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## HOME VIDEO

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# The D.J. Apostles Of Rock 'n' Roll

Documentaries often make the better shows on video. On March 23, for example, Winstar is to release "Rock 'n' Roll Invaders," a Canadian film that goes past the performers to get at the AM radio disk jockeys who brought the music to the people in the 50's.

Produced by Dramarama, a Toronto company, the documentary took its director, Paul Eichgrun, around the United States on a three-year search for material about a little band of visionaries who sensed an impending revolution and spun every record they could get their hands on.

Postwar America was nervous about race and its increasingly restless teen-agers. "Kids were becoming an economic power, buying their own cars and clothes and records," Mr. Eichgrun said. "It was a shock."

But race was the sore point. The documentary is especially good at showing how disk jockeys helped move the music that became rock 'n' roll from black to white in the middle and latter part of the decade.

Several years earlier radio itself



Dramarama

Bill (Hoss) Allen, a disk jockey at WLAC, a Nashville radio station, when black rhythm-and-blues met white rockabilly during the 1950's.

had been revitalized by black rhythm-and-blues, spread far and wide by the likes of Rufus Thomas and Martha Jean (The Queen) Steinberg, black disk jockeys on WDAI in Memphis (later she went to Detroit). Soon rhythm-and-blues met white rockabilly, introducing white disk jockeys like Dewey Phillips, the man with Beale Street connections, John R. (John Richbourg) and Bill (Hoss) Allen of WLAC in Nashville.

The music worked its way north, and in places like the Record Ren-

dezvous in Cleveland, white teenagers combed "sepia bins" for the hot, sweaty, boozy workingman's rhythm-and-blues. At Alan Freed's Moondog Ball, the first rock concert, a crowd of 26,000 tried to occupy 6,000 seats and there was a riot.

The rambunctious Freed ruled the scene, and the white mainstream was getting anxious. Rhythm-and-blues was about to become a white creation. "They bleached it and changed the name," Mr. Eichgrun said. Now it was rock 'n' roll and

headed for the coasts.

There was trouble. Freed was on WINS in New York and promoting concerts around the East. "Kids, it looks like the Boston police don't want you to have fun," he told a packed crowd in Boston Arena. That got him indicted for inciting a riot and cost him his job at WINS. ABC television hired him, but he lost that job, too, when the black singer Frankie Lyman danced with a white girl. The show was instantly canceled.

Middle America wasn't amused when Jerry Lee Lewis married his 13-year-old second cousin. The payola scandals, with many leading disk jockeys caught taking money to play records, were no help either. "Booze, Broads, Bribes," shouted a headline about a riotous disk jockey convention in Miami. Station management introduced the Top 40, which were played over and over.

Disk jockeys responded by becoming performers in their own right. At the Apollo Theater in New York, Jocko Henderson gave songs rhymed introductions that were the forerunners of rap. In Mexico, Wolfman Jack ruled border radio, the one-million-watt stations heard all over the country and beyond. "The Russians had to spend time blocking out the Wolfman," Mr. Eichgrun said.