

THE '50s: RAVE ON

TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

THE '50s: RAVE ON

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| <p>1 I Put a Spell on You
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Fats Domino (1959)</p> <p>3 My True Love Jack Scott (1958)</p> <p>4 Mary Lou Ronnie Hawkins (1959)</p> <p>5 The Angels Listened In
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The
ROCK'N'ROLL
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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-28
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- 1 I Put a Spell on You 2 I'm Gonna Be a Wheel Some Day 3 My True Love
4 Mary Lou 5 The Angels Listened In 6 For Your Love 7 Reet Petite
8 See Saw 9 Summertime, Summertime 10 Silhouettes 11 You Are My
Destiny 12 Somethin' Else 13 You Got What It Takes 14 The Happy
Organ 15 Almost Grown 16 Goodbye Baby 17 Long Lonely Nights
18 Itchy Twitchy Feeling 19 Queen of the Hop 20 Just Keep
It Up 21 Say Man 22 Tonite, Tonite

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*Screamin' Jay Hawkins,
master of the macabre*



THE '50s: RAVE ON

The first record he owned was by Enrico Caruso, and he once confessed, "Originally I came into this business to do opera." But fate dealt Jalacy Hawkins a wilder hand, and instead he was destined to be Screamin' Jay Hawkins, the man who introduced the theater of the macabre to rock 'n' roll. Hawkins had been beating around the minor leagues of R & B when he signed with OKeh and entered a New York studio. Some cheap muscatel leveled Hawkins' more dignified musical aspirations, and in his state of semiconsciousness, demons arose, gaining possession of his cavernous baritone. **I Put a Spell on You**, a sweet ballad Hawkins had written, was transformed into a masterpiece of hysteria.

With Hawkins' voice evoking the kind of voodoo of which rock 'n' roll was often accused, *I Put a Spell on You* became a scandalous event—it horrified decent folks, intimidated radio stations and forced the release of an edited version. Although the song proved his only commercial success (it sold without ever charting), Hawkins' notoriety was established, and he built his stage act around its nightmarish aura.

That show, replete with a coffin, cape, skull, snake, smoke and blood, became the mother lode to which the wild theatrics of Alice Cooper, Kiss and countless others can be traced. As his legend grew through the '50s, Hawkins' bizarre act became more elaborate. His sinister black wardrobe gave way to a flamingo-pink outfit with matching shoes and turban, and later to a zebra-skin tuxedo. He introduced a stuffed mascot, Mr. Gooch, and a cigarette-smoking skull named Henry. It was a hard act to follow, and at least one jealous headliner group, the Drifters, locked Hawkins in his coffin onstage.

Another of rock's more flamboyant performers, Bo Diddley, turned his electric guitar into an extension of his colorful stage persona, making the instrument one of rock's central theatrical devices. Diddley employed a host of custom-made guitars (rectangular, oblong and star-shaped, some covered with fur, others bound in leather), and he played them behind his back and with his teeth, talked to them and occasionally ignited one. **Say Man** emerged from a studio break when Diddley and his maracas player, Jerome Green, were fooling around, trading insults about their girlfriends. An engineer taped their comic repartee, and, with some neat editing and overdubs, a hit was born.

While Screamin' Jay Hawkins and Bo Diddley conjured the surreal and the comic onstage, Jackie Wilson kindled sexual hysteria. Capable of breathtaking splits, spins and knee drops, Wilson was a dazzling, athletic performer possessing good looks and an operatic voice. More than once, he provoked near-riots by leaping into the arms of his female admirers. In **Reet Petite**, Wilson romped through a frantic rocker in the exuberant style of Elvis Presley.

Reet Petite was the first hit not only for Wilson but also for a struggling songwriter named Berry Gordy Jr. In 1958, Gordy branched into independent production for United Artists, writing and producing a string of records for fellow Detroiters Marv Johnson. (Later, in the mid-'60s, Gordy would sign Johnson to his Motown label.) Another Detroit native, Dave "Baby" Cortez, created one of the era's unusual instrumental hits with **The Happy Organ**. Originally titled *The Dog and the Cat*, the song went to the top of the charts when Cortez decided to scrap his vocals and play the melody on his Hammond organ instead.

