

1958



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
ERA

Digital Remaster

1958

- 1 **Johnny B. Goode** (2:39) Chuck Berry
- 2 **Summertime Blues** (1:53) Eddie Cochran
- 3 **It's Only Make Believe** (2:10) Conway Twitty
- 4 **Good Golly, Miss Molly** (2:07) Little Richard
- 5 **Don't You Just Know It** (2:25)  
Huey "Piano" Smith and the Clowns
- 6 **Tears on My Pillow** (2:11)  
Little Anthony and the Imperials
- 7 **Yakety Yak** (1:49) The Coasters
- 8 **Rebel-'Rouser** (2:22) Duane Eddy
- 9 **Get a Job** (2:46) The Silhouettes
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The Teddy Bears
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Bobby Freeman
- 23 **Just a Dream** (2:30) Jimmy Clanton

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*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
•ERA•

**1958**

COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RRR-05  
OPCD-2538

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**LIFE**  
MUSIC

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- 1 Johnny B. Goode 2 Summertime Blues 3 It's Only Make Believe 4 Good Golly, Miss Molly 5 Don't You Just Know It 6 Tears on My Pillow 7 Yakety Yak 8 Rebel-'Rouser 9 Get a Job 10 Splish Splash 11 Tequila 12 Maybe 13 Sweet Little Sixteen 14 Oh, Boy! 15 Little Star 16 Book of Love 17 Breathless 18 Endless Sleep 19 Rock-In Robin 20 Chantilly Lace 21 To Know Him, Is to Love Him 22 Do You Wanna Dance 23 Just a Dream

*Clockwise from right: Texans J. P. Richardson, the Big Bopper, and the pride of Lubbock, Buddy Holly; teen dream Jimmy Clanton; New Orleans party-time rocker Huey "Piano" Smith; the lovable Teddy Bears, with a fresh-faced Phil Spector at left.*



By 1958 the rise of rock 'n' roll had brought an unprecedented volatility to the music industry. The wild new sounds, overnight stars and one-shot successes left many in the business yearning for a return to the tamer adult music and more predictable hit making that were typical of the early '50s. At a disc jockeys' convention, Columbia Records bigwig Mitch Miller declared that "adults all over the land are yearning for a pause in the day's cacophony."

Some radio stations obviously agreed with him and dropped their rock 'n' roll programing, even hosting record-smashing parties to dramatize their commitment to "serious, adult" music. However, America's uneasiness with the new music went beyond a distaste for its raucous quality. Anti-rock 'n' roll partisans often strove to associate it with juvenile delinquency. For example, a confrontation between police and a few teenagers outside a show at the Boston Arena in May was called "a riot" by the newspapers, and rumors of a rape, a stabbing and drug abuse at the show were widely printed.

Attempts to demean the music were everywhere, including an NBC advertising guide that described the Coasters as "four fugitives from a hog-calling seminar." You might say the Coasters had the last laugh, though. Their **Yakety Yak** wasn't just one of the year's biggest and funniest hits, it was proof that teen culture had found its voice in rock 'n' roll. With its hilarious litany of parental demands (e.g., "take out the garbage and the trash"), *Yakety Yak* comically conveyed the oppressive conditions of an adolescent's existence.

An even more potent evocation of teen-age miseries was **Summertime Blues**, written and performed by the young rockabilly artist Eddie Cochran. Cochran registered his complaints about working late and for low pay

and having no car or vote with a cocksure rebelliousness that rendered the song perhaps the first great teen anthem. A superb guitarist and songwriter, Cochran was killed at 21 in a car crash that also seriously injured his good friend Gene Vincent, who was with him on a 1960 tour of England.

Songs like *Yakety Yak* and *Summertime Blues* were evidence that, despite the backlash, many artists and labels were trying to capitalize on the expanding teen-age record market. During 1958, there were not only more songs expressing the concerns of America's youth from their point of view, but also more songs sung by teenagers.

In fact, the problems of young people had become such a national obsession that Pat Boone was able to achieve a different kind of bestseller with *Twist Twelve and Twenty*, a book of advice for teenagers. The success of clean-cut dreamboats like Boone, Paul Anka and Tommy Sands led to the search for more teen idols, and a number of new ones, including Bobby Darin, Jimmy Clanton and Frankie Avalon, scored their first hits in 1958.

