

THE  
RADIO  
ONE

# Story of Pop

THE FIRST  
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
POP IN 26 WEEKLY PARTS



**CREAM:** The Heavy Success

**MOTOWN:** The Golden Years

**BEE GEES:** Brothers in Pop

**PLUS:** Honest to Goodness Pop, God Rock & more

PART 19

**25p**

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The latter years of the '60s saw a fragmentation in music and in life-styles. The old order was starting to break up. The global popularity of the Beatles had made youth homogeneous; kids of the same age group listened to and liked the same music, wore the same hairstyle, dressed alike; they were Beatles' imitators whether they lived in London, New York or Tokyo. Once this look-alike phase ran down, change came fast. The Beatles and their peers had helped to liberate youth, broken barriers and pointed the way to new experience, different values and opened minds to previously unorthodox thoughts, philosophies and ideas.

This issue reflects this turbulence. On one hand there are the Bee Gees – 'Australian Beatles' – who combined the traditional elements of pop, bowed towards showbiz and yet dabbled in new arrangements and orchestral forms; there were also the down-to-earth popsters, dependent on easily-assimilated, instantly recognizable tunes brought out and into the charts every three months. There were, too, the emerging black stars from the Motown stable who were taking commercial black music to places and people previously unaware of the rich vein of invention they had to offer. On the other hand there was a rumbling from the underground groups who went beyond pop, took a lead from the Beatles and Stones, explored different structures, revived older but now latent sources and fused them into a startlingly original, astonishingly free music. The critic who said 'Underground is a term for groups who haven't yet, don't now and never will have a hit' was soon to eat his words as they shot to the top of charts (particularly with albums) and discovered a new, intellectual audience. Spearheading them, perhaps the first of the true superstars, was Cream. Drugs started to influence music as never before and to be accepted into the youth culture. They were allied to the search for spiritualism which led to God rock and the stirrings of the Jesus movement.

*Although the radio programme and this publication have been linked for readers in the UK, we have taken care to ensure that readers abroad will find this publication complete in itself.*

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## IN THIS ISSUE

**HONEST TO GOODNESS POP** by John Pidgeon: Don't denigrate pop – it has its place in the music world, the same as other music forms ..... 505

**THE MOTOWN STORY (Part 2)** by Roger St Pierre: The very special Motown sound was the Four Tops, the Temptations, the Supremes, it was endless ..... 508

**FROM UNDERGROUND TO PROGRESSIVE ROCK** by Andrew Weiner: It was implied that rock music was going somewhere ..... 512

**CREAM** by Charles Shaar Murray: In the three and a half years of their existence, Cream changed the way in which bands play ..... 517

**TALKING 'BOUT MY GENERATION:** Lyrics of 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale' and 'A Groovy Kind Of Love' in full plus analysis ..... 521

**THE PARTING OF THE DANCE CRAZE** by Georgina Mells: The crazes seemed endless, a kaleidoscope of capers that eventually cooled down ..... 522

**GOD ROCK** by Dave Downing: Religion becomes a 'hip' subject, one deserving of interest in the rock scene ..... 524

**BEE GEES** by Dave Downing: They were so young and so sure, and they went down big ... so what really went wrong? ..... 527

**DRUGS IN THE ROCK CULTURE (Part 2)** by Johnny Hackett: Middle-class disapproval has not halted the inclusion of drugs into our rock culture ..... 529

**POP FILE** by Mitch Howard: Pop from A – Z ..... 531

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# Honest to Goodness Pop



"It's no good doing something if it doesn't sell: if the public don't like it you can't sing it."

. . . so said Cliff Richard, but the same point could have been made by countless singers, songwriters, arrangers, producers, managers and record company executives – in short, *money dominates music*.

It is an opinion popular among critics that the relative role of money distinguishes 'pop' from 'rock', in that rock has other goals besides making money. So how does a rock band differ from a pop group? Well for a start a rock band isn't necessarily chasing a hit in the Top 20, whereas to hit the singles charts is a must for a pop group, which relies more on appealing to a massive mixed audience through the media than on a cult following of fans drawn largely through the live gig circuit.

On the other hand, however, just having a hit single doesn't turn a rock band into a pop group . . . although to many people this is the way it often appears. Roy Wood, for

example, has written a number of excellent pop songs over the years, from the Move's hits, through 'Hello Susie' for Amen Corner, to Wizzard's 'Angel Fingers' in 1973; but whether he would appreciate the title of 'pop songwriter' is open to question. In fact it is most probably the 'pop' press that is largely responsible for the term's disrepute, as their well-circulated jargon clearly makes 'pop' a synonym for trash, while 'rock' is . . . well, what *they* like.

In trying to appeal to so many people with one song, there are usually certain ingredients that the pop song has to contain – in fact perhaps the simplest definition of a good pop song is 'good to dance to, even better to sing along with'. It's rarely that anything climbs very high up the singles charts without being danceable (or at least toe-tappable) and hummable. For example Lieutenant Pigeon's 'Mouldy Old Dough' and the Simon Park Orchestra's 'Eye Level', both successful in 1973, were obvious hits when heard over a pint of beer in a British pub, or before the kick-off to a Saturday afternoon football match. In other words, memorable tunes make hits, and record

Left: '70s pop star, Suzi Quatro. Below: The sleek Sweet line-up.



producers are constantly searching for them.

In the early '50s, pop music was clearly established with crooners like Dickie Valentine, Alma Cogan, Jimmy Young, Ronnie Hilton, Anne Shelton and Frankie Vaughan dishing out the schmaltz with incredible ease – complete with violins and full orchestra. To challenge them came the rockers – Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Bill Haley – followed by the Everly Brothers, Fats Domino and Little Richard . . . all tugging at very much more than the heart strings.

Britain's answer to American rock lay in Cliff Richard, Tommy Steele, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury, but on the whole they were pretty lightweight, although Cliff's 'Living Doll' and 'Travellin' Light' did seem to inspire British pop ballads for the next three years.

### Manufactured Pop Star

The coming of Adam Faith saw a new dimension for the pop industry – a manufactured pop star. Here was someone who couldn't sing very well, was tiny, fragile and sensitive, and when others were playing it tough Adam even had a name that was in complete antithesis to the likes of Billy Fury, Marty Wilde and Duffy Power.

Adam had catchy songs written for him, used intriguing arrangements with such pop innovations as pizzicato strings, and sang with outrageously stylized enunciation. 'What Do You Want?' was on its way to the top of the charts as soon as he sang the unforgettable words:

*'What do you want if you don't want money?*

*What do you want if you don't want gold?  
Say what you want and I'll give it to you,  
darling*

*Wish you wanted my love, bye-bi.'*

Adam's first five releases all made the Top 3, each with its own quirk, and he kept going unchecked through three years and 12 straight hits. After that the going got tough.

Adam Faith wasn't the only singer to find things hard after 1962. In 1963 the Beatles tore the flimsy, threadbare fabric of the British pop business to shreds. Adam Faith was finished, Marty Wilde was finished, so were a lot of others. Suddenly, if you weren't in a group, no one wanted to know.

The Beatles had a manager (Brian Epstein) and a record producer (George Martin), but they were fundamentally far more self-sufficient than the previous generation of pop stars – simply because they could write their own songs and provide their own accompaniment. Others, though, were less well-equipped than the Beatles, and yet still made it. Gerry and the Pacemakers, who swapped places with the Beatles at the top of the charts in the summer of 1963, needed outside help to reach no. 1. 'How Do You Do It?' was written by a professional songwriter,

506



C. Walter

**Amen Corner, from left to right: Dennis Bryan, Blue Weaver, Allan Jones, Mike Smith, Neil Jones, Clive Taylor and Andy Fairweather-Lowe.**

Mitch Murray, and it was Murray's example which provided the inspiration for one of the most successful pop teams of the '60s. The team was Ken Howard and Alan Blaikley, and neither was in a group. They were ex-public school, university graduates with untypically strong interests in pop, who decided to have a go at songwriting after Murray said how easy it was.

After a couple of false starts with different singers they found their own group, signed a management contract with them, wrote them a song, got Joe Meek to produce it, changed the name from the Sheratons to the Honeycombs, and had their first no. 1 within a year with 'Have I The Right?' in August 1964. Howard and Blaikley had achieved their initial ambition, for the group's success was due entirely to them. The Honeycombs themselves were nothing special: if it hadn't been for the fact that the drummer was a girl, no one would have noticed what they looked like. And they *sounded* exactly the way Howard and Blaikley wanted them to – up-tempo and infectiously melodic. Yet apart from one Top 20 hit more than a year later, Howard and Blaikley had no further success with the Honeycombs. Without hits there was little to interest them in the group, for making hits was their sole concern. So they looked for another group. What they found was Dave Dee and the Bostons or, by the time the group had the first Howard and Blaikley hits, Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich.

Although the group had only one no. 1 in their career, between March 1966 and the end of 1968 they had 10 records in the Top 20, all but two well inside the Top 10. They were the perfect Howard/Blaikley

puppets, indeed the perfect pop group. None of the five was particularly handsome, but they always grinned pleasingly; their hair was exactly the right length – not so long that it offended the mums and dads, but long enough to identify them with the kids; and their clothes were the epitome of off-the-peg Carnaby Street. They were just a nice bunch of local lads. Not a Jagger or a Lennon amongst them. Through psychedelia, the underground, and the balmy summer of '67, they patrolled the charts with regularity.

Their name characterised their music: catchy and cheeky. 'Bend It' was their best song, a mixture of musical gimmickry (pinches from 'Zorba', bouzouki, accelerating tempos), sexual innuendo – 'Bend it, bend it just a little bit/And take it easy, show you're liking it' – and, naturally, a chorus you could sing along with the first time you heard it. A pop masterpiece.

### Pseudo-Underground

As early as 1967, however, Howard and Blaikley displayed a sudden desire for a measure of 'rock' respectability, when they turned to composing pseudo-underground material for the Herd. They went on to write for Matthews Southern Comfort and Flaming Youth ('Arc', a concept album), but have since stepped back into the mainstream of pop with songs for Starbuck – songs that sound curiously dated alongside Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman's 1973 version of the '60s DDBM&T hits, the Sweet's 'Blockbuster', 'Hellraiser' and 'Ballroom Blitz'.

Even more successful as a hit-maker



Pictorial Press

SKR

The original line-up of the Move, with Roy Wood, far right. Insert: Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich.

since the mid-'60s, but in a different capacity to Howard and Blaikley, has been Mickie Most. His work as a producer put the Animals into the charts, gave the Nashville Teens their two hits, revived flagging careers for Donovan and Lulu, turned Jeff Beck briefly into a pop star, and made Herman's Hermits one of the most successful pop groups ever. Without writing a note, instead by choosing everything the group recorded and supervising the sound of each recording session.

In five years he hardly ever missed, and eventually he became bored by the ease with which he could repeatedly send the Hermits into the Top 10 – 'just churn them out, there was no work attached, no sweat' – and started his own record label, Rak, as 'something to keep in the business'. He still has a good ear, and in 1973 he showed it by having hits with Suzi Quatro, C.C.S. and Mud, and himself producing one of the best pop singles of the year, Hot Chocolate's 'Brother Louie'.

No one has improved on either the methods or the track record of Howard and Blaikley or Mickie Most, but there's been no reason for the methods to have changed since pop music itself hasn't changed. Most knows that well. Interviewed in 1973, he said this: "The record business is timeless . . . 'Blockbuster' by the Sweet could have been made in the

mid-'60s – it's just like Dave Dee, etc."

All the same, many of the hit songwriters of the mid-'60s don't seem able to write hits today. Maybe Howard and Blaikley are now more interested in writing standards (Elvis recorded 'I've Lost You', a song they wrote for Ian Matthews) or creating 'art'; but others, without altering their aims, have found the going hard. Tony Hazzard wrote hits for the Hollies, Manfred Mann, Lulu and Herman's Hermits in the '60s, but nothing in the '70s.

### Consistent Success

Roger Cook, Roger Greenaway and Tony McCauley have been more consistent over the years than Hazzard, but their success in 1973 was paltry compared to that of Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman, who have written hits for Suzi Quatro, Mud and others, and had their biggest success with a series of songs for Sweet. Mickie Most is right – Sweet's hits are merely an updated version of DDDBM&T's Howard and Blaikley songs – only the gimmicks and the group's costumes have changed.

Most's successor is Jonathan King, who in fact started out around the same time with a hit of his own in the summer of 1965, and immediately afterwards created one for Hedgehoppers Anonymous. His most prolific period of chart success however came in the early '70s, when he

singlehandedly made a succession of one-off hits with groups that only existed as long as they were in the recording studio with him.

Then, in 1972 he started his own record label and started to sign up acts as long-term investments. To date only 10 C.C. have shown that he has retained his touch, but he has pinned his greatest hopes on two potential teenybopper stars, Simon Turner and Ricky Wilde. The game's the same: spot the trends and exploit them – whether it's the Beatles and the Stones leading into Herman's Hermits and DDDBM&T, or David Cassidy and Donny Osmond giving rise to Turner and Wilde.

It's the ruthless commercialism that offends most enemies of pop. But how many cineastes still feel that way about Hollywood cinema? Until a group of French film critics campaigned for the artistic integrity of the Western, Hollywood thrillers and comedy, directors like Hawks, Fuller and Siegel had been regarded by most arthouse buffs as mere hacks. Without automatically raising the likes of Howard and Blaikley, Mickie Most, Cook and Greenaway or Jonathan King to the Pantheon, it's worth bearing in mind that some of the pop music they've created in the pursuit of profit has been just as good as (and occasionally better than) the rock music that inspired them. Long live pop!

# MOTOWN: The Golden Years

The 'Sound Of Young America' was the slogan that Tamla Motown coined to sell their wares, and it wasn't just a clever sales pitch – it was true.

During the '60s, what had started as simply another independent black recording label, evolved into a force so powerful and so stylistically original that its music was granted a category all of its own.

Artists like the Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, the Miracles and Martha and the Vandellas were no longer classified as 'soul' performers, but as purveyors of the 'Motown Sound' – a musical style that cut across all racial barriers.

Right from the Motown company's beginnings, founder Berry Gordy Jr. was well aware that the black audience represented just a small percentage of the American record-buying audience. Hitting the R&B charts was fine, but it only represented 2–300,000 sales. By appealing to young, white audiences, however, especially the middle-class with their high allowances and music-orientated buying habits, Motown had got into the real money. So, where Chess, Duke-Peacock, Kent-Modern, Stax and the other R&B companies concentrated their sales pitch on intensive penetration of the urban black ghettos, Gordy cast his net further afield.

First, he made sure his distribution was not only rapid and efficient, but that it reached out to all record stores, serving both black and white. He brought in experienced white marketing people like sales president Barney Ales to project the label; he aimed his advertising at an 'all-American' image and, most importantly, offered recordings with a multi-racial sound.

While in later years Motown was to release many racially conscious records – 'Message From A Black Man' and so on – mid-period Motown was marked by a heavy concentration on teen songs which were, in effect, an extension of the sort of jumping, dancing R&B which Leiber and Stoller, Phil Spector, George Goldner and other New York producers had been so successful with. Moreover, Gordy didn't stop at hitting America with this new and

vibrant dance sound. Unlike other State-side companies, Tamla Motown realised early on the importance of overseas markets, contributing to the corporation's eventual emergence as the largest, most successful black-owned company in any industry.

