

ROCK AND ROLL MAN – Content Warning

February – March 2026

This sheet is for anyone who would like to have a greater understanding of any sensitive content prior to seeing the show, therefore **please be aware that if you read on, there will be significant spoilers.** Songs featured in the production will be detailed in bracketed italics.

Please note that this production contains racist and segregationist language, anti-Semitic themes, innuendos, references to alcoholism and drug abuse, and strong language throughout.

PLOT SUMMARY

Rock & Roll Man is the original musical about a musical original. Alan Freed was a Cleveland DJ who heard the future and knew he had to let it sing. He named the genre "Rock & Roll", bringing music to the masses. Along the way, he became an icon to the nation's youth and a target to the nation's establishment. Enjoy explosive original songs written just for the stage, alongside classics from legends such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis and The Drifters. Revel in genre-defying hits like 'Tutti Frutti', 'Great Balls of Fire', 'Yakety Yak' and 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love', with directing by Tony Award nominee Randal Myler and choreography by Drama Desk Award winner Stephanie Klemons (*Hamilton, In The Heights*). Freed's passion for music inspired the generation that changed society forever.

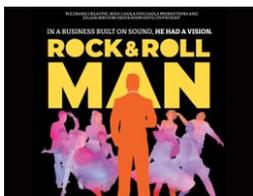
SCENE BY SCENE BREAKDOWN

Act 1

Scene 1, Paramount Theater, NYC, 1958: We see a grown-up Alan Freed sat in an armchair as we hear a memory of his childhood overlapping the scene; his mother is telling him to turn the music down, and Alan refuses, as he loves listening to the musician playing, Benny Goodman.

Back in Alan's present, we are at the Brooklyn Paramount, at Alan Freed's 1958 Holiday Rock and Roll Extravaganza. Alan takes to the microphone and welcomes to the stage the quartet, The Chords (*Sh-Boom*).

Scene 2, Alan's Palm Springs House, 1965: The TV News announcer is reporting on the troops being deployed in the Vietnam war. Alan's wife Jackie enters and, seeing her husband asleep, turns off the television. Going over to Alan, she shakes him awake, worried. Alan insists that he is fine, saying he was dreaming that he was back at the Paramount in Brooklyn. Jackie spots the empty drinks bottle that Alan is hiding in the chair and, in protest, Alan insists that he is going to stop drinking, and that he will be back on the radio soon. He smells dinner cooking, and teases Jackie that dinner isn't the only thing that's smelling good. Jackie gives him the remote, and he



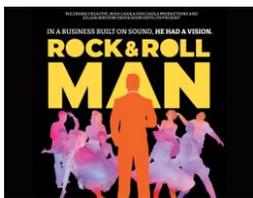
turns the radio back on, just in time to hear the TV announcer say that ‘Alan Freed is in trouble again’, and that President J. Edgar Hoover is going to push for Freed’s prosecution. Alan is frustrated by this, and the news article moves onto celebrating the ongoing success of The Beatles – a success that Alan claims is due to his Rock and Roll shows. He is desperate to get back on the airwaves and share his love of music with his audiences again (*Playin’ Music*).

Scene 3, The Dream Courtroom: The Bailiff calls for order in the court, and Alan appears to wake up with a start. The Judge, presiding over the Court of Public Opinion, enters, and tells Freed that his reputation is hanging in the balance. J. Edgar Hoover comes forward as the prosecuting officer, and the judge asks Alan to present his lawyer – at which point, Little Richard comes forward (*Ready Teddy*), stating that this trial is a witch-hunt, and that he is the original architect of Rock and Roll. Hoover accuses Little Richard of not being a character of good standing, insisting that he is making a mockery of the court. The Bailiff reads the charges against Alan Freed, that he is accused of destroying the American way of life with the genre that he has called Rock and Roll. Hoover in turn accuses Freed of forcing it upon the unsuspecting youth of America, manipulating them into a world of drugs, delinquency, narcotics, alcohol, and sex. The Judge invites Alan to tell the court of where he first heard this kind of music, and Alan says it was when he first went to the church of a school friend (*Rocka My Soul*).

Scene 3A, Alan’s Childhood Home: Alan brings his friend Dave home to dinner, and Alan’s mum tells Alan to ask Dave to leave. It becomes clear very quickly that Alan’s mother is concerned that Dave is black, and says that the neighbourhood can already barely cope with the fact that Alan’s father is Jewish. She insists that Dave must leave, and so, rather than asking Dave to leave, Alan says to him that they will go and get a burger together, his treat. The scene morphs back into the court, and the Judge instructs Alan that they don’t want his life story, but more about where Rock and Roll came from.

