



## Eddie Cochrane

Edward Ray Cochran was born on the 3rd October 1938 in Albert Lea, Minnesota, U. S. A.

He became well known with the rise of the Rock n Roll Music phenomena during the 1950's. Three of his best known hits were Summertime Blues, Three Steps to Heaven and C'mon Everybody.

On 3rd February 1959 an air crash took the lives of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and The Big Bopper. The former two being good friends of Eddie. Eddie recorded a tribute to the three artists called the Three Stars.

After the loss of Holly and Valens, Eddie Cochrane became convinced he would die young in a fatal accident. His wish was to tour less and record and write more to avoid potentially dangerous situations whilst touring. Contracts and finances were to keep Eddie on the road and he accepted the chance to tour the UK in 1960.

Eddie Cochrane appeared with fellow musician Gene Vincent at the Bristol Hippodrome on Saturday, 16th April 1960. After the show they were to drive to London in a hired taxi along with Sharon Sheeley, a songwriter who was Eddie's fiancée and tour manager Pat Tomkins. The route from Bristol to London would have meant a journey through Chippenham and at around 11.50 p.m. the speeding taxi crashed into a lamppost on Rowden Hill. In protecting his fiancée Eddie Cochrane was thrown from the taxi when a door flung open on impact. Gene Vincent suffered more damage to a previously injured and weak leg. Eddie's fiancée and tour manager also survived the crash. Eddie Cochrane was rushed to St. Martin's Hospital, Bath where he died of serious head injuries at 4.10 p.m. on the 17th April 1960. His body was flown home to California where he was laid to rest on 25th April at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Cypress, California.

George Martin the taxi driver was charged and convicted of dangerous driving. He was fined £50 or in default 6 months imprisonment. He was disqualified for driving for 15 years but his license was reinstated in 1969.

Some interesting stories can be traced to this tour of 1960 and in particular surrounding Eddie's Guitar. Firstly after one of the London Concerts at the Hackney Empire, Eddie Cochrane gave a

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thirteen year old lad the opportunity of carrying his guitar to his waiting limousine. The young boy was called Marc Feld. This act of kindness had an impact on the young fan who started calling himself Dik Cochran and later formed a band called the Earwigs. Marc Feld later gained fame as Marc Bolan of T. Rex. Sadly Marc Bolan was to die young in a car accident, following in the footsteps of his onetime idol.

After the accident in Chippenham the car and its contents including the instruments and belongings of Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent were impounded awaiting the post mortem report. These were held at a local police compound. It is rumoured that a young police cadet at the station would access the guitar used by Eddie and strum away whilst on his breaks. That police cadet was Dave Harman. Dave Harman went on to be the lead singer with Salisbury based band Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Titch.

A memorial plaque marks the accident spot at Rowden Hill. Members of the Eddie Cochran Fan Club pay tribute at the site each year.

