



Buddy Holly: The Rocker Next Door With The Mail-Order Axe

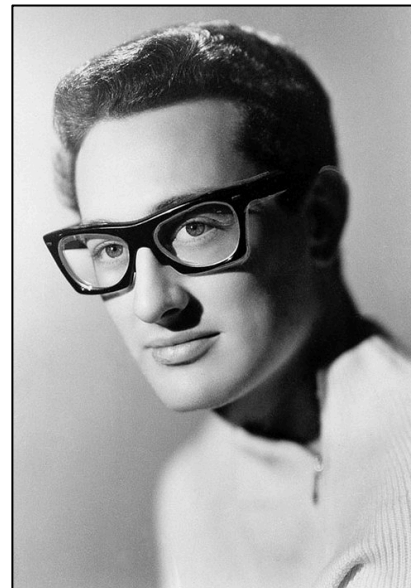
Excerpt of article by Mick Farren, appearing in *NME*, 13 September 1975

In a frame of reference where you might think of Elvis Presley as an idol and Little Richard as a hero, Buddy Holly has to be considered as an influence.

Buddy Holly, the first rocker to actually go on stage wearing hornrimmed spectacles, who died in an air crash on February 3rd, 1959, and who thereby created rock's very first tragic legend, was much more than simply another fifties rock 'n' roll front man who got thrown into unnatural notoriety by his premature death.

In any final analysis of the contribution of the stars of the fifties to the general steam of rock and roll, Holly has to be singled out as the man who made possible a whole lot of what came later.

"And what's that supposed to mean?" you ask. Precisely that Holly was the one who, above all others, convinced a large number of nondescript male children that maybe they too could be rock performers.



Most of the early rock 'n' roll stars had so much going for them that they tended to overawe the average fan. Only the extremely talented or the extremely crass could attempt to seriously emulate Elvis Presley's dramatic hoodlum good looks and wide local range, Little Richard's maniac energy, or Gene Vincent's delinquent meanness.

Holly was the really accessible early rock star. His high, rather, lightweight tenor could be copied by any spotty third former who posed in front of a mirror with a six pound mail order guitar, while with his capped teeth and myopic grim he was certainly no winner in the beauty stakes. He was the first star who made it clear that just about anyone, given a lot of application and the right breaks, could actually make it in the wonderful world of rock 'n' roll.

Among today's superstars who fell under Holly's persuasive spell was one Eric Clapton. In a number of interviews, Clapton has cited Holly as the artist who first inspired him to take up the guitar. Dylan also includes Buddy Holly in his list of early heroes, while John Lennon went to great pains to make the 'Peggy Sue' cut on his *Rock 'n' Roll* album a loving tribute to one of his first idols.

Holly may not have been over strong on charisma, but that didn't mean that he was in any way short on talent. In terms of seminal creativity, Holly must rank close to Chuck Berry as one of the greatest innovators of the fifties. His songs had such lasting merit that more than half a dozen of them have earned a prominent place in the catalogue of all-time rock standards, and are still hitting the charts today...