

Course Title: “Turn, Turn, Turn”: A chronological and musical five-week road trip through the golden era of American rock ‘n’ roll, 1955-70”

Course Description:

This course will cover the golden age of American rock n’ roll, 1955-70. It will be taught chronologically and geographically across regions where key musical movements sprung up, where that region was at the forefront of popular music. The course will use several media: lectures, photographs, recorded music, film clips, question and answer sessions, and the use of live music. The instructor will play piano, guitar and sing, and will choose appropriate examples from each genre.

Course outline by week, with suggested reading, listening and viewing:

Week 1: New Orleans and the Deep South 1955-1960: the cradle of rock and roll. Early rhythm and blues, the first wave: Leadbelly, Robert Johnson at the crossroads, early R&B, Fats Domino (New Orleans) Little Richard (Georgia) Bo Diddley (Mississippi) and Chuck Berry (Missouri). Why does this music swing so much? *From the fields to the factories to Friday night.*

**suggested reading, listening, and viewing:*

Reading:

The Alan Freed Story - The Early Years of Rock & Roll, by John Jackson (2007)

Chuck Berry: the Autobiography (2001)

Listening:

The Complete Recordings: Robert Johnson (Columbia, 1990)

Fats Domino Greatest Hits: Walkin’ to New Orleans, 30 songs (Capitol, 2007)

Here’s Little Richard, (Specialty, 1957)

The Great Twenty-Eight, Chuck Berry, (Chess, 1982)

Viewing:

Rock Around the Clock, dir. by Fred Sears (1956)

American Hot Wax, dir. by Floyd Mutrux (1978)

Hail! Hail! Rock ‘n’ roll, Chuck Berry with Keith Richard, dir. by Taylor

Hackford, (1987)

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Week 2: Up the Big Muddy to Memphis, 1955-1962. The Rockabilly era--rhythm and blues meets country-western, and the result is rock n’ roll. Sun Studio, Sam Phillips, Elvis, Buddy Holly, the wild rockabilly of Jerry Lee Lewis, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran and Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, the Everly Brothers. *Just give me a Gibson guitar and a Fender amp. And record it in mono...*

** suggested reading, listening, and viewing:*

Reading:

Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music, by Greil Marcus, (1975)

Rockabilly: The Twang Heard 'Round the World: The Illustrated History, by Michael Dregni (2011)

Listening:

The Sun Sessions, Elvis Presley, 1954-55, (RCA Victor, 1976)

Rebel Rock: The Essential Rockabilly Album (101 Distribution label, 2011 compilation)

Carl Perkins Greatest Hits, (Columbia, 1969)

Everly Brothers Greatest Hits, (Not Now label, 2013, 3-CD set, 75 songs)

20 Golden Greats, Buddy Holly and the Crickets (EMI, 1978)

Viewing:

The Buddy Holly Story, dir. by Steve Rash (1978)

Great Balls of Fire, dir. by Jim McBride (1989)

Walk the Line, dir. by James Mangold (2005)

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Week 3: North to New York City, 1957-64: the urbanization of rock n' roll: *Power returns to the publishers, labels, producers and writers.*

Part A. The singers: the great doo-wop, groups, Solomon Burke, Ray Charles, Jackie Wilson, the Drifters, the Coasters, Sam Cooke, the Ronettes, the Four Seasons.

Part B. The producers and the writers: Phil Spector, Bert Berns, Jerry Wexler, Ahmet Ertegun, Arif Mardin, Tom Dowd and Atlantic Records, the wunderkinds of the Brill Building; Pomus/Shuman, Goffin/King, Leiber/Stoller, Greenwich/Barry, Sedaka/Greenfield, Mann /Weill, Bacharach/David.

** suggested reading, listening, and viewing:*

Reading:

Here Comes the Night: The Dark Soul of Bert Berns and the Dirty Business of Rhythm and Blues,

by Joel Selvin (2013)

Rhythm and the Blues; A Life in American Music, by Jerry Wexler (1994)

Tearing Down the Wall of Sound: The Rise and Fall of Phil Spector, by Mick Brown (2008)

Always Magic in the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era, by Ken Emerson (2005)

Listening:

Back to Mono, Phil Spector, 1958-1969 (ABCKO, 1991)

The Greatest Hits of Jackie Wilson 16 songs (Brunswick--1998)

A Man and his Music; Sam Cooke—28 songs (RCA-1998)

The Magic Hits of the Drifters, (Atlantic Compilation 1975)

Viewing

*Hitmakers: The Teens Who Stole Pop Music (Television: A&E network
“biography,” 2001)*

Tom Dowd and the Language of Music, dir. by Mark Moorman (2003)

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Week 4: Double back to Memphis and points south, 1963-68: Memphis Soul, Muscle Shoals, the Godfather of Soul, Raw sounds and soul music to the fore.

Stax-Volt: Otis Redding, Booker T and the MGs, Wilson Pickett, Aretha, James

Brown, Dusty Springfield, American Sound Studios. The power of race-blind music.

Mellow Wurlitzers, soulful B-3s, brash horns, stinging telecasters, testifying and the sanctity of the four-piece rhythm section.

** suggested reading, listening, and viewing:*

Reading:

Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records by Rob Bowman (2003)

Sweet Soul Music: Rhythm and Blues and the Southern Dream of Freedom, by Peter Guralnick (1999)

Listening:

Live at the Apollo, James Brown (King, 1963)

Otis Blue, Otis Redding (Volt, 1965)

Various Artists - Memphis Gold, Vol. I, (Stax-Volt, 1967)

Lady Soul, Aretha Franklin, (Atlantic, 1967)

The Very Best of Wilson Pickett, (Atlantic, 1993)

Viewing:

Otis Redding: Respect - Otis Live (in Europe), dir. by D.A. Pennebaker (1967)

Muscle Shoals dir. by Greg Camalier (2013)

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Week 5: Migration to Motown, 1963-1970: How a little house in Detroit became

“Hitsville, The Sound of Young America” hallowed ground for American pop

music. Berry Gordy, Smoky Robinson, the Temptations, The Four Tops, The

Supremes, Stevie Wonder, and the tortured prince of Motown, Marvin Gaye.

Sweeten up the tracks with strings, and it “sounds like they’re hitting a bloody tree!” (John Lennon, upon hearing the big backbeat on all Motown records)

** suggested reading, listening, and viewing:*

Reading:

Where Did Our Love Go, by Nelson George (1986)

Nowhere to Run, The Story of Soul Music, by Gerri Hershey (1985)

Standing in the Shadows of Motown, an autobiography.

The Life and Music of Legendary Bassist James Jamerson (1989) with CD, transcriptions of his bass parts

Listening:

Motown 1's—CD of 25 #1 Motown hits (Motown, 2004)

Greatest Hits, The Temptations (Gordy, 1966 original release)

What's Goin' On, Marvin Gaye, (Tamla, 1971)

Talking Book, Inner Visions, Stevie Wonder, (Tamla, 1972, 1973)

Viewing:

Get Ready: Definitive Performances by The Temptations 1965-1972 (DVD)

Standing in the Shadows of Motown, dir. by Paul Justman (2002)

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