

NINTH EDITION

Rockin' in Time

A Social History of Rock and Roll

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To My Wife, Mary



Contents

Preface	viii		
Introduction	x		
1 The Birth of the Blues			
Born in Slavery	1		
The African-American Church	3		
The Birth of the Blues	3		
Train Stations, Frolics, and Juke Joints	6		
The Rural Blues Explosion	8		
The Great Migration	9		
The Blues Singers	11		
2 The Advent of Rock and Roll	15		
Muddy Waters and the Postwar Electric Blues	15		
The Wolf	17		
Bo Diddley and Other Chess Discoveries	18		
Modern Records: B. B. King, Elmore James, and John Lee Hooker	19		
Other Discoveries	21		
The Blues Audience	22		
Rock and Roll Emerges: Little Richard and Chuck Berry	24		
Rock and Roll and the Changing American Culture	27		
Racist Backlash	29		
The Music Industry versus Rock and Roll	30		
The Blanching of Rock	31		
The Story of Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup	32		
3 Elvis and Rockabilly	34		
Rockabilly Roots	34		
The Rockabilly Sound	36		
Sun Records and Elvis	37		
"The Killer"	40		
"Blue Suede Shoes"	41		
Johnny Cash	42		
The Sun Rockabilly Stable	43		
The Decca Challenge	43		
Rockabilly Sweeps the Nation	46		
The Selling of Elvis Presley	47		
Reactions Against the Presley Mania	49		
Elvis Becomes a Respectable Icon	51		
4 The Teen Market: From <i>Bandstand</i> to Girl Groups			55
Lost Idols			55
The Booming Teen Market			56
Dick Clark and American Bandstand			57
Clark's Creations			59
The Payola Investigation			61
Don Kirshner Takes Charge			62
The Sounds on the Streets			63
The Girl Groups			64
The Dream			66
5 Surfboards and Hot Rods: California, Here We Come			68
Surfing U.S.A.			69
The Sound of the Surf			70
The Beach Boys			71
Jan and Dean			72
Drag City			73
6 The New Frontier of Folk			75
Songs of Protest			75
The Folk Revival			77
Sit-Ins, Freedom Rides and Marches			79
Kennedy and the New Frontier of Racial Equality			82
Bob Dylan: The Music of Protest			83
Joan Baez			86
The Singer-Activists			87
Dylan's Disenchantment			88
Folk Rock			89
7 The British Invasion of America: The Beatles			92
The Mods, the Rockers, and the Skiffle Craze			93
The Early Beatles			95
Brian Epstein Shapes the Beatles			96
The Toppermost of the Poppermost			97
The Beatles Invade America			98
The Cute and Safe Beatles			101
The Mersey Beat			102
The Monkees			104

