Gene Vincent

Gene Vincent (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

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Rainbow

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8 weeks in

the nationally-broadcast "Dance to the Bop" was released by Capitol records on October 28, 1957.

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 tailors' 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 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. 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). 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 venues.

**BIGGEST HITS**

In 1956 he wrote "Bluejean Bop". In 1957 he released the million selling disc "Rip It Up" (highest position No. 49 in Billboard Chart), "Rocky Road Blues", "Pretty Pearly", "High School Confidential", "The Girl Can't Help It" (No. 96 in Billboard and No. 50 in Cashbox), "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" (high 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", 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.

"Dance to the Bop" was released by Capitol records on October 28, 1957. On November 17, 1957 Vincent and His Blue Caps performed the song on the nationally-broadcast Ed Sullivan Show. 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. The song was used in the movie Hot Rod Gang for a dance rehearsal scene featuring dancers doing West Coast Swing.

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. Appearances were on October 25, 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".
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]

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 the Byrds' 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.

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 Rockabilly Hall 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.
"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 14868 UK)
"Lotta Lovin'"/"Be Bop A Lula" (Capitol F3871 US) (11/20/57) (Re-issue)
"Baby Blue"/"True to You" (Capitol F3874 US) (11/20/57) (Re-issue)
"I Got a Baby"/"Walking Home From School" (Capitol F3874 US) (1/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14830 US)
"Baby Blue"/"True to You" (Capitol F3959 US) (5/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14868 UK)
"I Got It"/"Who's Pushing Your Swing" (Capitol F4105 US) (11/58) (Capitol 45-CL 14974 UK)
"Summertime"/"Frankie And Johnnie" (Capitol 45-CL 15035 UK)
"The Night is So Lonely"/"Right Now" (Capitol 45-CL 15053 UK)
"Crazy Beat"/"High Blood Pressure" (Capitol 45-CL 15099 UK)
"Where Have You Been All My Life?"/"Temptation Baby" (Columbia DB 7218 UK) (64)
"Private Detective"/"You Are My Sunshine" (Columbia DB 7293 UK) (64)
"Held For Questioning"/"You're Still in My Heart" (Capitol 45-CL 15009 UK)
"Pistol Packin' Mama"/"Weeping Willow" (Capitol 45-CL 15035 UK)
"Anna Annabelle"/"Accentuate The Positive" (Capitol 45-CL 15067 UK)
"Jezebel"/"Maybe" (Capitol 45-CL 15179 UK)
"If You Want My Lovin'"/"Mister Loneliness" (Capitol 45-CL 15185 UK)
"She She Little Sheila"/"Hot Dollar" (Capitol 45-CL 15202 UK)
"Brand New Beat"/"Unchained Melody" (Capitol 45-CL 15231 UK)
"Lucky Star"/"Baby Don't Believe Him" (Capitol 45-CL 15243 UK)
"King of Fools"/"Be-Bop-A-Lula '62" (Capitol 45-CL 15264 UK)
"Humpity Dumpity"/"A Love 'Em And Leave 'Em Kinda Guy" (Columbia DB 7218 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 UK) (64)
"Lonely Street"/"I've Got My Eyes on You" (Challenge 59347 UK) (64)
"Born To Be A Rolling Stone"/"Hurtin' For You Baby" (Challenge 59365 UK) (67)
"Be-Bop-A-Lula '69"/"Ruby Baby" (Dandelion S 4596 UK)
"White Lightning"/"Scarlet Ribbons" (Dandelion S 4974 UK) (70)
"The Day The World Turned Blue"/"How I Love Them Old Songs" (Kama Sutra KSBS 2019 US) (71)
"Essential B-Bop" (bootleg) (Koala KOA 14617 US) (80)
"Lost Dallas Sessions" (Rollercoaster RCCD 3031) (90)
"Hey Mama!" (Rollercoaster ROLL 2021 UK) (98)

(NB Apart from the first 1957 reissue, this listing omits the very many reissue singles released over the decades)

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 T 20453 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)
Rhythm in Blue (bootleg) (Bluecap Records BC2-11-35 Canada) (79)
Be-Bop-A-Lula (bootleg) (Koala KOA 14617 US) (80)
Forever Gene Vincent (Rolling Rock LP 022 US) (80) (contains 4 rare recordings by Gene Vincent)
Dressed in Black (Magnum Force MFLP 016 UK) (82)
Gene Vincent With Interview By Red Robinson (bootleg) (The Great Northwest Music Company GNW 4016 US) (82)
From LA to Frisco (Magnum Force MFLP 1023 UK) (82)
For Collectors Only (Magnum Force MFLP 020 UK) (84)
Rarities (sic) (bootleg) (Dr Kollector CRA 001 France) (86)
Rarities Vol 2 (bootleg) (Doktor Kollector DK 005 France) (85)
Important Words (Rockstar RSR LP 1020 UK) (90)
Lost Dallas Sessions (Rollercoaster RCCD 3031) (98)
Hey Mama! (Rollercoaster ROLL 2021 UK) (98)

(NB This listing omits the many reissue albums released over the decades)
EPS

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)

(FN 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

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
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