



**GENE PITNEY**

**THE COASTERS**

**Carl Gardner**

*Born April 29th, 1928*

*Tyler, Texas*

**Billy Guy**

*Born June 20th, 1936*

*Itasca, Texas*

**Will "Dub" Jones**

*Born Los Angeles, California*

**Cornell Gunther**

*Born Los Angeles, California*



On July 15th, 1958, at a Senate hearing concerned with the music industry, a counsel for the American Guild of Authors and Composers treated our elected officials to a spin of the Coasters' "Yakety Yak" in order to illustrate how rock and roll was

responsible for "the cheapening of American music." "Yakety Yak," which topped both the pop and the rhythm and blues charts and was the Coasters' biggest hit, was a fine example of a number of things, but not of the aforementioned allegation.

For one thing, it exemplified the approach of the ubiquitous songwriter-producer team of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, who fashioned a career's worth of hits for the vocal group (a quartet or quintet, depending on the year) by devising story songs, called "playlets" by Stoller. They were tableaux that were larger (and funnier) than life, combining street jive, adolescent goofiness or ardor and lots of good-natured leg pulling. The hapless teen in "Yakety Yak," facing a possibly bleak future in which, by his mom's decree, he "ain't gonna rock and roll no more," must cram a week's worth of chores into the few hours before he goes cruisin' with his pals: "You just put on your coat and hat! And walk yourself to the laundry-mat! And when you finish doing that! Bring in the dog and put out the cat." All of which is followed by an unequivocal order: "Yakety yaki! Don't talk back." The song also showed that doo-wop, characterized in the mid-Fifties by one-hit wonders, could be turned into a more durable pop style. And it served to introduce the world to the "yakety sax" of King Curtis, who went on to become a solo artist and a sought-after session player; he performed on some of Aretha Franklin's finest songs.

The first Leiber and Stoller composition the Coasters recorded (under their original name, the Robins) was "That's What the Good Book Says," in 1951. Two years later, the composers began producing the Robins on their own Spark label, beginning with "Riot in Cell Block #9," soon followed by "Smokey Joe's Cafe." In late 1955, Atlantic Records offered Leiber and Stoller and the group a deal with its subsidiary label Atco, which precipitated a move east to New York City and a split in the Robins. Half remained in L.A. as the Robins; the others recruited new members and called themselves the Coasters, since their career was taking them from one coast to the other.

In 1957, the Coasters reached the pop Top Ten and the Number One R&B spot with their double-hit single "Searchin'" and "Young Blood." Over the next two years, the Coasters had a series of smashes - including "Charlie Brown," "Along Came Jones" and "Poison Ivy" - all filled with instantly adaptable slang, hip pop-culture footnotes and timeless rock and roll humor.



# FOREFATHERS, EARLY INFLUENCES AND NONPERFORMERS



When rock and roll itself was still a baby, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were among its youthful prodigies. Beginning with their 1952 breakthrough, a catchy blues romp called "K. C. Loving," Leiber and Stoller rapidly grew into one of the most prolific and creative teams in the music's history.

Had they done nothing more than turn out a stream of songs for Elvis Presley — "Love Me," "Jailhouse Rock," "Treat Me Nice," "You're So Square (Baby I Don't Care)" — Leiber and Stoller would rank among the most renowned composers of the rock and roll era. But as pop auteurs — the writer-producer-arrangers of timeless recordings by the Coasters, the Drifters, Ben E. King and so many others — Leiber and Stoller not only sold millions of records but advanced rock and roll to new heights of wit and musical sophistication. ("K. C. Loving," by the way, was later retitled "Kansas City." It became a rock-R&B standard recorded by everyone from Muddy Waters to Ann-Margret.)

Jerome Leiber, the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland, grew up on the edge of Baltimore's black ghetto, where he was first exposed to jazz and rhythm and blues as a delivery boy for his widowed mother's grocery. In 1945, the family moved to Los Angeles; at age sixteen Jerry began clerking in a record shop. Although he'd briefly studied piano in Baltimore, Jerry couldn't read music; his real interest was in words — poetry, drama, song lyrics. In 1950, he found the collaborator he'd been looking for, a Los Angeles City College freshman named Mike Stoller.

