



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**PETER COOPER** Welcome to Voices in the Hall. Presented by the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. I'm Peter Cooper. Today, we've got guitar man Duane Eddy.

**DUANE EDDY** I saw something over against the wall. I said, "What's that, Dad?" He says, "It's a guitar." And I said, "Oh, what's it do?" He says, "Well..." He walked over and he played a couple three chords and said, "I used this to court your mother."

One day the guitar player wasn't there, the other one. And he did all the guitar solos, and so I, he gave me a solo. And I realized that the high strings weren't as strong as the bass strings. You know, they really romped through there. So I just played along with the radio and learned to play that way.

All the players are signed to somebody, but I wasn't because I was just a side man in a country band. So he said go home and write something. So I went home and wrote "Movin' 'N' Groovin'."

**PETER COOPER** It's Voices in the Hall with the king of Twang, Duane Eddy.

***"Movin' And Groovin'" – Duane Eddy (\$1,000,000 Worth of Twang / Jamie)***

**PETER COOPER** That was "Movin' 'N' Groovin'," by the great Duane Eddy.

Duane is the most popular of rock 'n' roll's early instrumental stars. He's a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Musicians Hall of Fame. In the 1950's Duane toured with Chuck Berry, The Everly Brothers, Brenda Lee, and so many more.

And at the base of all this is Country Music. His guitar work was inspired by Country Music Hall of Fame member Chet Atkins, and by the sounds of other country musicians that he heard growing up.

Duane Eddy developed a way of playing electric guitar that accentuated melodic runs on the lower-pitched strings, with heavy, heavy vibrato. He made the guitar sound like the biggest, baddest instrument in the world. Actually, he made the guitar into the biggest, baddest instrument in the world. And the impact of Duane Eddy can be heard in so many later works.

He was a major influence on George Harrison, Bruce Springsteen, Mark Knopfler, and most anyone else who's picked up an electric guitar. It's safe and important to say that rock and roll would not be the same without Duane Eddy. And it's safe and important to say that Duane Eddy would not be the same without country music.

In April of 2000 in Nashville, Tennessee Duane Eddy was officially proclaimed the "Titan of Twang." 20 years later, he sat down in the Audio Lair and we got to chatting...



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**PETER COOPER** Duane tell me about your first guitar.

**DUANE EDDY** Oh boy. Well the first one, I don't even know what it was. The first one I discovered because we had moved into a new house and we were down in the basement. And in those days you had a coal furnace and the guy was delivering coal for the, it would be like a little stall, almost like a horse stall, and they'd have a chute. And they'd just chute a ton of it or so.

**PETER COOPER** This was in New York State?

**DUANE EDDY** Yeah. In the, in the box, just coming down there. My dad would, you know if it bounced out or something he'd shovel it back in and close the little gate. And get the furnace going too. I'm down there with him, I'm five or a little over five and a half. I saw something over against the wall. I said, "What's that, Dad?" Says, "It's a guitar." I said, "Oh, what's it do?" He says, "Well..." He walked over and he played a couple three chords and said, "I used this to court your mother." And he taught me the chords and I learned to play those. And I didn't know you could play up the neck for about the next four years until I saw somebody do it. I went, "Oh yeah. There's places up there, I guess if you knew what to do you could do it."

But you know I'd go see Roy Rogers and Gene Autry and Rex Allen and all the singing cowboys. And they always played in C pretty much, or D. And they didn't ever play up there and. So I just didn't know. But that was the first one, and then and I don't know what happened to that. But they bought me a K, a big F-holed hollow bodied K, acoustic. And that's what I had for a few years. My aunt when I was nine bought me a lap steel and a little amp. And I took a couple of lessons and played radio. This guy had a radio show for 15 minutes over in Horn Hill, New York and the station there. And he'd take a couple of students along. He took me along to play with him. And had me play "The Missouri Waltz," and that was my first performance on radio, was actually a lap steel.

**PETER COOPER** So were you obsessed by it? Were you drawn to it?

**DUANE EDDY** No I didn't. I wanted to play guitar. My folks liked the Hawaiian guitar, you know the steel. I love steel, but not until I heard Bud Isaacs. Well Jerry Byrd, I take that back. I loved Jerry Byrd. And thought that's when I really. And Don Helms, I loved what he did. And then I fell in love with all steel players and all things pedal steel or non-pedal. I took some lessons on that and did that show. And then I just put it away, and I told my folks I wanted guitar lessons or I'm not, I don't want to go. So. "Don't go then." So I didn't get the guitar lessons either. So I just played along on the radio and learned to play that way.



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**PETER COOPER** You were mimicking melodies from the radio?

