

CHUCK BERRY Biography

If any one individual can be credited as the premier figure of rock and roll, it's CHUCK BERRY. His music, lyrics, and free spirit made an indelible impression on millions of young people, including the Beatles and Rolling Stones.

He celebrated the birth of rock and roll in 1955 and he still remains one of its most superbly exciting performers. Each year, more and more people become aware of his enormous influence.

"Rock 'n' roll was the beginning, however tentative, of a mass state of mind (if not way of life) beyond race in America ... No one fully grasped what was happening, but CHUCK BERRY seemed to have an idea. Of all the musicians, he was the one who best recognized these new American kids, and he loved and encouraged them. With an extraordinary leap of empathy, he knew and expressed their feelings, and they understood themselves through him. His songs were hymns to a generation." -- Michael Lydon in RAMPARTS.

"You begin to wonder where today's bands would be, had there never been a CHUCK BERRY. We certainly wouldn't have had the Stones. He's more than just someone to pay homage to every now and then, for CHUCK hasn't aged, he's right back where he was, and his music ain't dated in the slightest. There are, no better credentials than that." == Roy Hollingworth in MELODY MAKER.

"He showed everyone how to adopt boogie woogie and blues to rock & roll. His amplified solo and rhythm guitar style opened new doors, and the combination of instruments in his band created an exciting tension never heard before in pop music. But the most impressive thing about CHUCK's music is the way it swings like mad. CHUCK also did something personally for millions of kids who just dug records. He saved them from the horribly anemic music of the 50's and turned them on to gutty, tasteful things. The Rock and Roll age began with CHUCK's 'Maybellene' in 1955 and is with us bigger than ever today." -- Jim Delehant in HIT PARADER.

"Serious (and comic) as only a genius can be: arrogant, beautiful, and demonically energetic, CHUCK has marked our times. CHUCK sang to us and we sang back, joyously accepting his voice as our own voice, a voice we never knew we had until he gave us his. His intuitive knowledge of us and, of his Moment was so profound that it became a prophecy which his simultaneous encouragement helped bring to Pass." -- liner notes to BACK HOME on Chess Records.

The man has done all that and more. Teenagers who weren't even born when CHUCK had his first hit now seek his autograph. They know all the words to his songs too. CHUCK often has ten or fifteen thousand voices singing along in concert.

He is a bigger star today than at any time in his career. "The London Chuck Berry Sessions" album, one side of which was cut "live" in concert, received RIAA "gold" certification as did the "My Ding-A-Ling" single from the LP. BERRY has topped the bill in many of the Richard Nadar Rock & Roll Revival concerts and was featured in "Let The Good Times Roll," a documentary film of the 1950's and the rock revival. On BERRY's latest album, "Bio," he's backed by the Elephant's Memory.

Between recording and touring, he doesn't have much time to enjoy BERRY PARK, the country club and amusement park he built in Wentzville, Missouri, complete with guitar shaped swimming pool, a recording studio, and darkroom and videotape equipment, all for his various hobbies.

CHARLES EDWARD BERRY was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1931. His parents sang in the Antioch Baptist church choir and his three Sisters played piano. He was picking out boogie woogie rhythms on the piano when he was seven, and he became interested in the guitar when a classmate backed him in a high school review. CHUCK bought a second hand Spanish six string and some introduction books for \$4.40 while still in high school. He made his earliest appearances as a singer/guitarist at church affairs and house parties.

CHUCK formed his first group in 1952 and played clubs around St. Louis on weekends. He occasionally worked as a carpenter with his father and two brothers, who were all construction engineers. CHUCK studied cosmetology and was considering becoming a hairdresser or a photographer until he met Muddy Waters in May 1955 during a vacation visit to Chicago.

Muddy suggested that CHUCK see Leonard Chess at Chess Records. CHUCK recorded his trio in a St. Louis living room and returned to Chicago two weeks later with four songs on tape. During his third Chicago visit, CHUCK and his group recorded for Chess. His first release, "Maybellene" became a hit within a few weeks.

Between 1955 and 1958, the weekly music trade papers always carried a CHUCK BERRY Record on the Hot Hundred, often both sides appeared and sometimes two different records were on the Charts at the same time. His very first personal appearance tour was "101 Nights in 101 Days." He starred in such Allan, Freed rock movies as "Rock, Rock, Rock" and "Go Johnny Go" and his Newport Jazz Festival Performance in 1958 was filmed for the classic documentary "Jazz on A Summer Day."

CHUCK BERRY's greatest hits include "Roll over Beethoven" and "Rock And Roll Music," both of which the Beatles later recorded; "Round And Round," "Carol" and "You Can't Catch Me," which appeared in early Rolling Stones albums; "Memphis," which later became a hit again for Johnny Rivers and Lonny Mack; "Johnny B. Goode," "Sweet Little Sixteen," "School Days," "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man," "Nadine," "Almost Grown," "Too Much Monkey Business," "No Particular Place To Go," "Back In The USA," "Reelin' And Rockin'," "Thirty Days" and several more. Except for a few years with Mercury Records, CHUCK has always been on Chess.

There's much more that could be said about CHUCK BERRY -- about his flamboyant showmanship and charismatic personality --- but all you have to do is listen to his music and you'll understand what makes him great. To quote a few appropriate words from the Master, "Hail, Hail, Rock n' Roll! Deliver me from the days of old, Long live Rock 'n' Roll! The Feeling is there body and soul."