

**LECTURE 4**  
**From Whence Came 1950s**  
**Rock and Roll?**  
**(and where did it go?)**

**What was the first  
Rock and Roll song?**



# “Rocket 88” 1951

- Jackie Brenston and His Delta Cats (Ike Turner and his Rhythm Kings)
- Ike Turner – boogie woogie piano
- Jackie Brenston – vocals/sax
- heavily distorted electric guitar
- R&B hit about partying in a Oldsmobile Rocket 88
- recorded by Sam Phillips at Memphis Recording Services

JACKIE  
BRENSTON

RAYMOND  
HILL

EDDIE  
JONES

FRED  
SAMPLE

BILLY  
GAYLES



JESSE  
KNIGHT, JR

IKE  
TURNER

EUGENE  
WASHINGTON

THE KINGS OF RHYTHM - 1956

*William*

**1950s COVER SONGS**  
released on R&B charts  
cross-over into pop charts  
re-recorded by white artists  
re-marketed by major labels  
often the biggest money makers



# **“Shake, Rattle, and Roll” 1954**

- **Big Joe Turner**
- **KC Blues Shouter**
- **R&B jump band**
- **boogie-woogie bass**
- **piano**
- **riffing**
- **growling sax solo**
- **strong backbeat**
- **chauvinist and objectivist lyrics**
- **strong sexual innuendo**
- **weakly coded metaphor**



# “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” - Turner

Get outta that bed  
Wash your face and hands  
Get outta that bed  
Wash your face and hands  
Well, you get in that kitchen  
Make some noise with the pots and pans



Way you wear those dresses  
The sun comes shinin' through  
Way you wear those dresses  
The sun comes shinin' through  
I can't believe my eyes  
All that mess belongs to you

I believe to the soul  
You're the devil and now I know  
I believe to the soul  
You're the devil and now I know  
Well, the more I work  
The faster my money goes

I said shake, rattle and roll  
Shake, rattle and roll  
Shake, rattle and roll  
Shake, rattle and roll  
Well, you won't do right  
To save your doggone soul

I'm like a one-eyed cat  
Peepin' in a seafood store  
I'm like a one-eyed cat  
Peepin' in a seafood store  
Well, I can look at you  
Till you ain't no child no more

I get over the hill  
And way down underneath  
I get over the hill  
And way down underneath  
You make me roll my eyes  
Even make me grit my teeth

# **“Shake, Rattle, and Roll” 1954**

- **Bill Haley and the Comets (Western Swing band from Pennsylvania)**
- **semi-cleaned-up version of Turner’s**
- **use of saxophone and electric guitar**
- **clearly enunciated vocals**
- **producer: Milt Gabler @ Decca Records**



# “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” - Haley

Get out in that kitchen  
and rattle those pots and pans  
Get out in that kitchen  
and rattle those pots and pans  
Well roll my breakfast  
'cause I'm a hungry man

Wearin' those dresses  
your hair done up so nice  
Wearin' those dresses  
your hair done up so nice  
You look so warm  
but your heart is cold as ice

I'm like a one eyed cat  
peeping in a sea food store  
I'm like a one eyed cat  
peeping in a sea food store  
I can look at you  
tell you don't love me no more

I believe you are doing me wrong  
and now I know  
I believe you are doing me wrong  
and now I know  
The more I work  
the faster my money go

# Shake, Rattle, and Roll - Haley







## **Alan Freed**

- **Cleveland DJ – The Moondog House**
- **early R&B promoter**
- **coined term “Rock and Roll”**
- **moved to major market station WINS, NY (1954)**

# “Rock Around the Clock” 1955

- Bill Haley and the Comets
- 1<sup>st</sup> certified #1 Rock ‘n’ Roll hit
- boogie-woogie bass
- riffing (sax/guitar)
- technical electric guitar solo from country
- Milt Gabler producer



# “Blackboard Jungle”



# “Rock Around the Clock” 1955



# **SAM PHILLIPS**

**(recording engineer/producer)**





**Memphis Recording Service – 1950**

**recorded R&B acts**

**experimentation with live sound and energy**

**Sun Records – 1952**

**discovered Elvis – 1953**



# ELVIS AARON PRESLEY (1935–1977)

- born East Tupelo, Mississippi
- family moved to Memphis in 1948
- hung out on Beale Street
- early career as a truck driver