**DUANE EDDY** No I would just play with them. If there was a melody, if it was a Billy Byrd solo on an Ernest Tubb record I'd play right along with him. [sings] You know. And I'd just play right along with him and. And then I'd have to tune real fast because they didn't have 440, well they had it but country people didn't use it. They just tuned with the piano. If they didn't have a piano, they just tuned with each other. They'd be a hair under a hair over. and I'd have to tune up real fast. I'd get done before, in six bars or so. I'd be in tune and then I'd just play along with them do fills and.

**PETER COOPER** Now were you playing guitar with an eye to escape from your surroundings or...?

**DUANE EDDY** No I just loved it. I just loved the guitar. And it just felt natural and I could do it. So. And I sang along with it then too, when I was a kid. I loved Hank Williams and sang all those songs. And when I was about 10 we moved up to a place called Guyanoga which was just a crossroads out in the country. My dad traded a house in Bath for a country store. And he had a couple of gas tanks out in front and a grocery store inside. And a house behind the store so we could live there. And we had a garage down about, way down behind which we used for a chicken coop and raised some chickens. And had about three acres there.

And he took care of all the farmers around the valley there that. It was just a farm community, and gave them credit and then when they'd harvest their crops they'd go, come in, pay their bills and he'd restock the store. And I went to school, I was in the seventh and eighth grade. They had a little three room school for the sixth grade two miles south of Guyanoga in Branchport, which is at the West End of Lake Keuka, one of the Finger Lakes. Vineyards all over the place and apple orchards and so forth. All these hills and valleys and the lakes in between. There was five or six or seven of them, I don't know how many.

**PETER COOPER** Why would you leave that kind of paradise and go to the southwest?

**DUANE EDDY** Well my dad got sick of the snow. And he got tired of sitting there. He always wanted to be a writer, a story writer, book writer. And he did finally get an article published in Reader's Digest which he was very proud of. A short story. And I was very happy for him because he, you know he did get one thing done. And they bought it from him, paid him. Anyway.

So he decided he was tired of the cold weather and bored to tears and. So there we were crossing the country, three dogs and a kid. I mean three kids and a dog. Either way works. Then we went to Tucson. And we're just about to run out of money and my dad got a job at Safeway. And he worked his way up, assistant manager. And then they



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

gave him his own store but it was in Coolidge. We moved up there and I finished my junior year and senior year of high school there. And that's when I started working. I was 15. Started working with a country band. I'd cut a little Chet Atkins song on a tape because my dad did the dad thing. And the disc jockey, we had a local radio station there, KCKY, who Waylon worked as a deejay at when he first came out west. And. Years later. And.

So anyway this guy named Jim Doyle was a deejay. And my dad says, "My son plays guitar." You know how they do. And he says, "Well..." He says, "Oh that's nice." He says, "Well I'll bring him out to the transmitter and we'll cut, make a tape of him playing." So we went out there and I played the song or two or three times. And Jim said you know, "Play it a few times so you get levels," and just me and my guitar, an electric guitar. I'd bought a Les Paul Gibson from the hardware store a few, a couple months earlier. And so I just played that. And I had an orange crate amp. And took it out there and I played the song. And I says, "Okay I think I'm ready." He says, "Ready?" Says, "We're done." He says, "I recorded that last time through." He says, "I think it's fine." So he played it the next day. And that started it all off first. Jimmy Delbridge came up and wanted me to play music with him and we ended up singing together and playing in a country group. Four piece country group played there, or three piece. I don't know.

**PETER COOPER** Duane Eddy, one of the most amazing things to me about you is you've taken one of the most well-trodden instruments in the world. You're playing an instrument that so many people have played. And yet when you play it, it sounds different than when anyone else plays it. A six string electric guitar. Were you at this point as a kid already playing like Duane Eddy in the Duane Eddy voice?

**DUANE EDDY** Pretty much. I think. I mean I didn't have my outfit yet. But I didn't have any vibrato on the Gibson. You know on the Les Paul. But I was pretty much playing what I heard on the radio in those days.

**PETER COOPER** Were you playing with a thumb pick?

**DUANE EDDY** Oh yeah, I was. And. Chet Atkins mostly, and Merle Travis. You know those were my guys. And that's what I tried to do when I could, or Billy Byrd when I couldn't. And. Or, we just put him in the Hall of Fame. "Don't Worry," the guitar player?

