

Excerpt from “Number One with an AXE!” by Michael Rays

Too Much, Elvis Presley, 2/9/57, 3 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 5, Fills 0, Solo 6; Total 11

High adventure! This song features single-note rhythm lines and a dirty-toned, triplet-filled solo. Outstanding!

Innovation Alert! Scotty Moore’s 12-bar blues solo starts with four bars of what sounds like double-tracking, then settles in to single-track—only to take a wild left turn in measures 6-8. The passage sounds cool from a jazz/experimental point of view but is a train wreck by pop music conventions. I almost can’t believe they released it this way (though I’m glad they did). This is not your standard pop/blues guitar solo, and it’s definitely worth a listen or two!

Young Love, Tab Hunter, 3/2/57, 4 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 6, Fills 4, Solo 2; Total 12

The rhythm playing is nice. The fills are nice. The solo is about as tame as it can be. Still, the guitar is represented well in this song so good on ya, Team Tab!

Bonus version: Is it possible Tab was a tad nervous?

Party Doll, Buddy Knox, 3/30/57, 1 week at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 5, Fills 1, Solo 4; Total 10

Did this song’s borderline-psychotic lyrics help launch the feminist movement? Yikes! Guitar-wise, it features two solos; or more accurately, one solo done twice. Still, ten points ain’t half bad!

Round and Round, Perry Como, 4/6/57, 1 week at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 6, Fills 0, Solo 0; Total 6

I always equated Perry Como with snoozing (partly because of a great SCTV skit, “Perry Como: Still Alive”), but this upbeat shuffle borders on a hot jazz feel; it’s a definite toe-tapper with some good rhythm playing.

Bonus version: A nice cover from the 80s.

All Shook Up, Elvis Presley, 4/13/57, 8 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 4, Fills 0, Solo 0; Total 4

Less is more on this one: the half-step slides of the rhythm guitar give a slightly Hawaiian flavor. On drums, it’s simple brushes and bongos.

Love Letters in the Sand, Pat Boone, 6/3/57, 5 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 1, Fills 0, Solo 0; Total 1

There’s a mix of old and new musical styles on this number, but guitar-wise it’s just some minimal rhythm playing.

(Let Me Be Your) Teddy Bear, Elvis Presley, 7/8/57, 7 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 0, Fills 0, Solo 0; Total 0

A great tune that's devoid of guitar as far as I can tell.

[Bonus video](#): Guitars everywhere, but can you actually *hear* them?

Tammy, Debbie Reynolds, 8/26/57, 3 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 0, Fills 0, Solo 0; Total 0

We're in a slump! This sap-fest is total orchestra.

Diana, Paul Anka, 9/9/57, 1 week at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 7, Fills 3, Solo 0; Total 10

Two female-named songs in a row! And 10 points for Mr. Anka? When Bucky Pizzarelli plays on the track, you bet! This song has a cha-cha feel with some nice fills in a rock-ish mid-song section, and also some high, staccato rhythm parts that may have been done with a high-up capo.

That'll Be the Day, The Crickets, 9/23/57, 1 week at #1

Riffage 8, Rhythm 1, Fills 2, Solo 7; Total 18

Bow your heads in reverence—music royalty is here! This flawed (guitar-wise) masterpiece starts not on the verse but the chorus, and the chorus starts not on the I chord but the IV chord. Awesome! The riff is an all-time classic; the solo starts great and then abruptly ends, leaving a void. Nevertheless, it's just a terrific song that ebbs and flows beautifully.

[Bonus video](#): Gold.

Honeycomb, Jimmie Rodgers, 9/30/57, 2 weeks at #1

Riffage 0, Rhythm 5, Fills 0, Solo 0; Total 5

Solid rhythm playing, but you have to listen for it.

[Bonus video](#): Jimmie is all thumbs with his rhythm playing.

Wake Up Little Susie, The Everly Brothers, 10/14/57, 1 week at #1

Riffage 9, Rhythm 8, Fills 7, Solo 0; Total 24

Bill Haley and His Comets set the bar high back in '55. It took two-plus years, but we finally have a new points leader! This song has guitar glory in spades: a great, chugging chord-based riff, great rhythm playing and great fills. There is no solo to complete the grand slam, but that doesn't take away from the fact that "Wake Up" is a guitar tour de force!

Jailhouse Rock, Elvis Presley, 10/21/57, 8 weeks at #1

Riffage 8, Rhythm 8, Fills 0, Solo 4; Total 20

Whoa, back-to-back whoppers! This weapons-grade tune has a simple but great riff, an adventurous single-note-based rhythm line and a very nice (but too short!) solo. The piano provides the fills—we won't hold that against The King.