Although Darin's first hit was a clamorous piece of bathtub nonsense called **Splish Splash**, his considerable vocal talents were quickly channeled into his developing career as a nightclub singer. Better suited to the fantasies of teen-age girls was the hopelessly romantic **Just a Dream**, recorded by Jimmy Clanton, whose cute looks earned him starring roles in two rock movies. One young man who understood the tastes of his generation perfectly was the 18-year-old Phil Spector. Just out of high school, Spector formed and performed in a vocal trio called the Teddy Bears and hit No. 1 with an achingly soft ballad, **To Know Him, Is to Love Him**, the title taken from the epitaph on his father's gravestone.

Teenagers seemed to like a dose of tragedy in their romantic ballads, and Conway Twitty struck that note dra-



matically in **It's Only Make Believe**. Twitty, who grew up as Harold Lloyd Jenkins, fabricated his name from the names of two small towns (Twitty, Texas, and Conway, Arkansas). Since moving into country music full-time in 1965, he has recorded more No. 1 hits than any artist in history. Going a dark step further than *It's Only Make Believe* was Jody Reynolds' eerie **Endless Sleep**, the first in a string of death songs that later included Mark Dinning's *Teen Angel* (1959) and Ray Peterson's *Tell Laura I Love Her* (1960).

The exploitation of the youth market was particularly obvious in the novelty-song craze of 1958. At its most inane, it resulted in such big but dimwitted hits as *The Purple People Eater* by Sheb Wooley and *The Witch Doctor* by David Seville. However, in the hands of skillful comics like Huey "Piano" Smith and the Clowns, a novelty could be irresistible. With the four Clowns bouncing around silly phrases like "gooba-gooba-gooba" and Smith pounding out some contagious New Orleans piano, **Don't You Just Know It** proved both funny and danceable.

Also cashing in on the novelty craze was J. P. Richardson, a Texas disc jockey who was better known as the Big Bopper. Richardson came up with a calculated little ditty called *The Purple People Eater Meets the Witch Doctor*, but it was the flip side, **Chantilly Lace**, that became the hit. With his Stetson hat and wild striped suit, Richardson was the kind of flamboyant and ebullient personality teens loved. Unfortunately, he was killed in the same 1959 plane crash that took the lives of Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens.

Doo-wop also took a comic turn in 1958, especially in the *Silhouettes' No. 1* hit, the relentlessly haranguing **Get a Job**. The song's endless chants of "sha-na-na-na, sha-na-na-na-na" turned up again in 1969 when the King's Men, a Columbia University vocal group, changed their name to Sha Na Na and became a highly successful nostalgia act in concert and on TV. For a Newark doo-wop



*The Coasters*



group called the Monotones inspiration came in the form of a television commercial for Pepsodent toothpaste. The ad's jingle, "You'll wonder where the yellow went," led them to write a song that wondered exactly who wrote the **Book of Love**.

Along with novelties, the instrumental came of age in 1958. Early in the year, a West Coast group, the Champs, scored the first No. 1 rock instrumental with **Tequila**. The band, which recorded for Gene Autry's Challenge label and named itself after his famous horse, Champion, would later include Jim Seals and Dash Crofts of Seals and Crofts, as well as Glen Campbell.

From Phoenix, Arizona, came guitarist Duane Eddy and a smash called **Rebel-Rouser**. Using *Rebel-Rouser* as a model, Eddy parlayed his twangy guitar style, a honking saxophone and rebel yells into more hits than any other instrumental act. He proved to be an influential artist, one of the first to explore the potential of the electric guitar as a solo voice in rock.

Along with the tough guitar instrumentals of artists like Eddy and Link Wray, some of 1958's hardest rock 'n' roll came from the music's most enduring legends. Buddy Holly's Crickets hit with the jubilant **Oh, Boy!** originally written as a country song but transformed by the group into a rockabilly number. Although Little Richard had renounced rock 'n' roll to pursue the ministry, Specialty Records still had a backlog of great material, including the frantic **Good Golly, Miss Molly**.

