Chapter 1:

Good Rockin’ Tonight
OVERVIEW:
The Foundation of Rock And Roll

During the Great Migration more than 100,000 African-American laborers moved from the agricultural South to the urban North bringing with them their music and memories.

Also, during the 1920’s the phonograph and the rise of commercial radio began to spread Hillbilly music and the Blues. This gave rise to an appreciating of American vernacular music, both white and black. Ultimately, the homogenizing effect of blending several regional musical styles and cultural practices gave birth to 1950’s rock and roll.
The Tin Pan Alley Pop Era (1885-mid 1950’s)

“The Great American Songbook”
1940’s Big Bands
1950’s Popular Music

New York: “Tin Pan Alley” 14th St. and 2nd Ave.
The music was distributed through sheet music

Professional songwriters dominated the period; George Gershwin, and Irving Berlin

Composers wrote for pop music, Broadway, and film

Eventually Tin Pan Alley tradition was replaced by the Rock and Roll tradition
Tin Pan Alley Characteristics

- Written by a professional (often non-performing) song-writers
- Sophisticated arrangement
- Syncopated rhythm (accents on unexpected, weak beats)
- Clever, well-crafted lyrics
- Striving for upper-class sensibilities
- Striving for mainstream respectability
- Primary audience: Adults
The rise of “Roots Music” = The Blues AND Country music

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Rock and Roll: 1952
“Roots Music” (Vernacular Music)

1. Regional popular and folk music
2. Played by amateur musicians
3. Not formally taught
4. Spread through an oral tradition
“Tin Pan Alley” Tradition
Music marketed through sheet music and “song pluggers”

Professional songwriters
“repertoire based”

Endorsed and promoted by the music establishment

1955

Tin Pan Alley

1965

Rock and Roll

1975

“Roots Music”
Ignored by mainstream audiences

Untrained performers
“rendition based”

Country Music
The Blues
Early Rock an Roll
Roots Music Pioneers
John Lomax (1867-1948)

Major Publications:

Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads (1910)

Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp (1919)

American Ballads and Folk Songs (1934)

Negro Songs as Sung by Lead Belly (1936)

Our Singing County (1941)

Folk Song U.S.A. (1947)
The Lomax car outfitted with primitive audio recording equipment
Alan Lomax (1915-2002) son of John Lomax continued in his father’s footsteps
Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter (1888-1949)

Discovered by John and Alan Lomax

He becomes a popular entertainer playing “old-fashioned” blues

*Lead Belly's Last Sessions* (1948) contained songs that became the springboard to the 1960’s folk revival:

- The House of the Rising Sun
- The Midnight Special
- Rock Island Line
- Goodnight, Irene

Many Leadbelly songs were “covered” by British acts of the 1960’s.
The Influence of the Blues
The blues were derived from field hollers and work songs. Many of the songs were work songs designed to synchronize manual labor such as swinging an axe or pounding railroad spikes. Other songs helped relieve the monotony and pass the time during repetitive tasks. The songs were kept alive and vital by rote memorization and an oral tradition.

Boogie Woogie Piano Playing
Boogie Woogie piano playing imitates a chug-a-lug train rhythm and was often played on honky-tonk trains transporting laborers throughout the Midwest. The style of makes use of “walking bass”

Mississippi Delta Blues (1900-1930)
Also known “country blues” the primary practitioners were male African-American itinerant laborers. The lyrics often expressed basic human conditions such as poverty, homelessness, unfaithful love, penitentiary life, and alienation. The vocal style features a fierce singing style similar to that of field hollers. Typical instruments included slide guitar, and harmonica. The rhythm was often fluctuating and uneven. Among the most influential of the Delta Bluesmen were Son House (1902-1988) and Robert Johnson (1911-1938)
Mississippi Delta Blues or Country Blues (1900-1930)

- Primate blues style
- Instruments limited to voice and acoustic guitar, and sometimes harmonica
- Fluid, fluctuating rhythm based on the lyrics
- Non-dance music that tells a story about hardships, loneliness, or sex
Robert Johnson (1911-1938) allegedly sold his soul to the Devil at the crossroads. He embodies the spirit of the rocker; a man and his guitar telling his story to the world.
“The Big Bang of Country Music”
Bristol Recording Sessions, 1927
Bristol, Tennessee

