ESSAYS

Birth of Rock 'n' Roll

For those of us born too late to experience the birth of rock 'n' roll firsthand, an unlikely parallel might be drawn to the Internet. It has been written that no one planned the Internet; it just happened. And the same could be said of rock 'n' roll. No one planned rock 'n' roll, and it overtook the musical culture of America and then the world, with a sudden impact that revolutionized popular music as surely as the Internet is revolutionizing telecommunications.

It has often been said that rock 'n' roll was the result of cross-breeding between rhythm & blues and country & western music. That's a large part of the equation, of course, but hardly the entire picture. Gospel music, swing jazz, jump blues combos, country swing bands, Tin Pan Alley publishers—they were just some of the other key building blocks of the music.

Few would dispute that rock 'n' roll owes most of its origins to the musical traditions of America's Black population. From Africa, Blacks brought a strong oral and musical tradition of music for storytelling, recreation, and work. Continued and modified in the United States under incredibly harsh conditions, these elements would provide the backbone of blues music. As segregated as American society has been, there has been constant personal interchange and cultural exchange between races throughout the nation's history. The white southern population of the United States had its own musical conventions: Anglo-Saxon folk songs, Appalachian music, and religious music for the church. African-Americans absorbed influences from whites in their use of stringed instruments and harmonies. The development of jazz around the turn of the 20th century introduced larger bands and stronger rhythmic elements.

Just as technological developments affected the pace and complexity of life in the early 20th century, so did it accelerate the growth of popular music. The phonograph record enabled artists to reach and influence an exponentially larger audience of listeners and fellow musicians. Huge numbers of Blacks from the South migrated to urban communities, where music and dancing took place in considerably more crowded and hectic environments. And to be heard in those venues, musicians eventually had no choice but to use electronic amplification and, eventually, electric instruments.

As early as the 1930s, strong intimations of rock 'n' roll can be found in rhythmic, increasingly riff-driven swing jazz music, as well as blues-influenced country recordings by the Delmore Brothers, Bob Wills, Jimmie Rodgers, and the Maddox Brothers. Charlie Christian pioneered the use of the electric guitar in the early 1940s, at the same time as jazz musicians like Lionel Hampton were putting out riff-heavy hits like "Flyin' Home." As the '40s progressed, jazz musicians like Illinois Jacquet, Big Joe Turner, Louis Jordan, Jay McShann, and others upped the R&B quotient with honking saxes, "shouter" vocals, and pounding boogie-woogie piano.

Big bands became increasingly less economically viable after the Second World War, and smaller combos became more in vogue. They still had to play just as loudly as ever, though, and riffs, electric guitars, "shouting" R&B vocals, and prominent beats were usually the ticket. So it was that jump blues came into style, paced by Louis Jordan and singers like Wynonie Harris, Tiny Bradshaw, and Roy Brown.

Jump blues itself wasn't far removed from rock 'n' roll, and there were several other major changes afoot as the '50s began. The Delmore Brothers recorded frenetic country-boogie that anticipated the spirit of rockabilly. Vocal groups like the Orioles took the smooth popular stylings of Black harmony ensembles like the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots and added a more pronounced R&B and gospel feel. After Delta musicians like Muddy Waters amplified their guitars and added rhythm sections, a fullbodied electric blues band sound was born in Chicago, Memphis, and other urban centers. Fats Domino, Lloyd Price, and others pioneered the keyboard-and-horn driven grooves of New Orleans R&B. Les Paul took electric guitar wattage to new heights with his innovative multi-track recordings.

There were also major rumblings in the music industry and American society itself. Independent companies like Atlantic, King, Sun, Specialty, Chess, and numerous others recorded R&B and hillbilly music, catering to audiences that the major labels deemed too specialized and uncouth to service. Young white listeners began tuning in radio stations that played music for these supposed minority tastes. And the increasingly affluent economy meant that these young listeners had more time and money than ever to spend on records.

These disparate strands began to collide and merge as the '50s progressed. There are a great number of opinions as to what could be called the first "rock 'n' roll" record; indeed, an entire book (the fine *What Was the First Rock 'n' Roll Record?*) has been written on the subject. Certainly, early sides by Jackie Brenston ("Rocket 88"), Bill Haley, Lloyd Price, Hank Ballard, Fats Domino, and others have strong claims. Whatever it was, and whenever it became a style, by 1954 there were several records in the Top 30 that couldn't, from a latter-day vantage point, be called anything but rock 'n' roll: Bill Haley's primitive rockabilly ("Shake, Rattle, and Roll"), the joyous doo wop of the Crows and the Chords ("Gee" and "Sh-Boom"), the saucy R&B of Hank Ballard ("Work with Me Annie"). The music needed a name, and several theories have been advanced as to how the term "rock 'n' roll" came about. Influential Cleveland and New York DJ Alan Freed's claim to have originated the phrase is probably the most widely circulated, though rocking and rolling had long been a euphemism, especially in the Black community, for dancing, partying, and more private pleasures.

