



book and lyrics by JOE DIPIETRO  
music and lyrics by DAVID BRYAN  
based on a concept by GEORGE W. GEORGE

*the rep*

ARKANSAS REPERTORY THEATRE  
SEP 5 - SEP 28, 2014 | TICKETS ONLINE AT THEREP.ORG

**Study Guide, September 2014**

Hockadoo!!

During the course of the performance of *Memphis*, presented by the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, you will hear the main character, DJ Huey Calhoun, exclaim that word as he fills his world with music. It's a non-sense word, it may be dirty (no one knows), but one thing is for sure – it is an expression of the explosive, life-changing effect music can have on a person's heart and soul.

And we hope that you will leave The Rep changed as well, after watching the characters of this foot-stomping, rip-roaring, roof-raising musical discover the transformative power of love and song.

Memphis is a love letter to the music of the 1950s, not just to rock and roll but the traditions of jazz and rhythm and blues that contributed to its inception as well. But no love affair is complete without a few bumps along the road. At the center of the play is a forbidden relationship, surrounded by prejudice and intolerance in a historical era of racial strife and segregation, but held together by a mutual affection for that one song that makes us clap our hands, dance around the room, and believe in something greater than ourselves.

Music can heal.

Music can cure.

Music can save.

Huey's Memphis is a real place, a city in Tennessee, to be sure. But this piece of theatre takes place in the Memphis that lives in all of us, that makes us more alive, right there in the middle of your radio dial...



Dewey Phillips

#### Special Note for Educators:

Throughout this Study Guide you will find words, names and phrases in **bold print**. These items are key terms and phrases to understanding the world and context of *Memphis* in greater detail. We encourage you to identify these items as vocabulary terms and as suggestions for further research and study among your students, both before and after you attend the performance at The Rep.

# Get to Know: Dewey Phillips

*The man whose life influenced  
Memphis The Musical*



## EARLY START

Dewey Phillips got his first 15-minute radio slot in 1949, jumping into it from his job managing the record department at the W.T. Grant 5 and 10, where he spun a mix of the latest records – hillbilly and “race” music, sacred and profane, Frank Sinatra and Wynonie “Mr. Blues” Harris – over the store’s PA.

From the start, he drew an equally mixed, equally eclectic in-house audience – as many young as old, as many black as white – in a segregated store, in segregated Memphis, located in the heart of the Deep South. His radio show, which aired on WHBQ, was titled “Red, Hot and Blue.” Within a year, he was on the air six nights a week, two hours a night.

*-This information courtesy of the Memphis Music Hall of Fame website.*

## FUN FACTS

Born: May 13, 1926  
Crump, Tenn.

AKA: Daddy-O

Station: WHBQ

\*First introduced Elvis  
to the airwaves

## TV

His television show, **Pop Shop**, went on the air in 1957. A version of *American Bandstand*, the show was, for a period, the biggest thing going in Memphis.



# Plot Synopsis

## ACT I

There's a party at Delray's, an underground African-American Rock and Roll bar in 1950's Memphis ("Underground"). Huey Calhoun, a white man, arrives on the scene. The regulars begin to leave, but Huey convinces them to stay, claiming he is there for the music ("The Music of My Soul").

Later, Huey is about to be fired from his job as a stock boy at a local department store, but he makes a deal with the owner - if he can sell 5 records by playing them over the speakers, he can have a sales job. Huey plays a Rock and Roll hit ("Scratch My Itch"). He sells 29 records in a matter of minutes, but the store owner fires him anyway, incensed at the type of music being played.

Huey returns to Delray's club, and begins flirting with Felicia, Delray's talented sister, and promises to get her on the radio ("Ain't Nothin' But a Kiss"). Huey then proceeds to apply for DJ jobs at various local white radio stations. One of the owners, Mr. Simmons, invites him in, saying he'll show him what a 'real' DJ looks like. Huey hijacks the mic, and plays another African-American rock song ("Everybody Wants to be Black on Saturday Night"). Mr. Simmons is about to have Huey thrown out, but then dozens of teenagers start calling in demanding more of Huey and his music. Mr. Simmons agrees to give him a two-week trial, and if he's successful he'll get hired full time. After a few days Huey is told to read an advertisement for beer, but he is illiterate. Huey asks Bobby, a friend of Delray's with a janitor position, to tell him what it says. He forgets the exact words almost immediately and begins to improvise, ending with the phrase "Hockadoo!"

