

Elvis & Rockabilly

History of Rock & Roll

Chpt. 2



Rockabilly

- A style of music made famous during the 1950s by American Performers
- Mixed jump blues and electric country

Rockabilly Fusion

- Fusion of:
 - Rock and roll
 - Blues
 - Hillbilly

Roots = Blues

Rock & Roll + Hillbilly = Rockabilly

Rockabilly Roots

- Propelled by:
 - Catchy beats
 - Electric guitar
 - Acoustic bass
 - (slap-back technique)

Rockabilly 1954

- Elvis Presley popularized the genre with recordings for Sun Records
 - “Rock Around the Clock”

Rockabilly 1955

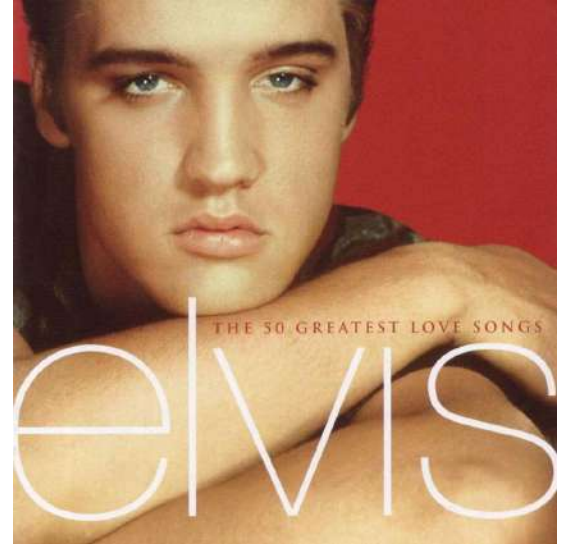
- Billy Haley was the breakthrough success for Rockabilly.
- Launched the careers of several rockabilly entertainers.

Rockabilly 1958

- most of these performers had moved on to different sounds and rockabilly had largely disappeared from popular music.

Elvis Presley

- Born: Jan. 8, 1935
 - Tupelo Mississippi
- Died: August 16, 1977
- Known as the King of Rock and Roll
- Had a twin brother who died at birth.
- Twin brothers name was Jesse and that inspired the character Uncle Jesse from Full House.



Young Elvis

- Learned guitar at 11
- After high school worked at a tool company and then electric company
- 1953 he paid to record his first records at Sun Studios
 - “My Happiness”
 - “That’s When Your Heartaches Begin”

(Recorded 5 singles with Sun)

Elvis on T.V.

- 1956: The Dorsey Brothers Show
- Ed Sullivan Show
 - Sullivan bowed to pressure from moralists
 - Filmed only from the waist up due to his “suggestive hip movements”

Gospel Elvis

- Recorded several gospel albums
-
- His 3 Grammys are all for gospel

Rough Draft

- In 1958 Elvis received his draft notice for a 2-year tour with the US army in Germany.
- Politically instigated because of his “dangerous, race-mixing” influences.

Elvis on the big screen

- Starred in 31 motion pictures
- Signed to multiple long-term contracts
- Musicals based around Presley's performances

