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Hawkins, Hound Dog, Elvis, and Red—How Rock and Roll Invaded Canada by Greig Stewart

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serve at Kesagami to preserve a once numerous animal approaching extinction in parts of the north. When trappers from Moose Factory brought their furs to auction, they weren't paid in cash. Instead, the first installment paid their debts at local stores. Later installments got the hunter through the summer and set him up for his winter advance. No one received cash because that would result in the trappers going on "a little spree in Cochrane" (181), a town accessible by rail. If a trapper wanted his money, he had to ask the local Indian agent for permission. Even when the preserve closed, the Indian agent continued to intervene in the ability of trappers to sell their furs.

Gettler provides unique insight into the how the state's control of currency impacted Indigenous peoples in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was, Gettler concludes, another form of dispossession that limited First Nations' ability to take part in the economy. Gettler's story of Mrs. Chum led me to use a compound interest calculator. It shows that the $37 a month Indian Affairs held back was $444 a year. Over 20 years, this amounted to $8,820. A low rate of return, perhaps 2%, increases the principal to $11,003. One wonders how much money the state owes Indigenous families and their descendants.

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Hawkins, Hound Dog, Elvis, and Red—How Rock and Roll Invaded Canada

by Greig Stewart

Toronto: Quick Red Fox Press, 2021, 416 pgs. Illustrations. $39.95. hardcover. ISBN 978-1-7751876-1-5, (www.quickredfoxpress.com)

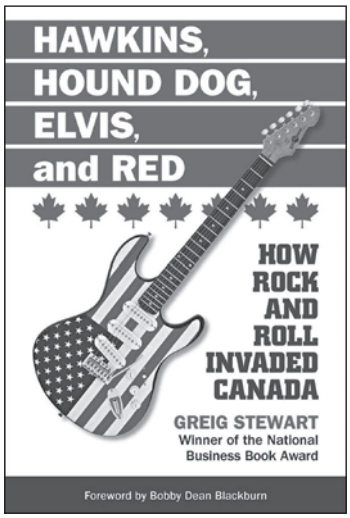
Before starting to read Greig Stewart's new book, there were a number of questions that I felt needed to be asked and then answered.

Firstly, was there a need for a publication explaining how rock and roll invaded Canada? To try and answer this question, I looked at the extensive bibliography of over 125 titles which the author had consulted and listed. Amazingly, there were only twenty-one entries that had any Canadian connection, the most recent being from 2015. This answered my first question; yes, the book would be a timely and welcome addition to this genre of literature.

Secondly, what qualifications/past experiences did the author have to write it? Greig Stewart's first book, *Shutting Down the National Dream; A.V.Roe and the Tragedy of the Avro Arrow*, was the winner of the National Business Book Award, and the basis for CBC Television's popular docudrama, The Arrow. Mr. Stewart also had a rock music background. From 1966-68, he was the drummer for the Toronto band The True Image. Latterly, he was deeply involved in the fields of arts, culture, heritage and tourism, and from 1981-2011, he worked as a field consultant for the Ontario government. Seems like a good pedigree to write a book on the history of Canadian rock and roll!

Thirdly, how would new evidence be uncovered to add to existing literature in the field, and to help prove the author's thesis? During an eight-year period while researching and writing his book, Stewart conducted over one hundred personal interviews. These were with individuals who were intimately involved with or participated in the Canadian music business of the time. Some of these included Bobby Dean Blackburn, Ray Hutchison, Dave

Marsden, Red Robinson, Ronnie Hawkins, Duff Roman, Doug Chappell, Buddy Burke, and others (see Notes at the end of Stewart's book for the entire list). They all provided intimate and insightful knowledge of their contributions to Canadian rock and roll. Third question answered. Now it was time to read the book.



The central thrust of this publication focuses on what Greig Stewart believes to be a critical window in the evolution of pop music in Canada. A twelve-year period, from 1951 when the term rock and roll was coined, to 1963 when a Toronto band, Ritchie Knight and the Mid-Knights song "Charlena" became #1 hit on the CHUM Chart. He believes that this constitutes a seminal time in the development of rock and roll in Canada. The author moves chronologically from the 1950s through to 1963, to document a fascinating, yet not well-known story. This time-travel provides a glimpse at how rock and roll invaded Canada from the United States, developed a home-grown component, and set the stage for the British Invasion of the 1960s.

Bobby Dean Blackburn's Forward presents a brief reflection from a pioneer of the Canadian rock and roll music scene. The author's Introduction, provides a helpful, succinct overview of the fifteen chapters and 338 pages of text which follow.

