



"If you tried to give Rock 'n' Roll another name, you might call it 'Chuck Berry.'"

John Lennon



Images courtesy of Roger Maserang and the Missouri Historical Society.

Pioneer of Rock 'n' Roll
Charles Edward Anderson "Chuck" Berry

10/18/1926 – 03/18/2017

Chuck Berry blended the genres of blues, swing and country-western music. He played with a driving rhythm and his method of bending notes on electric guitar created a new genre of music—Rock 'n' Roll. His guitar riffs and lyrics resonated with many American youth in the mid-1950s and spoke to teenage angst.

Berry's first hit "Maybellene" reached no. 5 in 1955 and established his career. The song was remarkable because it was one of the first rock 'n' roll songs sung by a Black artist to outsell cover versions by white artists. By the end of the 1950s, he had seven more songs in the top 40 hits including "Roll Over Beethoven" and "Johnny B. Goode." Berry also created a new stage move, "the duck walk," originally used to hide the wrinkles in his suit. His work influenced other rock greats including the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, and spoke to an entire generation of Americans.