



FOR FANS OF DU-WOP

By David I. Grunfeld

Admittedly dating myself, my favorite music genre is Du-Wop, or doo-wop. Despite alternate spellings, and arguments over origin, I think it is still the best listening music.

Maybe it's nostalgia for a youthful period, but I could listen to compilation albums, or "oldies" stations, or SiriusXM's 50s and 60s stations, all the time. There are still concerts (pre-virus) in the area periodically, mostly at the Keswick, with men and women in their 70s and 80s shuffling on stage, but, once they start singing, it sounds exactly like on the original records. There are also "tribute" bands playing at various venues. Anyone remember Sha-Na-Na?

The heyday could be said to begin in the mid-1950s, with a

peak in 1959, and starting to fade out in the early to mid-1960s. What ended it—the California sound, Motown, the British Invasion, and Elvis.

What is du-wop? I think it can be fairly characterized as follows:

group harmony, with a lead singer, and two, three, or four back-up singers, one of which is usually a tenor occasionally singing falsetto, and one of which is probably a bass

simple melodies and intelligible words, frequently, one critic has said, about love and loneliness

use of nonsense syllables, even in the song title

light instrumentation, sometimes none (a capella)

There were groups that "covered" songs of others, and groups that were "one-hit wonders." There was competition between cities, and within cities. There were teenage groups, and groups who started as serious gospel or rhythm and blues singers. There were boy groups, girl groups, and racially integrated groups. There

were new songs, and old classics turned into rock ‘n’ roll.

At great risk, I list hereafter my top 20 most memorable songs, in chronological order—not necessarily the best, or most famous, but ones I adore. Let me know what you think!

“Sunday Kind of Love,” The Harptones, 1953

“Sh-Boom,” The Chords, 1954

“In the Still of the Night,” The Five Satins, 1956

“Why Do Fools Fall in Love,” Frankie Lymon and The Teenagers, 1956

“Could This Be Magic,” The Dubs, 1957

“Get a Job,” The Silhouettes, 1957

“Come And Go With Me,” The Del-Vikings, 1957

“At the Hop,” Danny & The Juniors, 1957

“Little Star,” The Elegants, 1958

“Lovers Never Say Goodbye,” The Flamingos, 1958

“Sixteen Candles,” The Crests, 1958

“One Summer Night,” The Danleers, 1958

“Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” The Platters, 1958

“Since I Don’t Have You,” The Skyliners, 1959

“There Goes My Baby,” The Drifters, 1959

“A Teenager in Love,” Dion & the Belmonts, 1959

“Will You Love Me Tomorrow,” the Shirelles, 1960

“Blue Moon,” The Marcels, 1961

“The Lion Sleeps Tonight,” The Tokens, 1961

“You Belong to Me,” The Duprees, 1962

Honorable Mention:

“Looking for an Echo,” Kenny Vance, 1975 ■

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