The Bristol Recording Sessions were held in 1927 by Victor Talking Machine Company (RCA). The sessions are often described as “The big bang of country music”
Ralph Peer (1892–1960)
Talent scout, recording engineer
and record producer in the 1920s
and 1930s. The influence of the
carter Family can be heard in the
film **O Brother Where Art Thou**

Jimmie Rogers

The Carter Family
Hank Williams, Sr., (1923–1953) blended Country and Western with the Blues
Chicago Blues
(1930-1960)

Bar room drinking music
Rough, raspy, and crude vocals

Frequent instruments include:
• Electric guitar
• Amplified harmonica
• Piano
• Drums

Muddy Waters (1915 -1983)
One of the most important Chicago Blues masters.

The Rolling Stones derived their name from Muddy Waters’ song “Rolling Stone”
12 Bar Blues Format - *Call It Stormy Monday*

### Phrase 1
1. Statement
2. → Instrumental Fill

### Phrase 2
3. (Same) Statement
4. → Instrumental Fill

### Phrase 3
5. Conclusion
6. → Instrumental Fill

- **Intro:**
  - Phrase 1
  - [Optional Intro:]

- **1st 12-Bar chorus:**
  - Phrase 2

- **2nd 12-bar chorus:**
  - Phrase 3

- **3rd 12-bar chorus:**
  - Instrumental chorus
Bing Crosby (1903-1977)

The first entertainer to use the tape recorder

No one had ever considered pre-recording radio programs!
“Indies”

The first commercial tape recorders became available shortly after WWII. Small independent record labels such as Chess, Sun, and Atlantic records emerged riding the wave of interest in rhythm and blues. As “Indie” records began filling the juke boxes in the inner cities in the early 1950's, an increasing number of white teenagers became infatuated with the new sound.

Disk jockeys such as Cleveland's Alan Freed (1921-1965) began playing rhythm and blues records using the term "rock and roll", a relatively unknown blues euphemism for sex and partying, to disguise the music's black origin.
Atlantic - New York (Ahmet Ertegun, Herb Abramson and Jerry Wexler, 1947) This important indie label recorded early stars including Ruth Brown, Big Joe Turner, Ray Charles, Clyde McPhatter, and Ben E. King


Sun Studios- Memphis (Sam Phillips, 1950) Sun was the birthplace of the rockabilly style of rock, Sam Phillips recorded "masters" of black bluesmen for other companies. Among artists he recorded during this period were Howlin' Wolf, and Ike Turner
The phonograph record from 1930 to the present

10-inch, 78 rpm shellac record (1930-40s)

12-inch, 33 rpm “long-playing” record (LP) 1948, Columbia

7-inch, 45 rpm single, 1949, RCA

5-inch, 200-500 rpm Compact Disc Phillips, 1982
Although the term “race music” seems derogatory now, at the time it showed pride and support for African American people and culture.

In 1949 Atlantic record executive and Billboard reporter Jerry Wexler (1917-2008) was instrumental in re-labeling “Race Music” “Rhythm and Blues”
Quick Review of Styles

From Blues to “Rhythm and Blues”

1920-1930: Mississippi Delta Blues

1930’s: Urban Blues Types
  Chicago Blues
  Memphis Blues
  Kansas City Blues
  Texas Blues
  New Orleans Blues

1940’s New Orleans Jump Blues

Late 1940’s Rhythm and Blues
Big Band Swing music was the most popular style of music during World War II. Big band touring was curtailed by rationed gas and rubber. Jump bands were a scaled down version of swing bands with a jazzy, bouncy beat.
New Orleans Jump Blues: The 1940’s forefather of rhythm and blues:

Style characteristics:
Big band swing style dance music
Small ensemble: One or two horns, piano, guitar, drums and bass
Bouncy and upbeat rhythm
Boogie-woogie piano rhythm
Geared toward younger audiences
More mainstream and commercial than other blues styles
Louis Jordan and his Timpany Five: New Orleans “Jump Blues” King
The Baby Boom

The rise of the Post- WW II baby boomers (78 million children born between 1945-1964) led to a substantial youth subclass. The typical allowance of many 1950’s teenagers was greater than the main family breadwinner of the previous generation.

