

*Eddie and Gene were friends ... to the end.*

## “BE BOP A LULA” PLAYS THE FRINGE

Direct from the Cat Club on the Sunset Strip, the legendary rock drama about Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent takes the stage for a 15-night run at Sweet Grand ECA



***Be Bop A Lula***, the full-length play about 1950s rockabilly stars Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent, will open at Sweet Grand in the Edinburgh College of Art (Venue 186) on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August (preview night), at 8:00PM, running daily until 30<sup>th</sup> August. This is the play’s UK debut.

Written by Rex Weiner, ***Be Bop A Lula*** was first produced in 1991 at Mark Mahoney's Shamrock Tattoo on 3rd St. in Los Angeles. Audience demand moved the play to the Coconut Teazer nightclub on the Sunset Strip, and then to Theatre/Theater in Hollywood for an extended run in 1992, produced by British pop star Adam Ant, John Densmore (The Doors), and Lori Depp. The play’s run – featuring an electrifying performance by Paul Hipp (original lead in *Buddy* on the West End and Broadway) as Gene Vincent – has since become an LA theater legend.

The 2009 Fringe production stars Aaron Dupree as Gene Vincent and Chance Dean as Eddie Cochran. These rising young actors led the cast of a September 2008 revival of ***Be Bop A Lula*** at the Cat Club, a rock venue on LA’s famed Sunset Strip owned by Slim Jim Phantom of the Stray Cats.

“I’m very excited that ***Be Bop A Lula*** is finally coming home to the UK, where Eddie and Gene remain heroes, and I’m particularly proud to be part of Sweet Entertainment’s lineup at the Fringe, where the play is really the thing,” said playwright/director Rex Weiner. “We look forward to rocking Edinburgh.”

***Be Bop A Lula*** has been endorsed by Gene Vincent’s daughters Melody Craddock and Sherri Vincent, with rights permissions granted by the Vincent Estate. Excerpts from ***Be Bop A Lula***, performed by Dupree and Dean, were featured in the recent BBC Radio 2 documentary on Gene Vincent “Race With the Devil,” narrated by The Who’s Roger Daltrey. The play is mentioned in Adam Ant’s autobiography *Stand and Deliver*.

***Be Bop A Lula*** is inspired by the true facts of Cochran and Vincent’s famous English tour in 1960, taking place in their hotel room in a small town between Manchester and Liverpool on the night when Eddie is reported to have had a premonition of his early death two weeks later in a car crash at the age of 21.

The Fringe performance is directed by Rex Weiner, and produced by JD Henshaw & DBS Productions, Executive Producers Amy Laurie and Rex Weiner; Associate Producers Oliver Kwon, and Primum Entertainment Group (<http://www.primumlive.com/>), with musical direction and original music by Dan Radlauer. Tickets £5, £9, and £10.

For interviews with the author, Rex Weiner, Gene Vincent’s daughter Sherri Vincent, and John Densmore (of The Doors) please contact by email: [bebopalulatheplay.amy@gmail.com](mailto:bebopalulatheplay.amy@gmail.com)

For more information: Sweet Entertainment +44 (0) 20 7404 6411

[Tickets www.edfringe.com](http://www.edfringe.com) ,

[www.myspace.com/bebopalulaplay](http://www.myspace.com/bebopalulaplay)

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# Be Bop A Lula

## The rock drama by Rex Weiner

*“This is a fascinating play, and anyone who digs the twisted, demented history of rock and roll should go and see it.” – Classic Rock Today*

**Be Bop A Lula** is a play written by Rex Weiner about American rockabilly stars Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent touring England in 1960, meeting two English girls in a small town on the night when Eddie has a premonition of his early death, and how the event changes everyone's life forever.

### History

The play was first produced in 1991 at Mark Mahoney's Shamrock Tattoo on 3rd St. in Los Angeles. It subsequently moved to the Coconut Teaser nightclub on the Sunset Strip, and then to Theatre/Theater in Hollywood in 1992 for an extended run where it was produced by Adam Ant, John Densmore (The Doors), and Lori Depp (Johnny's ex). Starring Paul Hipp (the lead in the original "Buddy" on the West End and Broadway) as Gene Vincent and Donal Logue ("The Tao of Steve") as Eddie Cochran, the play was directed by Jeff Murray and ran for two months to excellent reviews in Billboard, Variety and the LA Times before being shut down by the Los Angeles riots of that year.

A revival of *Be Bop A Lula* in September 2008 returned the legendary rock drama to the Sunset Strip with an all-new cast led by rising young stars Aaron DuPree and Chance Dean. The limited engagement of the show staged at the Cat Club (owned by Slim Jim Phantom of the Stray Cats) was directed by Rex Weiner and Polly Shannon, featuring musical production and original music by veteran Hollywood film and TV composer Dan Radlauer. DuPree and Dean reprise their roles at the Fringe, again under the direction of Rex Weiner, with musical direction from Radlauer.

Two excerpts from *Be Bop A Lula*, performed by Dupree and Dean, were featured in the recent BBC Radio2 documentary on Gene Vincent "Race With the Devil," narrated by The Who's Roger Daltrey. The play is mentioned in Adam Ant's autobiography "Stand and Deliver."

*Be Bop A Lula* has been endorsed by Gene Vincent's daughters Melody Craddock and Sherri Vincent, with rights permissions granted by the Vincent Estate.

