



MIAMI TEEN-AGERS IN ROCK 'N ROLL FEST AT DADE COUNTY AUDITORIUM  
... bawling beat of dance fad has a muddled origin

**Rock and Roll—IV**

***New Music 'Too Bad to Continue  
Indefinitely,' Says Disc Executive***

## **Last of four articles on rock 'n' roll.**

**By PHYLLIS BATTELLE**

**By International News Service**

"Rock 'n' roll" — the tortuous rhythm that makes derbies of teen-agers and despondents of their parents—has a most muddled origin.

Some musicians say, frankly, that it is a poor white trash version of a music form called "rhythm and blues."

Others call it an off-shoot of western hillbilly.

"It is only logical to assume," said one classicist, "that it rolled out from under a rock."

Wherever it came from, its bawling, squalling beat has taken over the lion's share of most afternoon, and many evening, radio disk jockey shows.

• Of popular records sold, rock-roll is featured in about 65 per cent.

Disk jockeys who three years ago refused to play it, because they considered the passionate rhythm a bad influence on youngsters, have now been forced to take it up.

In Atlanta, one reported: "The people let you know what they want to hear and if you don't play it, you're out. Oh, we can 'push' certain types of music and help record sales along a bit. But we cannot censor music just because we don't like it.

"The public picks its meat. We've got to serve it."

It boils down to this, then: The teen-age citizens of America, like their parents before them, want their own peculiar music to dance to and talk about.

If the rock 'n' roll beat is a bigger fad today than "The Big Apple" was in their parents' day, it's because these teen-agers have more money to spend for records and dancing.

Mitch Miller, one of the canniest musicians in the recording industry, claims it's a direct off-shoot of the Southland "rhythm and blues" music.

"It's been going on for 50 years — maybe a hundred. Started down south. The kids who liked it down there used to call them 'cat songs.'"

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## **Named by a DJ**

**MILLER INSISTS** that when white musicians began to pick

up the beat (a syncopated rhythm, in which the second and fourth beats are heavily stomped out) it took on a "ridiculous frenzy."

The words "rock and roll" have for decades appeared in Negro blues songs, and when white artists picked up the rhythm, it began to be referred to, in the record industry, as rock and roll stuff.

Then Allen Freed (a disk jockey from Ohio who came to New York several years ago) started a local show and titled it "rock 'n' roll." Its success was instantaneous and overwhelming.

The kids had found their beat. And it was unofficially christened.

John McClellan of station WHDH, Boston, calls RR a "cheap imitation of the blues."

In Denver, they prefer to think the hillbilly influence is the strongest influence in the new craze. Ray Perkins, a popular local disk jockey, calls it "Rockbilly."

Whatever its uncertain heritage, it's making a lot of people a bundle of money. As a recording-company director told the Music Educators National Conference in St. Louis recently, it's like this:

"It will make tons of money for many people, and will last long enough to be a long-remembered fad in popular mu-



**NAT KING COLE**

... refuses to 'rock'

sic. But it hasn't the substance to remain in the mainstream of jazz.

"Perhaps the most hopeful thing about rock 'n' roll is that it's so bad. It cannot endure indefinitely."

The music (?) has been banned in many cities in the United States because of riots which occurred during RR dance sessions.

In Alabama, a pro-segregation group put pickets outside a hall where a rock and roll revue was in progress — but minutes later there appeared another set of pickets with hastily-painted signs picketing the pickets.

Religious leaders in Boston have long urged censorship of RR, after a series of "incidents" in which high school and college students were injured by their companions who had worked up to what was referred to as "frenzy pitch" after an evening of dancing.

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## *Disc Firms Blamed*

JUDGE John J. Connolly, head of Boston's juvenile court, says "the climb in immorality among youngsters is shocking. Innocent girls get into trouble when they go unsupervised to record hops. Older boys, excited wise guys, sell them a bill of goods, and what happens is shameful."

There are, all over the country, adults who are seriously troubled by this strange, "hypnotic" fad. Others pooh-pooh its dangers and take the attitude that it is only normalcy for children in the 12-to-19-year age bracket to let off steam and kick up their heels.

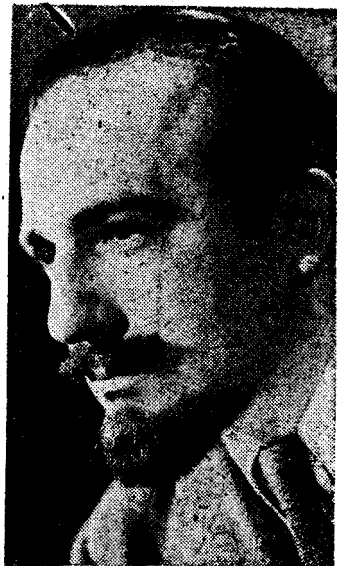
Nat "King" Cole, the mellow-voiced singer who has managed to retain popularity with the

kids though steadfastly refusing to "rock," laments the trend. But he does not consider it a spur to juvenile delinquency.

He blames record companies and song publishers for, continuation of a "dull, unmelodic" fad.

"Publishers and record companies don't encourage embryo Gershwins and Cole Porters to write melodic tunes . . ." Cole says. "The teenagers have taken over the popular record business. They're on the threshold of adulthood. They're showing off, and there's a note of defiance in them occasionally."

The only lamentable part of



## MITCH MILLER

. . . *'offshoot from South'*

it is that "in a few years, they'll look back hungrily at a growing-up period almost devoid of melody because the song publishers are mistaking youthful enthusiasm for musical taste."