# ELVIS' INFLUENCES

- **Gospel (Pentecostal Church)**
- **Pop/TPA crooners (Dean Martin)**
- **KC Blues Shouters (Wynonie Harris)**
- **R&B “bird” groups (Clyde McPhatter)**
- **Country Blues (Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup)**
- **Honky Tonk (Hank Williams)**
- **Bluegrass (Bill Monroe)**





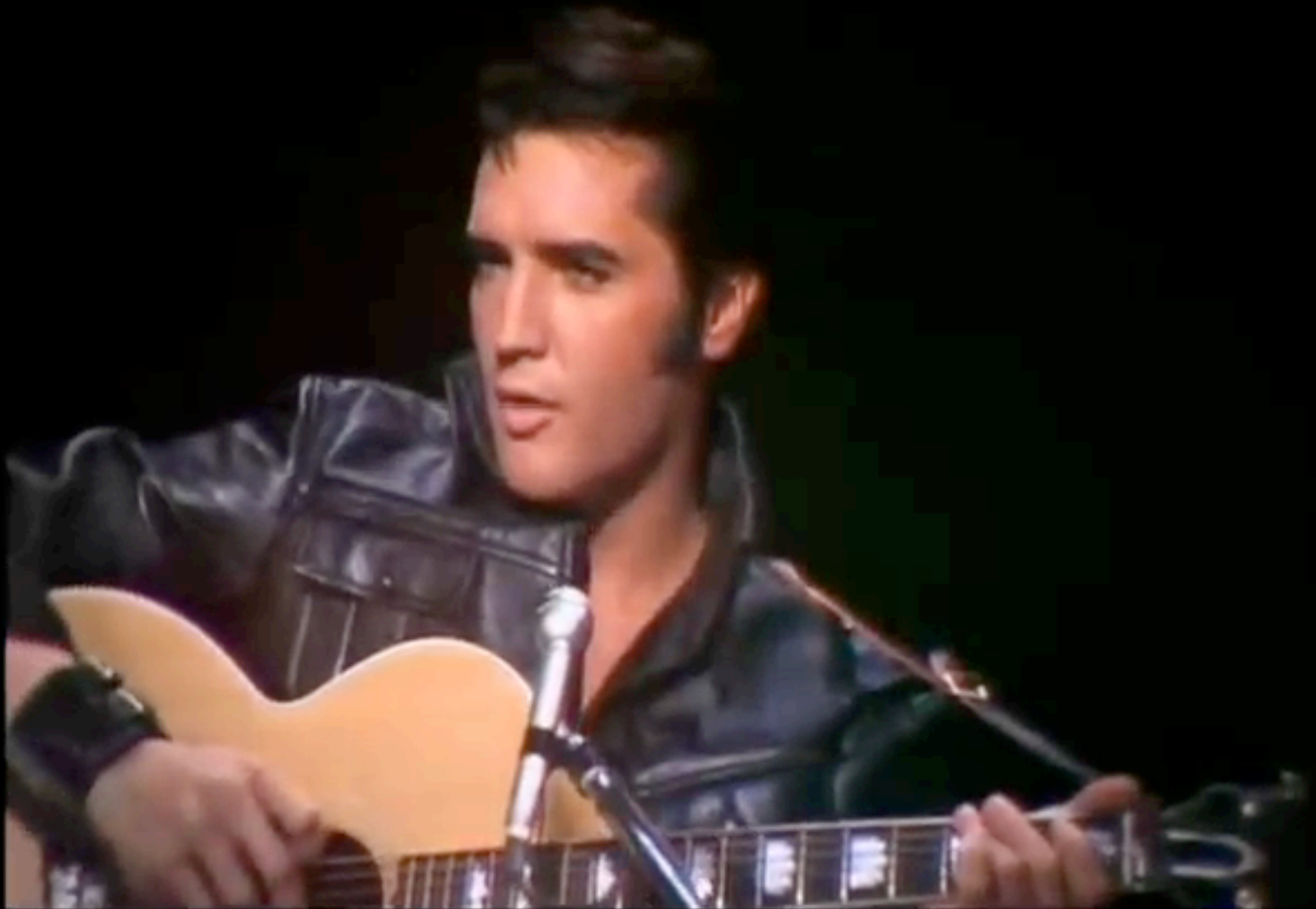
# ELVIS' SUN SESSIONS 1954-1955

- early recording sessions
- by Sam Phillips
- distinctive slap-back echo
- captured raw intensity of live performances
- perhaps his best work
- Scotty Moore – guitar (country)
- Bill Black – bass (acoustic)

