

Buddy Holly: Rock 'n' Roll's Tragic Trailblazer

Some say rock-and-roll began with the meteoric rise of Elvis Presley and crashed landed in a cornfield with the untimely death of Buddy Holly. Due to the racism of the time, many claim that great black artists such as Joe Turner, Chuck Berry, and Little Richard were overlooked, but deserve much of the credit for creating the new music genre. In 1955, "Rock Around The Clock" by Bill Haley & His Comets was the first rock-and-roll chartbuster, earning Haley the nebulous title "Father of Rock 'n' Roll." Yet, the Hank Williams ditty "Move It On Over" sounds a lot like rock-and-roll, and was released in 1947. Obviously, all of these early artists deserve special recognition, but only one embodied the spirit of the future.

Buddy Holly is certainly one of the most influential musicians of the early Rockers. His career lasted about two years—as long as the downtime between albums for many in today's overindulged rock royalty. Suppose Beethoven, Glenn Miller or even Elvis had been limited to just two years of creative output. Would that have been enough time for them to fundamentally influence an entire music movement?

Fortunately for us, Holly was a hard, fast worker, writing more than 40 songs. He had eight hits, and sold more than 10 million singles. And Holly did it all by age 22. He died February 3, 1959, in a wintry Iowa plane crash that also claimed Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper. Unlike Elvis, the Texas-born Holly wrote his own songs, thus influencing future rock stars, including the Beatles, Rolling Stones and just about everyone else in the '60s and '70s.

Charles Harden Holley started out as a country singer. He began performing rock-and-roll when it was still fun music and not yet an art form or satanic ritual. If he had lived, his product would have surely eclipsed that of both Elvis and Chuck Berry.

After his two years in the army, Presley concentrated on becoming a mediocre movie star. The vast majority of the films were forgettable as well as the songs they spawned. And for the most part, Chuck Berry exhausted everything original he had to offer by 1960. Most of his later works were just warmed over versions of earlier hits.

Buddy Holly, on the other hand, was like a rock-and-roll Mozart. The fact that many of his original recordings sound a lot like "typical '60s music" is rather amazing when you remember he died in 1959. However, in the late '50s and very early '60s, when Holly's music gained international popularity, no one else had that sound. He influenced so much music in the years immediately following his tragic death that we often forget he was the original.

Buddy Holly and The Crickets were the first of the "self-contained" rock bands—a model for the Beatles and many later groups. Thanks to the genius of Buddy Holly, the Crickets were the first rock band to write and arrange their own music. Furthermore, they could perform LIVE and maintain the sound integrity of their recordings.

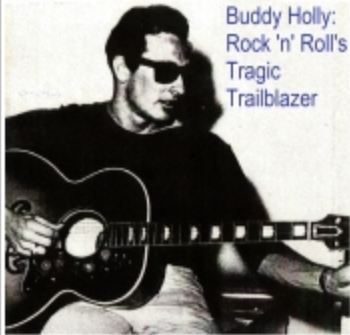
Legend has it that the band wanted to differentiate themselves from the many pop acts with names such as the Robins, Orioles, or other bird-type names. So they looked to world of insects for an inspiration. Although they ultimately chose the Crickets as the band's new name, others seriously considered were the Grasshoppers and the Beetles. Of course, it is well known that the Beatles chose their name as homage to the Crickets.

How did Buddy Holly and The Crickets manage to record so much outstanding material in such a short period of time? Before Buddy's first hit "That'll Be the Day," the cost of studio time severely limited the output of the band. After his initial success, the record company was anxious to cash in on what might be just another shooting star. Recording sessions were squeezed around endless tours that included: Australia, Europe and two TV appearances on the Ed Sullivan show. While on the road, one set of recordings was made in a makeshift studio at an Air Force base. Holly's last three songs, with only voice and guitar, were found on his tape recorder in his New York apartment after his death. Later, additional tracks were added and these songs including "Peggy Sue Got Married" and "Crying, Wishing, Hoping" were released posthumously.

The song "Words of Love," like many other Holly recordings, employed a technique called double tracking. For example, you will notice that Holly also sang the backup vocals on many of his songs. Holly was also experimenting with full orchestrations of songs such as "True Love Ways." Other rock artists did not effectively exploit these innovations until the mid '60s. Compare his '57 recording of "Words of Love" to the Beatles cover version released by Capitol Records on the 1965 album *Beatles VI*. Most American rock fans of that era assumed it was just another great Beatles' original. It sounded so fresh and "British."

Essentially, Holly had already moved onto a more progressive sound by 1959. He had broken with the Crickets and lived in New York City with his new bride Maria Elena. There he worked with a wide range of talented musicians, many appeared on his later recordings. Yet, Buddy had plans for his own studio in Lubbock. There he would concentrate on his unique vision, while encouraging the talent of many others. His career was really just beginning—suddenly it was all over.

Some musicologists speculate on what would have happened if Holly had lived. For instance, if Holly had been active in the '60s, would he have prevented the stagnation in American pop music that led to the "British Invasion?" Unfortunately, we are left with only what would have been Holly's "early formative period." In 1959, he was about at the same stage in his career that the Beatles were in 1966, prior to their great studio work. John Lennon acknowledged this on the Mike Douglas Show in 1972: "We often wonder where he'd be today (as far as) writing songs. He was so advanced. His songs are really something—beautiful songs."



