

**LIFE**

SPECIAL ISSUE

**U.S. ENTERTAINMENT**



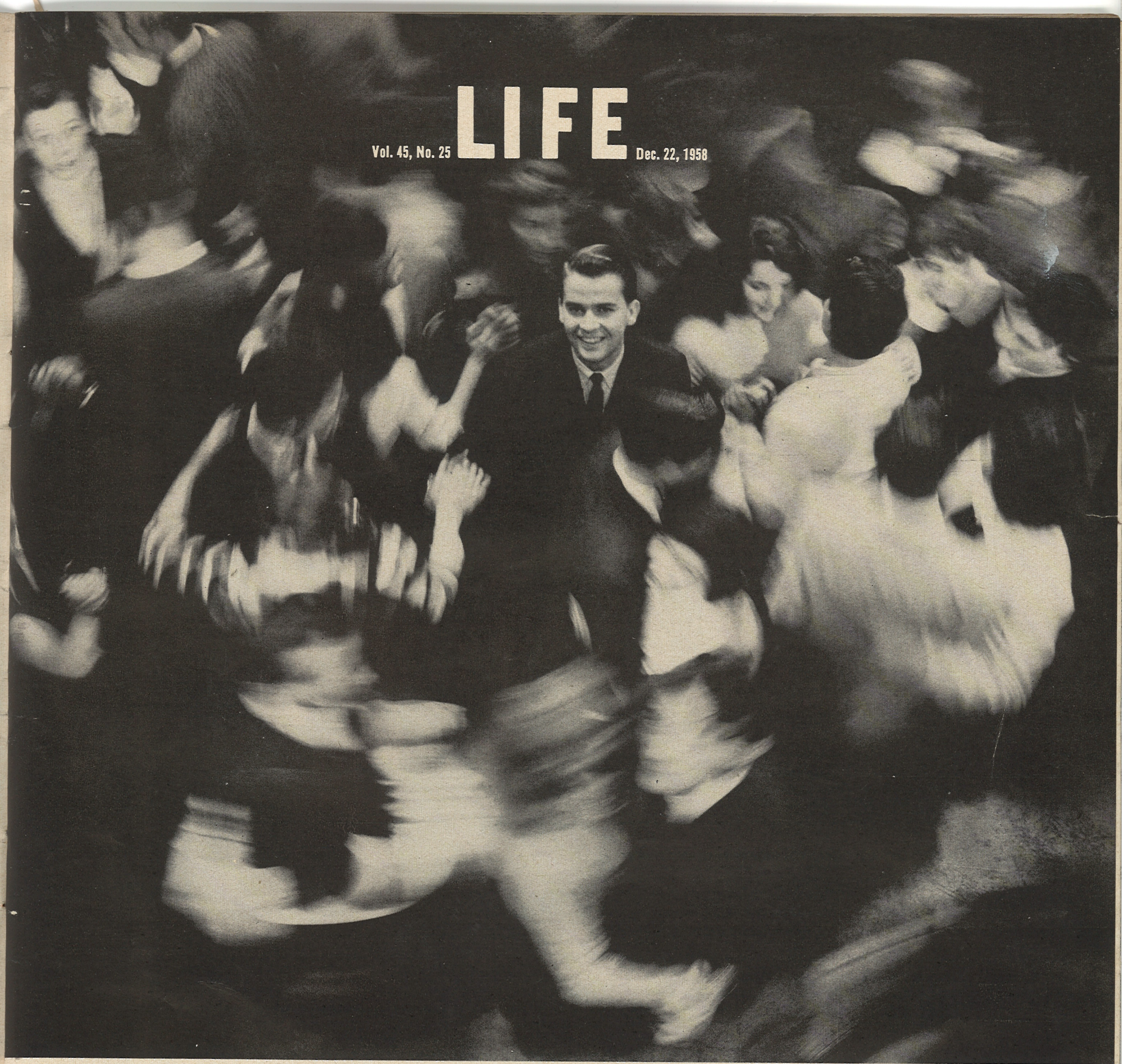
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**SPECIAL TWO-IN-ONE HOLIDAY ISSUE**

**35 CENTS**





MOST INFLUENTIAL MAN IN ROCK 'N' ROLL, TV'S DICK CLARK, SMILES HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR-A-YEAR SMILE AT LOYAL FANS SWIRLING BY HIM AT STUDIO DANCE

## NEWEST MUSIC FOR A NEW GENERATION

# ROCK 'N' ROLL ROLLS ON 'N' ON

The biggest new act going on in entertainment's age-old program is a vigorous, naive manifestation called rock 'n' roll which has created a new, sharply defined audience. It consists mainly of youngsters in their early teens. They have their own idols. The music is theirs and theirs alone—most adults don't dig it. Yet rock 'n' roll accounts for a quarter of the \$500 million the U.S. spends annually for records, and is mainly responsible for the jobs of 3,500 disk jockeys currently at work in U.S. TV and radio. The most powerful of these is Dick Clark (*above*).

