

# ROOTS OF ROCK: 1945-1956



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

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- 1 **Good Rockin' Tonight** Wynonie Harris (1948)
- 2 **Sixty-Minute Man** The Dominoes (1951)
- 3 **Caldonia** Louis Jordan (1945)
- 4 **The Hucklebuck** Paul Williams (1949)
- 5 **Rocket "88"**  
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- 18 **Shake a Hand** Faye Adams (1953)
- 19 **Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)**  
Gene and Eunice (1955)
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Ruth Brown (1953)
- 21 **Hallelujah, I Love Her So** Ray Charles (1956)
- 22 **Crying in the Chapel** The Orioles (1953)

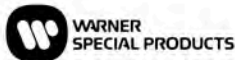
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*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
•ERA•

**ROOTS OF ROCK: 1945-1956**

COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-30  
OPCD-2570

TIME  
**LIFE**  
MUSIC

- 1 Good Rockin' Tonight 2 Sixty-Minute Man 3 Caldonia 4 The Hucklebuck 5 Rocket "88" 6 Lawdy Miss Clawdy 7 Hound Dog  
8 Chicken Shack Boogie 9 Good Lovin' 10 The Fat Man 11 The Things That I Used to Do 12 Money Honey 13 Crazy, Man, Crazy 14 Ling, Ting, Tong 15 I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man 16 Honey Hush 17 Smokey Joe's Cafe 18 Shake a Hand 19 Ko Ko Mo 20 Mama 21 Hallelujah, I Love Her So 22 Crying in the Chapel

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*Joe Turner, the Boss of the Blues*



## ROOTS OF ROCK: 1945-1956

In 1951, disc jockey Alan Freed began calling his Cleveland radio show *Moondog's Rock and Roll Dance Party*. The music that Freed played was known in the record business as rhythm and blues, or R & B, a term devised in 1949 to refer to music made and consumed primarily by black Americans. R & B had been thriving for years, though most white adults seemed all but unaware of it, content with the pop music mainstream represented by the major labels—Columbia, Decca, RCA and Mercury.

Freed's audience was young and, more important, racially mixed. For white teenagers, R & B was new, fascinating and illicit. The fact that their parents were somewhat threatened by this music only added to its appeal. By 1954, Freed's show had helped to transform the sexual colloquialism "rock 'n' roll" into a ubiquitous musical noun and, thus, to grant R & B an aura of acceptability.

In truth, most of the musical elements of this new craze had already been developed in postwar R & B. Louis Jordan, a singer and alto saxophonist who came from Chick Webb's pre-World War II big band (where he shared vocal duties with Ella Fitzgerald), became the best-selling black artist of the '40s. Jordan was unique in R & B; the hip, sassy lyrics and contagious jump blues of *Caldonia*, *Saturday Night Fish Fry* and *Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens* were so broadly appealing that Jordan and his Tympany Five achieved crossover success with the white audience. Jordan's comic verve and showmanship allowed him to satisfy white and black tastes much as Chuck Berry and Little Richard did a decade later.

Outside of Jordan's recordings, few R & B releases managed to achieve pop chart status before 1954. An exception was the Dominoes' *Sixty-Minute Man*, a 1951 hit featuring the bass voice of Bill Brown. While the sexual imagery of its lyrics went well beyond pop music's proprieties

("fifteen minutes of kissin', fifteen minutes of teasin', fifteen minutes of squeezin', and fifteen minutes of blowin' my top"), the song's good humor helped make it a huge hit. Shouting "Don't stop!" throughout the record was a young Clyde McPhatter, who would leave the Dominoes in 1953 to form the Drifters.

One other early crossover song was *Crying in the Chapel* by the Orioles. This Baltimore quartet began in the '40s in the wake of pioneering vocal groups such as the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers, and provided an important transition to the vocal groups of the rock 'n' roll era, such as the Clovers and the Drifters. The group's forte was sweet ballads featuring the pure tenor voice of Sonny Til. Oddly enough, *Crying in the Chapel* was a cover of a country song recorded by both Darrell Glenn and Rex Allen.

The Clovers and the Drifters were recorded by Atlantic Records, at that time the most famous of the small independent record companies whose fresh sounds and savvy marketing all but froze the long-established major labels out of the early stages of the rock 'n' roll boom. Beginning in 1951, the Clovers of Washington, D.C., parlayed a hard-rocking, bluesy vocal-group style into a long series of R & B hits. Both the Clovers' *Good Lovin'* and the Drifters' *Money Honey* were backed by Atlantic's outstanding session players—pianist Van Walls, guitarist Mickey Baker and saxophonist Sam Taylor. *Money Honey* was the Drifters' first release, and turned them and their gospel-trained lead singer, Clyde McPhatter, into major R & B stars.