The term “teenager” was first used in 1941 in reference to juvenile delinquency. The term soon began to be associated with the tastes, styles, attitudes and cultural identity of the growing ranks of WW II baby boomers. The rise of teenage allowances and greater free time set the stage for something new (anything new) to capture the teenager’s youthful energy. 1950’s films depicted problems of this new teenage idle time in such films as Rebel Without A Cause.

New record formats were being introduced for the expanding consumer music market. Columbia records introduced the 12-inch 33 rpm long playing vinyl record in 1948. RCA, introduced the 7-inch 45 rpm record (1949) The convenience of the 7-inch 45 gave rise to portable record players When music migrated from the living room into a teenager’s bedrooms, a divergent, teen age based, music market emerged.
Top of the Charts in early 1950’s

The U.S. Hit Parade is dominated by white mainstream performers.

The music was well-produced, with naïve or sentimental lyrics. The songs were inoffensive and geared toward white middle-class audiences.

Novelty songs such as “How Much Is That Doggie In The Window?” became popular.
Q: Why did Pop Music sound the way it did?

A desire to shelter their families from horrors of WWII

Music was geared to the White adult middle-class

Music became less important to growing families

The television advocated “family values”

Music was designed to be inoffensive and polite

Novelty songs and instrumentals are popular
1950 Hit Parade Winners

My Foolish Heart (18 weeks)
All My Love (17 weeks)
Mona Lisa (17 weeks)
Goodnight Irene (15 weeks)
A Bushel and A Peck (15 weeks)
Tennessee Waltz (15 weeks)

Rock and Roll brought unpredictability and turmoil to the music industry

Your Hit Parade was sponsored by Lucky Strike Cigarettes
The Restless “Teenager”

More spendable income

More leisure time

Looking for excitement or “kicks”
- Cars and Cruising
- Motorcycles

No marketing specific to youth sub-culture
Teen Musical Tastes:

Prior to Rock and Roll there was no separate teen record market; teenagers listened to the same music as their parents. Professional songwriters and standard renditions were more important than the performer. Bored with the musical status quo, teenagers began listening to black dance music; rhythm and blues. The binding force was teenage self-identification rather than socio-economic, regional, or racial distinctions.
The term “teenager” was first used in Popular Science magazine in 1941 in reference to juvenile delinquency. The term soon began to be associated with the tastes, styles, attitudes and cultural identity of the growing ranks of WW II baby boomers. The rise of teenage allowances and greater free time set the stage for something new (anything new) to capture the teenager’s youthful energy. 1950’s films depicted problems of this new teenage idle time in such films as Rebel Without A Cause, The Wild One, and The Blackboard Jungle. Teen deaths, like Johnny Ace and James Dean were somehow viewed as heroic.

As in previous generations, America’s living room was the entertainment focus after WW II. New record formats were being introduced for the expanding consumer music market. Columbia records introduced the 12-inch 33 rpm long playing vinyl record in 1948. RCA, Colombia’s chief rival introduced the 7-inch 45 rpm record (1949) which effectively held the same amount of music as the previous 78 rpm shellac records but in a more compact, convenient format. The convenience of the more compact 7-inch 45 gave rise to portable record players and more efficient juke boxes. The 45 rpm record also gave teenagers a greater freedom in their listening habits. Once teenagers were able to listen to music in their own bedrooms, a divergent, teen age based, music market emerged.
Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, 1953

James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, 1955
The portable record player brought music to teenager’s bedrooms and provided an opportunity to evolve teen oriented music: Rock and Roll.
How did African-American Performers fit into the Pop Music Mainstream?
Louis Jordan>  
Funny and clever

< Nat King Cole
Sophisticated and jazzy

< Fats Domino
Inoffensive and non-threatening, he transitioned from Jump Blues to Rhythm and Blues
What are the differences between early Rock and Roll and Rhythm and Blues?
“Big” Joe Turner (1911-1985)
One of the best-known rhythm and blues performers
Differences between early Rock and Roll and Rhythm and Blues

