their senses and rediscover “good” music, a generation of innovators who knew otherwise

# NEIL SEDAKA

45 RPM

RCA VICTOR  
47-8046



BREAKING  
UP  
IS  
HARD  
TO  
DO

AS  
LONG  
AS  
I  
LIVE



stepped into the subsequent void and took over. The Brill Building popsters were, simultaneously, the most up-to-the-minute extension of the old Tin Pan Alley mentality, and a clear break from it.

What is remarkable is how few of them there actually were. Throughout this compilation, the same behind-the-scenes names recur. Songwriters Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller led the way. They started out in L.A. with the Robins, then went to New York (as the group changed its name to the Coasters) and became the hottest team in town; they created sounds tailored specifically to the group, while putting their personal stamp on the records as well. Eventually, Leiber and Stoller became label owners, starting Red Bird initially to record girl groups. Other dominant writing teams were Carole King and Gerry Goffin, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, and Neil Sedaka and Howie Greenfield (all employed by Aldon Publishing, run by Al Nevins and Don Kirshner), as well as Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich, and Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman.

A few also worked occasionally as

arrangers or producers. Bert Berns, Burt Bacharach and Hal David emerged as writer-producers. Luther Dixon was a top writer, arranger, conductor and producer, while George "Shadow" Morton mostly wrote and produced. Some of these hit-makers were at first associated exclusively with a single act—Dixon with the Shirelles, and Bob Crewe and Bob Gaudio with the 4 Seasons. Neil Sedaka and Carole King eventually became star performers in their own right.

For the first time, the producers' names appeared on singles, because these New York producers were starting to have as much influence on the overall sound of the records as the artists (consider Shadow Morton's misunderstood-youth opus, *Leader of the Pack*). New York City pop combined rocking rhythm sections with ornate string sections and stylish horn embellishments, and integrated new influences such as Latin music, all the while keeping distinctive voices up front.

The dominant genre was the girl group, the female derivative of '50s doo-wop. The girl-group sound was innocent and sexy and



full of yearning, while speaking of uncomplicated, utopian love as if it were an everyday occurrence, even a birthright. The Chantels blazed this trail alone in the late '50s, but by the time the Angels had become the first white girl group to hit No. 1 (with *My Boyfriend's Back* in 1963), the sound was positively mainstream. Producer Phil Spector took the teen melodrama song as far as it could go, after doing his basic training in New York with Leiber and Stoller and then going to Hollywood to make his landmark records with the Crystals and the Ronettes. The girl-group sound echoed through the rest of the decade in ways as obvious as the Motown acts and as subtle as the Beatles (who often simply gender-switched girl-group harmonies while combining them with the more bedrock music of '50s stars such as Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly).

There was also the Italian rock 'n' roll of the 4 Seasons and Dion, Italian-Americans having shown themselves to be the whites best able to capture the street sensibility of doo-wop and extend it into the next era. Black solo singers were frequently a couple

of generations removed from the South, and felt no obligation to sing blues; they could be as pop as Johnny Thunder, or could redefine bluesiness as fully as Dionne Warwick, while still leaving room for rootsy singers such as Ben E. King. And finally, there were wild cards such as Gene Pitney, who came out of no distinct tradition and left no distinct influence, even though many artists and fans alike claim him as a favorite. And that, one might say, is easier said than done.

**1. The Loco-Motion** Little Eva (Goffin-King) *Original issue: Dimension 1000. Peak position: No. 1 (8-25-62); No. 1 (R&B).* This driving dance tune proved one of the most magical records of its era. Little Eva (born Eva Narcissus Boyd) was Goffin and King's babysitter, and sang the demo for this song, which was intended for Dee Dee Sharp (*Mashed Potato Time*). But Kirshner liked Eva's shouting performance so much he made this the first release on his new Dimension label. With Goffin producing and King arranging, Eva sang with all-out enthusiasm for both the dance and her partner



# Dionne Warwick

In the '60s, Warwick combined her talents with those of songwriters Burt Bacharach and Hal David, leaving as their legacy some of pop music's classic, most elegant recordings.



amidst a live-sounding blare of kicking drums, baritone drones, handclaps and rip-snorting sax solo. This was one of the first pop records to let a woman singer really cut loose.

## **2. Breaking Up Is Hard to Do** Neil Sedaka

(Sedaka-Greenfield) RCA 8046.

No. 1 (8-11-62); No. 12 (R&B).

