**Dance of the Decades**

**1950-1959**

The end of World War II brought thousands of young servicemen back to America to pick up their lives and start new families in new homes with new jobs. With an energy never before experienced, American industry expanded to meet peacetime needs. Americans began buying goods not available during the war, which created corporate expansion and jobs.  The baby boom was underway... Fashion successes were Bill Blass and his [blue jeans](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/history/material_culture/cynth/index.html), [poodle skirts](http://www.fiftiesweb.com/fashion/fashion-ws.htm) made of felt and decorated with sequins and poodle appliques, pony tails for girls, and flat tops and crew cuts for guys.  [Saddle shoes](http://www.fiftiesweb.com/fashion/saddle-shoe.htm) and blue suede loafers were popular. Activities they liked were watching and dancing to Dick Clark's [American Bandstand](http://www.fiftiesweb.com/bandstnd.htm) .  American Bandstand aired its first national show in 1957. The first singer to perform on the show was Jerry Lee Lewis, singing "Whole Lotta Shakin Goin' on". Dancing was a major feature of Bandstand. The kids who showed up everyday knew all the most popular steps: the Slop, the Handjive, the Bop, & the Stroll. It was a different kind of dancing from before because the style was mingling rather than coupling. When the 1950's are mentioned, the first type of music to come to most people's minds is [rock 'n roll.](http://www.rockhall.com/home/default.asp)Developed from a blend of Southern blues and gospel music with an added strong back beat, this type of music was popular with teenagers who were trying to break out of the mainstream conservative American middle class mold.  Popular artists such as [Bill Haley](http://www.history-of-rock.com/haley.htm), [Elvis Presley](http://www.fiftiesweb.com/elvis.htm), and [Jerry Lee Lewis](http://www.rockhall.com/hof/inductee.asp?id=144) were promoted on radio by just as popular disc-jockeys (DJ's) like [Alan Freed](http://www.radiohof.org/discjockey/alanfreed.html) and [the Big Bopper](http://www.tsimon.com/bopper.htm).  The [deaths](http://www.fiftiesweb.com/crash.htm) of Lubbock singer [Buddy Holly](http://www.buddyhollycenter.org/index2.html), [Ritchie Valens](http://www.rockhall.com/hof/inductee.asp?id=1145) and the Big Bopper is still lamented by fans.  The [influence of these early rockers](http://www2.worldbook.com/features/aamusic/html/rock.htm) has been felt in popular music worldwide. Elvis was the king of rock and roll. His pelvis movements caused much controversy that he was only shown from the waist up on television. During the 1950's, television became the dominant [mass media](http://www.mediahistory.umn.edu/teevee.html) as people brought [television into their homes](http://www.high-techproductions.com/historyoftelevision.htm) in greater numbers of hours per week than ever before.  In the early fifties, young people watched TV more hours than they went to school, a trend which has not changed greatly since that time.