The Drifters Encyclopedia Article

The Drifters

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The Drifters

When Clyde McPhatter formed The Drifters in 1953, a new musical voice emerged. Combining doo-wop with gospel stylings, rhythm and blues changed. Songs like "Money Honey" (1953) and "White Christmas" (1954), second only to Bing Crosby's version, increased their popularity. McPhatter left the group in 1954, and a series of lead singers fronted the group until the arrival of Ben E. King in 1959, who changed the Drifters' image and sound. The baion, a Latino rhythm, and the addition of strings made songs like "There Goes My Baby" (1959) a success. From 1953 to 1966, The Drifters proved a driving force for Atlantic Records from which many rising musicians gained inspiration. The Drifters, who were inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 1990, provided the music for a southeastern coastal dance, "the shag."

Further Reading:

Barnard, Stephen. *Rock: An Illustrated History.* New York, Schirmer Books, 1986.

Hirshey, Gerri. *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music.* New York, Da Capo Press, 1994.