Sedaka got his first No. 1 in 1962, four years after launching his singing career. It was inspired, he said, by the Showmen's rock anthem *It Will Stand*. Nonetheless, this is probably the most girl-group-sounding record ever cut by a man, and Sedaka's Juilliard training shines through on the well-integrated string arrangement. The introductory nonsense phrase and thumping drum turnaround, on the other hand, are undeniably rock 'n' roll.

The 4 Seasons

### 3. Easier Said Than Done

The Essex

(Linton-Huff) *Roulette 4494. No. 1 (7-6-63); No. 1 (R&B)*. Formed in the military, the Essex began as a duo in Okinawa in 1961, expanding to a quartet at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, before finally adding lead singer Anita Humes, a Marine who sang at the non-commissioned officers' club there. *Easier Said Than Done* was written for them after the Roulette label expressed interest in their ballad demo, but requested up-tempo material. Marine buddies William Linton and Larry Huff of the Camp Lejeune communications department wrote the song to the rhythms of the Teletype machines they worked on all day. Whatever its origin, *Easier Said Than Done* fit the New York City vogue for Latin-derived rhythms, and its deepest male voices echoed like a plea from afar.

**4. Up on the Roof** The Drifters  
(Goffin-King) *Atlantic 2162. No. 5 (2-9-63); No. 4 (R&B)*. This remains one of Gerry Goffin and Carole King's best-loved songs, and rightfully so. Few other lyrics have evoked

the New York night as poignantly, and the Drifters, an R&B group that had evolved into a pop group with a fondness for Latin rhythms, put it across with an effortless feel for the various ethnic and commercial ingredients in Brill Building music. Rudy Lewis' quivering lead caresses the delicate internal rhymes, while chimes and horns poke through to punctuate the arrangement, and the strings seem to climb to the sky.

**5. Don't Say Nothin' Bad (About My Baby)** The Cookies  
(Goffin-King) *Dimension 1008. No. 7 (4-27-63); No. 3 (R&B)*. Though primarily the backup singers for Dimension Records, the Cookies were the girl group that perhaps most influenced the Beatles (the Fab Four remade *Chains*, which was the girls' second-biggest hit). Lead singer Earl-Jean McCree's husky voice was tougher than most in the genre, and the vocal arrangements utilized churchy call-and-response that other girl groups avoided. The Cookies seem to have been influenced more by Ray Charles and male groups than by female singers. On this



# Maxine Brown

The provocative looks of Maxine Brown were matched by her sensuous and sultry voice—a voice that made every song she sang her own.

Goffin-King tune, the Cookies' biggest hit, lead lines alternate between the solo McCree and the harmonizers, with the sexy Earl-Jean sometimes phrasing to make the lyrics incomprehensible (a girl-group taboo).

## 6. I'm Gonna Be Strong

Gene Pitney  
(Mann-Weil) *Musical* 1045. No. 9 (12-12-64). With his near-operatic voice and convoluted emotions, Pitney was the Northeastern equivalent to Roy Orbison. Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil wrote this impassioned ballad, which begins with Spanish-flavored guitar and a trembling voice that can hardly believe what it is singing.



Instruments come in, slowly and steadily, until the listener is confronted with a full-blown tour de force that builds to . . . complete breakdown. Early '60s rock was seldom so theatrical and so musical, and early '60s males were seldom so vulnerable.

## 7. Will You Love Me Tomorrow

The Shirelles  
(Goffin-King)  
*Scepter* 1211. No. 1 (1-30-61); No. 2 (R&B). Shirley Alston, the lead singer for this most popular of girl groups, at first dismissed this Goffin-King tune as "country and Western." By the time musical director Luther Dixon was through, though, Shirley was singing a different tune. Dixon whipped up a string intro worthy



**LLLOCO-IT**

**LITTLE**

WILL YOU LOVE ME  
TOMORROW  
SOME KIND-A WONDERFUL  
BREAKING UP IS  
HARD TO DO  
SHARING YOU - UPTOWN  
HOW TO BEAT - & OTHERS



of the Big Question being asked, and King herself played kettledrums to second the emotion. Alston's singing is all innocence, the other three are smooth and the lyrics are uncharacteristically frank. It was no wonder this became the first No. 1 single by a black girl group (as well as the first Goffin-King tune to top the charts).

**8. A Little Bit of Soap** The Jarmels (Russell) *Laurie 3098. No. 12 (9-18-61); No. 7 (R&B)*. The Jarmels, a quintet from Richmond, Virginia, had the distinction of being the only hit black act on the Laurie label, which specialized in Italian doo-wop. But

*A Little Bit of Soap* had an integrated-group feel to it, as well as such a buoyant melody that it has been successfully revived twice. The song fits snugly between doo-wop and soul, being less complicated vocally than doo-wop, and less apocalyptic than soul.

