What was Australia's first rock 'n' roll record?

One sure way to generate an historical controversy is to ask a question such as 'what was the first rock 'n' roll record?'

As rock 'n' roll has become an accepted popular culture, historians have become increasingly interested in researching this question, and their responses often reflect different perspectives.

Number One 'Rocket 88' http://rockhall.com/blog/post/7755_jackie-brenston-rock-88-first-rock-song/ is a blog entry at the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, dealing with the claims of Jackie Brenston, whose song 'Rocket 88' was a hit in 1951. You will notice the blog also mentions several other contenders that are earlier than 'Rocket 88'. It often comes down to the criteria historians establish to come to a historical judgement.

This is your opportunity to become historians and answer the question, 'what was Australia's first rock 'n' roll record?'

Before you start, conduct a brief survey to get an idea of what people think it might be. Keep a list of suggestions and see how many turn up in your research.

Step 1 – establishing a basic list

'RareCollections: What was the first Australian Rock 'n Roll Record?'

Discusses the question, and gives you four possibilities. The next set of links will give you the chance to hear the four songs mentioned. Listen to each of them, and make a note of the date they were released.

It is also important for you, as a historian, to make sure that you verify all the information you see on sites such as YouTube, because there is no verification process for information posted there.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFllbEBh7oQ will take you to the Schneider Sisters' Washboard Rock

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsoWc54Codk will take you to Frankie Davidson's version of Rock A Beatin' Boogie

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5bV3Q-TUt8 will take you to Vic Sabrino's version of Rock Around the Clock

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1QfXQakX2w will take you to Louis Jordan's original version of Saturday Night Fish Fry, which was covered in Australia by Les Welch in 1954
After listening to these four songs, do you have an opinion on what should be called Australia's first rock 'n' roll song?

**Step 2 – exploring further options**

This site lists holdings that are tagged 'rock music' in the National Sound and Film Archive. Its 1950s holdings give you two more names to investigate: Col Joye and Johnny O'Keefe.

Go to the Johnny O'Keefe timeline [http://www.johnnyokeefe.com.au/timeline.html](http://www.johnnyokeefe.com.au/timeline.html) What possible candidates can you add to the list from this information?

The ABC's Long Way to the Top [http://www.abc.net.au/longway/artist_index/coljoye.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/longway/artist_index/coljoye.htm) gives some basic information on Col Joye. What possible candidates can you add to the list from this information?

The National Film and Sound Archives' Complete List [http://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/sound/sounds-australia/complete-list/](http://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/sound/sounds-australia/complete-list/) is a listing of sound recordings on the National Registry of Recorded Sound. Check this to see if there are any other titles you might like to investigate and add to your list.

**Step 3 – consolidating research and preliminary conclusions**
Identify all the claimants you now have for the title of Australia's first rock 'n' roll record.

Which one do you consider has the best claims?

**Step 4 – going deeper: further research**


**Step 5 – asking questions**
Do you think George Assang/Vic Sabrino's indigenous background stopped him gaining recognition in 1950s Australia?

Does a song have to be written in Australia to be Australia's first rock 'n' roll record, or merely recorded here?

**Step 6 – drawing conclusions**
What do you think was Australia's first rock 'n' roll record?

In your response, it is vital that you specifically name the sources and evidence that you use to support your response.