In 1955, Bill Haley's "Rock Around the Clock" became the first No. 1 rock 'n' roll hit; Little Richard and Chuck Berry had their first national smashes that year with "Tutti Frutti" and "Maybellene," songs which put electric guitar leads, honking saxes, whooping vocals, and lyrics about cars and girls to the forefront in a glorious package. In early 1956, Elvis Presley's No. 1 hit "Heartbreak Hotel" ended any doubt (or hope by the more conservative factions of the music business) that rock 'n' roll would fade.

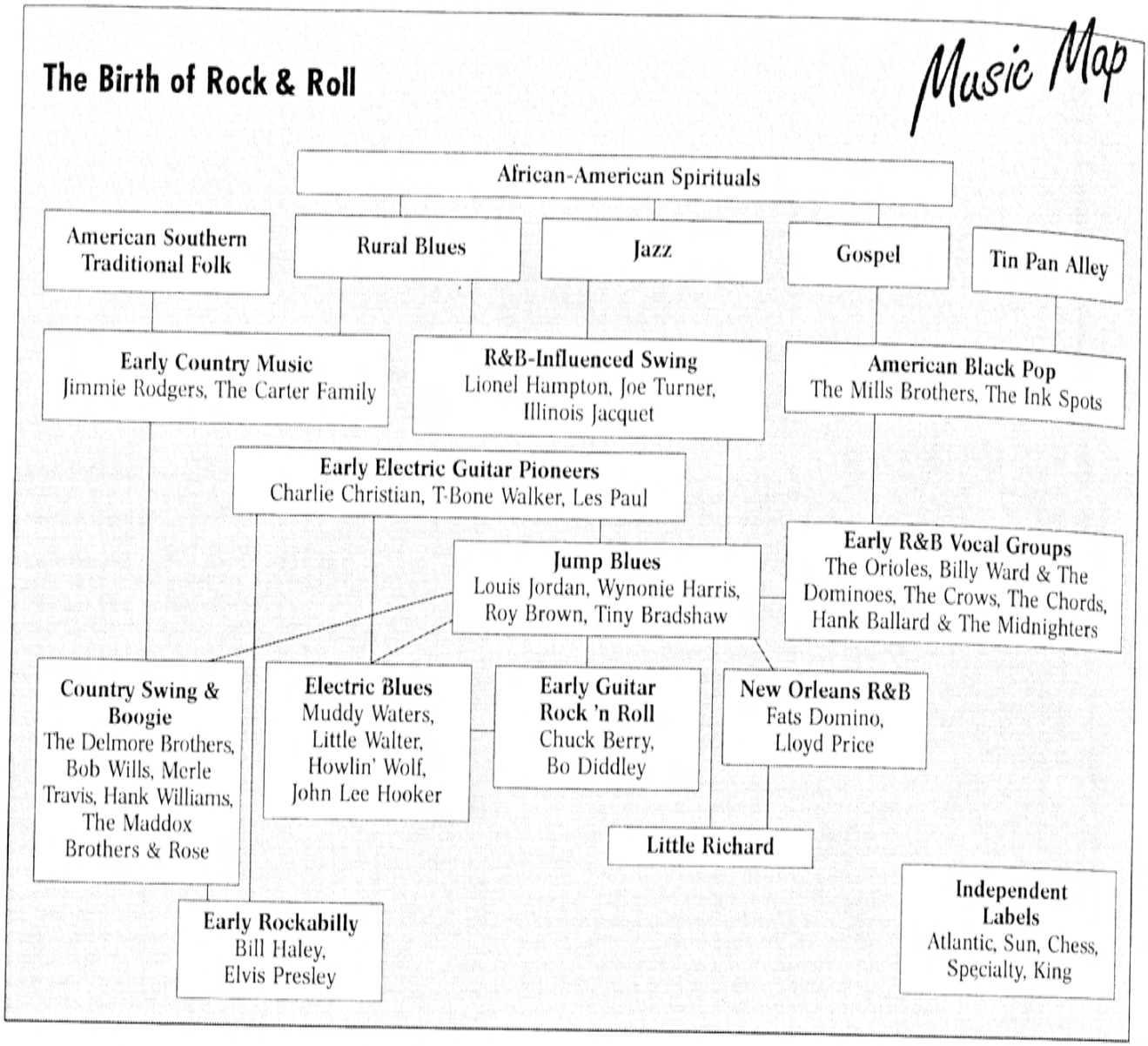
An emerging regional sensation, Elvis pioneered rockabilly on his legendary recordings for Sun records in 1954 and 1955 by marrying the feels of the blues and country boogie with his hard-driving rhythms and frenetic vocals. His jump to a major label—and assimilation of slightly more pop-oriented values into his recordings that didn't diminish his genius in the slightest (at least at first)—made rock 'n' roll an international phenomenon. His massive success, and the success of the countless rock 'n' rollers who followed, was the end of the line in the evolution of the forces that gave birth to rock music—and the beginning, of course, of much more.

