

RED-HOT ROCKABILLY



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

RED-HOT ROCKABILLY

- 1 **Red Hot** Billy Lee Riley
- 2 **Fujiyama Mama** Wanda Jackson
- 3 **The Way I Walk** Jack Scott
- 4 **The Train Kept A-Rollin'**
The Johnny Burnette Trio
- 5 **Dance to the Bop** Gene Vincent
- 6 **Rock Around with Ollie Vee** Buddy Holly
- 7 **Break-Up** Jerry Lee Lewis
- 8 **Hoy, Hoy** The Collins Kids
- 9 **Bertha Lou** Clint Miller
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- 11 **One Hand Loose** Charlie Feathers
- 12 **Tear It Up** The Johnny Burnette Trio
- 13 **Ubangi Stomp** Warren Smith
- 14 **Honey, Don't!** Carl Perkins
- 15 **Race with the Devil** Gene Vincent
- 16 **Go! Go! Go!** Roy Orbison
- 17 **Jeannie Jeannie Jeannie** Eddie Cochran
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- 22 **Bop-a-Lena** Ronnie Self
- 23 **Red Cadillac and a Black Mustache**
Bob Luman

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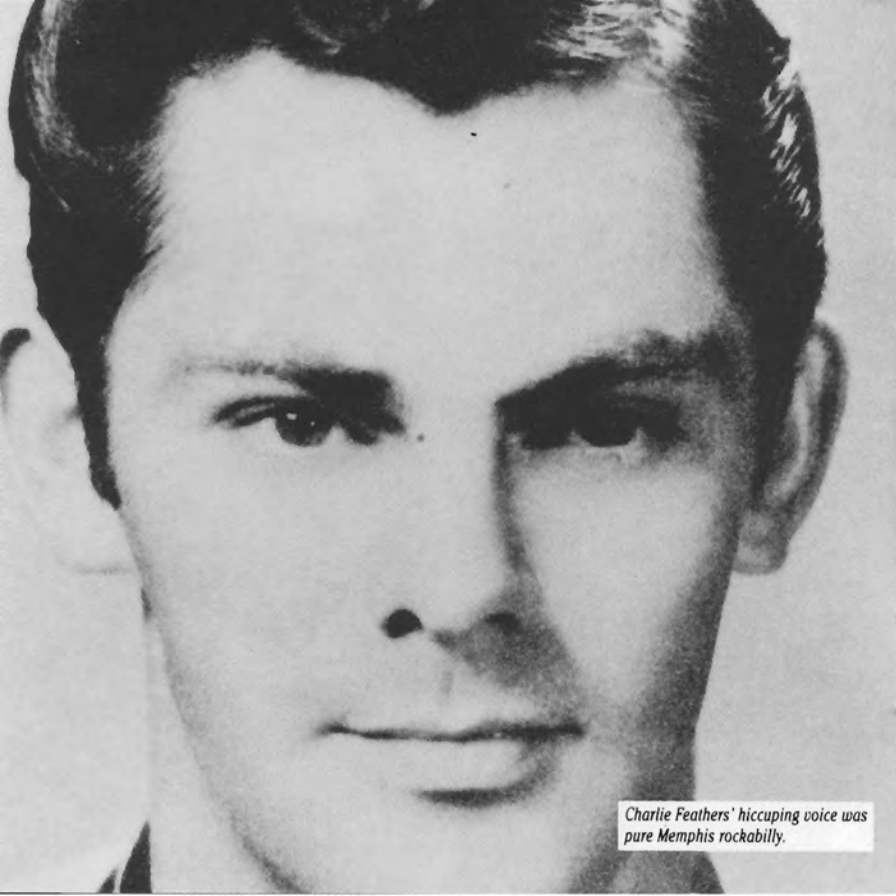
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COMPACT
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DIGITAL AUDIO

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Don't! 15 Race with the Devil 16 Go! Go! Go! 17 Jeannie
Jeannie Jeannie 18 Hot Rod Man 19 Flyin' Saucers Rock
'n' Roll 20 Leroy 21 Forty Days 22 Bop-a-Lena
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Charlie Feathers' hiccuping voice was pure Memphis rockabilly.

