

## White Pioneers of Rock and Roll

- Social Trends in White America, c. 1955
  - Teen resistance to adult-dictated culture
  - Isolated suburban environments
  - Rise of teen consumer power
  - Radio and the appearance of the "DJ"
    - Alan Freed (1922-1965)
  - Seminal films about the teen experience
    - *The Wild One* (1953)
    - *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955)
    - *Blackboard Jungle* (1955)
- Country & Western (C&W)
  - Commercial combination of various rural acoustic country styles
  - Uses electric guitar
  - Stylistic comparison w/R&B:
    - Tempo
      - C&W: Slow to moderate
      - R&B: Faster, more exuberant
    - Bass
      - C&W: "Two-beat" on 1 & 3
      - R&B: Active, playing on all beats
    - Harmony
      - C&W: Simple triads
      - R&B: Chords with blue notes
    - Vocals
      - C&W: Nasal, non-vibrato vocals
      - R&B: Full-voiced, Gospel vibrato
    - Dynamics
      - C&W: Soft, restrained volumes
      - R&B: Loud, aggressive volumes
- Rockabilly
  - General Characteristics
    - C&W-influenced proto-rock style, c. 1954-56
    - Up-tempo music of youthful rebellion created by poor white, souther male musicians
    - Instrumentation: lead electric guitar, acoustic rhythm guitar, slapping string bass, optional drums (w/brushes)
    - Vocal hiccups, stutters, echo effects
  - Examples
    - Gene Vincent: "Be-Bop-A-Lula," 1956
    - Carl Perkins: "Honey Don't," 1955
    - Elvis Presley: "That's All Right (Mama)," 1954
- Sam Phillips & Sun Studios
  - Record Producer/Founder of Indie-label Sun Records, 1952

- All-star roster of Blues, Early Rock and Country musicians
- Saw potential of Rockabilly's cultural synthesis
- Elvis Presley (1935-77)
  - b. Tupelo, MS
  - Meteoric rise to fame, 1954-56
  - Important TV appearances: Jackie Gleason/Milton Berle/Ed Sullivan variety shows
  - RCA Hits: "Mystery Train," "Hound Dog" (cover of "Big Mama" Thornton recording)
  - Musical Innovations
    - Combined C&W and R&B traditions in a style accessible to mainstream listeners
    - Wide range of vocal styles: gospel, blues, country, pop
    - Helped make state choreography part of rock performance
- [BREAK FOR FILM #1]
- Jerry Lee Lewis
  - b. Ferriday, LA 1935
  - Singer/Pianist with "percussive" technique, glissandos
  - "Nervous" vocals w/"Sun echo"
  - Hits
    - "Whole Lot of Shakin' Goin' On," 1957
    - "Great Balls of Fire," 1958
- Buddy Holly (1936-59)
  - b. Lubbock, TX
  - Singer/Guitarist
  - C&W influence in his music gives it a lighter feel
  - Hits
    - "That'll Be the Day," 1957
    - "Peggy Sue," 1957
    - "It's So Easy," 1958
  - Characteristics/Accomplishments
    - Wrote innocent, childlike love songs
    - Light vocal style w/hiccups, glissandos, melismas, light growls
    - His band the Crickets standardized the rock ensemble's instrumentation
    - Popularized the Fender Stratocaster guitar
- The First "Death" of Rock Music c. 1959
  - Top 1950s superstars experience life changes/tragedies
  - Payola scandal
  - Growing opposition from church, civic, and corporate America