Mr. Simmons again almost fires Huey, until the manager of the store advertised calls in saying that he wants Huey to do all of his advertisements, seeing as his stock sold out in minutes. Huey's station gains immediate popularity, as does his new catch phrase, even though no one understands what it means - including Huey. While on the radio, Huey encourages white people to go down to black churches ("Make Me Stronger"), and they begin to. Meanwhile, Delray has saved enough money to put Felicia's voice on the record, and she travels to Huey's house to tell him this. He is overjoyed and promises to play it the next day. Huey's prejudiced mother, however, breaks the record, which leaves Felicia heartbroken, but Huey tells her to come down to the radio station anyway ("Colored Women").

The next day, Huey brings in a band and back-up singers to play for Felicia live. Despite her reservations, Felicia sings and becomes an instant sensation ("Someday"). Felicia and Huey's relationship begins to grow, and Delray is becoming more and more infuriated with Huey. He warns him of the danger of what he is doing, threatening to harm Huey if anything happens to Felicia ("She's My Sister"). Huey's radio popularity grows more and more as white teens and black teens begin to accept each other ("Radio"). Huey and Felicia have been carrying on a secret relationship since the day she sang live on the radio.

Two years later Huey proposes to Felicia on the way to a party at Delray's. She says no because of laws and prejudice, but admits that without those obstacles she would accept. As the two share a kiss, a gang of white men pass by, spotting this. They hold Huey down as they beat Felicia with a bat. Huey manages to carry her into the club, crying out for help. Delray tries to go after Huey, for he promised to harm Huey should Felicia get hurt because of him, but Gator, a friend who has not spoken since he saw his father lynched as a child, calms him and sends out a prayer for change as Delray takes Felicia outside and gets her into the ambulance they called ("Say a Prayer").

## ACT II

Time has passed, and Huey is about to open his new TV show, a rock and roll variety show featuring all African American dancers ("Crazy Little Huey"). Felicia is supposed to be his first guest, but she backs out at the last minute, fearing that people will think her and Huey to be in a relationship. Huey informs Bobby that he will fill in, and after getting over some jitters, Bobby brings the house down ("Big Love"). Felicia's popularity is also beginning to grow around Memphis, as does her relationship with Huey. Felicia tells Huey that if they went to New York they wouldn't have to sneak around all the time, but Huey insists that they are happy the way they are and don't need to leave ("Love Will Stand When All Else Falls"). She has been discovered by a talent agency in New York, as has Huey's TV show. The agency wants them both to come up to New York, although Huey has to compete with a local Philadelphia DJ, Dick Clark for the national show. They ponder the decision ("Stand Up"), and are even supported by Huey's mother, who has changed her racist ways after seeing an African American church choir ("Change Don't Come Easy"). Huey is told he has won the TV position, if he agrees not to use African American dancers. Huey refuses, and proceeds to strip out of his suit on the air ("Tear Down the House"). Felicia tells Huey that she plans to go anyway, as it is her dream. In a desperate attempt to keep her, he kisses her on the air, and says he loves her.

("Love Will Stand/Ain't Nothin' But a Kiss" (Reprise)). The feed is cut, and Huey is fired on the grounds that no one would watch his show if they knew about him and Felicia, and that he wasn't the only white person to play black music anymore. Delray takes Felicia away in an attempt to save her career.

Now unemployed, Huey leaves the station and ponders his relationship with Memphis, realizing he couldn't leave for any reason ("Memphis Lives in Me").

Four years later, Huey is a DJ on an obviously low budget and low rated station (he jokes that they have "exactly one listener"). Felicia walks in, about to start a national tour. She tells Huey that she is engaged to a man named Bill, but that she wants him to join her on stage one last time. He refuses, afraid that no one will remember him. She begins her performance, and halfway through the song Huey walks on stage, and finishes the song with her to thunderous applause. He then proclaims, "The name is Huey Calhoun. Good-night and HOCKADOO!" ("Steal Your Rock and Roll").