The rock and roll uses elements of Rhythm and Blues in a more mainstream way

The lyrics are often “cleaned up” for mainstream audiences

The tempo is generally faster

Other elements such as country western and mainstream pop are often thrown in the mix

“Swing 8ths” replaced by “straight 8ths”
The Geography of Early Rock

Chicago: Chess Records

Memphis: Sun Studios

New Orleans: J & M Studios

N.Y.: Atlantic Records
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<tr>
<th>Artists</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABBA</td>
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<td>AC/DC</td>
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<td>Jewel</td>
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<td>Bad Religion</td>
<td>Ben E. King</td>
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<td>The Pointer Sisters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cream</td>
<td>The Young Rascals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bobby Darin</td>
<td>The Rolling Stones</td>
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<td>Dr. Dre</td>
<td>Duncan Sheik</td>
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<td>Dream Theater</td>
<td>Percy Sledge</td>
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<td>The Drifters</td>
<td>Skid Row</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emerson, Lake &amp; Palmer</td>
<td>Small Faces</td>
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<td>En Vogue</td>
<td>Snoop Dogg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Frampton</td>
<td>Dusty Springfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aretha Franklin</td>
<td>The Spinners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>Donna Summer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Haley</td>
<td>Big Joe Turner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hall and Oates</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hootie And The Blowfish</td>
<td>Cat Stevens</td>
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1920-1930: Mississippi Delta Blues

1930’s: Urban Blues Types
  Chicago Blues (electric guitar based blues)
  Memphis Blues
  Kansas City Blues
  Texas Blues
  New Orleans Blues

1940’s: New Orleans Jump Blues
  (boogie-woogie rhythm with honking horns)

Late 1940’s: Rhythm and Blues
  (boogie-woogie rhythm with honking horns)
1950’s Rock and Roll Regional Styles: Rockabilly, Doo-wop, Gospel shout, Blues and Rhythm and Blues covers.
Owned and operated by Sam Phillips
He sold blues and C&W recordings to other labels; i.e. Chess
Eventually he started his own label, Sun Records
Sun Records became the birthplace of the Rockabilly style
MEMPHIS RECORDING SERVICE “SUN STUDIOS”

The birthplace of rockabilly. Owned by white record producer Sam Phillips, Sun studios began recording blues acts in the early 1950’s such as Little Junior Walker, B.B. King, and Howlin' Wolf.

He then sold these recordings to other indies such as Modern and Chess Records. Sam Phillips felt that if he could find a white performer who had the charisma and energy of a black R & B performer he could “make a million dollars”.

His discovery and merchandizing of Elvis Presley is a major landmark in the evolution of Rock and Roll. The Sun studio sound popularized heavy reverb, slap-bass, a nasal singing style.
The Contributions of Elvis Presley

Hybridized Rhythm and Blues with Country and Western

Was considered a “lesser evil” among white parents

Became an icon that propelled rock into an international phenomenon

One of the most widely imitated and influential rockers
Rockabilly (1956-1960)

Rockabilly is a hybrid of blues and hillbilly music. During its height, performers came from several styles i.e.; Rick Nelson (pop); Johnny Cash (country); Elvis Presley (rock). The style makes heavy use of twanging guitars, nasal singing and slap-bass. Heavy drumming, still associated primarily with black music, was kept to a minimum. The visual style of rockabilly stars was strongly influenced by actors James Dean and Marlon Brando. Hank Williams Sr. and Bill Haley and the Comets bridge the gap between country-swing and rockabilly styles.
Buddy Holly (1938-1959)

He marks the transition from Rock ‘n’ Roll to Rock.

He departed from the R&B tradition and became one of the first important Singer/Songwriters.
Norman Petty’s Studio in Clovis, New Mexico

Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison, and Waylon Jennings recorded tracks here. He produced some “one hit wonder” songs like “Sugar Shack” by Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs.
Buddy Holly’s Innovations and Contributions

1. He was one of the earliest performers to use the guitar band format. (Lead guitar, rhythm guitar, drums and bass)
2. He was one of the first white rockers to write his own material
3. He wore glasses on stage portraying him as “the boy next door”
4. He produced and “mixed” some of his own recordings
5. He rarely employed Rhythm and blues in his music
6. He often used vocal effects such as his trademark hiccups and baby talk
7. He was one of the first performers to use a solid-body electric guitar
The Day The Music Died

