

# THE '50s: LAST DANCE



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

Digital Remaster

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- 1 **Back in the U.S.A.** Chuck Berry (1959)
- 2 **Raw-Hide**  
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- 21 **So Tough** The Original Casuals (1958)
- 22 **I'll Be Home** The Flamingos (1956)

## SEE PROGRAM NOTES INSIDE

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*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
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**THE '50s: LAST DANCE**

COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-33 TIME  
OPCD-2572  
MUSIC

- 1 Back in the U.S.A. 2 Raw-Hide 3 Be My Guest 4 It's All in the Game  
5 I Met Him on a Sunday 6 True Love Ways 7 Mona Lisa 8 Bongo  
Rock 9 Matilda 10 The Diary 11 Close Your Eyes 12 Who Do You  
Love? 13 Cannon Ball 14 Honeycomb 15 Lipstick on Your  
Collar 16 Down the Aisle of Love 17 He's Gone 18 She Say  
19 Woo-Hoo 20 Ooh! My Soul 21 So Tough  
22 I'll Be Home

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*The Flamingos sang some of the smoothest and finest doo-wop of the era.*

## THE '50s: LAST DANCE

Elvis Presley's three appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in late 1956 and early 1957 announced the arrival of rock 'n' roll to the American public. However, nearly a year earlier, on November 20, 1955, Ed Sullivan had anticipated the impending rock 'n' roll revolution when he presented a 15-minute segment devoted to rhythm and blues, hosted by Dr. Jive (Tommy Smalls), an important R & B DJ in New York City. Three of the hottest R & B acts in America—LaVern Baker, Bo Diddley and the Five Keys—performed. Capitol Records had signed the Five Keys in late 1954 and was immediately rewarded with two hits, *Ling, Ting, Tong* and **Close Your Eyes**. The latter, a gorgeous ballad penned by Chuck Willis and lovingly delivered by lead singer Maryland Pierce, was revived by Peaches and Herb in 1967.

Bo Diddley's appearance on Sullivan's show created a tiff when Diddley performed his current hit, *Bo Diddley*, rather than *Sixteen Tons*, the song Sullivan specifically requested. Diddley later recalled Sullivan angrily cornering him after the show: "He said, 'You're the first colored boy that ever double-crossed me.' And I started to hit the dude because I was a young hoodlum out of Chicago and I thought 'colored boy' was an insult." Both evidently recovered, as Sullivan went on to present hundreds of rock acts and Diddley went on to transform his hoodlumism into one of rock 'n' roll's most exciting stage personas.

No song served Diddley's comic yet sinister image better than the voodooistic **Who Do You Love?**, a non-hit covered by hundreds of other acts, including Quicksilver Messenger Service, Ronnie Hawkins, the Blues Magoos and George Thorogood. The song depicts Bo as a man with "a tombstone hand" and "a graveyard mind," a man who wears "a cobra snake for a necktie" and who "don't mind dyin'." Diddley later explained the song's meaning this way: "I'm tellin' this chick, 'Who do you love, me or him?'"

And I'm tellin' her how bad I am so she can go and tell the cat she's hangin' with, 'This dude is somethin' else!' Cat ridin' rattlesnakes and stuff like that! And kissin' boa constrictors!"

Along with an impressive songbook, Bo Diddley created one of rock 'n' roll's most widely imitated styles. His distinctive "Bo Diddley beat" served as the foundation for numerous songs, including Duane Eddy's **Cannon Ball**. The song was Eddy's fourth "twangy" hit in 1958, and by the year's end, he had sold over 3 million records and launched the rock instrumental era (1958-1963).

Guitarist Link Wray eschewed "twang" in favor of a more raunchy, distorted guitar sound. After his smash instrumental, *Rumble*, for the Cadence label, Wray switched to Epic and hit again with **Raw-Hide**. Epic, however, was uneasy with Wray's primitive style, first pushing him into Duane Eddy imitations and finally saddling him with a 65-piece orchestra. By 1963, Wray had fled to Swan Records, where he resumed making nasty instrumentals, including the aptly titled *Jack the Ripper*.

The era of rock instrumentals opened some strange doors; through one came Preston Epps with a set of bongos and one unlikely song, **Bongo Rock**. Epps, who was discovered in a coffeehouse by Los Angeles DJ Art Laboe, never matched the success of *Bongo Rock*, but he did persist long enough to create three bongo-heavy albums: *Bongola*, *Surfin' Bongos* and *Bongo, Bongo, Bongo*. Another unusual instrumental sound came from the Rock-aways, a Virginia sextet who swiped Arthur Smith's *Guitar Boogie*, added a drum break and a refrain of falsetto "woo-hoos," and ended up with a quasi-instrumental imaginatively titled **Woo-Hoo**. Originally released on the small Doran label from Salem, Virginia, *Woo-Hoo* became a hit after Roulette picked it up for national distribution.