**PETER COOPER** Grady Martin.

**DUANE EDDY** Grady Martin. I liked what he did on the Johnny Horton records I remember. And because he was down on the low strings. "One Woman Man" and things like that. So it was all jumbled in my brain. And I played what was on the record when we worked. You know. But I started work when I was 15. A guy called up after that. He heard one song on the radio said, "Want to come on and work at the VFW



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Saturday night? I'll pay you 15 bucks." I said, "I don't know if I can." I had never played with anybody else. So he said, "Well we'll have a little rehearsal and see." And I said, "What songs do you do?" And I knew all of them. They were all country standards. And so I did it. And it worked out fine. And I played with him on Saturday night. And that started my working. I worked a bunch of joints and dumps and dives.

**PETER COOPER** So your roots were in country music and that's what you were listening to. How did you become the first great instrumental star of rock n roll?

**DUANE EDDY** Well that was thanks to Elvis Presley.

**PETER COOPER** I haven't heard of him. Was he a performer of some kind?

**DUANE EDDY** Yeah, he came along there from somewhere down south. I think Memphis or Tupelo or somewhere. Some odd place down there. Oh, and that little station too, the KCKY in Coolidge, Jim Doyle went on to a bigger market and they sent a new kid that just graduated from Columbia Broadcasting School and had studied to be a disc jockey. His name was Lee Hazlewood. And that's where I met him. And a friend of mine took me out and introduced me. He was, wanted to be a disc jockey, my friend. Ed Myers. And he said, "You've got to come out and meet this guy. He's a hoot." So. Because Lee hit the ground running. Even then he had two voices, he had the old man's voice and he'd tell jokes in between the two of them. And I when I first went out there, I was looking. I thought there were two. I was looking for the old man. I couldn't find him. And then I. Lee was working and I realized he's doing both voices! That's only one guy!

**PETER COOPER** Lee would go on to produce your...

**DUANE EDDY** Yes. He went on to produce the record. And he went to a bigger market. He went to Phoenix. Mesa first and then Phoenix. And a country station there. He went to the pop station in Mesa, and then he went to the country station in Glendale, which is a suburb of Phoenix that Marty Robbins grew up in. So he was a deejay. And we were out there going to breakfast one morning. He had the morning shift then. And this country singer, local country singer that cut a few records and got a little action had done a tour down through Texas with Hank Snow and a bunch of people.

And he said. And he comes driving up and he says, "Hey guys, how are you? Hey Chuck, how are you?" He says, "I got something for you Lee." He says, "Got these records from this kid that was on the tour with me." He says, "He just tore it up." He says, "Nobody could follow him. He'd just shake his hips and wiggle around." And he says, "He sang kind of R&B, you know. And his name was Elvis Presley." And so Lee says, "Well, let's go hear it at Sun Records. So he went in. We went in, back into the station which was a great place to hear a record for the first time because they have



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

good equipment. So that's the first time I heard Elvis. And Lee says, "He's going to be a giant." I don't know how he knew it, but he knew.

And he played him constantly until they said, you know when people'd call up and say, "What are you playing that weird music for?" And a lot of other uncomplimentary terms. And you know. Finally they said, "Lee, you got to stop playing it so much. Or we'll have to let you go." He says, "Okay, bye bye." And they said, "Well couldn't you? No, no, no, no, don't do that." They said, "Well could you cut it down some?" He said, "I could do that." So he cut back on the number of plays he did, but he was the first one to play Elvis in Phoenix. And Elvis in '56 came along and "Heartbreak Hotel." And later that year Elvis came to the fairgrounds and worked. And by then the colonel had him and he had a dog act that opened. You know, where they'd jump through hoops and run around and do tricks and stuff.

They did that and then Elvis came out in a big Cadillac, came driving down the track. He came around and the girls were. They had this big fence up there cause they had jalopy races. And they had a big chain link fence in front of, all along the front of the grandstand there that we were sitting in. It was a little stage. It was the track in front of the grandstand and a stage on the other side of that. Just a stage. Nothing. In the hot sun. No roof over it or anything. And it was like August or September. It was the hottest time of the year.

And the car crept around this track until it got right up, just pulled in beside the stage. It just sat there. These girls were climbing up that chain link fence. They must have been 20 feet off the ground some of them. And they're screaming their heads off. And they kind of quieted down and the door popped open. Nothing. And out came a leg. And then a guitar. And then he bounded out of the car and ran up the steps and started. [sings] And whatever he started with. And they just went crazy. I thought it was loud before, but it really got loud then. And we watched that whole thing. Me and a couple of musician friends.

And I saw what he was doing. You know I mean. I'd heard him, but I hadn't paid all that much attention you know. It was different. It wasn't really country so you know. Wasn't anything like Hank Williams. But after I saw that show, something clicked and I started listening to the pop stations and seeing what rock and roll was.