# Creative Team



David Bryan

**David Bryan** (Music & Lyrics) is a Grammy Award-winning keyboard player and founding member of Bon Jovi. Over the past 26 years, the band has sold more than 130 million records and toured the world, playing to millions of people. Their recent Lost Highway Tour was the No. 1 grossing tour in the world. David and Joe DiPietro have also co-written the award-winning musical *The Toxic Avenger*, currently playing at New World Stages. David is a National Spokesperson for VH1's "Save The Music Program."



Joe DiPietro

**Joe DiPietro** (Book & Lyrics) won Tony Awards for Best Book and Best Score for *Memphis The Musical*, which was also awarded the 2010 Tony Award, Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Musical. His other shows include *All Shook Up*; *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (the longest-running revue in Off-Broadway history), *The Toxic Avenger* and *The Thing About Men* (both winners of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway musical) and *Falling For Eve*. His plays include the much-produced comedy *Over The River And Through The Woods*, *The Art Of Murder* (Edgar Award, Best Mystery Play), *Creating Claire*, and *The Last Romance*.



Remmel T. Dickinson

**Remmel T. Dickinson** (Producing Sponsor) is a Tony Award-winning theatrical producer working in New York, London, Washington, D.C. and his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas. His credits as a Broadway Producer include *Warhorse*, the Tony Award-winning Best Play of 2011; *Memphis*, the Tony Award-winning Best Musical of 2010; *The Norman Conquests*, the Tony Award-winning Best Revival of a Play for 2009; and *The 39 Steps*, the Tony Award-winning Hitchcock comedy of 2008 – also presented by the Arkansas Repertory Theater. In the current season, Mr. Dickinson has produced the Tony Award-winning musical *The Bridges of Madison County*, the Japanese production of *War Horse*, and is thrilled with the new productions of *Memphis the Musical* in both London and Little Rock. Working on Broadway is a second career for Mr. Dickinson after concluding nearly 30 years of government service as a professional staff assistant in the United States Senate. He is a product of the Little Rock Public School System and a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

# History

*Memphis* was originally developed at the North Shore Music Festival in Massachusetts and TheatreWorks in California in 2003-04, and subsequently staged at the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego in 2008 and Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre in 2009.

The musical opened on Broadway in October 2009, where it played for over 1,100 performances before closing in 2012. In late 2011, the actor playing Huey Calhoun, Chad Kimball, left the musical's cast due to an injury, and was replaced by Adam Pascal, best known for starring in the original Broadway casts of *Rent* and *Tim Rice and Elton John's Aida*.

In 2011-13, the producers mounted a successful **national tour** of the musical.

The original Broadway production was filmed in high-definition for a limited digital cinema release in 2011, after which it was released on DVD.

*Memphis* will open in London's West End in late 2014.



# Awards

*Memphis* was nominated for 8 and won 4 **Tony Awards** (celebrating the best in Broadway theatre) in 2010, including:

BEST BOOK OF A MUSICAL: Joe DiPietro  
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE: Joe DiPietro and David Bryan  
BEST ORCHESTRATIONS: Daryl Waters and David Bryan  
BEST MUSICAL

*Memphis* won 4 Drama Desk Awards (celebrating the best in theatre throughout New York City, on Broadway and off), including:

OUTSTANDING MUSIC: David Bryan  
OUTSTANDING ORCHESTRATIONS: David Bryan and Daryl Waters  
BEST MUSICAL

It also won 4 Outer Critics' Circle Awards, including

BEST SCORE: David Bryan and Joe DiPietro  
BEST CHOREOGRAPHY: Sergio Trujillo  
BEST MUSICAL





# Character List

*Huey Calhoun:* The main character, a flamboyant white radio DJ who opens up the Memphis airwaves to the “race records” that lay the foundation for 1950s rock-and-roll. Huey is patterned after “Daddy-O” **Dewey Phillips** (1926-1968), a historical rock-and-roll radio programmer in Memphis who rose to prominence between 1959-69 as a figure whose “Red, Hot & Blue” program featured both white and black musicians during a period of deep cultural segregation in the South. Phillips was the first radio personality to reveal Elvis Presley’s race (it was widely believed Presley was African American until Phillips interviewed him).

