

Cleveland stages bash in bid to lure rock hall

By Jim Sweeney
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It was only rock 'n' roll, but they liked it.

Cleveland rocked all over the town yesterday at a plethora of parties. Punks and yuppies shared the same dance floors and politicians showed they are really rock 'n' roll fans at heart.

The purpose of the parties was to convince members of the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame and Museum Foundation to locate its facility in Cleveland, instead of Chicago, Philadelphia or New York.

The 34th anniversary of the first rock concert at the old Cleveland Arena was celebrated at clubs throughout Greater Cleveland with appearances by rock legends Chuck Berry and Chubby Checker, rock 'n' roll ice cream and music, music, music.

It began at a noon rally on Public Square where a host of politicians set the tone for the day.

Taking the stage while a local band, Wild Horses, cranked out "Louie, Louie," Gov. Richard F. Celeste did a modified shuffle before grabbing U.S. Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (D-20) of Cleveland for an impromptu dance.

Not to be outdone, state Sen. Lee I. Fisher (D-25) of Shaker Heights boogied with Claire Rosacco, press secretary to Mayor George V. Voinovich.

Politicians and officials from the Greater Cleveland Growth Association took turns exhorting the crowd of about 700.

Celeste told the crowd that the late Alan Freed, the Cleveland disc jockey credited with coining the

term "rock 'n' roll" and holding the first rock concert, was "with us in spirit."

"The fact of the matter is we still provide the best rock 'n' roll fans anywhere on the face of the planet," Celeste said.

Oakar and Fisher presented commemorative resolutions from Congress and the Ohio General Assembly. A plaque honoring Freed and the birth of rock was unveiled. It will be placed at the former studios of WJW where Freed worked.

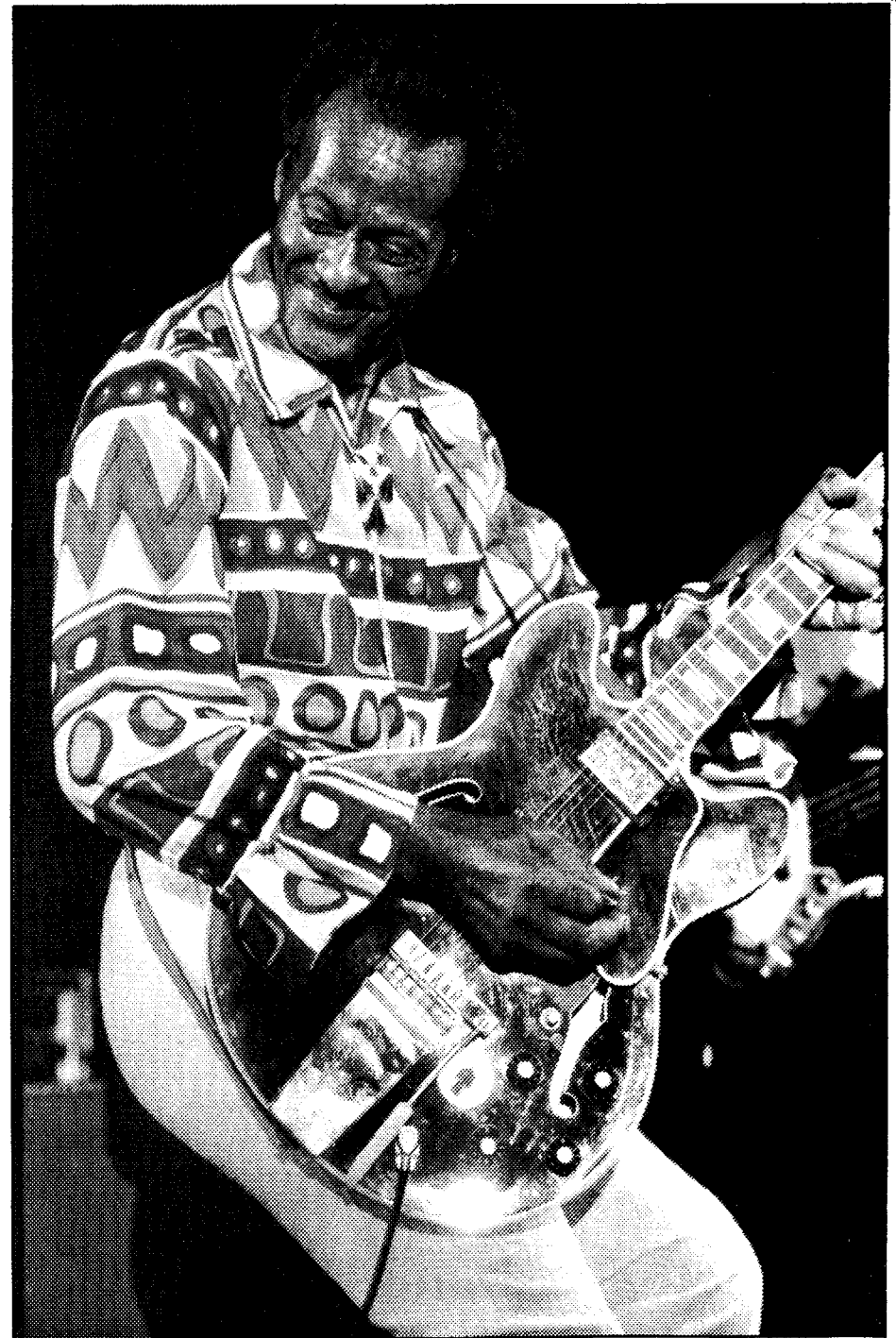
A sock hop was thrown last night at the Palace Theater. Underneath a prop high school gymnasium backboard, people danced to "Run-around Sue" and "Twist and Shout" and gyrated in a twist contest supervised by the inventor of the dance, Chubby Checker.

Cynthia Botker of Concord Township brought her 19-year-old daughter, Venetia, to the Palace to give her a taste of old time rock.

For Botker, it was a chance to relive the past. In the '50s, she danced on the local television show, "Dance Fair," a precursor to "American Bandstand." She remembers meeting singer and actor Eddie Fisher and being thrown off the stage at a Johnny Ray concert.

At last night's "Moondog Coronation Ball II" at Tower City, the shoulder-to-shoulder crowd of 3,500 went wild when Hall of Famer Chuck Berry duckwalked across the stage. His set included "Sweet Little Sixteen" and "No Particular Place to Go."

It remains to be seen whether the celebration turns out to be anything other than a good time. The rock hall decision is expected in mid-April.



Chuck Crow/News-Herald

Hall of Fame rocker Chuck Berry entertained a sold-out crowd of 3,500 last night at Tower City in Cleveland as part of the city's festivities to try to lure the rock 'n' roll hall of fame to locate there.