RED-HOT ROCKABILLY

Rockabilly, for all its musical antecedents, was really born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1954. The two main progenitors were a 19-year-old truckdriver who claimed, "I don't sound like nobody," and a 29-year-old record company owner who had been heard speculating, "If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a billion dollars." In early July, 1954, Sun Records owner Sam Phillips called the truckdriver, Elvis Presley, along with guitarist Scotty Moore and bassist Bill Black, into his small studio on Union Avenue. A week later, they emerged with Elvis' first single, containing versions of Arthur Crudup's blues *That's All Right* and Bill Monroe's bluegrass classic, *Blue Moon of Kentucky*.

Phillips was looking for a new sound, but what he created with Elvis, Scotty and Bill was such a startling and innovative synthesis of blues and up-tempo country styles that, in retrospect, it has come to represent rock 'n' roll's primordial moment. Elvis' first single marked the birth of an authentic white rock 'n' roll style called rockabilly. By mid-1955, Elvis had released four more Sun singles and toured the Deep South extensively, bringing the rockabilly sound to a whole generation of young fans and musicians.

One reason Sam Phillips was willing to sell Presley's contract to RCA in November of 1955 was his confidence that he had other potential rockabilly stars in the wings. Chief among them was Carl Perkins, who was called into the Sun studio a month after Presley's departure. "We had been playing country music," Perkins has recalled, "because Sam did not want two artists doing colored music like Elvis, but at this session he said to go right ahead and rock." Perkins did rock, and the results were the epochal *Blue Suede Shoes* and *Honey, Don't!*, both Perkins' compositions featuring hot guitar work by "the Rockin' Guitar Man," as he was known.

The classic Sun singles of Presley and Perkins are synon-

ymous with the Sun sound, a production style characterized by echo-laden vocals, a slapped bass fiddle and a spontaneous "live" feel. The excitement captured in these singles drew hillbilly singers from all over the South to Memphis and Sun Records. Roy Orbison made the long trip from West Texas to cut his first hit, *Goby Dooby*, and its flip side, **Go! Go! Go!**, a song he claimed to have written as a parody of rock 'n' roll. Like so many others, Mississippi-born Warren Smith was a country artist who caught the rockabilly fever at Sun, singing comic gems such as **Ubangl Stomp** and *Miss Froggie*.

One of Sun's greatest rockabillys was Billy Lee Riley, a multi-instrumentalist who had the looks, talent and energy to reach stardom but never did. Riley achieved some success in the South with **Flyin' Saucers Rock 'n' Roll**, released under the name "Billy Lee Riley and His Little Green Men," a group of Sun session players known for their green suits and wild onstage performances. Riley's most famous recording was his raw-throated version of Billy Emerson's blues **Red Hot**, featuring Jerry Lee Lewis on piano and Ace Cannon on sax.

Riley played on many Sun recordings including guitar on Jerry Lee Lewis' **Break-Up**, written by another Sun legend, Charlie Rich. The frenetic rock 'n' roll heard on *Break-Up*, as well as on other Lewis recordings, was derived from the hillbilly boogie style that was an immediate precursor of rockabilly. Some of the best hillbilly boogie of the '50s was the work of Roy "the Hound" Hall, a Nashville-based pianist who co-authored Lewis' biggest hit, **Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On**, under the name Sunny David. In 1955, Lewis played a few weeks at Hall's Nashville honky-tonk, the Music Box, undoubtedly picking up a few tricks from "the Hound." Released in late 1955, Hall's version of *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On* was actually preceded by Big Maybelle's R & B version for OKeh.

Memphis' Johnny Burnette and the Rock 'n' Roll Trio ignored Sun Records, traveling instead to New York City where their performances on TV's *Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour* earned them a contract with Coral. The trio issued some of the wildest rockabilly records of the era, especially **Tear It Up** and their reworking of Tiny Bradshaw's jump blues **The Train Kept A-Rollin'**. The distorted sound of the guitar on the latter cut was actually created through a bit of serendipity. Guitarist Paul Burlison accidentally dropped his amplifier, which loosened a tube and produced a primitive fuzz tone. Though the trio never achieved a commercial breakthrough, both Johnny and Dorsey Burnette became popular on the West Coast as writers and singers in the early '60s.