While other labels looked overseas almost as an afterthought, Gordy and Motown put real effort behind it. They were one of the first US record companies ever to release some of their singles in the UK and Europe before they even became available in the States. Moreover, unlike others who insisted that overseas territories follow the US release pattern, they allowed their foreign licensees – like EMI in Great Britain – to have a strong say in what should be issued and when. This explains why many of Tamla's American singles hits never saw the light of day in Britain, while some of their biggest British and Continental hits were merely album tracks in the States.

Artists like Jimmy Ruffin and the Motown Spinners (later the Detroit Spinners) were much bigger in Britain than in the States, while Britain knew little of Bobby Taylor and the Vancouvers, the Monitor's Brenda Holloway and the like.

## 'Too Black And Ethnic'

John Schroeder, who had helped the careers of Cliff Richard, Helen Shapiro and others as an assistant producer at EMI had left to join the independent Oriole label as product manager. Noticing how many Motown records were skating up and down the charts in America, he contacted the company and made a bid for a licensing deal which eventually came off. And so, soon after, records like Stevie Wonder's 'Fingertips' became favourites at London Mod clubs and parties, along with early Jamaican blue-beat and anything on the old yellow and red Sue label. Enthusiast Dave Godin formed an appreciation society which produced a good magazine and did much to spread the word. But the BBC didn't want to know: 'Great music, but it's too black and ethnic for our programme format', they told Schroeder, Godin and others pleading the company's case. But the Mod movement grew, and with it the



The old and the new Temptations.

audience for Motown in the UK.

Gordy sent a mammoth package tour to Britain, and although it flopped dismally in commercial terms, Motown had lost the battle in order to win the war... for the wall at last was breached. With the switch to EMI's Stateside label and, even more importantly, the 1965 UK launch of Tamla Motown's own logo identity, plus the endorsements of stars like the Beatles and the Stones who acknowledged the sound's importance, air-play could no longer be denied.

Previously Motown had done very well on mere club, ballroom, party and word-of-mouth exposure (still important elements in the making of their hits) – Marvin Gaye's 'Heard It Through The Grapevine' for instance was actually in the charts before it received any significant radio exposure. What helped too was that the 'Motown Sound' received from its fanatical followers the kind of dedicated devotion normally reserved for individual artists.

It has to be admitted, of course, that this wasn't difficult because virtually all the company's releases started to follow an instantly recognisable and strictly

defined basic sound. Fortunately, it happened to be a very, very good one. The quality of Motown's session musicians, working in the company's Detroit studios situated in a converted family house, was unquestioned. Organist Earl Van Dyke, present on so many of the Motown classics, had recorded highly-rated jazz albums for Blue Note; the string section was drawn largely from a local symphony orchestra, and the other regulars were all men of vast experience.

But, of course, any recognizably different style can rapidly degenerate into a cliché, and that, regrettably, was largely what happened to Motown right until the move from Detroit in 1969–70, brought a refreshing wind of change and a total diversification of musical direction for many of the label's acts.

## Motown Dictators

Between 1965 and '69, however, the whole thing did earn, deservedly, the slur of being 'production-line pop-soul'. Motown acts were strictly regimented, and the artists' individual personalities became strictly subservient to the overall company image. Not only were their singing styles largely dictated by the company's staff producers, notably Harvey Fuqua (Gordy's brother-in-law), Mickey Stevenson (who married Tamla singer Kim Weston), the Holland-Dozier-Holland team and Bill 'Smokey' Robinson (who was also lead singer with the Miracles); but Motown dictated what they should say in interviews, how they should dress and, through rigorous choreographical training, how they should move on stage.

Sure Motown really was, as it claimed, a 'family', but it was a family strictly under the control of domineering parents. The resulting frustrations were, of course, many. Starting with Mary Wells, many artists got the itch to move on so they could do their own thing, but – as for Mary – it always spelt disaster. Kim Weston did the same, so did Florence Ballard who left the Supremes in 1967 with hopes of solo stardom. Worse than that, wherever Motown signed an established artist they usually succeeded in killing off the act's individuality and appeal.

Chuck Jackson had been a great singer with Wand, but on Motown he became a nonentity . . . just one of many. Billy Eckstine and Sammy Davis Jr. equally, could hardly be expected to adapt themselves to the Motown Sound, but that was what was demanded. It was only the great strength of personality and ambition of Gladys Knight and the Pips that enabled them to preserve their integrity, though even they lost much of their fire initially on signing with Motown.

In other words, the once vibrant Motown Sound – which had liberated black artists by launching them from the confines of R&B out into the vast white market – had now placed them in a different brand of shackles. The music was stagnating, predictable; becoming clichéd, and lacking real verve.

Gordy made concerted efforts to break his artists into the lucrative 'supper-club' circuits, and to some degree he (if not dyed-in-the-wool soul music enthusiasts) reckoned the zenith of Motown's search for recognition was being reached, when acts like the Four Tops, the Temptations and the Supremes were booked into such swish nighteries as New York's Copacabana and London's Talk Of The Town. With this shift the artist had to include standard showbiz slush – both in terms of material and presentation. But at least they were now reaching a truly international and, more important, ageless audience, ranging from the teen fans through to night club audiences.

Record-wise though, this trend wasn't quite so healthy. Albums of standards given the Detroit Sound treatment never quite worked out, and saleswise it was, always, the disco thumpers who gave Motown their relentless flow of gold discs. The Velvelettes, the Fantastic Four, the Originals and a host of others were there to support the big league success of the Tops, Temps, Supremes, Miracles, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, *et al.*

The 'cornbread and chittlin' circuits of the black ghettos were far behind, dollars were rolling into the coffers, and creatively-speaking the atmosphere of the Detroit hit machine was stifling. Artists were finding they had less and less control over their own artistic destinies. Bound to the company by long-term contracts which had at first offered the attractive security of generous fixed salaries, successful Motown artists now found that the company was in practice creaming off the financial reward . . . so there they were, just sitting out their contracts.

## Hits Kept Rolling

Tales of Mafia involvement, and of the company even owning the clothes on its artists' backs, didn't exactly help the family image – nor did the move from the quaint, run-down house at 2648 West Grand Boulevard, Detroit, to a huge 10-storey downtown office block. But why should they worry? Artists like the Supremes, the Four Tops and Temptations had broken into the lucrative cabaret market (resulting in dire albums of standards and live shows), and clichéd or not, the hits kept on rolling in.

Right from the start of the company at the tail end of 1959, not a year had passed without a substantial increase in both chart entries and monetary turnover – and that applied equally in the States, Britain, Europe and other overseas territories. Nationwide tours by Motown acts – in the early years packaged together, later on each in its own right – never failed to gain packed houses; while this 'in person' acclaim was well reflected in record sales.

By 1968, Motown accounted for nearly half the soul records sold in Great Britain. Moreover, not only was the label the most powerful representation of black musical success, it also had few white rivals despite the constricted limits of its stylistic boundaries. No wonder the company could

confidently put out feelers for signing up Tom Jones, then Britain's wonder boy as far as the US was concerned.

No wonder that virtually every Motown record released made money and managed to corner substantial radio and press exposure in the process. It almost seemed that the label had become bigger than the music. Executives of other companies proclaimed enviously, but not without a grain of truth, that a lot of records were happening on Motown which wouldn't have stood a chance had they been released on any other label – a fact borne out by the many and often superb imitations of the Detroit Sound which simply got nowhere.

So all-powerful was the corporation, indeed, that when a possible local challenge emerged in the shape of Detroit's Golden World/Ric-Tic labels, Motown quickly put them out of the running by the simple expedient of a take-over bid, which brought Edwin Starr to Motown, but left many other fine artists like J. J. Barnes and Al Kent right out in the cold.

On and on the Motown Sound rolled. Then, losing many of its old fans for lack of new ideas, it gained a steady flow of new ones as new age groups arose to latch on to what was, without question, the best dance music around at the time . . . despite its by now severe limitations. The truth was that none of the records were actually bad, but many were mediocre.

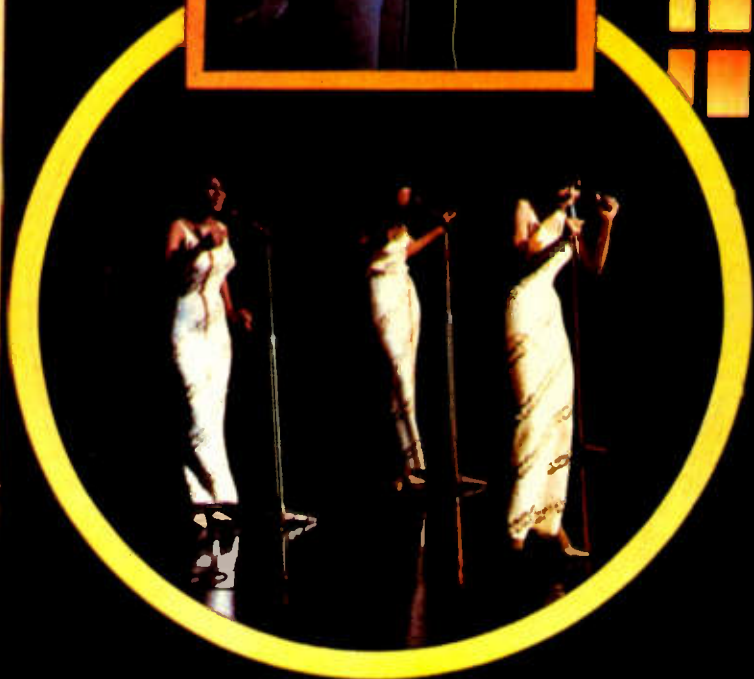
A lot of them were actually very good, even classic like the Supremes' 'I'm Living In Shame', Stevie Wonder's 'For Once In My Life', and Mary Johnson's 'I'll Pick A Rose For My Rose' and others – but few possessed the sheer originality of early things like Stevie Wonder's 'Fingertips' or Mary Wells' 'My Guy'; or even post-'60s things like Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On?' or Eddie Kendricks' 'Keep On Truckin'.

Motown was growing and growing sufficiently to prompt a move from the Detroit roots out to the entertainment capital of Los Angeles – but if the company was to continue progressing, then something fairly drastic had to happen to the music itself. And it did.

## Psychedelic Soul

The advent of acid rock had already started to influence things. The Temptations had, with producer Norman Whitfield, evolved a style they called 'psychedelic soul' – and the singing of white acts like Rare Earth also spelt change. With the move, and all those long-term contracts coming to termination, the exodus started in earnest with the Four Tops going to Probe, Jimmy Ruffin to Polydor and Gladys Knight and the Pips to Buddah. But Motown had made its own play just in the nick of time, and these departures were to be far outweighed by the new images of Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and Eddie Kendricks.

Maybe Motown was no longer synonymous with 'The Sound Of Young America', but it still had much of the nation's best music and as a company, was now ready to embark on yet more new ventures.



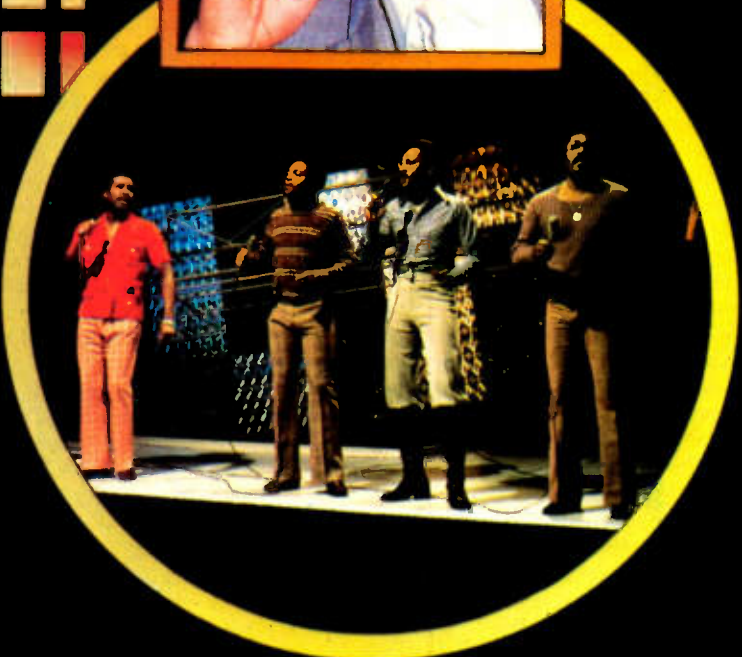
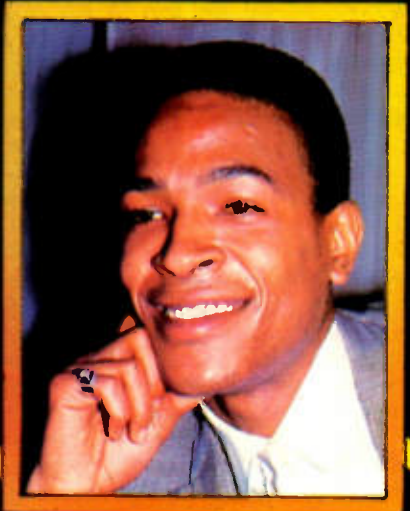
# FROM M

Top picture: Gladys Knight, pictured without the Pips. Middle picture: Jimmy Ruffin, who for a long time was much bigger in Britain than in the States. Bottom: The Supremes, long-lasting stars of the cabaret circuit.



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# MOTOWN



Top picture: The Miracles. Centre: Marvin Gaye. Bottom: The 4 Tops. They appealed to the young white audiences and evolved a style so full of force and power that it cut across racial barriers.

SKR

Cyrus Andrews

C. Walters

# From Underground to Progressive Rock



The original King Crimson band, top left: Ian Macdonald. Top right: Greg Lake (now with ELP). Bottom left: Robert Fripp. Bottom right: Mike Giles. Opposite page: a jumping Jethro Tull.

No one can say now who first coined the phrase 'progressive rock'. Suddenly it was *there*, a part of the language, a brand new verbal albatross. Progressive mania swept the British rock culture.

Musicians felt obliged to tell the pop press how much progress they thought they'd made since last being interviewed – often as long ago as a month before. Fans argued fiercely about the relative progressiveness of their favourite bands. Mysterious signs proliferated in the album racks of suburban record shops: PROGRESSIVE A-K.

The idea of *progress* exerted an enormous influence on the shape of British rock in the late '60s – an influence that has persisted, if somewhat raggedly, well into the '70s. 'Progressive rock' was more of a crusade than an exact scheme of categorisation: it took in, at one time or another, everything from blues to folk to heavy rock, with mysterious monoliths like 'jazz rock' and 'classical fusion' and 'singer-songwriters' strewn along the way.

'Progress' actually had two overlapping meanings. In one sense, it referred to visible change and development in the music of a particular performer or group; in the second, wider sense it carried the implication that rock music as a whole was going *somewhere*. Where, in particular, it was going was something that few worried about.

Such notions were new and radical in the context of the British pop industry. In the old-established way of thinking, performers did not try to change and develop their music – an unnecessary and probably foolhardy move. At best, they learned to sing or play better. Real progress was topping the bill instead of opening it, a country mansion after a council flat. And if a performer *did* change style in mid-career, that would be for economic rather than personal and aesthetic reasons: Elvis Presley, for example, ditched rock & roll for

ballads in the late '50s because it appeared to be fading fast, and because he wanted to reach a wider audience. But that was hardly *progress*.

And meanwhile, no one was very concerned about the overall shape of pop music. The main medium of pop was the three-minute hit single, and the main arbiter of pop success the Top 30 sales charts. And while the individual songs and performers on the charts turned over very rapidly, the actual nature of the music remained fairly constant. The pop charts were geared, by definition, to the tastes of the mass pop audience – tastes which changed very slowly indeed.