Stoller, who grew up in Queens, New York, picked up the basics of blues and boogie-woogie at age seven from the black kids with whom he attended summer camp; he later studied with the great stride pianist and composer James P. Johnson. At fourteen, Mike was digging the nascent be-bop scene on New York's famed Fifty-second Street, soaking up the sounds of Bird and Diz. In 1949, his family relocated to Los Angeles, moving into a small apartment in a largely Chicano section of Hollywood. Mike took up classical theory and composition while continuing to sit in with pickup dance bands and jazz combos.

Lester Sill, then head of sales for Modern Records, gave Leiber and Stoller their first break in 1951 when he had their song "That's What the Good Book Says" recorded by a black vocal group called the Robins. A year later, the team got a call from bandleader Johnny Otis, who needed a song for blues diva Big Mama Thornton. They came up with "Hound Dog," which they helped Otis produce.

In 1953, Leiber, Stoller and Sill formed Spark Records and went back to work with the Robins on a song called "Riot in Cell Block #9." The basic riff came from Muddy Waters's "Hoochie Coochie Man," but as Robert Palmer noted in his 1978 book *Baby, That Is Rock & Roll: The Legendary Leiber & Stoller*, "Everything else about [the record] was years ahead of its time. 'Riot' created its own category, the Leiber-Stoller playlet . . . a kind of three-minute audio

dream with music that would still be the freshest sound on the airwaves years later."

More Robins sides followed on Spark, including "Framed" and "Smokey Joe's Cafe." Atlantic Records soon signed Leiber and Stoller to one of the industry's first independent production deals. Their first Atlantic successes were with the Coasters, a group featuring two former members of the Robins. In 1957, the first Coasters smash appeared, "Searchin'," backed with "Young Blood"; it both broke the group and established Leiber and Stoller as major producers. In a sea of doo-wop sound-alikes, Coasters hits like "Charlie Brown," "Yakety Yak" and "Poison Ivy" stood out, a seamless blend of rich black vocal harmony, Mike Stoller's melodies and arrangements and Jerry Leiber's flair for pop-culture references and black and teenage slang.

In 1956, Elvis Presley's Number One version of "Hound Dog" seemed to sum up the spirit of the entire rock and roll era in three electrifying minutes. Soon, Leiber and Stoller were turning out one Presley song after another, including the title tunes for his films King Creole, Loving You and Jailhouse Rock. All were written to order, and the team had little control over the outcome of Elvis's recording sessions (although Stoller played piano on several of the songs). But if the work was not as satisfying as their own R&B productions, Presley's sweeping success brought Leiber and Stoller's music to a wider audience than they'd ever dreamed possible.

In 1959, Leiber and Stoller had one of their biggest hits with their production of the Drifters' "There Goes My Baby," featuring Ben E. King on lead vocal. With its majestic string arrangement and innovative rhythm, "There Goes My Baby" was one of the most influential R&B records of all time, not the least for its immediate crossover appeal. The Drifters' hot streak continued with Leiber-Stoller

productions of top-drawer material from Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, Gerry Goffin and Carole King, and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil: "This Magic Moment," "Save the Last Dance for Me," "Up on the Roof," "On Broadway." (Phil Spector, a young assistant of Leiber and Stoller, also worked on many of these records.)

Red Bird Records was Leiber and Stoller's final and most successful attempt at running their own record label. Their unerring ear for talent brought newcomers like Ellie Greenwich, Jeff Barry, Shadow Morton and Richard Perry into the Red Bird nest. The company's very first release, "Chapel of Love," by the Dixie Cups, shot to Number One in the spring of 1964. Of Red Bird's first thirty singles, eighteen made the charts, and eleven made the Top Forty. This enviable rate of commercial success was equaled by the quality of the music, including such girl-group classics as the Shangri-Las' "Leader of the Pack" and "Remember (Walkin' in the Sand)."

