



Gene Vincent

February 11, 1935 - October 12, 1971

Newhall, California

Gene Vincent, the Norfolk-born rockabilly pioneer whose 1956 hit "Be-Bop-a-Lula" helped define early rock and roll, died in Newhall, California, on October 12, 1971. He was thirty-six.

He was born Vincent Eugene Craddock in Norfolk, Virginia, on February 11, 1935, and grew up around the Navy yards of Hampton Roads. A motorcycle crash in 1955 shattered his left leg; doctors nearly amputated it, and he wore a steel brace for the rest of his life, a limp that became part of his coiled stage presence. Signed to Capitol Records, he and his band the Blue Caps cut "Be-Bop-a-Lula" in a burst that reached the Top Ten and made him, for a moment, a peer of Elvis Presley.

American chart success faded after a few more hits in 1956 and 1957, but in Britain and France he remained a star, touring hard in black leather and influencing a generation of English rockers who studied his snarl and stance. In 1960 he survived the car crash near Chippenham, England, that killed his friend Eddie Cochran; Vincent's injuries worsened the damage to his already fragile leg. He kept recording and performing through the 1960s, sometimes brilliant, often struggling with pain and drink.

He died of a ruptured ulcer and internal bleeding at Inter-Valley Community Hospital in Newhall. He was buried in Eternal Valley Memorial Park nearby. In 1998 he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The nickname some fans gave him, the Screaming End, fit the sound he left behind: urgent, raw, and finished far too soon.

Services

Died in Newhall, CA, October 12, 1971, aged 36. Portrait: Capitol Records publicity photograph (public

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