Gene Vincent

Vincent Eugene Craddock (February 11, 1935 – October 12, 1971), known as Gene Vincent, was an American musician who pioneered the styles of rock and roll and rockabilly. His 1956 top ten hit with his Blue Caps, "Be-Bop-A-Lula", is considered a significant early example of rockabilly.[1] He is a member of both the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Rockabilly Hall of Fame.

BIOGRAPHY

CONTENTS

- Biography 1
- Early life 1.1
- Early music career 1.2
- Biggest hits 1.3
- Europe 1.4
- Later career 1.5
- Death and legacy 1.6
- Discography 2
- Singles 2.1
- Albums 2.2
- EPs 2.3
- Film appearances 3

See also 4
Rainbow Appearances were on October 25, 1958, as well as July 25 and November 7, 1959. Songs performed were: "Be-Bop-A-Lula", "High Blood Pressure", also on from 8:30 to 9:30 pm over the NBC Radio network. It was also shown on KTTV, channel 11 from 10 pm to 1 am on Saturday nights. Compton, California. ‘Town Hall Party’ drew in excess of 2,800 paid admissions each Friday and Saturday with room for 1,200 dancers. The show was set up with a scene featuring dancers doing the Twist and 8 weeks in the nationally-broadcast "Over The Rainbow", "Roll Over Beethoven" and "She She Little Sheila".

EARLY LIFE

Vincent Eugene Craddock was born in Norfolk, Virginia. His musical influences included country, rhythm and blues and gospel music. He showed his first real interest in music while his family lived in Munden Point, Princess Anne County (now Virginia Beach), Virginia, near the North Carolina line, where they ran a country store. He received his first guitar at the age of twelve as a gift from a friend.

His father, Ezekiah Jackson Craddock, volunteered to serve in the U.S. Coast Guard and patrolled American coastal waters to protect Allied shipping against German U-boats during World War II. His mother, Mary Louise Craddock, maintained a general store at Munden Point. Craddock’s parents moved the family and opened a general store and sailors’ tailoring shop in Norfolk.

Having spent his youth in the Norfolk area, Craddock dropped out of school at seventeen and enlisted in the United States Navy in 1952. Craddock's parents signed the forms allowing him to join the Navy. He completed boot camp and joined the fleet as a crewman aboard the fleet oiler USS Chukawan although he spent two weeks training period in the repair ship USS Amphion before returning to the Chukawan. Craddock never saw combat but completed a Korean War deployment. He sailed home from Korean waters aboard battleship USS Wisconsin, but was not part of the ship's company.

Craddock planned a career in the Navy and, in 1955, used his $612 re-enlistment bonus to buy a new Triumph motorbike. In July 1955, while in Norfolk, a motorcycle crash shattered his left leg. He refused to have it amputated. The leg was saved, but the crash left him with a limp and pain. He wore a steel sheath around the leg[2] for the rest of his life. Most accounts relate the accident as the fault of a drunk driver who struck him, although some claim Craddock had been riding drunk. Years later in some of his professional music bios, there is no mention of an accident, but it was claimed that he was wounded in combat in Korea.[3] He spent time in the Portsmouth Naval Hospital and was medically discharged from the Navy shortly thereafter.

EARLY MUSIC CAREER

Craddock became involved in the local music scene in Norfolk. He changed his name to Gene Vincent, and formed a rockabilly band called the Blue Caps (a term used in reference to enlisted sailors in the U.S. Navy).[4] The band included Willie Williams on rhythm guitar, Jack Neal on upright bass, Dickie Harrell on drums, and lead guitarist, Cliff Gallup. He and his band were named Gene Vincent and His Blue Caps. He also collaborated with another rising musician, Jay Chevalier of Rapides Parish, Louisiana.

