

Buddy Holly: the 100 most inspiring musicians of all time

Buddy Holly: the 100 most inspiring musicians of all time

American singer and songwriter Charles Hardin Holley, professionally known as **Buddy Holly**, (b. Sept. 7, 1936, Lubbock, Texas, U.S.–d. Feb. 3, 1959, near Clear Lake, Iowa) produced some of the most distinctive and influential work in rock music.

Buddy Holly (the e was dropped from his last name—probably accidentally—on his first record contract) was the youngest of four children in a family of devout Baptists in the West Texas town of Lubbock, and gospel music was an important part of his life from an early age. A good student possessed of infectious personal charm, Holly was declared “King of the Sixth Grade” by his classmates.

He became seriously interested in music at about age 12 and pursued it with remarkable natural ability. The African American rhythm and blues that Holly heard on the radio had a tremendous impact on him, as it did on countless other white teenagers in the racially segregated United States of the 1950s. Already well versed in country music, bluegrass, and gospel and a seasoned performer by age 16, he became a rhythm-and-blues devotee.



By 1955, after hearing Elvis Presley, Holly was a full-time rock and roller. Late that year, he bought a Fender Stratocaster electric guitar and developed a style of playing featuring ringing major chords that became his trademark. In 1956, he signed with Decca Records' Nashville, Tennessee, division, but the records he made for them were uneven in quality, and most sold poorly.

In 1957, Buddy Holly and his new group, the Crickets (Niki Sullivan on second guitar and background vocals, Joe B. Mauldin on bass, and the great Jerry Allison on drums), began their association with independent producer Norman Petty at his studio in Clovis, New Mexico. Together they created a series of recordings that display an emotional intimacy and sense of detail that set them apart from other 1950s rock and roll. As a team, they threw away the rule book and let their imaginations loose.

Unlike most independent rock-and-roll producers of the time, Petty did not own any cheap equipment. He wanted his recordings to sound classy and expensive, but he also loved to experiment and had a deep bag of sonic tricks. The Crickets' records feature unusual microphone placement techniques, imaginative echo chamber effects, and overdubbing, a process that in the 1950s meant superimposing one recording on another. While crafting tracks such as "Not Fade Away,"

“Peggy Sue,” “Listen to Me,” and “Everyday,” Holly and the Crickets camped out at Petty’s studio for days at a time, using it as a combination laboratory and playground.

They were the first rock and rollers to approach the recording process in this manner. When the Crickets’ first single, “That’ll Be the Day,” was released in 1957, their label, Brunswick, did nothing to promote it. Nevertheless, the record had an irrepressible spirit, and by year’s end it became an international multimillion-seller. Soon after, Holly became a star and an icon.

Holly and the Crickets’ association with Petty (who, serving as their manager, songwriting partner, and publisher, owned their recordings) was far from all beneficial, however. According to virtually all accounts, Petty collected the Crickets’ royalty checks and kept the money. By 1959, the hit records tapered off, and Holly was living in New York with his new bride. Estranged from the Crickets and broke, he was also contemplating legal action against Petty. This left him little choice but to participate in the doomed “Winter Dance Party of 1959” tour through the frozen Midwest, during which he and coheadliners Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper (J.P. Richardson) were killed in a plane crash.

The music of Buddy Holly and the Crickets, their innovative use of the studio, and the fact that they wrote most of their songs themselves made them the single most important influence on the Beatles, who knew every Holly record backward and forward. In 1986 Holly was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and in 1996 he was honored by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences with a lifetime achievement award.

Buddy Holly [Greatest Hits TOP 20](#)

BEST SONGS

**Best Rock & Roll sheet music
download here.**