Scene 4, A Bar in Cleveland: Alan is joking at the bar with another man, swapping jokes. They introduce themselves to one another, and we learn that the man Alan is talking with is Leo Mintz, owner of one of Alan’s radio station’s biggest sponsors, Record Rendezvous. Leo tells Alan that he has to check it out.

Scene 5, Leo’s Record Shop: Black and white kids are dancing together, singing along to a record (*Good Rockin’*). Alan is enthralled, having never seen kids from different races dancing together (*Destiny*). As the kids are dancing, the father of one of the girls in the store sees her dancing with a black man, and insists that she leaves to go home at once. The atmosphere breaks, and Leo insists that it is closing time, so all the kids leave. Alan reassures him that they will be back, and Leo confesses that it isn’t the kids he is worried about, but more so their parents, who might stop the kids from coming to the store.



Alan says that he wants to be the first person to play this music on the WJW radio, and the pair of them come up with the idea of Leo sponsoring Alan's show, as then they can play whichever artists, and whatever tracks, they'd like. Pleased with themselves, Leo plays Alan one of the most popular records of the moment, saying the kids love it as it is a little raunchy (*Sixty Minute Man*).

As the track plays, Alan looks through other records that Leo has available, and is taken by the title of one called the 'Moondog Symphony'. Leo says it's the weirdest thing he's ever heard, but plays it for Alan anyway, who loves it so much that he uses the track as the inspiration for his new radio show, calling himself the Moondog and his listeners the Moondoggers, saying that the radio station managers would be mad to say no.

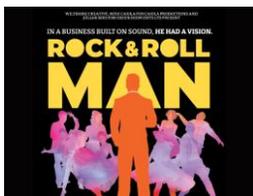
Scene 6, Radio Station WJW, Cleveland: Radio station manager Bob says no. He worries that by playing that kind of music, they'll lose all their white listeners. Alan pushes back, but Bob's word is final – until, that is, he has to call on Alan to deputise for a show as the host is unwell. Alan says yes, and goes against the track list he is given in order to play the records he really wants to play (*Rocket 88*). The phone lines start ringing, including Bob's daughter calling in – who, talking over her dad, tells him that she loves this music and that all her friends are tuning in too.

Scene 7, Alan's New Radio Show: Alan introduces the new show, the Moondog show, bringing all the best and new rhythm and blues to his audiences (*Money Honey*).

Scene 8, Leo's Record Store: Back in Record Rendezvous, the kids are back and singing along to 'Money Honey'. Leo asks the kids who are in there dancing everyday if they are ever going to buy anything, and the kids in turn try to convince him to give them some records on credit, on the promise that they will pay him back the following day when they get their allowances. Alan, watching, tells Leo to put the cost of the records on his own tab, and the kids thank Alan as they leave. Leo introduces Alan to one of the kids, Jay, and Jay initially doesn't believe that the Moondog could be a white man, because of the music he plays. Leo reaffirms that Alan is the Moondog and Jay, suddenly starstruck, tells Alan that he's going to be a singer someday, and that his friends call him Screamin' Jay Hawkins. Alan, equally excited, tells Leo that they've got to put on a show for these kids, a concert where they can all come and enjoy the music live, performed by the artists who they've been listening to for so long, and they'll call it the Moondog Royal Coronation Ball.

Scene 9, Cleveland Arena, the Moondog Coronation Ball: Alan asks the crowd, his Moondoggers, to howl, as he introduces singer LaVern Baker (*Jim Dandy*).

Scene 10, Backstage at the Cleveland Arena: Alan goes to find his wife backstage at the arena, where she is counting up the ticket sales from the night's show. Alan asks how they did, and



Jackie, thrilled, tells him that it is a sell-out show. LaVern, however, enters and tells Alan that they've got a problem, as there are thousands of kids outside the arena all trying to get in. The arena's proprietor, Mr Murphy, tells Alan that he must cancel the show, and that he will find Alan personally responsible for any damage that is done.

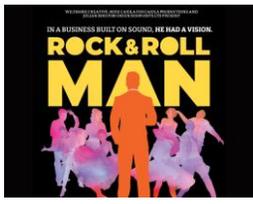
Scene 11, Alan's radio show: Bob, the radio station manager, is furious with the fallout from Alan's live show, with front page news reporting that it was a fiasco. Alan, in a moment of defiance, tells his radio show listeners to get in touch if they want to keep hearing him on the airwaves. He tells his listeners that he's got a hot new track to play them, from someone who's going to be big on the music scene, and plays Little Richard (*Lucille*).

