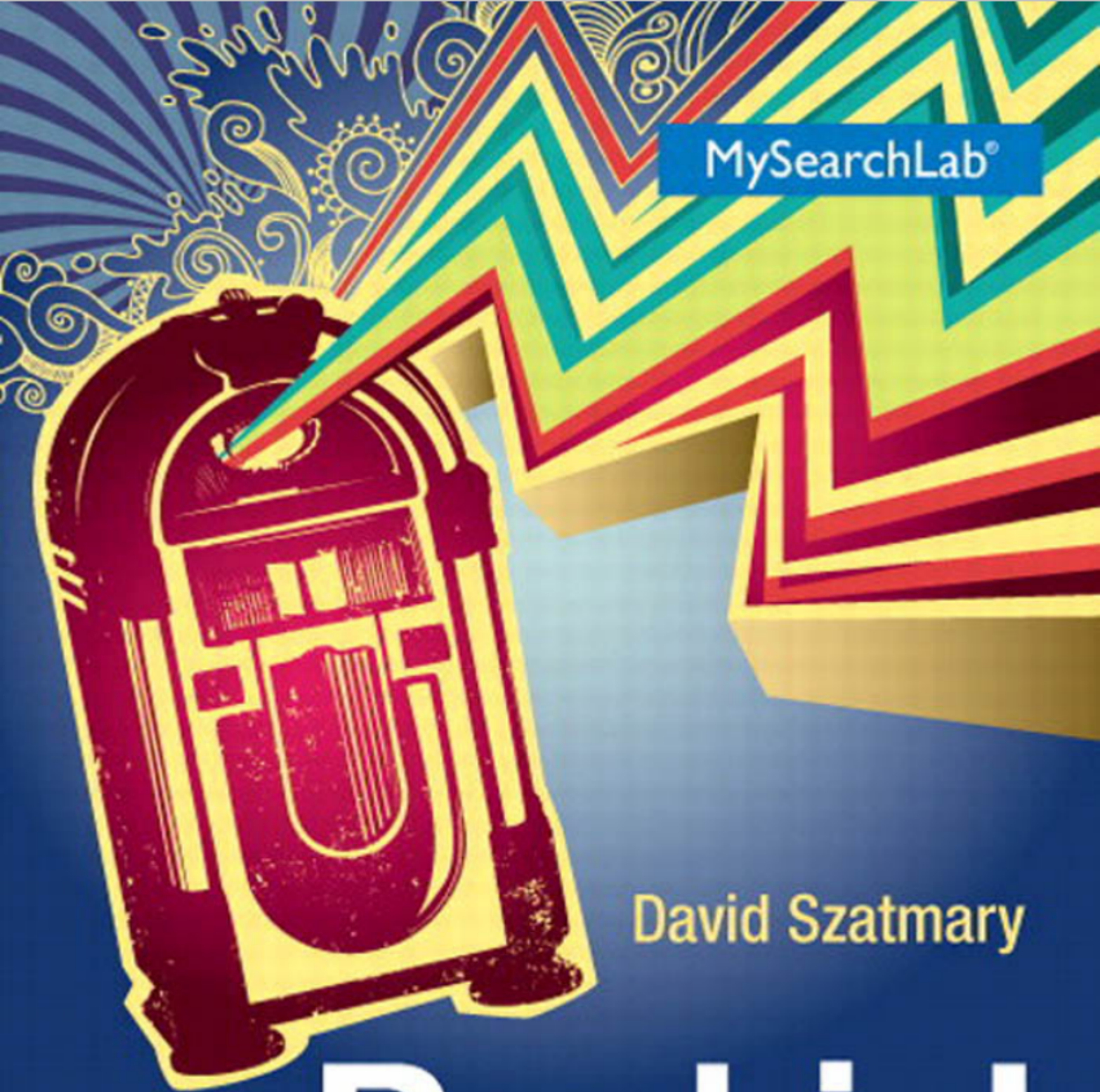
MySearchLab®



David Szatmary

Rockin' in Time

EIGHTH EDITION

Rockin' in Time

A Social History of Rock-and-Roll

Eighth Edition

David P. Szatmary

PEARSON

Boston Columbus Indianapolis New York San Francisco Upper Saddle River
Amsterdam Cape Town Dubai London Madrid Milan Munich Paris Montréal Toronto
Delhi Mexico City São Paulo Sydney Hong Kong Seoul Singapore Taipei Tokyo

To My Wife, Mary

Editor in Chief: Ashley Dodge
Editorial Assistant: Nicole Suddeth
Editorial Project Manager: Reena Dalal
Director of Marketing: Brandy Dawson
Executive Marketing Manager: Kelly May
Marketing Coordinator: Jessica Warren
Managing Editor: Denise Forlow
Program Manager: Kathy Sleys
Senior Operations Supervisor: Mary Fischer
Operations Specialist: Eileen Corallo
Art Director: Jayne Conte
Cover Designer: Suzanne Behnke
Cover Image: Radoman Durkovic
Director of Digital Media: Brian Hyland
Digital Media Project Manager: Tina Gagliostro
Full-Service Project Management and Composition: Saraswathi Muralidhar/ PreMediaGlobal
Printer/Binder: R.R. Donnelley
Cover Printer: Lehigh/Phoenix Color
Text Font: 10/12 Ehrhardt MT Std

Credits and acknowledgments borrowed from other sources and reproduced, with permission, in this textbook appear on pages 418–419.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Szatmary, David P.
Rockin' in time: a social history of rock-and-roll / David P. Szatmary. — Eighth edition.
pages; cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-205-93624-3
ISBN-10: 0-205-93624-5
1. Rock music—United States—History and criticism. 2. Rock music—Social aspects—United States. I. Title. II. Title: Rocking in time.
ML3534.S94 2013
781.660973—dc23 2013012793

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Student Edition
ISBN-10: 0-205-93624-5
ISBN-13: 978-0-205-93624-3

Books a la Carte
ISBN 10: 0-205-93776-4
ISBN 13: 978-0-205-93776-9

PEARSON

Contents

Preface

This edition varies considerably from the previous one.