8	The British Blues Invasion and Garage Rock	106		
	The British Blues Explosion	107		
	The Rolling Stones Emerge	108		
	The Stones Turn Raunchy	109		
	Success	110		
	The Who	113		
	The British Blues Onslaught	114		
	American Garage Rock	116		
9	Motown: The Sound of Integration	119		
	Motown: The Early Years	119		
	Civil Rights in the Great Society	120		
	The Sound of Integration	122		
	The Supremes on the Assembly Line	123		
	The Motown Stable	126		
10	Acid Rock	128		
	The Beats	128		
	The Beats Reemerge in New York	130		
	The Haight-Ashbury Scene	131		
	The Hippie Culture	132		
	Acid Rock: The Trip Begins	136		
	Rock-and-Roll Revolution	137		
	Psychedelic London	141		
	The Decline of Hippiedom	143		
	Monterey and the Commercialization of Psychedelic Rock	144		
11	Soul Music: Fire from the Streets	146		
	Black Pride	148		
	From R&B and Gospel to Soul	152		
	Funk	156		
	Black Soul in White America	157		
12	Guitar Heroes and Heavy Metal	160		
	Escalating Conflict in Vietnam	161		
	Campus Unrest	161		
	The White Blues	165		
	Jimi Hendrix: The Sound and the Fury	166		
	Guitar Rage of the Metal Pioneers	168		
	Heavy Metal Thunder	169		
	Woodstock, Kent State, and the End of an Era	173		
13	Soft Sounds: Country Rock, the Singers-Songwriters, and Sweet Soul	177		
	Back to the Country	177		
	Dylan and California Country Rock	177		
	Seventies Singers-Songwriters	181		
	Sweet, Sweet Soul Music	183		
14	Rock Turns Serious: Jazz Rock and Progressive Music	186		
	The Jazz-Rock Fusion Begins	186		
	Miles Ahead	188		
	The Offspring of Miles: Fusion Explodes on the Scene	189		
	Progressive Rock	193		
15	The Era of Excess	197		
	The “Me” Decade	197		
	Elton John	199		
	Heavy Metal Theater	199		
	Art Pop in the Arena	205		
	Rumours	206		
	Funk from Outer Space	207		
	Disco	209		
	Corporate Rock	211		
16	Punk Rock	214		
	New York Punk	214		
	The Sex Pistols and British Punk	218		
	The British Punk Legion	222		
	Ska, Reggae, and Radical Punks	223		
	The Punk Independents	226		
	The Decline of British Punk	227		
	Postpunk Depression	228		
	The New Wave	230		
17	American Hardcore	233		
	Stirrings in Los Angeles	233		
	Orange County Hardcore	234		
	Regional Hardcore	237		
	Hardcore Politics in San Francisco	237		
18	I Want My MTV	239		
	MTV and the Video Age	239		
	The New Romantics	240		
	MTV Goes Electro-Pop	242		
	MTV and Michaelmania	244		
	The Jackson Legacy	247		
	Pop Goes the Metal	249		
19	The Promise of Rock and Roll	253		
	Trickling Down with Ronald Reagan	253		
	The Boss	255		
	The Benefits	258		

Children of the Sixties	259	The Rap-Rock Explosion	310
Classic Rock and the Compact Disc	260	Nu-Metal Anthems	313
20 Country Boomers	263	25 The Age of the Internet	315
The Country Rock Rebirth	263	The Advent of the Internet	315
Garth Brooks	264	The Download Mania and the Ipod	316
		Free Music for the Masses	317
21 The Generation X Blues	267	The New Realities of the Music Industry	319
Generation X	267	The Reinvention of the Music Industry	320
From the New Wave of British Heavy Metal to Thrash Metal	269	26 Life in Wartime	324
Death Metal and Grindcore	272	A Never-Ending War	324
The Industrial Revolution	274	Global Warming	325
Grunge	275	Rock Against Bush	326
Grunge Spreads	281	The Singer-Songwriters	328
Grunge's Demise	283	Hip-Hop Pop with a Message	330
		Black Metal	331
22 Post-Grunge Party	285	27 Country Counter-Revolution	334
Britpop	285	The End of Hope	334
Jam Bands	288	The Tea Party	335
		The Country Counter-Revolution	336
23 The Hip-Hop Nation	292	28 The Rave Revolution and Electronic Dance Music	340
African-American Reality	292	House and Techno	340
Old School	293	A Rave New World	341
The Second Wave	297	Chillin' Out	344
Gangsta	298	The Dark Side of the Jungle	345
Young, Gifted, and Black	300	The Big Beat	346
New Jack Swing	303	Electronic Dance Music Captivates the United States	347
The Return of Shaft	304		
		Bibliography	350
24 Metal Gumbo: From Rap-Rock to Nu-Metal	309	Index	363
Hip-Hop Rock	309		

Preface

New to this Edition

I have used many new photos and images to make the text more relevant and to better show the connection of rock and roll to social history. I have added new material, including the following:

- New chapter on Delta blues
- New section on fusion jazz
- New chapter on the electronic dance movement
- Additional new material incorporated into each chapter

I have also corrected any errors in the text. I hope that you find this revision useful and would appreciate any comments as you read it.

This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about our programs, pricing options, and customization, visit www.pearsonhighered.com.

Music for this title is available through Spotify. The link to the title-specific Spotify playlist can be found on this title's page at www.pearson.com.