Basically, rock 'n' roll—which has little musical eloquence—is a singer's highly personal way of shouting or moaning lyrics ("The Big

Sound"), mostly to a slow, heavily accentuated four-four time ("The Big Beat"), accompanied by guitar or hoarse-honked tenor saxophone. It is eight years old but only in the past two or three years has it proven that it is more than a flash in the piano. It has, of course, been deplored, especially since its most numerous fans are girls aged 8 to 16, whose squealing, shrieking response (*p. 42*) to their idols' music sometimes turns into hysteria. As they grow older and become more mature and influential, the rock 'n' rollers may turn away from rock 'n' roll, at least in its more violent forms. But rock 'n' roll will leave its imprint on their musical tastes, and just as surely, on American popular music.



# THE DICTATOR AT HOME AND KING AWAY AT WAR

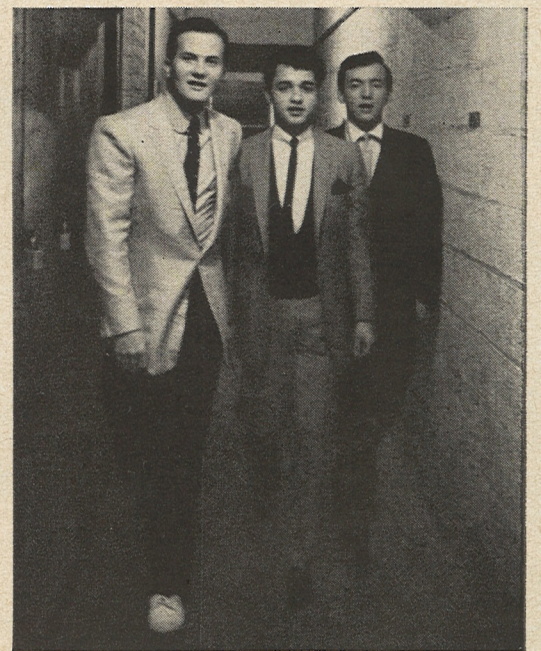


**EXULTANT IMPRESARIO** Dick Clark bursts with joy when he sees the celebrated pop singer guests

(picture at right) who appeared as a surprise on his televised birthday party in New York. He was 29.

Rock 'n' roll is making fortunes for performers like Elvis Presley (*opposite*), who has sold more than 30 million "single" records, and for disk jockeys like Dick Clark whose home base is Philadelphia. Clark's five-times-a-week TV show, on which teen-agers dance to records, is an institution based on his defense of teen-age behavior and taste in music. The loyalty of rock 'n' roll performers, who make sure to show up at Clark's shows, is based largely on the fact that he can make almost any record.

The rock 'n' roll record business is crazy. Anyone—*anyone*—can record and press 5,000 records for \$1,200. So there now are more than 1,500 little pop record companies who press almost any song or sound that comes along and hope the lightning will strike. It rarely does. Said a disgruntled recording executive, "Anyone who thinks he can pick what the kids'll want next, his orientation is in Cloudsville."



**SURPRISE GUESTS** at the Clark party sneak into studio: Pat Boone, Sal Mineo and Bobby Darin.



**LINEUP OF NOTABLES** at Clark party includes (starting at second left) Darin, Frankie Avalon, Boone (behind him), Mineo (front of Avalon). Clark (at mike)

is behind piano with members of Danny and the Juniors. Behind, at far right, are Little Anthony and the Imperials. Second from right is Connie Francis.