Pop music, in fact, had 'progressed' only with the arrival of significantly different new performers offering significantly different music. For instance, when Elvis Presley replaced Perry Como as the best-selling solo artist in the mid-'50s, and again in the early '60s when the Beatles and the Rolling Stones dethroned Elvis.

The idea that existing performers might progress, and that rock music itself might actually be going somewhere, only arrived with Bob Dylan. Re-inventing himself yearly as folkie, protester, acid-rocker, Dylan showed that a performer could move on stylistically, retain the support of a part of his original audience, and add more fans along the way. He had, in fact, found an audience sophisticated enough to accept and understand such changes as tokens of the personal evolution of the performer, and as appropriate responses to the changing mood of the times. But even then he had to bear the cat-calls and hostility for some time before his new 'electric' self was wholeheartedly accepted.

If Dylan pioneered progressive rock, it was the Beatles, with their ubiquitous 'Sgt. Pepper' album of May 1967, who first delivered the idea to the rock masses. Encouraged by Dylan's success, and impressed by the example of the West Coast acid rock bands, the Beatles had already begun to make adventurous singles and ambitious album tracks. But this was the

clinch, the 'album of the decade', the work which in Nik Cohn's phrase, 'indirectly, brought pop to its knees'.

The success of 'Sgt. Pepper' kicked off an astonishing boom in album sales, a boom which couldn't help but alter the rules of the pop game. When the Beatles began their career, albums were of little consequence: usually, just a couple of old hits tacked on to a collection of throwaway tracks, recorded at maximum speed using the most primitive studio techniques, issued primarily in monaural form. The single was and had always been, the unit currency of pop. Albums were generally outside the reach of the kids who bought singles: they were of marginal importance to the industry – Xmas present products.

The Beatles had always taken some care over what they put on their albums. 'Sgt. Pepper', though, was the result of truly infinite pains. And it paid off big. In fact, that album would go on to gain greater fame and success than any one of their innumerable hit singles.

Why did the Beatles take so much trouble over 'Sgt. Pepper'? Simple enough, they were bored. Bored with the constricting demands of the pop charts, with the need to turn out formulaised single after formulaised single. Bored with not touring. There was, they believed, a great deal more you could say, musically and lyrically, than 'I Wanna Hold Your Hand'. They were determined to say it on their albums.

The Beatles hoped that at least a minority of the pop audience would go along with them: that they, too, were getting tired of the charts, of the same old riffs and hooks, of 'plastic' pop songs cooked up on assembly lines in obscure hit factories. They hoped that someone would be prepared to listen when they



Redferns

tried to introduce them to more complex musical forms, and to new ideas about religion and philosophy and politics and drugs. The Beatles based their hopes upon the success of Dylan and the West Coast bands, and upon the first stirrings of native British psychedelia. And they were proved correct.

Crucial to this equation, though, was the simple fact of increasing teen affluence. Kids now had the money to buy albums regularly: they needed only a reason to do so. 'Sgt. Pepper' and all the subsequent progressive albums provided that reason. By 1968, albums had become the staple diet of the rock industry, with revenue exceeding that from singles: a change greatly facilitated by the diffusion of relatively cheap stereo equipment. Ironically enough, then, the reaction against the 'commercialism' of the singles market has led to the creation of a still more profitable and commercially-orientated album market. And the much despised obsession with the singles charts has given way to a nearly equal obsession with the album charts.

Still, with 'Sgt. Pepper' rock grew up. The quality papers began running high-brow rock columns, with critics gushing embarrassingly about the 'new classical music'. And meanwhile rock entered into a period of dazzling, if not always fruitful, experiment.

'Progressive' rock had a number of separate, though overlapping strains, each one borrowing devices and ideas from the next. What they shared was an apparent desire to push the boundaries of rock outwards, ever outwards, in both music and lyrics. The first major strain to appear overground was something that might be called 'progressive blues'. Progressive blues took up where the London R&B boom of 1964 left off, and many of its most important figures were veterans of that scene: Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page from the Yardbirds; Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker from the Graham Bond Organisation; Rod Stewart and Julie Driscoll from the Steampacket.

### Black Elvis

The most important single figure, though, was imported from Seattle, USA – Jimi Hendrix, 'the black Elvis'. Hendrix, with his sustained notes and bent octaves and imaginative use of wah-wah pedals, was one of the few real innovators of the entire progressive movement. Arguably, he invented a whole new way of playing the electric guitar.

Hendrix, and the group called Cream, introduced the notion of 'improvisation' to rock. They used improvisation as a means of personal expression, as a way of continually searching for new meanings in a set piece of music. Yet their improvisations were accepted by their audiences primarily as indications of their spectacular technical prowess. An obsession with instrumental virtuosity and sheer complexity developed in the progressive audience: an obsession which would lead

to the later canonisation of dazzlingly 'complex' bands like Yes and Emerson, Lake and Palmer.

Progressive blues was a dead-end. It led, on the one hand, to the reactionary 12-bar blues boom of 1968–69 (Fleetwood Mac, Chicken Shack, Ten Years After) and on the other hand to the 'heavy metal' epidemic that persists even today. Heavy metal bands (Black Sabbath, Status Quo, Uriah Heep) play *even louder* than Hendrix and Cream: unsubtle power music for a younger segment of the progressive audience, less concerned with intellectual subtleties.

The second major strain of progressive rock, psychedelia, is still with us – though it goes by different names. British psychedelia began as a local imitation and mutation of the West Coast acid rock avant garde, but quickly developed a uniquely British character. The Beatles were the godfathers of this movement, but its true leaders were new and unknown bands: the Pink Floyd, Soft Machine, the Crazy World of Arthur Brown.

### Pixies and Brown Rice

First, always first, were the Pink Floyd. They were art school students, and they dabbled early in light shows, back projected films, strobe effects. Led at first by the legendary Syd Barrett, they offered a fairly complete hippy package deal: UFOs, pixies, bells, incense, coloured cloaks, brown rice. Yet they retained a distinctly British identity: the title of their first album, 'The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn', was borrowed from Charles Kingsley's *The Wind In The Willows*. The Barrett Pink Floyd were commercial enough to score a couple of hit singles, 'Arnold Layne' and 'See Emily Play', and puzzle the boppers on the ballroom circuit.

Later, when Barrett dropped out and bassman Roger Waters assumed control, the focus of their music narrowed. 'A Saucerful Of Secrets', their second album, concentrated fairly firmly on UFO-ology and space-rock: much hypnotic pulsing bass, often used as lead instrument, combining with ethereal church organ and whispered, menacing lyrics to create swirling, dreamlike tapestries of sound. The Pink Floyd quickly became renowned for their ability to reproduce this sound live, and their competence as a live band is documented on the live half of their 1968 double-album 'Ummagumma'.

The second half of that album, though, shows the band in an increasingly grim struggle with the notion of 'progress'. Afterwards, their stage shows became even more spectacular and gargantuan, huge mixed-media events, but their music appeared to be a more and more sophisticated way of avoiding saying anything. Only with their last album, 'The Dark Side Of The Moon' have the Pink Floyd at last found a concrete theme (madness) and attempted to get back in tune with the times.

The Soft Machine, named after the William Burroughs novel, were always less



Status Quo, a successful pop group of the 1960s, who turned to progressive music in the '70s.



successful and more esoteric than the Pink Floyd. While Kevin Ayers and Robert Wyatt were in the group, they retained a certain manic dadaistic sense of humour. But over the years they have become more and more purely instrumental, hailed by people who know about such things for their use of multiple time signatures, the 'avant garde' Shadows.

The Crazy World of Arthur Brown was unusual in having a very definite star member. An ex-philosophy student, Brown combined an astonishingly wide-ranging voice with a riveting theatrical presence. The band quickly developed a successful stage act, and then ran it into the ground: the 'hell-fire' suite on their first and only album, from which 'Fire' was taken to score a no. 1 hit single in mid-1968. That hit didn't much help their underground credibility, and they broke up in the midst of a disastrous American tour. The drummer, Carl Palmer, is at present one-third of Emerson, Lake and Palmer. The organist, Vincent Crane, persists with his own band, Atomic Rooster. As for Arthur Brown, he has produced nothing remotely as gripping since, despite a long stay with Kingdom Come.

### Symphonic Rock

These were all new bands. Other, established acts reconstituted themselves to meet the boom in psychedelia and the equally booming album market. The Moody Blues, a Birmingham R&B band who had gone through hard times since their 1964 hit 'Go Now', went into the studio and recorded 'Days Of Future Passed': overdubbed with an orchestra, reproduced on stage with the aid of mellotrons, it was hailed as a breakthrough in 'symphonic rock'. Since then the Moody Blues have built up a devoted cult following for their own particular line of progressive rock: a curious mixture of sweeping strings and sweeping philosophising about love and truth and religion. Moody Graeme Edge once observed that "we tread a very thin line between good music and plush Hollywood bullshit": in many peoples' view, they have long overstepped that line.

Meanwhile, Stevie Winwood dropped out of the Spencer Davis Group to form Traffic with Dave Mason. Members of the unsuccessful Paramounts formed Procol Harum to score with 'A Whiter Shade Of Pale' – Bach-like fugues and Dylanesque lyrics – more classical-rock. R&B veterans Brian Auger and Julie Driscoll found renewed success on the college circuit. Even the Who, a well-established and successful singles band, glimpsed new glory and found it with their 'rock opera' 'Tommy' in 1969.

British psychedelia gave way to something we might call 'art-rock': a form purveyed by an array of new bands as apparently disparate as ELP, Yes, King Crimson and Jethro Tull. The psychedelic bands, together with the Beatles, had established the notion that rock was now also 'art': something to be admired rather

than something merely to be danced to.

Robert Fripp, founder of King Crimson – the progressive sensation of 1969 – defined this new music in a letter to *IT*. Describing the Hyde Park Rolling Stones concert, at which his band had made their breakthrough appearance, he suggested that it 'augered in the music of the '70s, a music that was 'more self-conscious than before', a music that expected a reaction from 'the head rather more than the foot'. Most revealingly of all, Fripp pointed out that: '... it is obvious that groups who provide thought ... can be and often are very successful on a commercial plane, so let us stop regarding "commercial" as a dirty word.'

King Crimson, with their rococo 'poetic' lyrics about Greek gods, cadences and cascades, night, children of the sun and Formantera ladies, with their mellotrons and synthesisers and vast swathes of acid-rock Mantovani, were in many respects the ultimate 'progressive' band. The message of it all was that rock was 'art' and that 'art was important'; that King Crimson were 'important artists' and that they expected their audience to be duly impressed.

Much is now made of the difference between the deadly seriousness of progressive rock and the total triviality of that current phenomenon, glitter-rock. But despite all the obvious differences there is a fundamental similarity: the progressive bands rooted their appeal, just as much as the glitter-rockers, in pure *spectacle*. The so-called progressive groups created an aura which lifted them high above 'ordinary people' through their speed and dexterity and the strange sound effects they created. Their audience equated difficult riffs and obscure lyrics with a higher form of music through which they could create a clique and feel superior. They really had no cause to see themselves in such a lofty position above the bubble-gum bands, who created their false auras through sex-appeal and pretty clothes – in effect they both detracted from the quality (or otherwise) of the music.

### Intellectual Progressives

Who listened to progressive music? Not primarily, as one might suppose, the people who formed the original audience for psychedelia – the freaks and drop-outs and hippies – but, rather, the affluent sections of the rock audience who identified to some degree with those elements. In particular, students who demanded ever-more intellectual and challenging rock music. It was students who largely bankrolled the new movement, through the lucrative college circuit. It was students who were excited by the idea that rock was art. Predominantly middle-class, middlebrow students.

Despite all that late 1960s rhetoric about a universal, unified youth culture, progressive rock based its success upon a closely defined minority of the mass audience. When Jagger released his butterflies in Hyde Park, the skinheads looked on and sneered. Progressive rock never really reached working class kids – just certain unusual and limited numbers of them.



Rex Features

The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown had a riveting stage act, plus a very good drummer, Carl Palmer, and organist, Vincent Crane.

That division was evident all along. It was made absolutely clear in a recent study by Graham Murdock and Guy Phelps (*Culture, Class and Schooling: the impact of pop*). Interviewing pupils in a large Midlands comprehensive school, they found a very sharp division in musical tastes between the kids who were going to leave school at 15, and the kids who were staying on to do A-levels and hopefully reach university. Early leavers liked reggae, soul, Motown and straight pop. Actual and prospective sixth formers liked progressive rock. Early leavers identified themselves as 'skins' or 'smooths', as 'people who like to dance', and dismissed progressive fans as 'wierdoes', 'freaks' and 'wankers'. Progressive fans responded by calling the early leavers 'stupid skins' and 'CSE cretins'. They described themselves as 'people who listen deeply to records and think about them'.

Progressive rock, then, is middle-class rock, enshrining and propagating middle-class values and aspirations: creativity, individuality, intellectuality. The music of a minority culture. And yet, through the enormous buying power of that minority and through the middle-class orientation of the mass media in this country, it was able to wreak a disproportionate influence upon the shape of British rock. When progressive mania reached its height, the

cream of Britain's rock musicians discarded any notion of making hit singles. They found true happiness cruising around the college circuit, making highly progressive and often huge-selling albums. They left mainstream pop in the hands of the hit factories of the Jonathan Kings and Tony Macauleys. And, predictably enough, British mainstream pop got very sickly indeed.

That was bad enough. What was worse was the way in which the progressive musicians themselves became lazy and self-indulgent. Financially speaking, they didn't need to make hit singles. But artistically speaking many of them – particularly the younger bands who'd never had to go through the charts mill – very much needed the discipline of making hit singles, of tightening up their music instead of spreading it out to infinity. After all, there was nothing so shameful about making singles. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Dylan, the Who, the Kinks, the Yardbirds – they've all, in their time, made great and memorable music on singles. But all a progressive band needed to do was tune up for 20 minutes and sell the end result as an improvisation.

In the end, of course, pop was reborn. By the close of the 1960s, progressive music had clearly lost its way. A back-to-the-roots movement was initiated by Dylan

and by the Beatles. Nostalgia for simpler music broke out and the great rock & roll revivals began. And finally Marc Bolan, David Bowie, Slade and all the rest of them came through, making new pop music for a new teenage audience. An audience which demanded the very same things that their older brothers and sisters had long discarded as quaint and antiquated: excitement and glitter, noise and outrage, a focus for their own separate identity as a new and unique generation.

Meanwhile, the progressive audience is confused and bemused by the rebirth of pop, by the failure of their own lofty ideals. Certainly, no one talks much about 'progress' these days. The epitaphs are already being prepared. 1973 saw Al Stewart's 'Post World War Two Blues', a kind of British 'American Pie', which pretty well sums up the feelings of confusion and disillusion now rife in the progressive rock culture:

*'... music was the scenery  
Jimi Hendrix played loud and free  
Sergeant Pepper was real to me  
Songs and poems were all you needed  
which way did the 60s go?  
Now Ramona's on Desolation Row  
And where I'm going I hardly know...'*

(Gwyneth Music 1973)

sound to the pop music scene of the time.

