

The Story of Pop

HEINEMANN GUIDED READERS
UPPER LEVEL

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The Story of Pop

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Glossary

The glossary at the back of this book on page 83 is divided into four sections. A number beside a word in the text, like this ³, refers to a section of the glossary. *Section 1* – a list of the types of pop music – is only referred to once in the text. Within each section, the words and phrases are listed in alphabetical order.

Section 1 – list of types of pop music

Section 2 – terms to do with music and the music industry

Section 3 – adjectives used to describe music and musicians

Section 4 – other words

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ONE

ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK

It was very early one dark spring morning in 1973. A number of young girls, most of them about the age of twelve or thirteen, were waiting in the main hall of London airport. They passed the time drinking coffee and eating sandwiches. Some of them were talking and some were reading. Now and then, one or two of them got up and walked around impatiently before sitting down again.

All the time, more and more girls were arriving at the airport and soon there was a really large crowd. One girl who had just arrived recognised a friend in the middle of the crowd.

‘Hi, Jane,’ she shouted.

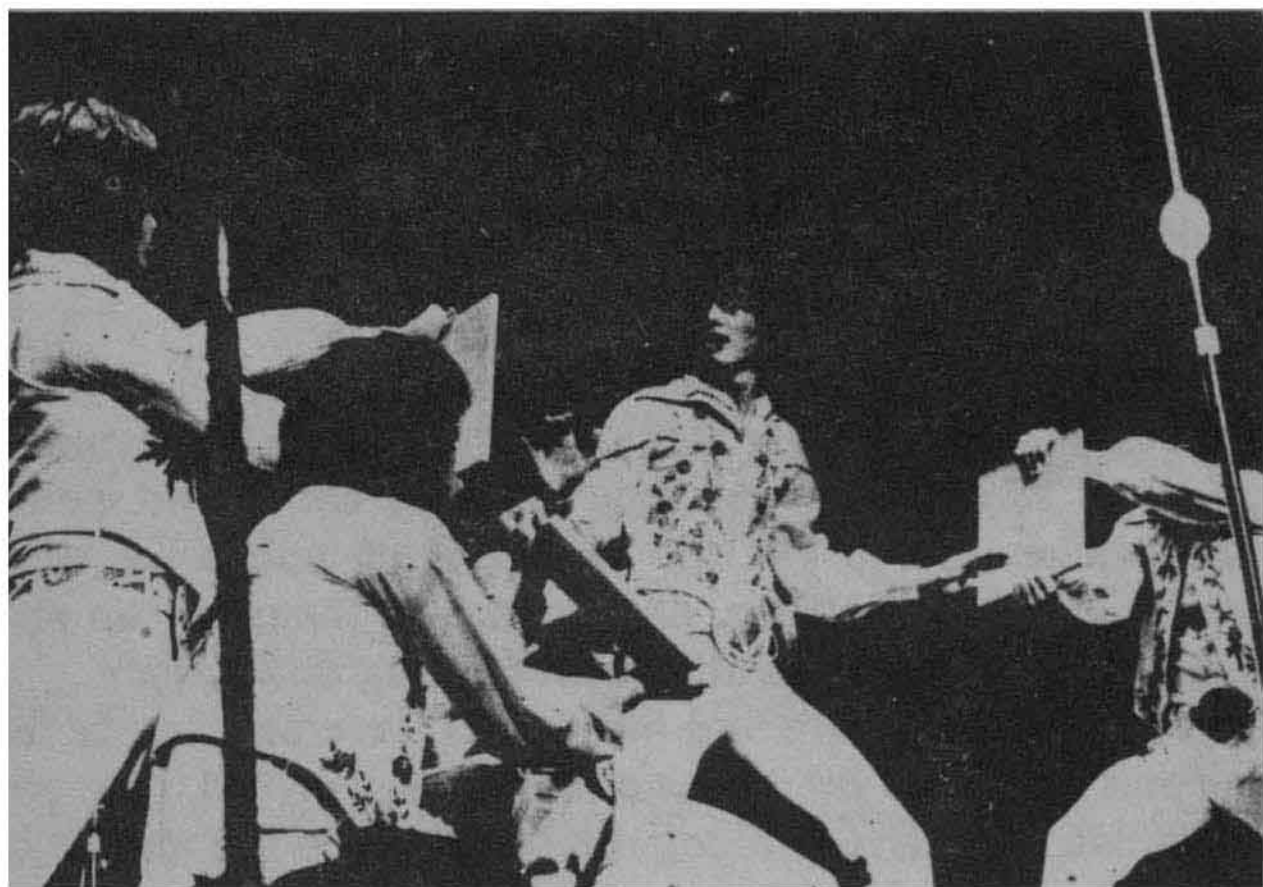
‘Hi, Susan,’ came the reply. ‘Been here long?’