**9. One Fine Day** The Chiffons (Goffin-King) *Laurie 3179. No. 5 (7-13-63);*

*No. 6 (R&B)*. *One Fine Day* is one of those girl-group hits that sounds so perfect as a whole it is hard to hear the individual parts. The Chiffons were four Bronx teens led by Judy Craig. They recorded for the production company run by the Tokens, who considered Carole King's demo so close to a finished record that they merely erased her vocals and overdubbed the bright-sounding quartet, adding percussion and a new sax break in the process. The surging beat and tricky piano line took care of the rest.

**10. Any Day Now (My Wild Beautiful Bird)** Chuck Jackson (Bacharach-Hilliard) *Wand 122. No. 23 (6-23-62); No. 2 (R&B)*. Co-written by a young Burt Bacharach, this was the bigger of two pop crossovers for one of R&B's most underrated balladeers. Luther Dixon wound up producing this single, with orchestrations by Bacharach—he had cut the basic track, with its lightly syncopated rhythm, a year earlier—and Jackson's inventive phrasing and emphatic voice made it one of the first up-town soul records. As an added bonus, the



ATLANTIC



A-6357

UP ON THE ROOF

(Goffin-King)

THE DRIFTERS

Arr. & Cond. by Gary Sherman  
A Leiber-Stoller Production

The Drifters



nervous organ line would echo through New York rock for the rest of the decade, most notably in Bob Dylan's electric albums.

## 11. I Love How You Love Me

The Paris Sisters

(Mann-Kolber) *Gregmark 6. No. 5 (10-30-61)*. Encouraged by their mom, this trio began in the '50s as Andrews Sisters sound-alikes. They did the USO and Vegas circuits before hooking up with Hollywood mogul Les Sill, who brought Phil Spector back from New York to produce them. In Priscilla Paris, Spector heard another Annette Kleinbard, lead singer of his old group, the Teddy Bears (*To Know Him, Is to Love Him*). He tailored the record to her, and Priscilla—15 and pregnant at the time—whispered her way through the lyrics while the other two sang dreamy, hypnotic harmonies that wove around whirling strings. Spector's notorious Wall of Sound production technique was clearly only a few recordings away.

**12. Walk Like a Man** The 4 Seasons  
(Gaudio-Crewe) *Vee-Jay 485. No. 1 (3-2-63)*;

*No. 3 (R&B)*. The greatest of all Italian-American groups enjoyed its third No. 1 regular release in a row (a Christmas single that stopped at No. 23 interrupted the streak) with a song strangely similar to Pitney's *I'm Gonna Be Strong* in theme. The booming drumroll intro settles into a martial beat, but what carries the song, as always, are the full and lustrous falsetto harmonies, produced thickly (by Bob Crewe) as if to suggest that the musicians don't matter, just the vocal sound.

## 13. Leader of the Pack

The Shangri-Las

(Barry-Greenwich-Morton) *Red Bird 014. No. 1 (11-28-64)*; *No. 1 (R&B)*. The Shangri-Las were two pairs of teenage sisters, including identical twins Mary and Betty Weiss, who wanted to be the female Little Anthony and the Imperials. But when brash young writer-producer Shadow Morton talked Jeff Barry into letting him cut the quartet, the result was pure girl-group sass and woundedness. *Leader of the Pack*, their second single, was in a modified Phil Spec-

tor style, with a tortured Mary crying lead over the sympathetic harmonies as the engineer revved his motorcycle in the studio. The rumbling drums, heavy echo, screeching tires and colliding vehicles added to the ominous drama of this story-song production, which was also influenced by Leiber and Stoller. And when it came to fixing blame, the song deviated from past teen-death sagas by pointing the finger directly at parents rather than at the Fates.

**14. Tell Him** The Exciters  
(Russell) *United Artists 544. No. 4 (1-19-63); No. 5 (R&B)*. A sexually mixed group with a girl-group sound led by Brenda Reid, the Exciters sounded so raw that this aggressive record could be considered proto-soul. Reid's husband, Herb Rooney, sang the bass parts, while producers Leiber and Stoller provided a sexy chimes-and-strings intro for this Bert Berns (writing as Bert Russell) song.

