



ROCK 'N' ROLL

Classic 45s  
Demon

A splendid, slip-cased box set of 10, 7" singles from the rock'n'roll era. Each single is 'dinked' and so requires a spindle adaptor, while featured artists include Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley, Carl Perkins, Fats Domino and Gene Vincent.

I was generally impressed with the mastering and pressing of these singles. There is a perception that 7" discs are printed from the leftover vinyl cuts swept up off the floor by the cleaner after hours, but these examples have been well produced - being quietly pressed with no crackling or spitting or excessive background noise. While the inherent format lowers the quality of the signal itself, reducing detail by degrees, that level of detail did manage to surprise.

There was a remarkable amount of instrumental separation on Jerry Lee Lewis' '[Whole] Lotta Shakin' Goin' On' with the fragile cymbal

taps easily emerging from Lewis' whole-hearted vocal and thunderous piano blows, while Little Richard's 'Lucille' remained coherent and precise despite the raucous screams of the man himself. The Everly Brothers' own 'Wake Up Little Susie', meanwhile, provided a sense of transparency that keyed into the duo's vibrant youth, giving a wholly musical, foot-tapping experience.

I'm glad my wife wasn't in range, otherwise she would have been lifted, flipped and thrown around the room, worrying our low-energy lightbulbs and mowing a heel-shaped stripe down the cat's back as she was swung around in an ambitious circle. This box set requires a health warning!

Also look out for the sister box set 'The Blues: Classic 45s', similarly presented and featuring Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Lightnin' Hopkins, Buddy Guy, Jimmy Reed, Elmore James, John Lee Hooker, Sonny Boy Williamson, B.B. King and Willie Dixon.

AUDIOPHILE VINYL

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THE RONETTES

Veronica  
Bear Family

Originally released as a CD in a more expanded form (17 tracks instead of the 11 tracks featured on this vinyl pressing) by Sequel in 1994. That collection was called 'The Complete Coolpix and Buddha Sessions' and that's the essence of this release. It tracks the history of the girl group before they were signed up by Phil Spector, who would place them in front of his Wall of Sound and then issue one of most romantic rock'n'roll tracks of all time in 'Be My Baby' - a song that was also Beach Boy Brian Wilson's all-time favourite single, incidentally.

This compilation tracks the sisters Veronica (aka Ronnie) and Estelle Bennett and their cousin Nedra Talley after their 1959 formation as The Darling Sisters starting with 'I Want A Boy' for Coolpix in 1961 as Ronnie & the Relatives.

The tracks released as the Ronettes include 'I'm on the Wagon', 'Silhouettes', and 'Good Girls'. All good songs but all remained regional hits.

In audiophile terms, the music has been pushed through the compression mill.

It is squeezed to increase the effect of the detail around the upper mids for those playing this music through those new fangled transistor radios and early record players at the time. As such, the mastering reflects a time and a place. You can't criticise the sound quality (well you can but it would be churlish to do so). The mastering hits all of the right nostalgia buttons.

Underneath the source mastering, though, Bear Family has done a sterling job by placing the mastering on the best available sonic platform, so you don't lose any frequency that might be in the offing.