### ***"Raunchy" – Duane Eddy (Twangin' the Golden Hits / Sony)***

**PETER COOPER** That was the appropriately titled "Raunchy," from Duane Eddy, our guest today on "Voices in the Hall."

**PETER COOPER** Duane, you grew up in times of segregation and separation, but you didn't have hang-ups about race...



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

**DUANE EDDY** No. No I. We didn't have. I mean we didn't have any problem in Arizona. We went with black kids at the school and they were our buddies you know.

**PETER COOPER** I mean this was a time when you know especially the American south was...

**DUANE EDDY** Oh yeah, we ran into it later, out on the road down south and nearly got into some situations which, we just fought the battle. But anyway. No I had, I didn't. They were just guys that were a different color, but it didn't bother me. You know because I'd known them in Arizona and there was no bars there, there was no separate, no segregation at all.

**PETER COOPER** That was part of what rock and roll it seems like was about was just destroying these color lines.

**DUANE EDDY** Well I think we did. I think we helped a lot anyway because it was before all the civil rights stuff, before the sit ins. So this was 19, February of '58. And I went down there and I sat anyone this big blues band. And they were like the old '40s bands. They had a guy singer, and a girl singer, a conductor, horn section, three or four guitars, basses and the whole big horns. And I'm just playing. They'd said they want you to play "Movin' and Groovin'," so they got my guitar and amp out of the trunk. They were all, we were all in my car because I had the nicer car. I never did see theirs. "We'll take your car because it's nice." I had a '56 Chevy that I'd bought because we'd been making good money in the clubs over in Phoenix just before that. And so. It was second hand, but it was a good car.

And so we went down to this place and they went and got my guitar and amp, set me up there and I went up there and I'm dreading it. I was like they're not going to know "Movin' and Groovin'." But I'm listening to what they're doing and they're just playing blues. And I said, "It's not too unlike country. It's three chords, four chords, you know, except that it's got all these different sounds you know. And they're more in a minor key. You know they do, they sound sad you know, even on the up-tempo stuff has minors and stuff." But I see what they were doing and I kind of.

And finally the conductor points at me. And I said shook my head. No, no. We're rocking along in this blues shuffle and. He said, pointed again and shook his head yes. So I said OK. So I came up to the beginning in the solo and I just...[sings]. You know. And that type of thing and... [sings]... then I went [sings] the horns went [sings]. I thought, "Oh my goodness! That's cool!" So I did it again. [sings] And they went [sings]. And I said, "Gee whiz! This is amazing!" So I got through my solo and the conductor twirled his finger in



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

the air and said, "Go around again!" So I did. And I just let it rip. That's when I learned to play the blues that night.

And they, the guys, the Sharps were just tickled to death. They later became a group called the Rivingtons, had a record called "Papa Oo Mow Mow," and Rocky the bass singer did that [sings] which the Oakridge Boys later used to great effect on their big hit there.

**PETER COOPER** Elvira.

**DUANE EDDY** Elvira.

**PETER COOPER** That's right.

**DUANE EDDY** I finished that week and then I went back to Phoenix. And then they said, "Well the record got up to 70 something in Billboard and higher in Cashbox," I think. And they said, "Go back in and do something else." So we went back in March 16th. I remember well 16th, 17th, 18th and we cut about four tracks. And one of the first of them "Rebel Rouser."

**PETER COOPER** A song written under the influence of Tennessee Ernie Ford, as I understand.

**DUANE EDDY** Well he was an inspiration for me. And I knew. And that's when I came into my style is I knew the bass strings. I'd done just enough recording and played a couple of things on stuff that Lee was doing and mostly played rhythm if I got to work at all. But one day the guitar player wasn't there, the other one, and did all the guitar solos. And so I, he gave me a solo. And I realized the high strings weren't as strong as the bass strings. You know they really romped through there. And I didn't even have a tremolo on it or anything. You know I wasn't even trying to. But I realized that, and I realized.

And then after "Movin' 'N' Groovin'," so with "Movin' 'N' Groovin'" I had both the high thing and the low thing. A lick I liked and it was absurdly simple I thought. It's way too simple but it wasn't for you know when I got out there. And it started surf music according to the surf groups that I've talked to. They heard that and they said, they started to think, "Well gee, we can make an instrumental like that." The Surfaris and all those guys they said, "Oh that's where we started." They don't give me credit for that. No I'm kidding. That's my joke.