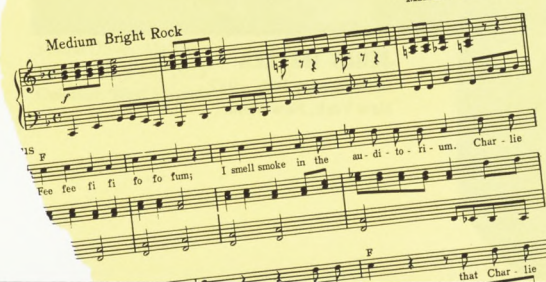
Leiber and Stoller made a graceful transition into the album-rock era. As producers, they worked equally well with bands like Stealers Wheel and Procol Harum and song stylists like Peggy Lee ("Is That All There Is?") and Leslie Uggams. In 1986, Ben E. King returned to the Top Ten with "Stand by Me," the song he wrote and recorded with Leiber and Stoller twenty-five years before.

"Leiber and Stoller can't be fully understood or appreciated simply as rock and roll tunesmiths," wrote Robert Palmer in 1980. "It's best . . . to think of them as American artists — makers of songs, makers of records, shapers of our environments, our dreams, our imagination. Only America could have produced them, and through the many exceptional voices they've worked with, it's America that they sing."



## Charlie Brown

Words and Music by  
JERRY LEIBER  
MIKE STOLLER



## LEIBER AND STOLLER

**Jerome Leiber**  
Born April 25th, 1933  
Baltimore, Maryland  
**Michael Stoller**  
Born March 13th, 1933  
Belle Harbor, New York





## DOO-WOP

### The Street-Corner Roots of Rock

BY PHILIP GROIA

**T**HIS EVENING we honor the drag strips and low-riding alleys of Los Angeles, the housing projects and community centers of Washington, D.C., the churches, rehearsal halls and assembly lines of Detroit, the front stoops and street corners of New York. These were not the great concert halls and recording studios of America; nor were they the great amateur showcases where winners seemed to become recording stars overnight. They are the birthplaces of the Robins, the Marquees, the Miracles and the Dominoes – groups that sang a music now known as doo-wop. The reason we single out these particular groups is that some members of the Robins became the Coasters; the Marquees included the young Marvin Gaye; the Miracles were fronted by songwriter Smokey Robinson; and the Dominoes' lead singer was Clyde McPhatter, who was later replaced by Jackie Wilson.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the big bands gave way to simpler forms of popular music. One of these was the music of the vocal groups. These groups, usually composed of young men, began with little or no musical training and no instrumental accompaniment. They were equipped with talent and passion. But were vocal groups really singing “doo-wop”? Or were they improvising the forerunner of the “hook,” a catchy, easy-to-remember phrase designed to get the listener and record buyer hooked on a song or recording?

The Moonglows blow-noted their way through “Sincerely” with “who-we-who, whooit, whooit, whooit.” Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers began “I Promise to Remember” with “oodie-bop-a-cow, bop-a-cow.” The Crows introduced “Gee,” a landmark recording, with “doot-a-doot-a-doot.” The Cleftones intoned “yeah, diddle-little-little-lit” in “Little Girl of Mine.” The Chords’ “Sh-Boom” shook up the musical world with “hey, laddie, ding-dong, a-lang, a-lang, a-lang – sh-boom.” The Five Satins “shoo-doo-bee-dooed” through “In the Still of the Night.” In “Get a Job,” the Silhouettes sang “sha-na-na, sha-na-na,” never realizing they were inspiring a blockbuster parody group, Sha Na Na. The Five Keys took us to Chinatown with “Ling Ting Tong” (“tais-a-moke-um-boot-ah-yay”). The Cadillacs responded to “Speedo” with “bah-bah-jibb-a-dee.” The Flamingos came the closest to using the phrase “doo-wop.” They disguised it with split-second timing as they answered Nate Nelson’s “I Only Have Eyes for You” with a lightning-fast “doo-bop-shoo-bop.”

The street corner offered the singing group a symposium to show its talent. Songs were composed and exchanged on the street. There, the lead, bass and harmony singers were chosen, and groups battled to be the best. As friendships were made and broken, a fraternity of group members was formed. Some of the Solitaires sang with the Cadillacs. Members of the Cadillacs, the Flairs and the Valentines sang with the Coasters.