1967 brought the Great Hippie Summer, a tour of the States and the first manifestations of psychedelia. Their second album, 'Disraeli Gears' sported cover art by Martin Sharp (who was responsible for some remarkable graphics in *Oz* magazine), all manner of art deco splendour, Clapton's monstrous puffball hair-do (which unkempt souls suggested was grown with the aid of hair-restorers), and production by a young New Yorker named Felix Pappalardi. The album blended hard blues with more Bruce/Brown songs, and a couple by Clapton. One ('Tales Of Bruce Ulysses') had lyrics by Sharp, and another 'was written in collaboration with Pappalardi and his wife Gail Collins. Two of the songs, 'Sunshine Of Your Love' and 'Swlabr' – (the latter being a contraction of 'She Was Like A Bearded Rainbow') – demonstrated Bruce's ability to come up with a new breed of musical phrase, later to become known as the 'heavy riff', an ostinato bass figure embroidered with improvisation.

### Lip-Service

What distinguished Cream's improvisations from anybody else's was the fact that all three musicians blew freely. Usually, the rhythm section stayed where they were while the lead instrument(s) carried the improvisational load; but in Cream, they paid musical lip-service to the basic motif of the piece and then headed out into inner space until they ran out of ideas. The best example of this is the marathon version of 'Spoonful' that takes up most of side 3 on their 1968 double-album 'Wheels Of Fire', and it is significant that this is their only wholly successful long piece.

With 'Wheels', it became apparent that to a certain extent the strain was beginning to show. The first album of the set consisted of studio material, and the second of material recorded at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco. Out of the four live tracks, two were reprises of tunes from the first album. Baker's 'Toad' lasts 15½ minutes, and consists principally of a grossly attenuated drum solo, which may have been effective in concert, but on record cannot really appeal to anybody who's not a frustrated percussionist.

When 'Goodbye', their final album, consisted of only three new numbers alongside three concert versions of already recorded numbers, it became clear that one of the factors that crushed Cream to death was lack of playable material that was acceptable to all three members. The great diversity of the music they played after separating, only emphasises the amount of compromising that they must have had to do to play together at all.

The other principal reason for their eventual split was the fact that if they were not totally musically compatible, they were even less compatible on a personal

From left to right: Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker.



Pictorial Press

level. Remember, this was no boyhood union like the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, but a group formed by three grown men, with no other reason than to play music together. So when the music turned sour on them, they had no further possible motivation for continuing to work together.

Even Jimi Hendrix paid his respects. Performing 'live' on Lulu's BBC TV show, he stopped in the middle of 'Hey Joe', broke into 'Sunshine Of Your Love', and played to the end of the show . . . one of those great unplanned moments that break out from their surroundings to live on in the memory. So Cream did a farewell tour of the States, played their farewell gig at the Albert Hall in London, and recorded their farewell album, 'Goodbye'.

Two more live albums surfaced, which were by turns both turbulent and listless. Clearly, playing Cream's music involved more than simply showing up, plugging in and doing the set. If it wasn't played with commitment, involvement and enthusiasm, Cream's music fell apart at the seams. And equally clearly, it is impossible for musicians, no matter how gifted, to be able to maintain that level of energy, both physical and mental, for every single gig while working those gruelling American tours. It was America that made Cream, but it was also America that broke them.

There are no great and weighty conclusions to be drawn from the career of Cream. They banded together, played their music until they were no longer able to do it, and then went their separate ways. Even now, as memories of that last gig at the Albert Hall fade into the mists of time, each of the three is still haunted by Cream. Eric Clapton in his retirement, Jack Bruce on the road with West and Laing, Ginger Baker in his African studios – all of them still branded with Cream.

Still, it is worth recording that the post-Cream careers of Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton have been jumbled, inconsistent, restless and only intermittently rewarding. Clapton teamed almost immediately with Stevie Winwood, then on leave from Traffic, to be joined by Baker and ex-Family bassist Rick Grech to form Blind Faith, a 'supergroup' who made one interesting, if flawed album, and played one British gig and most of an American tour (as is usually the case) before clashes between Winwood and Baker tore the group apart inside. A dalliance with white American gospellers Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett led to a solo album masterminded by Delaney and his then colleague Leon Russell. The band then did the Mad Dogs tour with Joe Cocker, but its rhythm section of Carl Radle (bass), Jim Gordon (drums) and Bobby Whitlock (keyboards and vocals) came together with Clapton to see him through his most productive post-Cream period as Derek and the Dominos.

From the Dominos period came 'Layla', a classic album, and one that for the first time featured Clapton as leader. The late Duane Allman, slide guitar wizard of the Allman Brothers Band, guested on co-lead

guitar. It presented Clapton in a setting where he perhaps felt happiest – easy, rocking and bluesy.

The collapse of the Dominos and the death of Allman, sent Clapton into a premature retirement from which he only emerged briefly at the behest of his good friend Pete Townshend of the Who, to play concerts backed up by an all-star cast including Winwood, Grech, Townshend, Faces guitarist Ronnie Wood, Traffic drummer Jim Capaldi, conga player Rebop, and Taj Mahal's drummer Jimmy Karstein. On those gigs he recreated songs from his Cream days and most other bands that he'd worked with since then, but he seemed to show little interest in coming upfront to say anything new.

After the Blind Faith debacle, Baker formed a monstrous big band entitled Air Force featuring Winwood, Grech, Graham Bond, the late Harold MacNair and a cast of thousands, but it didn't achieve the success that its founder had hoped for. He has since spent most of his time in Lagos, working with and recording Nigerian musicians.

Bruce has possibly had the most musically rewarding post-Cream career of the three. Again in collaboration with Pete Brown, he wrote and recorded two extremely fine solo albums, 'Songs For A Tailor' and 'Harmony Row'. For a short while he was a member of Tony Williams' Lifetime alongside John MacLaughlin, and also worked in short-lived and unrecorded bands with the likes of Larry Coryell, Mitch Mitchell, Chris Spedding, and Mike Mandel, as well as participating in Carla Bley's mammoth jazz opera 'Escalator Up A Hill'. Finally he decided to be a rock star again, and formed West, Bruce and Laing.

Leslie West (guitar) and Corky Laing (drums) were both former members of Mountain, a group led by Felix Pappalardi, Cream's producer for most of their career. He'd sung and played bass in a very Bruce-orientated style, and so it had seemed only natural for them to want to work with the real thing. Despite everybody's protestations to the contrary, West, Bruce and Laing sounded like a very poor substitute indeed for Cream.

And there it is. There are very few bands in existence today who have not in some way, however remote, been influenced by Cream. The trouble is that far too many have learned the wrong lessons.

Cream took chances. They were the first rock band to issue a double-album of previously unreleased recordings. They were the first rock band to improvise to such a degree. They were the first rock band to go in for extended pieces. The reason that they were able to get away with it was their superlative musicianship. The music made by Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker in those three short years has influenced the course of rock in the simplest and most basic way. Echoes of Cream are in every band currently functioning, and it will be a very long time before anybody else will do so much to affect the music on that most basic level – the way it sounds.



## BACK TRACK

**1966:** November, 'Wrapping Paper' single. December, 'Fresh Cream' LP. 'I Feel Free' single.

**1967:** June, 'Strange Brew' single. November, 'Disraeli Gears' LP.

**1968:** May, 'Anyone For Tennis' single. August, 'Wheels Of Fire' LP (Double Live & Studio) September, 'Sunshine Of Your Love' single. 26th November, last concert at the Albert Hall.

**1969:** January, single 'White Room'. March, 'Goodbye' LP, 'Badge' single. November, 'Best Of Cream' LP.

**1970:** June, 'Live Cream Vol I'. 1972: June, 'Live Cream Vol II'.

**1973:** April, 'Heavy Cream'. Ginger Baker: born 19th August 1939.

**1970:** May, 'Airforce'. 1972: July, 'Stratavarius'.

**1973:** April, 'Ginger At His Best' (RSO). Eric Clapton: born 30th March 1945.

**1970:** August, 'Eric Clapton'. December, 'Derek and the Dominos – Layla'.

**1972:** July, History of Eric Clapton. 'Layla' single, Derek and the Dominos.

**1973:** March, 'Derek and the Dominos In Concert' (RSO) April, 'Eric At His Best' (RSO) September, 'Eric Clapton At The Rainbow' (RSO).

**Jack Bruce:** born 14th May 1943. 1969: July, 'Songs For A Tailor'.

**1971:** July, 'Harmony Row'. December, 'Things We Like'.

**1973:** April, 'Jack Bruce At His Best' (RSO).

**West, Bruce and Laing.** 1972: December, 'Why Don't You'.

**1973:** June, 'Whatever Turns You On'.



## THE SUPERSTARS

# CREAM

'Influential' is probably one of the most carelessly used words in the rock writers' lexicon. In the final analysis, there are very few artists whose work genuinely changes the direction of a substantial number of subsequent musical arrivals.

In the three and a half years of their existence, Cream changed the way in which bands play. Peculiarly enough, despite the excellence of their music, their influence on rock as a whole has often been seen as 'destructive'.

In 1966, Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker decided to form a group. Eric Clapton had played lead guitar for the Yardbirds from 1963 to 1965, and had cemented his reputation as Britain's leading blues guitarist with a dazzling period playing with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Bruce had come to London from Glasgow and had acted as bassist and occasional vocalist with Alexis Korner, Graham Bond's Organisation, and Manfred Mann. Ginger Baker had drummed with the Organisation, where he and Bruce had, according to legend, indulged in epic fist-fights in the van on the way to and from gigs. Bruce, Baker and Clapton were widely acknowledged to be the finest performers in Britain on their respective instruments, so, logically enough, they dubbed their group 'Cream'.

Strangely enough, given their name, they weren't sure how they would go down

at first, and plans were even made for a 'showy' stage act including stuffed gorillas. In the event, the word that Jack, Ginger and Eric had formed a band was enough publicity in itself for the British club and college circuit, and their first gigs in London had thousands queueing, and hundreds left outside. This was not really surprising, since the walls of London had long been plastered with the legend 'Clapton Is God'.

### Savage And Delicate

In those early days, it was Clapton who stole the thunder. His playing in Cream was a revelation even to those who had admired his work with Mayall and the Yardbirds. He contrived to be simultaneously savage and delicate, sweet and abrasive, violent but pure, powerful but gentle. His tone was almost intoxicatingly cloying, but unlike his great contemporaries Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix, he did little to extend the possibilities of the electric guitar by technical innovations, rather his genius lay in the way he manipulated, caressed and stroked it, creating amazing sounds through his fingers alone.

The man most responsible for the technical aspects of Cream was Jack Bruce, and it was Bruce who was the real musical revolutionary of the group. Cream was the first real opportunity he had to prove himself as a composer and as a vocalist, and his collaboration with lyricist

Pete Brown provided the band with the bulk of their original material. He and Baker virtually blueprinted the rhythm section sound of the next five years, and there is a pleasant irony in the idea of two ex-jazzmen and a blues player re-inventing instrumental rock.

Their debut album, 'Fresh Cream', was released in late 1966. It consisted of tentative forays in various directions: almost visionary re-workings of blues standards like Skip James' 'I'm So Glad', Robert Johnson's 'Four Till Late', Muddy Waters' 'Rollin' And Tumblin'', and Willie Dixon's 'Spoonful' set alongside compositions by Bruce and Baker. There was little of the hell-for-leather improvisation that was later to become Cream's trademark, but it established their identity, gave them a basic repertoire, and enabled them to demonstrate some of their more unusual capabilities.

Obviously, Cream were something very special. Their range covered everything between the two extremes of Clapton's almost academic blues, and the melodically quirky and lyrically convoluted songs concocted by Jack Bruce and Pete Brown – and their instrumentation was almost unique. The stripped-down, three-instrument group was not unprecedented – earlier bands as incongruous as the Who and the Troggs had demonstrated this – but Baker's ponderous but tricky drumming, Bruce's grinding and serpentine bass lines, and Clapton's almost unadorned blues guitar produced an irresistibly fresh





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'Influential' is probably one of the most carelessly used words in the rock writers' lexicon. In the final analysis, there are very few artists whose work genuinely changes the direction of a substantial number of subsequent musical arrivals.

In the three and a half years of their existence, Cream changed the way in which bands play. Peculiarly enough, despite the excellence of their music, their influence on rock as a whole has often been seen as 'destructive'.

In 1966, Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker decided to form a group. Eric Clapton had played lead guitar for the Yardbirds from 1963 to 1965, and had cemented his reputation as Britain's leading blues guitarist with a dazzling period playing with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Bruce had come to London from Glasgow and had acted as bassist and occasional vocalist with Alexis Korner, Graham Bond's Organisation, and Manfred Mann. Ginger Baker had drummed with the Organisation, where he and Bruce had, according to legend, indulged in epic fist-fights in the van on the way to and from gigs. Bruce, Baker and Clapton were widely acknowledged to be the finest performers in Britain on their respective instruments, so, logically enough, they dubbed their group 'Cream'.

Strangely enough, given their name, they weren't sure how they would go down

at first, and plans were even made for a 'showy' stage act including stuffed gorillas. In the event, the word that Jack, Ginger and Eric had formed a band was enough publicity in itself for the British club and college circuit, and their first gigs in London had thousands queueing, and hundreds left outside. This was not really surprising, since the walls of London had long been plastered with the legend 'Clapton Is God'.

### Savage And Delicate

In those early days, it was Clapton who stole the thunder. His playing in Cream was a revelation even to those who had admired his work with Mayall and the Yardbirds. He contrived to be simultaneously savage and delicate, sweet and abrasive, violent but pure, powerful but gentle. His tone was almost intoxicatingly cloying, but unlike his great contemporaries Jeff Beck and Jimi Hendrix, he did little to extend the possibilities of the electric guitar by technical innovations, rather his genius lay in the way he manipulated, caressed and stroked it, creating amazing sounds through his fingers alone.

The man most responsible for the technical aspects of Cream was Jack Bruce, and it was Bruce who was the real musical revolutionary of the group. Cream was the first real opportunity he had to prove himself as a composer and as a vocalist, and his collaboration with lyricist

Pete Brown provided the band with the bulk of their original material. He and Baker virtually blueprinted the rhythm section sound of the next five years, and there is a pleasant irony in the idea of two ex-jazzmen and a blues player re-inventing instrumental rock.

Their debut album, 'Fresh Cream', was released in late 1966. It consisted of tentative forays in various directions: almost visionary re-workings of blues standards like Skip James' 'I'm So Glad', Robert Johnson's 'Four Till Late', Muddy Waters' 'Rollin' And Tumblin', and Willie Dixon's 'Spoonful' set alongside compositions by Bruce and Baker. There was little of the hell-for-leather improvisation that was later to become Cream's trademark, but it established their identity, gave them a basic repertoire, and enabled them to demonstrate some of their more unusual capabilities.

Obviously, Cream were something very special. Their range covered everything between the two extremes of Clapton's almost academic blues, and the melodically quirky and lyrically convoluted songs concocted by Jack Bruce and Pete Brown – and their instrumentation was almost unique. The stripped-down, three-instrument group was not unprecedented – earlier bands as incongruous as the Who and the Troggs had demonstrated this – but Baker's ponderous but tricky drumming, Bruce's grinding and serpentine bass lines, and Clapton's almost unadorned blues guitar produced an irresistibly fresh

sound to the pop music scene of the time.

1967 brought the Great Hippie Summer, a tour of the States and the first manifestations of psychedelia. Their second album, 'Disraeli Gears' sported cover art by Martin Sharp (who was responsible for some remarkable graphics in *Oz* magazine), all manner of art deco splendour, Clapton's monstrous puffball hair-do (which unkind souls suggested was grown with the aid of hair-restorers), and production by a young New Yorker named Felix Pappalardi. The album blended hard blues with more Bruce/Brown songs, and a couple by Clapton. One ('Tales Of Bruce Ulysses') had lyrics by Sharp, and another was written in collaboration with Pappalardi and his wife Gail Collins. Two of the songs, 'Sunshine Of Your Love' and 'Swlabr' – (the latter being a contraction of 'She Was Like A Bearded Rainbow') – demonstrated Bruce's ability to come up with a new breed of musical phrase, later to become known as the 'heavy riff', an ostinato bass figure embroidered with improvisation.