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I owe a special debt to the late Bob “Wildman” Campbell, the king of psychedelia who spent many hours with me analyzing the lyrics of Larry Fischer, the nuances of Tibetan Buddhists chants, Bonzo Dog Band album covers, and the hidden meaning behind the grunts of Furious Pig. He shared with me his definitive psychedelic record

collection, mentored me about the beats, and suggested that we venture into CBGBs to see the Voidoids. Besides reading and commenting on this manuscript, he expanded my musical horizons with a series of demented tapes and letters, which twisted this book into shape. Such a debt can never be repaid, and he will be sorely missed.

Thanks to my late parents, Peter and Eunice, for instilling in me a love of music and the written word. A special appreciation goes to my mother who commented on the manuscript and gave me suggestions for a title.

A special thanks to my grandson, Alexander Fantl who constantly expands my musical boundaries.

My daughter Sara constantly brought me back to reality, when I became overly absorbed in the manuscript, and showed me that energy can be boundless. She provided needed guidance about music in the twenty-first century and gave me hope that rock and roll will never die. In the last several editions, she offered insightful editorial comments about the newest music on the charts and provided invaluable research.

Most of all, I want to thank my wonderful wife Mary for her love and companionship, her openness to all types of music, her editorial comments, her willingness to attend concerts when we were both too old for the venue, and her indulgence of my vinyl and rock-poster addictions. For this edition, she continually provided me rock-and-roll material for sources, which I would otherwise have not seen. I could never have completed nine editions of this book without her understanding, interest, encouragement, and love. I dedicate this book to her with all my heart.

Introduction

“Rock and roll will be around for a long, long time. Rock and roll is like hot molten lava that erupts when an angry volcano explodes. It’s scorching hot, burns fast and completely, leaving an eternal scar. Even when the echoes of the explosion subside, the ecstatic flames burn with vehement continuity.”

—Don Robey, owner of Peacock and Duke Records, in *Billboard*, March 1957

This book is a social history of rock and roll. It places an ever-changing rock music in the context of American and, to some extent, British history from the early blues to the present. *Rockin’ in Time* explains how rock and roll both reflected and influenced major social changes during the last eight decades. As Ice-T explained in 1997, “albums are meant to be put in a time capsule, sealed up, and sent into space so that when you look back you can say that’s the total reflection of that time.”

Rockin’ in Time deals with rock music within broad social and cultural settings. Rather than present an encyclopedic compilation of the thousands of well-known and obscure bands that have played throughout the years, it examines rock and rollers who have reflected and sometimes changed the social fabric at a certain point in history. It concentrates on rock musicians who most fully mirrored the world around them and helped define an era.

Rockin’ in Time emphasizes several main themes, including the importance of African-American culture in the origins and development of rock music. The blues, emanating from American slaves, provided the foundation for rock and roll. During the early Fifties, African-Americans who migrated from the South to Chicago created an urbanized, electric rhythm and blues that preceded rock and roll and served as the breeding ground for pioneer rock and rollers such as Little Richard and Chuck Berry. African Americans continued to develop new styles such as the Motown sound, the soul explosion of the Sixties, fusion jazz, the disco beat, house music, techno, and hip-hop.

Many types of rock coincided with and reflected the African-American struggle for equality. The electric blues of Muddy Waters became popular amid the stirrings of the civil-rights movement. During the early Sixties, as the movement for civil rights gained momentum, folk protesters such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez sang paeans about the cause. In 1964 and 1965, as Congress passed the most sweeping civil rights legislation since the Civil War, Motown artists topped the charts. When disgruntled, frustrated African Americans took to the streets later in the decade, soul artists such as Aretha Franklin gained respect. During the late Eighties and throughout the Nineties, hip-hoppers such as Public Enemy rapped about inequality and renewed an interest in an African-American identity.

White teenagers embraced rock and roll, when the civil-rights struggle cultivated an awareness of African-American culture. Youths such as Elvis Presley listened to late-night, rhythm-and-blues radio shows that challenged and broke down racial barriers. During the Sixties, white teens readily accepted African-American performers such as the Ronettes, the Temptations, and the Supremes who had been carefully groomed for success in a mainstream market. At the same time in Britain, teenagers such as the Rolling Stones became obsessed with Chicago blues and brought their version of the blues back to adoring fans in America. Later in the decade, white youth bought soul records and revered Jimi Hendrix as the ultimate guitar hero. By the Eighties, young white suburbanites wore baggy pants and chanted the lyrics of inner-city rappers. In the new

century, American teens danced at massive festivals to the African-American sounds of house music and techno. During the last eight decades, black and white Americans have been integrated through rock and roll.