## **15. Oh No Not My Baby**

Maxine Brown

(Goffin-King) *Wand 162. No. 24 (1-2-65); No. 24 (R&B)*. This R&B-to-soul transitional ballad is also reminiscent of the supper club. The Goffin-King tune was the third and last top-40 hit by Brown, an R&B journeywoman from South Carolina, who sang it incredulously, with swaying sorrow. The booming drums and orchestral break made her loss more palpable.

**16. Stand by Me** Ben E. King  
(King-Leiber-Stoller) *Atco 6194. No. 4 (6-12-61); No. 1 (R&B)*. *Stand by Me* is, along with *Spanish Harlem*, one of the two greatest solo singles by the Drifters' greatest lead singer, as well as being another Leiber-Stoller production. King rewrote an old gospel song to create this for his former group. Their manager did not want it, so King's producers Latinized it with Afro-Cuban bass and percussion, which picked up a riffing cello and quartet harmonies as the arrangement built and built. King claimed he cried in the studio as he recorded the song.

*Presenting* **DION**  
**AND THE BELMONTS**



**17. Loop De Loop** Johnny Thunder (Vann) *Diamond 129. No. 4 (2-9-63); No. 6 (R&B)*. Floridian Gil Hamilton (his real name) was a Drifter for a couple of months, and a background singer around New York; he also cut the first version of *Tell Him*. But the novelty *Loop De Loop* was his sole moment of glory. The noisy, echoing intro gave the song its live dance-club feel, while the roller-rink organ—barely audible, but fully felt, through the first half—emerged as the force that pushed the song along while Thunder shouted to be heard over the clatter. A brother-in-law held up scraps of paper with the lyrics so Thunder could sing as he played drums.



**18. I Wanna Love Him So Bad**  
The Jelly Beans  
(Barry-Greenwich) *Red Bird 10003. No. 9*

(8-8-64); *No. 9 (R&B)*. Five Everyteens—a guy and four girls from Jersey City—sang this Jeff Barry-Ellie Greenwich vow with an aching earnestness that could not be denied. Charles Thomas' bass bobbing between the two leads and two back-ups created a novelty effect that set the record apart from the competition.

### **19. A Teen-ager in Love**

Dion and the Belmonts (Pomus-Shuman) *Laurie 3027. No. 5 (5-15-59)*. This doo-wop effort put the emphasis on Dion's lead while the Belmonts proved they were well versed in classical chorale styles. Most of the group's singles for the Laurie label were remakes of standards, but this was a Pomus-Shuman original that spoke helplessly of teen insecurities. The light, skipping beat reinforced Dion's wistfulness.



# **The Jelly Beans**

The heartfelt ache of Jersey City's The Jelly Beans could not be denied as they spoke to love-sick teens across the nation.

**20. Walk On By** Dionne Warwick (David-Bacharach) *Scepter 1274. No. 6 (6-13-64); No. 6 (R&B)*. Despite two earlier hits, this is the single that put Warwick and Burt Bacharach and Hal David on the map (both men produced, while Bacharach wrote, arranged and conducted). The scratchy guitar, strings, Latin percussion and two-flügel-horn obbligato combined with Warwick's icy, no-nonsense vocals to establish rock's compatibility with Manhattan's supper-club tradition.

**21. Hey, Girl** Freddie Scott (Goffin-King) *Colpix 692. No. 10 (9-7-63); No. 10 (R&B)*. Recording for Don Kirshner's Colpix label, an arm of Screen Gems films, Scott managed to sound bubblegum and operatic simultaneously. His wispy voice was set against emphatic bass and drums interplay and a female chorus that threatened to dwarf him, while sad, romantic horn lines set off schlocky strings.

—John Morthland

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# The Shangri-Las

LEADER OF THE PACK



Red  Bird

RB 20-10

REMEMBER ★ GIVE HIM A GREAT BIG KISS





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**Vice Presidents:** James D. Fishel, Donna Pickett,  
Martin Champaine  
**Executive Producer:** Charles McCardell  
**Producer/A&R Manager:** Robert Hull  
**Art Director:** Robin Bray  
**Associate Producer:** John Bonfield  
**Recording Producer/Consultant:** Joe Sasfy  
**Financial Director:** Pamela Chin  
**Associate Director of Production:** Karen Hill

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# The Exciters

## "TELL HIM"

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE HIT

# THE EXCITERS



PLUS TEN  
MORE NEW  
SONGS



TELL HIM - THE EXCITERS - UNITED ARTISTS UAL 3264 MONORAL

*Tell Him* didn't quite become "America's Number One Hit," stalling out at a respectable No. 4 in January of 1963.