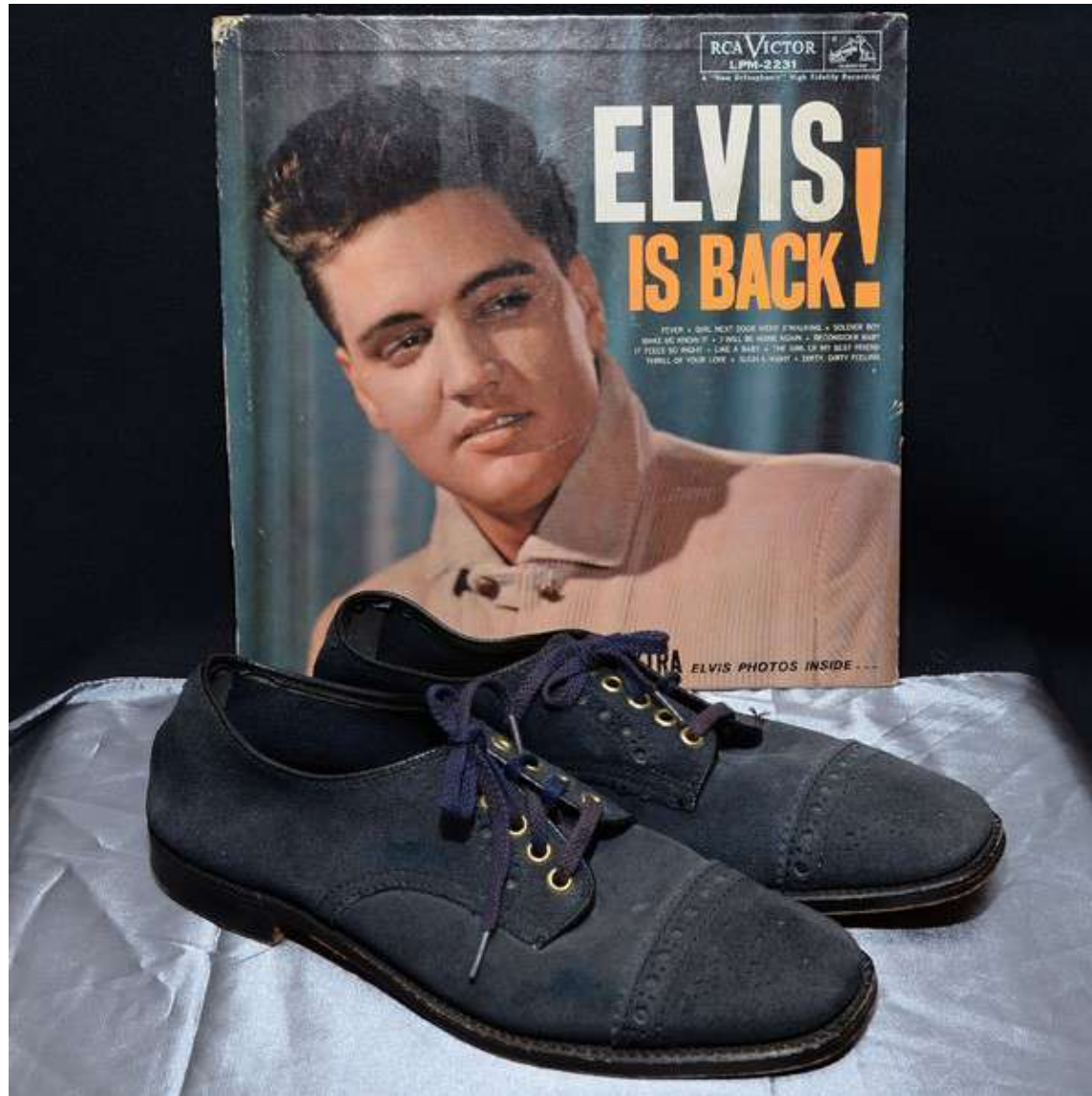
From sex symbol to family man

- “Elvis has left the building”
- 1967 married Priscilla Anne Beaulie
- Daughter, Lisa Marie, born 9 months later
- Divorced in 1973
- Biography claims he had a secret gay affair with Nick Adams

The End of the King

- 1969, his last #1 hit while still alive
 - “Suspicious Minds”
- Mid-1970s: isolation & a prescription drug addiction took a toll on his performance and appearance.
- Died at Graceland in Memphis in 1977
- Cause: Polypharmacy (drug mixing) or heart disease exacerbated by drug use.

Elvis Presley



Jerry Lee Lewis

- Born: September 29, 1935
 - Ferriday, Louisiana
- Rock and Roll pioneer and piano player
- Raised, like Elvis, singing the Christian/gospel music



Young Jerry

- Attended a fundamentalist bible school in Texas
- Expelled for misconduct
 - Playing rock and roll versions of hymns in church

Jerry: the beginning

- Cut his first record in 1956 with Sun Records
 - “Crazy Arms”
- around the time as Elvis and Johnny Cash
- 1957 “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” propelled him to international fame
- “Great Balls of Fire” next big hit

Jerry's "Springer"

- Turbulent personal life was kept out of the public eye until a tour of Great Britain in 1958
- 3rd wife was his 13-year-old cousin
- He was 23...and her cousin...
- Public uproar cancelled his tour
- Followed him to America where his career almost vanished

Tragedy strikes

- Plagued by alcohol and drug problems
- 19-year-old son, Jerry Lee Lewis Jr. was killed in a road accident in 1973
- Erratic behavior in the late 1970's led to hospitalization and near death from a bleeding ulcer.