Recommended Recordings

The Delmore Brothers, *The Best of the Delmore Brothers* (Starday). Country boogie with a reckless feel, close harmonies, and pounding backbeat, separated from rockabilly only by the level of electric instruments and a rhythm section. This collection of their late 1940s sides continues much of their most raucous work.

Bill Haley & His Comets, *Rock the Joint!* (Schoolkids'). A collection of his early 1950s singles, prior to his breakthrough to mass success with "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" and "Rock Around the Clock." The earliest white rock 'n' roll ever recorded, combining country swing, electric guitars, saxophones, and R&B rhythms to come up with something different altogether.

Louis Jordan, *The Best of Louis Jordan* (MCA). A crucial bridge from swing jazz to jump blues, and a major influence upon Chuck Berry.



The Maddox Brothers & Rose, *Vol. 1* (Arhoolie). Another hillbilly band that anticipated elements of rockabilly with their rumbling boogie and slap-back bass. This has 27 of their songs from 1946-51.

Various Artists, *Hillbilly Music Vol. 1 . . . Thank God!* (Capitol). A double album of rowdy hillbilly music from the late '40s to the mid-'50s, featuring such country giants as Tennessee Ernie Ford, Merle Travis, Buck Owens, and the Louvin Brothers. No other compilation illustrates the white country roots of rock 'n' roll as well.

Various Artists, *Atlantic R&B: 1947-1952* (Atlantic). The Atlantic label was arguably the greatest and most influential record company specializing in rhythm & blues during rock 'n' roll's formative years. This is the first volume of a seven-part series, also available as part of a box set.

Various Artists, *Atlantic R&B: 1952-1955* (Atlantic). More classic performances from the early Atlantic roster, edging closer to rock 'n' roll from its more blues- and R&B-based beginnings.

Various Artists, *Blues Masters Volume 5: Jump Blues Classics* (Rhino). The best jump blues compilation, with classics by Big Jay McNeely, Wynonie Harris, Tiny Bradshaw, Big Joe Turner, and others. A second volume in the *Blues Masters* series (*More Jump Blues Classics*) is of equally high quality.

Various Artists, *Blues Masters Volume 6: Blues Originals* (Rhino). Many of these songs helped form the backbone of the rock repertoire. Often popularized to a larger audience by white performers from Elvis Presley and the Rolling Stones down, here is where you'll find the original versions of classics like "That's All Right," "Back Door Man," "Love in Vain," and a lot of others.

Various Artists, *A History of New Orleans Rhythm and Blues Vol. 1* (Rhino). The first part of this three-volume series features key performances from the early and mid-1950s by artists who laid the foundations for the New Orleans sound, such as Lloyd Price and Guitar Slim.

Billy Ward, *Sixty Minute Men: The Best of Billy Ward & His Dominoes* (Rhino). One of the first great Black harmony groups of rhythm & blues, featuring lead vocals by two singers who would go on to become early rock 'n' roll stars in their own right, Clyde McPhatter and Jackie Wilson.

Muddy Waters, *The Best of Muddy Waters* (Chess). The cream of the prolific output by the man who did more than any other performer to shape the course of modern electric blues, one of the primary currents feeding into the rock of both the past and present.

Various Artists, *A Sun Blues Collection* (Rhino). Excellent single-disc survey of the electrified country blues that the Sun label specialized in before moving to rockabilly, with great early- and mid-'50s sides by Rufus Thomas, B.B. King, James Cotton, and others.

Various Artists, *A Sun Country Collection* (Rhino). The other side of the Sun equation has the country roots of the southern rockabilly sound, with country hillbilly-verging-on-rockabilly by Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Warren Smith, Charlie Feathers, and more obscure performers.

Elvis Presley, *The Complete Sun Sessions* (RCA). The full-fledged birth of rockabilly on Elvis' legendary 1954-55 recordings, which in the eyes of some critics have never been surpassed in the history of rock 'n' roll.

