



Television Dance Shows in the 1950s-1960s



Source: WFIL-TV/ABC/Click Corporation

Both television and Rock and Roll became increasingly popular during the 1950s. As a result, many TV stations began to air dance shows with names such as *Teen Time* and *Big Beat*, aimed directly at a teenage audience. These shows typically aired in the late afternoon, as teens came home from school, and featured teens dancing to popular hit songs. *American Bandstand* was one of the first of these shows, going on the air in Philadelphia in 1952; in 1957, the show went national on the ABC network, where it stayed on the air until the 1980s.

In addition to popular national shows such as *Bandstand*, many local TV stations continued to air regional shows, which often featured local teens as dancers. These shows included *The Buddy Deane Show* (on WJZ-TV in Baltimore, Maryland), *Teen Time* (on WSTV-TV in Steubenville, Ohio), and *Seventeen* (on WOI-TV in Ames, Iowa).

As you watch the clips from each of these shows, think about the following:

- How are the dancers dressed? How do they wear their hair? Overall, how would you describe their appearance?
- How do they dance? In pairs? Individually? Do dance partners touch each other?
- How does the style of dance reflect the music that is playing?
- How much skill does the style of dancing in the video seem to require?
- What is the racial composition of the dancers?
- If you were a teenager watching one of these shows on television, how do you think what you saw might have affected you? Would it have influenced the way you dressed? The way you danced? In other ways?
- Do you notice any changes in the appearance of the dancers or the style of dance between the 1950s and 1960s? What changed? What stayed the same?
- Do you notice any differences between the national show (*Bandstand*) and the local shows?

- Do the shows present an idealized version of what a teenager should look and sound like? If so, what was that image? How might this presentation have affected teens watching, particularly if they did not look and sound like the teens on the shows?

Please use the chart below to take notes and organize your responses.

Show	General Observations & Impressions	Appearance of Dancers	Dance Styles	Race
<i>American Bandstand</i> (c.1957)				
<i>Buddy Deane Show</i> (1960)				
<i>Seventeen</i> (1958)				
<i>Teen Time</i> (1967)				