Singers Killed

These three rock 'n' roll singing idols were killed Tuesday when their plane crashed near Mason City, Iowa, en route to play an engagement at Moorhead, Minn. Buddy Holly, 22, left, Ritchie Valens, 17, center, and J.P. (The Big Bopper) Richardson, 24, were killed along with the pilot of the chartered plane. The three took the plane after playing an engagement near Mason City so they could arrive early and get their clothes laundered. The rest of the troupe went by bus. The Moorhead performance went on last night although members of the troupe said they didn't have the heart to perform. Some 1,000 advance tickets had been sold.
Doo-Wop (Early ‘50’s)

Doo-wop was one of the first successful styles of rock and roll. The style started in the late 1940's with black vocal harmony groups performing on the street corners of New York. Doo-wop is characterized by elaborate vocal harmony, and was often sung “a cappella” (without instrumental accompaniment). The vocal arrangement usually follows a standard format: A sweet, strident lead singer, back-up singers vocalizing nonsense syllables such as “ooma ooma kow kow” or “doo-wop” and an independent and prominent bass singer. The lyrics were optimistic, hopeful, and naive. Because of its romantic and sweet vocals, doo-wop was one of the first black popular styles to effectively penetrate the white pop market.

During its height there were approximately 3,000 doo-wop groups in America, the vast majority of which were one-hit wonders. The style was later popularized by groups such as the Coasters and the Platters. There have been numerous doo-wop revivals and stylistic adaptations throughout the decades.
Characteristics of Doo-Wop:
Late 1940’s through early 1960s

Sweet harmony sound derived from jazz vocal harmony groups of the 1940’s

Sung in a competitive, street corner “a-cappella” style

Inoffensive, charming, sentimental lyrics

Listened to by large cross-section of teen America

About 3000 doo-wop groups saturated the market
Style characteristics of Doo-Wop:

High, Strident lead singer

Prominent bass singer

2 or more backup singers using non-sense syllables such as “Rat-a-tat”, “Doo-wop”, or “Sh-boom”

Stereotypical chord progression. I-vi-IV-V (C-am-F-G)
Gospel Shouters (1953-1957)

Many early rockers were influenced by the vocal intensity and fervency of black congregational singing.

Shouting, “call-response” techniques and emotional delivery of gospel sermons found its way into the vocal style of rock and roll singers. Much for Little Richard’s music is a combination of the gospel shout tradition and boogie-woogie piano playing.
Rock and Roll Comes Under Fire:

Churches and local municipalities tried to ban rock concerts

The music establishment tried to discredit rock and roll

Rock and Roll DJs came under fire for taking bribes (payola)
The mid 1950's witnessed not only an astronomical rise in television but also one of its first fads: TV game shows. After it became public that some of the shows, including the Sixty Four Thousand Dollar Question were fixed, a full-blown investigation of television promotional practices ensued. A number of establishment figures thought that the rock and roll was being promoted by unscrupulous disk jockeys who were getting money under the table (payola) and also corrupting the morals of America's youth. They saw this as an opportunity to enlarge the entertainment industry investigation to include the practices of rock and roll disk jockeys as well.

ASCAP (American Society of Composers Authors and Publishers) was the principal music performing rights society in America was ASCAP wanted nothing to do with rock and roll. Traditional song-writers, clients of ASCAP, did not want to jump on the rock and roll bandwagon. Also, ASCAP had their own, more traditional artists, and ASCAP primary focus was on marketing these artists.

ASCAP also prevented radio stations from playing records without paying a huge fee. Radio stations retaliated by starting Broadcast Music, Incorporated (BMI) which encouraged jukebox type playing on the radio and became a direct competitor of ASCAP. Since rock and roll was, from the beginning, a recorded product, most indies supported BMI.

ASCAP, understandably concerned about its new competitor BMI, jumped on the bandwagon in a drive to discredit rock and roll. Alan Freed, most visible among rock DJs was indicted and later convicted. Dick Clark, selling teen products as well as rock and roll, was asked to divest himself of any financial gain in promoting groups that appeared on American Bandstand.