Books

What Was the First Rock 'n' Roll Record?, by Jim Dawson & Steve Propes (1992, Faber & Faber)

Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll, by Nick Tosches (1984, Charles Scribner's Sons)

The Sound of the City, by Charlie Gillett (1983)

–Richie Unterberger

Early Rhythm & Blues

When rhythm & blues began in the mid-'40s, it didn't even have a name. When the term caught on, though, it caught on in a big way. Right up until the present day, R&B has come to refer to the entire world of Black popular music, although it's mostly identified as R&B—rather than rap, soul, or urban contemporary—by specialized audiences and music

industry insiders, not general fans. In its earliest form, rhythm & blues was among the most important precursors of rock 'n' roll, if not THE most important. Early rock 'n' roll is basically R&B blended with country & western and pop influences. R&B wasn't only a crucial bridge between blues and rock 'n' roll, but between blues and soul, R&B's longest-lived and most important offshoot.

The blues, of course, was a big part of rhythm and blues, but jazz was nearly as important. The earliest rhythm & blues artists emerged from the big-band and swing-jazz era. Before World War II, jazz, much more so than today, was a dance-oriented music, often featuring vocalists. Around World War II, many major jazz players began developing bebop and cool jazz, a decidedly less danceable (though equally worthy) style; economic factors, as well as the draft and wartime restrictions on travel, made big bands less viable. Audiences, especially the rapidly growing metropolitan African-American communities, still wanted dance music. The musicians accomodated them by playing louder, more electric instruments, and accentuating riffs, boogies, and vocals.

The first popular style of rhythm & blues is often referred to as "jump" blues. From jazz, jump blues took its horn-driven lineup and swing rhythms; from blues, it took its general riffs and chord structures. Cab Calloway was perhaps the most important precursor of the style, but in jump blues, the vocals were harsher, the rhythms faster. The instrumentation was different, too; the pianos pounded harder, and the saxes didn't just blow, but honked and squealed.

The most important and popular jump blues star was Louis Jordan, whose records, unusually for the era, enjoyed success with both Black and white audiences; he was a big influence on Chuck Berry. Many of the early jump blues performers emerged from Los Angeles, where a large Black community had been growing during the Depression and the war; most other big cities had jump blues stars of their own by the end of the 1940s. Independent labels such as L.A.'s Specialty and Aladdin jump-started their success with the jump blues sound, filling a demand that the majors were basically unaware of. Joe Liggins, Tiny Bradshaw (the original performer of "The Train Kept A-Rollin' "), Amos Milburn, Camille Howard—all are largely forgotten except by record collectors, but all had huge R&B successes in the jump blues style, and ranked among the most popular Black musicians of their time.

Jump blues itself came in several different styles. There were the vocalists that came to be known as the "shouters," adding energy, soul, and gospel to the more restrained brand of big-band singing. Big Joe Turner, who got his start with Kansas City jazz bands, was the most legendary link between the eras, shifting into the R&B era with ease, and even scoring some early rock 'n' roll hits. Wynonie Harris, Roy Brown, Roy Milton, and Nappy Brown were a few of the most popular "shouters" of the late '40s and early '50s, although they aren't nearly as well remembered by history as Turner. There were also showmen, usually saxophonists, whose appeal was primarily instrumental: Big Jay McNeely, Illinois Jacquet, and Joe Houston, all with strong roots in jazz, drove dance crowds crazy with their acrobatic honking. And there were smoother, more urbane singers, like Charles Brown, Percy Mayfield, and Cecil Gant, who were as adept at ballads as uptempo material.

By the time the '50s started, "race" music, as it was known within the industry, had been renamed the more appropriate "rhythm & blues" by *Billboard* magazine staff-member Jerry Wexler. As an A&R man at Atlantic Records, Wexler helped shape jump blues into something with more appeal to pop listeners and teenagers. The recordings by early Atlantic stars like Ruth Brown, LaVern Baker, the first incarnation of the Drifters, and Chuck Willis (who actually began at the OKeh label) retained a strong jump blues flavor, but their rhythms, riffs, and lyrics point more clearly toward rock 'n' roll. Indeed, Baker and Willis managed to enjoy some success in the early rock 'n' roll era with material that was tailored toward a younger audience. As rock 'n' roll began to emerge in the early and mid-'50s, several distinct branches of R&B had developed that would each exert a large influence on popular music in their own rights: doo wop groups, electric blues, and New Orleans rhythm & blues. All of these sub-genres are examined in greater depth in this book in essays of their own, and all would prove to have a greater and more lasting impact on rock 'n' roll than the earlier, jazzier forms of R&B.

Still, there were quite a few performers who survived through the 1950s, and sometimes thrived, recording music that could not be called anything but R&B. Ike Turner, Ivory Joe Hunter, Faye Adams, Wynona Carr, Big Mama Thornton, Big Maybelle—none of these were straight blues artists, but their music wasn't rock 'n' roll either. Blues singers like Bobby "Blue" Bland, Junior Parker, and Little Milton bridged electric blues and soul, but they couldn't be pigeonholed as straight rock 'n' roll singers. Occasionally R&B performers like Johnny Otis, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and Wilbert Harrison crossed over to the rock 'n' roll audience with their most hook-savvy songs; Harrison's "Kansas City" is largely jump blues with a shuffle beat, at least until it gets to the searing electric guitar break.