Duck-walking guitar maestro Chuck Berry produced two of his most brilliant portraits of pop culture in 1958. First came **Sweet Little Sixteen**, Berry's affectionate celebration of a music-crazed schoolgirl. Next was **Johnny B. Goode**, which recounts a country boy's transformation to rock star and opens with probably the most famous and oft-copied guitar riff in rock history.

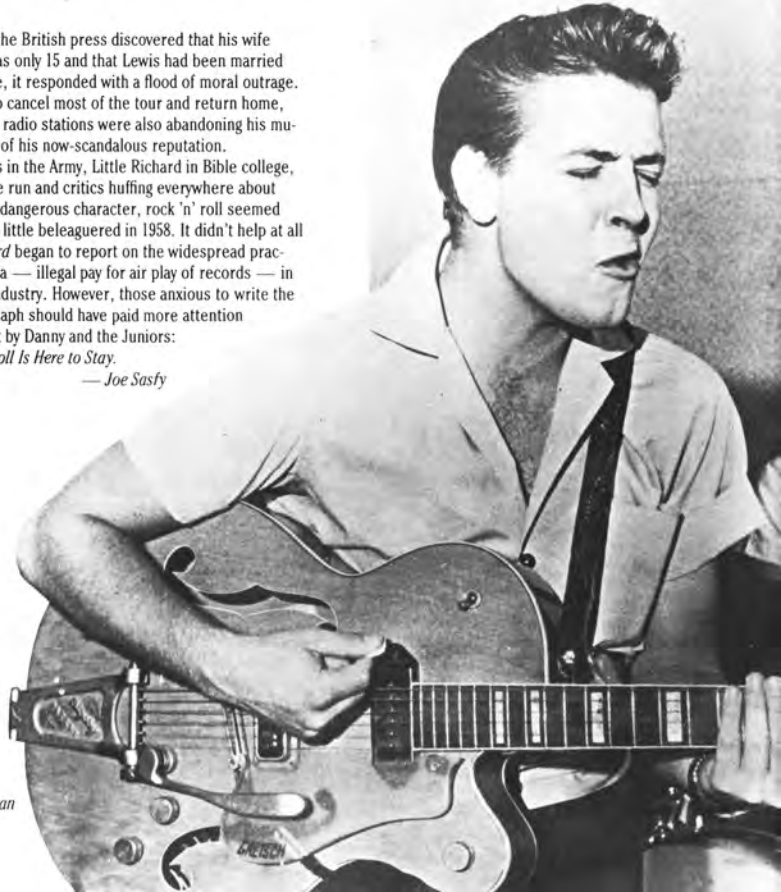
Despite his hit **Breathless**, Jerry Lee Lewis suffered a disastrous career setback during an English tour in



May. When the British press discovered that his wife Myra Gail was only 15 and that Lewis had been married twice before, it responded with a flood of moral outrage. Lewis had to cancel most of the tour and return home, where many radio stations were also abandoning his music because of his now-scandalous reputation.

With Elvis in the Army, Little Richard in Bible college, Lewis on the run and critics huffing everywhere about the music's dangerous character, rock 'n' roll seemed more than a little beleaguered in 1958. It didn't help at all that *Billboard* began to report on the widespread practice of payola — illegal pay for air play of records — in the music industry. However, those anxious to write the music's epitaph should have paid more attention to a 1958 hit by Danny and the Juniors: *Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay*.