*Delray Farrell:* Owner of Delray’s, an underground juke joint\* on Beale Street\* in Memphis who is very protective of his sister Felicia.

*Felicia Farrell:* Delray’s sister, an aspiring singer who falls in love with Huey

*Vernon, James, Elroy:* Musicians from Delray’s club

*Selma, Laverne, Bessie:* Felicia’s backup singers from Delray’s club

*Mr. Collins:* Owner of a department store where Huey works at the beginning of the play

*Perry Como:* American singer (1912-2001) whose popularity in the 1940s – 1960s focused largely on his appeal to the traditional family values of post-war “middle America.” Como’s singing career was augmented by his persona as the host of many television programs, including his Christmas specials.

*Wailin’ Joe:* A stand-in for colorful figures in the African American music scene of the 1950s such as **Screamin’ Jay Hawkins** and **Little Richard**.

*Bobby:* Frequent club-goer at Delray’s, a janitor for Simmons’ radio station, later becomes a personality on Huey’s television program

*Gator:* Soft-spoken bartender at Delray’s

*Mr. Simmons:* Owner of radio station WHDZ, later becomes a producer of Huey’s television program

*Buck Wiley:* DJ and former host of “Boppin’ with the Blues” on WHDZ

*Rev. Calvin Hobson:* African-American pastor at the First Baptist Church

*Gladys Calhoun/Mama:* Huey’s mother, a waitress

*Gordon Grant:* Executive from RCA Records in New York

*Martin Holton:* A television network executive from New York

\*juke joint – Informal night club for African American customers, featuring drinking, singing, and dancing, often as an alternative to “whites only” establishments that barred them.

\*Beale Street (pictured right): Currently, one of Memphis’ major tourist attractions due to the number of historical blues clubs that line the district. In the first half of the 20th century, it was a leading African American neighborhood in Tennessee, a gathering place for black culture and an important center for the leaders of the civil rights movement. Many of the founders of the American blues music scene began on Beale Street, including Muddy Waters, Louis Armstrong, most notably B.B. King. In 1977, Beale Street was declared “The Home of the Blues” by the US Congress, an act of historical recognition that led to its current revitalization.