# “That’s Alright” Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup (Mississippi Delta Blues)



# **“That’s Alright” Elvis’ first single**




# “Blue Moon of Kentucky”



# **“Blue Moon of Kentucky”**

- **written by Bill Monroe**
- **distinctive slap-back echo**
- **“suitcase drums”**
- **#2 on C&W chart, July ‘54**
- **sold 20,000 copies nationally**
- **created “rockabilly” genre**



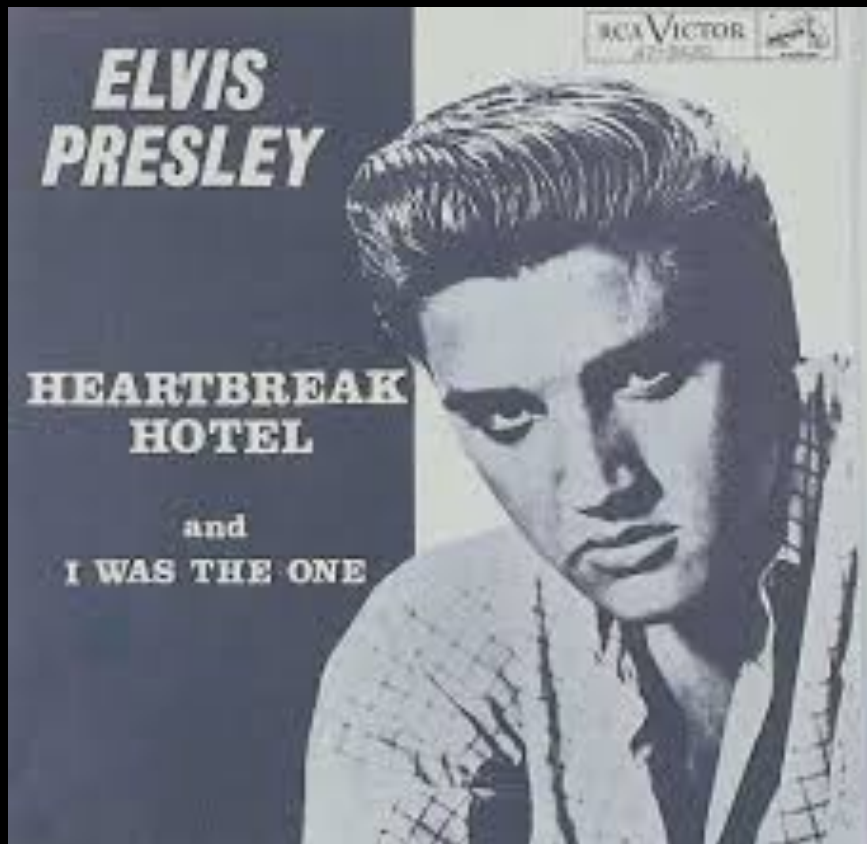
A black and white photograph of a young Elvis Presley. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark, patterned, long-sleeved shirt. He is holding an acoustic guitar and looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a brick wall and some hands in the foreground, possibly from an audience or another person.

**Billboard magazine's 8th most promising**

**Country and Western singer in Nov. '54**

**contract sold to RCA in 1955 for \$35,000**

# “Heartbreak Hotel” 1956



- first national hit record for RCA
- recorded in Nashville
- slicker studio style
- “crooning vocals”
- Chet Atkins (producer) country guitarist
- Floyd Cramer - slip-note (country) piano

