



"I CAN'T KISS YOU— IT SMELLS LIKE PISS"

a cultural analysis of rock 'n' roll pioneer

CHUCK BERRY

AND HIS ALLEGED PISS FETISH

American pop culture has always been rife with cruel racial ironies, and one of the most poignant is the fact that in the 1950s, a middle-aged black man was best able to express what it felt like to be a white teenager living in the USA.

"If you tried to give rock and roll another name, you might call it 'Chuck Berry,'" opined bespectacled homicide victim John Lennon, and I reluctantly find myself agreeing with a Beatle. No one—not the fried-peanut-butter-and-banana-sandwich-eating Elvis, not born-again flamin' homo Little Richard, not psychotic Looziana cracker Jerry Lee Lewis—was able to epitomize the nation's restless, boundless, post-Hiroshima, teen-hormone energy the way Chuck Berry could do it with a few simple lyrics and chords. Songs such as "Johnny B. Goode," "School Day," and "Sweet Little Sixteen" are masterworks of lyrical and musical economy, branded so deep within the American consciousness that they go beyond anthems, almost so pure and familiar that they escape notice. Like most of the true greats—James Brown, Bo Diddley, Eddie Cochran, Slade, The Ramones—Chuck Berry really only ever wrote one song, but a song so original that it became a template for the rest of his career and a fertile source of musical plagiarism for generations to come.

Berry's career peaked in the late 1950s. But in 1961, he was sentenced to three years in prison for "transporting a minor across state lines for immoral purposes." The way it appears now, Berry may have been framed by a vengeful ex-employee. He had asked a young girl from Texas to work a hat-check job in an Arizona club he'd owned. He fired her two weeks after she started. When police arrested her for prostitution in a motel room, she blamed Chuck Berry. An initial guilty verdict was dismissed after the judge made racist remarks at trial. But a subsequent verdict stuck, and one of rock 'n' roll's primary architects was thrown in the penitentiary, forever embittering him.

When he emerged into freedom two years later, a new crop of Caucasian musical acts had gained prominence by shamelessly raping his music. The Beach Boys' "Surfin' USA" was such a pure rip-off of "Sweet Little Sixteen" that Berry was later able to force them into giving him a songwriting credit for it. The Beatles had gained astronomical success by releasing mangled, atonal versions of Berry's "Rock 'n' Roll Music" and "Roll Over, Beethoven." And it seemed as if the Rolling Stones' early career consisted entirely of Chuck Berry covers. But even though all of these acts acknowledged his influence, Chuck Berry never enjoyed nearly the level of fame or money as his imitators.

Chuck Berry has plenty of reasons to be bitter.

IN THE EARLY 1990S, a friend sent me a short videotaped scene in which a man alleged to be Chuck Berry is shown pissing on a white woman and farting in her face. [See sidebar for a complete transcript.] It was explained to me that Chuck Berry had been hassled so many times by authorities for sexin' up young white girls while on the road, he took to videotaping all of his one-night stands as legal proof of consent on the girls' part.

This explanation gained further credence when *High Society* magazine published eight photos of Berry posing naked with various women, presumably groupies. It was given further credibility in the early 1990s, when a former female chef Berry had employed at his Southern-Air Restaurant in Missouri filed a lawsuit claiming that Berry was covertly videotaping gals in the women's bathroom using cameras placed at angles



that gave aerial and eye-level views of the toilet. [The suit was apparently settled out of court.] And a few years back, *Spy* magazine ran a feature which described not only the piss-and-fart scene which I viewed, but also other videotapes containing alleged poop-eatin' by Chuck and his various lady friends.

A year or two after I received the initial videotape, another friend sent me a Berry-themed tape called *Sweet Little Sixteen*. Lasting over an hour and a half, it contains the initial piss-and-fart clip, plus TV news blurbs about Berry's restaurant lawsuit, and an interminable parade of hairy, inflamed, slimy, beef-jerky white-girl twats in disgusting clinical closeup, many of them pissing while squatting over motel-room toilet bowls. The tape tends to imply that these segments were all filmed by Berry during one-night-stands. During one sad-yet-funny scene, the feather-headed white girl tries sucking off a skinny old black male wearing only a white T-shirt [presumed to be Berry] for what seems like a half-hour, but he's apparently too old or coked-out to get it up. He tries shoving his half-hard choco-worm inside her pussy, but it plops out limply each time. He finally retrieves a giant black dildo and rams it up her twat like he's shoving a thermometer between a turkey's legs. While she painfully squirms on the monster artificial dong, he cackles, grunts, and asks her things such as "How ya like that big dick goin' up in ya?"