# Cast

Director: Lynn Furdziel-Formato



Jasmin Richardson



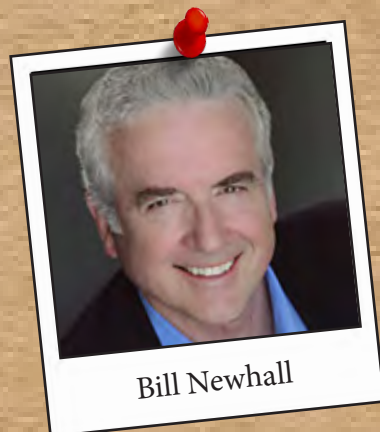
Brent Michael DiRoma



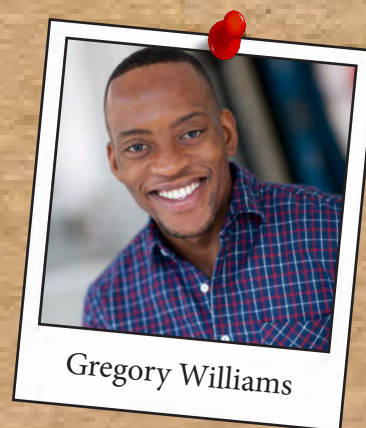
Arthur L. Ross



Ann-Ngaire Martin



Bill Newhall



Gregory Williams

- **Jasmin Richardson\*** (*Felicia*)
  - **Brent Michael DiRoma\*** (*Huey*)
  - **Tony Perry\*** (*Delray*)
  - **Ann-Ngaire Martin\*** (*Gladys*)
  - **Bill Newhall\*** (*Mr. Simmons*)
  - **Gregory Williams\*** (*Gator*)
  - **Arthur L. Ross\*** (*Bobby*)
- 
- Courtney Blackmun (*Ensemble / "Someday" Backup Singer*)
  - Michele May Clark (*Ensemble/Clara/White Mother/US Gladys*)
  - Katie Emerson\* (*Ensemble/Teen Girl 1/Double Dutch Girl*)
  - Ryan Farnsworth\* (*Ensemble/Perry Como/US Huey*)
  - Tatiana H. Green (*Ensemble/"Someday" Backup Singer*)
  - DeCarl Jones (*Ensemble/Black DJ/Wailin Joe/Reverend Hobson/US Delray*)
  - Marisa Kirby\* (*Ensemble/Dance Captain/Teen Girl 2/US Clara/US White Mother*)
  - Daniel McDonald\* (*White DJ/Mr. Collins/White Father/Gordon Grant/US Mr. Simmons*)
  - Chris McNiff (*Ensemble/Buck Wiley/Martin Holton/Photographer*)
  - Gregory Omar Osborne (*Ensemble / "Be Black" Trio*)
  - J Nycole Ralph\* (*Ethel/"Someday" Backup Singer/Ensemble /US Felicia*)
  - Shaun Repetto (*Ensemble/ Frank Dryer/ US Perry Como*)
  - James Roberts (*Ensemble/"Be Black Trio/US Gator*)
  - Kyron Turner (*Ensemble/"Be Black" Trio*)
  - Laura Leigh Turner (*Ensemble/Double Dutch Girl*)

\* Denotes actor/actress is a Member of the Actors' Equity Association

# Race Relations and Desegregation in Arkansas

While *Memphis* takes place in Tennessee in the 1950s, many of its themes and events transcend geography and time, particularly in the post-WWII era in the South.

Since the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in 1957 and the national attention brought to issues of school integration by the treatment of the **Little Rock Nine**, Arkansas has played an integral role in the American Civil Rights Movement. The Central High incident was a test case for the 1954 Supreme Court decision of **Brown v. The Board of Education**.

In September 1957, a mob of white protestors blocked the entrance to the school when nine African American students who had enrolled at Central High at the behest of the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**. When the state's governor **Orval Faubus** employed the Arkansas National Guard to block the students' entry to the school, Little Rock's mayor Woodrow Wilson Mann petitioned President Dwight Eisenhower to assist. The President deployed 1200 members of the US Army's 101st Airborne Division (the **327th Airborne Battle Group**) to escort the students into the building and took control of the state National Guard out of the governor's hands.



The presence of military guards to keep the peace at the school continued until the 1960-61 school year.

Because of the importance of these historical events, Central High is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated a National Historic Landmark.

These historical events, and those of the **1963 Birmingham Campaign**, the **1963 March on Washington**, the 1965 Selma Marches, the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** and the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, all occur within the same time period as the action of *Memphis: The Musical*. Across the South, indeed

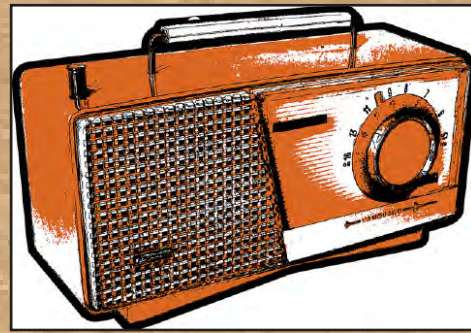
across the entire United States, the crucial role of racial integration, whether it be in schools or the workplace or the airwaves, broke down barriers for all Americans and created ripples that are still being felt today as activists continue to eliminate the remaining forms of discrimination that threaten to challenge the country's founding principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."