# “Heartbreak Hotel” 1956



# **“Don’t Be Cruel” 1956**

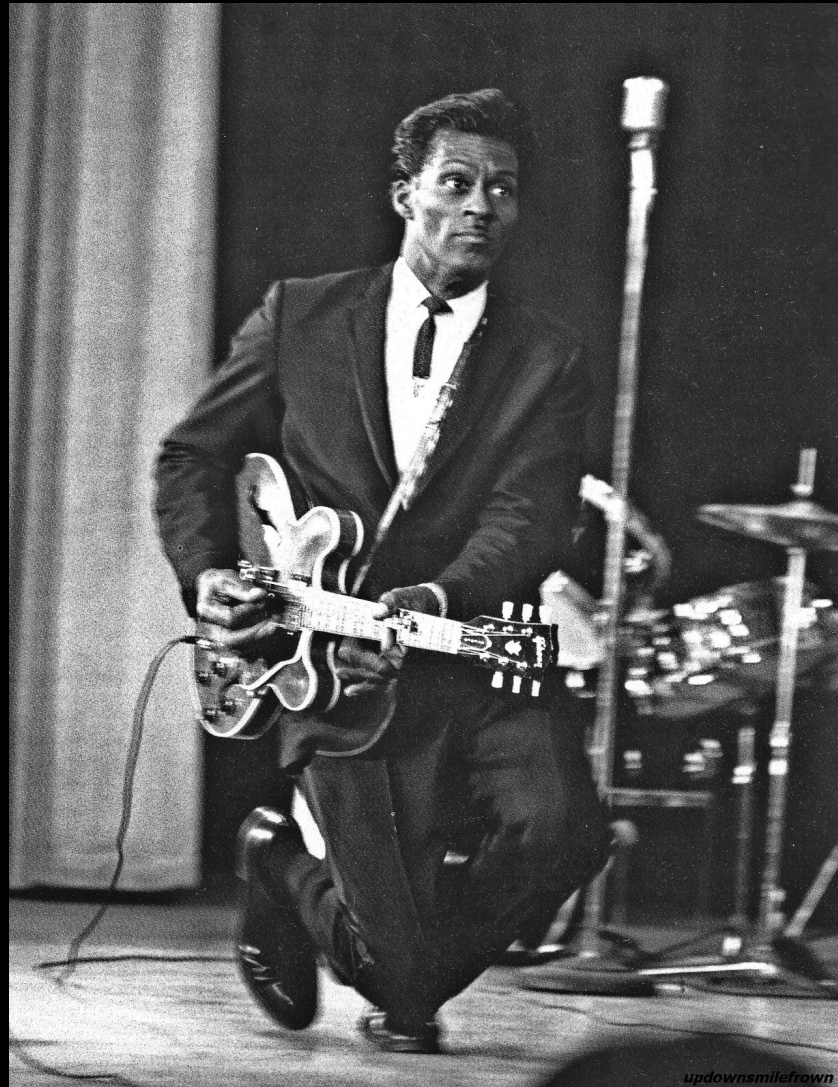
- **Presley’s biggest hit record**
- **11 weeks at #1**
- **hiccupping effect**
- **strong backbeat**
- **Western swing influenced electric guitar**
- **slick studio sound**
- **Jordanaires (country backup vocal group)**

# “Don't Be Cruel” 1956



# CHARLES EDWARD ANDERSON “CHUCK” BERRY

- Chess Records
- hairdresser from St. Louis
- innovative guitar
- clearly enunciated lyrics
- teen-oriented songs
- cross-over artist
- most influential 50s artist



# “Ida Red” 1951 - Bob Wills



# “Maybellene” 1955





# **“LITTLE RICHARD” PENNIMAN**



- **Georgia Gospel roots**
- **whooping-shouting vocal style**
- **major influence on vocal style of Paul McCartney**
- **wild piano banging style**
- **outrageous stage presence (makeup & pompadour)**
- **ambiguous sexual persona**

