

1956



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

1956

- 1 **Blue Suede Shoes** (2:12) Carl Perkins
- 2 **I'm in Love Again** (2:00) Fats Domino
- 3 **I'll Remember (In the Still of the Night)**  
(3:00) The Five Satins
- 4 **The Fool** (2:43) Sanford Clark
- 5 **Let the Good Times Roll** (2:20)  
Shirley and Lee
- 6 **Eddie My Love** (3:12) The Teen Queens
- 7 **Roll Over Beethoven** (2:21) Chuck Berry
- 8 **Love Is Strange** (2:54) Mickey and Sylvia
- 9 **Be-Bop-a-Lula** (2:33) Gene Vincent
- 10 **My Prayer** (2:43) The Platters
- 11 **Honky Tonk (Part 2)** (2:32) Bill Doggett
- 12 **Blueberry Hill** (2:18) Fats Domino
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- 15 **Treasure of Love** (2:07) Clyde McPhatter
- 16 **Drown in My Own Tears** (3:17)  
Ray Charles
- 17 **Young Love** (2:29) Sonny James
- 18 **Long Tall Sally** (2:07) Little Richard
- 19 **Why Do Fools Fall in Love** (2:15)  
Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers
- 20 **Fever** (2:39) Little Willie John
- 21 **See You Later, Alligator** (2:44)  
Bill Haley and the Comets
- 22 **Since I Met You Baby** (2:41)  
Ivory Joe Hunter

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# The ROCK'N'ROLL ERA

## 1956

COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-14  
OPCD-2544

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*The Platters*

## 1956

At the end of 1955, Elvis Presley was still largely unknown outside the Deep South. But by early the next year his first RCA recording, *Heartbreak Hotel*, had reached the top of the charts. Spurred by Presley's TV performances on *The Dorsey Brothers Stage Show*, *The Steve Allen Show* and *The Milton Berle Show*, his record sales reached an incredible 10 million by September of 1956. On September 9, with *Hound Dog* and *Don't Be Cruel* spinning on the record players of teenagers across the country, Elvis made his first appearance on Ed Sullivan's variety show. An estimated 54 million people watched, some in delight, others in horror.

Rock 'n' roll's explosive entry into the national consciousness in 1956 was inseparable from the arrival of Elvis Presley as a superstar. His domination of the charts, as well as the hysteria he created, had profound musical and cultural impact. He not only unleashed the enormous commercial potential lurking in rock 'n' roll and the teenage market, he also crystallized the music's rebellious image. Presley inspired thousands of young men (in Little Richard's words) to "rip it up" and he helped open up the mainstream pop culture to such black artists as Little Richard, Chuck Berry and Pats Domino.

Hoping to cash in on the latest rage, a lot of labels went after their own "Elvis." Among them was Capitol Records, whose talent search turned up one Eugene Vincent Craddock. With his dark, gaunt good looks and penchant for black leather and motorcycles, Gene Vincent seemed to embody the somewhat sinister hepcat image. Though his biggest hit, *Be-Bop-a-Lula*, got its title from a Little Lulu comic book, there was nothing comic about Vincent's erotic singing. Even more overtly sexual was the record's B side, *Woman Love*, which earned him an obscenity conviction and a \$10,000 fine in his home state of Virginia.

When Presley left the small Sun label for RCA in late 1955, Carl Perkins stepped in to fill his shoes at Sun. In early 1956, it looked like Perkins might even challenge Elvis for the rockabilly crown when his *Blue Suede Shoes* went racing up the charts. Perkins wrote the song after overhearing a young man warn his dance partner, "Don't step on my suedes." Unfortunately, on the way to New York City to appear on *The Perry Como Show*, Perkins was involved in a car accident that hospitalized him for six months. While lying in traction, Perkins watched Elvis perform his song on *The Milton Berle Show*.

With blue suede shoes becoming a youth symbol, it was obvious that the nation's 13 million teenagers had the desire and spending power (an estimated seven billion dollars) to put their stamp on popular culture. Chuck Berry was one of the first rockers to address his songs directly to them, offering a perfect rallying cry in *Roll Over Beethoven*. What could be better than a celebration of rock 'n' roll and the new teen scene that also mocked highbrow art by urging the immortal classical composer to "dig these rhythm and blues"?

Along with music, young people adopted their own clothing, hair styles — even their own language. They picked up such phrases as "go cat go" from *Blue Suede Shoes* and "see you later, alligator" from the Bill Haley hit of the same name. Along with *See You Later, Alligator*, Haley had other hits in 1956, one with a remake of Little Richard's *Rip It Up*. The influence of the charismatic Richard was obvious in the many cover versions he inspired, not only by Haley and Pat Boone but also by Presley, who recorded four Richard classics in 1956.