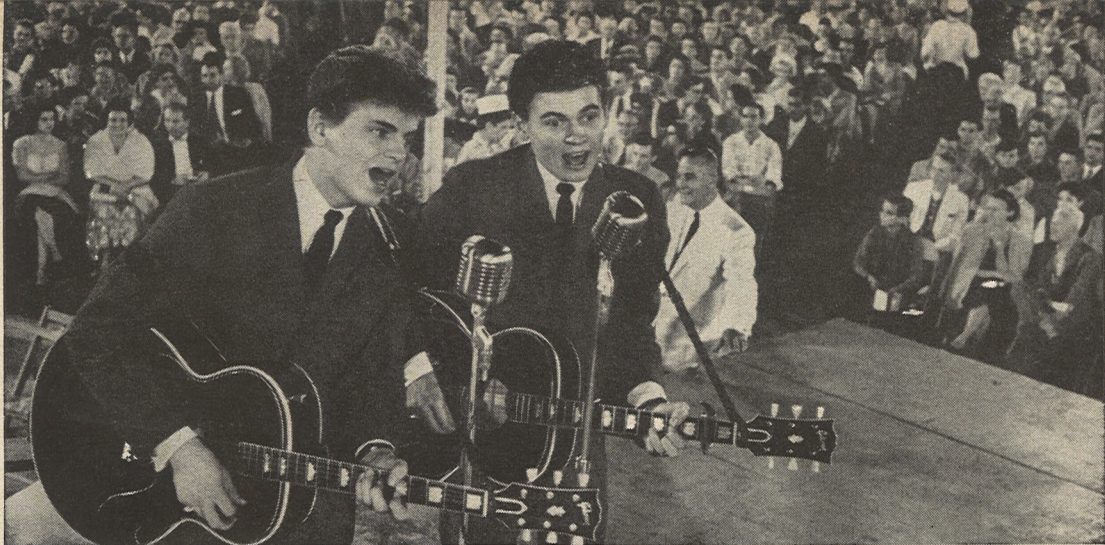




**THE ABSENT KING** of rock 'n' roll, Elvis Presley, sings to a sergeant in Germany where Elvis is a Jeep driver. He just learned he had become private first

class, and though he has made 19 records that sold a million copies or more each, he was pleased by the \$13.57 raise. It means he is making good as a soldier.





"BIRD DOG," a big hit, is belted out in a Tampa ball park for an audience of 15,000 by the Everly

Brothers. The Everlys sing rockabilly, which is a combination of rock 'n' roll and hillbilly music.

## THE IDOLS AND THE AMBITIOUS



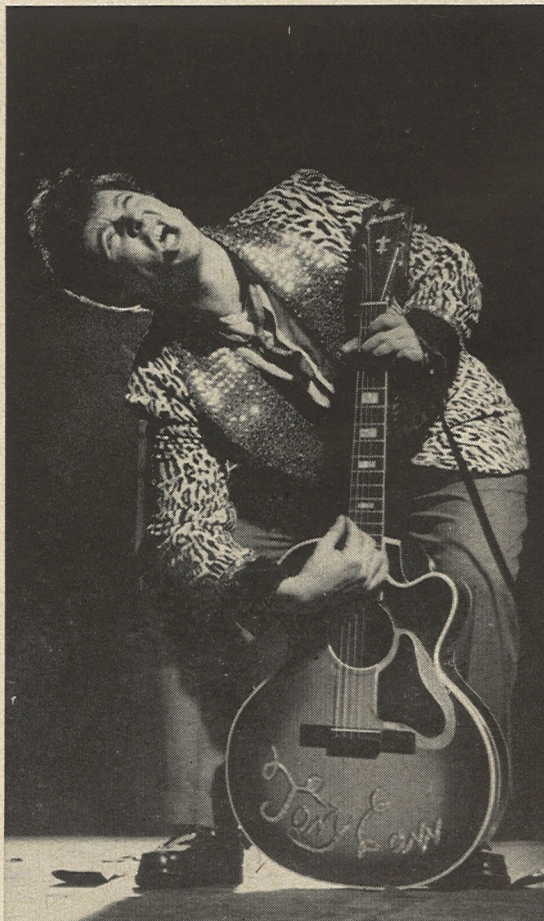
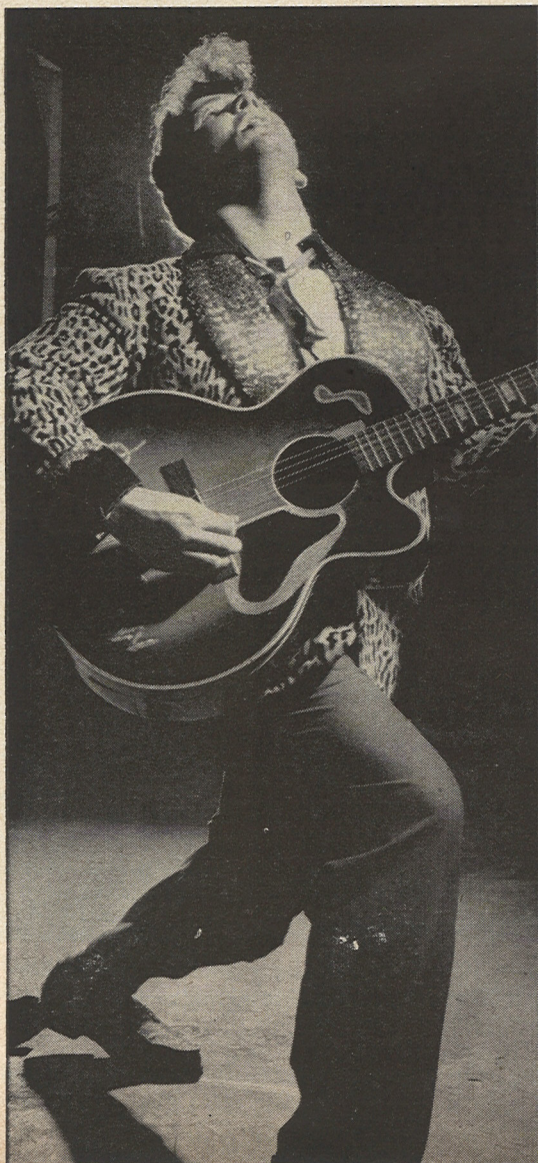
"LONESOME TOWN" is rendered by Ricky Nelson (LIFE, Dec. 1) before a teen audience in Wichita.