For the young male, life, or at least the fantasy of life, consisted of two things—girls and cars. Chuck Berry, the poet laureate of American adolescence, handled these topics with characteristic wit in numerous songs, one of the best being **Almost Grown**. Backed by the Moonglows, Berry keeps his eyes on the girl and the car while telling the adult world to get off his back. Eddie Cochran was similarly obsessed in **Somethin' Else**, co-written with his girlfriend, Sharon Sheeley. Though in the song Cochran has to settle for a '41 Ford, not the '59 convertible of his dreams, he does land the date.

While the songs of Berry and Cochran portrayed adolescent life with wit and empathy, Bobby Darin's *Spish Splash* and **Queen of the Hop** were the product of a record industry groping for the teen-age dollar. Unbeknownst to many, Darin actually scored a third hit between his two 1958 recordings. Darin had released several flops for Atlantic in 1957 when, anticipating that his contract would be dropped, he recorded *Early in the Morning* for Brunswick under the name the Ding Dongs. When *Spish Splash* charted, Atlantic re-signed Darin and released his *Early in the Morning* under the name the Rinky Dinks. The record outsold a cover version by Buddy Holly.

Like Darin, Paul Anka had his eyes set on the entertainment world even while serving a stint as a teen idol. The precocious Canadian was only 16 when he recorded **You Are My Destiny**, a superb slice of romantic agony backed by Don Costa's big-band orchestration. It was the second hit for Anka, who also wrote the theme for *The Tonight Show*, as well as songs for artists as dissimilar as Buddy Holly (*It Doesn't Matter Anymore*) and

*A young and cocksure
Eddie Cochran defined the
rebellion of rockabilly.*





Dave "Baby" Cortez

Frank Sinatra (*My Way*).

Over the years, Canada produced a host of notable pop, rock and folk artists, including Jack Scott, who like Elvis Presley proved equally adept with up-tempo rock 'n' roll and dramatic ballads. Scott wrote and produced a string of late-'50s songs for the Carlton label that distinctively melded country, rockabilly and doo-wop (courtesy of his backup singers, the Chantones). Both *My True Love* and *Goodbye Baby* were characteristic of Scott's ability to create hypnotic musical settings for his warm baritone voice.

Arkansas-born Ronnie Hawkins took his band to Toronto in 1958 (at Conway Twitty's suggestion) and became a legend in Canada, enjoying considerable popularity while inspiring a generation of nascent Canadian rockers. In the early '60s, Hawkins employed four Canadians—Robbie Robertson, Rick Danko, Richard Manuel and Garth Hudson—who would later form the Band with another Hawkins alumnus, drummer Levon Helm. Hawkins' two biggest domestic hits were *Forty Days* (a rewrite of Chuck Berry's *Thirty Days*) and *Mary Lou*, which featured saxophone ace Sam "the Man" Taylor.

It was also a Canadian vocal group, the Crew Cuts, who scored one of the first rock 'n' roll chart toppers with a cover of the Chords' *Sh-Boom*. Inspired by their fellow countrymen, the Diamonds built a career out of covers of R & B songs. In the case of *Silhouettes*, the Diamonds' version was outclassed and outsold by the Rays' original. Although the Mello-Kings, another white vocal group, had little commercial appeal, *Tonite, Tonite* sold steadily for years after its initial release in 1957, achieving classic status among doo-wop aficionados.



The Jamies

Long Lonely Nights, a romantic vocal-group classic by Lee Andrews and the Hearts, featured Andrews' note-bending lead tenor. It was originally released on a small Philadelphia label, Mainline, co-owned by popular DJ Jocko Henderson. When Mainline learned that Clyde McPhatter was preparing a cover version for Atlantic, the company swung a deal with Chess for national distribution of the Hearts' recording.

In addition to his many recordings with the Dominoes and the Drifters, and as a solo artist, Clyde McPhatter influenced a whole generation of black vocalists, including Dee Clark, whose **Just Keep It Up** is clearly indebted to McPhatter's excited vocal style. Bobby Hendricks was one of the many singers who succeeded McPhatter as lead vocalist for the Drifters, scoring a hit with them in 1958 with *Drip Drop*. At the same time, Hendricks had his biggest solo record with the frivolous **Itchy Twitchy Feeling**, which employed the Coasters as backup. His only other success came in 1960. *Psycho*, a strange novelty written by McPhatter, features Hendricks performing a bizarre conversation between a psychotic patient and his psychiatrist.

