

## Friday, April 3

### What Happened After “The Music Died?”

Broadly speaking, the United States went through a musical “identity crisis,” uncertain what the dominant popular music form would be.

That crisis ended decisively in 1964, with rock music winning...easily.

#### *I. Cool and Modal Jazz were peaking*

Miles Davis releases *Kind of Blue* (1959), *Sketches of Spain* (1960), *Someday My Prince Will Come* (1961)

Dave Brubeck Quartet releases *Time Out* in 1959

- *Kind of Blue* and *Time Out* are two of the biggest-selling jazz albums of all time

John Coltrane releases *Giant Steps* (1961), *My Favorite Things* (1962)

Charles Mingus releases *Mingus Ah Um* and *Mingus Dynasty* in 1959

#### *II. Other musical forms were also finding success*

Country pop: Virginia Patterson Hensley was born in Winchester, Virginia on September 8, 1932. Called “Ginny” in her childhood,

she began singing country music at the Grand Ole Opry in 1948. When she married Gerald Cline in 1953, she simply changed “Patterson” to “Patsy” to become Patsy Cline. In 1957, “Walking After Midnight” became one of the first country songs to cross over into “pop.” She would have further success in 1961 with “Crazy” and “I Fall to Pieces.” However, her death in a plane crash in Tennessee on March 5, 1963 cut her career short at just 30 years of age.

Meanwhile, a young Texan named Roy Orbison with a warbling falsetto and serious guitar chops found success with pop country songs like “Only the Lonely” in 1960 and “Crying” in 1961. His own career would last decades—including helping form the rock “supergroup” The Traveling Wilburys in 1988. Sadly, he would die from a heart attack that same year until his death from a heart attack on December 6.

“Rock and roll” pop: Walden Robert Cassotto was born in the East Harlem neighborhood of New York City on May 14, 1936. Something of a musical prodigy, young Bobby could play piano, drums and guitar as a teenager, later learning harmonica and xylophone. He could also sing, though he first found moderate success as a songwriter. At some point, he passed a neon sign for a takeout Chinese restaurant. The letters “M-A-N” were not working, leaving only the word “DARIN.”

And thus was Bobby Darin born—and in 1958 a song he co-wrote called “Splish Splash” became a hit. Over the next four years, he would further hits with “Dream Lover,” “Mack the Knife” and “La Mer (Beyond the Sea).” Bored with these songs, though, he

eventually turned to folk music, covering “If I Were a Carpenter” in 1966. Unfortunately, bouts of rheumatic fever as a child had weakened his heart, and an infection he contracted in 1973 led to open heart surgery late that year. It was not successful, and he died at age 37 on December 20, 1973.

Rhythm and blues was still going strong in the persons of two black sons of the south blind pianist and singer Ray Charles and “the Godfather of Soul” James Brown. Charles would combine rhythm and blues with Gospel singing to help to form the genre known as Soul. Brown would begin as a soul performer before altering its rhythm—accenting the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> beats of a measure instead of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>—to help to create the genre known as Funk.

Meanwhile, a Detroit-based songwriter and one-time jazz record store owner named Berry Gordy, Jr. would buy a photography studio on West Grand Boulevard in June 1959. The back of the house was converted into a recording studio. And what had once been Tamla Records would officially become Motown Records on April 14, 1960. From that studio would emerge many of the biggest pop/soul music artists of the 1960s and 1970s: Smokey Robinson, The Temptations, The Four Tops, The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, The Jackson Five...and a blind musical prodigy born on May 13, 1950 as Stevland Hardaway Morris, though we know him best as Stevie Wonder.

*III. But none of this was rock-and-roll—until two very sets of teenaged boys living 6,000 miles apart brought it back from the dead*

A. In 1961, the three teenaged Wilson Brothers—Brian, Carl and Dennis—got together with their cousin Mike Love and a friend named Al Jardine were living in the Los Angeles, California. Brian had been absorbing vocal group harmonies, rhythm and blues and rock-and-roll. Dennis was also an avid surfer—a dominant pastime and mood among southern California teenager. Forming a band called “The Pendeltones,” Dennis convinced his bandmates to write songs about surfing, so Brian wrote one called “Surfin.” A demo recorded that September 15 was eventually released as a single by Era Records. Rather than be named The Surfers, which a promoter named Russ Regan knew was taken, Regan suggested “The Beach Boys.” The following year, “Surfin’ Safari” would reach the Billboard Top 15—and The Beach Boys would become one of the most successful American bands ever.

B. In March 1957, a 16-year-old guitar player and singer named John Lennon formed a “skiffle” band with some high school friends, he eventually called the Quarrymen. That July, he met a 15-year-old rhythm guitarist named Paul McCartney and invited him to join. McCartney had a friend—a terrific guitar player named George Harrison—who he wanted to join the band. Eventually Lennon relented, and Harrison became their lead guitarist in March 1958. Soon, the high school friends left the band, and Lennon enrolled in art school. As of January 1959, though, the three guitarists—now Johnny and the Moondogs—played rock and roll whenever they could find a drummer. An art school friend named Stuart

Sutcliffe bought a bass guitar in January 1960 and joined the band. Inspired by Buddy Holly and the Crickets, Sutcliffe suggested they call themselves “The Beatals,” which would later become Silver Beetles, Silver Beatles and, as of mid-August, simply The Beatles. In the same month, they hired Pete Best to be their regular drummer, and they began long-term residency in Hamburg, Germany – often at The Cavern Club. It was there in November 1961, they met local record-store and music columnist Brian Epstein; he became their manager in January 1962. Over the next few months, he got The Beatles released from their previous contract. Meanwhile, Sutcliffe died from a brain hemorrhage in April...and Pete Best was replaced in August by a drummer born Richard Starkey, but now known as Ringo Starr for the flamboyant rings he wore. Also that April, producer George Martin signed them to EMI’s Parlophone label; they entered Abbey Road studios for the first time on June 6, 1962, eventually recording “Love Me Do,” “Please Please Me” and “P.S. I Love You.” The former two songs were released that fall...and the rest...

Well, we will get to that next week.