### Lip-Service

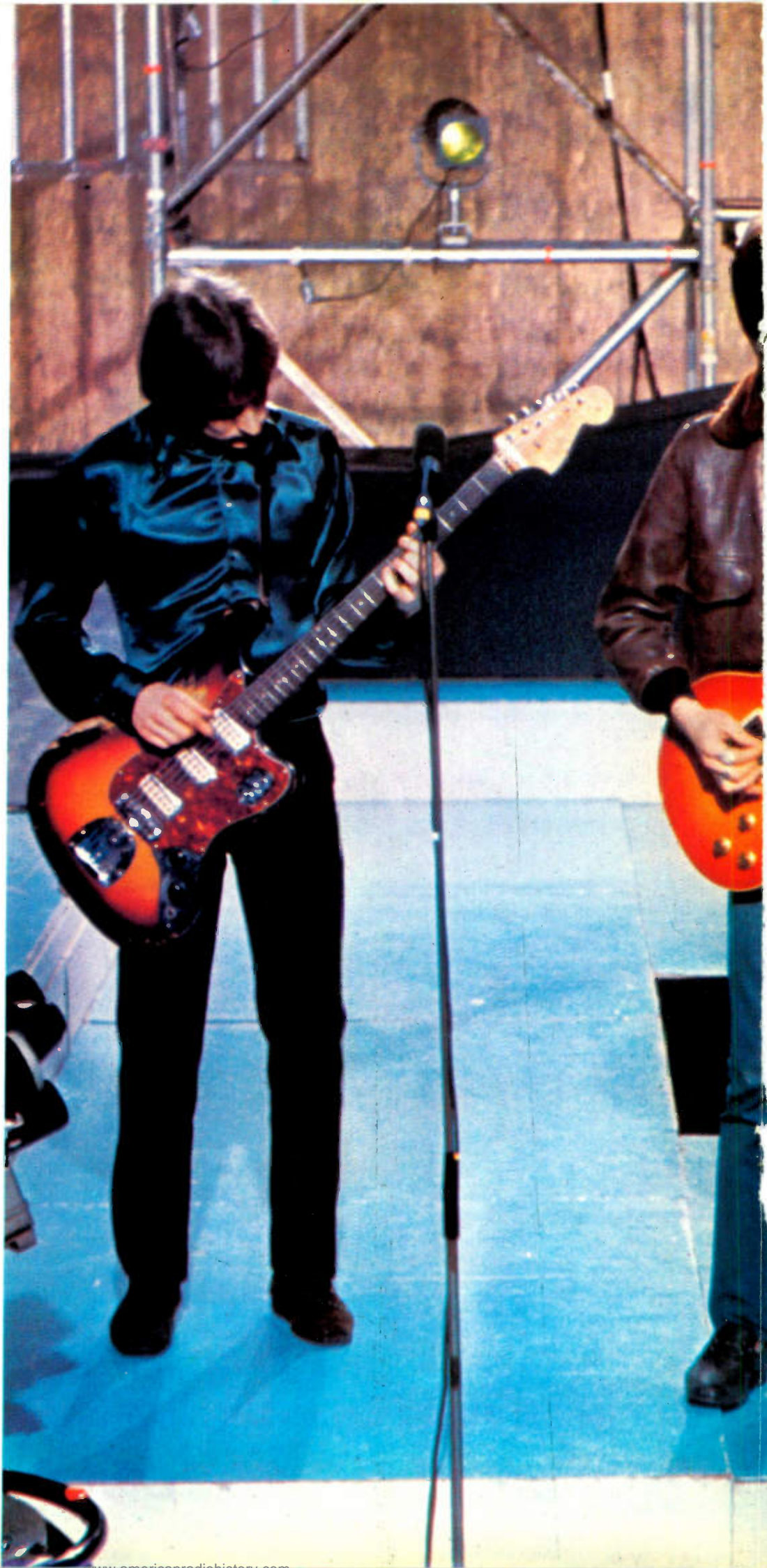
What distinguished Cream's improvisations from anybody else's was the fact that all three musicians blew freely. Usually, the rhythm section stayed where they were while the lead instrument(s) carried the improvisational load; but in Cream, they paid musical lip-service to the basic motif of the piece and then headed out into inner space until they ran out of ideas. The best example of this is the marathon version of 'Spoonful' that takes up most of side 3 on their 1968 double-album 'Wheels Of Fire', and it is significant that this is their only wholly successful long piece.

With 'Wheels', it became apparent that to a certain extent the strain was beginning to show. The first album of the set consisted of studio material, and the second of material recorded at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco. Out of the four live tracks, two were reprises of tunes from the first album. Baker's 'Toad' lasts 15½ minutes, and consists principally of a grossly attenuated drum solo, which may have been effective in concert, but on record cannot really appeal to anybody who's not a frustrated percussionist.

When 'Goodbye', their final album, consisted of only three new numbers alongside three concert versions of already recorded numbers, it became clear that one of the factors that crushed Cream to death was lack of playable material that was acceptable to all three members. The great diversity of the music they played after separating, only emphasises the amount of compromising that they must have had to do to play together at all.

The other principal reason for their eventual split was the fact that if they were not totally musically compatible, they were even less compatible on a personal

From left to right: Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker.





level. Remember, this was no boyhood union like the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, but a group formed by three grown men, with no other reason than to play music together. So when the music turned sour on them, they had no further possible motivation for continuing to work together.

Even Jimi Hendrix paid his respects. Performing 'live' on Lulu's BBC TV show, he stopped in the middle of 'Hey Joe', broke into 'Sunshine Of Your Love', and played to the end of the show . . . one of those great unplanned moments that break out from their surroundings to live on in the memory. So Cream did a farewell tour of the States, played their farewell gig at the Albert Hall in London, and recorded their farewell album, 'Goodbye'.

Two more live albums surfaced, which were by turns both turbulent and listless. Clearly, playing Cream's music involved more than simply showing up, plugging in and doing the set. If it wasn't played with commitment, involvement and enthusiasm, Cream's music fell apart at the seams. And equally clearly, it is impossible for musicians, no matter how gifted, to be able to maintain that level of energy, both physical and mental, for every single gig while working those gruelling American tours. It was America that made Cream, but it was also America that broke them.

There are no great and weighty conclusions to be drawn from the career of Cream. They banded together, played their music until they were no longer able to do it, and then went their separate ways. Even now, as memories of that last gig at the Albert Hall fade into the mists of time, each of the three is still haunted by Cream. Eric Clapton in his retirement, Jack Bruce on the road with West and Laing, Ginger Baker in his African studios – all of them still branded with Cream.

Still, it is worth recording that the post-Cream careers of Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton have been jumbled, inconsistent, restless and only intermittently rewarding. Clapton teamed almost immediately with Stevie Winwood, then on leave from Traffic, to be joined by Baker and ex-Family bassist Rick Grech to form Blind Faith, a 'supergroup' who made one interesting, if flawed album, and played one British gig and most of an American tour (as is usually the case) before clashes between Winwood and Baker tore the group apart inside. A dalliance with white American gospellers Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett led to a solo album masterminded by Delaney and his then colleague Leon Russell. The band then did the Mad Dogs tour with Joe Cocker, but its rhythm section of Carl Radle (bass), Jim Gordon (drums) and Bobby Whitlock (keyboards and vocals) came together with Clapton to see him through his most productive post-Cream period as Derek and the Dominos.

From the Dominos period came 'Layla', a classic album, and one that for the first time featured Clapton as leader. The late Duane Allman, slide guitar wizard of the Allman Brothers Band, guested on co-lead

guitar. It presented Clapton in a setting where he perhaps felt happiest – easy, rocking and bluesy.

The collapse of the Dominos and the death of Allman, sent Clapton into a premature retirement from which he only emerged briefly at the behest of his good friend Pete Townshend of the Who, to play concerts backed up by an all-star cast including Winwood, Grech, Townshend, Faces guitarist Ronnie Wood, Traffic drummer Jim Capaldi, conga player Rebop, and Taj Mahal's drummer Jimmy Karstein. On those gigs he recreated songs from his Cream days and most other bands that he'd worked with since then, but he seemed to show little interest in coming upfront to say anything new.

After the Blind Faith debacle, Baker formed a monstrous big band entitled Air Force featuring Winwood, Grech, Graham Bond, the late Harold MacNair and a cast of thousands, but it didn't achieve the success that its founder had hoped for. He has since spent most of his time in Lagos, working with and recording Nigerian musicians.

Bruce has possibly had the most musically rewarding post-Cream career of the three. Again in collaboration with Pete Brown, he wrote and recorded two extremely fine solo albums, 'Songs For A Tailor' and 'Harmony Row'. For a short while he was a member of Tony Williams' Lifetime alongside John MacLaughlin, and also worked in short-lived and unrecorded bands with the likes of Larry Coryell, Mitch Mitchell, Chris Spedding, and Mike Mandel, as well as participating in Carla Bley's mammoth jazz opera 'Escalator Up A Hill'. Finally he decided to be a rock star again, and formed West, Bruce and Laing.

Leslie West (guitar) and Corky Laing (drums) were both former members of Mountain, a group led by Felix Pappalardi, Cream's producer for most of their career. He'd sung and played bass in a very Bruce-orientated style, and so it had seemed only natural for them to want to work with the real thing. Despite everybody's protestations to the contrary, West, Bruce and Laing sounded like a very poor substitute indeed for Cream.

And there it is. There are very few bands in existence today who have not in some way, however remote, been influenced by Cream. The trouble is that far too many have learned the wrong lessons.

Cream took chances. They were the first rock band to issue a double-album of previously unreleased recordings. They were the first rock band to improvise to such a degree. They were the first rock band to go in for extended pieces. The reason that they were able to get away with it was their superlative musicianship. The music made by Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker in those three short years has influenced the course of rock in the simplest and most basic way. Echoes of Cream are in every band currently functioning, and it will be a very long time before anybody else will do so much to affect the music on that most basic level – the way it sounds.



D. Hoffmann

## BACK TRACK

- 1966: November, 'Wrapping Paper' single. December, 'Fresh Cream' LP. 'I Feel Free' single.
- 1967: June, 'Strange Brew' single. November, 'Disraeli Gears' LP.
- 1968: May, 'Anyone For Tennis' single. August, 'Wheels Of Fire' LP (Double Live & Studio) September, 'Sunshine Of Your Love' single. 26th November, last concert at the Albert Hall.
- 1969: January, single 'White Room'. March, 'Goodbye' LP, 'Badge' single. November, 'Best Of Cream' LP.
- 1970: June, 'Live Cream Vol I'. 1972: June, 'Live Cream Vol II'.
- 1973: April, 'Heavy Cream'.
- Ginger Baker: born 19th August 1939.
- 1970: May, 'Airforce'.
- 1972: July, 'Stratavarious'.
- 1973: April, 'Ginger At His Best' (RSO).
- Eric Clapton: born 30th March 1945.
- 1970: August, 'Eric Clapton'. December, 'Derek and the Dominos – Layla'.
- 1972: July, History of Eric Clapton. 'Layla' single, Derek and the Dominos.
- 1973: March, 'Derek and the Dominos In Concert' (RSO) April, 'Eric At His Best' (RSO) September, 'Eric Clapton At The Rainbow' (RSO).
- Jack Bruce: born 14th May 1943.
- 1969: July, 'Songs For A Tailor'.
- 1971: July, 'Harmony Row'. December, 'Things We Like'.
- 1973: April, 'Jack Bruce At His Best' (RSO).
- West, Bruce and Laing.
- 1972: December, 'Why Don't You'.
- 1973: June, 'Whatever Turns You On'.

## THE MUSIC: LYRICS

# Talking 'bout my generation

### A WHITER SHADE OF PALE

Words and Music by  
Keith Reid & Gary Brooker

*We skipped the light fandango  
And turned cartwheels cross the floor.  
I was feeling kind of sea-sick  
But the crowd called out for more  
The room was humming harder  
As the ceiling flew away  
When we called out for another drink  
The waiter brought a tray  
And so it was that later  
As the miller told his tale  
That her face at first just ghostly  
Turned a whiter shade of pale*

*She said 'There is no reason,  
And the truth is plain to see',  
But I wandered through my playing cards  
And would not let her be  
One of sixteen vestal virgins  
Who were leaving for the coast  
And although my eyes were open  
They might just have well been closed  
And so it was that later  
As the miller told his tale  
That her face at first just ghostly  
Turned a whiter shade of pale*

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The mid-'60s marked a sort of musical schizophrenia as commercial pop reached new and most polished heights, while elsewhere others were experimenting with original forms, pushing the boundaries of the rock song ever farther. This double-headedness is shown in 'Groovy Kind Of Love' and 'Whiter Shade Of Pale' released within months of each other. The Toni Wine-Carole Bayer number is almost camp in its popiness. It couldn't be simpler, a pleasant ear-grabbing tune wedded to lyrics of almost stunning banality. The line running 'Any time you want to you can turn me on to anything you want to any time at all' has few equals in repetition, and yet the sheer sameness of it has an effectiveness when sung that belies its crassness when seen baldly in print. The rhymes are crude, the emotions adolescent, the structure basic and yet it works successfully as an example of the unpretentious popular song at its best, which was reflected by its stay in the charts.



Peter Owen

This week we look at the songs of  
Toni Wine/Carole Bayer and Keith  
Reid/Gary Brooker.

### A GROOVY KIND OF LOVE

Words and Music by  
Toni Wine & Carole Bayer

*When I'm feelin' blue  
All I have to do is take a look at you  
Then I'm not so blue  
When you're close to me  
I can feel your heart beat  
I can hear you breathing in my ear  
Wouldn't you agree, baby you and me  
Got a groovy kind of love.  
We've got a groovy kind of love.  
Anytime you want to you can turn me on to  
Anything you want to any time at all.  
When I taste your lips oh I start to shiver  
Can't control the quivering inside.  
Wouldn't you agree baby you and me  
Got a groovy kind of love  
We've got a groovy kind of love*

*When I'm feelin' blue  
All I have to do is take a look at you  
Then I'm not so blue  
When you're close to me  
I can feel your heart beat  
I can hear you breathing in my ear  
Wouldn't you agree baby you and me  
Got a groovy kind of love.  
We've got a groovy kind of love.  
Anytime you want to you can turn me on to  
Anything you want to any time at all.  
When I'm in your arms nothing seems to  
matter  
If the world would shatter I don't care.  
Wouldn't you agree baby you and me  
Got a groovy kind of love  
We've got a groovy kind of love.*

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Compare it with 'Whiter Shade Of Pale' that appeared less than a year later. This was one of the two great anthems of 1967 (the other being Scott McKenzie's 'San Francisco'). Keith Reid's obscurantist, teasing lyrics were sensitively echoed in Gary Brooker's melody that owed more than a little to Bach—interpreted so well by Matthew Fisher's organ-playing. That the lyrics puzzled the listener was unimportant, the whole was superb and the song has rightly become a classic. There is no need to know, for example, who 'the miller' is or why 16 vestal virgins should be leaving for the coast. If the listener wants to attempt an analysis he would do well to note Reid's assertion that 'there is no reason' but perhaps contend that 'the truth is plain to see'. The meaning of it all is unimportant; what matters is that words and music together create a marvellously evocative, haunting mood that lingers long past the song's residency in the charts, making it one of the best things to emerge from the era.