Gene Vincent and His Blue Caps soon gained a reputation playing in various[5]

BIGGEST HITS

In 1956 he wrote "Be-Bop-A-Lula" became a hit (peaking at No. 5 and spending 20 weeks on the Billboard Pop Chart, and No. 5 and 17 weeks in the Cashbox Chart), Gene Vincent and His Blue Caps were unable to follow it up with the same level of commercial success, but released critically acclaimed songs like "Race with the Devil" (No. 96 in Billboard and No. 50 in Cashbox) and "Bluejean Bop" (No. 49 in Billboard, and another million selling disc).[7]

Cliff Gallup left the band in 1956 and Russell Williford joined as the new guitarist for the Blue Caps. Williford played and toured Canada with Vincent in late 1956 and left in early 1957. Gallup came back to do the next album, left again, then Russell came back and exited before Johnny Meeks entered the band. The group had another hit with 1957's "Lotta Lovin" (highest position No. 13 and spending 19 weeks in Billboard, and No. 17 and 17 weeks in Cashbox). Vincent was awarded gold records for two million sales of "Be-Bop-A-Lula",[7] and 1.5 million sales of "Lotta Lovin". The same year he toured the east coast of Australia with Little Richard and Eddie Cochran, drawing audiences totaling 72,000 to their Sydney Stadium concerts. Vincent also made an appearance in the film, The Girl Can't Help It with Jayne Mansfield, performing "Be-Bop-A-Lula" with The Blue Caps in a rehearsal room.

"Dance to the Bop" was released by Capitol records on October 28, 1957.[8] On November 17, 1957 Vincent and His Blue Caps performed the song on the nationally-broadcast Ed Sullivan Show.[9] The song spent nine weeks on the Billboard charts and peaked at No. 23 on January 23, 1958 and No. 36 and 8 weeks in Cashbox, and would be Vincent's last American hit single.[10] The song was used in the movie Hot Rod Gang for a dance rehearsal scene featuring dancers doing West Coast Swing.[8][11][12]

Vincent and His Blue Caps also appeared several times on 'Town Hall Party', California's largest country music barn dance held at the Town Hall in Compton, California. 'Town Hall Party' drew in excess of 2,800 paid admissions each Friday and Saturday with room for 1,200 dancers. The show was also on from 8:30 to 9:30 pm over the NBC Radio network. It was also shown on KTTV, channel 11 from 10 pm to 1 am on Saturday nights.[13]

Appearances were on October 25, 1956, as well as July 25 and November 7, 1959. Songs performed were: "Be-Bop-A-Lula", "High Blood Pressure", "Rip It Up", "Dance to the Bop", "You Win Again", "For Your Precious Love", "Rocky Road Blues", "Pretty Pearly", "High School Confidential", "Over The Rainbow", "Roll Over Beethoven" and "She She Little Sheila".[14]
EUROPE
A dispute with the US tax authorities and the American Musicians’ Union over payments to his band and his having sold the band’s equipment to pay a tax bill led him to leave the US and try his hand in Europe.

On December 15, 1959, Vincent appeared on Jack Good’s TV show Boy Meets Girl, his first appearance in England.[15] He wore black leather, gloves, and a medallion, and stood in a hunched posture. Good is credited with the transformation of Vincent’s image. After the TV appearance he toured France, the Netherlands, Germany, and the UK performing in his US stage clothes.[16]

On April 16, 1960, while on tour in the UK, Vincent, Eddie Cochran, and songwriter Sharon Sheeley were involved in a high-speed traffic accident in a private hire taxi in Chippenham, Wiltshire. Vincent broke his ribs and collarbone and further damaged his weakened leg. Sheeley suffered a broken pelvis. Cochran, who had been thrown from the vehicle, suffered serious brain injuries and died the next day. Vincent returned to the States after the accident.

Promoter Don Arden had Vincent return to the UK in 1961 to do an extensive tour in theatres and ballrooms with Chris Wayne and the Echoes. Due to the overwhelming success of this tour, Vincent subsequently moved to England in 1963. The accompanying band, Sounds Incorporated, a six-piece outfit which included three saxophones, guitar, bass and drums, later went on to play with the Beatles at their Shea Stadium concert.