Population shifts and generational changes, the second theme of this book, provided an audience for African-American-inspired rock and roll. During World War II, African Americans from the South streamed into large Northern cities such as Chicago in a Great Migration. Blues musicians such as Muddy Waters came north along with thousands of African-American migrants who provided a ready audience for the electrified blues.

When the war ended, soldiers came home to their wives and had children who as a group became the baby boom and represented one of the most populous generations of all time. By the mid-Fifties, an army of youngsters demanded their own music. Along with their older brothers and sisters who had been born during the war, they latched onto a young, virile Elvis Presley who attracted hordes of postwar youth.

Until the early Eighties, rock music reflected the interests of the baby-boom generation. The music of the Dick Clark era, Brill Building songwriters, the Beach Boys, Motown artists, and the early Beatles focused on dating, cars, high school, and teen love for young boomers. Catering to post-teen baby boomers during the Sixties, rock morphed into the serious protest music of Bob Dylan and psychedelic bands that questioned basic tenets of American society. When college-age boomers were threatened by the Vietnam War military draft and the prospect of fighting in an unpopular war, the music turned harsh and violent with heavy metal and then escapist after the student killings at Kent State. During the Seventies, after the war ended and when many college rebels landed lucrative jobs, glitter rock and disco exemplified the excessive, self-centered behavior of the boomers. During the Eighties, artists such as Bruce Springsteen reflected the baby-boom yearning for the Sixties spirit of social change.

The sons and daughters of the baby boom, born between 1965 and 1981 and called Generation X, carried forward the rock-and-roll banner. Disaffected youths born on the cusp of the new generation delivered a stinging British punk rock and an American hardcore to vent their anger. Other youth from Gen X watched and listened to British dance music, Michael Jackson and a pop-oriented version of heavy metal on the MTV television network. As they grew older, Generation X confronted sobering social conditions with thrash, grunge, death metal, and rap.

By the late Nineties, a third generation of youth, born between 1982 and 2001 and referred to as the Baby Boom Echo, Generation Y, or the Millennials, developed their own rock. Confronted by a plethora of economic, environmental and political problems, they flocked to socially conscious singer-songwriters and rappers. During the past decade, amid a conservative upheaval in the United States, many Millennials listened to the traditional message of a country rock and escaped their troubles by dancing to electronic beats.

The roller-coaster economic times of the post-World War II era serve as a third focus of this book. A favorable economic climate initially allowed rock to flourish by permitting baby boomers in the United States to live in relative affluence. During the Fifties and early Sixties, sizeable allowances enabled teens to purchase the latest rock records and buy tickets to see their favorite heartthrobs. During the next fifteen years, unparalleled prosperity allowed youth to consider the hippie counterculture and led to cultural excesses and booming record sales.

When the economic scene worsened during the mid-to-late Seventies in Britain, youth spat out the sneering protest of punk that reflected the harsh economic realities of the dole. Throughout the most of the Eighties and early Nineties, American youth coped with few career prospects and little family stability through shattering hardcore punk, pounding industrial music, a bleak grunge, growling death metal, and a confrontational rap. During the mid-Nineties, when the economy brightened for several years on both sides of the Atlantic, teens turned to a bouncy, danceable Britpop and

Sixties-style, eclectic jam bands. From 2007 to the present, as the worldwide economy settled into one of the worst recessions in one hundred years, youth listened to a conservative country rock and escaped reality through massive electronic-dance-music festivals, which featured fantastic Disneyland-like settings.

Advances in technology shaped the sound of rock and roll and provide another framework for *Rockin' in Time*. The solid-body electric guitar, invented and popularized during the Fifties by Les Paul and Leo Fender, gave rock its distinctive sound. Mass-produced electric guitars such as the Fender Telecaster, appearing in 1951, and the Stratocaster, first marketed three years later, enabled blues musicians and later white teens to capture the electric sound of the city and the passion of youth. During the late Sixties and early Seventies, guitar gods plugged into a wide array of electronic devices such as the distortion box and the wah-wah pedal to deliver slashing, menacing heavy metal. Later technologies such as the synthesizer, the sequencer, and the sampler allowed musicians to embellish and reshape rock and roll into different genres.