Because Little Richard's 1955 hit, *Tutti-Frutti*, had been outsold by Pat Boone's cover, Richard reportedly cut his follow-up, *Long Tail Sally*, at an extra-frenzied pace so that Boone wouldn't be able to keep up. He

couldn't, and the original *Long Tall Sally* outsold Boone's tepid remake. Richard also turned in some scintillating performances in the finest rock 'n' roll film of the '50s, *The Girl Can't Help It*. In the unforgettable opening scene, he belts out the title song while Jayne Mansfield saunters saucily down a sidewalk clutching two bottles of milk to her bosom.

Rock 'n' roll quickly found a home on radio, TV and the big screen in 1956. After noticing that teenagers tended to play the same 40 or so songs over and over on jukeboxes, radio station owner Todd Storz developed a new format called Top 40. With its frenetic mix of hits, fast-talking DJs and repetitious station jingles, the Top 40 format swept the nation. In Hollywood, producers began cranking out a stream of shabbily plotted low-budget "jukebox musicals," many starring DJ Alan Freed, who invariably portrayed rock 'n' roll as well-intentioned fun.

In the 1957 film *Rock Rock Rock*, Freed defended the music's character by having Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers sing a musical protest called *I'm Not a Juvenile Delinquent*. The group's biggest hit came in 1956 when Lymon, only 13 and possessing a gymnastic soprano voice, led his group through **Why Do Fools Fall In Love**. The song originated at a rehearsal in the hallway of an apartment building in Harlem. Tired of hearing Lymon and company practice the same cover songs day after day, a tenant handed them a poem his girlfriend had written called "Why Do Birds Sing So Gay?" and suggested they make a song out of it.

Nineteen fifty-six also produced perhaps the most beloved doo-wop hit of the decade, **I'll Remember (In the Still of the Night)** by the Five Satins. Lead singer Fred Parris wrote the song while he was on late-night guard duty in the army, and the group recorded it in the basement of St. Bernadette's Church in East New Haven, Connecticut. Although it never charted higher than No. 29 in 1956, the song kept selling and selling, and even reap-





Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers (Lyman, second from right)

peared twice on the charts during the early '60s. Is there a rock 'n' roll fan alive who has not chanted, "Sho-doh-en-doh-be-doo"?

The most successful vocal group of the '50s, the Platters, achieved considerable success with their gorgeous arrangements of standards, most featuring the operatic lead voice of Tony Williams. In 1956, they scored their second No. 1 hit with **My Prayer**, originally a French composition for violin by Georges Boulanger called *Avant de Mourir*. In 1939 English songwriter Jimmy Kennedy adapted the melody and added lyrics to create the song. It was Kennedy himself who, years later, stopped the Platters' manager, Buck Ram, on the street and suggested he have them record it.

One reason many rock acts learned pop standards was that it helped them get better bookings in a wider variety of clubs. With his classic New Orleans treatment of *My Blue Heaven*, Fats Domino had already revived one truly "moldy oldie," and he pulled the same trick with his biggest hit ever, **Blueberry Hill**, dating from 1940. While recording the song in Los Angeles, Domino couldn't remember the lyrics so he sang it in bits and pieces, which a studio engineer later spliced together.

Making use of many of the same New Orleans musicians as Fats Domino, Shirley and Lee had been racking up R & B hits since 1952. Billed as "the Sweethearts of the Blues," the duo was playing a dance when a young man called out to Shirley Goodman, "Hey baby, let the good times roll." Leonard Lee responded by writing the rollicking **Let the Good Times Roll**, and the whole country was finally treated to Shirley's one-of-a-kind shrill and nasal vocal style.

Because of their success in 1956, Shirley and Lee played on a number of big rock 'n' roll shows and became good friends with Mickey and Sylvia, two singer-guitarists who created one of the year's most intriguing hits with the calypso-style **Love Is Strange**. In 1973, Sylvia (Rob-

inson) had a huge hit with *Pillow Talk* on her own label, Vibration Records. Shortly after, she called up her old friend Shirley Goodman for a recording session. The result was the international disco hit *Shame, Shame, Shame* by Shirley and Company in 1975.

With Presley leading the way, rock 'n' roll blossomed into a splendiferous musical hybrid that stretched from the comic doo-wop gibberish of the Cadets' **Stranded in the Jungle** to the silky piano blues of Ivory Joe Hunter's **Since I Met You Baby**. The year offered the first instrumental smash, **Honky Tonk (Part 2)**, by Bill Doggett, and the first giant country crossover in **Young Love** by Sonny James. Hillbilly, blues, gospel, folk, pop and jazz were all being churned up in a vital democratization of music that suggested that this new sound called rock 'n' roll might be the closest America had yet come to its melting pot ideal.