# “Long Tall Sally” 1955



# “Tutti Frutti”



**Little Richard**



**Pat Boone**

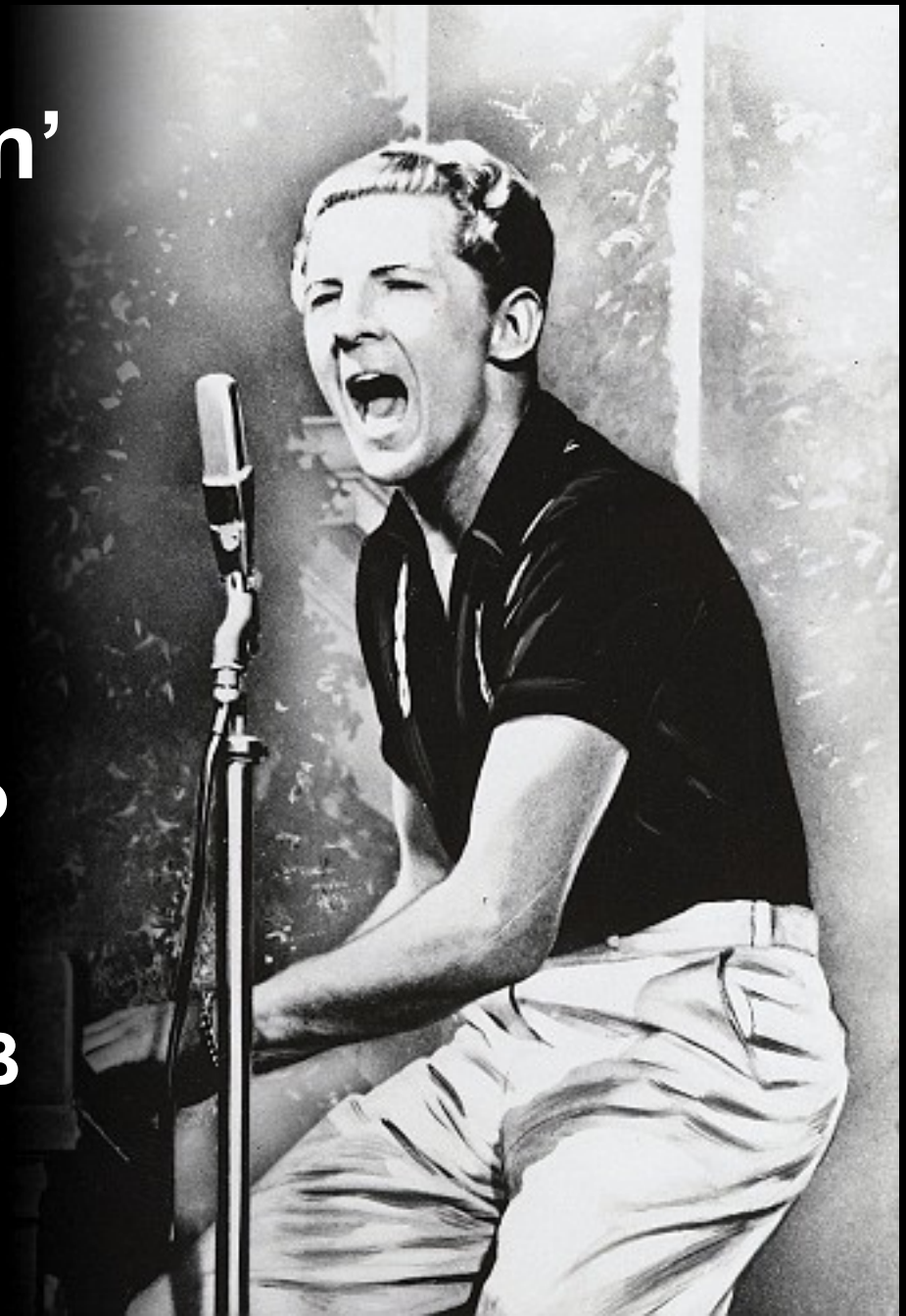
# JERRY LEE LEWIS “KILLER”



- from Louisiana
- signed at Sun in 1956 as Elvis' successor
- influence from C&W, boogie woogie, and Gospel music
- slammin' piano style
- hard-edged persona
- rock 'n' roll wild man

# **“Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” 1957**

- **first major hit at Sun Records**
- **suggestive lyrics**
- **boogie-woogie piano**
- **strong backbeat**
- **Berryesque guitar solo**
- **#1 on pop charts (6 million overall)**
- **#1 on country and R&B charts**



# “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” 1957



# Carl Perkins

rockabilly stable mate at Sun Records  
with Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash



# BUDDY HOLLY

A black and white photograph of Buddy Holly, a young man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking down and playing a light-colored electric guitar. The background is a patterned curtain.

- from Lubbock (East Texas)
- background in country music
- combined with influence from Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Elvis
- pioneer of modern studio recording
- popularized rock instrumentation (2 guitars, bass, drums)
- ability as pop songwriter
- toured England in 1958
- directly influenced Beatles



# “That’ll Be the Day” 1957



# RICHIE VALENS

- born Richard Steven Valenzuela, California
- first hit at age 17 with “Come On Let’s Go”
- early 1959 hit (#2) with two-sided single “Donna/La Bamba”



**“La Bamba” (movie)  
starring Lou Diamond Philips**



# Big Bopper

Jiles Perry "J. P." Richardson, Jr.  
1958 hit song "Chantilly Lace"