New to This Edition

I have significantly rearranged the text to make it more chronologically accurate. For example, I have placed hardcore punk after the punk chapter rather than as a precursor to grunge.

I have used mostly new photos and images to make the text more relevant and to better show the connection of rock and roll to social history.

As usual, I have added new material, including

- A new chapter on the re-emergence of country rock during the past few years;
- A new section about the black arts movement of the 1960s;
- Added material about 1970s country rock such as outlaw country;
- More information about the birth of heavy metal;
- A section about the Rock against Bush movement during the 2004 Presidential election; and
- Nearly half a chapter about the significance of jam bands such as Dave Matthews.

I hope that you find this revision useful and would appreciate any comments as you read it. Also, I want to dedicate this edition as a tribute to my mother who passed away two months before publication. She instilled in me a love of books and music that made this book possible.

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.

May 2013

Acknowledgments

Thanks to several people who helped me with this book: Bill Flanagan, Timothy Leary, Michael Batt, Jamie Steiwer, Peter Blecha, Chris Waterman, Charles Cross, Gene Stout, John Shannon, Richard Carlin, Gary June, Joe Moore, Dave Rispoli, Jerry Schilling, Keith John, Joel Druckman, W. Michael Weis, and Sonny Masso offered perceptive comments and constant help on various drafts of the text. I also thank Robert Palmer, Bob Guiccione, Jr., Alan Douglas, Mike Farrace, Gregg Vershay, and Bob Jeniker for their encouragement. I especially thank Stewart Stern, Richard Hell, Sebastian, Frank Kozik, Mark Arminski, Emek, and rapper Ed "Sugar Bear" Wells for their insights. Obviously, none of those who provided assistance can be held responsible for the contents of this book.

As in previous editions, I have others to thank. Jerry Kwiatkowski (Kaye) introduced me to the world of rock and prodded me to listen to everyone from Captain Beefheart to Eric Clapton. Mike Miller helped me explore the summer concert scene in Milwaukee. Neil Fligstein, Eileen Mortenson, Gail Fligstein, Tom Speer, and Pete Acevez did the same for me in Tucson and Seattle. On the East Coast, Dave Sharp fearlessly accompanied me on journeys to see Sid Vicious and explore the mantra of Root Boy Slim.

I acknowledge former coworkers at Second Time Around Records in Seattle—owners Wes and Barbara Geesman, Dan Johnson, Mike Schwartz, Dave Wolter, Howie Wahlen, Jeff Taylor, Rob Innes, Michael Wellman, and Jim Rifleman—for adding to my understanding of rock music and the rock business. At the University of Arizona, Donald Weinstein graciously allowed me to teach a class on the social history of rock-and-roll, the beginnings of this book; Rick Venneri did the same at the University of Washington. Students in those classes added to my knowledge of rock music. Thanks to Dudley Johnson at the University of Washington for initially putting me in contact with Prentice Hall.

I owe a special debt to 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. 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.

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

My daughter Sara 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 new century and gave me hope that rock-and-roll will never die. In the last several editions, she offered insightful comments about the newest music on the charts and provided invaluable research.

Most of all, I thank my 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. I could not have completed the eight editions of this book without her understanding, interest, encouragement, and love.

Credits

Special thanks to Frank Kozik, Mark Arminski, Emek, Jeral Tidwell, Jason Cooper, and Jeff Wood and Judy Gex at Drowning Creek for use of their posters.

Every effort has been made to locate, identify, and properly credit photographers and artists. Any inadvertent omissions or errors will be corrected in future editions.

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 roughly 1940 to 2013. *Rockin' in Time* tries to explain 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."

This book 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 does not focus on the many artists, some of my favorites, who never gained general popularity or who achieved commercial success with a sound that either reinvigorated an older style or who did not encapsulate the times. *Rockin' in Time* 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, originating with American slaves, provided the foundation for rock-and-roll. During the early 1950s, southern African Americans who had migrated 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 create new styles such as the Motown sound, the

soul explosion of the late 1960s, the disco beat in the next decade, and, most recently, hip-hop.

The new musical styles many times 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 1950s. During the early 1960s, 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 1980s and throughout the 1990s, hip-hoppers such as Public Enemy rapped about inequality and renewed an interest in an African American identity.

As the civil rights struggle began to foster an awareness and acceptance of African American culture, rock-and-roll became accessible to white teenagers. Teens such as Elvis Presley listened to late-night, rhythm and blues radio shows that started to challenge and break down racial barriers. During the 1960s, African American performers such as the Ronettes, the Crystals, the Temptations, and the Supremes achieved mass popularity among both African Americans and whites. By the 1980s, African American entertainers such as Michael Jackson achieved superstar status, and during the next decade rap filtered into the suburbs. Throughout the last eight decades, rock music has helped integrate white and black America.

The shifting population trends during the postwar era, the second theme of this book, provided the audience for an African American-inspired rock-and-roll. After World War II, both the United States and Great Britain experienced a tremendous baby boom. By the mid-1950s, the baby boomers had become an army of youngsters who demanded their own music. Along with their older brothers and sisters who had been born during the war, they latched onto the new rock-and-roll, idolizing a young, virile Elvis Presley who attracted hordes of postwar youth.

Rock music appealed to and reflected the interests of the baby-boom generation until the early 1980s. The music of the Dick Clark era, the Brill Building songwriters, the Beach Boys, the Motown artists, and the early Beatles showed a preoccupation with dating, cars, high school, and teen love. As this generation matured and entered college or the workforce, the music scene became more serious and was dominated by the protest music of Bob Dylan and psychedelic bands that questioned basic tenets of American society. The music became harsh and violent when college-age baby boomers were threatened by the Vietnam War military draft and the prospect of fighting in an unpopular war. During the 1970s, after the war ended and when many of the college rebels landed lucrative jobs, glitter rock and disco exemplified the excessive, self-centered behavior of the boomers. During the 1980s, artists such as Bruce Springsteen, who matured with his audience and celebrated his fortieth birthday by the end of the decade, reflected a yearning for the 1960s spirit of social change.