— Joe Sasyf



*The Five Satins*



## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Blue Suede Shoes** (2:12) Carl Perkins • *Music and lyrics by Carl Lee Perkins. Original issue: Sun 234. Courtesy of Sun International Corp. No. 4\**
- 2. I'm in Love Again** (2:00) Fats Domino • *Music and lyrics by Antoine Domino and Dave Bartholomew. Original issue: Imperial 5386. Courtesy of EMI America Records, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 5\**
- 3. I'll Remember (In the Still of the Night)** (3:00) The Five Satins • *Music and lyrics by Fredericke Parris. Original issue: Ember 1005. Courtesy of Murray Sporn. No. 29\**
- 4. The Fool** (2:43) Sanford Clark • *Music and lyrics by Sanford Clark and Lee Hazlewood. Original issue: Dot 15481. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 9\**
- 5. Let the Good Times Roll** (2:20) Shirley and Lee • *Music and lyrics by Leonard Lee. Original issue: Aladdin 3325. Courtesy of EMI America Records, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 27\**
- 6. Eddie My Love** (3:12) The Teen Queens • *Music and lyrics by Aaron Collins, Maxwell Davis and Sam Ling. Original issue: RPM 453. Courtesy of Kent Music, Inc. No. 22\**
- 7. Roll Over Beethoven** (2:21) Chuck Berry • *Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry. Original issue: Chess 1626. (P) 1986 MCA Records, Inc. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 29\**
- 8. Love Is Strange** (2:54) Mickey and Sylvia • *Music and lyrics by Mickey Baker and Ethel Smith. Original issue: Groove 0175. Love Is Strange by Mickey and Sylvia courtesy of RCA/Ariola International. No. 13\**
- 9. Be-Bop-a-Lula** (2:33) Gene Vincent • *Music and lyrics by Gene Vincent and Sheriff Tex Davis. Original issue: Capitol 3450. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 9\**
- 10. My Prayer** (2:43) The Platters • *Music by Georges Boulanger, lyrics by Jimmy Kennedy. Original issue: Mercury 70893. My Prayer by the Platters produced under license from PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\**
- 11. Honky Tonk (Part 2)** (2:32) Bill Doggett • *Music by Henry Glover, Bill Doggett, Billy Butler, Shape Sheppard and Clifford Scott. Original issue: King 4950. Courtesy of G.M.L., Inc. No. 2\**
- 12. Blueberry Hill** (2:18) Fats Domino • *Music and lyrics by Al Lewis, Larry Stock and Vincent Rose. Original issue: Imperial 5407. Courtesy of EMI America Records, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 4\**
- 13. Rip It Up** (2:20) Little Richard • *Music and lyrics by Robert Blackwell and John Marascalco. Original issue: Specialty 579. Courtesy of Specialty Records, Inc. No. 37\**
- 14. Stranded in the Jungle** (3:12) The Cadets • *Music and lyrics by Ernestine Smith and James Johnson. Original issue: Modern 994. Courtesy of Kent Music, Inc. No. 18\**
- 15. Treasure of Love** (2:07) Clyde McPhatter • *Music and lyrics by Lou Stallman and Joe Shapiro. Original issue: Atlantic 1092. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 22\**
- 16. Drown in My Own Tears** (3:17) Ray Charles • *Music and lyrics by Henry Glover. Original issue: Atlantic 1085. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 2 (R & B)\**
- 17. Young Love** (2:29) Sonny James • *Music and lyrics by Ric Carter and Carole Joyner. Original issue: Capitol 3602. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 7\**
- 18. Long Tall Sally** (2:07) Little Richard • *Music and lyrics by Enotris Johnson, Richard Penniman and Robert Blackwell. Original issue: Specialty 572. Courtesy of Specialty Records, Inc. No. 13\**
- 19. Why Do Fools Fall in Love** (2:15) Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers • *Music and lyrics by George Goldner and Frankie Lyman. Original issue: Gee 1002. Courtesy of Roulette Records, Inc. No. 7\**
- 20. Fever** (2:39) Little Willie John • *Music and lyrics by John Dawson and Eddie Cooley. Original issue: King 4935. Courtesy of G.M.L., Inc. No. 27\**
- 21. See You Later, Alligator** (2:44) Bill Haley and the Comets • *Music and lyrics by Robert Gaudry. Original issue: Decca 29791. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 6\**
- 22. Since I Met You Baby** (2:41) Ivory Joe Hunter • *Music and lyrics by Ivory Joe Hunter. Original issue: Atlantic 1111. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 12\**

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