

Chapter 12 Revivals of Country-Styled Rock

The late 60's country-rock sound grew out of the revival of interest in folk music. Vocals were very important to folk music. The instruments used by folk groups generally included the acoustic guitar and string bass. Some groups included other instruments, like the harmonica, but the drums were seldom used. Bob Dylan horrified his fans by adding drums, amplification, and a rock beat to his recordings. But, this created a new style of music---folk-rock. Later, Dylan added elements of country music to his compositions. In some later compositions Dylan went to Nashville and hired Charlie Daniels and Johnny Cash for the recording sessions. These recordings along with recordings made with Gram Parsons helped create the sound known as country-rock.

Gram Parsons (a.k.a. Cecil Conner, 1946-1973) wrote and played with the International Submarine Band until he joined The Byrds in 1968. Parsons convinced The Byrds to do a country album. His goal was to combine country music with rock. However, the album produced, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, was more of a country album with occasional rock influences. Even though this was the case, it had a profound influence on many groups that would come later.

Listen to Gram Parsons and The Byrds---You're Still On My Mind (v. 1:2)

Parsons died in 1973. The cause of death was never established, but a combination of drugs and alcohol were discovered during the autopsy. Groups and individuals followed his lead in combining rock with country music.

The Buffalo Springfield was a folk-rock group. When it disbanded in 1968, Jim Messina and Rich Furay formed the country-rock group Poco. Poco was among the earliest to include pedal-steel guitar and dobro (guitar-like, steel strung acoustic instrument, played with a sliding bar---invented in the 20's) in their regular instrumentation. The group experienced many personnel changes and changed their style, including as much R&B as country. *Crazy Love* was among their greatest commercial successes.

Listen to Poco---Crazy Love (v. 1:3)

Some country-rock groups began as jug bands. In 1966, the Illegitimate Jug Band started as a group that played bluegrass and country swing. They changed both their name and their style after hearing gram Parsons and The Byrds. The new band, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, was close to breaking up when their recording of *Mr. Bojangles* became a hit single.

Listen to The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band---Mr. Bojangles (1:4)

Linda Ronstadt grew up listening to country music and performed on *The Johnny Cash Show* and was featured at the *Grand Ole Opry* early in her career. But, she was not an

instant success as a solo artist. Under the guidance of Peter Asher, a British manager/producer, she began to top the country and pop charts. Once she was established as a performer, she recorded music in several different styles, including Motown and reggae, and eventually, traditional Mexican songs with a mariachi band.

Listen to Linda Ronstadt---Desperado (v. 1:6)

Ronstadt's backup band for her country album included guitarist/singer, Glenn Frey, guitar/banjo/mandolin/singer, Bernie Leadon, bass/singer, Randy Meisner, and drummer/singer, Don Henley. After working together in studios and as backups, this group decided to form their own band. The Eagles soon became one of the most important and successful country-rock bands to come out of southern California in the 70's. Their recording of *Take it Easy* used a rock beat, but the use of a five-string banjo gave it a country feel. *Lyin' Eyes* was rock music with the country sounds of the electric bass, honky tonk piano, and mandolin. In addition, the lyrics told a story, common for country music. The bass was not the traditional two-beat bass. Rather, it established a Latin-influenced beat. *Lyin' Eyes* was one of many international hits for the Eagles.

Listen to the Eagles---Lyin' Eyes (v.1:7)

The direction of the Eagles changed a bit when their guitar/banjo/mandolin player, Bernie Leadon quit and was replaced by rock guitarist, Joe Walsh. They remained successful and placed their songs at the top of the charts. *Hotel California* illustrates the changes.

Listen to the Eagles---Hotel California (v. 1:10)

The group broke up in the early 80's.

In Northern California, led by brothers, John and Tom Fogerty, Creedence Clearwater Revival was becoming successful. The group took rock music and flavored it with country or rockabilly guitar fills and country influenced lyrics to create their brand of country rock. While they did cover some songs, much of their music was written by John Fogerty.

Listen to Creedence Clearwater Revival---Proud Mary (1:13)

CCR broke up in 1972, but John Fogerty experimented with overdubbing and made a number of recordings on which he played all the parts.

Ronnie Hawkins, the rockabilly singer, had moved his band to Toronto, Canada. While there, all the group's members, except for the drummer left the group and were replaced by Canadian musicians. This group worked as the backup band for Bob Dylan during the mid-60's. and eventually began working on their own material, calling themselves The Band. The group combined country and rock styles. Most of the group were vocalists, so they developed their own style by weaving the independent vocal lines.

Listen to The Band---The Weight (1:15)

The group continued together for a number of years and finally grew tired of life on the road. They announced the end in 1976 by throwing a big party and concert and called it *The Last Waltz*. They were joined by many musician friends. Director, Martin Scorsese filmed the concert and released it as a movie, *The Last Waltz*, in 1978.