Like their fellow avian group the Orioles, Los Angeles' Robins went way back, with hits as early as 1950. By the time they immortalized *Smokey Joe's Cafe* in 1955, though, they had been transformed by songwriter-producers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Impressed with the sound and sales of the original Spark label release of *Smokey*

*Joe's Cafe*, Atlantic invited Leiber, Stoller and the Robins to move to New York to record for Atlantic's Atco subsidiary. Two members remained in Los Angeles to form a different Robins group, while Carl Gardner and Bobby Nunn followed Leiber and Stoller to New York to become kingpins among doo-wop's most famous clowns, the Coasters.

Another Atlantic artist, Joe Turner, shouted the blues for more than 50 years and never had to change his style. Whatever worked when he sang with Count Basie and Pete Johnson in the seething Kansas City jazz scene of the '30s worked just as well when he sang *Shake, Rattle and Roll* and *Corrine Corrina* in the '50s. Unlike his other Atlantic songs, **Honey Hush** was recorded in New Orleans with the cream of the Crescent City's musicians, including Lee Allen, Red Tyler and Fats Domino. A few years earlier, Domino had debuted on vinyl with **The Fat Man**, an adaptation of *Junker's Blues* animated by Domino's boogie-woogie piano and mock muted-trumpet solo.

Atlantic's Ruth Brown was the No. 1 female R & B star of the '50s. Brown got her nickname in 1950 at Philadelphia's Earl Theater when Frankie Laine, known as "Mr. Rhythm," introduced her as "Miss Rhythm." Her most famous song, **Mama (He Treats Your Daughter Mean)**, created such a sensation that Brown often performed it as many as eight times before the audience was satisfied. Brown's hit occupied the top of the R & B charts for five weeks, but that reign ended when Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton's **Hound Dog** took over. The song, another Leiber-Stoller composition, was performed by Johnny Otis' band and featured the stinging guitar work of Pete Lewis. *Hound Dog* was such a phenomenon that it spawned many C & W cover versions, as well as a great answer record, Rufus Thomas' *Bear Cat*, recorded for Sam Phillips' Sun label.

Before Phillips launched Sun, he worked as an independent producer, leasing songs to other labels. The most important of these was Jackie Brenston's **Rocket "88,"** a rocking tribute to a classic Olds, played by Ike Turner's



Antoine Domino was nicknamed "Fats" after his first single, *The Fat Man*.



fan, became a hit in 1950.

Kings of Rhythm. (Brenston was the group's sax player and occasional vocalist.) The income from *Rocket "88,"* a No. 1 R & B record, helped Sam Phillips establish his label in Memphis the following year.

It was at Sun that the career of Elvis Presley began. Elvis' second Sun single was **Good Rockin' Tonight**, originally written and recorded by blues shouter Roy Brown in 1948. The most successful version of *Good Rockin' Tonight*, however, came from Wynonie Harris, a slick-dressing, good-looking blues singer whose sexual bravado epitomized the power of early R & B.

At RCA, Elvis continued to record important R & B songs, including five others from this collection: *Hound Dog*, *Money Honey*, *Crying in the Chapel*, **Shake a Hand** and **Lawdy Miss Clawdy**. *Lawdy Miss Clawdy* was the first hit for New Orleans singer Lloyd Price, who was signed by Los Angeles' Specialty Records in 1952 when the label went to New Orleans in search of talent. Two years later, Specialty would achieve No. 1 R & B status with another artist and recording from New Orleans, Guitar Slim and his **Things That I Used To Do**. Slim's gospel-based delivery was reinforced by Ray Charles' arrangement and piano work. (Listen for Ray's shout at the very end.) Charles went on, of course, to record a host of gospel-style R & B hits himself, including **Hallelujah, I Love Her So**, which sounded like it had sprung right out of the church. Charles' ability to wed the excitement of gospel to the sensuality of the blues produced a partnership that later was designated "soul."

Bill Haley's background was almost as far removed from the prerock mainstream as that of most R & B artists of the early '50s. Haley paid his dues as a hillbilly singer in Pennsylvania, where he performed with his band, the Four Aces of Western Swing. By 1950, Haley and his Comets (formerly the Saddlemen) began to play their country boogie louder and harder than anyone else around, gradually winning some regional fame with an early cover of Jackie

Brenston's *Rocket "88"* for Essex Records, a small Philadelphia label. Haley's breakthrough came in 1953 with **Crazy, Man, Crazy**. The record may not have been R & B but drew on its liberated energy and big beat. Let's just call it rock 'n' roll.