The sons and daughters of the baby boom, born between 1965 and 1981 and called Generation X by the press, carried forward the rock-and-roll banner. Disaffected youths born on the cusp of the new generation created a stinging British punk rock and an American hardcore to vent their emotions. A few years later, the

first true Gen Xers found their music on a video-friendly medium called MTV. As they grew older, Generation X confronted sobering social conditions with thrash, grunge, death metal, and rap. During a brief respite of their woes, they turned to Britpop and jam bands.

By the late 1990s, a third generation of youth, born between 1982 and 2001 and referred to as the Baby Boom Echo, Generation Y, or the Millenials, demanded their own music. This group equaled the baby-boom in sheer numbers and buying power. In addition to the last strains of hip-hop, they flocked to hard sounds of metal as well as socially conscious singer-songwriters. By 2011, amid a conservative upheaval in the United States, many listened to the traditional message of a new country rock.

The roller-coaster economic times during the post–World War II era serve as a third focus of this book. A favorable economic climate initially allowed rock to flourish among the baby-boom generation. Compared to the preceding generation, which had been raised during the most severe economic depression of the twentieth century, the baby boomers in the United States lived in relative affluence. In the 1950s and early 1960s, many youths had allowances that enabled them to purchase the latest rock records and buy tickets to see their favorite heartthrobs. During the next fifteen years, unparalleled prosperity allowed youths to consider the alternatives of hippiedom and led to cultural excesses and booming record sales during the 1970s.

When the economic scene began to worsen during the mid-to-late 1970s in Britain, youths created the sneering protest of punk that reflected the harsh economic realities of the dole. At the same time and through the most of the 1980s and early 1990s, American youths, who had few career prospects and little family stability, played shattering hardcore punk, a pounding industrial sound, bleak grunge music, a growling death metal, and a confrontational rap. In the mid-1990s, when the economy brightened for several years on both sides of the Atlantic, teens turned to a bouncy, danceable Britpop and jam bands. From 2008 to the present, as the worldwide economy settled into one of the worst recessions in 100 years, youths began to listen to a country rock that preached a conservative message of tractors, tailgate parties, and the American flag.

Advances in technology shaped the sound of rock-and-roll and provide another framework for *Rockin' in Time*. The solid-body electric guitar, developed and popularized during the 1950s by Les Paul and Leo Fender, gave rock its distinctive sound. Mass-produced electric guitars such as Fender's 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 1960s and early 1970s, guitar gods plugged into a wide array of electronic devices such as the distortion box and the wah-wah pedal to deliver a 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, making it easily and inexpensively accessible. Television brought, and still brings, rock to teens in their homes—Elvis Presley and the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, *Shindig* in the 1960s, and MTV. In Britain, television programs such as *Thank Your Lucky Stars, Ready Steady Go!*, and *Juke Box Jury* played the same

role. The portable transistor radio, the portable cassette tape player-recorder, the portable CD player, and, most recently, the iPod provided teens the opportunity to listen to their favorite songs in the privacy of their rooms, at school, or on the streets. The inexpensive 45-rpm record, introduced in 1949 by RCA, allowed youths to purchase the latest hits and replaced the more brittle shellac 78-rpm record. Starting in the mid-1960s, such rock music as the experimental psychedelic sound fully utilized the more extended format of the long-play, 12-inch, 33-1/3-rpm record, which Columbia had invented in 1948. The LP became the dominant medium for rock music until the laser-powered compact disc became commercially available in October 1982. Advances in the quality of sound, such as high fidelity, stereo, and component stereo systems, brought the immediacy of the performance to the home and enhanced the rock experience. By the 1990s, the Internet enabled youths to listen, trade, download, and burn their favorite music, and learn about new bands.

The increasing popularity of 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. At first, small, independent companies such as Chess, Sun, Modern, and King recorded and delivered to the public a commercially untested rock. As it became more popular among teens, rock-and-roll began to interest major record companies such as RCA, Decca, and Capitol, which in the 1960s dominated the field. By the 1970s, the major companies aggressively marketed their product and consolidated ranks to increase profits and successfully create 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. At the end of the 1980s and 1990s, the major companies reasserted their dominance of the record industry, buoyed by the signing of new acts that had been tested by the independents and by the introduction of the compact disc, which lured many record buyers to purchase their favorite music in a different, more expensive format. As the new century unfolded, the 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, a home where my spirit could wander." "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 took on specific characteristics and styles. Fueled by uncontrolled hormones, rockabilly greasers in the 1950s and early 1960s 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, and screamed to the hip-shaking gyrations of

Elvis Presley. In the 1960s, serious clean-cut, smartly dressed, college-aged folkniks directed their frustration and anger at racial and social injustice, taking freedom rides to the South and protesting against nuclear arms. A few years later, the hippies flaunted wild, vibrant clothing, the mind-expanding possibilities of LSD, sexual freedom, and a disdain for a warmongering capitalism, which they expressed in their swirling psychedelic poster art. In the next decade, the rock lifestyle changed once again, as some baby boomers crammed into 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, lashing out against economic, gender, and racial inequities. In America, some youths created a slam-dancing, Mohawked hardcore punk. Around the same time, a hip-hop subculture started that unabashedly condemned racial prejudice and its effects on African Americans in the inner cities, highlighting 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 had spread to the white suburbs, where gun-toting teens looked for ho's and wore Adidas, saggy pants, baseball caps (preferably New York Yankees) turned backward, loose T-shirts, and, depending upon the year, gold chains.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Generation X youth voiced a passionate 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" community of grunge, which adopted the idealized look of the working class: longish, uncombed hair, faded blue jeans, Doc Marten boots, and T-shirts. Other Generation Xers faced their problems differently by refashioning the hippie lifestyle for the nineties. Joining together at updated love-ins called raves, they favored Ecstasy over LSD, put on their smiley faces, and hugged their fellow techno-travelers as demonstrations of peace in a war-filled, terrorist-riddled world. Though less confrontational than its grunge counterpart, the techno subculture directly challenged and shocked mainstream society as nearly each rock subculture has done during the last eighty years before being subverted and incorporated into the mainstream by fashion designers, Hollywood, and big business.