Gaining a reputation in the neighborhood and attracting the admiration of female fans were two important reasons groups were formed. Lyrics and routines were devised to attract girls, and guys who were considered entertainers were given a form of diplomatic immunity from street fighting





*The "S" Royales*



*The Del Vikings*



*The Five Keys*



*Lee Andrews and the Hearts*



*The Ravens*



*The Willows*



*The Clovers*



*The Chantels*



*The Dominoes*



*The Turbans*



*The Harptones*



*The Channels*





*The Chords*



*The Velours*



*The Swallows*



*The Cadillacs*



*The Crows*



*The Platters*



*Dion and the Belmonds*



*The Dells*



*The Pastels*



*The Silhouettes*



*The Monotones*



*The Impalas*



and gang wars. Perhaps this is why most of the doo-wop groups of the early Fifties were male.

Vocal competition often spread from the corners of one block to battles of the groups in other neighborhoods. "We used to go and visit groups in the 150th Street area," said Tony Middleton, lead singer of the Willows, from Harlem's West 115th Street. "The whole area was like one small neighborhood. Groups were, in a way, parts of families. Everybody would go and see the other groups perform. Even though it was six or eight miles away, we would visit one another. We would walk up there and walk back, just singing all the way. Never take the subway. If we did take the subway, it would be for the echo chamber."

Battles of the groups took place indoors at rent parties and red-light parties, where couples danced slowly and closely – hence the name *grind-em-ups*. Reggie Walker, who sang "Bermuda Shorts" with the Delroys, talked about an indoor battle of groups:

"There was a big argument, so we decided to have it out. . . . We had five guys; they had five. We sang this song called 'Raindrops,' by the Inspirations, with Angel, who was really a man. He was fifteen or sixteen years old. He got down on his knees and started crying – 'Raindrops are fall-hall-in'. . . .' The song called for that. In those days crying was really in. He was really crying. He had tears in his eyes. That was it. We won and went on as the best group in the projects."

Establishing peer acceptance in the neighborhood was a mere prelude to the real symbols of success, a recording contract and an engagement on a live stage show. Nothing showed the glamour of the doo-wop group more than the stage show. Adoring fans were treated to the flashy clothes, the exciting choreography, the fancy cars and the endless string of similar names.

Before a group acquired recognition in the neighborhood, it had to have a name. And what names? First came the bird-group era, supposedly influenced by the cool of jazz saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker – the Ravens, Orioles, Swallows, Flamingos, Crows, Penguins, Meadowlarks, Cardinals, Wrens and Robins. In the mid-Fifties the high-stepping Cadillacs heralded the era of the car groups – the El Dorados, Impalas, Imperials, Bonneville, Lincolns, Belvederes, Montereys, Montclairs, Edsels, Fleetwoods, Corvairs and V-Eights. Groups were named after musical terms – the Five Keys, Five Notes, Chimes, Cellos, Metronomes, Monotones, Clefones, Harptones, Channels, Dubs, Blue Notes, Vocaleers and Vocaltones. Romance played a part with the Heartbeats, Heartbreakers, Lovenotes, Four Lovers and Valentines. If you wanted to give flowers, you sent Carnations, Clovers, Gladiolas and Marigolds. For those who made only a cosmetic appearance, there were the Avons and Revlons. Geography played a role – the Nutmegs came from New Haven, the Marylanders from Baltimore and the Detroit Spinners from the Motor City. If a group wanted a reputation for being smooth, it chose names like the Five Satins, Velvets, Velvetones, Velours and Smoothtones. And there was royalty too – the Regals, "5" Royales, Five Crowns, Kings, Teen Queens, Royaltones, Monarchs and Queens. After the commercial viability of the boy-soprano lead was discovered came the Schoolboys, Teenagers, Teenchords, Juniors, Cubs and, of course, Youngtones. Finally there had to be something mystical about singing on the street corner at night, as shown by names like the Starlighters, Twilighters, Midnighters, Moonglows and Moonlighters.