‘Since six o’clock. We’ve been here more than two hours. They should arrive soon. It can’t be long now because ...’

Her words were lost in the tremendous noise of a plane coming in to land at London airport. Immediately everybody rushed to the big windows. There were photographers and newspaper reporters everywhere, taking photographs and writing down notes. Many of the girls rushed outside to try to get nearer the plane. Its doors opened and six young boys stepped out.

Well, of course, they were the Osmonds. In 1973, no other group in the world of entertainment could have brought such a crowd of fans² to the airport. Next day, the newspapers said there had never been a welcome like it before. Perhaps the journalists did not remember as much as the men who had worked at the airport for many years.

These men were able to remember many similar scenes, with the same large crowds of fans and the same ex-



The younger faces of pop in the seventies – the Osmonds.

citement. For example, the best known group of all, the Beatles, had received this kind of welcome many times in the past.

In 1957, the first American rock 'n' roll¹ singer who came to England, Bill Haley, had arrived by boat in Southampton. A very large crowd of fans was waiting to meet him. Later he travelled to London in a special train almost as if he had been a king or a president!

Naturally, everyone read about these events in the newspapers and watched them on TV. At the same time a film which included pop² music was being widely talked about in newspapers and on TV. The film was called *The Blackboard Jungle*. In this film Bill Haley and the Comets played and sang a song called *Rock around the Clock*. In many ways this song marked the beginning of 'pop'.

How has pop developed since then? To answer this question, we must look at some of the changes which have



America's first rock 'n' roll star – Bill Haley with the Comets.

taken place in society and music since the 1950s. In America, round about the year 1955, a type of music known as 'rock 'n' roll' first became popular, especially among young people.

In the early fifties, not many young people bought records. They did not have much money and the only popular music was the music which their parents liked. Perhaps you have heard that kind of music. For example, a large band, often with a singer, played well-known romantic³ music to which couples danced simple, popular dances like the waltz.

Everything was done very politely and quietly and young people had to listen to the same music as their parents. Some liked it and others did not. But, even if they did not like it, there was nothing else to listen to. There were no records which young people really wanted to buy.

Immediately after the Second World War, Europe and

America faced great economic difficulties, but by about 1955 America had solved its problems. In the fifties, America had become richer than ever before. At the same time, the political situation in the world was extremely confused.

America and Russia were enemies and seemed to be ready to use the terrible power of the atomic bomb. Many young people were troubled by this situation. On the one hand, their society promised a great future; on the other hand, there was the danger of total destruction. So, in many ways, they could not accept the world of their parents.

At the same time, the music and interests of the older generation was boring to young people who realised that their world might be destroyed at any moment. In America, the richest country in the world, there were lots of young people with money to spend. And they could only spend their money on the same things as their parents.

So, although teenagers had money, they could not spend it as they wanted. They were expected to wear the same kind of clothes that their parents had worn when they were teenagers.

Whenever young people have enough money, they become independent. And naturally, they want to show that they are independent and can make their own decisions. They can show this independence by the sort of clothes they wear. They can also find their own music to replace the old-fashioned³ music of their parents.

The men who controlled the record companies realised that teenagers were looking for a different kind of music. But they did not really know what young people wanted. And so these men began to make records of many new singers, hoping to find the type of music which appealed to teenagers.

They found the right music almost by accident in the

film *Blackboard Jungle*. As the film began, the audience heard Bill Haley and the Comets play *Rock around the Clock*. Teenagers who went to see the film heard the song and they bought millions of copies of the record.

Rock around the Clock was the first song which really belonged to teenagers. It was the beginning of rock 'n' roll. Since then pop has grown into a very rich industry. Young people spend huge amounts of money on records, cassettes, concerts and magazines. They spend money on anything connected with their favourite music and musicians. In this way, young people have helped to create pop and make it the special music of young people all over the world.

TWO

ROCK 'N' ROLL

Before Bill Haley arrived in England, he was already famous. *Rock around the Clock* had already sold more than a million copies² and *Blackboard Jungle* had received a lot of comment and criticism. So when he arrived in England in 1957, he immediately became the centre of attention in the newspapers and on TV.

He toured² England with his group, the Comets, and gave concerts in most big cities. Everywhere great crowds came to listen to him. Most people enjoyed his music so much that they got up and danced in the spaces between the seats. A year earlier, young people had danced in the cinemas in the same way to the music of the film, *Blackboard Jungle*.

It was clear that something important was happening. Nobody could remember anything like it. Of course, there had always been popular songs and singers, and these singers had had great numbers of fans. But the young people at Bill Haley's concerts behaved in a way which showed more than just enjoyment. It showed that they wanted to rebel against their parents and against older people in general.