Charlie Feathers, one of rockabilly's most distinctive artists, recorded for two Memphis labels, Sun and Meteor, before signing with the Cincinnati-based King label. Liberally employing his high-pitched hiccup, Feathers recorded four singles for King (including **One Hand Loose**), each considered as characteristic of pure Memphis rockabilly as the best Sun recordings.

Because of their raw sound and their limited distribution, most rockabilly records did not sell well outside the South. One exception was Ronnie Self's relentless **Bop-a-Lena**, a record indebted to rockabilly and Little Richard that managed to chart nationally. A talented rockabilly act on the Columbia label, the Collins Kids, never charted despite achieving popularity on the West Coast through their scintillating performances on the *Town Hall Party* TV show. Larry Collins was only 12 and Lorrie 15 when the brother-sister duo began turning out playful records such as **Hoy, Hoy**. Larry later co-authored two big country hits, *Delta Dawn* (1972) and *You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma* (1981).

Of all the early styles of rock 'n' roll, none glorified the lead guitar player as much as rockabilly did. Some of rockabilly's legends—Carl Perkins, Buddy Holly and Eddie





From Norfolk, Virginia, the lean, tough Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps

Cochran—were superb rock guitarists. It is Cochran and his semi-acoustic Gretsch that blaze a path through the middle of **Jeannie Jeannie Jeannie**. Other guitarists such as Scotty Moore, James Burton, Paul Burlison, Grady Martin and Hank Garland may only have been sidemen or session players, but all have earned reverence from rockabilly fans for their blistering leads. Moore's playing on Elvis' Sun singles was so influential that it was copied on hundreds of rockabilly records, including Buddy Holly's **Rock Around with Ollie Vee**. In 1956, Holly signed to Decca and traveled to Nashville, recording this song with a band (the guitarist was Sonny Curtis) hastily assembled in his hometown of Lubbock, Texas.

One of the most sophisticated rockabilly guitarists was "Galloping" Cliff Gallup, who played on Gene Vincent's earliest recordings, including **Race with the Devil**, where he played his characteristic jazzy solo. The recordings of rockabilly's greatest female vocalist, Wanda Jackson, were ignited by the feverish playing of West Coast guitarists such as Joe Maphis, Billy Strange, Buck Owens, Roy Clark and Merle Travis on **FuJlyama Mama**. (This song had originally been recorded by R & B vocalist Anisteen Allen.) Despite some questionable references to Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the atomic bomb, Jackson's version became a hit in Japan, and she toured there in 1958.

As a popular music phenomenon, rockabilly expired by the end of the '50s. Yet it had already become a part of rock mythology, particularly in England where romanticized images of pompadoured hillbilly hepcats cruising in pink Cadillacs prospered. Early in their career, the Beatles fell in love with rockabilly's sound and image, and in 1965 the Yardbirds journeyed to the Sun studio to record a faithful, albeit deranged, version of the Burnette Trio's *The Train Kept A-Rollin'*. In America, only Creedence Clearwater Revival succeeded in reviving rockabilly in a commercial fashion.

In the late '70s, however, rockabilly enjoyed a resur-

gence in popularity, benefiting from punk rock's emphasis on raw primitivism. Spurred by a fascination with the sounds of rockabilly's original practitioners, neo-rockabilly bands sprang up on both sides of the Atlantic. Some acts, such as Dave Edmunds, Robert Gordon, the Blasters and especially the Stray Cats, achieved international acclaim. Just as in the '50s, some of the finest contemporary rockabilly was issued by small labels such as Ripsaw Records (based in Easton, Pennsylvania). Ripsaw released two singles by Virginia rockabilly Tex Rubinowitz, whose **Hot Rod Man** remains one of the rockabilly revival's most exhilarating and authentic moments. Like rockabilly itself, "the hot rod man don't ever move slow."