The ensuing story starts when Black music from the southern U.S. states began moving north, and was embraced and adopted by many white teens. Radio stations facilitated this change, and the number of these outlets grew rapidly, influencing many listeners. The impact of disc jockeys, with the rise of personalities such as Alan Freed, "Hound Dog" Lorenz, Dick Biondi and Dick Clark, and other flamboyant characters in various U.S. cities. A young Red Robinson was one of the few DJs in Canada of the period who joined this wave. They all helped to bring rock and roll to the eager ears of Canadian teens. These men had a certain amount of power and influence behind their microphones, and music that they played became a strong link between teens and DJs. The rise of television was thought to be a threat to radio, but such did not happen. After a dip in popularity, rock and roll provided a transfusion to radio in maintaining its popularity.

Payola was a term coined by Variety Magazine in 1938. It was a scheme connected to gifts, favours, or cash given by record companies to DJs, in return for playing their music. This had a critical effect on what records were played. In 1950, Billboard Magazine reported that payola to disc jockeys had hit an all-time peak. The introduction of the Top 40 format by Todd Storz, greatly reduced this impact, as DJs were limited to play mostly songs listed on the Billboard chart. Payola had a huge impact in the USA, but because the Canadian record market was so small, a minimal one here.

By the mid 1950s, white, teenage, middle class boys "became a nascent market for black influenced rock and roll." Many owned or had the use of cars with radios, and local hangouts with jukeboxes brought more rock and roll to these teenagers. By 1955, 45-rpm records had mostly replaced

78s, and jukeboxes played more than fifty million records by then. Portable, transistor radios became accessible and popular by 1960, when more than nine million kids had one. This resulted in music becoming "the heartbeat of the new youth culture," and rock and roll was dependent upon this culture.

In Toronto by the spring of 1955, cars packed with teenagers began to congregate at locations around the city where American night-time radio shows could be clearly received. George Lorenz at WKBW in Buffalo became one of the favourites. In Canada, Buddy Burke formed a band called the Canadian Meteors in 1957. They played venues in and out of Toronto. Burke wrote and recorded songs for "Hound Dog" Lorenz, and released his first record in November of that year. It hit the top 40 on CHUM, and was also promoted and played by rival radio station CKEY. Quite an accomplishment for a Canadian written and performed rock and roll song!

Another important influence in the late 1950s were live rock and roll shows. Alan Freed and George Lorenz worked with Canadian booking agents to set up these travelling concerts, and hosted the events. They were wildly popular and featured up and coming and bona fide rock artists who were packaged together into one giant show. One was held at the Kitchener Auditorium in October 1958. It featured Buddy Holly and the Crickets, Frankie Avalon, Bobby Darin, the Coasters, Dion and the Belmonts, Clyde McPhatter, Jack Scott, Little Anthony and the Imperials, and six other well-known American rock and roll artists of the time. Some smaller concerts were also notable. In 1954, Frank Motley and His Motley Crew travelled from the southern United States to perform concerts in Toronto. They were one of the first all Black groups to do so.

An important home-grown influence was Harold Kudlets, a booking agent from Hamilton. In 1957 he booked Conway Twitty to perform there, and also promoted other southern U.S. acts who played in Hamilton and in a circuit of venues in southern Ontario. In the spring of 1958, he brought in Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks (including drummer Levon Helm). They played clubs in Hamilton, London and Toronto. Hawkins would never return to the States, and would for many years perform throughout Canada. To this day he still lives in Ontario.

In the following chapters, other interesting and informative details are provided about the music scene of the period in Vancouver, and Toronto. What is also given are details and insight about the evolution of Bobby Dean and the Gems, Elvis Presley's wildly successful concerts in Canada, the important role of Little Caesar and the Consuls in the Canadian evolution, the Great Radio war in Toronto, 1963 (a critical year for Canadian pop music), and the story of Charlena, and Richie Knight and the Mid-Knights. A brief Epilogue ends this fascinating history.

What Greig Stewart presents is a well researched and written book. While in part a microcosm of events and influences coming from the United States, it is also a story which has separate and unique Canadian components. It is a title which is not only timely in its release, but a pleasure to read. If you are interested in the history of Canadian popular music, it is one that should be added to your library.

Dr. John C. Carter
Historian and author, who in the mid-1960s was a member of the Kitchener-Waterloo based rock bands, the Primitives and the Lost Generation. He can be reached at drjohncarter@bell.net.