The big men of rock 'n' roll are well-paid and well-entrenched. Most of them—like the ones shown across the top of these pages—can sing proficiently and pleasingly.

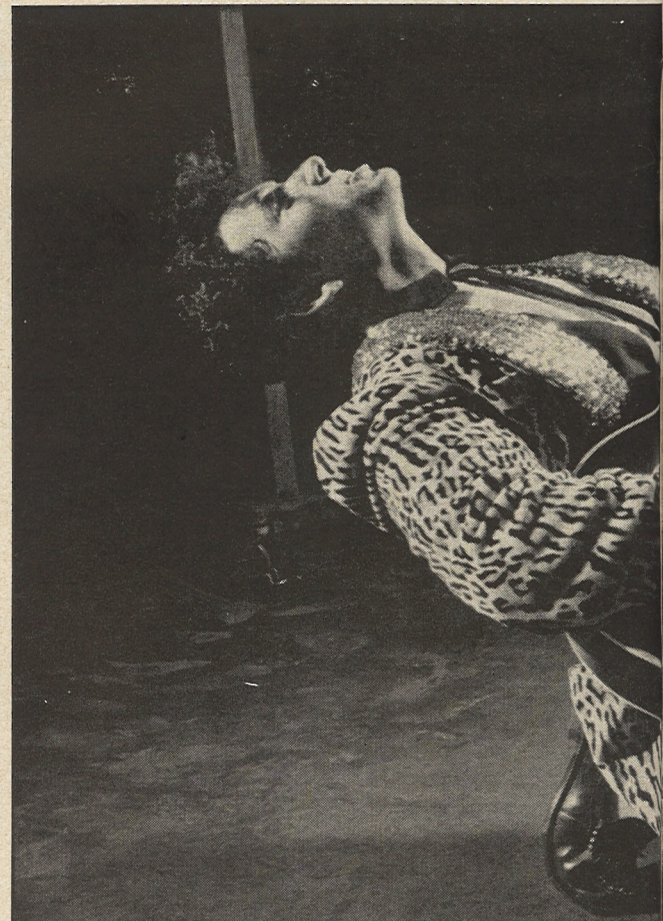
But the lesser rock 'n' roll artist has come to depend greatly on "props"—well-arranged hair, trademark costume, distinctive gestures or gyrations and sly eye-rolls. These are important because his voice is often inaudible above the audience's interruptive shrieks. So he quickly acquires props. Thus, Tony Conn, 23, whose first record will be released this month by Decca, took hours of patient instruction from his tutor-managers. He selected as his costume a leopard-skin jacket with sequined lapels and orange pants. He also devoted weeks to his musical education (*below*) which includes daily workouts in a gymnasium where he practices his splits and bends. "He had a tendency to be over-wild," say his managers. "We've toned him down."