By the start of the new century, rock-and-roll took on different cultural forms. Confronted by a seemingly never-ending war in Iraq and the prospects of rapid climate change, collegiate-styled youths listened to socially conscious singer-songwriters. Others rocked to black metal, espousing a pagan sentiment and wearing facial corpse paint, studded black leather outfits, and long hair to demonstrate their disgust with current cultural mores. With only a few exceptions, rock-and-rollers have coalesced into distinct subcultures to rebel against the dominant social norms.

History seldom can be separated into neat packages. Many of the different rock genres and their accompanying subcultures overlapped with one another. For example, from 1961 to the advent of the British invasion in 1964, the Brill Building songwriters, surf music, and Bob Dylan coexisted on the charts. Though sometimes intersecting and

cross-pollinating, 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 social setting, I have tried to present the music in a historical rather than a personal context and to avoid any effusive praise or disparaging remarks about any type of rock. As Sting, lead singer of the Police, once said, "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 and essential part of American and British culture, rock-and-roll has reflected and sometimes changed the lives of several generations.

1

The Blues, Rock-and-Roll, and Racism

> "It used to be called boogie-woogie, it used to be called blues, used to be called rhythm and blues. . . . It's called rock now."
>
> —Chuck Berry

A smoke-filled club, the Macomba Lounge, on the South Side of Chicago, late on a Saturday night in 1950. On a small, dimly lit stage behind the bar in the long, narrow club stood an intense African American dressed in an electric green suit, baggy pants, a white shirt, and a wide, striped tie. He sported a 3-inch pompadour with his hair slicked back on the sides.

He gripped an oversized electric guitar—an instrument born in the postwar urban environment—caressing, pulling, pushing, and bending the strings until he produced a sorrowful, razor-sharp cry that cut into his listeners, who responded with loud shrieks. With half-closed eyes, the guitarist peered through the smoke and saw a bar jammed with patrons who nursed half-empty beer bottles. Growling out the lyrics of "Rollin' Stone," the man's face was contorted in a painful expression that told of cotton fields in Mississippi and the experience of African Americans in Middle America at midcentury. The singer's name was Muddy Waters, and he was playing a new, electrified music called rhythm and blues, or R&B.

The rhythm and blues of Muddy Waters and other urban blues artists served as the foundation for Elvis, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and most other rock-and-rollers. A subtle blend of African and European traditions, it provided the necessary elements and inspiration for the birth of rock and the success of Chuck Berry and Little Richard. Despite their innovative roles, R&B artists seldom received the recognition or the money they deserved. Established crooners, disc jockeys, and record company executives, watching their share of the market shrink with the increasing popularity of R&B and its rock-and-roll offspring, torpedoed the new music by offering toned-down, white copies of black originals that left many African-American trailblazers bitter and sometimes broken.

The Birth of the Blues

The blues were a creation of black slaves who adapted their African musical heritage to the American environment. Though taking many forms and undergoing many permutations throughout the years, the blues formed the basis of jazz, rhythm and blues, and rock-and-roll.

Torn from their kin, enduring a brutal journey from their homes in West Africa to the American South on slave ships, and forced into a servile way of life, Africans retained continuity with their past through a variety of ways, including music. Their voices glided between the lines of the more rigid European musical scale to create a distinctive new sound. To the plantation owners and overseers, the music seemed to be "rising and falling" and sounded off-key.

The music involved calculated repetitions. In this call-and-response, often used to decrease the monotony of work in the fields, one slave would call or play a lead part, and fellow slaves would follow with the same phrase or an embellishment of it until another took the lead. As one observer wrote in 1845, "Our black oarsmen made the woods echo to their song. One of them, taking the lead, first improvised a verse, paying compliments to his master's family, and to a celebrated black beauty of the neighborhood, who was compared to the 'red bird.' The other five then joined in the chorus, always repeating the same words." Some slaves, especially those from the Bantu tribe, whooped or jumped octaves during the call-and-response, which served as a basis for field hollers.

The slaves, accustomed to dancing and singing to the beat of drums in Africa, emphasized rhythm in their music. In a single song they clapped, danced, and slapped their bodies in several different rhythms, compensating for the absence of drums, which were outlawed by plantation owners, who feared that the instrument would be used to coordinate slave insurrections. One ex-slave, writing in 1853, called the polyrhythmic practice "patting juba." It was performed by "striking the right shoulder with one hand, the left with the other—all the while keeping time with the feet and singing." In contrast, noted President John Adams, whites "droned out [Protestant hymns] . . . like the braying of asses in one steady beat."

African Americans used these African musical traits in their religious ceremonies. One writer in the *Nation* described a "praise-meeting" held in 1867: "At regular intervals one hears the elder 'deaconing' a hymn-book hymn which is sung two lines at a time, and whose wailing cadences, borne on the night air, are indescribably melancholy." The subsequent response from the congregation to the bluesy call of the minister, along with the accompanying instruments, created the call-and-response, the rhythmic complexity, and the minor-key sound common in African music.

