EIGHTH EDITION

ROCK MUSIC STYLES

A HISTORY

Katherine Charlton

eighth edition

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a history

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Mc Graw Hill Education

ROCK MUSIC STYLES: A HISTORY, EIGHTH EDITION

Published by McGraw-Hill Education, 2 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 LWI 21 20 19

ISBN 978-1-259-92257-2 (bound edition)
MHID 1-259-92257-X (bound edition)

ISBN 978-1-260-69054-5 (loose-leaf edition)
MHID 1-260-69054-7 (loose-leaf edition)

Product Developer: *Alexander Preiss*
Marketing Manager: *Nancy Baudean*
Content Project Managers: *Lisa Bruflodt, Danielle Clement*
Buyer: *Susan K. Culbertson*
Designer: *Debra Kubiak*
Content Licensing Specialist: *Brianna Kirschbaum*
Cover Image: ©*Brian Goodman/Shutterstock*
Compositor: *Lumina Datamatics*

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Charlton, Katherine, author.
Title: Rock music styles : a history / Katherine Charlton.
Description: Eighth edition. | New York, NY : McGraw-Hill Education, [2019] |
Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018042905 | ISBN 9781259922572 (alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Rock music—History and criticism.
Classification: LCC ML3534.C45 2019 | DDC 781.6609—dc23 LC record available at
https://lccn.loc.gov/2018042905

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To the memory of two wonderful men
I miss very much:
my first husband, Andrew Charlton,
and my brother, Richard French

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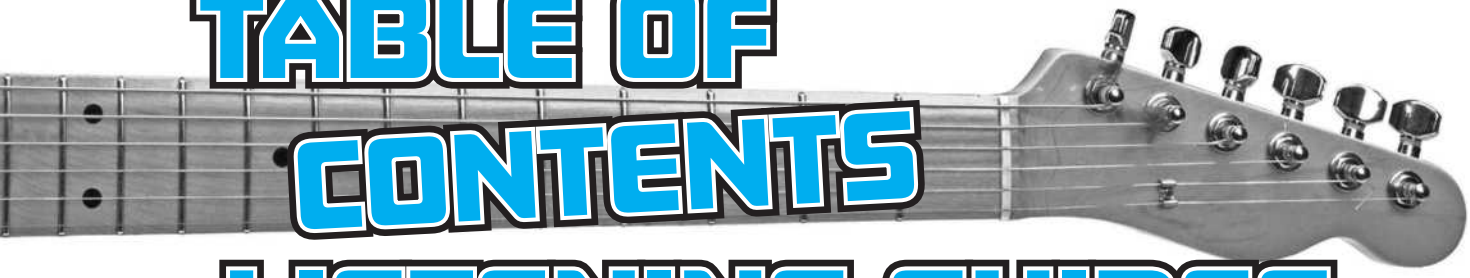

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Rock Music Styles: A History is intended to be used as the text for a college-level course on the history of rock music. As a teacher and a writer, my primary concern has been to help students develop an understanding of both the musical and cultural roots of rock music and the ability to hear a direct relationship between those roots and currently popular music. To that end, I identify the various styles of music that influenced the development of rock and discuss the elements of those styles along with the rock music to which they relate. Careful listening is necessary in order to hear and identify those basic elements of music and then understand how they help define the characteristics of individual styles. The kind of listening I am asking students to do is not about deciding whether the music is pleasing, but is analytical so the student can separate one musical element from another.

Organization of the Text

This book is organized in chronological order by decade, rather than year by year. The decade approach helps to meet the overall goal of keeping general musical styles together even though there is a break from one decade to another. Each decade is introduced with some general information about events and trends important during that decade, most of which had significant influence on the music that was popular during that decade. A Chronology Chart that includes Historical Events and Musical Events of the decade follows the general discussion. Of course, one can use the book in ways other than its obvious historical survey. A reader who is interested in one particular style, the blues for example, could read about early blues styles in Chapter 1, then blues styles from the fifties discussed in Chapter 2, and then skip up to the blues revival in Chapter 8.

Reading Listening Guides

The listening guides to individual recordings in this book are intended to aid students in analytical listening. Each guide begins with the tempo of the recording. To identify that basic beat in the recording all one has to do, in many cases, is look at the second hand on a clock while listening to the recording. We know that there are sixty seconds in a minute, so if the tempo is 120, the beats are the pulses in the music that are heard at the rate of two per second. Even if the tempo is 72, one can listen for pulses that are just a bit faster than the seconds to pick out the basic beat. Listening to the music is the most important part of this process, but many nonmusicians will need to force themselves to avoid the "tone bath" type of listening they may be used to so they can actually describe what they are hearing.

After discussing the tempo, the listening guides turn to the form of the recordings. Form in music is the overall structure as defined by repetition and contrast. A song like "Hound Dog," for example, has lyrics in an AAB form. That is, we hear one line of lyrics, A (the first letter of the alphabet is used for the first section of music), and then we hear that line repeated. Those two A lines are followed by new lyrics, so we identify those new lyrics by a new letter, B. When we get into music analysis we will be outlining when melodies repeat or are contrasted with new melodies. With either lyrics or melody, when we listen for form we listen for a given musical element to repeat, or for a new and contrasting element to be introduced.

"Features" in the listening guides vary with the recording and are my way of describing other musical elements or characteristics that are special in a particular recording that help to define the general style of music. This presentation does not allow for the type of detail that a musician who notates and analyzes music note-by-note or chord-by-chord uses, but that type of analysis is not the subject of this book. As I said earlier, what I have tried to do here is teach interested students about the musical characteristics of many different types of rock music and help these students learn to listen critically so that they can make stylistic connections on their own.

Lyrics are very important in most rock music, and for that reason, each listening guide includes a simple explanation of the song's lyrics. In some light pop songs that

explanation may say as much as do the lyrics themselves, but in most cases lyrics contain complexities that are open to different interpretations that would go beyond the scope of this book. I hope that my summaries of lyrics will be used as a point of departure for further thought and discussion about the meaning(s) conveyed in each song.

For this edition, McGraw-Hill Education has partnered with Spotify® to make songs from listening guides available online for **FREE.** Spotify is a digital music-streaming service that offers on-demand access to millions of songs on a variety of devices. Readers can access songs from listening examples by using Spotify directly and searching for the "Rock Music Styles" playlist, or by clicking on the Spotify play button on the Online Learning Center (more information about the OLC below). The Spotify icon will appear next to listening guides throughout the text to remind readers that they can listen to the featured song in Spotify. In cases where more than one recording of a song by the artist discussed in the book is available on Spotify, the recording that was used for the writing of the listening guide is given at the Spotify icon.

Suggestions for Class Discussions

Each chapter ends with Discussion Questions to be used as starting points for students and teachers to add their own ideas about the music and put them in historical context. Additionally, most rock listeners are well aware of the controversial aspects of some rock music, particular the lyrics. In these cases, I have mentioned some of the issues, but avoided imposing personal judgments in the text. My goal is to be as objective as possible and provide the reader with an understanding of what the music means to the performers and his or her fans. Discussions about any possible negative impact of the music or lyrics may have on some listeners can, and I expect will, take place in individual classrooms without any biased opinions from the textbook.

Updates in the Eighth Edition

This new edition features substantially improved listening guides that are much easier to follow than the general descriptions in the previous editions. Now that all of the recordings in the guides are available on Spotify and come with a timer that runs while each recording plays, it is possible to point out when the sections of the form happen. Of course, all of the lyrics to each song cannot be in the book, but it only takes a few words to allow the listeners to hear where the section is as they listen. The full lyrics are available on any number of sites on the Internet if the words are not clear as the recording plays.

There are two new listening guides: "Tom Sawyer" is the example for Rush, and "Brave Captain" by Big Big Train is the example of Progressive Rock music in the last chapter.

Other than a few minor deletions that were done to save space for the necessary career and chronology chart updates, the material is much like it has been in the past. One difference is that the "Musicians with Rhythm and Blues Backgrounds" section has been moved to the beginning of Chapter 4 and the "Musicians with Backgrounds in Country Music" follows that. This was done because even though the previous chapter had finished with a discussion of country music and country musicians covering rhythm and blues songs, it was really the rhythm and blues that came first. Moving those artists to the beginning of the chapter seems to make sense.

Supplementary Material

This text is accompanied by a wealth of resources to aid students and instructors. The Online Learning Center at mhhe.com/charltonrock8e offers an Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint Presentations, and Test Bank. For the first time, the site also includes a Spotify play button for each Listening Guide song. For more about Spotify, see the "Listening Guides" section mentioned earlier.

Additionally, this text can be found on McGraw-Hill's custom publishing program, Create. With McGraw-Hill Create™, instructors can easily arrange and rearrange material from a variety of sources, including their own. They can then build a Create book for use in their own classes.

About the Author

Katherine Charlton is a classically trained musician who has always loved rock music. She holds degrees in classical guitar performance and music history. As a music historian teaching at Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, California, she proposed and developed a course in the history of rock music in the early 1980s. Not happy with books available as texts at that time, she decided to write *Rock Music Styles: A History,* the first edition of which was published in 1990. During a sabbatical in 1990, she taught music history and history of rock music at the American Institute for Foreign Study at the University of London. During that teaching experience, she researched many places in London that were important in rock music and took her students on various different tours to see places bands formed, recorded, and other parts of the city of interest to rock music lovers. Katherine Charlton also wrote a book on general music appreciation, *Experience Music,* published by McGraw-Hill Education and currently in its fifth edition.

Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to my first husband, Andrew Charlton, for many reasons, not the least of which is that it was only with his support and encouragement that I wrote the first three editions. Having lost him to cancer in 1997,

I spent several years a grieving zombie. I finally met and married another wonderful man, Jeffrey Calkins, and it is with his patience and support that I have been able to dedicate myself to writing later editions. Jeff is an attorney with a master's degree in political science, and his advice has been a tremendous help in writing the political and social background sections for this book.

I thank the many McGraw-Hill editors and staff members who greatly helped with the development and production of this book, including Managing Director David Patterson, Content Project Manager Lisa Bruflodt, Product Developer Alexander Preiss, Content Licensing Specialist Brianna Kirschbaum, Associate Marketing Manager Nancy Baudean, Designer Debra Kubiak, freelance Full Service Project Manager Nikhil Rajender Kumar Meena, and freelance Project Manager Amy Oline.

Of course, I must remember that it has been the students in my own classes who have asked questions requiring me to look at rock music from many different perspectives who are really the only reason this book exists. I thank them all and hope that they continue to enjoy rock music all of their lives, as do I.

Katherine Charlton Calkins

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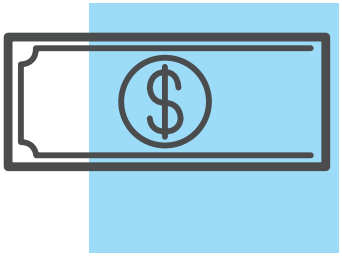

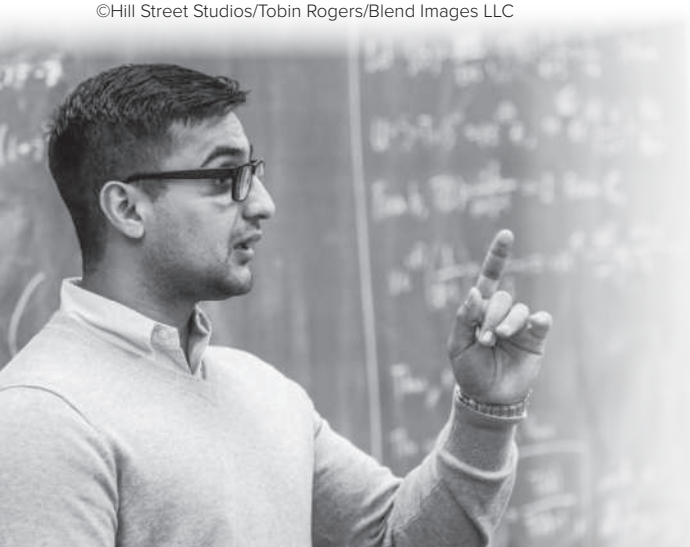

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- Jordan Cunningham,
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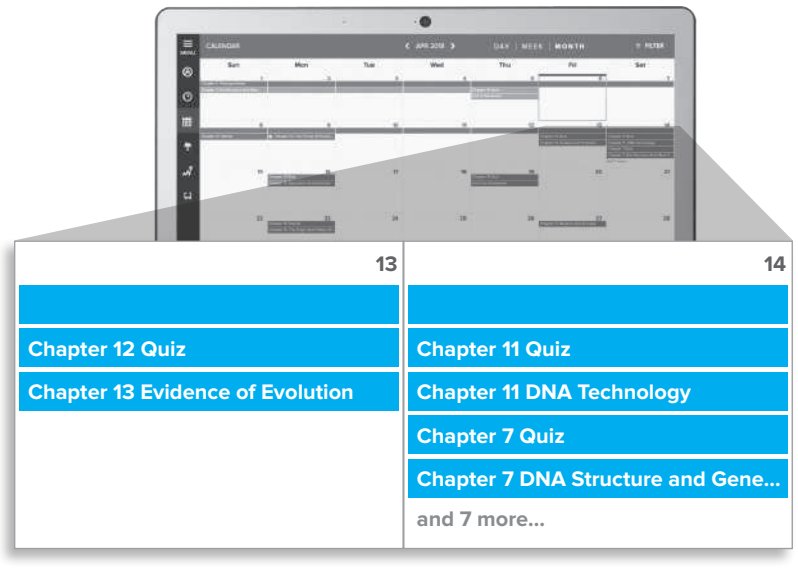

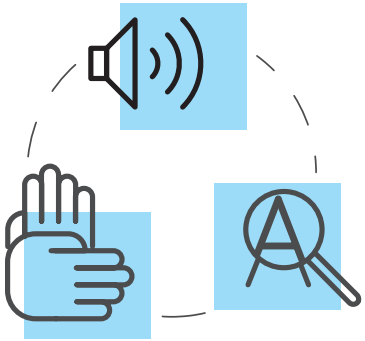

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chapter 1

Roots of Rock Music

"The way to write American music is simple. All you have to do is be an American and then write any kind of music you wish."

