

The Golden Age of Rock 'n' Roll

Week 9, April 23, 2018

1959: The Doldrums; Payola

Assignment:

Listen to:

Charlie Brown, The Coasters (#2 Pop; Leiber & Stoller)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMHEMXGjQqw>

Sea Cruise, Frankie Ford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2omjZ53k1A>

later live performance (lots of fun):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EVDdt5jrUY>

Since I Don't Have You, Skyliners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFGxB9LHDIU>

Raw Hide, Link Wray

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa4LHpRyg1Y>

Come Softly To Me, Fleetwoods (#1 Pop) (self-penned)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzsunLRwDV4>

A Teenager in Love, Dion & the Belmonts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzN4pSgOm1U>

Kansas City, Wilbert Harrison (#1 Pop)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vE0T-EA1294>

What'd I Say, Ray Charles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rggldf1c6c>

Love Potion No. 9, Clovers (Leiber & Stoller)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHPzGVoYFxo>

Mr. Blue, Fleetwoods (#1 Pop)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m05P36iAAMw>

The Stroll, The Diamonds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrGLNtZ0rEg> (with dancing)

Extra Songs:

Venus, Frankie Avalon (#1 Pop)

Mack The Knife, Bobby Darin (#1 Pop)

Lonely Boy, Paul Anka (#1 Pop)

Poison Ivy, Coasters

Teen Angel, Mark Dinning (#1 Pop)

Some notes for class discussion:

In the late 50's the Rock 'n' Roll music business suffered a number of jolting setbacks.

-Elvis had entered the army in March of 1958

-Little Richard quit rock n roll in 1957-58

-Jerry Lee Lewis, during a 1958 tour in England, decides to show off his new wife, Myra Gale Lewis. When the very young Myra admitted to having married her first cousin at age 13, the public reaction caused

cancellation of the tour, and many American radio stations refused to play Jerry Lee's music.

-On February 3, 1959, rock and roll musicians Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson were killed in a plane crash near Clear Lake, Iowa.

-In 1959 Chuck Berry was arrested on charges of having violated the Mann Act. Convicted in 1960 he eventually served one and a half years in prison.

-In 1959 Congress announced the initiation of hearings on the use of payola to corruptly influence disk jockeys to play particular records.

-In the ensuing scandal Alan Freed was fired, Dick Clark survived.

-Disk jockeys were thereafter prevented from selecting playlists. That function became the responsibility of station programming directors.

Backdrop for the investigation

-The American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) had been founded in 1914 to collect revenues for Composers of popular music. It was primarily identified with Tin Pan Alley and Musical Theater composers. As radio became the chief source of revenue (outstripping sheet music sales, and public performance), ASCAP's predatory fee increases led the radio networks to found Broadcast Music International (BMI) in 1940 as an alternative.

-ASCAP's esthetic objections to the emergent Rock 'n' Roll composers, and its desire to dismiss the craze as a transient phenomenon created an opening for BMI to dominate the RnR ranks of composers. The Congressional investigations grew out of the animus between the two organizations.

-The hearings were an extension of the Kulturkampf which had been simmering throughout the 1950's along the generational divide between admirers of "traditional American values" and the social and political ferment of those demanding a loosening of societal norms.

-Throughout the era between 1959 and the British Invasion the phenomenon of Teen Idols, in search of clean-cut, white "acceptable" singers grew.

- The RnR prototype was framed by Pat Boone, whose cover of Fats Domino's "Ain't That A Shame" launched him into stardom.
- Boone's recorded both highly bleached covers of black RnR stars as well as traditional Tin-Pan Alley pop.

- Successive imitations with varying levels of talent followed beginning with Bobby Darin in 1958, and later Paul Anka, Frankie Avalon, Tommy Sands, Bobby Rydell, Fabian, Bobby Vee, Freddy Cannon, Ricky Nelson et al.