Several technological breakthroughs helped popularize rock and roll by making records easily and inexpensively accessible. The reasonably priced 45-rpm record, introduced in 1949 by RCA, prodded youths to purchase the latest hits and replaced the more brittle shellac 78-rpm record. Starting in the mid-Sixties, the extended format of the long-play, 12-inch, 33-1/3-rpm record, which Columbia had commercialized in 1948, perfectly fit such rock music as the experimental psychedelia. The LP remained the dominant medium for rock until the laser-powered compact disc became widely available in 1982. Advances in the quality of sound such as high fidelity, stereo, component stereo systems, and digital sound transferred the immediacy of the live performance to the home and enhanced the rock experience.

Television popularized rock by broadcasting it to teens in their homes. Elvis Presley and the Beatles leapt into American homes on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Dick Clark's offered the popular *American Bandstand*, and during the Sixties programs such as *Shindig* aired regularly. In Britain, television shows such as *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, *Ready Steady Go!*, and *Juke Box Jury* lured teens to rock and roll. In the early Eighties, MTV changed the way youth thought about music by making it visual as well as aural.

Several technological devices fundamentally transformed rock and roll. The portable cassette tape player-recorder, the portable CD player, and, most recently, the iPod gave teens an opportunity to listen to their favorite songs in the privacy of their rooms, at school, or on the streets. By the Nineties, the Internet enabled youths to listen, trade, download, and burn their favorite music and learn about new bands. It greatly enhanced the scope of music available to the rock fan.

Political events, another theme of this book, directly impacted rock and roll. During the late Sixties, the Vietnam War drew the ire of rock musicians from Jimi Hendrix to Black Sabbath. In 1994, the British Criminal Justice and Public Order Act specifically targeted the rave culture and evoked opposition from bands such as Prodigy and Orbital. The 2004 Presidential election united rockers from all genres in opposition to George W. Bush and his foreign policies and his stance on environmentalism.

Gender serves as another focus of this book. Initially, hormonally motivated girls served as screaming fans for male rock stars such as Elvis, Fabian and the Beatles. During the early Sixties, women emerged as performers in singing groups such as Ronettes and the Supremes. Women similarly contributed to rock as Seventies singer-songwriters such as Carole King and country-rock singers such as Linda Ronstadt. In a largely male-dominated rock field, females first strapped on guitars and sat behind drum sets in great numbers during the punk era with Siouxsie and the Banshees, the Slits and Chrissie Hynde. Riot grrrls bands such as Bikini Kill continued the role of women as performing musicians. In hip hop, several women such as Queen Latifah joined male rappers, and the Spice Girls swept the international charts with their slogan of "girl power." The changing role of women in rock reflected the increasing acceptance of females in the workplace and as equals in American society.

Rock music has been entwined with the development of the music industry, another feature of this book. Rock and roll has always been a business. It started with small, independent companies such as Chess, Sun, Modern, and King, which delivered a new sound to the public. As it became more popular among teens, rock and roll sparked the interest of major record labels such as RCA, Decca, and Capitol, which in the Sixties dominated the field. By the Seventies, major companies aggressively marketed their product and consolidated ranks to increase profits and successfully build an industry more profitable than network television and professional sports. In 1978, as the majors experienced a decline in sales, independent labels again arose to release new rock styles such as punk, rap, grunge, and techno. Within a decade, the majors reasserted their dominance of the record industry, by the signing new acts that had been nurtured by the independents and by introducing the compact disc that enticed many record buyers to purchase their favorite music in a different, more expensive format. As the new century unfolded, major record labels confronted and protested against the Internet, which created a fundamentally new business model for the music industry by allowing musicians to release and distribute their music inexpensively to a worldwide audience without an intermediary.