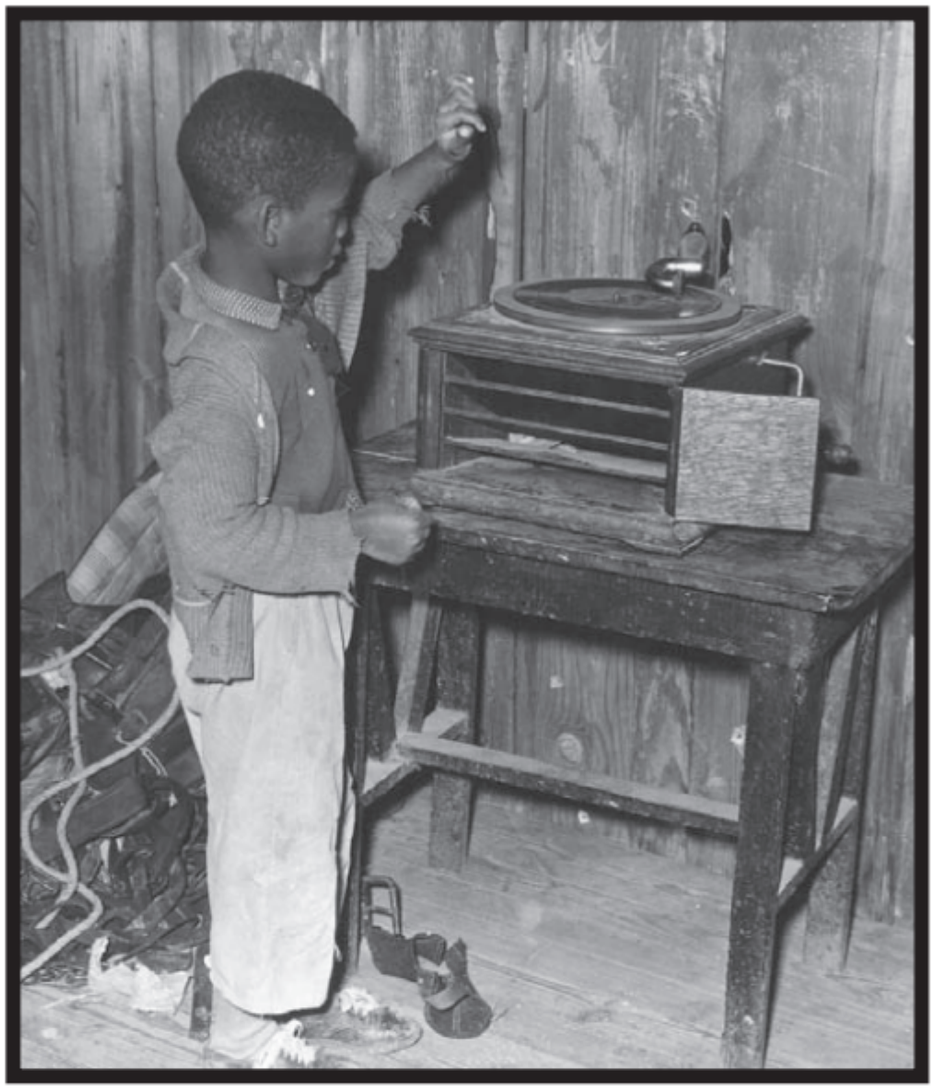
Such African-inspired church music, later known as spirituals, became the basis for the blues, when singers applied the religious music to secular themes. Bluesman Big Bill Broonzy, who recorded nearly two hundred songs from 1925 to 1952, started as "a preacher—preached in the church. One day I quit and went to music." Broonzy maintained that "the blues won't die because spirituals won't die. Blues—a steal from spirituals. And rock is a steal from the blues. . . Blues singers start out singing spirituals."

On the plantation, 1937. Photo by Dorothea Lange. *Permission by Library of Congress, F34-17335.*

The blues appropriated the African-based sound that spirituals had first captured and combined it with European harmony. It featured a centuries-old, twelve-bar European harmonic progression in a standard 4/4 time. Over the twelve-bar format, the music generally repeated a set of three chords to create a call-and-response effect. In the lyrics, the singer did the same by reiterating a line twice before embellishing it with a third line in a pattern called AAB. On the bass or the bass notes, the music emphasized a three-note riff to create a distinctive and dominant rhythm sometimes called a groove or a shuffle.

Blues players distinguished this rhythmic twelve-bar structure by using blue or bent notes–the flattened third, fifth, and seventh notes of a major scale. These notes, a cornerstone of the blues, gave the sound a rising and falling sensation and distinguished it from the diatonic European scale.

Blues musicians many times played the music on instruments from their African heritage. Many started with a one-string instrument called a diddley-bow, which they created by unraveling the wire that had been wrapped around the straw of a broom and then attaching one end of the wire to a stationary object like a barn. Once they



Listening to the blues, 1930s. Photo by Russell Lee. *Permission by Library of Congress, F34-31941.*

could afford it, they transitioned to the more traditional guitar which surged in popularity around 1900 when Sears and Roebuck began to sell inexpensive guitars through a mail-order business. A few favored the banjo, a traditional African instrument that many 19th-century slaves played.

Following African griots who relayed oral traditions by telling stories to the beat of music, blues players spoke rhythmically about either their personal situation or a recent natural disaster like a flood. As with the hollers they had learned in the fields while sharecropping or used to communicate with their neighbors over distances in rural areas, they would follow the African oral tradition by developing a line about a recent event or a local person, repeat it, and end with a final line that completed the thought. All told, the sons of former slaves combined their African heritage with European musical elements to develop a genre called the blues.