–VIRGIL THOMSON, COMPOSER

Was there life before rock and roll? Dyed-in-the-wool rock fans might think not, or at least think that whatever life there was was not worth living, but that, of course, was not the case for those who lived before the emergence of rock and roll. People have always entertained themselves and one another with songs, dances, and types of music. Music that is simple and catchy enough to immediately appeal to large numbers of people is generally dubbed "popular," and a large body of popular music existed before rock and roll and alongside rock music through to the present time.

Much popular music today is rather complex and would be beyond the ability of an average person to perform. Before the existence of such twentieth-century inventions as radio, television, and good-quality record, tape, or CD players, the only way most people could hear music was to perform it themselves, hire performers to play for them, or go to a public performance. Because of this, popular music of past times was often either relatively simple or composed to be part of large-scale public extravaganzas. Through the years popular music has become very big business and is usually produced primarily to generate financial gain for the writer, publisher, and performer.

The earliest popular songs in America were brought to the colonies by British and other European settlers. The business of producing, publishing, and selling music in America was aided by the passage of the first American National Copyright Act in 1790. A **copyright** protects the composer's credit and allows him or her and the publisher to receive payment for the sale of published songs and maintain control of their distribution. With many people willing to pay for printed music, the popular music industry in the United States grew rapidly during the nineteenth century. It exploded in the twentieth century with the availability of phonograph recordings in the first decade of the century, radio beginning in the twenties, and television in the forties. Rock music developed into a large-scale industry of its own in the fifties, but that happened only after and because of the popular music that preceded it.

Of the many types of music popular in various different parts of the United States during the late nineteenth century, ragtime, Tin Pan Alley, the blues, and jazz all directly influenced the development of rock music. By the 1890s, all four styles were well established and independent of one another and yet all also influenced one another. The one distinguishing factor that separates the blues and jazz from the other two is that the blues and jazz were improvised music. Unfortunately, the late nineteenth-century versions of improvised music are unknown to us today because they were not recorded and **improvisation** is not written down. Improvisation happens when a musician decides what to play while he or she is playing it. It wasn't until the first jazz recording was made in 1917, and the blues somewhat later, that we can really tell what they sounded like. Ragtime and Tin Pan Alley music was composed and published as sheet music, and performances were, for the most part, played and/or sung directly from that notation. Once recordings came into common use, that changed for many people and popular music became more of a thing to listen to than to perform.

Ragtime

Ragtime was primarily, although not exclusively, an African American style. It might well have been first performed on the banjo in the mid-nineteenth century, but piano rags became more common. It was named for the "ragged" or **syncopated rhythms** played by the pianist's right hand, or the main melody played by the banjo or the band. The ragged lines were generally accompanied by a steady alternation between a single note and a **chord** (three or more notes played together) in the bass or lower band parts. The music had existed for some time before any of it was published. **Scott Joplin** (1868–1917) is the best-known ragtime composer. The sheet music to Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" (1899) had sold more than a million copies while he was still alive to receive royalties from the sales.

The spread of ragtime and other popular music was aided by the invention of new sound devices such as the player piano, the phonograph, and jukebox-time players. Ragtime's direct influence on rock music had to do with its energy and fun, syncopated rhythms, and its influence

on the development of stride piano, which became an element of many rhythm and blues piano styles used in rock music.

Tin Pan Alley

Tin Pan Alley was the section of New York's West Twenty-Eighth Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway in which many music publishers had offices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The name "tin pan" referred to the thin, tinny tone sound quality of cheap upright pianos used by the music publishers at that time. The increasing popularity of **vaudeville shows** and the tremendous amount of new music they required helped the New York publishers gain much control of the popular music publishing industry because of the concentration of vaudeville houses and numbers of shows that began there before traveling to other parts of the country. Generally, the songs were sentimental ballads or songs that portrayed the "gay nineties" as full of fun and as an escape from life's realities. Many songs were based on popular dance rhythms. The most common feature of the songs was that they were simple and easy to remember. "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" is one such song that is still known to many baseball fans.

The clever, catchy, and easy-to-remember types of pop melodies in much Tin Pan Alley music created an important model for many of the more pop-oriented rock songs, ballads, and dance music. The biggest difference between Tin Pan Alley music and rock music was that rock music was usually sold as records, whereas Tin Pan Alley music was sold as sheet music for the consumers to play themselves.

The Beginnings of Jazz in New Orleans

New Orleans has always been a very musical city. By the late nineteenth century, the main emphasis of musical interest in New Orleans had shifted from opera and classical music to popular band music and then gradually to jazz. As early as 1840, band music had become an important part of New Orleans's musical traditions. Sunday parades where bands vied with each other for audience acclaim became common. The more popular groups found themselves in demand to play for funeral processions, park concerts, picnics, and other social events, as well as for dancing in many of the halls, taverns, and clubs that abounded in the city. The music that they played would range from marches to popular dances of the day. Bands in New Orleans were usually small and made up of African American musicians or those of mixed (Creole) blood, although there were a few all-white bands in the city as well.

The African American and Creole musicians who played in the bands in New Orleans, for the most part, had some formal training on their instruments and could read music. They were playing a large variety of types of music, and the musicians began to add improvisations to the written lines. The African American musicians, in particular, added energy to their performances with syncopated African rhythms and other influences of the blues and black gospel music with which they were familiar. Gradually this transformed music began to be referred to as "hot" music.

Early hot bands generally included one trumpet (or cornet), one clarinet, and one trombone as the principal solo instruments (called the **front line**); and a **rhythm section** composed of banjo, guitar, or piano, or some combination of them; string bass or tuba; and drums. (*Rhythm section* is a general term for the instruments in any band that keep the beat and play the chords.)

Jazz did not remain confined to New Orleans or even the South for long. African American touring groups traveled to various parts of the country as early as 1908 to perform in vaudeville and minstrel shows. The popularity of social dancing was one element that contributed to the spread of jazz. The energetic and "raggy" rhythms of jazz were perfect for dances such as the Charleston, which became popular during the twenties. Jazz remained a dancer's music through the swing era of the late thirties and early forties. Both Chicago and New York were important centers for the development of the next important jazz style, swing.

"If it hadn't been for him, there wouldn't have been none of us. I want to thank Mr. Louis Armstrong for my livelihood."

–Dizzy Gillespie

Swing Dance Bands

Beginning around 1934 and lasting through the end of World War II eleven years later, a couple's idea of a perfect night out would be one spent dancing to the music of a big band. **Swing** bands played jazz-related music, and individual musicians were allowed to improvise solos in a jazz style, but the bands themselves were bigger than earlier jazz bands, and improvisation time was limited. Most of the time the bands played music from written **arrangements** that were carefully planned for playing swing dance rhythms rather than the types of complex music of other jazz styles. Where earlier New Orleans jazz bands used one trumpet (or cornet), one clarinet, and one trombone as the principal solo instruments, swing bands were much larger, comprised of numbers of trumpets, trombones, and saxophones in addition to the rhythm instruments. A typical rhythm section in the New Orleans bands was composed of

banjo or guitar, string bass or tuba, and drums. The smoother style of swing dance music used string bass, piano, and drums.

Swing music not only increased the number of band instruments used but also brought about new ways of playing them. The old bass lines played on tuba were usually single notes pumping back and forth between the first and third beats of a bar of four beats. Swing bassists created a much smoother effect by "walking" from note to note by playing a new note on every beat and occasionally between the beats to decorate the rhythmic flow. This bass style became known as **walking bass** and was later used in rhythm and blues and rock and roll.

Swing bands often backed male singers who sang in a style known as **crooning.** Crooning was different from earlier popular singing styles in that it was developed as a way of using a new invention, the microphone. Sound engineers were better able to control and amplify a soft and gentle voice than a loud, resonant one. In the crooning style men softened their natural voices into a smooth, gentle tone, sliding from one note to another to create the effect of warm sentimentality. Popular crooners of the swing era included Bing Crosby (1903–1977) and Perry Como (1912–2001). These crooners all had an influence on the pop rock singers of the fifties and early sixties known as *teen idols.*

The Blues

The very earliest roots of the blues lie not only in Africa but also in music from parts of Arabia, the Middle East, and even Spain during the Moorish occupation (eighth through fifteenth centuries). Because that early music originated centuries before the advent of recorded sound and had not been notated, one can only listen to modern-day music from those parts of the world to hear similarities and assume intercultural exchanges among those peoples and Africans in the past. Musical devices, such as Arabic scale structures and melodic sequences, melodic and rhythmic patterns in Turkish ceremonial music, and the sense of rhythmic freedom used by Spanish singers, all share similarities with some types of African music and, ultimately, the blues.

To find the nearest direct predecessor of the blues, the ancestral music of African Americans must be examined. A potential problem in undertaking such a study is that Africa is a very large continent and the people who were brought to the New World as slaves came from many widely separated areas. Understanding this, we believe that the easiest single place to find preblues African musical traditions is Freetown, Sierra Leone. Freetown was given its name when it was established as a colony of Africans who were to be shipped to the New World as slaves but were freed by an antislavery authority. It is interesting to note that although the people of Freetown represented nearly the same mixture of Africans as those who came to the New World, the blues as we know it did not develop in Freetown. The music there continued to be performed according to African traditions and ceremonies that were of and by the dominant culture of that part of the world. However, some of those musical practices clearly point the way to the blues.

Accompanied songs sung by **griots** (pronounced gree-ōs) from Sierra Leone share characteristics with early American blues songs. In Sierra Leone, as in many parts of Africa, griots have functioned for centuries as oral poets who tell the history of the people and their leaders. Before their society had a system of writing, griots maintained a social standing that was high and respectable, and the oral tradition continued on even after many Africans were able to write down their own history and poetry.

Although African griot songs heard today and the American blues have enough similarities to assume that they developed out of a similar source, American blues is not merely a transplanted version of the griot song. Part of the reason the blues had to be different from the griot song was that the blues functioned as a personal expression of an individual who suffered from a lack of human respectability, where the griot song was central to the dominant social structure in Africa. African Americans also had been exposed to music from white European traditions, particularly the hymns sung in churches, and that music influenced their use of a three-chord harmonic progression and short verses that were equal to one another in length. From all of this one can see that the blues developed out of ancient musical traditions from many parts of the world, traditions that were synthesized by African Americans in the southern United States.

Some of the musical traditions that influenced the development of the blues come from the experience of slavery. During very hard group work, such as chopping wood to clear a field and digging dirt for planting a crop, slaves would often fall into the old African tradition of singing in a **call-and-response** style. Call-and-response means that a leader sings out a phrase and the group then sings a copy version, or "response," to that phrase. Call-and-response was done in Africa when a group was dancing or otherwise celebrating, but it also worked for New World slaves as a way of keeping the work motion going. This type of singing during slave work is called **work songs.** When we study the blues, we will hear much use of call-and-response, particularly when we hear instruments respond to singers at the end of each vocal phrase.

Another type of singing done by working slaves is called the **field holler.** The field holler is different from the work song in that it was done by an individual worker who often sang laments about the tasks required of him or her. Field hollers had a less regular rhythm than work songs; they were also usually slower and included much improvisation.

We will hear such individual improvisation in solos by blues and jazz singers and instrumentalists.

Both work songs and field hollers sometimes referred to a "captain" as the person who oversaw their work. Sometimes these references fell into what we call **signifying,** or having double meanings in a text. To the slaves the song might really be about their discontent, but to the ears of the overseer, it seemed respectful. We will also see this kind of double meaning in a text when we study spirituals as a root of black gospel music. The spoken word with multiple meanings attached to it has long been important in African traditions, going back to the tribal importance of the griot singers. That vocal tradition will also be an element of the later style of rap.

Because of their origins in rural areas of the United States, particularly the South, the earliest-known blues styles were called **country blues.** The composers and performers of country blues were, for the most part, people for whom the blues was an integral part of life. They usually accompanied themselves on battered guitars (if they were accompanied at all), and the texts they sang were often rough yet highly expressive.

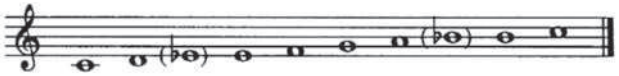
The blues developed its form and style some time in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, but the earliest recordings were not made until the twenties. Exactly how the blues sounded at the beginning of the century can only be inferred from these later recordings. Even putting the performers in front of a microphone to record them must have affected the musical results to some degree.

Although much variation existed in the country blues styles that developed in various parts of the South, the style that had the most direct influence on the development of rock music came from the Mississippi delta and was called **delta blues.** The lyrics were very expressive about the lives the singers really led. It was highly emotional and rough when compared to country blues styles from such places as the Carolinas, but its expressiveness and rhythmic vitality caused its popularity to spread. Delta blues musicians such as Robert Johnson, Charley Patton, and Son House accompanied their singing with guitars, strumming chords that they interspersed with melodic fills.

