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NASHVILLE, TN.-- Before the rumble of Stealth bombers and sonic youth, there was Duane Eddy. The twangy guitarist had late '50s instrumental hits such as "Rebel Rouser," "40 Miles of Bad Road" and "Peter Gunn Theme."

Eddy, now 54, lives in humble obscurity here. Last year his career was chronicled in "Twang Thang," a comprehensive 40-track boxset released by Rhino Records. On Wednesday, Eddy will be inducted into the

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame during ceremonies in New York.

John Fogerty, an Eddy disciple, will introduce him at the induction ceremonies.

"It's certainly my opinion that he stood at the crossroads of rock 'n' roll and transformed things by putting the musician out front," Fogerty said. "And for kids like me, that was a big inspiration."

Eddy's position at the crossroads is more than just simple posturing.

His style is as anarchistic as it is devoid of the narcissism that defines today's concept of "the guitar hero." Eddy sacrifices excessive sparks for succinctness, especially in the way that he embraces the lonely bass string for melody on his six-string guitar.

That is how the trademark Eddy twang developed.

"I once read a thing in Reader's Digest about a guy who painted two vases," Eddy said over coffee at a Music Row diner. "He was asked, 'Why do you charge so much more for the vase that has only one simple line on it? Your other vase is much more intricate.' The guy replied, 'If I make a mistake on the intricate one, you can't really tell.' When he painted the simple one, the slightest mistake glares.

"That's very true with music. It's more fun to play hot licks than to keep it simple and use discipline. It's a big battle I fought with myself every time I went in the studio.

"I still have that problem."

Eddy was born in Corning, N.Y., but reared in Tucson, Ariz. His father taught him a few chords on an old guitar, and his mother played a little harmonica. As a teenager, Eddy migrated to Phoenix, where he started playing in country bands. Hank Williams Sr. and Chet Atkins were his early musical heroes.

"Actually, I learned a lot just by watching Louis Armstrong," Eddy said. "Especially his authority.

His singing was fine and charming, but he'd stand up there and take that trumpet and just blast out with attitude and simplicity. He had a feel for it. I understood what he was doing.

"When I got up and played, there was no backoff, no hesitancy, no wimpiness. That doesn't mean it can't be done dynamically. I just noticed that authority first in country and later in rock 'n' roll."

The direct style accented Eddy's bottom-heavy reverberation.

"The bass strings recorded stronger in the studio, which was a little different than the way everybody else was playing," Eddy explained. "Then (saxophonist Bill Justis' 1957 hit) 'Raunchy' came along, which influenced us to make instrumentals (especially by leaning the late Steve Douglas' tenor saxophone against Eddy's guitar). You could have hits with instrumentals. Lee Hazelwood said, 'Let's try one.' "

Hazelwood, who in the 1960s wrote the Nancy Sinatra hit "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'," and dueted with her on the Johnny Cash-June Carter duet "Jackson," was Eddy's first and most important producer. Eddy and Hazelwood co-wrote Eddy hits such as "Moovin' and Groovin'," "Rebel Rouser," "Cannonball" and "Shazam!" Hazelwood, who also arranged for Dino, Desi and Billy, concocted most of the wacky song titles.

Hazelwood began his musical career as Eb X. Preston, an Arizona-based disc jockey who studied the records he played. After hearing "Raunchy," it was Hazelwood's idea to overdub Los Angeles-based rhythm and blues saxophonist Plas Johnson onto "Moovin and Groovin'."

"Lee really learned about sound," Eddy said. "That's why some of my early records still hold up. He knew what he wanted to hear over Top 40 radio. I wanted to experiment and fool around with stereo. He didn't like that at all. He said it took the guts out of it. He said, 'It has to be just like AM radio,' and he was right. That's what we tried to do with my box set, bring it up to date but still have that AM radio feel to it."

The "Twang Thang" anthology was a year in the works. Cuts were chosen by compiler Dan Forte, but Eddy got approval from Rhino to remaster all 40 tracks. Even the set-closer, 1987's "Rockestra Theme," inspired by the grandiosity of Paul McCartney, packs the appointed Eddy punch. Eddy also helped assemble

the liner notes and archival photos for the 50-page booklet.

Eddy moved to Nashville in 1986 from Lake Tahoe to raise his profile. In the late 1980s, he had been

commuting to a jazz club in Studio City, Calif., where he played in a band that included Ry Cooder and Eddy's original Rockin' Rebel, Steve Douglas, who died last year during a session with Cooder. After playing with Eddy, Douglas' saxophone solos were heard on the recordings of Phil Spector, the Beach Boys and Elvis Presley.

Three of the most compelling tracks from "Twang Thang" are previously unreleased instrumentals Eddy recorded with Cooder in 1982 in Hollywood. The most ethereal tune is "Zephyr Cove," with Eddy knee-deep in a celestial melody and drummer Jim Keltner delivering a minimalist backbeat. Eddy said defining such a mood is "totally critical" in making music.

"That's what captures people when they listen to a record," he said. "It makes all the musicians play a certain way. When you set a mood, they do things they wouldn't have thought of otherwise." Yet, Eddy never stretched for mood as much as in his 1986 collaboration with English techno rockers the Art of Noise on a remake of Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn Theme." Although he feels that his maverick guitar style doesn't fit in Nashville, he would like to continue with similar guest spots.

"The co-artist thing with Art of Noise seems to be a better way," Eddy said, his soft eyes peering into the distance from under the brim of his trademark fedora. "I end up being a co-artist rather than a session man playing guitar. Besides, they've got a real attitude in this town about old people. I just heard the joke about 'What do they call Branson, Mo.?' It's 'Jurassic Park,' but then I got to thinking how a lot of those people working in Branson have already done what Nashville guys are trying to do or are doing.

"Now it's so 'me' oriented and competitive. We never made it a competition. Hey, we were all trying to make a living doing the same thing.

"With these kids, it's like 'I'm great and you're old; you should get the hell out of here.' They call us the geezer factor. They fired ('Nashville Now' host) Ralph Emery off TNN. They make fun, but these kids are going to get old, too, just like us."

And few of them will be recalled with the rumblin' warmth of Duane Eddy.