He toured the UK again in 1963 with the Outlaws, featuring future Deep Purple guitar player Ritchie Blackmore, as a backing band. Vincent’s alcohol problems marred the tour, resulting in problems both on stage and with the band and management.[17]

LATER CAREER
Vincent’s attempts to re-establish his American career in folk rock and country rock proved unsuccessful; he is remembered today for recordings of the 1950s and early 1960s that appeared on the Capitol label. In the early sixties, he also put out tracks on EMI’s Columbia label (the British label, not the U.S. CBS/Columbia), including a cover of Arthur Alexander’s “Where Have You Been All My Life?”. A backing band called the Shouts joined him.

In 1966 and 1967, in the States, he recorded for Challenge Records, backed by ex-members of the Champs and Glen Campbell. Challenge released three singles in the US, and the UK London label released two singles and collected recordings on to an LP, Gene Vincent, on the UK London label in 1967. Although well received, none sold well.

In 1968 in a hotel in Germany, Gene Vincent tried to shoot Gary Glitter: he fired several shots and missed and a frightened Glitter left the country the next day.[18]

In 1969, he recorded the album I’m Back and I’m Proud for long-time fan John Peel’s Dandelion label, produced by Kim Fowley with arrangements by Skip Battin and backing vocals by Linda Ronstadt. He recorded two other albums for the Kama Sutra label, reissued on one CD by Rev-Ola in March 2008.

On his 1969 tour of the UK he was backed by the Wild Angels, a British band who had worked at the Royal Albert Hall with Bill Haley & His Comets and Duane Eddy. Because of pressure from his ex-wife, the Inland Revenue and promoter Don Arden, Vincent returned to the US. His final US recordings were four tracks for Rockin’ Ronny Weiser’s Rolling Rock label, a few weeks before his death. These were released on a compilation album of tribute songs, including “Say Mama” by his daughter, Melody Jean Vincent, accompanied by Johnny Meeks on guitar. He later recorded four tracks (released years later as The Last Session) in Britain in October 1971 as part of his last tour. He was backed by Richard Cole (from the Bluecaps) and Kansas Hook. They recorded five tracks at the BBC studios in Maida Vale, London, for Johnnie Walker’s radio show. He managed one show at the Garrick Night Club in Leigh, Lancashire, and two shows at the Wookey Hollow Club in Liverpool on October 3 and 4 before his health gave out. Vincent returned to the US and died a few days later. Four of these tracks were later released on the BBC’s own label pre-fix BEEB001 called The Last Session; this includes a version of “Say Mama”. The four tracks are now on Vincent’s White Lightning album.

DEATH AND LEGACY
Vincent died on October 12, 1971 from a ruptured stomach ulcer while visiting his father in California,[3] and is interred in the Eternal Valley Memorial Park, Newhall, California.

He was the first inductee into the Rockabilly Hall of Fame upon its formation in 1997.[19] The following year he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Vincent has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 1749 N. Vine Street. In 2012, his band, the Blue Caps, were retroactively inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame by a special committee, alongside Vincent. On Tuesday, September 23, 2003 Vincent was honored with a Norfolk’s Legends of Music Walk of Fame bronze star embedded in the Granby Street sidewalk.