From the Rural South to the Urban North

During and after World War I, many southern African Americans brought the blues to northern cities, especially Chicago, the end of the Illinois Central Railroad line, where the African-American population mushroomed from 40,000 in 1910 to 234,000

Dancing at a juke joint, Memphis, 1939. Photo by Marion Post Wolcott. *Permission by Library of Congress, F34-052590-D.*

twenty years later. Many African Americans left the South to escape the boll weevil, a parasitic worm that ravaged the Mississippi Delta cotton fields in 1915 and 1916. Others wanted to leave the shackles of the sharecropping farm system that had replaced plantation slavery in the South after the Civil War and which bound many ex-slaves and their children to former slave masters. Some migrated to break loose from the chains of crippling racial discrimination in the South. As Delta-born pianist Eddie Boyd told *Living Blues*, "I thought of coming to Chicago where I could get away from some of that racism and where I would have an opportunity to, well, do something with my talent. . . . It wasn't peaches and cream [in Chicago], man, but it was a hell of a lot better than down there where I was born."

Once in Chicago, migrating African Americans found jobs in steel mills, food-processing plants, and stockyards that needed extra hands because of the wartime draft and a sudden restriction on European immigration. They settled in Chicago's South and West Side neighborhoods.

The migrants to the Windy City included Big Bill Broonzy, an ex-slave's son who worked as a plow hand in Mississippi and laid railroad track in Arkansas. He reached Chicago in 1920. In 1925, guitarist Tampa Red (b. Hudson Woodbridge)

headed from Florida to the same destination where he scored with the double entendre "Tight Like That" three years later. Pianist Eurreal Wilford ("Little Brother") Montgomery, born in 1906 on the grounds of a Louisiana lumber company, performed at logging camps until he ended up in Chicago in 1928. A few years later, barrelhouse pianist Roosevelt Sykes, "The Honeydripper," took the same route. In 1934, harmonica wizard John Lee ("Sonny Boy") Williamson, the first Sonny Boy, migrated from Jackson, Tennessee to the Windy City where three years later he cut his "Good Morning Little School Girl." George Leaner, who began selling blues discs in Chicago during the 1930s, recalled, "The Illinois Central Railroad brought the blues to Chicago. With the thousands of laborers who came to work in the meat-packing plants and the steel mills came the [blues artists]."

These migrants played different styles of blues. At first, most brought country blues to the city. By the early 1940s, when the urban setting began to influence the music, they recorded a hybrid of blues, vaudeville styles, and newer swing rhythms, which included the boogie-woogie, rolling-bass piano, a sound that became popularly associated with the jump-blues band of Louis Jordan who had eighteen number-one hits from 1942 to 1950. Some dubbed the early Chicago blues the "Bluebird Beat" because many of the blues artists recorded for RCA Victor's Bluebird label, formed in 1933.

Lester Melrose, a white music talent-scout producer, documented the Chicago blues scene during the 1930s and 1940s. As Willie Dixon, bassist, songwriter, and talent scout, told *Living Blues*, "I started goin' up to Tampa Red's house where a lot of the other blues artists was, on 35th and State Street. He had a place up over a pawnshop. And a lotta the musicians used to go up there and write songs, lay around in there, and sleep. Lester Melrose always came there when he was in town. That was his kind of headquarters, like. And whenever he was in town, and different people had different songs that they wanted him to hear, they came by Tampa's house. . . . Big Bill Broonzy and a bunch of 'em would hang around there. And we get to singing it and seein' how it sounds. If it sounded like it was alright, then Melrose would say, 'Well, looky here, we'll try it out and see what happens.'" Melrose himself boasted that "from March 1934 to February 1951 I recorded at least 90 percent of all rhythm-and-blues talent for RCA and Columbia Records." He included on his roster Big Bill Broonzy, Tampa Red, Roosevelt Sykes, Sonny Boy Williamson, and many others. By using several of his artists in one session, Melrose featured vocals, a guitar, and a piano to create a Chicago blues sound more enlivened and sophisticated than the more subdued country blues.

The blues became even more entrenched in northern urban areas during and after World War II, when thousands of Southerners in search of work streamed into the cities. "World War I started bluesmen up North and No. II made it a mass migration," pointed out Atlantic Record executive Jerry Wexler. Mechanical cotton pickers introduced in the South and the need for workers in wartime Northern industrial factories pushed many African Americans northward.

From 1940 to 1944, estimated *Time* magazine, more than 50,000 African Americans from Mississippi alone headed for Chicago. They paid about $15 for the day-long trip on the Illinois Central Railroad to the Windy City, the home of *The Defender,*

the widely read, black-owned newspaper that encouraged southern sharecroppers to migrate to the North. From 1940 to 1950, 214,000 southern African Americans arrived in Chicago, an increase of 77 percent in just one decade, and the African-American population in Chicago increased to nearly a half million. About half of the new migrants came from the Mississippi Delta region, which stretched 200 miles from Memphis to Vicksburg.

Many of the Delta migrants had heard a propulsive, acoustic style of blues on their sharecropping plantations. On Saturdays, at parties, at picnics, and in juke joints, they listened to the twelve-bar blues of local musicians who sometimes slipped the head of a broken bottle around a finger and slid it up and down the neck of their guitars to coax an other-worldly, minor-key sound from their instruments. Their favorites included Charley Patton, the king of the Delta blues, who played around Will Dockery's plantation during the 1920s, and in 1929 recorded his classics "Pony Blues," "Pea Vine Blues," and "Tom Rushen Blues." He played with Eddie "Son" House, a fallen-away Baptist preacher who taught himself how to play the guitar at age twenty-five. In 1930, House cut such discs as "Preachin' the Blues," which featured insistent, repetitive rhythms, a bottleneck guitar-style, and field-holler-like vocals that sent chills down the spines of listeners.

Robert Johnson represents one of the most celebrated and legendary Delta bluesmen, though not the most popular at the time. He first learned harmonica and then turned to guitar. He transformed his playing after listening repeatedly to House and his accompanist Delta guitarist Willie Brown. As House related, Johnson would beg him to use his guitar. Though House told the younger man to "just leave the guitar alone," Johnson would sneak up to the instrument "and go bamming with it." "BLOO-WAH, BOOM-WAH – a dog wouldn't want to hear it!" After a year or two, continued House, Johnson returned and again asked House and Brown to play during a break. House "winked at Willie" and gave Johnson his seat. "And when that boy started playing, and when he got through, all our mouths were standing open. All!" A myth started that the mild-mannered Johnson had sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads in exchange for his new-found guitar technique.