Buddy Holly: Rock 'n' Roll's Tragic Trailblazer

Some say Rock 'n' Roll started with Elvis Presley and ended with Buddy Holly. Others claim great black artists like Fats Domino, Chuck Berry, and Little Richard deserve most of the credit. Support Bonham's, Beck, or even Chris had been limited (just two years of creative output)? Shouldn't he have been enough time to fundamentally influence an entire music genre?

Bill Haley is usually credited with the honor of being the "Father of Rock 'n' Roll." Yet, many argue that Hank Williams' *Move It On Over*, released in 1947, was actually the first Rock 'n' Roll song ever recorded. But can any one of these early artists actually be credited as being the most important?

Buddy Holly is certainly one of the most influential of the early rockers. His career lasted about two years — as long as the duration between albums for many in today's overindulged rock era. But he was a hard, fast worker, writing more than 40 songs. He had eight hits, and sold more than 10 million singles. And Holly did it all by age 23. He died February 3, 1959, in a windy Iowa plane crash that also claimed Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper. Unlike Elvis, the Texas-born Holly wrote his own songs and thus influenced future rock stars (namely The Beatles) in ways that "the King" never could.

Charles Martin (Haley) started out as a country singer. He began performing rock and roll when it was still far more and not yet an art form or artistic ideal. If he had lived, his product would have easily eclipsed that of Elvis and Chuck Berry. After two years in the army, Presley concentrated on movies, the vast majority were forgettable as well as the songs they spawned. And for the most part, Chuck Berry exhausted everything original he had to offer by 1956. Most of his later works were just reworked over versions of earlier hits.

Buddy Holly, on the other hand, was like a rock and roll Mozart. The fact that many of his original recordings sound like "typical '50s music" is rather amazing when you remember that he died in 1959. His songs burst onto the scene in the late '50s. At that time, no one else had that sound. He influenced so much music in the years immediately following his untimely death, it's easy to forget he was the originator.

Buddy Holly and The Crickets were the first self-contained rock and roll band, a model for The Beatles. They were the first to write and arrange their own music. They could perform LIVE and maintain the sound of their recordings. Legend has it that the band wanted to differentiate themselves from the many bands with bird names (Robins, Orbits, etc.) which was popular at the time. So they chose The Crickets, an insect name. Other names only considered were The Grasshoppers and The Beatles. Of course, if we know that The Beatles chose their name in homage to The Crickets,

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How could so much outstanding material be recorded in such a short period of time? So few Buddy's live hits, *That'll Be The Day* the rest of studio time severely limited output after his initial success, the record company was anxious to cash in on what might be just another short-lived star. Recording sessions were spaced around million tours including Australia, Europe and two TV appearances on the Ed Sullivan show. While on the road, one set of recordings was made in a makeshift studio at an Air Force base. Holly's last three songs (only voice and guitar) were found while tape searchers in his New York apartment. Later, additional tracks were added and these songs included Peggy Sue, Don't Start Crying, Viking, Raging were released after his death. Many have since been re-released by various producers.

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The truth is, Holly had already moved onto a more progressive sound by 1959.

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would concentrate on his unique vision while encouraging the talent of many others. His career was really just beginning - when suddenly it was all over.

Some musicologists speculate on what would have happened if Holly had lived. Would there have been a "British Invasion?" With Holly on the scene in the '60s, the need to reinvigorate American Pop music might not have existed. Unfortunately, we are left with only what would have been

Holly's early formative period. In 1959, he was at the same stage in his career that The Beatles were in 1966, prior to their great studio work. John Lennon acknowledged this on the Mike Douglas Show in 1972.

BUDDY HOLLY

The Legendary Recordings

ORIGINAL VERSIONS

Not Fade Away
Well...All Right
It's So Easy
Words of Love
Maybe Baby
Crying, Waiting, Hoping
Oh Boy
Wishing
Think It Over
That'll Be The Day
True Love Ways
Peggy Sue Got Married
It Doesn't Matter Anymore

EXTRAS

Heartbeat
Everyday
Rave On
Looking For Someone To Love
Love's Made a Fool of You
Fool's Paradise

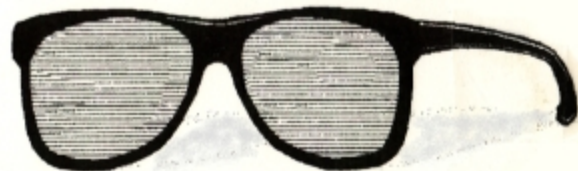
Crying, Waiting, Hoping
The Beatles
Sheila
Tommy Roe

THE COVER VERSIONS

It Doesn't Matter Anymore
Linda Ronstadt
Peggy Sue Got Married
Buddy Holly and the Hollies
True Love Ways
The Mavericks
Well...All Right
Nanci Griffith with the Crickets
That'll Be The Day
Linda Ronstadt
Not Fade Away
The Band/The Crickets
Think It Over
The Tractors
Wishing
Mary Chapin Carpenter
and Kevin Montgomery
Oh Boy
Joe Ely and Todd Snider
Crying, Waiting, Hoping
Marty Stewart and Steve Earle
Maybe Baby
Nitty Gritty Dirt Band
Words of Love
The Beatles
It's So Easy

BUDDY HOLLY

The Legendary Recordings



The Original Hit Recordings
and
Contemporary New Versions