Delta blues guitarists would often break off the neck of a bottle, file down the rough edges, put it on the third or fourth finger of the hand controlling the fingerboard of the instrument (usually the left hand), and slide it from note to note on the upper strings of the guitar, leaving the other three fingers of that hand to play simple chords or bass lines. Breaking bottles soon became unnecessary as tubes (called **bottlenecks**) of glass or steel were made commercially available. Other guitarists, Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter, 1885–1949) for one, achieved a similar effect by sliding a knife along the guitar strings. Blues players like Big Joe Williams, who recorded for Vocalion as early as 1929, and Muddy Waters, who began to record for Aristocrat Records in 1945 (renamed Chess Records in 1948), were later musicians who retained the essence of the delta blues bottleneck guitar style, while also updating it by using amplification and adding other instrumentalists.

A guitar being played with a bottleneck on the player's little finger

Part of the general character of the blues was created by bending the pitches of notes to what were called **blue notes.** The exact origin of blue notes may never be known for certain, but they came either from **pentatonic** (five-tone) **scales** used in much world music or perhaps even from Islamic influences on African music. In the blues as it was played by early blues artists, the commonly lowered blue notes were the third and seventh degrees of a major scale. In the key of C, for example, one of the blue notes was somewhere between E and E♭ and the other was between B and B♭. To perform these notes with the voice and on some musical instruments, an E or a B could be bent down in pitch to produce the blue note. On many instruments, the piano for one, a note could not be bent to produce a blue tone, so the player simply lowered the tone a full half step. The following example shows the C scale with the blue notes a piano would play in parentheses:



Although pianists were limited to either lowering the pitch of a blue note a full half step or hitting two adjacent notes simultaneously to suggest the one in between, the pitch level of blue notes was much less exact on instruments that could bend notes. One reason for the popularity of playing the guitar with a bottleneck was that the bottleneck could be used to slide through the blue notes that fell between the frets (metal bars across the fingerboard behind

which the strings were stopped). Another technique for playing blue notes on a guitar without a bottleneck was to play the fret just below a blue note and then push or pull the string, causing it to tighten and then loosen gradually, raising and lowering the pitch within the area of the blue note. This technique was called **string bending.**

The blues developed into a fairly consistent formal structure, influenced by European song forms, that was made up of repeated and contrasting lines of specific length. The form used in most blues could be outlined by the letters AAB. In that outline, the first letter A referred to the first line of melody (four measures) and the first phrase of words. The second A represented a repetition of the same words and a melody that was exactly or nearly the same as the first. The letter B stood for a contrasting line of text (often rhyming with line A) and a contrasting melody that functioned as a response to the words and melody of the A sections. In other words, blues lyrics usually had two lines of text, the first of which was repeated. Songs can still be the blues when this lyric structure is not followed, but it is common in traditional blues.

The rhythm of the blues form was organized into four-beat patterns, each of which was called a bar (or measure), and each section of the melody was made up of four bars. As the three phrases had four bars each, the complete structure for each AAB blues verse, chorus, or stanza (these terms are used interchangeably) had a total of twelve bars. For that reason, it was often referred to as the **twelve-bar blues.** Following is an example of a stanza of blues showing how the poetic (lyric) form was structured:

I love my man when he treats me fine (The first A section)

I love my man when he treats me fine (The second A section)
I just wish he wouldn't drink so much wine (The B section)

A practice not always followed in blues-based rock music, but typical of traditional blues styles, involved the use of the West African practice of call-and-response, in which a leader would call out to a group and the group would respond to the call. The blues singer usually played the part of the caller by singing from the first beat of each section of melody through the first beat of the third bar, and the remainder of the four-bar section was filled by an instrumental response. The response could be played by one or more players on a variety of instruments, by the singer on the guitar or piano, or by the singer repeating one or more of the words at the end of each line of text. The following diagram shows the placement of the text, the instrumental or vocal fill (response to the singer's call), and the chord progression as it became standardized in the twelve-bar blues. In the key of C, the tonic chord is C, the subdominant chord is F, and the dominant chord is G. All three are often seventh chords. (Early blues musicians often kept playing the G^7 chord through the first two bars of the B section instead of playing the F chord in the second bar.) Each repetition of the chord name represents a beat on which the chord would be played, and the vertical lines divide those beats into four-beat bars.

Twelve-Bar Blues Form

A Lyric Sung text_____Instrumental fill
C C C C | C C C C | C C C C | C C C C |

A Lyric Sung text_____Instrumental fill
F F F F | F F F F | C C C C | C C C C |

B Lyric Sung text_____Instrumental fill
$G^7 G^7 G^7 G^7$ | F F F F | C C C C | C C C C |

As was also true of most jazz styles, the beats were usually subdivided unevenly, creating a smooth flow of long-short-long-short in which each long note was twice the length of each short note, as shown by the following notation:

The uneven rhythm pattern was called a shuffle beat when the bass was played on the beat and the chord was played on the last part of the beat. When performed slowly, the uneven **beat subdivisions** created a relaxed feeling that was well suited to and became a characteristic of the blues. Even beat subdivisions are common in folk and country music.

One of the most influential country blues singer/guitarists who recorded during the thirties was **Robert Johnson** (1911–1938). Not much is known about his life other than that he was poor, grew up on a plantation in Mississippi, and was reputedly either husband or lover to just about any woman who would have him. The lyrics of most of Johnson's songs expressed his insatiable desire for wine, women, and song. He recorded only twenty-nine songs, although when one includes alternate takes of some of those songs his recordings total forty-one. His recordings were done in makeshift studios in hotel rooms or office buildings, and the distribution of those recordings in his own time was extremely limited because large record companies simply were not interested in his kind of music. The recordings were reissued in later years, and consequently many blues-loving rock musicians have been influenced by them.

Johnson did not perform in formal situations for large groups, so relatively few people heard him in person. Those who did spread stories about the expressiveness of his music, and from those stories arose the Faustian myth that he had sold his soul in order to play so well. That myth was dramatized in the 1986 movie *Crossroads.*

Johnson's songs did follow the traditional AAB lyrical scheme and the chords of the basic blues progression as it was described earlier (with only two chords in the B section), but he was not confined by the rhythmic strictness observed by later blues musicians. He added extra beats to bars and extra bars to phrases seemingly at random, and sometimes even sang in a rhythmic pattern that differed from what he was playing on his guitar. The simultaneous use of more than one rhythm (**polyrhythm**) was known in some African musical traditions, and he may have been familiar with music based in such practices. The essentials of Johnson's musical style can best be discussed with reference to one of his recordings. A listening guide for his "Cross Road Blues" is below.

Two years after the recording of "Cross Road Blues" was made, Johnson's wild and free lifestyle was responsible for his death. Only twenty-seven years old, he was poisoned either by a woman with whom he had been involved or by the husband of such a woman. Johnson's songs have been recorded by many rock groups, including the Rolling

Listening Guide

"Cross Road Blues" as recorded by Robert Johnson (1937)

Tempo: The speed of the basic beat is approximately 88 beats per minute, but Johnson speeds up and slows down at will.

Form: Twelve-Bar Blues

0:00 Johnson plays slightly less than a four-bar introduction on the guitar using a bottleneck.

(The introduction might be shortened because the recording machine was turned on after he had started playing.)

0:09 1st chorus: "I went to the…"

0:47 2nd chorus: "Hum, standing at the…"

1:21 3rd chorus: "Sun goin' down…"

1:53 4th chorus: "You can run…"

Features: Johnson sings four stanzas of blues lyrics, providing his own responses on the guitar without any backup by other musicians.

The influence of polyrhythms can be heard in two ways:

1. Johnson's beat is usually subdivided into uneven parts, as is typical of the blues, but he occasionally breaks the pattern and uses sections of even beat subdivisions.

2. His singing often departs from the beat played by the guitar, following a different rhythm pattern, producing a polyrhythmic effect.

Lyrics: The main image is a lonely black man in the American South of the 1930s who cannot "flag a ride" out of his environment, yet must leave the crossroads before dark (an allusion to curfews that were imposed on blacks in the South at the time). But the imagery suggests a deeper loneliness that transcends the singer's place and time: He falls to his knees seeking a way out of his existential predicament, yet no one stops to help him out, which parallels his failure to connect with a "lovin' sweet woman."

Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

Stones, who recorded "Love in Vain" and "Stop Breaking Down"; Cream, who recorded "Cross Road Blues" (although they called it "Crossroads"); and Fleetwood Mac, who recorded "Hellhound on My Trail."

Although most of the country blues singers who attracted the attention of record companies were men, women also sang and played the blues, and some had fairly successful careers. One such musician was Lizzie "Kid" Douglas, who recorded under the name Memphis Minnie (1897–1973). Her recordings can be found on several labels including Columbia, Victor, Vocalion, OKeh, Decca, and JOB.

Female singers in the classic blues style did not accompany themselves as did Memphis Minnie. Most were from the South and had grown up hearing country blues, but they developed powerful and gutsy vocal styles needed to be heard over the sound level of their accompanying jazz bands. Their style was called **classic blues.** Two classic blues singers who served as inspiration for such later rock singers as Etta James, La Vern Baker, and Janis Joplin were Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.

Bessie Smith (1894–1937) eventually earned the title the Empress of the Blues. Smith was featured in the 1929 film *St. Louis Blues.* She was on a theater tour with a group called Broadway Rastus Review when she was in a car accident and died from her injuries. A listening guide to Bessie Smith's classic recording of "Lost Your Head Blues" is on page 9.

Bessie Smith on stage in 1928

Other classic blues singers included Alberta Hunter, Mamie Smith, and Ida Cox. Billie Holiday is sometimes referred to as a blues singer, but she recorded few songs that were technically the blues. She is better known as one of the greatest of the female jazz singers who recorded during the thirties through the fifties. One of the best examples of her blues recordings was her own composition, "Fine and Mellow" (1939).

The Beginnings of Rock and Roll

Instrumental, vocal, and dance styles that were popular during the forties had a certain amount of influence on the development of rock music. It is important, however, to understand that rock music also had its roots in styles of music that had not yet gained the nationwide popularity of the Tin Pan Alley songs or the swing bands. For example, delta blues and rhythm and blues, which served as the basis of much early rock music, were mostly played and sold in African American neighborhoods and neither heard nor understood by the general American public. Similarly, some country music styles that influenced early rock music had their own particular regions of popularity and, therefore, rather limited numbers of fans. Racism and the forced segregation of African Americans was one of the reasons for this division of musical tastes.

In addition to the types of popular music previously discussed, which aided the development of rock music, several technological innovations in the late forties and early fifties were very important for rock. Magnetic tape recorders not only provided a dramatic improvement in the sound quality of musical recordings but also were handy in the recording studio. Fifties pop and rock musicians made much use of their ability to create echo effects and use **overdubbing** to enhance music already recorded. Some famous examples include Elvis Presley's recording of "Heartbreak Hotel" (1956), which used echo, and Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" (1958), which was made by overdubbing his own playing several times to create an effect that he could never achieve live without the help of other musicians. Recordings became so important in rock music that many performers would **lip sync** to the recordings of their songs on television rather than try to perform them live.

Three technological developments in 1948 were especially important. Transistor radios, 33⅓ rpm long-playing (LP) records, and 45 rpm single records became commercially available. Transistor radios were lighter and easier to move around than the old vacuum tube radios, and by the early sixties, they were made small enough to carry around all day long. It was not until 1954 that the new 33⅓ and 45 single records replaced older types, so many early rock recordings were originally released on the old 78s. The new

Listening Guide

"Lost Your Head Blues" as recorded by Bessie Smith, Joe Smith, and Fletcher Henderson (1926)

Tempo:	The speed of the beat is about 84 beats a minute, with four beats in each bar.
Form:	Twelve-Bar Blues
	0:00 Four-bar introduction played by the cornet and piano
	0:11 1st chorus: "I was with you baby…"
	0:44 2nd chorus: "Once ain't for always…"
	1:16 3rd chorus: "When you were lonesome…"
	1:48 4th chorus: "I'm gonna leave baby…"
	2:20 5th chorus: "Days are lonesome…"
Features:	The fills at the ends of vocal lines are played by the cornet.
	The piano plays accompaniment with no solo sections.
Lyrics:	The basic theme is how money has corrupted the relationship between the singer and her lover—the implication is that now that he has money, he has forgotten the one person who really stood by him when he was poor and is in the process of deserting her for someone he considers more desirable. This desertion has only left her more acutely aware of her own loneliness and the good efforts she has lavished on a bad man.

Spotify Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

45 singles were particularly popular because they allowed for the inexpensive purchase of an individual song with another on the reverse (or "B") side. They were also used in jukeboxes, which were becoming common in soda fountains, restaurants, bars, and other public gathering places. Jukeboxes played songs from their list of available 45 records when coins were dropped in them. Because they could be heard by everyone in the place, not just the person who chose and paid for the song, they helped many people hear popular songs even without the radio.

Racial barriers slowly eroded when white teenagers began to listen and dance to the rhythm and blues of such jump bands as Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five in the late forties.

Also in the late forties, a big change occurred in what music could be heard on radio stations. Previously, only four national stations were available, all of which played music and programs geared to a largely white middle-class audience. Now small, independent stations sprang up all over the country playing music geared to local tastes. These new independent stations used disc jockeys as entertainers and were not afraid to play rock recordings. They also played black rhythm and blues, another important type of music in which rock music was rooted. It was primarily through the radio that white teenagers became acquainted with rhythm and blues because rhythm and blues records were generally only available in black neighborhoods.