Scene 12, Alan's radio studio, several days later: Alan and Jackie are going through piles of fan mail: it's clear that the kids are supporting Alan completely in the music he plays. Leo shows them the front page of Billboard Magazine, stating that they're national news. Jackie gives Alan a telegram to read, and Alan realises it's an invite to go and do his radio show in New York – a huge opportunity. Leo tells Alan to take it, but that he can't go with him, as his shop and his roots are in Cleveland.

Scene 13, W.I.N.S. Radio Station, New York: Alan opens his radio show in New York, and ends up talking to his daughter on the radio phone. Saying that they miss each other, Alan plays a track by the Moonglows (*Sincerely*).

Scene 14, Dream Courtroom: Hoover reminds the court that Freed was the Manager of the Moonglows, stating that Freed was also given a songwriting credit on the track, which Freed says is because he came up with the title and worked on the lyrics with them. Hoover, however, asks about Chuck Berry, and surely it was Chuck's song more than Alan's. Chuck Berry enters the court (*Maybellene*), and says that, yes, he always thought he'd written that one. Hoover goes to strike the next blow, asking Freed about Louis Hardin, the real Moondog and original composer of the 'Moondog Symphony' track that Alan used as the theme song for his show. Alan reminds the court that he had settled with Hardin, and that's why he'd had to come up with a new name for his show. The *Sixty Minute Man* quartet appear, and start riffing on the song's chorus, particularly on the phrase 'Rock 'em, roll 'em, all night long'.

Finally, Alan tunes into it, and so calls the music genre that he's been playing 'Rock and Roll'. Little Richard, ever the innovator, states he was the originator of the music, but there is no doubt whatsoever that Alan is the one who gave it its name (*Good Golly/Tutti Frutti*).



Act 2

Scene 1, back in court: We're welcomed back into the courtroom with the final riff of 'A Wop Bop a Loop Bop, a wop bam boom!' from Little Richard. Pat Boone, however, intercedes, and says he hopes Alan will play his version of the same song – much more muted, toned down, and 'smoothed out', bleaching the colour from it. Alan maintains to Boone that he will only play the originals of those songs, and not any covers of them.

Order is restored in the court, and Hoover asks Alan to tell us about his friend Morris Levy. Alan says that Morris owned a big nightclub and a record company, and that he'd heard Morris was the guy to see to help promote live shows. Little Richard tries to stop Alan from recounting this story, saying Alan would like to retract this memory, but Alan proceeds with it anyway. The dream moves us to the nightclub.

Scene 1A, Birdland, Morris Levy's jazz club: The stage is set, and we are welcomed to Birdland.

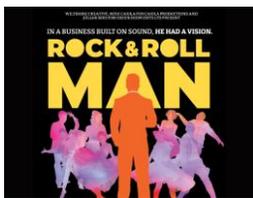
Scene 2, Birdland: The scene opens with Morris telling us how he operates (*Be Good To Morris*). Alan is introduced to Morris, and after some sharing of their Jewish heritage, they hash out a business deal where Morris will manage the promotion of Alan's live shows. Alan, after some persuading, agrees the deal with Morris and they shake hands.

Scene 2A, the courtroom: Hoover, accusatorily, says that Morris had Alan covered, and Alan replies with knowing that Morris delivered on his promise to Alan, big time.

Scene 3, Paramount Theatre: Onstage, Alan introduces LaVern Baker (*Tweedlee Dee*).

Scene 4, backstage at the Paramount: Morris is delighted, saying that they are grossing bigger figures than Frank Sinatra. Alan, also thrilled, tells Morris that he closed the deal – and enlightens Morris as to the plan he has been hatching, to take the show out on a national tour across America, including to some Southern states. Morris isn't convinced that the Southern promoters will agree to having black and white artists on the same stage, but Alan tells him that they already have, that the deals are sealed (*Rock and Roll Is Here To Stay*).

Scene 5, various theatres across America: in a montage of scenes that take us to different theatres across the States, Alan introduces a variety of musicians, including Buddy Holly (*Peggy Sue*), and Bo Diddley (*Hey Bo Diddley/Who Do You Love*). Morris meets Alan at the side of the stage, passing Jerry Lee Lewis, telling him that they have a problem as Chuck Berry, their closing act, has just been arrested for being with an underage girl. Jerry Lee chimes in, saying that he



could help out and close the show – as Morris and Alan both look at him, as he has his arm around a young girl. Jerry quickly states that she is his cousin. Alan, preparing to go out and tell the audience the bad news, is interrupted by the arrival of Chuck Berry, who finally manages to get onstage (*Roll Over Beethoven*).

