

California State University, Fullerton

From the Selected Works of Douglas J. Swanson, Ed.D APR

June 9, 1985

BBC follows Buddy Holly Trail to Clovis

Douglas J. Swanson, Ed.D APR



Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/dswanson/36/>

NEW MEXICO

Sunday, June 9, 1985

Albuquerque Journal

Page 1, Section C

BBC Follows Buddy Holly Trail to Clovis

By D.J. Swanson

JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

CLOVIS — He has been dead now for 26 years — four years longer than he lived. But for the fans of Buddy Holly, the feelings are still as strong today as they were on a February morning in 1959, when the young musician was killed in the crash of a chartered airplane.

In only 18 months, the Lubbock, Texas, native had recorded nine songs that became Top 10 hits on America's music charts.

Holly was the fastest-rising star in American music.

And in an instant, he was gone.

What many people don't know is that Holly and many other notable musicians of the period got their start in recording studios in Clovis.

And because of this fact of history, later this month a television documentary crew from the British Broadcasting Corp. in London, England, will be in Clovis and other communities throughout the United States to film an hourlong documentary its producers say is designed to tell "the real Buddy Holly story."

BBC director Richard Spence was in Clovis this past week, touring the city with a broadcasting consultant and associate producer, making preparations to film the Holly documentary for the BBC "Arena" program.

"We will try and tell the story completely through the pictures and the words of the



MCA RECORDS PHOTO

**Rock 'n' Roll Star Buddy Holly
BBC Wants To Set Record Straight**

people who were actually involved," Spence said, during an interview at one of the old Norman Petty production facilities in Clovis.

The late Norman Petty and Holly collaborated to write such songs as "Peggy Sue," "Maybe Baby," "It's So Easy" and "True Love Ways," which went to the top of the music charts in 1957, 1958 and 1959,

respectively.

Spence and his crew are being assisted by Petty's widow, Vi Petty, who herself sang background vocals with Holly's group, the Crickets, and was named "an honorary Cricket" by Holly.

Ironically, Spence said, the 1978 movie "The Buddy Holly Story," which purportedly showed the short life and times of the popular musician, was sadly inaccurate in many places — and downright wrong in others.

"It missed Clovis out completely," Spence said. "According to that film, Buddy Holly recorded in a garage in Lubbock and would rush over into a corner to switch the tape recorder on and off."

"Norman Petty, Vi Petty, Clovis," he continued, "disappeared completely from the map."

Spence also cited what he called "extraordinary scenes" depicting Holly as a sometimes violent man, when Holly and those around him actually "got on remarkably well."

Spence said these "peculiar inaccuracies" will be corrected when the BBC begins production on its version of the Holly story, something that will not have Hollywood's "great commercial desire to make things 'box office,' to make them as entertaining as possible."

"It's just sad," he said, referring to the 1978 movie, "that they didn't dig far enough into the true facts to find out that the true facts are far more entertaining than the feature film actually managed to be."

The BBC project, which will include seven weeks' filming in the United States, is to be shown on the "Arena" program in Great Britain before a planned worldwide syndication through a television distribution company owned by Paul McCartney.

A four-man shooting crew will begin the project this month with two days of filming in Clovis, before going on to location work in Lubbock, Nashville, New York City and Dallas, where Holly's widow now lives.

But last week was set aside for lengthy meetings with Vi Petty at the old Art Deco-style studio tucked away behind a dull stucco facade on Main Street in Clovis.

"It's an extraordinary place," Spence said, gesturing toward the raised clamshell stage and baby grand piano seemingly waiting only for a willing performer.

And, above all, the glass-walled production room sits silently. Red directors' chairs inscribed "Norman" and "Vi" sit waiting as they did when music was made here, before Norman became ill and died last year.

The 24-track state-of-the-art recording equipment is still. And dozens of pictures, awards and mementos still hang from the studio's teak-and-vinyl padded walls.

Vi said the Main Street studio and the Seventh Street studio Holly used are mostly empty these days.

"It's changed now ...," Spence agreed. "Vi's stored various things in here. But if you take away all the boxes, you can still see all the places and feel all the memories of the great music that was recorded here."