Bill Haley and other rock 'n' roll singers annoyed many older people in several ways. For example, older people thought rock 'n' roll was noisy and unpleasant. And it really was very different from the quieter, romantic love songs which had been popular before.

The style of dancing to rock 'n' roll was called 'jiving', and older people found it strange. When a couple 'jived', they did not dance close together; they jumped up and down, and turned around and threw each other in the air. Most parents disliked the new kind of music



Jiving – nothing like the older types of dancing.

because of the noise and the way the young people danced.

There was one more problem – the clothes worn by the rock 'n' roll singers who came from America. Young people had always worn the same kind of clothes as their parents. They had cut their hair in the same way as their parents, too. When rock 'n' roll appeared, the problems of hair and clothes came with it. The American singers wore their hair much longer than ordinary people, and they preferred jeans and tee-shirts. They did not like wearing ties, either. In England, in 1955, almost every man and boy had to wear a tie and almost everybody had short hair.

And then one day a teenager went to school with longer hair, trying to look like his favourite singer. His headmaster immediately sent him home from school and told him to get his hair cut. The incident made a good story for the newspapers, and the same thing happened several times in the following months.

Journalists saw these events as the beginning of a conflict between the generations. The older generation preferred ordinary clothes and the music they had always been used to. The younger generation was starting to prefer different, more colourful clothes, and a new, more exciting kind of music.

The newspapers found a special phrase to describe what was happening. This phrase was 'the generation gap'. It expressed the big difference between the tastes and opinions of the older generation and the tastes and opinions of young people.

Money helped to make the 'generation gap' wider. As America and Western Europe became richer and richer, there was more money and more work for everybody, especially young people. And so, with all this money, a teenager could show his independence in many ways: for example in his clothes and in his favourite music.



Teddy boys at a rock 'n' roll concert at Wembley Stadium, London.

'In rock 'n' roll, and in the new clothes and actions, people could hear and see the generation gap. Most people were interested in the events which were taking place. Some people felt that their authority was in danger and they did not like these changes at all.

But there was another group of people who welcomed the changes. These were the people who worked on newspapers and TV and those who made films or records. Journalists found many good stories in the new events. For example, newspapers frequently had stories about groups of teenage boys known as 'Teddy Boys'.

'Teddy Boys' dressed in clothes like those worn in England during the time of King Edward VII at the beginning of this century. The King had been known as 'Teddy' and this name was used to describe these young men. People noticed the strange clothes of the Teddy Boys and stared at them in the street.

Teddy Boys liked rock 'n' roll and they went to concerts and cinemas in large numbers to hear their favourite music. They often caused trouble and sometimes they started to fight. Many people were afraid of the Teddy Boys. And, of course, these people did not like their music, either.

As well as comment in newspapers, several films were made about the generation gap. *Blackboard Jungle* was one of these films. It is a story about the problems of teachers and students in the violent schools in New York City. In the cinema, the new stars were James Dean and Marlon Brando. Both appeared in films about the problems of young people.

The titles of these films are interesting. James Dean's film was called *Rebel without a Cause* and Dean himself played the rebel. Brando appeared in a film called *The Wild Ones*, which was about a group of violent young men who rode around on big, powerful motorbikes. Neither Brando or Dean looked like a Holly-

wood star of the forties and both had large numbers of young fans.

In the music business², record producers for the big companies were also looking for new stars. They wanted to find more songs like *Rock around the Clock* and also singers who could sing this new kind of music.

But what do we know about this new music? Rock 'n' roll was a mixture of different types of earlier music which had taken a long time to develop. In the next chapter we will look at where it came from and how it grew.

THREE

RHYTHM 'N' BLUES

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thousands of black people were brought from West Africa to work as slaves in the cotton fields of America. These slaves had their own kind of music and they sang together as they worked in the fields. They sang about their sadness and their songs had regular rhythms² which helped them to work together. African musical ideas, great feeling and strong rhythm together created a kind of singing which was called 'the blues'. The blues are the real folk² songs of the American negro.

After the Civil War in America (1861-1865), slavery was abolished and negroes were free. Now a negro was allowed to learn to play some of the white man's musical instruments, like the piano, the trumpet or the clarinet. Soon black musicians were playing the blues on these instruments. This new kind of music was called jazz.

When white people heard jazz, they disliked it very much. They were shocked because jazz was noisy and rhythmic³ and very different from their own favourite music. White people preferred quiet, romantic music. They attacked jazz in the same way that they attacked rock 'n' roll fifty years later.

Although white people never accepted jazz in its original³ noisy form, it became very popular during the twenties and thirties. White orchestras used the melodies² and rhythms of jazz, but added violins to make the music sweeter. White singers sang the new music in their old-fashioned way and jazz gradually became more acceptable to the tastes of white people.

Among themselves, American negroes still played real jazz. And they still sang the blues. Their lives had