The promotion of the vocal group in the 1950s began with the disc jockey. Records were hyped over the airwaves. The groups themselves or their fan clubs submitted on-air dedications. Many radio stations broadcast jock-sponsored live stage shows, which usually featured a large orchestra and a dozen or so hot acts, about half of which were vocal groups. The disc jockey served as the MC. As he introduced the group, the male quartet or quintet would enter from stage right and left, running at full speed, as their teenage admirers shrieked deliriously. The groups would charge to two microphones, one for the lead and bass singers, the other for a huddle of harmony singers. The close-knit ambience of the street corner was re-created on stage. The groups with the flashiest routines and showmanship would fare best, since the noise from the audience was so deafening.

Groups increased the frenzy of the audience by attiring them-

selves splendidly: usually in white shoes and dark suits with a gaudy shirt and tie. Lee Andrews and the Hearts wore white gloves to accent the mood of "Tear Drops." The Heartbeats wore pink shirts with "Mister B" collars, named after jazz-pop crooner Billy Eckstine. The Teenagers wore white sweaters with a red T. The Turbans, famous for the Latin-rock "When You Dance," adorned their heads with a wrap reminiscent of sepy mercenaries.

Other groups, including the Five Keys, the Solitaires, the Four Fellows and Dion and the Belmonts, were too sophisticated for theatrical frivolity. They just stood in front of the mikes, dressed cool, acted cool and blew cool notes. There were agents and managers, however, who sought a different image for their groups. Many acts hired the Apollo Theatre dance team of Cholly Atkins and Honi Coles as choreographers. For a while it seemed that Coles and Atkins, who first choreographed the Regals and the Cadillacs in 1955, had tutored everyone who had a bullet on the Hot 100 or R&B charts.

The Cadillacs were the best dancing group of the doo-wop era. The group would run on stage, and the lead singer, Earl "Speedo" Carroll, would sashay to the mike. Trouser legs fluttering as his feet kept the beat, Carroll accentuated his mouthing into the microphone with gestures – both hands waved side to side accompanied the words "You give me no chance, a no chance, a no chance, no"; he raised his hand as he sang, "Dear Lord, hear my plea"; and a hand clutched against the chest meant his heart went "zoom." At significant moments, the bass, Bobby Phillips, would lean over to the lead singer's mike or would come strutting around the lead to bellow the bass part: "bow, doe, doe." The group responded with "ooh-oooh," and the lead answered, "It's not Marie, it's Gloria." Back at the harmony mike, the background singers would be scating, arms churning, fingers snapping, feet tapping, knees marching. At the instrumental bridge, the bass would break away to the lead singer, and the group, high-stepping, would fake to the left, about-face to the right, take three steps to the rear, dance to the left, dance to the right, fake right, about-face again and return, hands clapping, to the mike, while the audience roared its approval. The group never lost a step, never missed a note, never lost its breath – and all of this in Brooks Brothers vines. For the finale, the bass began with "bom-bom-bom," the lead chanted, "Well, they up and call me Speedo," and the group chattered, "bah-bah-jibb-a-dee." Then slowly, tantalizingly, they disappeared behind the curtains, off the stage, out of the theater and into the street to a waiting 1956 Cadillac El Dorado with *Cadillacs* emblazoned in script on its sides.

They don't sing and dance like that anymore. But many people cannot forget waiting in line for hours to buy a two-dollar ticket only to endure a dreadful film before screaming and hollering for the rest of the day. The stage show has etched indelible memories – Sonny Til of the Orioles canting his body to the right as women threw themselves at the stage; the Flamingos, dressed impeccably in green suits, extending and retracting their arms to the cadence of a love ballad, "I'll Be Home," led by "the voice of champagne," Nate Nelson; the Harptones dancing so fast you could hardly see their feet; the Valentines forming a human locomotive for "The Woo Woo Train"; little Frankie Lyman illuminating the stage with the effervescence of youth; the Chantels' angelic harmony turning the delirium into a religious service; the voice of the Crests' Johnny Maestro reverberating through the theater; tenor sax breaks that sounded fifty times louder than on record; the Del Vikings' air-force uniforms; Clyde McPhatter's powerful melisma; the lead singer who cried; the harmony sung so smoothly you could snatch it out of the air; and the youth who proclaimed that freedom is singing, dancing and being a star.