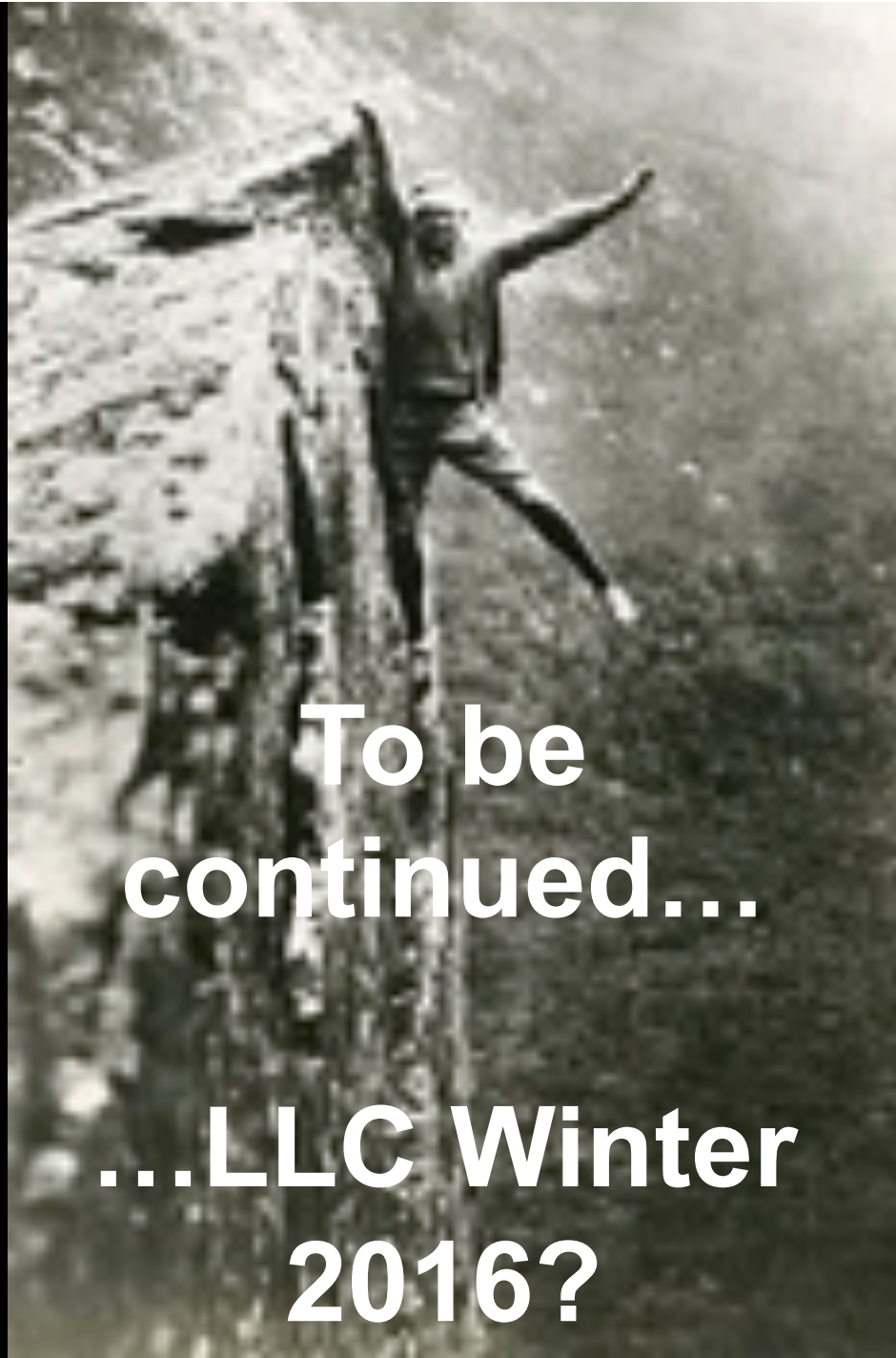


# 1959 – YEAR THE MUSIC DIED

- **Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, Big Bopper**  
- plane crash Feb. 3, 1959  
“The Day the Music Died”
- **Alan Freed – payola indictment**
- **Elvis – drafted into Army**
- **Jerry Lee Lewis – married cousin**
- **Carl Perkins – auto crash**
- **Little Richard – bible college**
- **Chuck Berry – jailed on Mann Act**

**Was this the death of  
Rock and Roll?**





**To be  
continued...**

**...LLC Winter  
2016?**