# The Parting of the Dance Craze

Where are the dance crazes of yesteryear? Whatever became of the Madison, the Turkey Trot, the Bunny Hop, the Ska and a million other elaborate variations that came and went every other week, so they were no sooner mastered than past?

Since the mid-'60s, dance crazes have faded into history, and discos and dance-halls have vibrated to the individual expression of each dancer's 'own thing', but once – in fact for around 10 years – you were no one unless you'd learned to leap about in the latest style.

## Beads And Bops

Probably it all began with the Charleston. In the jazzy, lightheaded days of Prohibition, the gay young things of the day (when gay had only one meaning) shimmied themselves into a frenzy. With lemming-like determination they hurled themselves frantically into having a good time. Beads popped, bobs bobbed and row upon row of fringes swayed, but what was perhaps most significant was that, however exuberant the dancer, the performance varied only in the grace of its execution. Everyone did exactly the same steps, and took unconscious comfort from a routine as rigid as the waltz or tango. So while this was the young, fun thing to do, it was no more decadent and no less regimented than any dance their parents or grandparents enjoyed.

Much of the same atmosphere prevailed in post-war Britain. For the young and not-so-young of the late '40s and early '50s the worst was over. There was peace at last and everyone was busily making up for all the lost time. Meanwhile, it was still a time of austerity and rationing, and the combination made for the same kind of desperate 'we're having the time of our lives' attitude to leisure that America saw between the wars. In fact there was even a brief Charleston revival in Britain in the early '50s.

Mostly though, energies were pumped into jive – inherited from the jitterbugging of US servicemen stationed in Britain during the war. This was sedate enough to dance a fast quickstep or foxtrot rhythm, but depraved enough – with its swirling skirts, flashing thighs and general air of abandon – to have adults tut-tutting disapproval. Jive was seized upon by university jazz clubs and local dancehalls alike, and was even banned by a dancehall manager in East London who complained, not about the dance itself, but about the

accompanying habit of spitting discarded gum all over the floor!

More or less concurrent with this was the Creep, a slow perambulation which involved close contact more than anything. The other vital ingredients seemed to be heavy rubber soles (for him and her), pencil skirts or drape suits and, above all, a vacant, glassy stare. It was also probably an early victory for Women's Lib, as the man danced continually backwards! A journalist on a serious daily paper wrote at the time: 'The trend must be watched as there is a little too much sex about it which is not nice.' Apart from this the other main advantage was that it took no time to learn . . . the inclination was enough!

Then, by the mid-'50s, a few minor crazes started to intrude. Around 1956 there was the Cha Cha, a simplified Latin American samba-type performance that smacked too much of 'old-time' . . . where it finally ended up among the sequins and tulle. In 1958 there was the Crawl, which as a version of the Creep is probably self-explanatory. But these were to be easily eclipsed, because 1955 had seen the birth of rock & roll – which dominated the rest of the decade.

Youth was really breaking out at last. They had found an exclusive expression of youth and freedom . . . and went out to prove it. They were growing more confident now than in the insecure, clinging days of the Creep and it showed as they bopped in the aisles and rocked up a riot of flailing limbs and flying clothes. They evolved 'hip' rhyming phrases of their own – 'see you later alligator'; 'in a while, crocodile' which were like passwords exclusive to the young. It was one of the first steps towards self-expression. Youth was starting to rebel, moving from being 'under' or 'in-between' to being 'in'.

## Twisting Time

With the advent of the Twist in 1961 the plan began to go awry. Though it was a clumsy dance – even when performed by the young and lithe – everyone took to it, regardless of age. As the main ingredient – co-ordination – is rare in tots and geriatrics, it was often a grotesque spectacle, but they seemed to have fun. Chubby Checker made a fortune and lost 35 lbs. in weight. Jackie Kennedy denied doing it, but everyone knew that it was the rage from the Peppermint Lounge to the local dancehall. It brought people back to the dancehalls in droves, it sold millions of discs (and slipped a few too) and everyone was happy. For most youngsters, ballrooms had always been the only real social



scene on offer, and the best part about the Twist was that it eliminated wallflowers for ever. You danced the Twist alone and if you had a partner it didn't matter because you were probably yards apart, each involved in a private kind of exhibitionism.

The Twist became competitive, an expression of the individual, which is why what happened next is so strange. The Twist continued and modified but suddenly there was an epidemic of short-



lived crazes that whistled in and out of the dancehalls and the popular press, most of them as neatly in formation as a square dance. It was as though, having almost broken out into self-awareness, everyone was diving back into the security of being exactly the same as the next man.

Just as most of the best music at the time had Negro origins, so did most of the dances. In Britain they were largely picked up from the weekly TV series

*Ready, Steady, Go!* which began including a new one on each show, and kids seemed so keen to be up-to-date that they'd copy anything.

The Method, was concocted for a TV serial, but soon everyone was jamming switchboards asking for repeats to learn how to 'be a tree', 'be a car', 'be a flower' on the dance floor, in a send-up of Brando type actors. Newspapers and magazines printed foot diagrams, or worse, photographed aged dance instructors in action, and brought out whole supplements about what to put on and how to wear your hair for each new craze. What was so amazing was how old the young seemed and yet how naïve.

Under a heading 'Formality is out of date on the dance floor', a woman's magazine answered questions about dance etiquette: Question: 'What can I do to discourage persistent partners?'; Answer: 'Try a firm "No thank you" or if you're not so brave try a subtle, "I'm sorry I've promised it to someone else". But if you're not dancing you may have to disappear into the Ladies for a while instead.' It's impossible to imagine even the teeniest weenybopper being so unsure of herself these days. Somehow informality had become strictly formalised, and everyone was losing themselves in mindless imitation of everyone else.

### Endless Dancing Days

The crazes seemed endless and it's almost impossible, as well as irrelevant, to describe them all or remember the exact order of their coming. One of the best known was the Locomotion, from a Little Eva song of the same name, where usually everyone formed a long chain round the floor and moving arms and legs in piston-like circles, chugged back and forth. Eva was also responsible for the Turkey Trot which had something to do with flapping your elbows like wings.

Originating in Harlem, the Hully-Gully enjoyed a brief vogue. It was a group dance with a caller who would shout out different movements which everyone copied. These included the Chicken and the Marilyn, an exaggerated version of Monroe's famous walk. A group of overweight Windsor housewives invented something called the Bunny Hop, mainly because they thought it might improve their figures. Someone came up with the Golli-Golli, a burnt-cork modification of an East End of London knees-up.

There was the Mashed Potato where you stamped your feet to mash imaginary potatoes; the Hitch Hiker which imitated thumbs up, hunger pains and empty palms, and the Popeye, based on a sailor's horn-pipe. There was the Bend, the Dog, the Monkey, and a Russian attempt called the Bip-Bip. There was the Block for purple-hearters, and one called the Blues which featured a hands-clasped-behind-back posture. There was the Madison which was pushed and pushed but never really made it, mostly because it was much too elaborate. The Let's Kiss was a big hit in

France where they enjoyed anything complicated, and the Modjenka came from Scandinavia to be a hit with the Mods. And still there were more: the Penguin Bounce, the Pony, the Slope, the Robot, the Loop-de-Loop, and briefly the Spastic for a few sick weeks. Eventually, every time anyone made a mistake or forgot a step they covered up by calling it a new dance.

Probably the only significant dance of the lot was the Ska, or Blue Beat, where Mods and West Indians started to meet, integrated by a common enjoyment of the same beat. This was much freer than any of the others, relying mainly on easy movement to the music rather than set steps and it coincided with the emergence of a new kind of confidence in the young. These were the real 'never had it so good' generation, well-fed, well-clothed, with money in their pockets, and the Beatles to prove that you could be British and working-class and conquer the world. It was the evolution of being yourself, doing your thing, and expressing an eccentricity you liked in dress, dance or music.

It's hard to imagine the atmosphere that bred the big dance-craze era, because now we take it for granted that freedom is an accepted part of being young. We enjoy different tastes from our neighbours but at the same time we can accept their choice. Such a way of thinking didn't happen overnight, but somewhere around the mid-'60s young people began to realise the choices and break up into multiple re-groupings. Now, only the very youngest kids swarm after a single idol, rush to buy one magazine or one disc. Even pre-teens are developing their own tastes.

A lot of energy has gone out of the dancehalls into the concert atmosphere. Stylised dancing expressed it for some people, and a few groups or individuals still attract their own fan movements. Slade fans stomp, Gary Glitter fans cavort, Stackridge followers do 'the Stanley', but for many people admiration takes a different form, A Bowie happening is full of stardust make-up, and Faces' crowds sport tartan scarves and Rod Stewart haircuts. We take a little of someone else's style, a dash of someone else's sparkle and roll it into our persona. Kids are influenced, but never submerged, creating a patchwork one-off from the edges of a hundred sources. Carbon-copy dances are dead, just as (or because) everyone is reacting as an individual.

Maybe it has a little to do with so-called permissiveness too. George Bernard Shaw called dancing 'a perpendicular expression of a horizontal desire'. While sexual freedom was still not a universal thing, maybe the Slop or the Bird were sufficiently attention-catching and exhibitionist; with out going beyond the limits others stuck to exactly. Now the Jaggeresque movements that differ just a little with every dancer, let as much or as little hang out as the mood or company of the evening suggests. Dancing is basically an age-old courting ritual and in the '70s it's as cool or as hot as the dancer.





# God Rock

As both religion and music stretch back into the mists of time, it is not surprising that each should have chosen over the centuries to illuminate the other. Religion and rock music, one might say, were fated for each other.

Rock music, as the most recent medium of popular culture in the Western World, has been faced like all others with a situation in which organised religion has continued to decline. In the face of this, and a conscious lack of purpose displayed in the century's culture, it comes as no surprise that some of rock's more serious practitioners have turned to religious ideas – not only the familiar Christian ones – in their search for an alternative life-style.

## From Beats To Beatles

In America in the '50s and early '60s, two things paved the way. First, there was a renewed interest in eastern religions, appearing in the writing of the Beat poets like Ginsberg, Snyder, and Kerouac. Secondly, there was the increasing use of 'psychedelic' drugs, which produced an apparently 'spiritual' experience.

This involvement in drugs and obscure religions was naturally only the concern of a small minority. Elvis may have made the odd religious album, but they were for the mums and dads; religion was no subject for the pop market and drugs were identified in the public mind with jazz fiends and oriental criminals. It was the Beatles' adoption of these minority concerns that brought them out into the mass arena. John Lennon might have said that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus, but it was his and George Harrison's interest in religion, and the subsequent effect it had on their music and public life-styles, that made it possible for religion to become a 'hip' subject, one deserving of interest in the rock scene.

Since the Beatles made it all possible, there have appeared a number of Christians who have used their music and their position in the rock hierarchy as a means of spreading the gospel. In the music itself this was largely reduced to an urging of peace and love in the Christian tradition, often with little or no reference to the faith. But in terms of public appearances and the attitudes there expressed, they have made their positions clear, as believers rather than people who merely adhere to the morality which underlies the Christian teaching.

Cliff Richard is the outstanding example. Since the invasion of rock by religion he has fully committed himself to being a public Christian. He has recorded religious songs – although never so blatant as to be seen as a positive 'pusher' of religion – he has sung for Billy Graham's evangelist crusades and has often appeared on TV defending his beliefs. He turns up in churches up and down Britain, seeing himself as a link through which youth and the Church can be brought together.

The problem from his, and like-minded people's points of view, is that Christianity is associated with the status quo of society, whereas rock music openly rebels against it. Memories of being forced to go to church or Sunday school don't really jell with the image of rock and free expression. One way around this is the 'up-dating' and secularising of Christianity. The spate of musicals in the '70s – *Jesus Christ; Superstar, Godspell, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* – have done just this. They have removed the truly religious elements of the story and recreated them as morality plays on the familiar theme. As Cliff himself said: "They will sing about Jesus as an historical figure, not as the Son of God."

## Black Judas

The casting of a black man as Judas in *Superstar* is significant, for in the context of current racial problems, the doctrines of Christianity can be turned with embarrassing effect on its white apostles. The gospel and blues traditions have always demonstrated this, and their absorption into rock via the soul music of the '60s has produced a number of black artists whose avowedly anti-establishment viewpoint relies heavily on a Christian insistence on non-discrimination, peace and love.

Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye are two prime examples. The latter's 'What's Going On', released in 1971, featured a beautiful interweaving of soul rhythms beneath Gaye's theme of political and ecological catastrophe versus love of each other, through faith in God.

Folk and country music also have a long tradition of religious themes, particularly in their association with the Deep South, but both have been largely secularised in their electrification, although the latter still in large part retains its use of religious symbolism.

It is in the symbolic, rather than the strictly religious sense, that Christianity

is mostly used in rock music. Both Britain and the US are professedly Christian societies, the Bible a book almost everyone knows something of. As a result, many songwriters use its characters and fables, not because they are Christians, but because it is a source of such well-known imagery. James Taylor's 'Fire And Rain', for example, contains the line – 'won't you look down upon me Jesus, you gotta help me make a stand'. In an interview Taylor described the line as 'a means of expressing desperation'. He believed that 'Jesus is interesting as a phenomenon that permeates this culture'.

In the early stages of his career, Dylan's songs had a *Pilgrim's Progress*-style simplicity; in the middle stages biblical characters like Abraham and the Good Samaritan walked in the same manic world as Einstein and Mr. Jones. Up to this time it seemed that Dylan also found Christianity both an 'interesting phenomenon' and a convenient repository of parables and moral weapons to lace his contempt with. But with 'John Wesley Harding' and the records that followed, a new commitment is discernible. The use of religious imagery is still stunning – for example, the transfer of the passage concerning the fall of Babylon almost word for word out of Isaiah and into 'All Along The Watchtower' – but there also seems to be a greater commitment to the idea and experience of God present in his work. Not that this is a purely Christian God; Dylan has taken from East and West alike in his search for spiritual affirmation. He is far from alone – Leonard Cohen, another prolific user of Christian imagery, is now in a Zen monastery in California.

It is indeed the eastern religions that have had the greatest impact on rock music. Concepts that 10 years ago were little known in the west are now almost household words. A fundamentally different conception of life has been transmitted, in however garbled a manner, to the mass audience that rock possesses. The main credit for this must go to the Beatles in general, and George Harrison in particular. Like Cliff Richard, but with a far more formidable array of ideas, George has proselytised his Hindu beliefs in all the ways open to him as a rock star, from music to interviews, from financial aid to religious sects, to the Concert for Bangla Desh.

## Indian Influence

It started with his interest in Indian music and consequent involvement in the philosophy behind it. There were a few songs on 'Revolver', and then the classic 'Within You Without You', on 'Sgt. Pepper', which summed up what George had absorbed:

*'When you've seen beyond yourself  
You may find peace of mind is waiting  
there  
And the time will come when you see  
That we're all one and life flows on  
within you and without you'*



J. Kingaby

David Essex, who appeared as the narrator in the stage version of the Who's pop opera, *Tommy*, really owed his major success to the rock show *Godspell*.

Through the remaining Beatle albums, George returned to the rock context whilst continuing to weave his songs around themes central to Hinduism but radically foreign to, and critical of, Western culture: the illusory nature of material reality, love without the romance of possession, the need to dissolve the ego to attain a true peace of mind. During this time the Beatles adopted the Maharishi and went to India.