Radio and television were both very important in popularizing rock music from its very beginnings. As hard as it is to imagine, it was not until 1951 that televisions were inexpensive enough to be purchased by average middle-class family consumers. Even so, TVs soon became important vehicles for rock performers, and they allowed for dance shows such as *American Bandstand* to be viewed nationwide. At first, many white radio-station and record-company owners resisted making music by African American performers widely available. Certainly, airtime on radio during the thirties and forties was crowded with programs by white entertainers. The increased availability of televisions and the subsequent movement of many former white radio programs from radio to television left room for broader radio programming. By 1951, the smooth rhythmic sounds of African American vocal groups like the Platters and the Moonglows were reaching white teens through radio programs hosted by maverick disc jockeys who refused to perpetuate racial exclusion, the most famous of whom was Cleveland's **Alan Freed.** The increased availability of radios, especially car radios during the early fifties and portable transistor radios several years later, was important in bringing both rhythm and blues and rock music to the teen audience. Bands and audiences were still segregated for the most part, but early rock music did help bridge some of the gap.

In 1954, the Supreme Court decided that equality could not exist when people remained separated by race. After

deciding the case known as *Brown v. Board of Education,* the court demanded that public schools be integrated. It still took years before integration became more common, but attitudes gradually changed from the extreme racist attitudes of the past. The popularity of rock music that developed directly from both African American and white styles of music can be given a part of the credit for helping to relax racist attitudes. Of course, rock music did not replace other types of popular music when it finally came into being, and many other types of popular music still maintain a large following. For the purposes of this book, however, it is rock and roll and its development that will be discussed further.

Summary

America's earliest popular music was brought to the New World by British and other European settlers. Eventually, American-born composers began to compose and publish their own music, providing popular songs that expressed more purely American interests and lifestyles. By the 1890s ragtime music was heard up and down the Mississippi River and had become popular in many big cities.

New York was an important center for several styles of popular music originating in Tin Pan Alley. Swing dance bands and the crooners who sang with these bands helped keep American optimism and spirit alive through World War II. The blues was performed by African Americans living in the rural areas of the southern United States around the beginning of the twentieth century. In its earliest form, country blues music was used to express the longings of people whose lives were generally very difficult. West African influences on the development of the blues included the use of polyrhythms and blue notes and the practice of call-and-response between a leader and a group. European musical traditions such as a regular four-beat pattern in each bar, a repeating and contrasting AAB lyrical scheme, and a twelve-bar chord progression also became elements of the blues.

During the early years of the development of recording technology, blues musicians began moving to larger cities and working with organized jazz bands or at least instruments from them in smaller groups. Rock music developed out of a number of different styles of music that existed in the forties and became a style of its own in the early fifties. More than any of the prerock styles we discussed, rock music depended on recording technology that came into common use in the late forties. In many ways, the popularity of rock music among both black and white musicians and fans aided the movement toward racial integration and mutual respect of people of any ethnic background.

discussion questions

To what degree did early rock music depend on sociological changes as distinct from technological developments? What were some of those sociological changes and how did they help create and popularize rock music? How might the blues be different if slavery had never existed and African Americans had been welcomed immigrants in the United States?

The NINETEEN FIFTIES

"Radioactive poisoning of the atmosphere and hence annihilation of any life on earth has been brought within the range of technical possibilities. . . . In the end, there beckons more and more clearly general annihilation."

–Albert Einstein (1950)

"We will bury you!"

–Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev (1956)

"Rock and roll is a means of pulling down the white man to the level of the Negro. It is part of a plot to undermine the morals of the youth of our nation."

–Asa Carter, North Alabama White Citizens' Council (1956)

The Decade of the Fifties

With memories of World War II still fresh in the minds of most Americans, a new threat was dawning on the horizon in 1950: the communist states of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. In the years immediately following World War II, the Soviet Union occupied much of Eastern Europe; at the other end of the continent, the People's Republic of China had aided the North Korean government against Western allies in the Korean War. The Soviet Union had more planes, tanks, and troops than did the United States and had even already tested its own atomic bomb. Americans were scared. Some who could afford to do so dug into their backyards and installed heavily shielded bomb shelters to save their families from the destruction of the "bomb." Drop drills were practiced in schools to teach kids to drop to the floor, get under their desks, and cover their heads and necks to protect them from window glass that would shatter if a bomb were dropped in the vicinity of the school.

Along with fear of a war with the Soviet Union was fear of the influence that Russian communism might have in the United States. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed (1953) for selling secrets to the Russians. Senator Joseph McCarthy was one of many who were obsessed by the thought that we could be overtaken by oppressive communism. He started his investigations in the early fifties by accusing members of the State Department of having communist ties. His televised questioning of members of the U.S. Army in 1953 gained national attention, but it was ended by the Senate for his obviously having overstated the case. Even so, McCarthy had drawn widespread attention to the communist threat. At the same time, the House Un-American Activities Committee investigated the entertainment industry in search of communists. Its "blacklist," or list of people it determined might be communists, was successful in curtailing or destroying the careers of many people in Hollywood. It also had unknown effects on the work being produced by people who managed to stay in the industry because controversial subjects in television, movies, or other modes of entertainment might lead to the writer's questioning, blacklisting, and subsequent job loss or jail stay. The average American citizen saw this tremendous amount of investigating at home and also saw that the Soviet Union was overtaking more and more countries around its borders, a move that was reminiscent of what Hitler had done. All of those news items added together to create a fear in many Americans that lasted through the cold war (1950–1990). The U.S. involvement in the Korean War was in many ways a reaction to perceived communist expansion into the Korean peninsula.

Despite this pressure to avoid communism and the bomb, the fifties was a decade of relative prosperity for most white middle-class Americans. With the exception of a recession in 1958, unemployment and inflation remained low. During this time fertility rates increased, and most of the members of what became known as the baby boom generation were born. Women were also

working outside the home in greater numbers than they had before, even during the war. Where families had suffered wartime rationing of food and other supplies, they finally had a fairly decent chance to buy their own homes and live comfortably. Some of these new parents had had to work to contribute to the family income during their own teenage years and responded by giving their kids more freedom and money to enjoy. When preteen or teenaged young people had their own money to spend on the things that appealed to them, their tastes began to dictate what was popular.

In part, the emerging youth culture had a dark, albeit exciting, side in the popular image of the rebellious antihero. Movies such as *The Wild One* (1954), in which a young Marlon Brando played the leader of a tough motorcycle gang, helped to popularize that image of rebellion for its own sake. That movie was followed by others, including *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), about juvenile delinquency in an all-male high school, and James Dean's *Rebel without a Cause* (1955). Some rockabilly singers such as Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran wore the black leather jackets associated with that image and sang songs about young people needing to break free of adult authority figures, but the rock artists did not create that image. The movies did.

Rebellion was not limited to teenagers in the fifties. Writers and poets of the Beat movement questioned the values of American society and found it to be hypocritical and oppressive compared to the popular belief that America was a place that gave freedom to all. Statements made by the Beats became central to the thinking of many young people during the sixties and later. Their influence aided the development of several styles of rock music of later decades, including folk-rock, psychedelic, glitter, punk, and industrial.

Televisions got less and less expensive, and by the end of the decade most middle-class households had one. Ironically, the image popularized by television contradicted that of the rebellious teenager portrayed in the cinema. Despite the seriousness of the statements made by the Beat writers, the beatnik (follower of the Beat writers) Maynard G. Krebs on *Dobie Gillis* was a comic character. The parents in *Ozzie and Harriet, Father Knows Best,* and *Leave It to Beaver* had no problems of their own and were always available to see to their children's every need. Lucille Ball did sometimes buck the image of the obedient housewife with her many efforts to gain control of her life in *I Love Lucy,* but she was only able to sell that effectively because she was such a brilliant comedian. The idea of a wife really having equality with her husband was not popular. Overall, the fifties can be seen as a time when many people of the large white middle class were enjoying the fruits of a lifestyle that was clean and comfortable and were anxious to avoid the bomb, communism, and almost anything foreign.

For African Americans, it was a time of serious recognition of their unequal status and for their gradual and finally unified decision to change it. For the most part, segregation had given them lower-quality lifestyles than whites had. Even such issues as the right to vote were in dispute. African Americans had previously been given that right by the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, but it was not practiced fairly in parts of the South. In such places, African Americans were given tests that were impossible for anyone to pass, and their failure kept them from being allowed to vote. Sometimes they were charged fees called poll taxes, so they could not afford to vote. Whites did not have either restriction on their voting rights. The images of African Americans on television were also extremely unequal. The actors on all of the popular shows were white, with African Americans and other minorities only cast in the roles of servants in such comedies as *Make Room for Daddy* and the *Jack Benny Show.*

In the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, the Supreme Court forced schools that had previously been segregated by race to integrate. The new law took some years to become common practice and be accepted by the majority of the U.S. population. More than two thousand school districts had still not integrated by 1960.

It was in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 that the weary Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man and was arrested and tried for it. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led a 381-day bus boycott following the incident. The legal battles that ensued took time, but the Supreme Court did finally outlaw the segregation of seats on vehicles for public transportation. The civil rights movement had gotten well under way.

Most entertainment venues had always been racially segregated. In cases such as New York's famous Cotton Club, where Duke Ellington and other jazz greats of the thirties often performed to white audiences, African Americans were not allowed to mix with the white patrons. By the fifties, some clubs would have "black" nights for African American patrons and "white" nights for whites. At times the

groups could be at the same club at the same time, but there was a rope across the floor segregating the crowd. As rhythm and blues and blues-based rock music began to be popular with more and more white teenagers, that segregation was unacceptable to them. The separate nights gradually became one and the ropes came down. As Chuck Berry said at the time, "Well, look what's happening, salt and pepper all mixed together." Rock music was, in many ways, a music of integration.

Chronology Chart

	Historical Events	Happenings in Rock Music
1945	Truman becomes president. U.S. drops first atomic bomb. End of World War II, beginning of postwar prosperity. Beginning of baby boom.	Louis Jordan's "jumpin' jive" style becomes popular with white teens. The Delmore Brothers record "Hillbilly Boogie."
1947	Truman orders all federal government buildings to be racially integrated. The Marshall Plan aids Europe.	Country musicians begin to cover African American blues recordings. Atlantic Record Co. formed.
1948	Apartheid policy becomes official in South Africa. The U.S.S.R. blockade of Allied sectors of Berlin. Goldmark invents microgroove system, making LP albums possible.	Pete Seeger and Lee Hays form the Weavers. 33⅓ and 45 rpm records first marketed.
1949	U.S. troops withdraw from Korea. Berlin blockade is lifted. NATO established.	*Race music* begins to be called *rhythm and blues.*
1950	Truman authorizes production of H-bomb. U.S. military advisers agree to aid South Vietnam against communist North. Senator Joseph McCarthy's search for communists begins.	Chess Brothers change label name from Aristocrat to Chess. Cool jazz develops from bebop jazz. "On Top of Old Smoky" and "Good Night Irene" hit for the Weavers.
1951	U.S. involvement in Korean War. First transcontinental TV and first color TV marketed in U.S.	Car radios become common. Bill Haley and the Saddlemen record "Rocket 88." Popularity of rhythm and blues among white teens increases. Alan Freed's debut on Cleveland radio.
1952	Immigration and Naturalization Act passes. U.S. explodes first hydrogen bomb.	Bill Haley's Saddlemen become the Comets. Riot at Alan Freed's Moondog Coronation Ball in Cleveland. *Bandstand* on television.
1953	Rosenberg executions. Eisenhower becomes president. Korean War ends. U.S.S.R. tests hydrogen bomb.	Weavers break up after HUAC investigation. Hank Williams dies.
1954	McCarthy hearings end with Senate condemnation of McCarthy. Racial integration in public schools begins. Some whites resist efforts toward integration of races. U.S. sends military units to South Vietnam as French troops leave.	Bill Haley's first release of "Rock around the Clock." Alan Freed on WINS in New York. 45s replace 78s at RCA and Mercury. "Sh-Boom" by the Chords enters the pop charts. Marlon Brando portrays a rebellious teen in *The Wild One.* Elvis Presley records for the Sun Record Co. Fender releases the Stratocaster. First stereo recorded on tape.
1955	Atomically generated power is used. Bus boycott is organized by African Americans in Montgomery, Alabama. Labor unions merge to form AFL-CIO.	*Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel without a Cause* are released. Chess label signs Chuck Berry. The Platters have a pop chart hit. First radio broadcasts in stereo. James Dean dies.