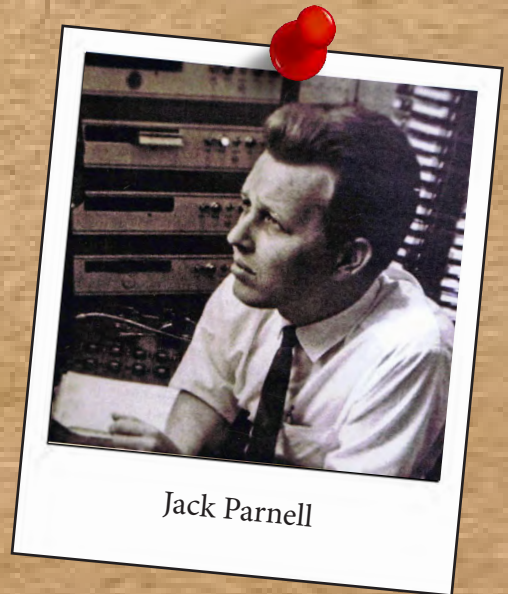
# A Look Back at the Airwaves

## Brief History of Radio in Memphis

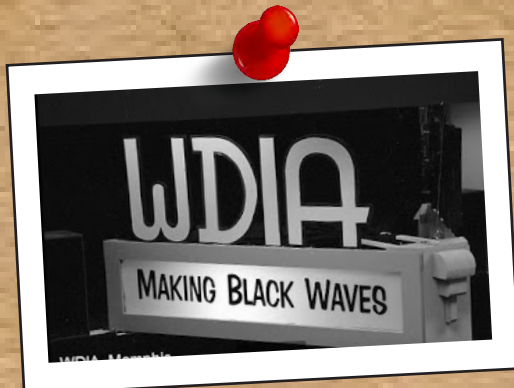


WHBQ became famous in the 1950s for playing rhythm and blues, most notably by Dewey Phillips, whose show "Red, Hot and Blue" broadcasted from the mezzanine of the Chisca Hotel.

For many years WHBQ was owned by RKO and was like a tryout for young, aspiring DJs like Rick Dees and Wink Martindale. They worked there in hopes of being moved to bigger markets like Boston, New York and Los Angeles. Jack Parnell helped usher in the rock and roll era on WHBQ with his deep resonant voice - frequently referred to as "the voice of God". In 1960, WHBQ became "Boss Radio." By the 1970s, they could no longer compete with the FM stations and in 1988, RKO sold the station to Flinn Broadcasting. Today the focus has shifted from music to sports.



Jack Parnell



WDIA went on the air in June 1947 from small studios on Union Avenue. The format was a mix of country, western and light pop. Nat D. Williams, a syndicated columnist and high school teacher, started "Tan Town Jubilee" in October 1948. It was the first program in the U.S. to specifically target black listeners. The station soon made a switch to all-black programming and became the city's top station. In 1954, they were licensed to increase power to 50,000 watts and with this powerful signal, were able to reach 10 percent of the African-American population in the United States. Many music legends got their start at WDIA, including B. B. King and Rufus Thomas. Isaac Hayes was a regular on the station's Big Star Talent Show and the station's first female African-American disc jockey was Willa Monroe, who hosted a program for homemakers.

-Information courtesy of [Historic-Memphis.com](http://Historic-Memphis.com)



## Questions for Further Discussion & Writing



1. What is the “music of your soul”? Name an artist/band and song that speaks to who you are as a person, that touches the heart of you. Why do you connect with this music so deeply?

2. Name an artist/band, song, and/or style of music that you love, that your friends and family might be surprised to learn that you enjoy. How did you discover this music? Did someone introduce it to you? What about it appeals to you?

3. Write a scene for a play in which a character introduces another character to one of the songs/artists/styles you discussed in the two questions above.

4. Is there still segregation in the music industry? Does music have a color?

5. Delray warns Huey against “stealing” his club’s music at the beginning of the play. At various stages of the development of popular music in America, from jazz to rock and roll to hip hop, white artists have been accused of appropriating musical styles that originated in the African American community and profiting off of them through a systematic exclusion of the black artists who created them. Research this trend in American popular music/culture and debate the various facets of this argument. Try to defend the opposing viewpoint to the one you normally believe and see if you gain any understanding of the other side’s point of view.