— Joe Sasfy



Eddie Cochran



## DISCOGRAPHY

\* Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Johnny B. Goode** (2:39) Chuck Berry • *Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry. Original issue: Chess 1691. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 8\**
- 2. Summertime Blues** (1:53) Eddie Cochran • *Music and lyrics by Eddie Cochran and Jerry Capehart. Original issue: Liberty 55144. Courtesy of EMI America Records, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 8\**
- 3. It's Only Make Believe** (2:10) Conway Twitty • *Music and lyrics by Jack Nance and Conway Twitty. Original issue: MGM 12677. It's Only Make Believe by Conway Twitty under license from PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\**
- 4. Good Golly, Miss Molly** (2:07) Little Richard • *Music and lyrics by John Marascalco and Robert A. Blackwell. Original issue: Specialty 624. Courtesy of Specialty Records, Inc. No. 10\**
- 5. Don't You Just Know It** (2:25) Huey "Piano" Smith and the Clowns • *Music and lyrics by Huey Smith. Original issue: Ace 545. Courtesy of Janus Records. No. 9\**
- 6. Tears on My Pillow** (2:11) Little Anthony and the Imperials • *Music and lyrics by Sylvester Bradford and Al Lewis. Original issue: End 1027. Courtesy of Roulette Records, Inc. No. 4\**
- 7. Yakety Yak** (1:49) The Coasters • *Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Original issue: Atco 6116. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 1\**
- 8. Rebel-Rouser** (2:22) Duane Eddy • *Music by Duane Eddy and Lee Hazlewood. Original issue: Jamie 1104. Courtesy of Jamie Record Company. No. 6\**
- 9. Get a Job** (2:46) The Silhouettes • *Music and lyrics by Earl Beal, Raymond Edwards, William Horton and Richard Lewis. Original issue: Ember 1029. Courtesy of Roulette Records, Inc. No. 1\**
- 10. Splish Splash** (2:03) Bobby Darin • *Music and lyrics by Bob- by Darin and Jean Murray. Original issue: Atco 6117. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 3\**
- 11. Tequila** (2:12) The Champs • *Music by Chuck Rio. Original issue: Challenge 1016. Courtesy of Challenge Records. No. 1\**
- 12. Maybe** (2:35) The Chantels • *Music and lyrics by Richard Barrett. Original issue: End 1905. Courtesy of Roulette Records, Inc. No. 15\**
- 13. Sweet Little Sixteen** (3:00) Chuck Berry • *Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry. Original issue: Chess 1683. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 2\**
- 14. Oh, Boy!** (2:06) The Crickets • *Music and lyrics by Sonny West, Bill Tilghman and Norman Petty. Original issue: Brunswick 55035. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 10\**
- 15. Little Star** (2:36) The Elegants • *Music and lyrics by Vito Picono and Arthur Venosa. Original issue: Apt 25005. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1\**
- 16. Book of Love** (2:17) The Monotones • *Music and lyrics by Charles Patrick, Warren Davis and George Malone. Original issue: Argo 5290. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 5\**
- 17. Breathless** (2:40) Jerry Lee Lewis • *Music and lyrics by Otis Blackwell. Original issue: Sun 288. Courtesy of Sun International Corp. No. 7\**
- 18. Endless Sleep** (2:25) Jody Reynolds • *Music and lyrics by Jody Reynolds and Dolores Nance. Original issue: Demon 1507. Courtesy of Dominion Entertainment Inc. No. 5\**
- 19. Rock-In Robin** (2:34) Bobby Day • *Music and lyrics by Jimmie Thomas. Original issue: Class 229. Courtesy of Sid Talmadge. No. 2\**
- 20. Chantilly Lace** (2:21) Big Bopper • *Music and lyrics by J. P. Richardson. Original issue: Mercury 71343. Chantilly Lace by Big Bopper under license from PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 6\**
- 21. To Know Him, Is to Love Him** (2:22) The Teddy Bears • *Music and lyrics by Phil Spector. Original issue: Dore 503. Courtesy of Dominion Entertainment Inc. No. 1\**
- 22. Do You Wanna Dance** (2:34) Bobby Freeman • *Music and lyrics by Bobby Freeman. Original issue: Josie 835. Courtesy of Roulette Records, Inc. No. 5\**
- 23. Just a Dream** (2:30) Jimmy Clanton • *Music and lyrics by Jimmy Clanton and Cosmo Matassa. Original issue: Ace 546. Courtesy of Janus Records. No. 4\**

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**The Author:** Joe Sasly is a regular contributor to *The Washington Post* and the *City Paper* of Washington, D.C., and his articles have also appeared in *Musician*, *Country Music* and *Creem*. He is chief consultant for The Rock 'n' Roll Era.

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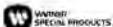
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