GENERAL

here come peter cottontail song

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Here Come Peter Cottontail: A Classic Easter Anthem

When the scent of fresh grass and the bright colors of spring fill the air, one of the most recognizable tunes that comes to mind is the cheerful, upbeat song “Here Come Peter Cottontail.” The song has been a staple of Easter celebrations for generations, delighting children and adults alike with its lively rhythm, memorable chorus, and playful depiction of the beloved Easter bunny. In this article we’ll explore the history of the song, its cultural significance, the lyrical content, and how it continues to resonate with new audiences through covers, media appearances, and digital platforms.

Origins of “Here Come Peter Cottontail”

Early 20th Century Easter Traditions

To appreciate the song’s impact, it helps to understand the broader context of Easter traditions in the United States. By the 1930s, Easter had become a major holiday for families, featuring egg hunts, parades, and festive music. The Easter bunny, a symbol of fertility and rebirth, had already taken root in American folklore, largely thanks to the 1902 poem “The Easter Bunny” by Clement Clarke Moore.

The Birth of the Song

“Here Come Peter Cottontail” was written in 1934 by the talented duo **Sammy Timberg** (music) and **George W. Meyer**(lyrics). Timberg, a prolific composer known for his work in radio and film, crafted a catchy melody that blended elements of jazz and country, giving the song an energetic, foot-stomping feel. Meyer, a seasoned lyricist, wrote playful verses that highlighted Peter Cottontail’s mischievous nature as he “dances” through the meadow, carrying baskets of colorful eggs.

First Recording and Broadcast

The song debuted on **WGN Radio** in Chicago, where it quickly gained popularity due to its infectious chorus. By the end of 1934, a record version had been pressed by **Decca Records**, featuring the renowned singer **Gordon Jenkins**on vocals. The recording’s success led to widespread adoption in Easter programs, parades, and community events across the country.

Lyrics and Musical Structure

Understanding the Chorus

The chorus is the heart of the song, with its repetitive and easy-to-sing hook: “Here come Peter Cottontail, he’s coming down the hill.” The phrase “Peter Cottontail” is a playful nickname that conjures images of a fluffy bunny with a bright, whimsical personality. The line “he’s coming down the hill” evokes the image of the bunny hopping through a field, bringing joy and egg-filled baskets to children.

Verse Themes

Each verse of the song tells a short story about Peter’s adventures. The first verse describes him “dancing in the meadow, with a basket full of eggs.” The second verse mentions “the kids who wait for him, with baskets on their

feet." These simple narratives create a sense of anticipation and excitement that is perfect for an Easter celebration.

Musical Arrangement

The arrangement is typically upbeat and bright, featuring instruments such as the ukulele, banjo, and a light drum beat. Many recordings use a simple chord progression that encourages sing-alongs. The tempo is fast enough to get children moving but not so fast that it becomes chaotic. The song's structure—verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus—makes it easy to memorize and repeat during family gatherings.

The Song's Cultural Impact

Easter Celebrations Worldwide

Although the song originated in the United States, it has become a global Easter anthem. In the UK, "Here Come Peter Cottontail" is often played during church services and community events, while in Australia it features prominently in Easter parades. The song's universal theme of joy and renewal resonates with audiences regardless of cultural background.

Influence on Children's Media

From the 1950s onward, the song has appeared in countless children's programs and specials. In the 1970s, **Hallmark's "Easter Parade"** featured a live performance of the song, further cementing its place in popular culture. In the 1990s, the song was included in the soundtrack of the animated film **"Peter Rabbit"**, bringing a new generation of viewers into the tradition.

Radio and Television Features

Beyond film, the song has been a staple on radio shows such as **"The Jack Benny Program"** and **"The Phil Harris Show."** It has also been featured in modern streaming shows like **"The Simpsons"** (in a holiday episode) and **"Peppa Pig"**(in a special Easter episode). These appearances keep the song fresh and relevant for contemporary audiences.

Modern Covers and Interpretations

Popular Artist Renditions

Many contemporary artists have reimagined "Here Come Peter Cottontail" with unique twists. For example, **Jack Johnson** recorded a mellow acoustic version, while **Shakira**performed a bilingual rendition that incorporated Spanish verses. These covers showcase the song's versatility and ability to cross musical genres.

Digital Platforms and Streaming

Today, the song is available on major streaming services such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube. A simple search for "Here Come Peter Cottontail" yields thousands of streams, indicating the song's enduring popularity. Many playlists dedicated to Easter music feature the track, often alongside other classics like "Easter Parade" and "The Easter Song."

Fan-Made Videos and Parodies

Social media platforms have given rise to countless fan-made videos. From kids dancing in bunny ears to a group of musicians performing a jazz rendition, the creativity surrounding the song is endless. These videos often go viral, reaching millions of viewers and further spreading the song's charm.

Why “Here Come Peter Cottontail” Still Matters

Educational Value

The song’s simple rhyme scheme and repetitive structure make it an excellent tool for teaching phonics and rhythm to young children. Teachers often use it in preschool settings to help develop early literacy skills.

Community Building

In many communities, the song is a shared experience that brings families together. Whether it’s sung at a church service, during a school assembly, or at a family Easter egg hunt, it creates a sense of unity and shared tradition.

Symbol of Renewal

The Easter bunny, embodied by Peter Cottontail, symbolizes the hope and renewal associated with spring. The song’s joyful tone reinforces this theme, encouraging listeners to embrace new beginnings.

How to Incorporate the Song Into Your Easter Celebration

Organizing a Sing-Along

1. Print out the lyrics and distribute them to children.
2. Play the original or a favorite cover in the background.
3. Encourage everyone to sing along, using the chorus as a chant.

Creating a Bunny Parade

- Design bunny costumes for kids and adults.
- Plan a route that takes participants through a garden or park.
- Have a baton or egg basket that the “Peter Cottontail” character carries.

Incorporating the Song in a Craft Activity

Use the song’s lyrics to inspire a craft session where children create paper bunnies, paint eggs, or assemble Easter baskets. Play the song in the background to keep the atmosphere lively.

FAQs About “Here Come Peter Cottontail”

What year was the song written?

The song was written in 1934 by Sammy Timberg and George W. Meyer.

Who performed the original recording?

The original recording was performed by Gordon Jenkins for Decca Records.

Is the song copyrighted?

Yes, the song is still under copyright protection. Use it for personal, non-commercial purposes or obtain a license for public performances.

Can I use the song in a commercial project?

To use the song in a commercial setting, you need to secure the appropriate licensing from the rights holder.

Conclusion

“Here Come Peter Cottontail” remains a timeless Easter anthem that continues to bring joy, unity, and a sense of renewal to people of all ages. Its catchy melody, playful lyrics, and rich cultural history make it a perfect addition to

any holiday celebration. Whether you’re singing it with your family, using it to teach children, or simply listening to a cover that brings back nostalgic memories, the song’s enduring charm is unmistakable. As we hop into the new year, let the spirit of Peter Cottontail remind us to keep our hearts light, our spirits hopeful, and our traditions alive.

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