So I. We cut Rebel-. I wrote it at the studio, at the session. And couldn't figure out a bridge. Then I realized I don't need a bridge. I can just go ahead and modulate, go up a half tone. Play it over and over. And I told Lee, I said, "We need to put a sax and





## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

answers,” because he overdubbed it and we didn’t have one in Phoenix, a sax player, so he had to take it to L.A. and overdub it at Gold Star Studios which had the best echo in the world. And we had our little, our big 2,000 gallon water tank echo that we’d rigged up, that they’d rigged up at the studio. And so we had that on it and then combined it with the echo over there. And he sent it back to me finished and it and he got the Sharps to come out and do the ooh’s and ah’s and they did the hand claps and then they started yelling. And they said, “Sorry Lee, we got carried away.” And he said, “No, let’s do one more and you do that again.” So they were. You know, “And do it. Don’t do it in this verse but do it in the last two.”

**PETER COOPER** It’s a song that sounds like a party.

**DUANE EDDY** It does. It did. And it came back and I heard it the first time. I couldn’t believe that’s what we’d cut. He’d changed it so much you know. Yes I wrote the melody, but we split the writers because I thought what he added with his overdubs and his ideas and his mixing was certainly worth half the song. You know. I would’ve never thought of that.

**PETER COOPER** Yeah. And as I understand it as you were writing it you were you’d been listening to Tennessee Ernie Ford.

**DUANE EDDY** I used to put Ernie Ford on, he had a song, an album called *Lusty Land*, *The Songs of Lusty Lands* or *Lusty Land Song* something. I’ve forgotten now but. Jack Fascinato did the arrangements and they’re very simple. It’d start out sometimes [sings]...Then the bass would come in... [sings] Then Ernie’d sing. And I thought that was so cool. You know so I. I did that with “Rebel Rouser.” I just played the whole verse first with nothing.

Because I also from working that show in L.A. I knew that I wanted to get. I needed to get, a way to get on stage ‘cause I’d walk out there and applause, “Here he is, Duane Eddy!” And I’d go walking out to plug in my, into my amp and the applause had died down and I’m just, it’s silent. I’m just playing my one song and I never made it off the stage before the applause stopped. Well first day the Sharps took me aside they said. They were watching and they said, “Man you got to dance around like this.” And I said, “I couldn’t do that in 100 years.” And they said, “Well you got to use that guitar you know and swing it back and forth and everything.” So they stood over there and they started making fun of me and kidding with me. So I did it onstage. I’d swing the guitar back and forth and the girls started screaming. And I thought Oh my God. Oh wow. Startled me even.

So I worked out a thing and I acted like I was really playing hard and I wasn’t you know, acting like it was really. I don’t know if I can make this next note or not! You know. And so I learned how to rock and roll that way from those guys basically. So I thought when I



## VOICES IN THE HALL: DUANE EDDY PART 1

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

went in to cut “Rebel Rouser,” I need to way to get on. So I thought well I'll just play this first verse and then spotlight will hit me and I'll be in there, I'll be in the center of the stage by the time the band comes in. That's what I pictured in my mind. It never happened that way but that was my idea. So that came out and became a big hit. Number six that summer.

#### *“Rebel Rouser” – Duane Eddy (Twangin’ the Golden Hits / Sony)*

**PETER COOPER** “Rebel Rouser,” from Duane Eddy. An instrumental that was Top 10 in 1958. That's inconceivable in today's world. It would never happen that an instrumental would hit the top ten.

At the time, there were a lot of people who thought rock and roll was a flash in the pan. And then there were some people singing, “Rock and roll is here to stay,” “it will never die.” Duane, did you think... “Well you know, we got three years with this thing.” Or did you think this is a turning point in culture?

**DUANE EDDY** Well no, nobody knew. But they all predicted that Elvis was a flash in the pan like the hula hoop. And, because that was hugely popular just before that and then it went away. And so they used that comparison. And Mitch, Mitch Miller had this group of singers, the squarest thing you ever heard, the records they made. Tin Pan Alley songs and all that. But they were successful. And he was screaming the loudest, “Rock and roll will never last!” And then he faded away, but rock and roll kept going. I don't know how that happened, but it did. And we didn't know. We didn't know if it would last. But after Elvis came Gene Vincent and the Everly Brothers and Sam Cooke and all these acts kept making hit records.

**PETER COOPER** And here we are sixty years later, and Rock and Roll is still going strong. So is Country Music. So is Duane Eddy. There's no way we can stop here. Please join us for Part 2 of our conversation, next time on Voices in the Hall.

Voices in the Hall is presented by the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and is produced by Ben Manilla and Jennie Cataldo of BMP Audio. Master engineer Alan Stoker recorded this show in the museum's audio lair. I'm Peter Cooper, and I appreciate you being with me as we explore the lives and the careers of the fascinating folks who make music history. Come see us in beautiful downtown Nashville, Tennessee.