

# *History of Rock and Roll*

Radio stations began to program their music to fit the demographics of a new audience. The audience, which until the early 1950's was a pretty homogeneous audience, now was divided into segments with different interests and people listened to music in a number of places, including their cars. This all meant that some radio stations played music for adults and some stations played music for the teens.

Not surprisingly, young people were tired of the music their parents listened to and they started to look for something new. The white teens of the major metropolitan areas such as New York, Chicago, Detroit and Los Angeles began to turn to the stations that played music they had never heard before. It turned out that the music being played on the "black" radio stations in those cities was Rhythm and Blues (R&B). This music, was of course, familiar to the black population in America, but was brand new for many whites. Since the white audience was so much larger than the black audience, radio stations and record companies released that a major shift in listening patterns was about to occur, and in order to keep the white audience, as well as to appeal to the black audience, they needed to broadcast and promote R&B, or something like R&B.

Big Joe Turner's song "Shake, Rattle and Roll" began to be played on the white stations. The white record companies started looking for white acts (in the foolish belief, soon to be proved wrong, that white kids wouldn't buy records by black performers) that played something resembling R&B. Groups like Bill Haley and His Comets (originally a country band called the Saddlemen) and soloists like Elvis Presley brought a strong country background to the music, and this combination of R&B and Country became Rock and Roll.

These influences combined in a simple, blues based song structure that was fast, sexy, catchy and could be danced to easily and with excitement. These qualities, along with the fact that it horrified adults in general and parents in particular, caused Rock and Roll to become immensely popular with teenagers, who then, for the first time had their own music.

Among the important bands and soloists in the 1950's Rock and Roll were Willie Mae Thornton, Big Joe Turner, Bill Haley and his Comets, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly and the Crickets, Fats Domino, Bo Diddley, Gene Vincent, the Everly Brothers and Carl Perkins.