Though a business, rock music has engendered and has been defined by rebellion, which manifested itself through a series of overlapping subcultures. Youths used rock and roll as a way to band together and feel part of a shared experience. As Bruce Springsteen mentioned about his own background, rock music “provided me with a community, filled with people, and brothers and sisters who I didn’t know, but who I knew were out there. We had this enormous thing in common, this ‘thing’ that initially felt like a secret. Music always provided that home for me.” “Rock provides a family life that is missing in America and England,” agreed David Bowie. “It provides a sense of community.”

During the last eight decades, identifiable rock-and-roll communities assumed specific characteristics, fashion, and styles. Fueled by uncontrolled hormones during the Fifties and early Sixties, rockabilly greasers challenged their parents by wearing sideburns and long greased-back hair and driving fast hot rods. Their girlfriends sported tight sweaters, ratted hair, pedal-pusher slacks. During the 1960s, serious clean-cut, smartly dressed, college-aged folkniks directed their frustration and anger at racial and social injustice by taking freedom rides to the South and protesting against nuclear arms. A few years later, hippies flaunted wild, vibrant clothing, the mind-expanding possibilities of LSD, sexual freedom, and a disdain for a warmongering capitalism that they expressed in their swirling psychedelic poster art. In the next decade, baby boomers attended stadium concerts to collectively celebrate sexually ambiguous, theatrical, and extravagant superstars. A few years later, women wore flowing, revealing dresses and men favored gold medallions and unbuttoned silk shirts as they discoed to the steady beats of deejays.

During the late 1970s, angry rock subcultures emerged. Sneering British punks grew spiked hair, wore ripped, safety-pinned T-shirts, and pogoed straight up and down to lash out against economic, gender, and racial inequities. In America, Mohawked youths congregated in small clubs and slam danced to hardcore punk. Around the same time, a hip-hop subculture of rap music, graffiti and break dancing unabashedly assaulted racial prejudice and its effects on African Americans in the inner cities to highlight the racial injustice that the civil-rights movement of the Sixties had not erased. Within a decade and into the new century, the inner-city b-boy subculture spread to white suburbs, where gun-toting teens looked for ho’s and wore Adidas, sagging pants, baseball caps (preferably New York Yankees) turned backward, loose T-shirts, and, depending upon the year, gold chains.

In the Eighties and Nineties, Generation X youth voiced frustration and despair through a series of subcultures that included a gothic-looking industrial style; a long-haired, leather-jacketed thrash and death metal; and the self-described “loser” com-

munity of grunge, which adopted the idealized look of the working class: longish, uncombed hair, faded blue jeans, Doc Marten boots, and T-shirts. Until subverted and incorporated into the mainstream by fashion designers, Hollywood, and big business, these subcultures knit together distinct groups of youth with common ways of looking at the world.

By the start of the new century, rock and roll splintered into a variety of subcultures. Black metal adherents wore corpse paint on their faces, studded black leather outfits, and long hair to demonstrate their disgust with current society. Young suburban country fans sported cowboy hats and cowboy boots and swing danced to a largely conservative version of country rock. During the past several years, youth danced all night in furry boots, underwear as outerwear and tutus to party with thousands of others at electronic-dance-music festivals such as the Electric Daisy Carnival.

History seldom can be separated into neat packages. Many of the different rock genres and their accompanying subcultures overlapped with one another. From 1961 to the advent of the British invasion in 1964, Brill Building songwriters, surf music, and Bob Dylan coexisted on the charts. Motown, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and soul music occurred approximately at the same time. Most recently, rap, country rock and electronic dance music coincided with one another. Though sometimes intersecting with one another, the different subcultures of rock and roll have been divided into distinct chapters in this book to clearly distinguish the motivating factors behind each one.

Rockin' in Time attempts to be as impartial as possible. Even though a book cannot be wrenched from the biases of its cultural setting, I have tried to present the music in a historical rather than a personal context and to avoid effusive praise or disparaging remarks about any type of rock. To paraphrase Sting, lead singer of the Police, there is no bad music, only bad musicians.

These pages explore the social history of rock and roll. During the last eight decades that it has been an important part of American and British culture, rock and roll has reflected and sometimes changed the lives of several generations. It has morphed into a plethora of creative forms and will continue to amaze, shock, entertain, and inform fans in the future.