The after-effects of the payola hearings were the marketing of respectable white teen idols, promotion of top-40 play-lists, homogenizing of rock’s regional variations and smoothing its abrasive edge.
The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) is a non-profit performance rights organization that protects its 300,000 members' musical copyrights by monitoring public performances of their music, whether via a broadcast or live performance, and compensating them accordingly.
The downside of ASCAP was that in order to be a member you had to have had five major hits.

It was next to impossible to have a major hit without ASCAP distribution; Catch 22.

Almost all African-American composers were excluded as were many Country and Western Artists.
ASCAP sought to keep radio stations from playing records

Radio Stations banded together to form BMI (Broadcast Music, Incorporated)

ASCAP’s fortunes declined as rock and roll rose in sales

- Rock and Roll did not sell much sheet music
- Rock and Roll was primarily a recorded medium
- Rock an Roll was often self-produced

ASCAP sought to discredit rock and roll by attacking the practices or Rock and Roll DJs
The Effect of the Payola Hearings:

Deejays relied on national sales statistics to determine songs they would play rather than regional talent.

The Rise of Top 40 Format drove regional artists off the charts (Country and Western and Black artists were hardest hit).

Top 40 Format gave rise to more clean-cut (white) Teen Idols.

Anything and everything was merchandized as Rock and Roll.

The rough edges were removed to maximize market appeal.
Teen Idols on American Bandstand
Dick Clark (L) introducing Fabian, Bobby Rydell, and Frankie Avalon
End Of The Golden Era

Rock and Roll's Golden Age came to an end about 1960.

1. Many of the original artists left the rock and roll scene. Big Bopper Richardson, Ritchie Valens, and Buddy Holly died in a charter plane crash near Clear Lake, Iowa. Chuck Berry was indicted for violating the Mann Act; transporting a minor across State lines without parental permission. Little Richard renounced rock and roll and turned to God. Bill Haley’s career declined rapidly after Elvis Presley entered the scene. As Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent began touring Europe they suffered a car accident that killed Cochran and seriously injured Vincent. Elvis Presley was inducted into the U.S. Army. Carl Perkins was in a car accident that killed a band member and put his career on hold. Jerry Lee Lewis was scandalized by marrying his 13-year old cousin.

2. Payola Scandal constrained DJs and performers. This led to the rise of top 40 format. Gone were the regional variations such as inner-city blues or country and western drawl in favor for a more homogenized pop style.

3. Rock and roll came under fire from a number of fronts. Following many disruptive concerts, sometimes bordering on riots, many communities ordered rock and roll concerts to be banned. Religious and conservative groups as well felt that rock and roll was decadent and immoral. Citizen's groups formed to fight rock and roll.

4. Absorption and adaptation of original rock styles by the music industry. By 1960 major record labels such as RCA, Decca, and Capitol had bought Elvis Presley and a flock of Elvis imitators. Anything that could even loosely be marketed as rock and roll, made the rock charts. “Teen idols" replaced the original stars.
The Greatest Generation (1910-1925)
Grew up during the Great depression and fought W.W. II

The Silent Generation (1925 to 1943)
Characteristics: grave and fatalistic, conventional, possessing confused morals, expecting disappointment but desiring faith.

The Baby Boomers (1945-1964)
Protracted adolescence and youth identification: The rise of the “teenager”

Teenagers had more spendable income and more free time
Rebelled against their parent’s generation;

Parents wanted to achieve upward mobility
Teenagers were looking for kicks: the taboo, the dangerous and the socially unacceptable
Robert Johnson - 1911  
Big Joe Turner - 1911  
Muddy Waters - 1913  
Nat King Cole - 1919  
Hank Williams – 1923  
Big Mama Thornton -1926  
Chuck Berry -1926  
Bo Diddley - 1928  
Fats Domino - 1928  
Ike Turner - 1931  
Little Richard -1932  
Elvis Presley - 1935  
Jerry Lee Lewis - 1935  
Gene Vincent - 1935  
Buddy Holly - 1936  
Roy Orbison - 1936  
Don Everly - 1937  
Eddie Cochran - 1938  
Phil Everly - 1939  

None of the early rockers were Baby Boomers!