Gone are groups of young men armed with a bottle of wine, urban cool and four-part harmony to compete for the attention of young women. The warm glow of stardom at a big stage show has faded. Mostly because of changing musical tastes and recording technology, the cultural phenomenon of street-corner doo-wop no longer exists. We may never again see four or five young men or women harmonizing under a lamp post, or hear the first tenor hit his high note at the end of a romantic ballad, or see a group fade off stage in perfect unison, but the music and feeling that grew out of their efforts shall live in many people's hearts forever.





Annette's scrapbook: with (left to right) Dick Dale, Bobby Rydell and Frankie Avalon



The songwriting team of Holland-Dozier-Holland



Gary "U.S." Bonds

The Shangri-Las



Wilson Pickett



Gerry Goffin, Ellie Greenwich, Jeff Barry, Cynthia Weil, Barry Mann, Neil Sedaka and Howard Greenfield, to name only some of the best) and producers (Bob Crewe, Shadow Morton, Feldman, Goldstein and Gottelher, Leiber and Stoller, Bert Berns) turned out hundreds of hits, many of which have become standards, and also fueled the girl-group explosion, which avoided the artificiality of its male counterpart, the teen idols, and produced some music now rightly regarded as classic. An indigenous rock scene emerged for the first time in Los Angeles, with a full complement of producers, managers, studio musicians, indie labels and even "teenage millionaires," like Phil Spector, who, more than anyone, defined the role of the producer as a creative force in rock and roll. Surf music came out of this era, as did instrumental bands and the very *idea* of the rock and roll band, as opposed to solo singers or vocal groups. This was happening all over America and, for some curious reason, in a British port called Liverpool . . . and we all know what *that* led to!

The city of New Orleans, source of so many musical advances, had played a leading role in the first wave of rock and roll. As early as 1948, many people, including Fats Domino, Roy Brown and Professor Longhair, were playing a kind of rock and roll. Many more were to follow, as the Crescent City became known for its good-time boogie-woogie sound. Then, around 1960, a new cycle began. Allen Toussaint, a prolific writer-performer-producer, worked with such singers as Irma Thomas, Lee Dorsey, Chris Kenner and Ernie K-Doe to create a steady flow of hits for recently created local labels like Joe Banashak's Minit and Instant. In 1961, arranger Harold Battiste and New Orleans's top session players started their own label, A.F.O., in an attempt to keep for the musicians some of the vast profits their hits were earning for other record companies. They charted with Barbara George's "I Know," but the rebellion was crushed by the big New York labels. Battiste and some of his best players countered by departing for other cities, chiefly Los Angeles, where they would have a critical role to play.

Almost immediately after Battiste's arrival in Los Angeles, which roughly coincided with the arrival of drummer Earl Palmer and saxophonists Alvin Tyler and Lee Allen, the studios of Hollywood got busier. At the same time indie labels began proliferating, and a rising generation of songwriters, producers and young session musicians got their first experience and, often, hits. Out of Phil Spector's studio band and the New Orleans contingent came a burst of activity that soon put Los Angeles on the map as a recording center.

In Detroit, another studio scene was taking shape at Motown. The sound that built America's most successful black-owned company – and launched the careers of Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, the Supremes, the Four Tops, the Temptations and so many others – was a controlled studio product in which the artists were often interchangeable, while the "feel" remained consistent.

Meanwhile, all over the country, soul was emerging. Following Sam Cooke's lead, others – including James Brown, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Ray Charles, Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions, Jerry Butler and Jackie Wilson – were refining the possibilities of R&B ballads, often utilizing strings (first tried on the Drifters' 1959 hit "There Goes My Baby"). These innovations would influence the course of black music for at least the next twenty years.