Cookie and His Cupcakes' **Matilda** was another song

that was first released on a small regional label (Lyric) before being picked up by a larger company with national distribution (Judd Records, owned by Sam Phillips' brother, Judd Phillips). Featuring the wailing vocals of Huey "Cookie" Thierry, *Matilda* achieved its greatest success on the Gulf Coast and is still widely heard on the jukeboxes and in the dance halls of South Louisiana. Similarly, the Quin-Tones' **Down the Aisle of Love** first saw light on a small Philadelphia doo-wop label, Red Top. When the song broke big in Philly, Dick Clark acquired it for his Hunt

label and pushed it onto the national charts with repeated play on *American Bandstand*.

In Passaic, New Jersey, a persistent teenager named Mary Jo Greenberg helped launch the Shirelles' career by hounding her classmates into auditioning with her for her mother, Flo, owner of the Tiara label. The Shirelles performed their own composition, **I Met Him on a Sunday**, for Flo Greenberg in her living room, and she signed them to a 5-year contract. Released first on Tiara, *I Met Him on a Sunday* was then leased to Decca, which turned it into a





moderate hit. After a few more Decca releases flopped, Flo Greenberg started a new label called Scepter and, in 1959, began a string of recordings with the Shirelles that kicked off the girl-group era.

But the pioneering girl group was the Chantels, five high school students from Saint Anthony of Padua School in the Bronx who had been singing Latin hymns and pop songs together since the second grade. Their name was taken from a rival Catholic school, St. Francis de Chantelle. The group was discovered in 1957 by Richard Barrett, the same

talent scout-producer-singer who discovered Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers. The Chantels' first single paired **He's Gone** and **The Plea**, both written by Arlene Smith, the group's 15-year-old lead singer.

From 1958 to 1960, rock 'n' roll suffered a mild case of fatigue. Little Richard didn't help matters when he abandoned rock 'n' roll in late 1957 to enter a Seventh-Day Adventist college. Specialty Records kept his hits coming through 1958 by releasing earlier recorded material such as **Ooh! My Soul**. Chuck Berry's celebration of American life, **Back in the U.S.A.**, would be his last top-40 hit until 1964, largely because of an apparently trumped-up Mann Act violation that would result in his imprisonment in the early '60s.

Sun Records, the home of Memphis rockabilly, also ran out of gas by the decade's close. Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins had left for CBS Records in 1958, the same year Jerry Lee Lewis' career derailed because of the scandal involving his marriage to Myra Gale Lewis. One of Sun's last triumphs was pianist Carl Mann, who recorded for Sun's Phillips International subsidiary. While Mann was auditioning **Mona Lisa** at Sun, Conway Twitty stopped by, liked what he heard and quickly recorded a popular version of his own for MGM.

By late 1958, with no big hits in over a year, Buddy Holly was looking for new musical directions and, in October 1958, he recorded four songs at New York City's Pythian Temple with a string section. One of those songs, **True Love Ways**, was based on *I'll Be All Right*, a gospel song Holly had liked since high school. Although Holly's *True Love Ways* never charted in America, a version by Peter and Gordon became a hit in 1965.

The commercial decline of rock 'n' roll's early legends paralleled the rise of two precocious pop stars, Neil Sedaka and Connie Francis. Sedaka penned his first hit,

*Cookie and His Cupcakes defined the swamp-pop sound; the band's music can still be heard on jukeboxes in South Louisiana.*



Francis' *Stupid Cupid*, at age 18. A few months later, he made his own chart debut with **The Diary**. Connie Francis had been singing regularly on television for five years when she signed with MGM in 1955 at age 15. After her first 10 singles failed, she turned to an old standard, *Who's Sorry Now*, for her first hit. Though ballads were her forte, she made several stabs at rock 'n' roll, including **Lipstick on Your Collar**.

Like Neil Sedaka's *Breaking Up Is Hard to Do*, Tommy Edwards' **It's All in the Game** was a hit in two different versions recorded years apart. Edwards' first rendition came in 1951. In 1958, with his career failing, he re-cut the song, which then rose to the top of the charts. *It's All in the Game* was composed in 1912 as *Melody in A Minor* by Charles Gates Dawes, a Chicago banker who became vice-president during Calvin Coolidge's second term. It has the distinction of being the only No. 1 record written by a vice-president.