1956	Martin Luther King Jr. becomes recognized leader of civil rights movement. Supreme Court overturns Alabama Intrastate Bus Segregation Law. First transatlantic telephone cable put into operation.	Ska begins to develop in Jamaica. Elvis Presley's first RCA recording sessions and movie *Love Me Tender.* Elvis Presley makes first TV appearance on the Tommy Dorsey Show. Carl Perkins is injured in an auto accident. Buddy Holly and the Crickets sign first record contract. Dick Clark becomes host of *American Bandstand*. Many bans on rock concerts sought due to brawls and riots at previous concerts.
1957	U.S.S.R. launches first satellites (Sputniks I and II). Eisenhower Doctrine seeks to keep communism out of the Middle East. International Atomic Energy Agency is founded. Federal troops sent to Arkansas to protect African American students at formerly all-white high school.	*American Bandstand* broadcast on national TV. Little Richard quits performing to enter the ministry. Jerry Lee Lewis marries thirteen-year-old cousin. Boston bans the Everly Brothers' "Wake Up Little Susie." Paul McCartney joins John Lennon's Quarry Men in Liverpool. Burrough's novel *Naked Lunch* is published. Last 78s are released.
1958	Congressional committee investigates unethical practices in broadcasting industry (payola scandal). U.S. launches Explorer I satellite. First recordings made in stereo.	Army drafts Elvis Presley. Violence causes cancellations of Alan Freed shows. NBC bans rock music. St. Louis DJs break rock records on radio. Aldon Music and Brill Building centers for New York pop songwriting. First Newport Folk Festival. Transistor radios are marketed. Big Bill Broonzy dies.
1959	Alaska and Hawaii join U.S. as states. First ballistic missile submarine and first atomic-powered merchant ship are launched. Castro takes power in Cuba. Soviet premier Khrushchev visits U.S.	Buddy Holly records first rock record using a string section. Alan Freed is fired because of payola scandal. Motown Record Co. starts in Detroit. Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper die.

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chapter 2

Urban Blues and Rhythm and Blues

"Muddy Waters is the godfather of the blues."

–CHUCK BERRY

The term *blues* has long been used to describe feelings of sadness and hopelessness. The music called the blues developed out of a very unhappy situation indeed—that of people taken forcibly from their homes and brought to a new world to live in slavery. Even long after they were released from servitude, African Americans were not accepted by the white society that had granted them their freedom. Despite that difficult fact, the blues was not always a sad music. It was often music used by African Americans to help them cope with the problems and frustrations they encountered in the harshness of their daily lives. The lyrics of many blues songs included an element of hope and the anticipation of better times. Some told stories, often including sexual references, sometimes euphemistically, sometimes blatantly; but in general they were an emotional outpouring by a people who had been relegated to existing on the fringes of a society that considered them social and genetic inferiors. One, perhaps the first, type of rock music was played by rhythm and blues musicians who added more energy and a stronger **backbeat** (accents on the second and fourth of each four-beat bar) to their music than was typical of most earlier rhythm and blues. Bo Diddley was one such musician who was really a rhythm and blues guitarist and singer but whose music is also an early type of rock music.

Urban Blues

The U.S. involvement in World War I (1914–1918) required many men of military age to leave their industrial jobs in large northern cities and go to Europe to fight in the war. Around that same time, many African Americans in the Mississippi delta were losing jobs because of the boll weevils' attacks on cotton crops. The result of these two events was that many southern African Americans ended up moving to such northern cities as Kansas City, Chicago, and New York in order to find jobs. Once settled in the North, the first of these workers found that they suffered less from the kinds of racial discrimination they had in the South; and that word spread, causing others to move north. Racism still existed in the North to the point that neighborhoods were segregated, so separate African American communities developed in each city. Among those workers who were newly grouped together and living a much more urban, or city-oriented, lifestyle than they had in the rural South were many musicians whose training was in country blues. When these musicians banded together into small groups instead of just singing and accompanying themselves on guitars, a new style of blues developed: **urban blues.**

Most urban blues was played by groups of instruments that included a rhythm section (bass, drums, guitar, or piano) and solo instruments such as the saxophone and other wind instruments. The instrumental group, which at times was a full jazz band, accompanied the singer, played responses to the singer's lines, and also played instrumental choruses. A piano was loud enough to be used as a solo instrument, but an unamplified guitar did not project well enough (although some acoustic guitar solos were played on recordings). For that reason, the guitar was used primarily to strum rhythms until the invention of the electric guitar.

Urban blues guitarist Aaron Thibeaux Walker, nicknamed **T-Bone Walker** (1910–1975), was among the first musicians to use the electric guitar as a solo blues instrument. Born in Texas, Walker grew up playing country blues guitar in the style of Blind Lemon Jefferson, who was also from Texas. Jefferson played with the same casual approach to rhythm that delta singers like Robert Johnson had used, but his style differed in that the lines he played as fills between his vocal phrases were much longer and more complex than those of most delta guitarists. After years of playing both the blues and rhythm and blues, Walker grew away from his early rural roots and developed a flashy solo style in which he played highly embellished versions of the melody. He was a terrific showman who did things like play the guitar behind his back, and he became a strong influence on both blues guitarist B. B. King and rock guitarist Chuck Berry.

B. B. King (1925–2015) came from Mississippi, the homeland of the delta blues. His very lyrical and expressive solo style was an important influence on many rock guitarists, including Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Jimi Hendrix, and Mike Bloomfield. King's initials, "B. B.," were derived from his nickname, "Blues Boy"; his real name was Riley B. King. An analysis of King's recording of "Three O'Clock Blues" (1951) showing the important elements of his playing is on page 19. "Three O'Clock Blues" was a number one hit on the *Billboard* rhythm and blues charts for five weeks.

B. B. King in concert

Listening Guide

"Three O'Clock Blues" as recorded by B. B. King (1951)

Tempo: The speed of the beat is slow (about 76 beats per minute), with four beats in each bar.

Form: Twelve-Bar Blues

0:00 Four-bar guitar introduction

0:13 1st chorus: "Now here it's three o'clock. . ."

0:54 2nd chorus: "Lord, I look around. . ."

1:36 3rd chorus: Instrumental featuring guitar solo

2:15 4th chorus: "Well, goodbye everybody. . ."

Features: King sings and then plays guitar lines that function as a response to his vocal lines. (He plays the instrumental fills on the last seven beats of each section of the twelve-bar form.) The guitar lines imitate and expand on the vocal melody to which they respond and often use string bends to reach blue notes.

A chordal accompaniment is supplied by saxophones playing sustained (long-held) notes. The drums are very soft (under-recorded?), with little or no accenting of the backbeat (beats 2 and 4 of a four-beat pattern). A bit of urban sophistication in the arrangement is the occasional use of half-step slides into some of the main chords of the progression. Most of the time King slides down to the proper chord, but he reverses that and slides up to the tonic chord at the final cadence (ending).

Lyrics: Finding, in the wee hours of the morning, that his lover has left him, the singer is suicidal, though going to the local pool hall may offer some solace.

Billboard rhythm and blues charts: number one for five weeks

Spotify Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

“I can hear myself singing when I play. That may sound weird, but I can hear the words that I’m saying and a lot of times they don’t mean as much to me as the way I say it.”

–B. B. King

It is helpful to compare the rhythmic informality of Robert Johnson to the formal regularity of the beat pattern and song structure of “Three O’Clock Blues” to hear the urbanization of the later style. Also, King’s urban blues guitar style includes playing lines that are of equal importance to the lines he sings. Certainly no single recording could show all of B. B. King’s abilities as either a guitarist or a singer. He has performed as featured soloist with jazz bands and groups of all sizes, as well as with large orchestral string sections playing arrangements of blues songs. He also performed with U2 in their 1988 movie *Rattle and Hum.* King’s interest in playing melodic lines rather than chordal accompaniments was evident in that performance. Just before King went on stage with U2, he requested that “the Edge” take care of the chords. King’s career continued on in the nineties with several new albums and even a performance on *Simpsons Sing the Blues* (1990). On the album *Blues Summit* (1993), King played a series of duets with John Lee Hooker, Lowell Fulson, and Robert Cray.

“I still don’t think there is a better blues guitarist in the world than B. B. King.”

–Eric Clapton

Although the urban blues was more complex than country blues, this style was not necessarily better. Rock musicians have taken advantage of both styles, drawing elements from the music of both the relatively untrained but tremendously expressive style of country blues artists and the musical sophistication of urban blues artists. Blues-based rock styles may differ greatly from each other, but this is proof that through the years the blues has remained a very adaptable and flexible music.

Chicago Blues

Chicago was one of the large industrial cities that attracted many African American workers during World War I. Soon after the end of that war, African American neighborhoods in Chicago’s West Side and South Side were populated by as many as 200,000 people. That population more than doubled during World War II, again because of job availability in the city. As had happened in other northern cities, Chicago musicians urbanized their styles by joining into groups and by replacing the older acoustic guitars with electric ones. The blues style that developed in Chicago combined swing jazz and boogie-woogie piano influences with the passion of the delta blues. This style came to be called **Chicago blues.**

Chess Recording Studios in Chicago must be given much credit for its recordings of the blues during the forties and fifties. The company was owned and run by two brothers, **Phil and Leonard Chess,** who had immigrated to the United States from Poland. Almost all of the blues artists discussed earlier were with the Chess label at one time or another; and while their styles were generally rural, country blues when they first came to Chicago, Chess gave them backup musicians and amplification that resulted in a more urban style.

As you listen to music by the delta singers, you will notice that while many of their songs fit the twelve-bar form of the traditional blues described earlier, others avoided both the AAB lyrical structure and the prescribed chord progressions. Some songs had no more than a single chord throughout but kept a general blues style by using other elements such as blue notes and uneven beat subdivisions. In other words, not every “blues-sounding” song played by a blues musician necessarily fit the formal structure of the twelve-bar blues. To aid the inexperienced listener’s understanding of the basic differences between the sound of the twelve-bar structure (and some common variants) and the sound of the blues-style chant over a single chord, this section concludes with some comments about the structure and other characteristics of a few representative songs by Chicago blues musicians, along with some information about their careers.

Willie Dixon (1915–1992) worked as a writer, producer, contractor, bass player, and occasional singer at the Chess Recording Studios in Chicago, but he became better known as a blues songwriter than as a singer. He wrote many hits for others, including “You Shook Me” and “I Can’t Quit You Baby,” which have been recorded by many blues and blues-rock musicians. “You Shook Me” and another of his songs, “(I’m Your) Hoochie Coochie Man,” represented a variant on the twelve-bar blues structure because both had an extra-long (eight-bar) first A section on each vocal chorus, followed by A and B sections of the usual four bars each, extending each full blues chorus to sixteen bars. “Little Red Rooster” and “I Can’t Quit You Baby” followed the twelve-bar blues form. As a performer, Dixon played bass on many Chess recordings.

Although the origin of **Muddy Waters**’s stage name is not known for certain, popular legend has it that he was so called because he liked to “muddy” for fish (reach into water and catch fish with his hands) in a pond near his father’s home in Rolling Fork, Mississippi. As a songwriter, Muddy Waters used his real name, McKinley Morganfield. His style, which often included the whining sound of a

Circa 1960: Blues songwriter–bassist Willie Dixon (standing) and blues singer songwriter guitarist Muddy Waters performing

bottleneck guitar, was rustic and was actually close to country blues in his early blues hits like "Rollin' Stone" (1948). That song was not a twelve-bar blues but instead had only one chord played throughout, with the lyrics structured in eight-bar periods. Waters's bending of blue notes and relaxed flow of uneven beat subdivisions created a blues feel without the standard structure.

Although Muddy Waters began playing and singing in the rural delta blues style, his change to the electric guitar and the addition of a band that included Little Walter on blues harp, Jimmy Rogers on guitar, and Waters's half-brother, Otis Spann, on piano shifted his sound from country blues to urban blues. It was for this latter style that he became best known. Waters never actually played rock and roll, but he often performed in rock concerts, including the Band's final concert in 1976 (subsequently made into the movie *The Last Waltz*) and a tour with Eric Clapton in 1979. Over the years, Waters won many Grammy awards in the categories of "Best Ethnic" and "Best Traditional" recordings. He died in 1983 having spent over forty years performing and recording the blues.

A listening guide to Muddy Waters's recording of Willie Dixon's song "(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man" is on page 22. "(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man" reached number three on the rhythm and blues charts but did not make the pop charts.

"There was quite a few people around singing the blues, but most of them was singing all sad blues. Muddy was giving his blues a little pep."

–"(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man" songwriter Willie Dixon

Elmore James (1918–1963) claimed to have met and played with Robert Johnson, who, James said, suggested that he try using a metal pipe to slide along the strings in much the same way that others were using a bottleneck. Like Muddy Waters, James eventually moved from Mississippi to Chicago to perform and record. Instead of just accompanying his singing with his own guitar as he had in the past, James took advantage of the availability of jazz musicians in Chicago and was among the first of the delta blues musicians to work regularly with groups including saxophone, piano, and drums. Through his work with those groups, he gained a reputation as one of the early modernizers of the delta blues. While his groups gave his music a modern sound, his own guitar playing was an example of bottleneck country blues. Elmore James's recording of Robert Johnson's twelve-bar blues song "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom" exemplified that synthesis of urban and delta blues.

James's slide guitar style was copied by many rock guitarists, including British blues players Eric Clapton, Brian Jones (an original member of the Rolling Stones), and Jeremy Spencer (of the original Fleetwood Mac), and Americans Jimi Hendrix and Duane Allman. His lifestyle must have included Robert Johnson's fondness for women, because when James died of a heart attack in 1963 at age forty-five, six women claimed to have been married to him.

Chester Arthur Burnett originally called himself Big Foot Chester, but the wolflike growls and howls that were part of his act earned him the name **Howlin' Wolf** (1910–1976). He played both the guitar and the harp (the **blues harp** is a harmonica) and claimed to have played with Robert Johnson, who influenced his guitar style, and with the original Sonny Boy Williamson, from whom he learned to play the harp. Burnett's aggressive, sometimes raunchy, sound was not suited for the pop charts, but such recordings

Listening Guide

"(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man" as recorded by Muddy Waters (1954)

Tempo: The tempo is about 76 beats per minute with four beats in each bar.