I DON'T REALLY CARE whether or not the man in these videotapes is Chuck Berry. Even if it isn't, the fact that someone would go to the length of *making it all up* signifies that Chuck Berry is somehow highly relevant to American cultural psychology.

So what reasons could he possibly have for pee-peein' on all those poor dumb white girls?

My favorite Chuck Berry story involves shriveled Limey junkhog Keith Richards, who never played a note Chuck Berry didn't play first. In the early 80s, Richards apparently went backstage at a Chuck Berry show and tapped him on the back of the shoulder, hoping to introduce himself. Before looking to see who it was, Berry instinctively hauled off and slugged him in the face.

Good for you Chuck. Shoulda pissed on him, too.

ROLL OVER, BEETHOVEN—AND LEMME PISS ON YOU

The following dialogue was transcribed from a segment of videotape lasting a little over two and a half minutes. The action appears to take place in a motel bathroom. It begins with a white woman sitting in a bathtub, lazily scrubbing herself. The woman's feathered-back blonde hairstyle suggests that the events transpired sometime in the late 1980s. Although the tape is blurry, and although surface "white noise" tends to muddy the sound, it's credible that the warm brown blob of a man who suddenly steps into the bathtub is rock legend Chuck Berry. He is thin and bony, naked except for a classy gold wristwatch. His hair approximates Chuck's greased-back black wool. His speaking voice sounds like Chuck Berry's. But I have no way of proving it's him, and I'm sure he'd deny it, so I have to throw in all these disclaimers.

CHUCK BERRY [allegedly, of course]: Are you bathing?
BLONDE WHITE FEMALE GROUPIE: Yes.

You gotta get clean.

Yes, I do.

You like to stay clean, don't you?

Yes, I do.

You really do.

Mm-hmm.

I'll give you somethin' to bathe for. You know that? [stands up over her]

I'm-a give you somethin' to bathe for. See this here? [wiggles his dick]

Yes.

Yeah? That's what you bathe with.

It is?

Kiss it...Kiss it...Again...Suck on it...You my girl?

Yes.

You love me?

Yes.

Very much?

Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm? I'll bet you do.

I do.

Well...You really love me? [begins pissing on her face]

[she gasps, surprised] I really love you.

Yeah? Put your hands down by your thighs. Take it.

[she continues gasping as he continues pissing] **Take it.**

Take it. Take it. Open your mouth. Open your mouth.

[sound of piss gurgling into her mouth, then Berry unleashes a LOUD, long fart] **You can smell my fart.**

Piss on ya, that's what I'm doin'. Pissin' all over you. Mm-hmm. You love me?

Yes.

You can smell my fart!

Tell me you love me.

I love you.

Alright, then, drink my piss. Drink my piss. [grabs towel and hands it to her] **Dry yourself off. Clean yourself off. How's that piss taste, hmm?**

Bitter?

Alright, alright, alright? Tastes bitter, doesn't it? It's salty, yeah, I know.

Yes.

You drank my piss.

Yes, I did.

Yeah. Suck this. SUCK IT. [she's sucking and gasping and grunting as if in pain] **Here, clean yourself. Clean that piss out of your eyes. Poor sugar, little baby. What's the matter, baby? Did I piss in your eyes?**

Yes.

Did I piss in your eyes? I'm sorry. There's piss all over your neck and your hair. But you love me.

I love you.

I won't betray you. I won't betray you ever. Believe it. [leans in to kiss her, then stops] **I can't kiss you—it smells like piss.**

I know.

I'm sorry. Clean yourself off. Take a shower. [he walks out of the tub as she turns on the faucet to clean herself]

"The white man stole his music...his brilliant, original music.

The white man used dubious criminal charges to steal his freedom for a few years.

So if he pisses and farts on a few white girls, I'd hardly call that getting even, much less a capital crime."