

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

INDEX A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

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LAS Calendar | E-Mail/Phones | LAS Search

[Welcome](#)[About the College](#)[Academics](#)[Alumni Resources](#)[Diversity](#)[Faculty Resources](#)[Fund Raising](#)[Prospective Students](#)[Student Resources](#)[LAS News & Events](#)**News Sources****College News**[LAS News Archives](#)[Around LAS](#)[LAS Research](#)[Music/ISU Theatre](#)[LAS International News](#)[LAS Alumni News](#)**Iowa State News**[ISU News](#)[Arts & Entertainment](#)[Research News](#)**July 5, 2005****Iowa State music professor writes rock 'n roll history book**

While David Stuart can accurately be described as a classical musician, rock 'n roll has always held a special place in his heart.

So much so that Stuart, associate professor of music at Iowa State University and graduate student Ryan Sheeler of Ames, will soon publish a book on the subject with Kendall-Hunt Publishing. "From Bakersfield to Beal Street - a Regional History of American Rock 'n Roll" will look at the history of American rock 'n roll through its origins until the 1990s.

While many texts organize information chronological or by musical genre, in their book, Stuart and Sheeler take the unique approach of organizing their material by regional music tastes. One section will look at how the classic Memphis Blues was transformed by such artists as Fats Domino, Chuck Beery and Little Richard in the 1950s.

"These artists took the Blues format, speed up the tempo and added youth-oriented lyrics to their music," Stuart said. "Correspond that with the Baby Boomer era that now has disposable income and things start happening in the industry."

At approximately the same time, something similar was happening in New York City where songwriters were taking the music from American musical theatre and transforming it into pop music.

On the West Coast the "surf" music of the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean spoke of a different lifestyle. Latin rock in the late 1950s with such artists as Ritchie Valens became popular as did the rockabilly music of Buddy Holly.

"I think when we talk about this country's melting pot and how it affects culture, that melting pot is reflected more in pop music than anything else," Stuart says.

Stuart teaches a history of rock 'n roll course every spring at Iowa State with assistance from Sheeler. The pair plans to use their new textbook next spring in the class.



David Stuart and Ryan Sheeler

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