In a theatre in Boston, Alan introduces The Coasters, one of his favourite acts (*Yakety Yak*).

Scene 6, backstage at Boston Arena: An Irish police cop approaches Alan, telling him he has to get the crowd under control, as white and black kids are dancing together, telling Freed that they separate the kids for a reason. Alan says that doesn't happen at his shows, and the cop replies that it might be Alan's show, but it is taking place in his town. Alan encourages LaVern Baker to go onstage and perform if she's comfortable doing so, or he can put Jerry Lee Lewis on if not. LaVern insists she'll go on, saying that all her life people have been trying to stop her from doing things, and that it won't be happening tonight. She goes on stage and performs (*See See Rider*). LaVern finishes performing, and Jerry Lee Lewis follows (*Great Balls of Fire*). As Jerry Lee begins his solo, the cop intervenes, switching on the lights and stopping the show, as the kids fight back saying that they want to rock.

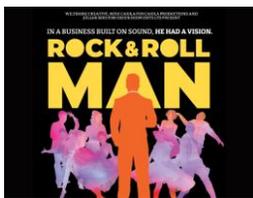
Scene 7, the Boston Riot, and Hoover's crusade: A Newsboy announces the headlines of the riot at Alan's show (*We Wanna Rock/Get Freed/Banned*) as we move to the next scene.

Scene 8, FBI Headquarters: Hoover continues his commentary of the situation as various FBI staff offer him paperwork that could support a case against Freed.

Scene 8A, the riot begins: The Newsboy reads us further headlines, and the riot begins as words against Freed are shouted out. A Southern Preacher claims that it is this "jungle music" being played by devilish DJs, and he destroys the records in the name of Jesus (*Jesus Save Us*). Alan appears in his own spotlight, and insists that he is not going to be taken down by the rioters and those protesting against him (*King of the World*).

Scene 9, Alan's office at W.I.N.S: Alan is packing up his office, and drinking heavily. Morris comes in and asks him what's new, to which Alan replies that he doesn't have a job anymore. Morris, bringing in good news, says that he's been able to pull in a couple of favours at Paramount Pictures, and has secured a 4 film deal with them for Alan to become a movie star.

Scene 10, WABC Studio, on the air: Alan signs off his radio show at the new station, thanking his listeners in the States, Luxembourg, and now in the British Isles, too. Once off the air, he's told that his daughter is on the line, and he picks up. Alana says that she misses him, and that her mother and her new husband fight all the time. In an attempt to cheer her up, Alan says that he's



been talking to her mother and that he is going to buy a house for them all down the street from him in New York. Excited, Alana asks her father if he's going to have Elvis on his new TV show, and Alan says that he'll try.

Scene 11, Big Beat television show set: Alan starts off the show, saying he's just finished filming his first motion picture featuring the audience's favourite rock and roll acts, as he introduces the first act of the evening, Frankie Lymon and The Teenagers (*Why Do Fools Fall In Love*). Frankie invites a girl from the audience up to join him, and finishes the song by kissing her on the cheek. Everyone freezes, including the band, as the TV show stage manager yells that they must cut to commercial, as the band tell Frankie he's crazy for doing that live on TV.

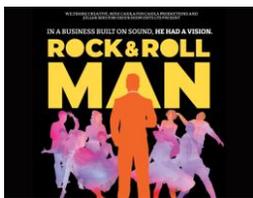
Scene 12, dream commercial: Little Richard comes onstage with a Dairy Queen cart, advertising their chocolate and vanilla ice creams, and how at Dairy Queen, you can mix them up, even if other people don't want you to.

Scene 13, a hallway: Hoover labours the point that this kind of music encourages uncontrollable urges in young people, including interracial kissing, and Little Richard replies by going up to Hoover and throwing a kiss his way. Hoover, disgusted, asks for the New York District Attorney (D.A.)

Scene 14, Hoover and the D.A.: Hoover is on the phone to the D.A., asking him for a way to be able to take Freed off the airwaves permanently. He asks if there is a commercial bribery statute in New York and, sensing a way through, asks if payola - the practice of bribing someone in return for the unofficial promotion of a product in the media - would fall under that statute, and the D.A. confirms that it would. Hoover says that in whatever way possible, what Alan is doing must be made to fit this description.