—Joe Sasy

Larry and Lorrie, the Collins Kids



DISCOGRAPHY

1. **Red Hot** Billy Lee Riley • Music and lyrics by Billy Emerson. Sun 277 (1957). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.
2. **Fuilyama Mama** Wanda Jackson • Music and lyrics by Earl Burrous. Capitol 3843 (1957). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.
3. **The Way I Walk** Jack Scott • Music and lyrics by Jack Scott. Carlton 514 (1959). Courtesy of Jack Scott.
4. **The Train Kept A-Rollin'** The Johnny Burnette Trio • Music and lyrics by Tiny Bradshaw, Lois Mann and Howie Kay. Coral 61719 (1956). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.
5. **Dance to the Bop** Gene Vincent • Music and lyrics by Floyd Edge. Capitol 3839 (1957). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.
6. **Rock Around with Ollie Vee** Buddy Holly • Music and lyrics by Sonny Curtis. Decca 30434 (1957). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.
7. **Break-Up** Jerry Lee Lewis • Music and lyrics by Charlie Rich. Sun 303 (1958). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.
8. **Hoy, Hoy** The Collins Kids • Music and lyrics by Johnny Jones. Columbia 41087 (1958). Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Division of CBS Records, a Service of CBS Inc.
9. **Bertha Lou** Clint Miller • Music and lyrics by John Marascalco. ABC-Paramount 9878 (1958). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.
10. **Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On** Roy Hall • Music and lyrics by Dave Williams and Sunny David. Decca 29697 (1955). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.
11. **One Hand Loose** Charlie Feathers • Music and lyrics by Charlie Feathers, Jerry Huffman and Joe Chastain. King 4997 (1956). Courtesy of Gusto Records.
12. **Tear It Up** The Johnny Burnette Trio • Music and lyrics by Johnny Burnette, Dorsey Burnette and Paul Burlison. Coral 61651 (1956). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc.
13. **Ubangi Stomp** Warren Smith • Music and lyrics by Charles Underwood. Sun 250 (1956). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.
14. **Honey, Don't!** Carl Perkins • Music and lyrics by Carl Perkins. Sun 234 (1956). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.
15. **Race with the Devil** Gene Vincent • Music and lyrics by Tex Davis and Gene Vincent. Capitol 3530 (1956). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.
16. **Gol Gol Gol** Roy Orbison • Music and lyrics by Roy Orbison. Sun 242 (1956). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.
17. **Jeannie Jeannie Jeannie** Eddie Cochran • Music and lyrics by George Motola and Rickie Page. Liberty 55123 (1958). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.
18. **Hot Rod Man** Tex Rubinoiwitz • Music and lyrics by Tex Rubinoiwitz. Ripsaw 214 (1979). Under license from No Club Productions.
19. **Flyin' Saucers Rock 'n' Roll** Billy Lee Riley • Music and lyrics by Roy Scott. Sun 260 (1957). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation.
20. **Leroy** Jack Scott • Music and lyrics by Giuseppe Perotti and Jack Scott. Carlton 462 (1958). Courtesy of Jack Scott.
21. **Forty Days** Ronnie Hawkins • Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry. Roulette 4154 (1959). Licensed from Rhino Records, Inc.
22. **Bop-a-Lena** Ronnie Sell • Music and lyrics by Melvin Tillis and Webb Pierce. Columbia 41101 (1958). Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Division of CBS Records, a Service of CBS Inc.
23. **Red Cadillac and a Black Mustache** Bob Luman • Music and lyrics by W. Thompson and Lilly May. Imperial 8311 (1957). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets.

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NOTES INSIDE

Chairman: Paul R. Stewart

President: John Hall

Vice President: Fernando Pargas

Executive Producer: Charles McCardell

Recording Producers: Joe Sasfy, Steve Carr

Creative Director: Don Sheldon

Art Director: Robin Bray

Associate Producers: Robert Hull, Brian Miller

Series Consultant: Joe Sasfy

Art Studio: Nina Bridges

Chief Financial Officer: Eric R. Eaton

Production Manager: Karen Hill

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