Form: Twelve-Bar Blues with additional four bars added to first A section in vocal choruses extending them to sixteen bars

0:00 Two-bar introduction

0:05 1st chorus: "The gypsy woman. . ."

0:57 2nd chorus: "I gotta black. . ."

1:48 3rd chorus: Twelve-bar instrumental chorus

2:25 4th chorus: Twelve-bar instrumental chorus

3:03 5th chorus: "On the seventh. . ."

Features: Each A section has a two-beat instrumental stop time segment.

The drums maintain an uneven beat subdivision with little or no backbeat.

The piano usually plays triple-beat subdivisions, but at times lapses into a duple subdivision, creating a polyrhythm with the drums.

The recording has no instrumental choruses.

Lyrics: The theme is the singer's *supernatural* sexual prowess. *Hoochie coochie* is a term for sexual desire (to dance the hoochie coochie is to perform an erotic dance). The supernatural nature of the singer's "studliness" is shown in every verse, from the references to a gypsy fortune teller who prophesies that the singer will make women "jump and shout," to black cats, good luck charms ("I got a mojo too"), and a birth on the seventh hour of the seventh day of the seventh month. Indeed, the supernatural force of multiples of seven goes back at least as far as the Old Testament's Book of Joshua, where seven priests blowing seven trumpets for seven days cause the walls of Jericho to "come a tumbling down" the way that the singer brags that his own association with the number seven will undermine the defenses of any woman he has chosen to sexually conquer.

Billboard rhythm and blues charts: number three

Spotify Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example! Note that the Spotify recording from 1977 includes two twelve-bar instrumental choruses. The *Chess Box* and *Best of Muddy Waters* recordings have the recording discussed here.

as "Little Red Rooster" (written by Willie Dixon) were often played by blues revivalists, including the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead. "Little Red Rooster" was a traditional twelve-bar blues, but many other recordings by Howlin' Wolf were not. "Smokestack Lightnin'," for example, was chanted over a single chord. His songs were also recorded by the British groups Cream, the Yardbirds, and Led Zeppelin, and in America by the Doors and the Electric Flag.

In 1972, Burnett (Howlin' Wolf took writer's credit under his real name) recorded the album *The London Sessions,* which included some of the rock musicians who had begun their careers playing his music—Eric Clapton, Steve Winwood, Bill Wyman, and Charlie Watts. After a long and successful career, Burnett died of kidney disease in 1976.

John Lee Hooker (1917–2001) was based in Detroit rather than Chicago and recorded on a variety of labels,

Chart Listings

Information about the relative popularity of songs in this book has been gathered from books published by *Billboard,* a weekly magazine on popular music. First published in 1894, the earliest issues of *Billboard* magazine were comprised of articles of interest to people in the business of popular music, but it did not begin having chart lists until 1940. Information needed to compile the charts was gathered from radio station playlists and from record sales. Since neighborhoods where records were sold and radio stations aired were segregated and a variety of styles of music were being evaluated, *Billboard* listed songs on three different charts: popular, currently called pop; hillbilly, later called country and western and currently country; and sepia (a dark reddish brown color), later called race and currently rhythm and blues. Given that the rhythm and blues charts generally reflect the tastes of African Americans; the country charts those of white Americans, particularly in the South and West; and the pop charts those of the very largest, multiracial, but primarily white population, it can be interesting to compare how a particular song or artist rated on the various different charts. The primary goal of this text is not to take the place of the *Billboard* books in reporting the listings for every song that is discussed; but the ones of particular interest to the subject of general popularity of rhythm and blues and early rock music will be included here.

including Modern and Riverside Records, but he toured with some of the Chicago bluesmen and also had an influence on rock musicians who recorded his songs. His dramatic delta-based guitar style and deep, rich voice gave him a career that lasted almost six decades. His twelve-bar blues song "Boom Boom" became a rock hit when recorded by a British group, the Animals, in 1965. Both recordings used a **break,** in which the instruments stopped playing during the vocal line and then responded by playing on the second, third, fourth, and first beats that followed. The break created an effective type of call-and-response that was used in other blues and blues-rock recordings as well. Other songs originally written and recorded by Hooker were also recorded by the Spencer Davis Group and by the later American blues revivalists Canned Heat and George Thorogood. Hooker was featured in the 1980 film *The Blues Brothers,* and he toured and recorded albums well into the eighties. On his album *The Healer* (1988), he was joined by Santana, Bonnie Raitt, Robert Cray, Canned Heat, Los Lobos, George Thorogood, and Charlie Musselwhite. Hooker has recorded several new albums, and collections of his old recordings were released during the nineties. He stopped touring in 1995, but vowed to continue to sing and record for the rest of his life. He died in 2001, six years later.

The Chess Record Company was sold to GRT Corporation after Leonard Chess died in 1969. The company continued to do minimal recording, but it no longer promoted musicians' careers. The catalog of recordings was preserved, however, and eventually purchased by MCA, later known as the All Platinum/Sugarhill Company. The new owners have continued to reissue the great Chicago blues recordings of the past.

Many early rock songs were based on the blues form and style, making the blues one of the most important roots of rock music. The blues is not rock by itself, however. Other important styles of music that melded with the blues to create rock music are discussed in the next chapter.

Rhythm and Blues

The blues might not have had as great an impact on the development of rock music of the fifties and sixties had it not been for the tremendous popularity of a related style, **rhythm and blues.** Called *race music* until the end of the forties, rhythm and blues was a type of rhythmic dance music in which every second and fourth beat of each four-beat bar was accented. Because it was more common in other styles of music to accent the first and third beats of each bar, that stress on the "off" beats was called a backbeat. The backbeat was used in the blues, but it became more obvious and important in rhythm and blues.

Whereas the blues developed as music reflective of the problems of African American life, rhythm and blues was a dance music that expressed the enjoyment of life. It originated in the African American ghettos of large cities and was played by organized, rehearsed groups that included a variety of instruments. These groups put on energetic stage shows in which saxophone players often swiveled their hips, lowered themselves to the floor (or into the audience), and rolled around on their backs while playing. Singers shouted out their lyrics while maintaining a high level of physical activity. This excitement and energy, as well as the rhythm and backbeat of rhythm and blues, formed the very basis of much fifties rock and roll. The sexual suggestiveness of the lyrics of many rhythm and blues songs also helped to contribute to some of the backlash against rock music that was based on it.

During the late thirties and through the forties, **Louis Jordan** (1908–1975) played alto saxophone and clarinet in

various large jazz bands and finally formed his own band, Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five. His group often played big theaters like the Apollo in New York and the Regal in Chicago, and through these performances, he gained a following as much for his sense of humor as for his musical ability. Jordan called his rhythmic style of playing the blues "shuffle boogie" or "jumpin' jive," and his group was often described as a "jump band." His music was so danceably rhythmic, his stage personality so engaging, and his songs so full of humor that his records were as popular with whites as they were with African Americans. Having heard and liked Jordan's jump band, white rock musicians such as Bill Haley imitated its shuffle beat in the early fifties. Newer tributes to Jordan's popular appeal include the rerecording of some of his songs on Joe Jackson's album *Jumpin' Jive* (1981) as well as the musical revue *Five Guys Named Moe* that opened in London in 1990 and then moved on to Broadway in New York. Jordan was also a big influence on the "jump blues" rock style of Little Richard.

Bo Diddley, born Ellas Bates (1928–2008), strummed his guitar in a constantly throbbing, rhythmic style that sounded almost as if he were playing drums. His name was legally changed to Ellas McDaniel by the adoptive parents who raised him, and he used that name as a songwriter. He studied the violin for a time before he decided to change to the guitar, an instrument that was more acceptable to the other kids in his rough Chicago neighborhood. Many stories have been told about the source of his stage name, but he claimed that his friends gave it to him back when he was a boxer because of his originality in coming up with new fighting tricks. It was quite possible that his friends chose Bo Diddley after the diddley-bow, a single-stringed instrument of African origin that was played by African Americans in the South.

Bo Diddley's strongly rhythmic style was rock-oriented, although it was considered rhythm and blues during the fifties. In fact, his only top forty hit on the *Billboard* pop charts was "Say Man," which reached number twenty in 1959. His first record was "Bo Diddley" backed by "I'm a Man," and it was a number one hit on the rhythm and blues charts. Bo Diddley was very influential on American rock musicians during the fifties and was copied by British blues-revival rock groups of the sixties in their covers of his songs as well as in their own material. The Yardbirds did his "I'm a Man"; the Rolling Stones, his "Mona"; and the Animals, his "Bo Diddley." None of these three songs were in the blues form; in fact, both "Mona" and "Bo Diddley" were based on a single chord throughout. In both of these songs, Diddley used a bottleneck to slide up and down between the fifth and seventh frets on his guitar, giving the effect of more chord changes during breaks in the melody. "I'm a Man" used a modified form of an instrumental break that was also common in the blues. The harp and piano break (stop playing) during the vocals, but the drums continue throughout the song, repeating the characteristic rhythm known as the "Bo Diddley beat," which is notated in the listening guide on page 25. Of course Bo Diddley was not the first musician to ever play this beat pattern, but it has taken his name because of the characteristic energy with which he strummed it and the fact that he popularized it.

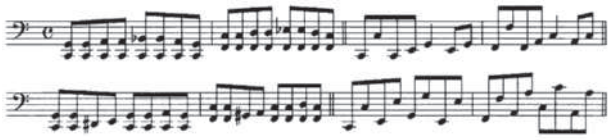
Guitarist Bo Diddley poses for a portrait with his Gretsch electric guitar and Jerome Green on his right playing maracas circa 1958 in New York City

"I'm a rhythm fanatic. I played the guitar as if I were playing drums."
–Bo Diddley

The Bo Diddley beat has been used in many rock songs, including Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," Johnny Otis's "Willie and the Hand Jive," the Who's "Magic Bus," Bruce Springsteen's "She's the One," U2's "Desire," and the Pretenders' "Cuban Slide." In addition to covering Diddley's recordings, the Animals also recorded a tribute to him they called "The Story of Bo Diddley," in which they gave Diddley much of the credit for starting rock and roll. Bo Diddley himself was still performing, writing, and recording in the nineties, and the influence of his rhythmic, blues-based style was apparent in the music of younger blues musicians including George Thorogood.

One of the most important rhythm and blues pianists to influence rock and roll was New Orleans's **Professor Longhair** (Henry Roeland Byrd, 1918–1980), whose rollicking boogie-woogie bass lines became essential elements in the rock styles of Fats Domino, Huey "Piano" Smith, Dr. John (Malcolm "Mac" Rebennack), and Allen Toussaint, to name only a few. **Boogie-woogie,** a spirited and rhythmic piano style developed

by African Americans in the South during the twenties and copied by many white performers, eventually became basic to most rock piano styles from both blues and country roots. In boogie-woogie, the pianist's left hand played a fast, repeated note pattern with two notes played in the time of each single beat. Its effect was that of doubling the basic beat, creating a fast, motoristic, rhythmic drive. Some common boogie-woogie piano patterns are notated as follows:



These examples are notated in even note values, but they were also often played in a shuffle beat pattern. Over these left-hand bass patterns, the right hand often played short bits of melody (called **riffs** when repeated several times). Boogie-woogie most often employed the classic twelve-bar blues harmonic form. However, Professor Longhair also used pop song forms for some of his songs; his rhythm and blues hit from 1949, "Bald Head," is an example of this. In addition to his own successes and his influences on others, Longhair's music continues to be remembered in his hometown when his "Mardi Gras in New Orleans" is played every year as the famous Mardi Gras carnival's theme song.

Listening Guide

"Bo Diddley"
as recorded by Bo Diddley (1955)

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 104 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

Form: 0:00 Four-bar introduction that establishes the beat pattern that will repeat throughout the song.

0:09 Seventeen-bar phrase "Bo Diddley bought his babe. . ."

0:48 Twenty-four-bar phrase "Bo Diddley caught a nanny. . ."

1:43 Nineteen-bar phrase "Mojo come to my house. . ."

Features: Even beat subdivisions are maintained by the maracas.

There is no stress on the backbeat other than the fact that the second and fourth beats are played as part of the basic Bo Diddley beat that is followed throughout the recording.

Billboard rhythm and blues charts: number one for two weeks

The Bo Diddley beat is notated as follows:

Along with this basic beat there are other beat patterns that, at times, create an almost polyrhythmic effect. Most of the variants make changes in the second beat of the four-beat pattern, maintaining the stress on beat one, the second half of beat three, and on beat four.

After the sections with vocals, the repetitions of instrumental bars are colored by rhythmic strums on the guitar stopped by a bottleneck on the seventh, the fifth, and then the seventh frets.

Lyrics: The mythical Bo Diddley goes to great expense and effort to seduce his "pretty baby," from buying her a diamond ring to trying black magic, but the ultimate result is that she won't go for it.

Spotify Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

Summary

In urban blues the guitar moved beyond its earlier role as an accompaniment instrument to that of a solo instrument playing along with piano, drums, and other instruments. Chicago blues was a particular type of urban blues that was heavily influenced by swing jazz and boogie-woogie piano styles. Urban blues, from Chicago and other large cities, lead directly to the development of rock guitar styles of the fifties.