Several 1950s singers began as more or less straight R&B performers, but added an earthier, more pronounced gospel and church influence than had ever been heard before. Today, we recognize the greatest of these vocalists—Ray Charles, James Brown, Jackie Wilson, Little Willie John, Johnny Ace, Jessie Belvin, and Clyde McPhatter—as the forefathers of soul. Some of them, like Charles and Brown, would indeed become soul superstars in the '60s. Others, like McPhatter and John, were unable to make the transition, due to a combination of the inability to grow with the times and personal problems that proved insurmountable. R&B, though it has changed greatly since its birth, remains a crucial part of rock, soul, and rap; it's often just below or very much above the surface of the music.

For all of its monumental significance and the vast critical acclaim it has belatedly received, early R&B recordings can be tough to swallow in large lumps for the neophyte. The R&B performers and labels of the '40s and '50s were concerned with entertaining, not establishing diverse artistic oeuvres, and the similar chord patterns and arrangements can be wearing when heard on a compact disc rather than a juke box or dance floor, which is where the songs were often played in their heyday. Those investigating the genre in-depth for the first time are advised to start with some general various artist samplers, and move on from there according to their degrees of interest.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Blues Masters, Volume 5: Jump Blues Classics* (Rhino). The best jump blues introduction, with key cuts by Joe Turner, Wynonie Harris, Roy Brown, Tiny Bradshaw, Jay McNeely, Big Mama Thornton, Ruth Brown, and others.

Various Artists, *Blues Masters, Volume 14: More Jump Blues* (Rhino). Up to the same level as *Jump Blues Classics*, with tracks by Louis Jordan, LaVern Baker, Big Maybelle, Faye Adams, and many more.

Big Joe Turner, *Big, Bad & Blue: The Big Joe Turner Anthology* (Rhino). As mammoth as the man himself, this three-disc set encompasses several decades, reflecting R&B's evolution from the days of big-band jazz through rock 'n' roll. Too extensive for the casual fan; as alternatives, there are other Turner anthologies that focus on specific phases of his career.

Louis Jordan, *The Best of Louis Jordan* (MCA). Jordan recorded a great deal of material in the 1940s and 1950s, and no collection satisfactorily encompasses all of his classics; this one is the best.

Various Artists, *Atlantic Rhythm & Blues Vol. 1-4* (Atlantic). The most important label in the development of modern R&B, this is part of a seven-volume series that goes up to 1974. There's a whole box set of them if you want to go whole-hog, but the first four cover 1947-1962, before R&B had been fully renamed rock and soul.

Various Artists, *Specialty Story* (Specialty). At five discs, this is too much for non-specialists, if you'll pardon the pun. But it does offer a comprehensive survey of one of early R&B and rock 'n' roll's most important labels, with tracks by such greats as Joe Liggins, Percy Mayfield, Roy Milton, and Lloyd Price, up through early rock stars like Little Richard and Larry Williams.

Ruth Brown, *Rockin' in Rhythm: The Best of Ruth Brown* (Rhino). The singer on whom much of Atlantic's early fortune was built, this disc contains her most popular 1950s sides.

LaVern Baker, *Soul on Fire: The Best of LaVern Baker* (Rhino). One of the most important singers to lead the transition from R&B to rock 'n' roll.

The Drifters, *Let the Boogie-Woogie Roll: Greatest Hits (1953-1958)* (Atlantic). The first lineup of the Drifters, featuring Clyde McPhatter, could be called a doo wop group as well, but also had strong early R&B/jump blues influences.

Ike Turner, *I Like Ike: The Best of Ike Turner* (Rhino). Before joining Tina, Ike was an important talent scout, sideman, and bandleader. This collection of odds 'n' ends is mostly from the 1950s, and often walks the edge between R&B and electric blues.

Ray Charles, *Birth of Soul* (Rhino). Aptly titled three-disc box of Charles' work for Atlantic in the 1950s.

Johnny Otis, *The Capitol Years* (Capitol). An enormously popular figure in R&B as a bandleader, musician, and talent scout, Otis crossed over to success in the rock market in the late '50s by adding a Bo Diddley beat. Although Otis himself preferred straight R&B, this collection of late-'50s sides is his best.

Little Willie John, *Fever: The Best of Little Willie John* (Rhino). One of R&B's most versatile vocalists, and a huge influence on James Brown.

Clyde McPhatter, *Deep Sea Ball: The Best of Clyde McPhatter* (Rhino). His biggest hits for Atlantic in the late '50s, after he left the Drifters.

James Brown, *Roots of a Revolution* (PolyGram). A double-disc retrospective of 1956-1964 recordings, bringing us from hardcore R&B to the verge of the birth of funk.

