Introduction to Rock Music

Reaction to Rock ‘n’ Roll: The 1950’s through 1960’s—A Heated Political Climate!
1950’s

- Broad social change in society and the music industry.
  - Tilt toward African American sensibilities and working-class styles.
  - Challenged existing cultural values and public taste.
  - Socially, threatened to upset the “neat separation of the races that had guided not just the operations of the music industry but the dynamics of all social interaction to date.
Social Change

- Dealing with communism and Eastern Block.
- Racism, integration.
- Suburbia
- School as preparation for work
- Rigidity and conformity
  - Conflicted with the demands of the new consumer economy.
  - The pleasure principle
  - Growing use of sexuality to sell products
Changes to the Music Industry

- **Talent Buying**
  - RCA: Elvis Presley
  - MGM: Conway Twitty

- **Cover Records**
  - Johnny Ray: Cover of the Drifters’ “Such a Night”
  - Often R&B remakes by white artists. Altered stylistic elements and lyrics.

- **Capitalize on growing R&B market for White Listeners**
  - Joe Turner and Bill Haley: “Shake, Rattle, and Roll”
    - Replace sexual phrases
    - Moved the “action” from the bedroom to the kitchen
  - Pat Boone
    - Most covers to his name
    - “Lightning rod for all the criticism of the practice” of cover records
  - Fats Domino: Ain’t That A Shame

- Advantages or disadvantages to Cover Records???
Diversion

- Calypso
  - Sexuality
  - Social Commentary
  - Highly politicized
  - Novelty
    - Harry Belafonte
      - Jamaica Farewell; Banana Boat Song
Schlock Rock, Television and the Music of the White Middle Class

- White, middle-class teen idols: Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello, Fabian, Bobby Darin. Many Italian American who “anglicized” their names.

- “At a time when ethnic succession still played a major role in white ethnic inter-group relations, entertainment and sports offered the most promising avenues for upward mobility.

- The Brill Building
  - The New Tin Pan Alley

- New pop orientation in Rock ‘n’ Roll cannot be reduced to the function of a particular ethnic affiliation. Schlock knew no ethnic boundaries.

- Large emphasis on dance music.
  - Chubby Checker: “The Twist

- Television played a huge roll in the public taste.
  - Dick Clark and American Bandstand

- Surf Music
  - The Beach Boys “Sufin’ USA”
  - The Sufaris “Wipe Out”
Reactions to Rock ‘n’ Roll

- Calls for Censorship
  - Weed out suggestive lyrics. Stop the use of sexual double entendres
- Catholic Youth Organizations
- Confiscation by police
- The payola scandal
- Further racial tension and separation

- 1954: Brown vs. Board of Education (no more separate but equal principle—desegregation begins) in cooperation with other events (Rosa Parks, Montgomery Bus Boycotts and assassination of Medgar Evars) would lead American in the Civil Rights Movement through the rest of the 1950’s and 60’s.
Crossing the Line

- Rock ‘n’ Roll crossed the lines of class, race, and age; however, Civil Rights activists tended to avoid the music. Why?

- Civil Rights: MLK, NAACP, CORE, SNCC

- Civil Rights movement had an impact on the larger musical culture. Early Rock ‘n’ Roll found a national audience.

- Integrationist, social equality.
Girl Groups Through Motown

- Girl Groups flourished during the 1950’s to the 60’s.
  - Phil Spector
  - Still there was a cliché as to what women could sing about: their man coming home, love.
  - My Boyfriends Back (Angels); Leader of the Pack (Shangri-Las) Most of the men that were sung about were “Rebels”

- Accomplished what the early Civil Rights movement aimed to do: white songwriters and black vocalists incorporating the excitement and urgency of rhythm and blues into the mainstream tradition of professional pop.

- Growth of Pop and R&B fusion

- The color-blindness of the early Civil Rights movement was reinforced, for here was black-sounding music that was written by whites, produced by whites, performed by whites, and accepted by blacks. Was not able to be repeated in reverse.
  - Ike and Tina Turner “River Deep—Mountain High”

- Motown
  - Formula writing: did not substitute for creativity!
  - Brought about better treatment of African American artists in the music industry.
  - “Black Pop” that was danceable and threatening to no one in tone or content.
  - The Supremes, Dionne Warwick
    - “Stop! In the Name of Love”
    - “I Say a Little Prayer”
Folk Music and Civil Rights

- In the folk music arena, there was a huge issue between whether someone was an authentic folk artist and who was a commercialist. Why did this matter?

- What were they?
  - Pete Seeger; Peter, Paul, & Mary; Bob Dylan

- What made folk music so important to the Civil Right’s movement and Rock ‘n’ Roll?
Lead Up to the British Invasion

- USSR launches Sputnik: The Space Race and Race for the Moon begin.
- 1963: JFK is assassinated.
- 1964: Passage of the Civil Rights Act
- Elevation of the “mood” of the nation from outside of itself. The British Invasion takes America by storm.
- British groups were much more marketable than African American groups...racial tension still ensues.

- The Beatles
- Herman’s Hermits
- The Kinks
- Blues of Korner/Mayall
  - Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker (Cream), members of Free, Led Zeppelin, and the Rolling Stones
  - All used African American music their “repertoires.”
  - Beatles and Stones meet Bob Dylan
More Social and Musical Change

- Assassination of Malcolm X in 1965.
- Folk artists and sound fold into the Rock ‘n’ Roll sound.
- Passage of the Voting Rights Act; Watts Riots; Urban Unrest.
  - Black is Beautiful! Challenge of the Motown sound and a desire for R&B sounds closer to its roots.
  - Sam and Dave “Soul Man”; Aretha Franklin [Lady Soul] “Respect” (remake of the original by Otis Redding”; James Brown “(I Got You) I Feel Good”
- Drugs a fundamental part of the Rock ‘n’ Roll Scene. Marijuana, Acid, Heroin, and more.
“The making of the counterculture was based on a rejection of the competitive, achievement-oriented culture in favor of free-living, free-loving lifestyles and shared communities of choice.” “Hippies.”

A new cultural center: San Francisco.
- Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead
- Anti-commercial tendencies; drug use (LSD, acid)
  - Timothy Leary: “Turn on, tune in, and drop out.”
  - Janis Joplin: Heroin overdose. Symbol of rebellion for the white, middle-class youth.
The Counterculture Comes Out!

- The Monterey Pop Festival
- Launched Careers of:
  - Janis Joplin
  - The Who “My Generation”
  - Jimi Hendrix
  - Otis Redding: First number one single—posthumous “Sittin’ on the Dock of the Bay”
- First huge rock festival
- West coast event

- The Beatles: brought out the positive, optimistic, upbeat aspects of the counterculture.
- The Doors were the complete opposite.
  - Jim Morrison
  - “Break on Through (To the Other Side)”
  - 1967: #1 Teenybopper band with release of “Light My Fire”
Woodstock

- **Tuesday**: Exam
- **Thursday**: Woodstock, Chapter 7, and 1st listening assignment will be given.