Rhythm and blues made use of blue notes and other musical characteristics of the blues but did not usually follow the twelve-bar blues form. It was intended as lighthearted entertainment rather than as a reflection of the difficulties of day-to-day living. Often used as dance music, rhythm and blues shared a type of formalism with urban blues because it was usually performed by groups of musicians playing written or memorized arrangements, and yet the performances were wild and full of sexual innuendo. Both the blatant sexuality and the backbeat of rhythm and blues became basic characteristics of rock music.

discussion questions

Listen again to "Three O'Clock Blues" by B. B. King and then to "Bo Diddley" by Bo Diddley. As you listen, compare the tempos, the feel of the rhythms, and the lyrics of the two recordings. What basic differences between the blues and rhythm and blues can you name based on this comparison? Can you tell why the term *rhythm* is there in "rhythm and blues"?

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chapter 3

Gospel and Country Roots of Rock

"Blues are the songs of despair, but gospel songs are the songs of hope."

–MAHALIA JACKSON

Rock music developed from the combination of a number of different styles of music that existed before it. The blues is a primary root of rock, but then the blues is the blues. It didn't become rock until it was combined with other music to create something new. One can say that much fifties rock is a combination of blues and country music, but then country musicians had been playing songs based on a twelve-bar blues form for years without sounding like they were playing rock. If they played their instruments and sang in a distinctively country style, their "blues" songs sounded like country music. A new type of rock music was created when musicians who grew up playing and singing the blues, rhythm and blues, and gospel, such as Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, and Little Richard, added country-styled characteristics to their music. Rock music was also created when country-trained musicians such as Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, and many others not only played songs in a blues form but also added blues characteristics such as blue notes and uneven beat subdivisions to their playing and singing. In order to be able to pick out the characteristics of each of the styles of music that came together to create rock and roll, those prerock types of music need to be discussed. That is the purpose of this chapter.

Spirituals

Christians were directed to sing "spiritual songs" in the New Testament of the Bible (Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16). Accordingly, the term **spiritual** was given to religious folk songs from both the white and the African American traditions from the middle-eighteenth century through the nineteenth century. Over time terms such as *psalm* and *hymn* became more commonly used for songs by white composers, and *spiritual* became associated with songs by African American composers. As was true of folk music in general, the original spirituals were not written down but were passed by memory from singer to singer. Exactly what the early spirituals sounded like can only be guessed from the descriptions written in slave owners' diaries or included in the earliest printed editions of the lyrics. According to *Slave Songs of the United States,* written by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison in 1867, spirituals were not sung in the prearranged, multivoiced structures that whites called *part singing,* but African American singers did not always sing the same melody at the same time either. Lead singers improvised, sliding from one note to another and singing "turns" around the melody notes. Other sources indicate that a similar style was used in African American work songs and field hollers. The use of leaders improvising while other singers stay in the background with the plain melody became common in black gospel singing styles of the twentieth century.

Texts of spirituals varied from slow, melancholy sorrow songs such as "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" to fast and highly energetic jubilees such as "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?" Both types of spirituals often contained coded messages that the singers did not want whites to understand. The messages were cleverly designed to sound on the surface as if they were being sung to celebrate the belief that Christianity would bring them to heaven, when they were really communicating the way to escape from slavery in the South to freedom in the North.

"Wade in the Water," for example, was about baptism on the surface, but it also communicated the suggestion that escaping slaves should travel in streams so that their "owners'" dogs could not track their scent. Granted, the reference to the owner is "A band of angels coming after me," but subtlety was essential. Other lyrics like "We'll stand the storm" helped to encourage patience and endurance until the dream of freedom came true.

Gospel Music

Black gospel music developed from the same musical roots as spirituals and the blues. These roots included certain scale structures and the call-and-response tradition from parts of West Africa. European musical traditions contributed formal structure, harmonies, regular beat patterns, and use of such musical instruments as the guitar and piano. The blues and gospel music developed into different, but related, styles because the blues was the personal expression of an individual singer, whereas gospel was used to voice the shared religious beliefs of a group of worshippers.

The development of black gospel music came about as it did because of the manner in which African Americans were introduced to Christianity. African American slaves attended church with their white owners (or under the watchful eye of someone who represented the owners) because it was thought dangerous to allow large groups of slaves to meet together without the presence and dominance of whites. White churches had separate sections for African American congregations, but both groups sang the

same hymns and came to share the same beliefs in the "good news" of the Gospels. Because churches were organized for white congregations, hymns were performed with white European traditions—a steady beat with even beat subdivisions and accents on the first and third beat of each four-beat pattern. Known as "white gospel," the music followed many of the same traditions as hillbilly music.

After the Civil War and the abolishment of slavery, African Americans built their own churches. White gospel music continued to be sung in the white churches, but African Americans developed their own style of religious music. Spirited by the new taste of freedom, they sang music that displayed the characteristics and energy of pre–Civil War camp meeting and jubilee spirituals, like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "In That Great Gettin' Up Morning." The African call-and-response tradition, as it was practiced in a church service, involved the preacher calling out a phrase from the Bible, to which the congregation would respond with statements about their belief in its truth or with the next biblical verse. Call-and-response was also employed during the singing of hymns, when the preacher or lead singer would sing verses and a group of singers would respond with the refrain of the hymn. By the thirties, the term *gospel* began to be applied to sophisticated religious music by such composers as Thomas A. Dorsey and Lucie Campbell.

Probably first intended as an expression of enthusiasm for the religious subjects of the music, a number of highly stylized vocal devices or patterns were improvised by gospel singers, and those improvisations became characteristic of the vocals in soul styles that followed gospel. One such device, sometimes called a *turn* (or **melisma** in its more elaborate form), was a type of embellishment that involved sliding around notes both above and below the melody note, thereby dramatically delaying that note, and then finally resolving to it. Another stylized vocal practice was breaking a single syllable of a word into several parts by punctuations or aspirations of breath. The effect was to build the intensity of the word.

As another result of the congregations' emotional involvement with religion, highly energetic and syncopated rhythms entered the performance of music in church services, along with dancing in the aisles, hand clapping, and shouting. It was not uncommon in some southern churches for preachers to become caught up in the fervor of these activities and faint during the service, something that became part of the stage act of many soul singers.

The **Soul Stirrers,** from Texas, recorded for the Library of Congress archives as early as 1936. They influenced many other gospel groups with their **falsetto** (higher than standard tenor range and generally somewhat breathy in tone quality) lead singing, use of polyrhythms, and textual improvisations. A rock singer and writer popular in the late fifties and early sixties, **Sam Cooke** (originally Cook), and the Memphis soul singer Johnny Taylor both did their first professional singing with the Soul Stirrers. The recording discussed in the listening guide on page 30 was made by the Soul Stirrers when eighteen-year-old Sam Cooke was their lead singer.

Female gospel groups became popular during the forties. Among the best known were the Clara Ward Singers, who gained such a following through their recordings and tours during the fifties that they left the church and concert hall circuit in 1961 to perform in Las Vegas. Although numerous gospel groups performed in secular settings, many popular gospel and, later, soul performers were uneasy about taking gospel music out of the church and using it in nonreligious performances.

Although small groups of four or five singers remained popular, a full-choir style of gospel music based on a tradition began by Thomas A. Dorsey in the early thirties was popularized by pianist/arranger Edwin Hawkins in Oakland, California, during the sixties. Hawkins replaced the small vocal group with a large choir and accompanied it with a rock beat played by keyboards, bass, and drums. His group, the **Edwin Hawkins Singers,** recorded gospel songs that became hits on the pop charts. In their recording of "Oh Happy Day," soloist Dorothy Morrison used the stylized vocal devices that had long been traditions in gospel singing, and because the large choir could not use those devices in their responses to her singing, her improvisations clearly stood out above their singing. Particularly on the words "oh" and "day," Morrison adds various melismas not sung by the choir in their repetitions of the same words. The recording

Sam Cooke with the Soul Stirrers in 1952

Listening Guide

"How Far Am I from Canaan?" as recorded by the Soul Stirrers with Sam Cooke (1952)

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 96 beats per minute, with four beats per bar for the first half of the recording, but then doubles to approximately 192 beats per minute for the second half. A doubling of the tempo is called **double time**.

Form:
0:00 Eight-bar phrase "I am standing on…"

0:23 Eight-bar phrase "There I'll rest…"

0:43 Eight-bar phrase "I can hear the angels…"

1:03 Eight-bar phrase "I can hear, I hear the saints…"

1:23 Sixteen-bar phrase "Tell me, how far am I…"

1:43 Sixteen-bar phrase "Lord over there…"

2:02 Sixteen-bar phrase "Lord up there, I'll meet…"

2:21 Sixteen-bar phrase "Lord when I get on home…"

Features: Sam Cooke sings the lead melody throughout the recording, often adding melismas to embellish the melody.

The Soul Stirrers sometimes sustain chords to accompany Cooke's lead vocals and at other times separate somewhat and sing portions of lyrics from the lead line. Even with their occasional breaks into separate lines, the Soul Stirrers never cover Cooke's lead or improvise melismas to the extent that Cooke does on his lines.

Only a drummer accompanies the singers. The drummer maintains a steady beat with thumps on the bass drum and accents the backbeats with a high hat cymbal.

Uneven beat subdivisions are used throughout the recording.

Lyrics: Canaan was another name for the Promised Land, which the singer identifies with heaven. The singer yearns to hear the angels singing, to have his troubles over, to meet his mother and join his Savior. The tension is in the haunting question—"how far" is the singer from obtaining this beatific state, which suggests recognition of the fact that there is yet more striving ahead in this world before he can enter the next one.

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also includes a high female voice improvising above the choir, a characteristic often copied in disco recordings. "Oh Happy Day" was number four on the pop charts and number two on the rhythm and blues ones. A listening guide to this recording follows on page 31.

Hawkins's large-choir gospel style was copied by other groups as well, but the smaller groups in which each singer, or several of the singers, could have an opportunity to solo and improvise remained more common.

Doo–Wop

Secular music sung by gospel-oriented African American vocal groups was popular as early as the twenties. The term *doo-wop* came to be used to identify the vocal group sound, as the groups usually had a lead singer who was accompanied (or responded to) by other singers singing nonsense syllables or repeating a few words from the lead singer's line. The general label doo-wop referred to the nonsense

Listening Guide

"Oh Happy Day" as recorded by the Edwin Hawkins Singers (1969)

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 112 beats per minute, with four beats per bar.

Form:
0:00 Ten-bar introduction played by pianos and percussion

0:21 Fourteen-bar phrase "Oh happy day…"

0:51 Fourteen-bar phrase repeats

1:19 Contrasting eight-bar phrase "He taught me…"

1:36 Eight-bar phrase "and live rejoicing…"

1:52 Fourteen-bar phrase repeats

2:21 Eight-bar phrase "He taught me…"

2:38 Eight-bar phrase "and live rejoicing…"

2:54 Earlier fourteen-bar phrase repeats and is extended with many repetitions and handclaps on the back beats "Oh happy day…"

4:16 Fourteen-bar phrase repeats and is extended to close the song. "Oh happy day…"

Features: The beat subdivisions are even.

The rhythm section maintains the steady beat while the vocalists gradually speed up, often ending phrases one-half beat early. This pushing of the tempo produces an effect of enthusiasm and fervor.

Dorothy Morrison sings the lead, and a large chorus sings responses. Her vocals use the stylized devices mentioned earlier; the chorus repeats her basic melody, but without her turns and inflections.

A contrasting section with new lyrics follows the repeat of the first section. The chorus is louder in this section, and a woman (possibly Morrison) sings above the chorus in a free and energetic style.

Lyrics: This is a simple spiritual, in which the singers exclaim their joy at the experience of religious conversion (the image of washing is a clear allusion to the Christian rite of baptism), with the caveat (in the words "fight and pray") that trouble and temptation still loom ahead in this world.

Billboard pop charts: number four; *Billboard* rhythm and blues charts: number two for two weeks; British hit singles: number two

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syllables—"ahs" or "dum, dum, de-dums"—that the backup singers used. Two early African American pop vocal groups whose influences could be heard in the later doo-wop style were the Mills Brothers, who sang four-part harmony in a smooth, sophisticated style, and the Ink Spots, whose high-tenor lead singer often dropped out after a chorus to allow the bass singer to speak the lyrics, accompanied by the rest of the group humming chords.

In 1945, the Ravens took the mellow vocal style of the Mills Brothers and added the Ink Spots' lead bass idea to bring to their New York audiences a musical combination of pop, gospel, and rhythm and blues. Even when the bass singer was not singing lead lines, he maintained a moving bass part that imitated the lines a string bass might play instead of merely singing the same rhythm pattern as the rest of the group, a technique the Mills Brothers pioneered. The

Ravens worked with a pianist who played a constant triplet pattern behind the group's vocals; the basic rhythm was used in much doo-wop to follow. As doo-wop was essentially a vocal style, instruments were relegated to secondary roles as accompaniment. The Ravens began to record and tour nationally and were eventually copied by many other vocal groups, some of which also used bird names, such as the Crows, the Penguins, the Cardinals, and the Flamingos.

A group from Baltimore, Maryland, took the name the Orioles from their state bird. The **Orioles** did not imitate the Ravens, because their sound depended more on the light lead tenor vocal style that the Ink Spots had used. The Orioles' recording of "Crying in the Chapel" (1953) was one of the first recordings by African American artists to be successful on the pop charts. Additionally, it was a **cover** (rerecording) of a country song by a white singer, Darrell Glenn (his father, Artie Glenn wrote the song). (Actually, the Orioles' recording was the third cover released; others by June Valli and Rex Allen were made after Glenn's but before the Orioles'.) Glenn's recording reached number six on the pop charts and number four on the country ones. The Orioles' recording reached number eleven on the pop charts and was number one for five weeks on the rhythm and blues charts.