The Band was eclectic. But, they were not the only group to experiment with many different styles. The Grateful Dead played many different styles. Members, Jerry Garcia and Phil Lesh wanted to play country music without the rock influences of the Grateful Dead's music. This caused them to form the group, New Riders of the Purple Sage. It became apparent that they could not maintain membership in both groups, so they quit the country group. But, their involvement in country had an impact on the music of The Grateful Dead.

In 1969, Little Feat was formed by Lowell George and Roy Estrada in northern California. These two had been members of Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention. Little Feat became very popular in the eastern and southern parts of the country. The group introduced strong influences of funk, gospel, and jazz.

Listen to Little Feat---Dixie Chicken (1:17)

Southern Rock

Southerners have had a long tradition of seeming to be separate from the rest of the country. Some of this has come out of southern rock which was generally an aggressive music played by musicians who projected a macho, stubbornly independent, outlaw image. The movement began around 1968 when The Allman Brothers band started playing music that combined elements of blues, soul, and country.

The Allman Brothers had two lead guitarists, Duane Allman and Richeard "Dickey" Betts, as well as two drummers. This combination gave the group a distinctive sound.

Listen to The Allman Brothers Band---Trouble No More (2:3)

The two lead guitars play in octaves. At other times, the two leads alternate in two bar phrases, giving the effect of a musical conversation. This is called *trading twos*. In October, 1971, Duane Allman was killed in a motorcycle accident. Recordings after that tragedy changed the sound of the twin lead to that of a single. Soon, they revived the trademark sound by hiring Chuck Leavell to play keyboards so Gregg Allman, originally the group's keyboardist, could play lead guitar with Dickey Betts.

Listen to The Allman Brothers Band---Ramblin' Man (2:2)

The band broke up in 1976 because of personal and legal problems and members pursued solo careers. Members of the original band reunited in 1978, but the reunion was not to

last. Fans in the 80's and 90's have been able to hear bands that had their roots with The Allman Brothers Band through the work of Gregg Allman and Dickey Betts. In addition, there have been occasional regroupings of The Allman Brothers Band.

The twin lead guitar sound of The Allman Brothers was imitated by many bands in the South, including The Charlie Daniels Band. Charlie Daniels was a country musician who played many different instruments. *The South's Gonna Do It* shows the southern pride of the entire southern rock movement. Also, Daniels includes many different southern styles in the music for the piece.

Listen to The Charlie Daniels Band---The South's Gonna Do It (2:5)

ZZ Top was a Texas based group that began in 1970. Guitarist/singer Billy Gibbons had been a member of the psychedelic group, Moving Sidewalks. It opened once for the Jimi Hendrix Experience, giving Gibbons the opportunity to watch Jimi Hendrix and the way he controlled distortion and fuzztone. When Moving Sidewalks broke up, Gibbons enlisted bassist Dusty Hill and drummer Frank Beard to join his band. This trio recorded their first album in 1970. This album, *The First Album* was not an immediate hit, but did set them up for a successful tour and later recordings.

Their top hit single, *Tush*, followed the 12-bar blues form and had bottleneck guitar solos during the instrumental sections. They used images of the southwest, not only in their music, but also in the cactus, cattle, and snakes with which they often shared their stage.

Listen to ZZ Top---Tush (2:8)

The band entered the 80's with new hit singles, *Gimme All Your Lovin'* and *Sharp Dressed Man* from their album, *Eliminator* (1983). The album title referred to a 1933 Ford model. Their rustic, cowboy image had been exchanged for one built around fast, modern cars and mock designer jumpsuits.

Listen to ZZ Top---Sharp Dressed Man (2:7)

ZZ Top remained popular through the 90's. Their latest album, *Mescalero*, was released in September, 2003.

The southern-rock band that most completely captured the national rock audience was Lynyrd Skynrd. The name was a misspelling of the name of a high school teacher who had criticized members of the group for having long hair. The group played with the Allman Brothers' twin lead guitar style, which Lynyrd Skynrd turned into a triple lead. The group's first album included *Freebird*, written and recorded to honor the late Duane Allman.

Listen to Lynyrd Skynrd---Freebird (2:9)

None of the group was from Alabama, but they recorded *Sweet Home Alabama* in response to Neil Young's (a Canadian) stereotyping of southerners in his recordings of *Alabama* and *Southern Man*.

In October, 1977, their chartered plane crashed en route from South Carolina to Louisiana killing four and badly injuring several other members of the band. The remaining members were back performing in 1980. Their music remained popular and there was a revival of the band that continued to play into the 90's.

Listen to Lynyrd Skynyrd---Sweet Home Alabama (2:10)