The revolutionary developments so far discussed took place within the framework of the record business. But at the same time, another movement was afoot, one that would lead to the rock-band explosion of the Sixties. With the disappearance of the great rock and roll stars on the touring circuit, there was a healthy audience for local and regional bands, particularly outside the big cities. All across the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest and the Southwest, thousands of bands were forming and playing at schools and dances, some of them becoming regional stars with audiences extending over several states.

At first, most of the songs these bands played were instrumentals, along with covers of rock standards by Holly, Berry and others. For millions of teenagers with no other exposure to rock's potential for raw exuberance, these bands kept the flame burning.

And out of them came the grass-roots garage-band movement, which grew to such strength in the later Sixties.

It takes some stretch of the imagination (or the memory) to envision a time when rock bands were virtually unheard of, but the late Fifties was such a time. Gene Vincent had his Bluecaps, the Crickets were carrying on without Buddy, and a few others could be mentioned, but that merely underlines the predominance of solo singers and vocal groups. Sometimes local bands would be hired to back up touring singers, but the rest of the time they worked on their own material and occasionally cracked the charts with an instrumental composition.

Just as the London-based British record industry remained unaware for years of the revolution stirring in Liverpool, American music in this period often continued to be dominated by the teen sound of New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. But we now know how decisive those years were in setting the stage for the legions of bands to come. The instrumental hits of 1959 and 1960 brought to light bands like Johnny and the Hurricanes (Ohio), the Fireballs (New Mexico) and the Wailers (Washington), but these were only the iceberg tip of the regional music scenes that surfaced between 1961 and 1963 with the creation of surf music (chiefly by Dick Dale and the Beach Boys), followed over the next couple of years by frat rock, then early garage-punk music, typified by the Kingsmen's "Louie Louie," the Trashmen's "Surfing Bird" and the Rivieras' "California Sun." Out of bands like these, in turn, came the musicians who created the classic music of the middle and late Sixties.

The growth that took place in these years provided an infrastructure without which the tumultuous events of 1964 and onward could not have occurred. A major illustration can be found in Los Angeles, which before 1961 was more or less a sleepy little outpost of the teeming New York industry. The quality of the music for which L.A. became known in the Sixties could not have been achieved without the experience of a legion of gifted young producers and songwriters who had worked with local bands, primarily surf bands, in the formative early Sixties. The best known of these songwriters and producers are Gary Usher, Richard Podolor, Gary Paxton, Lou Adler, Jack Nitzsche, Bruce Johnston, Nick Venet, David Gates, P.F. Sloan and Steve Barri, Terry Melcher and, of course, Brian Wilson, but behind them were scores of active figures who kept the studios and indie labels of Hollywood jumping.

The girl-group phenomenon, previously cited as giving an outlet to New York's brilliant new songwriters, also offered many budding producers a chance to cut their teeth on elaborate and experimental studio techniques. Furthermore, Phil Spector's relocation to Los Angeles from New York in 1961 spurred the growth of what was to become the world's leading studio scene, with legions of first-rate musicians available to turn anyone's teen dreams into chartable hits. Out of Spector's handpicked studio band came the players and the inspiration behind innumerable success stories, from Sonny and Cher's string of hits to the Byrds (whose early records were largely played by Spector alumni). The same scene produced folk-rock, America's first serious riposte to the British Invasion.

The linkages become more convoluted and fascinating as they are explored, but I believe the point has been made. Although the years immediately following 1958 may seem a period of musical doldrums, compared with the all-out mania that came before and was soon to follow, the fact remains that without the retrenchment and gradual development of diverse approaches that took place in these interim years, rock and roll might never have returned with the strength it did.

It's commonly said that the Beatles merely updated the music of Chuck Berry, the Everly Brothers and Buddy Holly, but this is far from the truth. The Beatles, and every other British band of note, drew just as heavily (if not more heavily) from the girl groups, the Brill Building tunesmiths and now-obscure contemporary soul artists. The British may have been twenty years ahead of us in acknowledging the importance of the American music of the early Sixties, but those who love music must no longer fail to recognize the significance of these few short years, this breathing space in which nearly everything that has happened since was formulated.