Scene 15, Radio Station: The scene opens with a song (*Everybody's Doin' It*). Morris arrives, telling Alan that everyone at Mercury Records is pleased he's going to be pushing their new singles, saying that they have a new one called 'Tweedle Dee' by Georgia Gibbs. Alan reminds Morris that that is LaVern Baker's song, and he won't be playing white cover versions of black artists. However, he appeases Morris by saying that Mercury should give him all of their new records and, as Alan knows what the kids want to listen to, if he likes it, he'll play it.

Scene 16, Grand Jury Courtroom: The D.A. is grilling Morris under a spotlight, querying a loan that he gave to Alan Freed. Morris says that it was for home improvements, and that he never expected anything back from it, and that in fact Alan had made a lot of people a lot of money over the years whilst Alan himself was earning very little at the radio stations.



Scene 17, Birdland: Alan questions Morris as to why he said that, and Morris replies saying that the Jury were digging a little too close to the truth and so he had to find a way out and around it. Morris tells Alan that as long as he didn't accept any other cheques, the police have no further proof – but it then becomes clear that Alan did, in fact, accept cheques from others. Morris, trying to steady the situation, tells Alan to keep his head down and it'll all blow over. Shortly after this, however, we hear of a headline "I never took payola" – Morris, cursing, calls Alan a loud-mouthed schmuck.

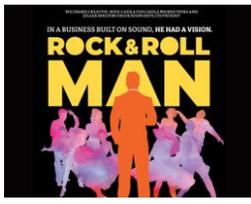
Scene 18, Congressional Hearing Room: A senator's voice asks Alan, standing in a spotlight, to recount his sources of income and Alan does so, including the title 'Record Consultant'. The senator queries this, and Alan says that record labels paid him to judge the market value of the records that they were putting out, and the senators ask Alan if it ever occurred to him that there might be some impropriety in him accepting money in this way. Alan insists that no impropriety occurred, that it was a fair business exchange: he worked, and he was compensated for that work. The hearing ends.

Scene 19: Brooklyn Paramount: Alan is drinking to the underscore of a song (*Smoke Gets In Your Eyes*), as his wife appears. Alan is confused as to why she is there, and she reminds him that they were meant to be getting dinner after the show. Alan had clearly forgotten this, and says that she could come along with him to meet Morris, but Jackie refuses, saying that Morris is trying to help Alan into prison, implying that he would be better off without him.

Scene 20, Alan's arrest: A Boston cop arrests Alan for the crime of commercial bribery, and Alan says to the reporter that this arrest isn't about payola, that in fact they're using that as a front to disguise the institutional racism that is going towards Rock and Roll. Lights come up on Jackie, who tells Alan that they haven't seen each other in weeks, that the bills aren't getting paid, and that really, she can't do this anymore.

Scene 21, Birdland: Morris is looking over a pile of receipts when Alan enters, telling Morris that he needs some more of the gross profits as he is down to his last ten percent. Morris tells him that that isn't possible, as many of the venues and promoters are pulling out of the live shows because of the negative press surrounding Alan. Morris breaks the hard truth to Alan that radio stations now just want squeaky-clean DJs, and that he is too much of a risk.

Scene 22, various radio stations: We follow Alan across his shows on different radio stations, with the implication that none of them are sticking, as he drinks deeply from a bottle (*Playing Music reprise*).



Scene 23, Dream Court: We hear the sound of a gavel, and Little Richard comes to collect Alan as the verdict is ready to be heard. We hear the judge as the jury if they have reached a verdict, and we hear that they have. The sound of the Quartet feeds back in (*Life Could Be A Dream reprise*).

Scene 24, Netherworld/Leo's record store: We're back in Record Rendezvous, and Leo asks Alan what the verdict was. Alan says he's not sure that it really matters, that even though they tried to stop him, the music that Alan championed is now everywhere. Leo smiles, saying that they did manage to make a bit of history after all. Alan asks Leo to play him what's hot, what the kids are enjoying listening to most in that moment (*Playing Music reprise 2*).

We hear a News Anchor, announcing the death of Alan Freed at the age of 43 in Palm Springs (*Rock and Roll Man*). Leo, at the microphone, announces the new inductees to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard takes over to announce himself as an inductee, too. Together, Leo and Little Richard announce the final inductee with these artists: Alan Freed. (*Rock and Roll Music*).

END OF SHOW