—Joe Sasfy

Little Richard,  
a man of God and  
rock 'n' roll





## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Back in the U.S.A.** Chuck Berry • Music and lyrics by Chuck Berry. Chess 1729 (1959). Courtesy of Chess/MCA Records, Inc. No. 37\*
- 2. Raw-Hide** Link Wray and His Wraymen • Music and lyrics by Mill Grant and Link Wray. Epic 9300 (1959). Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS Records Inc. No. 23\*
- 3. Be My Guest** Fats Domino • Music and lyrics by Antoine "Fats" Domino, John Marascalco and Tommy Boyce. Imperial 5629 (1959). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 8\*
- 4. It's All in the Game** Tommy Edwards • Music by Charles Gates Dawes, lyrics by Carl Sigman. MGM 12688 (1959). Produced under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\*
- 5. I Met Him on a Sunday** The Shirelles • Music and lyrics by Shirley Owens, Doris Coley, Addie Harris and Beverly Lee. Decca 30588 (1958). Courtesy of Gusto Records. No. 50\*
- 6. True Love Ways** Buddy Holly • Music and lyrics by Norman Petty and Buddy Holly. Coral 62210 (1959). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. Did not chart.
- 7. Mona Lisa** Carl Mann • Music and lyrics by Joy Livingston and Ray Evans. Phillips 3539 (1959). Courtesy of Sun Entertainment Corporation. No. 25\*
- 8. Bongo Rock** Preston Epps • Music and lyrics by Preston Epps and Arthur Egnoian. Original Sound 4 (1959). Courtesy of Original Sound Entertainment. No. 14\*
- 9. Matilda** Cookie and His Cupcakes • Music and lyrics by George Khoury and Huey Thierry. Judd 1002 (1959). Courtesy of Janus Records, Inc. No. 47\*
- 10. The Diary** Neil Sedaka • Music by Neil Sedaka, lyrics by Howard Greenfield. RCA 7408 (1958). Courtesy of RCA Records, a label of BMG Music. No. 14\*
- 11. Close Your Eyes** The Five Keys • Music and lyrics by Chuck Willis. Capitol 3032 (1955). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 5 (R & B)\*
- 12. Who Do You Love?** Bo Diddley • Music and lyrics by Ellas McDaniel. Chess LP 1431 (1956). Courtesy of Chess/MCA Records, Inc. Did not chart.
- 13. Cannon Ball** Duane Eddy • Music by Duane Eddy and Lee Hazlewood. Jamie 1111 (1958). Courtesy of Jamie Record Company. No. 15\*
- 14. Honeycomb** Jimmie Rodgers • Music and lyrics by Bob Merrill. Roulette 4015 (1957). Masters licensed courtesy of Rhino Records, Inc. No. 1\*
- 15. Lipstick on Your Collar** Connie Francis • Music by George Goehring, lyrics by Edna Lewis. MGM 12793 (1959). Produced under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 5\*
- 16. Down the Aisle of Love** The Quin-Tones • Music and lyrics by the Quin-Tones. Hunt 321 (1958). Courtesy of Philadelphia International. No. 20\*
- 17. He's Gone** The Chantels • Music and lyrics by Arlene Smith and Richard Barrett. End 1001 (1957). Masters licensed courtesy Rhino Records, Inc. No. 71\*
- 18. She Say (Oom Dooby Doom)** The Diamonds • Music and lyrics by Barry Mann and Mike Anthony. Mercury 71404 (1959). Produced under license from PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 18\*
- 19. Woo-Hoo** The Rock-a-teens • Music and lyrics by George Donald McGraw. Roulette 4192 (1959). Masters licensed courtesy of Rhino Records, Inc. No. 16\*
- 20. Ooh! My Soul** Little Richard • Music and lyrics by Richard Penniman. Specialty 533 (1958). Courtesy of Specialty Records. No. 35\*
- 21. So Tough** The Original Casuals • Music and lyrics by Fredrick Mears. Back Beat 503 (1958). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 42\*
- 22. I'll Be Home** The Flamingos • Music and lyrics by Ferdinand Washington and Stan Lewis. Checker 830 (1956). Courtesy of Chess/MCA Records, Inc. No. 5 (R & B)\*

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## NOTES INSIDE

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**Art Director:** Robin Bray  
**Associate Producer:** Robert Hull  
**Series Consultant:** Joe Sasfy  
**Art Studio:** Nina Bridges  
**Chief Financial Officer:** Eric R. Eaton  
**Production Manager:** Karen Hill

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