—Barry Hansen

*With his jump blues and hip lyrics, Louis Jordan became the best-selling black artist of the '40s.*





## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Good Rockin' Tonight** Wynonie Harris • *Music and lyrics by Roy Brown. King 4210 (1948). Courtesy of Gusto Records, No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 2. Sixty-Minute Man** The Dominoes • *Music and lyrics by William Ward and Rose Marks. Federal 12022 (1951). Courtesy of Gusto Records, No. 17\**
- 3. Caldonia** Louis Jordan • *Music and lyrics by Fleece Moore. Decca 8670 (1945). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 6\**
- 4. The Hucklebuck** Paul Williams • *Music by Andy Gibson, lyrics by Roy Alfred. Savoy 683 (1949). Courtesy of SJ Records, Inc. (Savoy Jazz), No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 5. Rocket "88"** Jackie Brenston and His Delta Kings • *Music and lyrics by Jackie Brenston. Chess 1458 (1951). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 6. Lawdy Miss Clawdy** Lloyd Price • *Music and lyrics by Lloyd Price. Specialty 428 (1952). Courtesy of Specialty Records, No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 7. Hound Dog** Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton • *Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Peacock 1612 (1953). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 8. Chicken Shack Boogie** Amos Milburn • *Music and lyrics by Amos Milburn and L. A. Cullum. Aladdin 3014 (1948). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets, No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 9. Good Lovin'** The Clovers • *Music and lyrics by Leroy Kirkland, Danny Taylor and Ahmet Ertegun. Atlantic 1000 (1953). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 2 (R & B)\**
- 10. The Fat Man** Fats Domino • *Music by Daze Bartholomew, lyrics by Antoine Domino. Imperial 5058 (1950). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 2 (R & B)\**
- 11. The Things That I Used to Do** Guitar Slim • *Music and lyrics by Eddie Jones. Specialty 482 (1954). Courtesy of Specialty Records, No. 23\**
- 12. Money Honey** Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters • *Music and lyrics by Jesse Stone. Atlantic 1006 (1953). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 1 (R & B)\**
- 13. Crazy, Man, Crazy** Bill Haley and the Comets • *Music and lyrics by Bill Haley. Essex 321 (1953). Courtesy of Al Sherman International, Inc. No. 12\**
- 14. Ling, Ting, Tong** The Five Keys • *Music and lyrics by Mable Godwin. Capitol 2945 (1954). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets, No. 28\**
- 15. I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man** Muddy Waters • *Music and lyrics by Willie Dixon. Chess 1560 (1954). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 3 (R & B)\**
- 16. Honey Hush** Joe Turner • *Music and lyrics by Joe Turner. Atlantic 1001 (1953). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 23\**
- 17. Smokey Joe's Cafe** The Robins • *Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. Atco 6059 (1955). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 79\**
- 18. Shake a Hand** Faye Adams • *Music and lyrics by Joe Morris. Herald 416 (1953). Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 22\**
- 19. Ko Ko Mo (I Love You So)** Gene and Eunice • *Music and lyrics by Forest Wilson, Jake Porter and Eunice Levy. Aladdin 3276 (1955). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets, No. 6 (R & B)\**
- 20. Mama (He Treats Your Daughter Mean)** Ruth Brown • *Music and lyrics by Johnny Wallace, Herbert J. Lance and Charles Singleton. Atlantic 986 (1953). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 23\**
- 21. Hallelujah, I Love Her So** Ray Charles • *Music and lyrics by Ray Charles. Atlantic 1096 (1956). Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 5 (R & B)\**
- 22. Crying in the Chapel** The Orioles • *Music and lyrics by Arnie Glenn. Jubilee 5122 (1953). Produced under license from Roulette Records, a Division of ABZ Music Corp. No. 11\**

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**Chairman:** Paul R. Stewart  
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**Executive Producer:** Charles McCardell  
**Recording Producers:** Joe Sasyf, Steve Carr  
**Creative Director:** Don Sheldon  
**Art Director:** Robin Bray  
**Associate Producer:** Brian Miller  
**Assistant Producer:** Robert Hull  
**Art Studio:** Nina Bridges  
**Chief Financial Officer:** Eric R. Eaton  
**Production Manager:** Karen Hill

**Roots of Rock: 1945-1956** was produced by Time-Life Music in cooperation with Warner Special Products. Digitally remastered at Hit and Run Studios, Rockville, Md.

**The Author:** Barry Hansen (*Dr. Demento*) has compiled and annotated reissue albums for Specialty, Atlantic and Rhino records. Since 1970 he has hosted *The Dr. Demento Show*, a weekly program of "mad music and crazy comedy" heard nationwide on the Westwood One Radio Network.

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