–Richie Unterberger



New Orleans R&B

When it comes down to naming which American city contributed most to the birth of rock 'n' roll, it really only comes down to two: Memphis and New Orleans. New Orleans, of course, already occupied a rarefied place in the legacy of American popular music for its crucial role in the birth of jazz music. Its contribution to rock 'n' roll was nearly equal in stature, supplying the music with many of its bedrock rhythms, as well as much of its playful humor. Its population, a vibrant mix of Creole, Cajun, Black, and white cultures, cultivated precisely the kind of melting pot of music that led to the early styles of rock 'n' roll.

The early New Orleans sound was characterized by boogie piano, honking saxes, and relaxed, unfettered performances. Pianist Professor Longhair embodies the true sound of New Orleans for some listeners, but it wasn't established as a major commercial force until the emergence of Fats Domino. His 1950 single "The Fat Man" is one of the dozens of performances routinely cited as one of the first rock 'n' roll records. It took a while for Fats to cross over to the pop audience, but once he did, starting with 1955's "Ain't That a Shame," he became one of the most popular early rock 'n' roll performers, rolling off hit after hit for the next half-dozen years.

Another Crescent City candidate for the title of first rock 'n' roll record was Lloyd Price's "Lawdy Miss Clawdy," a 1952 No. 1 R&B hit. Price's late-'50s hits had a much more commercial sound, but his early work was much rawer, and influenced his label, the L.A.-based Specialty Records, to move its focus from jump blues to rock 'n' roll. Their biggest star was Little Richard, a Georgia native who didn't find his groove until he started recording in New Orleans, reeling off a batch of hugely influential hit singles in the mid-'50s that helped define early rock 'n' roll with their wooly vocals, pounding piano, and shrieking horns.

The chief behind-the-scenes architect of the New Orleans sound was Dave Bartholomew, a trumpeter, songwriter, and producer who graced many early classic New Orleans R&B/rock sessions, not the least of which were those of Fats Domino (whose hits Bartholomew co-wrote). Session players like drummer Earl Palmer and saxophonists Alvin "Red" Tyler and Lee Allen also played on numerous sessions, and were instrumental in putting the stamp on the early New Orleans sound. Little Richard and Fats Domino were the only superstars to emerge from the city's rock 'n' roll scene in the 1950s, but there were also many artists with only one or two national hits that recorded a wealth of fine material (much of which gave them sizable regional hits). Shirley & Lee ("Let the Good Times Roll"), Huey "Piano" Smith ("Rocking Pneumonia & the Boogie-Woogie Flu"), and Clarence "Frogman" Henry ("Ain't Got No Home") all recorded classics which continue to live at the heart of the rock 'n' roll repertoire. Most of the music was recorded by Blacks, but Bobby Charles ("See You Later Alligator") and Frankie Ford ("Sea Cruise") proved that whites could also rock convincingly in the New Orleans style.

In the early '60s, the New Orleans sound was updated slightly to reflect trends in the still-young soul scene. Pianist, songwriter, and producer Allen Toussaint inherited Dave Bartholomew's crown as the city's chief rock 'n' roll visionary. Again, while there were no stars of the magnitude of Fats Domino or Little Richard, there were many classic hits and non-hits by the likes of Ernie K-Doe ("Mother-in-Law"), Chris Kenner ("I Like It Like That"), the Showmen ("It Will Stand"), Barbara George ("I Know"), and Benny Spellman ("Fortune Teller").

Some of the New Orleans performers emerging during this period proved to be durable, though not superstars. Irma Thomas may be the finest female New Orleans R&B singer of all time, not to mention one of the finest soul-R&B singers of any kind; in addition to her classic early New Orleans ballads, she also recorded great pop-rock sides in L.A. and "deep soul" tracks with the Muscle Shoals rhythm section. Lee Dorsey had charming novelty-tinged hits with "Ya Ya," "Working in a Coal Mine," and "Ride Your Pony." Clarence "Frogman" Henry roared back into the charts in the early '60s with several singles in a sort of updated Fats Domino style. The Dixie Cups ran off several great girl group singles in the mid-'60s, one of which, "Iko Iko," was a variation on a traditional Mardi Gras Indian chant. Barbara Lynn recorded many early soul singles, although only one, "You'll Lose a Good Thing," was a big national smash.

After the mid-'60s, national New Orleans R&B hits were relatively rare, although the city continued to house a lively music scene. The most influential latter-day Crescent City performers were the Meters, who mixed New Orleans rhythms with funk; Dr. John, a session player with extensive roots in the New Orleans scene dating back to the late '50s, who created a sort of mystic voodoo-tinged update of the vintage New Orleans sound; and the Neville Brothers, a prodigously talented family who had been releasing fine R&B and soul records, together and separately, since the mid-'50s.