From 1931 until his untimely death from poisoning in August 1938 at the age of 27, Johnson traveled widely throughout the South and even reached St. Louis, playing his finely crafted music. Between November 1936 and his death, he signed a contract with Paramount Records, one of the few companies that extensively recorded Delta blues artists, and cut a series of such future rock standards as "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom," "Sweet Home Chicago," "Cross Road Blues," and "Love in Vain Blues."

Muddy Waters and Chicago R&B

Muddy Waters (a.k.a. McKinley Morganfield), who grew up in Clarksdale, Mississippi, listening to Johnson, Patton, and Son House, merged his Delta influences with the urban environment of Chicago. He had his first introduction to music in church. "I used to belong to church. I was a good Baptist, singing in church," he recollected. "So I got all of my good moaning and trembling going on for me right out of church."

Muddy bought his first guitar when he was seventeen. "The first one I got," he told writer Robert Palmer, "I sold the last horse we had. Made about fifteen dollars for him, gave my grandmother seven dollars and fifty cents, I kept seven-fifty and paid about two-fifty for that guitar. It was a Stella. The people ordered them from Sears-Roebuck in Chicago." A young Muddy played locally around his home base, a plantation owned by Colonel William Howard Stovall. In 1941, on a trip to the Mississippi Delta in search of Robert Johnson, musicologists Alan Lomax and John Work discovered Waters, then a tenant farmer, and recorded him for the Library of Congress.

Two years later, Muddy moved to Chicago "with a suitcase, a suit of clothes, and a guitar," hoping to "get into the big record field." He told a journalist, "I wanted to get out of Mississippi in the worst way. They had such as my mother and the older people brainwashed that people can't make it too good in the city. But I figured if anyone else was living in the city, I could make it there, too." Muddy worked in a paper-container factory and then as a truck driver by day, playing at parties in the evenings.

In 1944, Muddy bought his first electric guitar, and two years later, he formed his first electric combo. Possibly the archetype of Chicago R&B artists, Muddy Waters felt compelled to electrify his sound in Chicago. "When I went into the clubs, the first thing I wanted was an amplifier. Couldn't nobody hear you with an acoustic." At least partly out of necessity, Muddy combined his Delta blues with the electric guitar and amplifier, which blasted forth the tension, volume, and confusion of the big-city streets.

By combining the sounds of the country and city into a nitty-gritty, low-down, jumpy sound, Muddy Waters reflected the optimism of postwar African Americans, who had escaped from the seemingly inescapable southern cotton fields. The urban music contrasted sharply with the more sullen country blues, born in slavery. Willie Dixon, a bassist from Vicksburg, Mississippi, and composer of blues-rock classics such as "(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man," "I'm a Man," and "I Just Want to Make Love to You," recalled, "There was quite a few people around singin' the blues but most of 'em was singing all sad blues. Muddy was giving his blues a little pep." "We kept that Mississippi sound," explained Muddy himself. "We didn't do it exactly like the older fellows—with no beat to it. We put the beat with it. You know, put a little drive to it." The peppy, hard-driving blues of artists like Muddy Waters became known as rhythm and blues.

After three years of perfecting his electric sound in Chicago clubs, Muddy signed with Aristocrat Records, owned by local entrepreneur Evelyn Aron in partnership with Jewish immigrant brothers Leonard and Phil Chess, who had operated several South Side bars, including the Macomba Lounge. At first, as Muddy told journalist Pete Welding, Leonard Chess "didn't like my style of singing; he wondered who was going to buy that. The lady [Evelyn Aron] said 'You'd be surprised.' . . . Everybody's records came out before mine. [Macomba house vocalist] Andrew Tibbs had two records before me. . . . But when they released mine, it hit the ceiling." Muddy remembered about his first disc, "I Can't Be Satisfied," backed with "Feel Like Going Home" [September 1948], "I had a hot blues out, man. I'd be driving my truck and whenever I'd see a neon beer sign, I'd stop, go in, look at the

Muddy Waters, 1950s.
Permission by Alamy.

jukebox, and see my record on there. . . . Pretty soon I'd hear it walking along the street. I'd hear it driving along the street."

Encouraged by success and the abandonment of the blues market by RCA and Columbia, in December 1949 the Chess brothers bought out their partner Evelyn Aron, changed the name of the company to Chess, and released a series of Muddy Waters sides that became hits on the "race" charts. They first cut "Rollin' Stone" backed by the Robert Johnson tune "Walkin' Blues," followed by "Long Distance Call" and "Honey Bee" the next year. By the mid-1950s, Waters had defined the raucous, urbanized, electric Delta blues, recording "Got My Mojo Working," the Delta standard "Rollin' and Tumblin'," "Mad Love," "(I'm Your) Hoochie Coochie Man," "I Just Wanna Make Love to You," and "I'm Ready," among many others. His group in the early 1950s, which included Otis Spann on piano, Little Walter on harmonica, Jimmy Rogers on guitar, and Leroy ("Baby-Face") Foster on drums, stands out as one of the most explosive R&B units ever assembled.