DISCOGRAPHY
SINGLES
"Race With the Devil"/"Gonna Back Up Baby" (Capitol F3530 US) (9/10/56) (Capitol 45-CL 14628 UK)
"Blue Jean Bop"/"Who Slapped John" (Capitol F3558 US) (10/56) (Capitol 45-CL 14637 UK)
"Jumps, Giggles And Shouts"/"Wedding Bells" (Capitol 14881 UK)
"Crazy Legs"/"Important Words" (Capitol F3617 US) (1/7/57) (Capitol 45-CL 14693 UK)
"Five Days"/"I Bickey Bi Bo Bo Go" (Capitol F3678 US) (3/25/57) (Capitol 45-CL 14722 UK)
"Lotta Lovin’”/”Wear My Ring” (Capitol F3763 US) (7/22/57) (Capitol 45-CL 14763 UK)
"Dance to the Bop”/”I Got It” (Capitol F3839 US) (11/18/57) (Capitol 45-CL 14806)
"Lotta Lovin’”/”Be Bop A Lula” (Capitol F3871 US) (11/20/57) (Re-issue)
"I Got a Baby”/”Walking Home From School” (Capitol F3874 US) (1/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14935 UK)
"Baby Blue”/”True to You” (Capitol F3874 US) (5/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14868 UK)
"Rocky Road Blues”/”Yes I Love You Baby” (Capitol F4010 US) (7/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14908 UK)
"Get it”/”Little Lover” (Capitol F4051 US) (9/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14995)
"Over the Rainbow”/”Who’s Pushing Your Swing” (Capitol F4153 US) (1/59) (Capitol 45-CL 15000 UK)
"Summertime”/”Frankie And Johnnie” (Capitol 45-CL 15035 UK)
"The Night is So Lonely”/”Right Now” (Capitol F4237 US) (6/59) (Capitol 45-CL 15053 UK)
"Wild Cat”/”Right Here on Earth” (Capitol F4313 US) (11/59) (Capitol 45-CL 15099 UK)
"Jezebel”/”Maybe” (Capitol 45-CL 15179 UK) (61)
"If You Want My Lovin’”/”Mister Loneliness” (Capitol F4525 US) (61) (Capitol 45-CL 15185 UK)
"She She Little Sheila”/”Hot Dollar” (Capitol 45-CL 15202 UK) (61)
"Born To Be A Rolling Stone”/”Hurtin’ For You Baby” (Challenge 59365 US) (67)
"Bird Doggin’”/”Ain’t That Too Much” (Challenge 59347 US) (66) (London HLH 10079 UK)
"Private Detective”/”You Are My Sunshine” (Columbia DB 7343 UK) (64)
"Bird Doggin’”/”Ain’t That Too Much” (Challenge 59337 US) (66) (London HLH 10079 UK)
"Where Have You Been All My Life”/”Temptation Baby” (Columbia DB 7293 UK) (64)
"La Den Da Den Da Da”/”The Beginning of the End” (Columbia DB 7293 UK) (64)
"Humpity Dumpity”/”A Love ‘Em And Leave ‘Em Kinda Guy” (Columbia DB 7218 UK) (64)
"Private Detective”/”You Are My Sunshine” (Columbia DB 7343 UK) (64)
"La Den Da Den Da Da”/”The Beginning of the End” (Columbia DB 7293 UK) (64)
"Private Detective”/”You Are My Sunshine” (Columbia DB 7343 UK) (64)
"Bird Doggin’”/”Ain’t That Too Much” (Challenge 59337 US) (66) (London HLH 10079 UK)
"Lonely Street”/”I’ve Got My Eyes on You” (Challenge 59347 US) (66) (London HLH 10099 UK)

ALBUMS
Bluejean Bop (Capitol T764 US & UK) (8/13/56)
Gene Vincent and His Blue Caps (Capitol T811 US & UK) (1957)
Gene Vincent Rocks! And The Blue Caps Roll (Capitol T970 US & UK) (3/58)
A Gene Vincent Record Date (Capitol T1059 US & UK) (11/58)
Sounds Like Gene Vincent (Capitol T1207 US & UK) (6/59)
Crazy Times (Capitol T1342 US & UK mono) (Capitol ST1342 US & UK stereo) (3/60)
The Crazy Beat of Gene Vincent (Capitol T20453 UK) (63)
Shakin’ Up A Storm (Columbia 33-OSX 1646 UK) (64)
Gene Vincent (London HAH 8333 UK) (67)
I’m Back and I’m Proud (Dandelion D9 102 US)(69) (Dandelion 63754 UK) (70)
Gene Vincent (Kama Sutra KSBS 2019 US) (70) retitled If Only You Could See Me Today(Kama Sutra 2361009 UK) (71)
The Day The World Turned Blue (Kama Sutra KSBS 2027 US) (70) (Kama Sutra 2316005 (UK) (71)
The Day The World Turned Blue”/”High on Life” (Kama Sutra KSBS2013018 UK) (71)
Roll Over Beethoven”/”Say Mama”/”Be-Bop-A-Lula” (Beeb 001 UK) (74)
( NB Apart from the first 1957 reissue, this listing omits the very many reissue singles released over the decades)
EFS