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## REVIEW FROM THE CAT CLUB ON THE SUNSET STRIP

CLASSIC ROCK TODAY  
September 11th, 2008



### 'Be Bop A Lula' returns to Hollywood

On Monday, I had the pleasure of seeing a small, ambitious play at the Cat Club in Hollywood called **Be Bop A Lula**, a tale that revolves around 1950s rock legends Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran. Not exactly the Kodak Theatre, the Cat Club is narrow, dingy and owned by Slim Jim Phantom, the drummer for the Stray Cats. It's situated along the row of shops between the Whisky A Go Go and the Roxy Theatre. Yeah, the place is pure rock and roll — a rather appropriate locale when you consider the storyline of the play.

If you're unfamiliar with the life and times of Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran, I'll give you the abridged version. Both had major, influential rock hits in the mid 1950s — Cochran with "Summertime Blues" and Vincent with "Be Bop A Lula." By 1960, both had peaked in America, so they toured together in England, where their style of rock and roll was embraced by the likes of John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

On the night of April 17, 1960, Cochran, his girlfriend Sharon Sheeley and Vincent were riding in a taxi cab, en route to London's Heathrow Airport, when it crashed into a lamp post. Vincent and Sheeley were injured, but survived. Cochran wasn't so lucky — he died at the age of 21. This is where the plot thickens, so to speak. Three weeks prior, Cochran and Vincent were on tour and had spent the night at a hotel in a small English village. That evening's full turn of events is up for speculation, but the manager of the hotel claims he was rustled from his bed in the middle of the night by a frantic knocking on his door. When he rushed to see who it was, he found Eddie Cochran crying and claiming he was going to die.

On the small stage of the Cat Club, two beds function as the essential makings of the room Vincent and Cochran shared that night (if, in fact, they shared a room at all). A guitarist and keyboardist hide in the shadows, awaiting their cues, which are subtle, but necessary to the pace. The lights dim, and the 50 or so patrons squeezed into the tiny room fall mute. Rex Weiner, the play's author, breaks the silence by introducing himself and setting up the story. Then he brings up a very special guest — John Densmore, the drummer for the Doors.

It turns out Densmore has a past relationship with the **Be Bop A Lula** play which he, along with other luminaries including Adam Ant, produced at another Hollywood venue back in the 90s. He speaks softly and mentions that the Cat Club was where the Doors played many of their early gigs. It was the London Fog back then, according to Densmore. Although I'd read the coffee shop next door was where the London Fog was, I wasn't about to argue with a guy who was there. It makes more sense anyway.

Densmore talks about a time in L.A. when Jerry Lee Lewis opened for the Doors. It's great to hear guys from the 60s speak with such reverence about guys from the 50s — back when rock and roll was actually invented. There's no doubt in my mind that Lewis, along with Cochran, Vincent, Chuck Berry, Little Richard and a couple of others, are the true architects of early rock.

The play begins in the midst of the darkened club as Chancellor Dean as Eddie Cochran and Aaron Dupree as Gene Vincent snake their way to the stage, immediately engaged in dialogue. At the story's heart are two complex characters, young, in their early twenties, yet already past their prime. Dupree convincingly lives up to Vincent's image as a rough, reckless, self-deprecating prankster in chronic pain with a bad limp and resigned to his status as a has-been. Dean's Cochran is the more likeable of the two, playing a talented, homesick musician who wants to quit the road, marry his girlfriend and raise a family.

The two trade barbs, laugh and cuss up a storm until a couple of English girls — Alice and Martha played by Zoe Simpson and Nicole Nelson, respectively — knock on the door. Cochran lets his guard down at one point, making a play for Alice before things get dark and introspective. That's when Buddy Holly, played by Ron Geren, emerges and spoils the party.

I don't want to spoil the party, so I'll leave it at that. But I will say that ***this is a fascinating play, and anyone who digs the twisted, demented history of rock and roll should go and see it.***

<http://classicrock.today.com/2008/09/11/be-bop-a-lula-returns-to-hollywood/>

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

## TALES BEHIND THE DOORS



September 16, 2008 --

WHO knew 1950s rockabilly icon Gene Vincent was such a big influence on 1960s psychedelic band The Doors? Former Doors drummer **John Densmore**, fresh from a victory in a California court forbidding his two surviving former bandmates from using the name The Doors, turned up for the opening of "Be Bop A Lula," **Rex Weiner's** play about the late Vincent and fellow rocker Eddie Cochran, at the Cat Club on the Sunset Strip last week. "Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran were as important to rock 'n' roll as **Chuck Berry** and **Little Richard**," Densmore told the standing-room crowd from the same stage where The Doors got their start four decades ago, adding that Cochran's rollicking "Summertime Blues" just celebrated its 50th anniversary. Vincent's sister, **Tina Craddock**, recalled that Doors frontman Jim Morrison "had a man- crush" on Vincent.

[http://www.nypost.com/seven/09162008/gossip/pagesix/tales\\_behind\\_the\\_doors\\_129243.htm](http://www.nypost.com/seven/09162008/gossip/pagesix/tales_behind_the_doors_129243.htm)

Chance Dean is Eddie (L) Aaron DuPree is Gene  
photo by Colin Finlay®



# *Be Bop A Lula*

*the rock drama  
by Rex Weiner*



Eddie & Gene  
were friends

...to the end.

Edinburgh Fringe  
16-30 AUG '09  
Sweet Grand Theater  
Edinburgh College of Art

Wayne Kruse

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