The New Orleans sound may not be a big commercial presence nowadays—the Neville Brothers are the only big touring act associated with the sound, and they've never delivered the classic record that critics expect of their talents. But truth to tell, the city can carry on its traditions with little help from the rest of the nation, as many R&B musicians continue to base themselves in New Orleans and play to a regional audience. The city also continues to feature dozens of its R&B, blues, and rock performers in the massive New Orleans Jazz Festival, which attracts huge crowds from around the world every year.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *A History of New Orleans Rhythm & Blues Vol. 1-3* (Rhino)

Fats Domino, *My Blue Heaven: Best of Fats Domino* (EMI)

Little Richard, *18 Greatest Hits* (Rhino)

Lee Dorsey, *Holy Cow!: Best of Lee Dorsey* (Arista)

Dr. John, *Anthology* (Rhino)

Irma Thomas, *Time Is on My Side (The Best of Irma Thomas), Vol. 1* (EMI)

Lloyd Price, *Lawdy!* (Specialty)

The Neville Brothers, *Treacherous—A History of the Neville Brothers (1955-1985)* (Rhino)

The Meters, *Funkify Your Life: The Meters Anthology* (Rhino)

Professor Longhair, *Fess: Professor Longhair Anthology* (Rhino)

Dave Bartholomew, *Spirit of New Orleans* (EMI)

Huey "Piano" Smith, *Rock & Roll Revival* (Ace, UK)

Various Artists, *Crescent City Soul: The Sound of New Orleans* (EMI)

–Richie Unterberger

Doo Wop

"Doo wop"—the words bring smiles to the faces of most knowledgeable rock listeners. In some cases, they're smirks of derision, from those who feel that the form exemplifies rock 'n' roll at its most innocuous, silliest, and embarrassingly quaint. From those who grew up during the '50s, it's more likely a smile of pleasure from someone who treasures the exquisite vocal harmonies and mourns the loss of the utter lack of pretension and guile that characterized great doo wop recordings.

Love it or hate it, doo wop is a major part of rock 'n' roll's lexicon. The rhythm & blues ballads and uptempo numbers of doo wop are characterized by those harmonies, of course, but also by the nonsense syllables that often formed the backbone of the backup vocals. "Doo wop" was just one of those common phrases; "bop-bop," "dip-dip," "bomp-a-bomp-bomp-bomp, buh-dang-a-dang-dang," "wah wah, shoop shoop," "dooby dooby doo," and "yip-yip-yip-yip-yip-yip-yip-yip" were just a few of the others. Usually they were love songs, but often they were outrageous comic novelty tunes as well. They were early rock 'n' roll at its most sentimental and humorous. Doo wop—like all great African-American music—has much of its roots in the harmonies and emotive phrasing of gospel. The more pop-oriented side of the equation was provided by the first popular American Black vocal groups, the Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers. Adding a rhythm & blues flavor to this blueprint, as well as a strong "church" feel, the Orioles had a No. 1 R&B hit in 1948 with "It's Too Soon to Know," which is often cited as the first doo wop (and sometimes, even the first rock 'n' roll) record.

Several groups followed in the Orioles' style over the next few years, including the Ravens, the Cardinals, and the Larks (many of the early doo wop acts named themselves after birds). The Clovers drew more explicitly from rhythm & blues, and the snappier rhythms and saucier lyrics of jump blues infiltrated the form in recordings by the Dominoes (featuring Clyde McPhatter) and Hank Ballard & the Midnighters.

By 1954, singles by the Crows ("Gee"), Dominoes, Orioles, and Hank Ballard had crossed over from the R&B market to become bona fide pop chart hits. Numerous urban vocal groups sprang up—a lot of them probably did start on the street corner, as legend would have it—and numerous record companies rushed to get a piece of the action. As rock 'n' roll gained momentum, doo wop become brassier, with more honking sax solos, outrageous stuttering vocal interplay, and more explicitly teenage and young adult themes.

There were probably over a thousand groups that eventually cut a doo wop record over the next decade, leading to a vociferous collector community that probably ranks as the most devoted of its kind in rock 'n' roll. A great many of the records originated in New York, though Los Angeles and Philadelphia were also active centers, and scattered doo wop acts were active, in the studio and otherwise, across the country.