In 1970–71, the Beatles parted and Harrison went on to make his first fully realised rock/religion album, 'All Things Must Pass'. It was not *about* Hinduism, it was life *through* Hindu eyes, and the rock-prayer 'My Sweet Lord' sold 1,000,000 copies, as did the album. The music George was creating perfectly fitted the vision, and Spector's 'Wall of Sound' brought a hymnal quality to his flowing melodies. Words and music which apart might seem simplistic, together acquired a majesty of considerable depth. The next album, 'Living In A Material World', carries on where the first leaves off – the sorrows of material living and joy of the faith.

If George Harrison almost epitomises the connection between rock and religion, there are several other rock musicians who feel that connection with equal strength in their music. Pete Townshend has Meher Baba, to whom he devoted his solo album, and whose philosophy underlies much of the Who's music. The Mahavishnu Orchestra, and now Carlos Santana, share

Sri Chinmoy as their Guru, and their music is dedicated to spreading his light, the joy of the 'inner mounting flame'. The Osmonds who are a Mormon family, released a concept album, 'The Plan', which deals with their religious beliefs.

### Taoism and Zen

But important as these artists are, in explicitly adhering to a religion, they represent a small minority. The most important contribution that eastern religion has made to rock music and the rock sub-culture (it becomes difficult to separate them) lies in the absorption into its conscious and unconscious tenets of ideas which mostly spring from Taoism and Zen Buddhism. Because these two are not religions at all in the western sense, but rather 'ways of life', it becomes very difficult to trace their presence in simple terms. It is also hard to judge how deep their concepts have gone, how far they have affected the social experience beyond the whims of conversational cliché. What is certain is that they are widely enjoyed.

Cat Stevens' 'Moonshadow' has the following lines:

*If I ever lose my hands  
I won't have to work no more . . .  
If I ever lose my eyes  
I won't have to cry no more'*

In the light of Cat Stevens' pre-occupation with Zen, evident elsewhere in his music,

it is not hard to see that the Zen idea of 'ungrasping acceptance' underlies those lines. But take a record like Bowie's 'Ziggy Stardust' and the connection recedes into invisibility. Bowie's music has shown him to be aware of eastern religious thought, in that it forms part of the intellectual apparatus with which he writes his songs. 'Ziggy' has no particular reference to eastern religion, but equally its tortured web of opposites and circles is scarcely conceivable without such an influence. In much of rock music, such an influence exists, colouring the music but buried deep in its new assumptions.

Many gods and gurus have now appeared in rock, all the way from Townshend's Baba – who smiles at everything – to Bowie's 'Supergods' – who sit 'gloomy-browed their tragic endless lives'. Jagger has had 'sympathy for the devil', the Byrds have sung 'Jesus is just alright with me'. Religion has become, along with love and politics and intermixed with them, one of the main themes explored by rock. In doing so it has affected the ways of thought of a vast number of people.

It is now possible to turn on pop radio and hear George hoping to avoid reincarnation, or stroll down London's Oxford Street to the sound of clanging bells and the chant of 'Hare Krishna'. Both these things would have been inconceivable 10 years ago, their familiarity now a measure of how far religion is accepted by rock music and its audience.

PROFILE: 1956-73

# Bee Gees

## Brothers in Pop

In 1956 a Manchester cinema stage saw the appearance of a group called the Blue Cats. They comprised nine-year-old Barry Gibb and his seven-year-old twin brothers Robin and Maurice. Even in those days of skiffle they were singing harmonies.

Their precocious talent survived the family emigration to Australia in 1958, and by 1960 the brothers had their own TV series in Brisbane. Rules about minors cut down the TV though, and the trio performed in gambling clubs and on speedway tracks. As the Bee Gees, they made a number of records, and by the time they left Australia they had scored several no. 1 smashes.

An album of these hits had been sent to Brian Epstein, Beatle manager and head of NEMS, by their father before they set sail. While Brian was pondering their saleability, the family arrived in London in February 1967. About a week later, after a day of being told how impossible it was for a new group to break into the scene, they arrived home to find that the new NEMS whizzkid, Robert Stigwood, had been phoning up all day. They met him and the breakthrough was made. 'Spicks And Specks', a song recorded in Australia, was rushed out, making little impact but enough for Stigwood.

In April they released 'New York Mining Disaster 1941', accompanied by advertising that claimed them as 'the most significant talent to emerge in 1967'. This incredible claim wasn't taken too seriously at the time. They were accused of copying the Beatles and the record only reached the wrong end of the Top 20.

It was a remarkable song though, displaying an originality that promised much for the future. A frantically slow rhythm perfectly complements the story of a miner trapped underground waiting for an escape he really knows won't come. Doom-laden harmonies intone the key lines - 'have you seen my wife Mr Jones? Do you know what it's like on the outside?' The whole song is a masterpiece of imagination.

During these first few months they signed two Australians, Vince Melouney and Colin Peterson, to play guitar and drums, and they were receiving requests from all sorts of big names for their songs. Even the inexplicable failure of their second single, 'To Love Somebody' - a song since recorded by over 200 people. - failed to stop the ball rolling. In May they

From left to right: Robin, Barry and Maurice Gibb.



L.F.I.

Chris Walter

were approached by US Atlantic Records and offered an £80,000 record deal over five years, the largest amount ever offered to a new group. 'New York Mining Disaster' made the US Top 20, as did 'To Love Somebody'. In July they went across on a promotional visit.

By mid-summer, a well-known TV producer was calling them 'the best song-writing talent in Britain after the Beatles and the biggest influence on the pop scene at the moment'. And this with only one minor hit and a flop! As if to justify this high praise they proceeded to produce their most commercial song to date, 'Massachusetts'. Another doom-laden piece of imagination, it shot to no. 1 in both Britain and the US, selling over five million copies. It was one of those few songs that are instantly hummable until you reach the high note, which only Robin Gibb could scale with ease.

This hit, and the release earlier of their first album, seemed to confirm that the Bee Gees were capable of writing an endless series of good songs. They were obviously here to stay. The magazines interviewed them and found that they were all Christians, that none of them were interested in politics, and that they all liked steak best but with different drinks. Robin was afraid of loneliness, poverty and darkness; Maurice had apparently always dreamed of having a round bed. Then Robin was in a train crash which killed over fifty people; he was hurt but pulled several people to safety.

## Romance With Lulu

The work permit problems with Colin and Vince were solved in November, and the same month saw Stigwood leaving NEMS and taking the Bee Gees with him; the beginning of Maurice's much publicised romance with Lulu, and the making of a film called 'Cucumber Castle' with Spike Milligan. The group played at London theatres to scenes of BeeGeemania and secured a £130,000 contract to tour the States in early '68. The world was opening up for them, with older brother Barry barely out of his teens.

But the music scene was in some ways closing in on them. Stigwood's other main group, sold to Atlantic as a makeshift in the Bee Gees deal, were the Cream, and their success was to mirror the growing distance between pop and rock. The Bee Gees' next single, 'World', perhaps failed to appreciate this distance. It was by any standards a great record, superbly conceived, arranged and performed. Yet it was a little too elusive for the straight pop market, and the lads were not endearing themselves to the growing rock market. A fairly typical quote from Barry around this time was – "Thank goodness the hippy gear is going out of pop. I've talked to pop fans and they simply hate these hippy scruffy groups. They'd rather see Cliff Richard or Scott Walker looking smart in their suits. It's so much more healthy." Hardly the way to win the audience their music at this time deserved.

'World', selling in the wake of 'Massachusetts', reached only no. 9.

But at the time they still seemed on the crest of the wave. In April '68 they became the first group to take a full orchestra out with them on tour, a breakthrough for which they deserve great credit. The tour ended at London's Albert Hall amid scenes of fanmania that completely drowned orchestra and group, leaving velvet-clad Robin and shot-silk, jump-suited Barry gesturing like silent movie idols.

They went to the States in the summer and received tumultuous receptions everywhere – a little less mania but a lot more attention and applause. They seemed to have been taken more seriously there, and well they should – in the 18 months since their arrival in Britain they had sold a staggering 10 million singles and 3 million albums, and in the process lived up to Stigwood's extravagant hype. This indeed proved the crest, for on their return Robin collapsed from nervous exhaustion and Barry, doubtless in a moment of weariness, announced that he intended to leave the group when their commitments had all been fulfilled. This would admittedly take two years, but the breach had been made. From then on the group seemed dogged by internal strain, appearing in the press, so it seemed, merely to insult each other.

The music of those first 18 months was basically an original synthesis of two existing themes. One was the ballad form, using guitar and piano as rhythm and strings as a lifter and 'romanticiser'. The other was the bizarre lyrics of the post-Pepper period, which the Bee Gees took further than anyone else. They seemed to write lyrics in a trance, fashioning songs from whatever occurred to them, songs that could not be understood in any logical way but which communicated a definite feeling of outer madness and a broken heart. Barry specialised in love songs littered with strange objects and twisted phrases, Robin in a melodramatic paranoia – 'Til I finally died which started the whole world living' – brought back to earth by powerfully simple hook lines.

## Soaring Harmony

Their other great asset was the possession of two voices that sounded devastating either solo or in harmony. As one sung one verse and then the other followed, as in 'World' or 'Let There Be Love', – the transition produced a remarkable effect, like changing gear upwards. Then they'd go a notch higher into a soaring harmony. All of this might have been in vain had they not had the supreme attribute – an ability to write melodies both instant and lasting.

But this ability has also proved double-edged. Already in 1969, the spotlight in rock was turning to a combination of imagination and an intensely personal self-expression. But the Bee Gees never wrote about themselves in that way. The ballad form of which they were masters was to be left in its pre-Beatle state of moons and Junes, and the Bee Gees marooned

with it in the straight pop category.

For the next six months there was no new single. Then, eventually in February 1969 'First Of May' was released, one of Barry's songs, which he sang with no assistance from Robin. Robin apparently wanted the other side as the 'A'-side. In March he announced his decision to go solo, and his wife told the press that he had never been given enough credit for the group's successes. Barry said that it would all blow over, and Dad said that Robin needed the others, but Robin apparently didn't think so. A US tour was looming up and Barry said that they'd do it 'with or without Robin'. Gradually the split began to look permanent.

By the end of May, Barry was saying, "I don't think I could work with him again even if I wanted to. He has said such hurtful things about Maurice and I and our manager." Stigwood was himself threatening Robin with legal action, but eventually managed to create a compromise whereby Robin would play with the group for a few months each year. But Barry wouldn't have him back anyway.

A Bee Gees' single was released without Robin. It didn't do too well, and as Robin's solo 'Saved By The Bell' (which Barry had thought uncommercial) shot past them to no. 2, the boys seemed far from brothers.

The rot had really set in for the group. A year earlier, Vince had left to play his beloved blues – electric guitar was rarely to be heard again on a Bee Gees single. Now in August '69 Colin departed too, leaving just the two of them. They continued as a duo for a while but then Barry quit both Maurice and Stigwood. Two and a half years after their formation the group was no more.

## Brothers Together

Robin failed with his follow-up and by mid '70 the brothers were back together again. But it wasn't the same. Somehow in the interval they had lost track of where rock was going, and chose or were forced to confine themselves to churning out superior ballads. Their most creative period was behind them. Still the hits came, still they produced albums of a remarkable quality, showing all their flair for arranging, performing, and imaginative subject-matter. But their audience was now more restricted. The 'Trafalgar' album was at least the musical equal of their albums of four years before, but whereas the latter received lead reviews in all the papers, 'Trafalgar' received just a few lines at the bottom of a page. But their talent for melody has not deserted them; their rather simplistic words presumably a matter of choice rather than necessity. Stigwood once said that he thought Robin had one of the finest pop voices ever and cited 'Odessa' as one of the greatest songs ever written. Extravagant as these claims are, they are not totally ridiculous. The Bee Gees of 1967–69 were a great deal better than either they or the rock audience now gives them credit for. They might just turn round and show us in the future.

## Drugs in The Rock Culture Part 2

Have drugs been a major influence on the development of rock music? Are drugs an influence on the music today?

Both suggestions shock many people and confirm the fears of others that rock music is essentially a means of depraving and corrupting the minds and bodies of countless numbers of young people who are supposedly too young to be able to make for themselves vital decisions affecting the ways in which they choose to live their lives.

Drugs, more than any other single aspect of the rock life-style, are capable of offending and horrifying the many members of our society who have no direct experience of the drug culture and who are forced to rely on the more sensational tabloids for information on this enormously controversial subject.

### Drugs' Dual Role

Are drugs this generation's new discovery? This is certainly the theory supported by many people who bemoan the supposed deterioration of moral standards among the young. Yet this is patently untrue. Drugs of many sorts, including opium, morphine, penicillin, sleeping tablets, tranquillisers, alcohol and nicotine have long served a valuable and often indispensable role, both in the field of medicine and in a more general social capacity, providing people with a useful means of coping with illness and pain on the one hand, and tension, insecurity and the inability to relax in unfamiliar social situations on the other.

In the storms of righteous indignation that tends to be evoked by both sides in the controversy that rages over the use of drugs, it is worth remembering that drugs have a long tradition of association with the arts.

With the amazing developments that have taken place within rock music in the last twenty years, developments that have transformed it from a comparatively straightforward entertainment medium to



John Lennon and Yoko leaving a London court after a drug case, in 1968.

an art form with considerable potential for creative endeavour, it may still be possible to disapprove very strongly of the current widespread use of many forms of drugs but it would seem at the very least short sighted to be surprised by the amalgamation of drugs into the rock culture.

Whatever the pros and cons of drug use, it would certainly be extremely unrealistic to pretend that drugs are not now in widespread use, both amongst the musicians who create rock music and amongst the audience who listen to that music and use it as a central reference point for many of the decision-making processes in their own lives. How is it that drugs, most of them still illegal both in this country and the United States, have come to be a focal point of rock music? Initially the development of patterns of drug use paralleled the development of the music itself. The use of marijuana has long been widespread amongst black people both in the West Indies and in the United States and as black music has influenced the ideas of white musicians, initially in the fields of jazz and blues and latterly in the field of rock & roll itself, so black life-styles have affected the attitudes of many people towards the use of marijuana.

It was the extensive West Indian immigration into Britain in the 1950s that sparked off the current wave of widespread marijuana use there – though the process of dissemination has been a gradual one, from the immigrant community to white jazz musicians and beatniks of the period and later to the R&B enthusiasts of the early '60s. The use of marijuana has now been assimilated into the mainstream of rock culture along with the major influences from blues music itself. In the States the developing patterns of marijuana use have

followed a similar formula.

Initially, marijuana smoking was simply a part of the black culture that was assimilated by the heavily black-influenced, white jazz musicians of the '30s and '40s and their beatnik successors. With the more recent kindling of white interest in black blues music, the habit has spread beyond a closely-knit coterie of jazz musicians and bohemians to a whole generation of young white Americans.

The introduction of other types of drugs too has been a response to specific social needs and drives of certain periods of our recent history. The widespread use of amphetamines ('pep pills', 'speed') by the Mods in Britain in the early '60s was an integral part of their process of discovering new possibilities of mobility and experience within the limitations of their position at the bottom end of our social scale. Similarly, the introduction and adoption of LSD in the mid-'60s reflected a new curiosity amongst young people from all classes of society, for some new set of meanings and some system of reality beyond the now rather care-worn patterns that had been handed down to them by the older generation.