Tragedy Strikes...Again

- Wife #4: died in a swimming pool under suspicious circumstances
- Wife #5: found dead at his home from a methadone overdose
- Addicted to drugs, checked himself into the Betty Ford Clinic

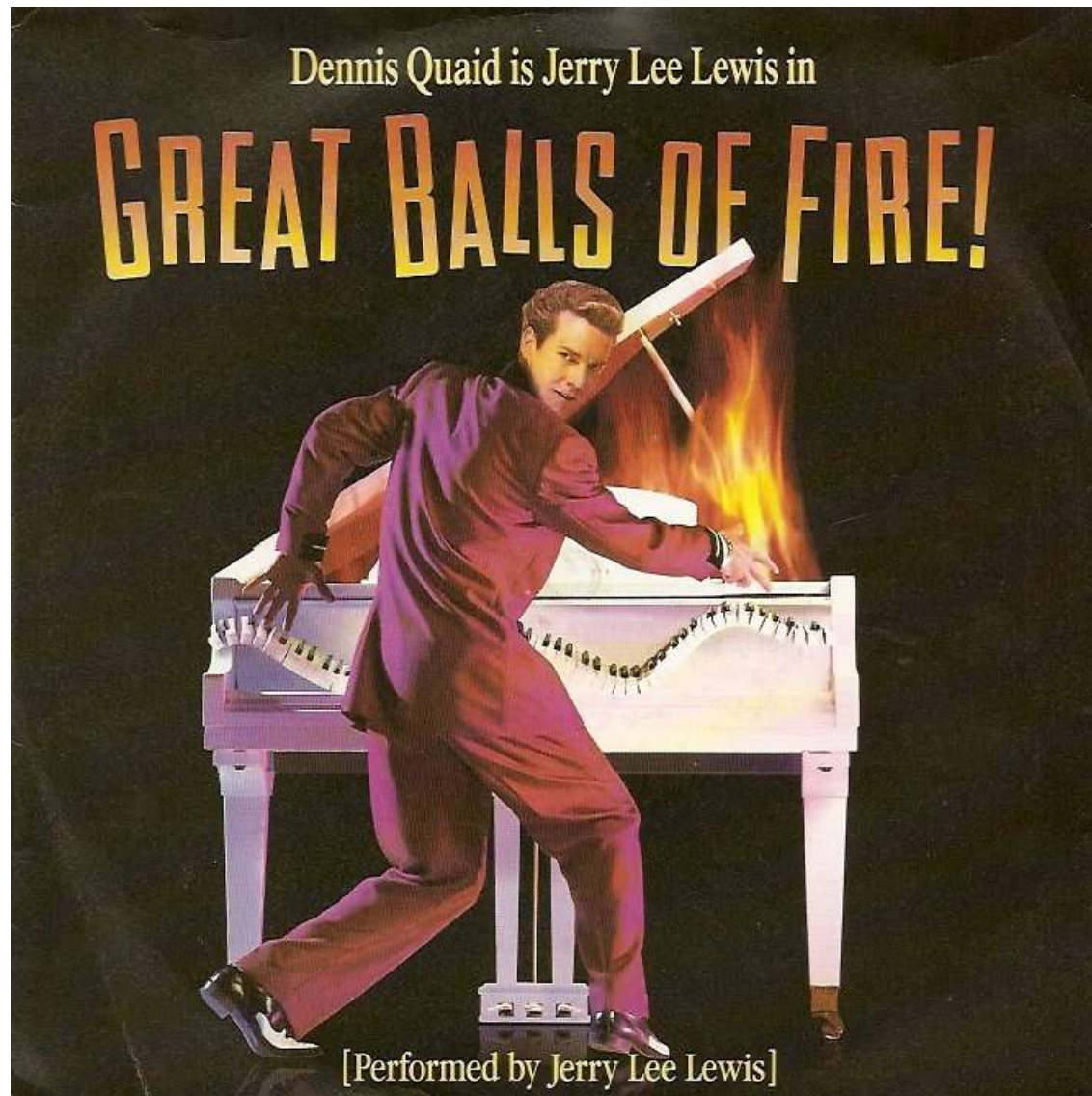
More Tragedy

- 41st birthday in 1976, playing with a gun (thought was unloaded) shot his bass player, Butch Owens in the chest
- Few weeks later, showed up at Graceland with a gun telling the guard he had come to kill Presley.
- Did I mention the bass player miraculously survived? He did.

The Killer

- Not for killing his bass player or Elvis
- Forceful voice
- Piano production on stage
- 1986: part of the first group inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Jerry Lee Lewis



Johnny Cash

- Born: February 26, 1932
 - Kingsland, Arkansas
- Died: September 12, 2003
- Country music singer and songwriter
- Known as:
 - John R.
 - Johnny
 - The man in black



Young Johnny

- Age five: working in the cotton fields
- Began playing guitar and writing songs
- Sang on a local radio station in high school
- Served in the US Air Force
- Moved to Memphis and sold appliances
- Studied to be a radio announcer

Here Comes the “Sun”

- Sun Records Rep. heard him singing in a trio (gospel of course) told him, “go home and sin, then come back with a song I can sell.”
- 1955 his first recording at Sun, “Cry Cry Cry”, found reasonable success
- First number one on the country charts: “I Walk the Line”

Johnny goes to Jail

- Battled drug problems
- Spent a night in jail, charged with a variety of offenses
- Despite this “Ring of Fire” went to number one on the country charts and broke the Top 20 on the pop charts.

More Jail Time

- 1965: arrested by the narcotics squad in El Paso, Texas for attempting to smuggle Amphetamines into the country stashed inside his guitar case.
- 1966: arrested for trespassing late at night onto private property to pick flowers
- 1968: Voluntarily entered California's Folsom State Prison to perform 19 songs for a classic live concert for 2,000 convicted felons.