6. How does music act as a force for social change and increased social awareness? Explore the role of music in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, looking at the following artists and songs for inspiration:

“We Shall Overcome”

Nina Simone

“Strange Fruit”

Betty Mae Fikes

“Alabama” by John Coltrane

“A Change is Gonna Come” by Sam Cooke

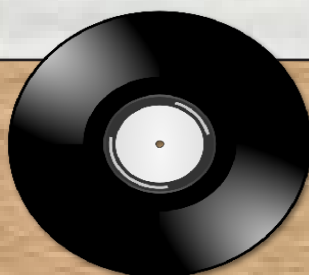
“Respect” by Aretha Franklin

Harry Belafonte

Mahalia Jackson

“Young, Gifted and Black”

Richie Havens



# Resources for Further Reading & Research



## FILMS

*Hairspray* by John Waters (1988)

This dark comedy introduced Ricki Lake and was the final film role for drag performer Divine; other actors included Debbie Harry, Sonny Bono, and Jerry Stiller. Its themes of racial integration (and sexism and sizeism) center upon a popular television music and dance program, a surrogate for **Dick Clark's "American Bandstand."** One of the supporting characters, Motormouth Mabel, is played by groundbreaking singer and civil rights activist **Ruth Brown**, popularly known as the "Queen of R&B."

*Lady Sings the Blues* (1972)

This biographical film about **Billie Holiday** stars Diana Ross as the main character. The movie explores Holiday's struggles with relationships, drug and alcohol abuse, and discrimination and racism in the music industry.

*Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (1967)

(picture right) This film about an interracial relationship was filmed when **miscegenation** laws (making it illegal for people of two different races to marry) were still on the books in America. However, by the time the movie was released to cinemas, the Supreme Court decision of **Loving v. Virginia** struck down those laws as unconstitutional. The Academy Award-winning film is a dramatic comedy starring Sidney Poitier, Katherine Hepburn, and Spencer Tracy. Tracy died 17 days after filming completed and six months before the film was released in theatres.

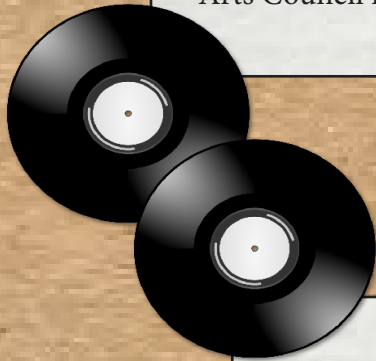


## BOOKS

- *Memphis: The Complete Book and Lyrics of the Broadway Musical* (The Applause Libretto Library Paperback) by Joe DiPietro and David Bryan (2011)
- *Dewey and Elvis* by Lewis Cantor (2005)
- *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began* by George Washington Lee (1934)
- *On Beale Street* by Ronald Kidd (2008)
- *Broadcasting the Blues: Black Blues in the Segregation Era* by Paul Oliver (2005)
- *Radio and the Struggle for Civil Rights in the South* (New Perspectives on the History of the South) by Brian E. Ward (2006)
- *How It Feels to Be Free: Black Women Entertainers and the Civil Rights Movement* by Ruth Feldstein (2013)
- *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America* (Pivotal Moments in American History) by Glenn C. Altschuler (2004)

## Our Story

Founded in 1976 and enjoying its 39th season, Arkansas Repertory Theatre is the state's largest non-profit professional theatre company. A member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT D), The Rep has produced more than 280 productions including forty world premieres on its 385-seat Main-Stage and 99-seat black box Second Stage located in its historic Galloway building in downtown Little Rock. The Rep relies on season subscriptions, special events, foundation support, corporate and individual donations, Shakespeare in American Communities, The Shubert Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts and Arkansas Arts Council funding



## Our Mission

Arkansas Repertory Theatre exists to create a diverse body of theatrical work of the highest artistic standards. With a focus on dramatic storytelling that illuminates the human journey, The Rep entertains, engages and enriches local and regional audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

## Contact Information

For questions or comments concerning this production of *Memphis* or the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, contact our offices at (501) 378-0445. Additional information may also be found at [www.therep.org](http://www.therep.org). The Box Office may be reached at (501) 378-0405.

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