



EDDIE COCHRAN

Born October 3rd, 1938
 Albert Lea, Minnesota
Died April 17th, 1960
 London, England



THE SUPREMES



It was in June of 1957 that the fourteen-year-old Paul McCartney first met the sixteen-year-old John Lennon, at a suburban-Liverpool church picnic where Lennon's Quarrymen were playing. Between sets, McCartney taught Lennon how to play Eddie Cochran's "Twenty Flight Rock." In 1981, the Rolling Stones chose the same song as one of the few covers they performed during the course of their American tour, and it was among the leanest and liveliest numbers in their set. Cochran was always highly regarded by British rockers, as he was by British teens in general. He was especially revered by the more recalcitrant bands: the Who tore into his "Summertime Blues," emboldening its don't-treat-us-like-kids message with stinging guitar riffs, and the Sex Pistols transformed "Somethin' Else" into a careening punk romp.

Cochran was only twenty-one when he died of injuries sustained in a car crash in England. With him at the time were fellow American rocker Gene Vincent, who suffered permanent leg injuries, and Cochran's girlfriend, songwriter Sharon Sheeley, with whom he had written "Somethin' Else." His death, at the edge of adulthood and at the momentous turn of the decade, left him a permanent symbol of the late-Fifties rebel rocker, part Elvis Presley, part James Dean, untouched by time or changing fashion. Though countless hopefuls had the same look and a similar rockabilly-influenced sound, Cochran played his role with a unique exuberance. He was the guitar-crazy guy always ready to do whatever it took to get what he wanted. His message wasn't "Youth must be served" but "Youth, serve yourself!"

Cochran was born in Minnesota, was brought up in Oklahoma and finally moved with his family to Southern California. It was there that he began his career, in 1954, cutting straight-ahead rockabilly sides with a singer-guitarist friend named Hank Cochran; the Cochran Brothers, as they naturally called themselves, recorded for the Ekko label. After Eddie met writer-producer Jerry Capehart, who managed and collaborated with him for the rest of his career, he cut his first solo effort, "Skinny Jim," for the Crest label. In 1956, he was signed to Liberty Records, where he perfected his hitmaking approach: the sound of dueling acoustic and electric guitars, egged on by steady hand claps and jangling tambourines. During the summer of 1958, Cochran captured the mood and imagination of America's school kids on the loose with his biggest stateside single, "Summertime Blues."

Cochran's performance of "Twenty Flight Rock" was immortalized on film in the cult-classic rock-exploitation musical *The Girl Can't Help It*, which also featured Little Richard, Gene Vincent and Fats Domino, not to mention Jayne Mansfield. He then appeared, along with Richie Valens, Chuck Berry and Jackie Wilson, in the plot-be-damned, nonstop rock and roller *Go Johnny Go!*, doing "C'mon Everybody." Cochran even took a stab at dramatic acting in a *Mamie Van Doren* potboiler called *Untamed Youth*, squeezing in a song, "Cotton Picker," for good measure.

Eddie Cochran released only one album, *Singin' to My Baby*, during his lifetime, although several collections were released posthumously. His single at the time of his death: "Three Steps to Heaven."