The Wolf

Chester ("Howlin' Wolf") Burnett, another Chess discovery, rivaled Muddy Waters with a raw, electrified Delta blues. A teenaged Burnett, living on Young's and

Morrow's plantation near Ruleville, Mississippi, in 1926, met Charley Patton, who lived nearby on Will Dockery's plantation. As he told writer Pete Welding, "Charley Patton started me off playing. He took a liking to me, and I asked him would he learn me, and at night, after I'd get off work, I'd go and hang around." A few years later he listened to the country yodeling of another Mississippian, Jimmie Rodgers, and he decided to emulate the white singer. Never mastering the yodeling technique with his harsh, raspy voice, the blues singer earned a series of nicknames for his distinctive style, which included "Bull Cow," "Foot," and "The Wolf." "I just stuck to Wolf. I could do no yodelin' so I turned to howlin'," remembered Burnett. To perfect his raspy blues, Howlin' Wolf traveled across the Delta during the next two decades and played with the legendary blues artists of the area, including Robert Johnson and Rice Miller (also known as Sonny Boy Williamson II).

In 1948, at age thirty-eight, the Wolf plugged his Delta blues into an electric amplifier and in West Memphis formed an electric band, the House Rockers, who at times included harp players James Cotton and Little Junior Parker. The Wolf and his band landed a regular spot on radio station KWEM and began to attract attention.

Four years later, the Wolf joined the exodus to Chicago. At first, remembered Burnett's guitarist Hubert Sumlin, "He stayed at Muddy [Waters'] house for about two months. And Muddy introduced him around. Muddy was on the road a good bit in those days, so he took Wolf and introduced him to Sylvio, Bobby, and Mutt at the Zanzibar, and Ray and Ben Gold at the 708 Club. When Muddy went on the road, Wolf just stepped in his shoes in [those] three places."

A competition began to develop between Waters and the Wolf, who quickly established himself among the Chicago R&B crowd. Sumlin pointed out that, "Ever since the Wolf came to Chicago and started taking over, Muddy didn't like him too well. A kind of rivalry started up between them about who was the boss of the blues." Willie Dixon, hired by the Chess brothers in 1950 as a songwriter and talent scout, recalled, "Every once in a while [the Wolf] would mention the fact, 'Hey man, you wrote that [song] for Muddy. How come you won't write me one like that?' But when you write one for him he wouldn't like it." Dixon "found out that all I could do was use backward psychology and tell him, 'Now here's one I wrote for Muddy, man.' 'Yeah, man, let me hear it. Yeah, that's the one for me.' And so, I'd just let him have it."

The Wolf scored a series of hits with Dixon's songs and traditional blues standards that would influence the course of rock-and-roll. He recorded his calling card, "Moanin' at Midnight"; "Killing Floor," later recorded by Jimi Hendrix; "How Many More Years," which became Led Zeppelin's "How Many More Times"; "I Ain't Superstitious," covered by Jeff Beck; and "Smokestack Lightnin'," later popularized by the Yardbirds.

Wolf's stage performances presaged later rock-and-roll antics. At the end of one performance, he raced toward a wing of the stage, took a flying leap, and grabbed onto the stage curtain, still singing into his microphone. As the song built to a climax, the Wolf scaled the curtain; as the song drew to a close, he slid down the drapery. He hit the floor just as the song ended, to the screams of the audience. Recalled Sam Phillips, the genius behind Sun Records who recorded a few Howlin' Wolf songs and

sold them to Chess, "God, what it would be worth on film to see the fervor in that man's face when he sang. His eyes would light up, you'd see the veins come out on his neck and, buddy, there was nothing on his mind but that song. He sang with his damn soul."

Bo Diddley and Other Chess Discoveries

The Chess brothers recorded other hard-driving rhythm and blues performers from the Delta. Born Otha Ellas Bates McDaniel in McComb, Mississippi, on December 30, 1928, Bo Diddley moved to the Windy City with his family when he was six years old. "Oh, I played street corners [on Maxwell Street] until I was nineteen or twenty, from about fifteen on," he told rock critic and musician Lenny Kaye. "Then I walked the streets around Chicago for about twelve years, before I got somebody to listen to me." Eventually, he landed a job at the 708 Club, and in June 1955, he signed with Chess Records, where reputedly he took the name Bo Diddley from a local comedian. That year, Diddley hit the R&B charts with "Bo Diddley" and "I'm a Man" and subsequently with "Mona," "You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover," and "Say Man." Though appealing to rock-and-roll fans, Diddley stood firmly rooted in the electrified Delta sound. The striking similarity between his "I'm a Man" and Muddy Waters's "Mannish Boy," both recorded in 1955, attests to Bo Diddley's Delta underpinnings.

Chess also recorded two pioneers of the amplified harmonica: Aleck "Rice" Miller (Sonny Boy Williamson II) and Marion Walter Jacobs, otherwise known as Little Walter. Miller was the undisputed king of the blues harmonica, who gained popularity through his long-running *King Biscuit Time*, a daily fifteen-minute radio show on station KFFA, broadcast from Helena, Arkansas. Although already a popular artist when he signed with Chess in 1955, Sonny Boy cut a number of now-classic singles for the Chicago label, including "One Way Out," which the Allman Brothers later covered.

Walter grew up in the cotton fields of Louisiana. He learned to play the harmonica (the harp, as he called it) during his teens, patterning himself after Miller. A year after World War II, Little Walter left home and reached Chicago, where he joined the Muddy Waters band. In 1952, backed by the Muddy Waters group, he hit the chart with "Juke," which remained in the R&B Top Ten for fourteen weeks. Little Walter quickly formed his own band, the Night Cats, and followed with several others, culminating in 1955 with his biggest commercial success, "My Babe," a Willie Dixon composition based on the gospel song "This Train."

By the mid-1950s, the Chess brothers had offered a new blues sound to record buyers. As Billy Boy Arnold (the harp player who backed Bo Diddley on his first Chess recording) explained, blues "changed drastically from 1940 to 1950. . . . The saxophone players couldn't hardly get jobs. And piano was just about obsolete," with the notable exception of Otis Spann in the Muddy Waters band. In their place, continued Arnold, Chicago blues during the 1950s featured "that harmonica blastin' on the amplifiers. Two guitars strumming behind 'em. . . . Electric blues and harmonica and Muddy's type of country singing and low-down blues was at its pinnacle at that