### Getting Stoned

At all stages, the introduction of these various sorts of drugs has been reflected in rock music. It was no coincidence that the Rolling Stones' second single 'I Wanna Be Your Man' had a B-Side that was titled simply 'Stoned'. Getting stoned rapidly became a part of the life-style associated with the early '60s blues clubs in Britain and the Stones' choice of title simply acknowledged this aspect of the scene that they had come from. An American group

called the Byrds who had previously devoted themselves mainly to electric versions of early Bob Dylan numbers, released a song called 'Eight Miles High'.

The words of the song themselves were certainly 'stranger than known'. To many people they were simply meaningless gibberish, but to anyone that had experimented with perception-altering drugs such as marijuana or LSD, the song was a very successful attempt to reproduce the egoless disorientation of a drug-induced state of awareness.

## System Of Codes

Songs like 'Eight Miles High' and Bob Dylan's 'Mr. Tambourine Man' ('Take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind') marked the beginning of a whole flood of so-called 'drug songs'. Since its beginning in the '50s, rock had relied heavily on the dynamics between what society allowed to be stated directly and what could be implied. Rock had long since developed its own codes and euphemisms, ways of transmitting messages that were quite clear and comprehensible to the rock audience, but incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

Up until the early '60s, this system of codes had mainly been used to transmit messages about sexual behaviour, an area where there was an obvious discrepancy between what young people thought and what their elders allowed them to say and do. By the mid-'60s there was a far greater amount of sexual permissiveness and this system of code transmission became applied almost exclusively to the use of drugs, the one major area where there was an almost total lack of agreement between the old and the young. Songs like the Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit' ('One pill makes you larger and one pill makes you small/But the pills that mother gives you don't do anything at all'), the Beatles' 'Tomorrow Never Knows' and 'A Day In The Life' ('Went upstairs and had a smoke/ Somebody spoke and I went into a dream . . . I'd love to turn you on'), Donovan's 'Sunny Goodge Street', Procol Harum's 'Whiter Shade Of Pale', the Association's 'Along Comes Mary', Dylan's 'Rainy Day Women' ('Everybody must get stoned'), Hendrix's 'Purple Haze' and 'Stone Free', the Who's 'I Can See For Miles' and 'Magic Bus' and countless too numerous to mention, all created and reinforced the idea of a secret language that was exclusive to the young. It was a language that relied heavily on an understanding of certain key slang words and phrases such as 'heads', 'high', 'stoned', 'turned on' and 'score' that were used to freely transmit information about the use of drugs.

Rapidly, more and more rock stars began to admit freely that they had taken drugs of various sorts and at the same time increasing numbers of rock heroes became involved in drug arrests and sensational court cases. Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger and Keith Richard were arrested in 1967 for drug offences and the spectacular trial that followed, high-



Mick Jagger and Keith Richard in 1967, shortly after they were tried in a Magistrates Court, on a drugs charge.

lighted the enormous gulf that was opening up between the pro- and anti-drug factions in society, a division that tended to correlate very closely with the much publicised 'generation gap'.

As the drug language evolved and drugs and rock & roll music came to be identified as two parts of a single phenomenon, so the sound and texture of the music altered too. The traditional four-to-the-bar, regular rhythms of rock and R&B were replaced by a more fluid form of electric music that was strongly influenced by the sounds of Eastern music and, in particular, the sound of the sitar. At the same time, groups like the Who, the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Led Zeppelin in Britain and West Coast bands like the Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and Steppenwolf, began to experiment with the possibilities of electrical techniques for distorting sound such as feedback and the wah-wah pedal.

For a time it seemed as if the possibilities of the new-styled 'acid rock' music were limitless, like the possibilities of the peace and love philosophy that accompanied them. But this was not the case. By the end of the 1960s 'acid rock', like the acid experience itself, was no longer viewed as a field of endless opportunity. Rock trendsetters like the Beatles, the Stones and Dylan moved away from the unstructured excesses of 'acid rock', back to the firmer foundations of rock & roll, R&B and country music and other simpler forms of music from which acid rock had developed. Albums like the Beatles' 'white album', the Stones' 'Beggars Banquet' and Dylan's 'John Wesley Harding' marked a conscious move back to simplicity and rigid structural form. In the general dissolution of the post-acid,

late '60s, rock music started to move in two distinct directions. On the one hand there was a return to formal simplicity exemplified by the Beatles and the Stones and on the other the development from 'heavy' acid music into the yet heavier 'downer' music of bands like Black Sabbath, with their overwhelming insistence on a single tortured distorted riff as the basis for any piece of music.

## No Longer Necessary

Since the euphoric optimism of the early acid days has dispersed, the rock culture itself has divided sharply on the question of drugs. On the one hand there is the view that drugs are no longer necessary once they have been experienced and understood. As Bob Dylan – once high priest of drug music put it 'Drugs are for ugly people'. On the other hand there is an increasingly desperate acceptance of drugs of all sorts (particularly the more obviously anaesthetic drugs like Mandrax) – an attitude epitomised in the lines 'Try and stop the waves behind your eyeballs/Drop your reds, drop your greens and blues' from the Stones' 'Sweet Virginia'.

Drugs are now an established part of the rock life-style for many people, though it has become increasingly difficult to see their use as any sort of long term solution to anything, just as it has become increasingly difficult to see rock itself as carrying any real message for social change. Like it or not, drugs are here in quite a big way and they will obviously continue to influence the music as long as they remain an integral part of the life-style that goes with rock & roll.

# POP FILE

... the Who's Who of Pop. Week by week the A-Z of who did what and when.

**SANDY NELSON** scored two big hits: 'Teen Beat' (1959) and 'Let There Be Drums' (1960). Both were notable for having drums as the main instrument, augmented with bass and electric guitar to produce a basic driving rock rhythm.

**ANTHONY NEWLEY** started off as a teenage actor, but in 1959 entered the British charts with his EP disc 'Idol On Parade'. He followed this with 'I've Waited So Long', a cover version of Lloyd Price's 'Personality', 'Why', 'Do You Mind', 'Strawberry Fair' and 'Pop Goes The Weasel'. As well as hit parade success he had a controversial TV show *The World Of Gurney Slade*, which was too weird for Britain's stolid citizens and taken off after one series. He has since written the hit musicals *Stop The World I Want To Get Off*, *The Roar Of The Greasepaint* and *The Good Old Bad Old Days*.

**RANDY NEWMAN** was born in Los Angeles on November 28th, 1943 into a musical family, and majored in musical composition at UCLA, by which time he was writing for Metric Music. His first Reprise album 'Randy Newman', came out in 1968, which was followed by 'Twelve Songs', 'Live', and 'Sail Away'. He has never sold many records, but is appreciated by many singers and has a hard-core following for his often amusingly ironic songs, such as 'Simon Smith And His Amazing Dancing Bear'.

**THE NICE** were formed in 1967 as a back-up band to singer P.P. Arnold; Keith Emerson (organ), and Brian 'Blinkey' Davison (drums) had previously been playing in Gary Farr's T-Bones, and they teamed up with Lee Jackson (bass) and Dave O'List (guitar). At P.P. Arnold's gigs the Nice's warm-up set became an attraction in its own right and soon the group were playing gigs of their own, managed by Andrew Oldham. Their live act included their



RCA

**HARRY NILSSON** worked in a California bank before he began to make records of his own songs. 'Pandemonium Shadow Show' was his first (1968), and others included 'Aerial Ballet' (1968), 'Harry' (1969), 'Nilsson Sings Newman' (1970) – a selection of Randy Newman material. After this he wrote the story and music for an animated film, *The Point*, which was narrated by Dustin Hoffman – for whose film, *Midnight Cowboy*, Nilsson sang 'Everybody's Talkin''. Then came 'Nilsson Schmilsson' (1971) and 'Son Of Schmilsson' (1972). 'Without You' was a single hit for him in 1971. In 1973 'A Touch Of Schmilsson - In The Night' – an album of evergreens – suited his soft approach, that has always appealed to his specific audience.

**THE NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND** got together in California in 1966 as a country rock jug-band. One of the few American groups to show a sense of humour, since 1969 their line-up has been: John McEuen (banjo, guitar, mandolin), Jeff Hanna (washboard, guitar), Les Thompson (guitar, bass, vocals), Jimmy Fadden (autoharp, jug, tuba, trombone), Jim Ibbotson (drums, bass, guitar, piano). Their 1973 album 'Will The Circle Be Broken' on United Artists shows the band at what many consider its best.

**JACK NITZSCHE** arranged the Crystals' 'He's A Rebel' and Ike and Tina Turner's 'River Deep Mountain High' for Phil Spector, and worked on many other early '60s hits, as well as recording in his own right. He played keyboards on and arranged some early Rolling Stones records, arranged strings for Neil Young's 'Harvest', and wrote and produced the score for the film *Performance*.

**LAURA NYRO** was born in the Bronx in 1947, and was soon influenced by jazz (her father was a trumpeter). She began singing in groups and songwriting while at high school, recorded 'Eli And The Thirteenth Confession' for CBS in 1968, and followed that with other original, soulful jazzy albums – usually featuring some of her own material. Her 'Gonna Take A Miracle' (1971) was the last original album.



Ron Grevatt

own heavy, psychedelic versions of Dylan's 'She Belongs To Me' and the old Dave Brubeck number, 'Rondo'. Their first album 'The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack' showed the beginnings of the classical tendency the group were to follow after the departure of Dave O'List on 'Ars Longa Vitae Brevis' and 'Five Bridges Suite' albums. They were banned from the Albert Hall in 1968, after burning a Stars and Stripes flag while playing their hit 'America' – which writer Leonard Bernstein barred them from playing in the US. The band split in 1970 and all three formed their own bands. Jackson and Davison are planning to form another band together.

**PHIL OCHS** was one of the generation of US protest singers that enjoyed popularity in the early '60s. More directly political than most, he is best remembered for his song 'I Ain't Marching Anymore'.

**ANDREW LOOG OLDHAM** was a publicist for the Beatles before working for agent Eric Easton, with whom he became joint-manager of the Rolling Stones in April 1963. Modelling himself closely on his image of Phil Spector, he showed a flair for publicity and projected the Stones as the group parents love to hate. He later became sole manager of the group and is credited with the production of their earlier records, but stopped working with the group in 1967. In 1966 he set up his own record company, Immediate, which recorded the Nice, the Small Faces and Chris Farlowe before going bankrupt in 1970. In 1973 he produced an album for Donovan.



Valerie Wilmer

**YOKO ONO** was born in Japan on February 13th, 1933. She finished her education in the USA, and in the '60s became a well-known figure in New York avant-garde art circles making



films and organising happenings. She met John Lennon at an art exhibition and Yoko, previously married with one child, Kyoko, married him on March 20th, 1969. She became his constant companion (even to Beatles' recording sessions) and appeared to be a bone of contention between Lennon and the rest of the group. She has recorded and performed with the Plastic Ono Band and recorded under her own name for Apple, as well as making films – two of which, *Apotheosis* and *Fly*, won awards at the 1972 Cannes Film Festival. In 1970 she published *Grapefruit*, a book of poems and epigrammatic comments.

**GILBERT O'SULLIVAN** was born in Ireland on December 1st, 1946. Brought up in England, he began playing as a teenager



while still at Swindon Art College, and tried to make a name for himself in music in the mid-'60s. In 1969 he signed to MGM and his first single, 'Nothing Rhymed', was a hit. He later dropped his silly but successful shorts-and-cloth-cap image, and has produced a series of successful singles including 'We Will', 'Alone Again Naturally', 'Claire', 'Get Down', and 'Ooh Baby', as well as three albums. He generally tends to middle-of-the-road lyrical material, but can rock it if he wants to, as on the excellent 'Get Down'.

**JOHNNY OTIS** was born into a Greek family in California on December 28th, 1921. He was attracted to the black way of life and its music, and in the '40s began recording with his own band. By the '50s he was working a lot with his revue line-up, and was among the first to cash in on rock & roll – even turning 'Bo Diddley' into 'Willie And The Hand Jive'. He still works with his show, that includes the incredible black female vocal trio Three Tons Of Joy, and still goes down well through solid, funky rock, visual impact, fast presentation and a sense of fun.

**LARRY PARNES** was the most successful British rock manager of the '50s and early '60s. He organised rock tours and talent contests, and had a habit of finding artists to whom he gave similar strange names. This practice led to them being known as the Larry Parnes Stable, and among his artists were Tommy Steele, Billy Fury, Marty Wilde, Duffy Power, and Vince Eager.

**LES PAUL** was among the first American guitarists to experiment with electric guitar and advanced recording techniques including multi-tracking. He also designed the famous Les Paul guitars for the Gibson Company, featuring a solid body and multiple pick-ups of exceptional quality. In the early '60s Paul stopped making these guitars following a disagreement with Gibsons. The company nevertheless began manufacturing them again.

**FREDA PAYNE** was born in Detroit, and began singing and playing piano as a child. At 18 she moved to New York to study music seriously, took dancing and vocal lessons, and was signed by arranger Quincy Jones. Her appearance with him led to her



1965 European tour and a recording contract with MGM in the same year. In 1969 she changed her style to more pop-oriented material, and had a hit with 'Band Of Gold' for Eddie Holland's Invictus label. She continues to work cabaret venues.

**POP FILE**



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## In the next issue



### ROCK

**The Blues Boom:** When bands like Ten Years After, Savoy Brown, Jeff Beck, and Fleetwood Mac were carried along by the club audiences with an enthusiasm equal to the British R&B boom which launched the Stones.

### BLACK MUSIC

**The Tamla Motown Story (Part 3):** Motown in the '70s – the final move into the big league as Tamla goes into the movie industry. The new stars, like the Jackson 5, break big, and the old stars, like Stevie Wonder and Diana Ross, mature into the new scene.

### THE MUSIC

**Holland/Dozier/Holland, and Smokey Robinson:** The songsmiths behind the Motown success story, who wrote such classics as 'You Keep Me Hanging On', 'Reach Out And I'll Be There', and Smokey's 'Tracks Of My Tears'.

### THE SUPERSTARS

**Diana Ross:** The Detroit ghetto-child who rose to fame as the lead singer of the Supremes. Her voice, with its edge of profound despair, led her on to solo fame and jazz pianist Lonnie Tristano called her the logical heir to Billie Holiday's mantle as the greatest jazz singer. She went on to achieve Hollywood stardom – playing that very part.

### PROFILE

**Creedence Clearwater Revival:** They'd played together since they were 13 as the Golliwogs, changed their name in 1967 for one last throw at stardom and succeeded beyond all their expectations, selling more records than the Beatles that year – just by playing simple, straightforward rock & roll.

### POP CULTURE

**Drop Out Culture:** The search for individual freedom in the '60s – internally with the aid of drugs and externally on the road to Khatmandu. A re-appraisal of the 'love culture' that couldn't survive the harsher '70s and the unthinking discipline of the new religions.

### POP INFLUENCES

**TV And Pop:** Rock On The Box: The story of the rise and fall of rock on TV, from 6.5 Special in 1958 to the glorious days of Ready, Steady, Go! in 1963, which reached never-to-be-repeated heights in 1966 as a 'live' show under the direction of Jack Good – the only man who truly transferred the excitement of rock to the TV screen.

### POP

**The Rise Of The Girl Groups:** The sudden appearance in the early '60s of girl harmony groups following the success of the Shirelles' 'Will You Love Me Tomorrow' – Candy and the Kisses, Reparata and the Delrons, the Crystals, the Shangri-Las and the unforgettable Ronettes, Martha and the Vandellas and of course, the Supremes.

**Plus: Pop File and more Lyrics**

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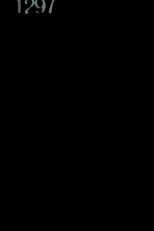
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