Hot Rod Gang (Capitol EAP 1–985 US & UK) (9/58)
Be-Bop-A-Lula '62 (Capitol EAP 1-20448 France) (62)
Live and Rockin’ (Fan club issue UK) (69)
The Screamin’ Kid Live! (bootleg) (no label 20240 France) (69)
The Screaming Kid (bootleg) (no label 20.266 France) (69)
Rainyday Sunshine (Rollin’ Danny RD1 UK) (80)
On Tour With Gene Vincent & Eddie Cochran (Rockstar RSR-EP 2013 UK) (86)
In Concert Vol 1 (bootleg) (Savas SA 178305 France) (88)
The Last Session (Strange Fruit SFNT 001 UK) (88)
Hey Mama! (Rollercoaster RCEP 123 UK) (98)
(NB This listing omits the many EPs of album tracks & compilations)

FILM APPEARANCES

The Girl Can’t Help It (1956)
Hot Rod Gang (aka Fury Unleashed) (1958)
Live It Up! (aka Sing And Swing) (1960)
It’s Trad, Dad! (aka Ring A Ding Rhythm) (1962)

Vincent was played by Carl Barât in the 2009 movie, Telstar

SEE ALSO

MUSIC

Ian Dury – “Sweet Gene Vincent”, from New Boots and Panties!! (1977)
Havana 3 a.m. – “Blue Gene Vincent”
Johnny Carroll – “Black Leather Rebel”
Robert Gordon – “The Catman” on his album Rock Billy Boogie
Stray Cats – “Gene and Eddie” on their album Blast Off!

MOVIES

Early in the movie, Quadrophenia, Kevin, played by Ray Winstone, sings “Be-Bop-A-Lula” in the bathtub.
In the 2003 movie, The Singing Detective, Robert Downey Jr, sings “In My Dreams”, “Important Words” and “Woman Love”
“Be-Bop-A-Lula” appears in the 1990 movie, Wild at Heart one of the main characters is named Lula.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


EXTERNAL LINKS

Official Gene Vincent website from Rockabilly Hall of Fame.
Gene Vincent at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
Official fan club Gene Vincent Lonely Street
Derek Henderson’s Gene Vincent website
### Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Class of 1998

**Performers**
- Eagles
- Fleetwood Mac
- The Mamas & the Papas
- Lloyd Price
- Santana
- Gene Vincent

**Early Influences**
- Jelly Roll Morton

**Non-performers (Ahmet Ertegun Award)**
- Allen Toussaint

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### Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Class of 2012

**Performers**
- Beastie Boys
- The Blue Caps
- The Comets
- The Crickets
- Donovan
- The Famous Flames
- Guns N' Roses
- The Midnighters
- The Miracles
- Laura Nyro
- Red Hot Chili Peppers
- Small Faces/Faces

**Early Influences**
- Freddie King

**Non-performers (Ahmet Ertegun Award)**
- Don Kirshner

**Award for Musical Excellence**
- Cosimo Matassa
- Tom Dowd
- Glyn Johns

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Vincent Eugene Craddock (February 11, 1935 – October 12, 1971), known as Gene Vincent, was an American musician who pioneered the styles of rock and roll and rockabilly. His 1956 top ten hit with his Blue Caps, "Be-Bop-A-Lula", is considered a significant early example of rockabilly. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Rockabilly Hall of Fame. Gene Vincent was Capitol’s answer to Elvis Presley. A rockabilly and rock’n’roll singer, he is best known for his début single, "Be-Bop-A-Lula". He had a long string of hits between 1956 and 61. He died of a ruptured stomach ulcer in 1971, aged just 36. Popular Gene Vincent songs. Be-Bop-A-Lula. Gene Vincent.