

'We invented what?'

A couple of weeks ago I wrote a column praising the accomplishments of the baby boomers and pre-boom generations. However, a few faithful readers brought to my attention that I neglected to mention the greatest innovation of the fabulous '50s era. They were indignant and vocal about my negligence in mentioning that this generation was responsible for the birth of Rock 'N' Roll.

We did indeed engender the greatest innovation in music since Bach invented the tempered scale, starting with Bill Haley and his Comets rockin' around the clock. Carl Perkins brought us "Blue Suede Shoes," and Chuck Berry introduced us to "Johnny B. Goode." The Everly Brothers, Elvis the King, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard followed these legends.

The Coasters sang about "Charlie Brown," while Sheb Wooley paid homage to the "Purple People Eater." Fats Domino found his thrill on "Blueberry Hill," and Chubby Checker taught us to do "The Twist" while Danny & the Juniors took us to the hop. Then Ray Charles put Rhythm and Blues on the map and James Brown, the godfather of Soul, gave definition to the word funk.

No doubt about it, rock 'n' roll and rhythm and blues caused a music revolution by introducing melodic innovations and styles that set traditional music aficionados on their collective ear. These popular music forms changed the fabric of our society and carved a cultural niche that more than likely will never be duplicated. Rock 'n' roll grew to influence the world more than any other musical movement.

The aforementioned artists and songs represent a small portion of the creative Americans who laid the foundation for the future of rock 'n' roll. When many of these groups and stars were at the forefront of pop music, the Beatles



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

and Rolling Stones were adolescent fans just learning how to tune their instruments. Without Buddy Holly and the Crickets what would the Beatles have punned on for their band name?

Yes, the rock 'n' roll generation made its presence known by inventing a billion dollar business and the birth of pop culture. However, before we pat ourselves on the back, let's not forget about some of the embarrassments that we also propagated on to an unsuspecting public.

The same generation that gave us the Beatles also produced Jane Fonda. The mob was in its heyday, but at least they were patriotic. And let's not forget pop culture icons like Twiggy, Tiny Tim, and, later, Richard Simmons. I didn't want to acknowledge Richard Simmons, but he's so annoying that he's difficult to forget (will somebody please tell his mother to buy him some long pants).

We also produced some of the greatest athletes, like Mohammed Ali. Unfortunately, along with the great boxer, came Howard Cosell, the master mouth of the sporting set, whom everybody loved to hate.

With good conscience, we cannot possibly reminisce about the '50s without mentioning some of the major design flaws of the 20th century. Remember the Edsel and the Nash Rambler? And how can we leave out Danish Modern furniture, a study in true ugliness?

But getting back to the positive side of this innovative era, we must talk about the emergence

of television. From Sid Caesar to Jackie Gleason and Audrey Meadows in "The Honey-mooners," and "All in the Family" with Archie Bunker, television put America in a class of its own. While television was in its infancy, it spawned Madison Avenue and the beginning of TV commercials. Whether that's good or bad is debatable. We could argue that "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should" made a grammatical error acceptable to future generations.

Also, Hollywood followed up on epics such as "Gone With the Wind" in 1939 and gave us "Ben-Hur," "Cleopatra," and "Lawrence of Arabia," and "Doctor Zhivago."

Some true wackiness happened during this memorable time in history, such as the UFO conspiracy at Roswell, New Mexico. That event or non-event came to be a legend that lives to this day. However, the most preposterous conspiracy theory, by my estimation, was that of the Apollo 11 lunar landing being a staged government hoax. That ranks along-

side Elvis still being alive.

Whether events, inventions, and innovations of this era are worth recognition or are less than memorable, I am sure to have omitted many that are important to some. Please forgive me.

Despite our mistakes and foibles, the world will rock on,

roll with the punches, and, in a couple of decades reminisce about the hip-hop generation that is now enjoying young adulthood.

I have every confidence that they will uphold the tradition of continuing to live by the rules of a system that we have no hope of ever understanding.



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