—Joe Sasfy

Jack Scott, Canada's Elvis Presley



DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. I Put a Spell on You** Screamin' Jay Hawkins • Music and lyrics by Jay Hawkins. OKeh 7072 (1956). Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS, Inc. Did not chart.
- 2. I'm Gonna Be a Wheel Some Day** Fats Domino • Music and lyrics by Dave Bartholomew, Roy Hayes and Antoine Domino Imperial 5606 (1959). Courtesy of EMI, a division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets. No. 17*
- 3. My True Love** Jack Scott • Music and lyrics by Jack Scott Scafione. Carlton 462 (1958). Courtesy of Jack Scott. No. 3*
- 4. Mary Lou** Ronnie Hawkins • Music and lyrics by Roy Hawkins and Jacqueline Magill. Roulette 4177 (1959). Produced under license from Roulette Records, a division of ABZ Music Corp. No. 26*
- 5. The Angels Listened In** The Crests • Music and lyrics by Billy Dawn Smith and Sid Faust. Coed 515 (1959). Courtesy of Janus Records, Inc. No. 22*
- 6. For Your Love** Ed Townsend • Music and lyrics by Ed Townsend. Capitol 3926 (1958). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets. No. 15*
- 7. Reet Petite (The Finest Girl You Ever Want to Meet)** Jackie Wilson • Music and lyrics by Tyrann Corbin and Berry Gordy Jr. Brunswick 55024 (1957). Courtesy of Brunswick Records, under license from CBS Special Products. No. 62*
- 8. See Saw** The Moonglows • Music and lyrics by Roquel Davis, Charles Sutton and Harry Pratt. Chess 1629 (1956). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 28*
- 9. Summertime, Summertime** The James • Music and lyrics by Tom Jameson and Sherm Feller. Epic 9281 (1958). Produced under license from CBS Special Products. No. 26*
- 10. Silhouettes** The Diamonds • Music and lyrics by Frank C. Stay Jr. and Bob Crowe. Mercury 71197 (1957). Courtesy of PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 60*
- 11. You Are My Destiny** Paul Anka • Music and lyrics by Paul Anka. ABC-Paramount 9886 (1958). Courtesy of Paul Anka. No. 7*
- 12. Somethin' Else** Eddie Cochran • Music and lyrics by Sharon Sheeley and Eddie Cochran. Liberty 55203 (1959). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 58*
- 13. You Got What It Takes** Marv Johnson • Music and lyrics by Berry Gordy Jr., Gaven Gordy and Tyrann Carlo. United Artists 185 (1959). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 10*
- 14. The Happy Organ** Dave "Baby" Cortez • Music by James Ken Wood, David Clooney and James Kriegermann. Clock 1089 (1959). Courtesy of Sid Talmadge. No. 1*
- 15. Almost Grown** Chuck Berry • Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry. Chess 1722 (1959). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 32*
- 16. Goodbye Baby** Jack Scott • Music and lyrics by Jack Scott Scafione. Carlton 493 (1958). Courtesy of Jack Scott. No. 8*
- 17. Long Lonely Nights** Lee Andrews and the Hearts • Music and lyrics by Lee Andrews, Bernice Davis, Douglas Henderson and Mimi Uman. Chess 1665 (1957). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 45*
- 18. Itchy Twitchy Feeling** Bobby Hendricks • Music and lyrics by Jimmy Oliver. Sue 706 (1958). Courtesy of Murray Sporn. No. 25*
- 19. Queen of the Hop** Bobby Darin • Music and lyrics by Woody Harris and Bobby Darin. Atco 6127 (1958). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 9*
- 20. Just Keep It Up (And See What Happens)** Deo Clark • Music and lyrics by Otis Blackwell. Abner 1026 (1959). Courtesy of Vee-Jay Records. No. 18*
- 21. Say Man** Bo Diddley • Music and lyrics by Eltus McDaniel. Checker 931 (1959). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 20*
- 22. Tonight, Tonight** The Mello-Kings • Music and lyrics by Billy Myles. Herald 502 (1957). Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 77*

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- 22 **Tonite, Tonite** The Mello-Kings (1957)



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