## LEARNING HOW TO BE \_\_\_\_\_ GOING



"LIKE WOW," a forthcoming record, begins with Tony Conn, an aspiring rock 'n' roll singer, tilting



his head back and growling a high note (*left*). Next he sags emotionally floorward. Then (*above*) comes

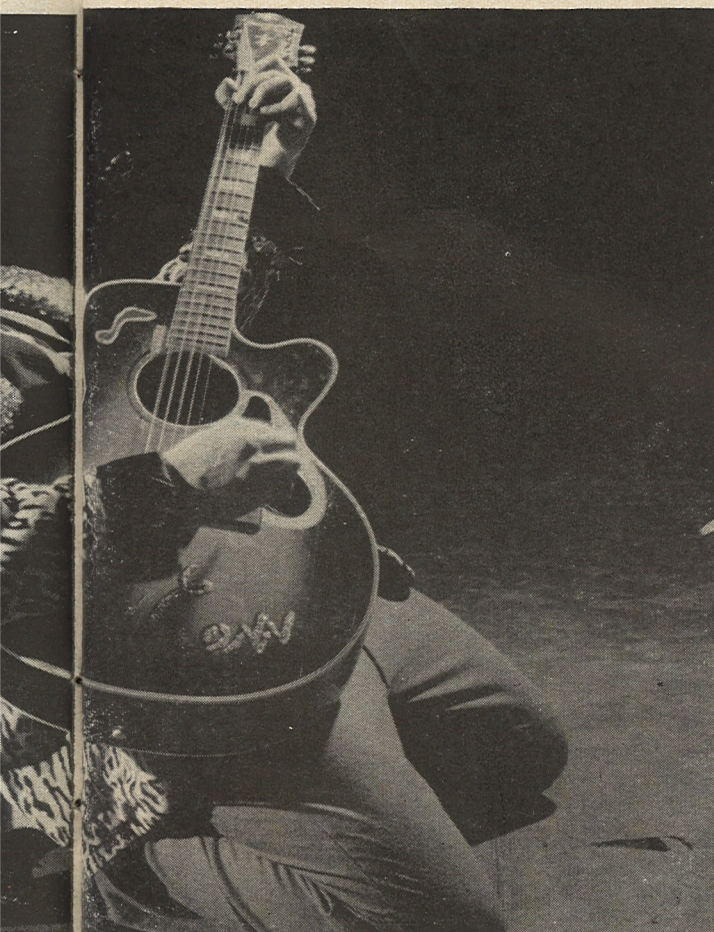




"SLEIGHRIDE" requires a snow effect as Johnny Mathis sings it at a televised record hop in Boston.

← "BIMBOMBAY" is sung personally to starry-eyed Barbara Prince, 12, by 25-year-old Jimmie Rodgers.

## GOING GONE



an expressive knee bend and a deep back bend, without the artist missing a beat or a growl. Finally,



when he gets into the song's climax he rolls over and embraces guitar. He also does shoulder dips, air

jumps and arm stretches, can sing and play completely supine. His managers now feel he's ready.



# SCREAMS AND SIGHS AT THE BIG BEAT'S BECK

It is hard to say what causes the rock 'n' roll rapture shown on these pages. Part of it comes from the carefully calculated antics of the performer, since a glance from a singer will bring indescribable joy to the girl at whom it is directed. But most of it, of course, comes from the music itself, even though the melody is monotonous and the lyrics are repetitive and frequently vulgar ("leer-ics"). But at some point, the susceptible fans hear something which triggers their emotions and sets off

a gale of screams and moans that suggest ancient Rome's Colosseum on a day when the Romans felt particularly bloodthirsty.

That something, whatever it may be, is recognizable to its audience, even though they cannot define it. They just *feel* it. One thing is sure: it cannot be imitated by a non-rock'n'roller. Song-writing veteran Hoagy Carmichael was talking about it recently. "I couldn't write rock 'n' roll if I tried," said he. "The kids would detect it as imitative right away."



**USHER DISAPPROVAL** of rock 'n' roll fans is general—as here in the Brooklyn Paramount theater.

In foreground center of this group of girls is Helen Woloch, 16, also seen in pictures at right and below.



**TEEN ECSTASY** is registered by Helen Woloch as she listens to her newest idol, Jimmy Clanton, sing.



**LIFETIME MEMORY** is acquired by Helen. After standing long in the inclement night (she had arrived at the theater that morning at 5, equipped with a day's

supply of bologna), she penetrated to the dressing rooms. There her rain-wet hair was actually touched by Singer Frankie Avalon. Helen could hardly bear it.