The styles were so different from each other that a comparison of the two by Glenn and the Orioles demonstrates the basic contrast between white and black gospel styles. White gospel music followed the steady beat and instrumental practices common in country music, while black gospel used a shuffle rhythm and backbeat, vocal improvisation, and a backup chorus. The Orioles' recording is discussed in the listening guide on this page.

"Crying in the Chapel" was covered again by Elvis Presley in 1960, and his version was much closer to the style of the Orioles than to Glenn's. The Orioles broke up in 1954, but their Ink Spots–influenced sound was copied by many other groups.

Listening Guide

"Crying in the Chapel" by the Orioles (August 1953)

Tempo: The tempo is about 69 beats per minute, with four beats per bar.

Form: AABA Song Form

0:00 Descending bell tones as introduction

0:04 Eight-bar A section: "You saw me crying…"

0:36 Eight-bar A section: "Just a plain and simple…"

1:11 Eight-bar B section: "I searched and I searched…"

1:29 Eight-bar A section: "Now I'm happy…"

2:02 Eight-bar B section: "You'll search and…"

2:19 Eight-bar A section: "Take your troubles…"

Billboard rhythm and blues charts: number one for five weeks

Features: Sonny Til sings the lead, with the other Orioles singing "ahs" and a few words taken from the lyrics in response to his lead lines.

Til varies the melody with many turns and other black gospel stylizations.

Uneven beat subdivisions are maintained throughout the recording.

Instruments include trumpet, alto saxophone, Hammond organ, bass, and drums.

The drums keep a strong backbeat.

Lyrics: The song uses the (literally) puritan image of a "plain and simple chapel" to juxtapose the singer's spiritual joy in the experience of repentance (he gains "peace of mind") with the spiritual void and emptiness the song associates in the general world. The key to that spiritual joy is humility (note the references to "humble people" and being on one's knees).

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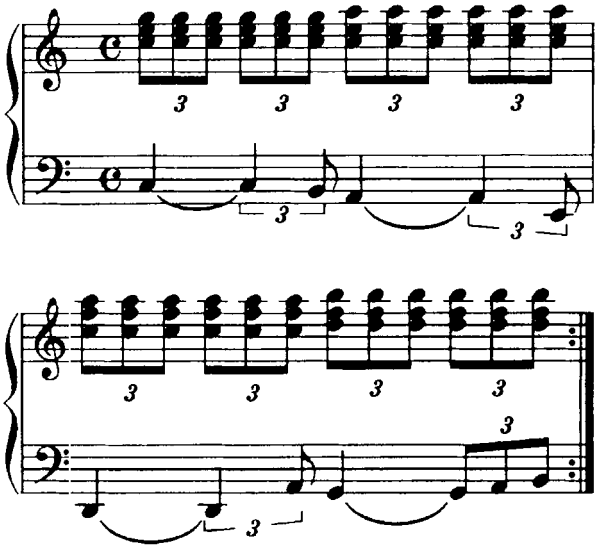
Despite the Glenn/Orioles example, it was much more common for white groups to cover African American material than the reverse. As with blues and rhythm and blues songs, many of the white covers had changes in lyrics, instrumentation, and production style that were supposed to make them more salable to the white audience than the African American originals. One of the most famous examples of this was the song "Sh-Boom," which was written and first recorded in 1954 by the **Chords,** an African American vocal group, and covered by the **Crew-Cuts,** a white group from Canada. The Crew-Cuts did not make any substantive changes in the song's lyrics, but they did make other changes to take out African American musical characteristics and "whiten" their sound.

Other changes that were made included backing by a full swing-style dance band instead of the small rhythm section plus saxophone that played on the Chords' recording. As often happened when white groups covered material by African American ones, the covers outsold the originals. The Chords' recording reached number two on the rhythm and blues charts and number five on the pop charts, whereas the Crew-Cuts' version was number one on the pop charts. A listening guide to the two recordings appears on page 34.

The chord progression of I–vi^7–ii^7–V^7 (C–Am^7–Dm^7–G^7, in the key of C) used in "Sh-Boom" was the harmonic basis of many songs in the doo-wop style. Some songs varied it slightly, but the regular use of this same basic chord progression at about the same rhythmic rate was the reason so many of the doo-wop songs sounded similar. It is commonly referred to as the **doo-wop progression.**

Another musical characteristic found in a large percentage of doo-wop is the constant pounding of repeated chords at the rate of three chords per beat with the bass line and the melody following that triplet pattern through their use of uneven beat subdivisions. An example of a simple form of a typical doo-wop accompaniment follows:



The Chords in 1954

The **Drifters** were given their name because the members were known to drift from group to group; in fact, not a single member stayed with the group throughout its career. The Drifters added a Latin beat to some of their songs, an example of which could be heard in their recording of "Honey Love" (1954). The lead bass that the Ink Spots and the Ravens had introduced was copied by the Drifters in their recording of "White Christmas" (1954). The original Drifters broke up in 1958, but their manager retained the copyright on the group's name and renamed a group that had called themselves the Five Crowns (with Ben E. King singing lead) the Drifters. The old Drifters had recorded songs that made the rhythm and blues charts, but the new group broke through to the top of the pop charts at number two with "There Goes My Baby." That record was not the first to use orchestral strings—Buddy Holly had done that with his last hit "It Doesn't Matter Any More"—but it was the first rhythm and blues record to use such a full, thick background, which became a trend toward the early sixties. The song was written and the recording produced by Atlantic Record Company's Leiber and Stoller, who had earlier written "Hound Dog" for Willie Mae Thornton. A listening guide to the recording that put the orchestral background into early sixties rock appears on page 36.

Other doo-wop groups that had hits during the fifties included the Moonglows, the Coasters, the Five Satins, the Rays, the Clovers, Little Caesar and the Romans, and the Capris (in addition to the various "bird" groups mentioned earlier). Doo-wop groups named after cars

Listening Guide

	"Sh-Boom" as recorded by the Chords (1954)	*"Sh-Boom" as recorded by the Crew-Cuts (1954)*
Tempo:	The tempo is about 134 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.	The tempo is about 134 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.
Form:	0:00 Four-bar introduction: two bars unaccompanied vocals (**a cappella**), then two bars with instruments 0:07 Eight-bar A section: "Life could be a dream…" 0:22 Four-bar beginning of A section sung in nonsense syllables 0:28 Eight-bar A section: "Life could be a dream…" 0:43 Eight-bar B (or **Bridge**) section: "Every time I look…" sung by a bass singer 0:57 Eight-bar A section: "Life could be a dream…" 1:11 Eight-bar A section: nonsense syllables, then "Life could be…" ending with introduction to saxophone solo 1:21 Eight-bar instrumental section based on A section melody 1:38 Eight-bar instrumental section based on A section melody 1:52 Eight-bar A section: "Life could be a dream…" 2:06 Eight-bar A section: nonsense syllables, then "Life could be…"	AABA Song Form 0:00 Four-bar introduction: Solo voice with instrumental accompaniment 0:07 Eight-bar A section: "Oh, life could be…" 0:22 Eight-bar A section: "Oh, life could be…" 0:37 Eight-bar B section: "Now every time I look…" 0:52 Eight-bar A section: "Oh, life could be…" 1:07 Eight-bar A section: "Sh-Boom, Sh-Boom…" 1:22 Eight-bar A section: "Sh-Boom, Sh-Boom…" 1:37 Eight-bar B section: "Every time I look…" 1:51 Eight-bar A section: "Ah, life could be…" 2:06 Seven-bar A section: nonsense syllables, then "Life could be…" 2:19 Eight-bar A section: "Life could be…"
Features:	The vocal group is accompanied by a rhythm section consisting of a guitar, string bass, drums, and saxophone for instrumental solos. Beat subdivisions are uneven.	The vocal group is accompanied by a full swing-style dance band including several saxophones, brass instruments, a rhythm section, and a kettledrum. Beat subdivisions are uneven.

(*continued*)

	Most of the lyrics are sung by the vocal group, except for the bridge, which is sung by a solo bass singer (showing the Ink Spots' influence).	The introduction and first four eight-bar periods are sung by solo singers (not always the same one). The last seven periods are sung by the full group. None of the soloists is a bass.
	The sixth and seventh full eight-bar sections are instrumental, with a tenor saxophone improvising in a jazz style.	There is no instrumental section except for occasional fills between lines of text. During the fifth and sixth periods, the vocal group sings nonsense syllables and the band fills in behind them. After dramatic pauses at the end of each of those periods, the band returns with a strong beat and glissando on a kettledrum. (Its pitch is raised as it rings.)
Lyrics:	The doo-wop air of simple love and sexual desire ("if you do what I want you to Baby . . .") is emphasized in the repetition of nonsense syllables, reference to "paradise," and (shades of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat") the possibility that life could be a dream.	The lyrics are the same as those sung by the Chords, except that the nonsense syllables have been changed, with repetitions of "sh-boom" and "la la las."
	Billboard pop charts: number nine; *Billboard* rhythm and blues charts: number two for two weeks	*Billboard* pop charts: number one for seven weeks; British hit singles: number twelve

Spotify Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example!

became popular with the advent of the Cadillacs, the Impalas, the Fleetwoods, the Imperials, and the Edsels. The vocal styles of the Mills Brothers, the Ink Spots, the Ravens, and the Orioles were the main influences on all of the doo-wop groups. The general style was a fairly consistent, smoothly romantic, moderately slow, danceable sound in which the lead singers often used gospel singing devices including repeated breath punctuations on words needing emphasis and stylized embellishments at phrase endings.

The smooth, pop-oriented doo-wop style gave way to gutsier African American vocal styles from the late fifties through the early seventies. That music came to be called *soul.* The term *soul* was first used for African American music in reference to gospel groups' ability to "stir people's souls." By the early sixties, however, it came to refer to secular music by and, for the most part, for African Americans, during a time of struggle for recognition in a white society. In general terms, soul music was not imitative of white styles, and it developed as an expression of African American pride.

Gospel and doo-wop were alive, well, and extremely popular in the nineties and early two-thousands with such singers and groups as Amy Grant, Take 6, All-4-One, Boyz II Men, and many others.

Country Music

Country music is a commercial form of folk music that developed into a variety of styles of its own sometime during the nineteenth century. The earliest forms of country music were first called *hillbilly,* a name used for backwoods southerners of British descent who played them.

From the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, large numbers of settlers from the British Isles made their way to the mountainous regions of what is now the southern and southwestern United States, bringing with them many centuries of rich musical traditions that they maintained as cultural links with the Old World. Their dance music included simple rhythmic dances such as the jig, the reel, the polka, the waltz, and various types of round dances. Their vocal music included hymns and folk ballads as well as other types of songs. Much of their dance music was played by a fiddle, a folk term for the violin dating back to a medieval European bowed-string instrument, the *fidula* or *fidel.* The British settlers sang their songs either unaccompanied or backed with instruments such as the guitar, the plucked and strummed dulcimers, the piano, and later the harmonica. African

Listening Guide

"There Goes My Baby" as recorded by the Drifters (1959)

Tempo: The tempo is approximately 126 beats per minute, with four beats in each bar.

Form:

0:00 Eight-bar A section: Bass solo with backing vocals and strings in final bar. "There goes…"

0:16 Eight-bar A section: Solo voice with instruments "Bo-bo (doo-doot…)"

0:31 Eight-bar A section: Solo voice with backup vocals "I broke her heart…"

0:45 Eight-bar A section: Group vocals with solo responses "There goes my…"

1:00 Eight-bar A section: Solo voice with low strings "I wanna know if…"

1:14 Eight-bar A section: Solo voice with strings and sustained voices "I wonder why…"

1:29 Eight-bar A section: Solo voice with swirling violins "I was gonna tell…"

1:44 Eight-bar A section: Group voices "I wanna know if…"

Features: A variant version of the doo-wop progression is followed in each period, with each of the four chords lasting for two bars and IV replacing the ii^7 ($I–I–vi^7–vi^7–IV–IV–V^7–V^7$).

The orchestral string group provides most of the instrumental accompaniment with kettledrums accenting beats.

No backbeat is accented.

Beat subdivisions are uneven throughout the recording.

Lyrics: The singer's lover, or "baby," has gone away brokenhearted and not said exactly why she left or whether or not she loves him. The singer wishes he could tell her of his love for her.

Billboard pop charts: number two; *Billboard* rhythm and blues charts: number one

Spotify

Check out the Spotify playlist to hear this Listening Example! This recording is on the *Atlantic Top 60* album in Spotify.

Americans in the South developed the banjo out of an African instrument, the *banza,* and it was adopted by the white players of British-derived folk music around the time of the Civil War. By the end of the thirties, instruments such as the string bass, the steel guitar, and the autoharp had also come into common use in southern folk music.

"Country music is three chords and the truth."

–Harlan Howard

With the growing importance of radio and the developments in recording technology in the twenties, the folk music of the South was brought to the attention of the rest of the country. It was not long before radio stations were springing up across the country, bringing live music broadcasts into homes and gathering places. One of the most popular types of radio programs, the barn dance show, featured live performances of rural dance music for which people collected in barns or other large buildings to dance. *The WSM Barn Dance* (WSM were the radio station's call letters) was first broadcast in 1925, and its name was changed to the *Grand Ole Opry* as a playful commentary on the classical operatic program that preceded it.