The Concept of Johnny

- 1965: Ballads of the True West – Cash's spoken narration
- 1964: Bitter Tears – songs highlighting the plight of the native Americans
- Many stations refused to play “The Ballad of Ira Hayes”, saying it was too risky.

Solving Problems

- Destructive behavior led to a divorce and numerous problems performing.
- Moved to Nashville and married June Carter (a member of the Carter Family), who co-wrote “Ring of Fire”.
- Failed suicide attempt due to a religious conversion
- Overcame his addiction and became a born-again Christian

The original “Man in Black”

- 1971 began dressing in black
- “I wear the black for the poor and the beaten down. Livin’ in the hopeless, hungry side of town. I wear it for the prisoner who has long paid for his crime. But is there because he’s a victim of the times.”
- Had his own television show on the ABC network

Johnny's Back

- Career rejuvenated in the 1990s
- 1994: American Recordings
- 1998: Unchained
- 1997: diagnosed with shy-drager syndrome (autonomic neuropathy) associated with diabetes.
- 1998: hospitalized 2000: “I Won’t Back Down”, his response to the illness

The Line Johnny Walked

- Won 11 Grammy awards
- 1985 album with Jerry Lee Lewis
- Lifetime Achievement in 1999
- Country Music Hall of Fame: 1980
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: 1992
- Kennedy Center Award: 1996
- Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame
- Americana Awards show with a “Spirit of Americana Free Speech Award”: 2002

The End of the Line

- 2002: Released American IV: The Man Comes Around
- Wife died due to complications following heart valve surgery in 2003
- Johnny Cash died due to complications from diabetes resulting in respiratory failure while hospitalized in Nashville, also in 2003

Johnny Cash



Rockabilly Review

- 1 paragraph – Elvis
- 1 paragraph – Jerry Lee Lewis
- 1 paragraph – Johnny Cash
- 1 paragraph – Comparing to each other
- 1 paragraph – What they did for Rockabilly

Due Tuesday Sept. 1 at the beginning of class