



American Legends: The Life of Buddy Holly

Charles River Editors

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“If anyone asks you what kind of music you play, tell him 'pop.' Don't tell him 'rock'n'roll' or they won't even let you in the hotel.” – Buddy Holly

At the time of Buddy Holly's birth in 1936, in Lubbock Texas, rock music and its various hybrid genres were in early infancy. Signs of rock's future magnitude would soon be seen in the sexual charisma of the young Elvis Presley, the rhythm and passion of Chuck Berry, the riveting musical dialogues of Little Richard, and the raw virtuosity of Jerry Lee Lewis. Even then, however, no one yet knew what a rock star really was, and who could become one. Viewed in that light, observers of the time must have thought it fantastical that a nerdy boy-next-door, wearing bow ties and thick, dark horn-rimmed glasses, would consider such a climb into the rarified air of the traditionally-accepted stage performer, with a charisma not to be found in daily life.

The fact that Holly stuck to his guns and persevered would actually come to make him an important pillar of rock music's origins. His visual appearance and easy, unassuming style struck a sympathetic note with the “everyman” audience, and his brilliant, albeit brief, career demonstrated that there was a flip side to the “suave and sexy” style of Elvis and his early rock contemporaries. Despite his lack of overt sex appeal in the traditional sense, the quirky Holly, who spent only 21 months in the public eye, was nevertheless “a good student, possessed of infectious personal charm.” For young men around the world who shared Holly's “nerdiness,” and women who were of a mind to take a break from being seduced from the stage to focus their attention on the “good boy,” he was “hard not to like, with his goofy charisma, innovative vocal style, and very catchy tune.”

Holly did not immediately seek out a niche to occupy, but studied, tweaked, experimented, and grew constantly in the areas of sound, arrangement, orchestration, unique lyrics and technology to become the “most progressive rock and roll star of the 50s.” He attracted an audience of kindred spirits with the affable “boy next door charm” to become “one of rock 'n' roll's founding fathers.” Along the way, he contributed his own gifts as a visionary, in the same way that Presley did, by conveying through his music, whatever the setting, “the wide-open spaces of Texas.” In addition, he altered the rock music industry in such a way that performing artists could also become self-arrangers and songwriters. Holly was, in fact, an artist whose career sustained itself almost entirely on original songs, an act of courage in the rock industry, and he has been singled out as one of the two greatest songwriters of his era, the other being Chuck Berry.

While Holly is frequently given the credit he deserves, he is probably best remembered for the tragic plane crash that killed him when he was still just 22. Known as “The Day The Music Died”, Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the J.P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson boarded a small plane after performing a show on the “Winter Dance Party” tour in Clear Lake, Iowa, but that night, February 3, 1959, their plane crashed shortly after takeoff when the pilot got confused due to bad weather and poor visibility. In addition to prematurely killing 3 young artists, the crash was immortalized by Don McLean's “American Pie.”

American Legends: The Life of Buddy Holly looks at the life and career of one of America's most famous

rock stars. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Buddy Holly like never before, in no time at all.

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