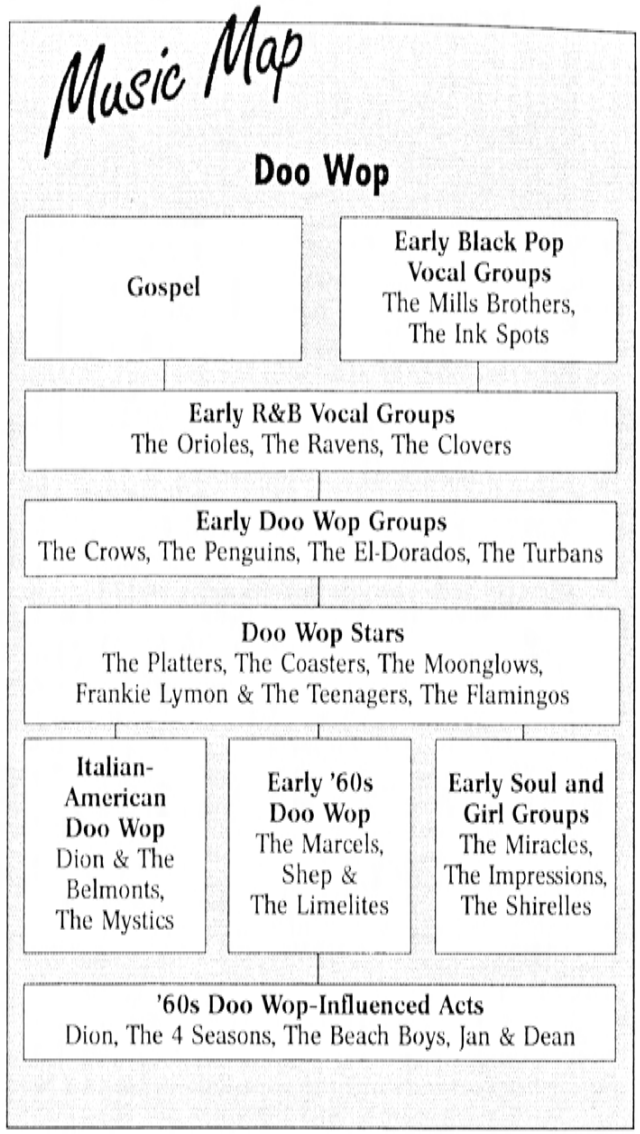
Most of the doo wop groups, if they made it onto the charts at all, were one or two-shot acts, quickly fading into obscurity after failing to secure follow-ups. The Penguins, the Five Satins, the Monotones, the El Dorados, the Dell Vikings, the Silhouettes —these are just a few of those glorious names, though in some cases they recorded some non-hit efforts that were nearly as fine as their smashes. There were also a few groups that managed to maintain a presence on the R&B and pop charts for a few years running, sometimes with numerous personnel changes. The Clovers, the Flamingos, Little Anthony & the Imperials, and the Moonglows were a few of the best. With the Teenagers, Frankie Lymon pioneered a brand of pre-teen soul that was pinpointed as an influence on Michael Jackson when the Jackson 5 emerged many years later. Before Clyde McPhatter left to become a solo act, the first incarnation of the Drifters was one of the most popular R&B acts of the mid-'50s.

At the top of the pyramid were a couple of groups that ranked among the most popular early rock 'n' rollers. The Platters were one of the most pop-oriented of all of the doo wop groups, and appealed to the adult audience more than almost any of the early major rock 'n' roll acts. The Coasters were among the wittiest rock groups of any era, courtesy of Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller, who penned and produced many classic songs for the singers, including "Searchin'," "Young Blood," "Yakety Yak," and "Poison Ivy."

As the '50s progressed, more and more white performers sang doo wop, sometimes in integrated ensembles (such as the Dell Vikings and the Impalas), sometimes as all-white groups (the Mystics, Dion & the Belmonts). Often Italian-American in origin, by the time the '60s began, these white singers were a major part of the form, which was becoming less of a commercial force.

But before doo wop vanished from the charts altogether, it underwent a revival of sorts in the early '60s, which saw huge doo wop hits by the likes of the Marcels, the Capris, Maurice Williams, and Shep & the Limelites. By the time of the British Invasion, though, there was barely a ripple of pure doo wop to be found on the charts.

Doo wop did not vanish so much as become permanently absorbed into rock and soul. Early soul giants like the Miracles and the Impressions owed huge debts to doo wop; indeed, their early records pretty much are doo wop. A lot of doo wop could be heard in the girl groups of the early '60s. Many hits by the Four Seasons and Dion were doo wop in construction, if not always in production. In vocal surf music, there's no doubt that doo wop was a prime influence on the ensemble singing of the Beach Boys and Jan & Dean. You can also hear it in the early records by the Beatles and several other British Invasion groups, as well as many of Frank Zappa's satirical efforts. Right on up to Boyz II Men, soul music has built upon the harmonies and vocal arrangements of doo wop music.



Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *The Doo Wop Box, Vol. 1-2* (Rhino)
Billy Ward & the Dominoes, *Sixty Minute Men: The Best of Billy Ward His Dominoes* (Rhino)
Hank Ballard & the Midnighters, *Sexy Ways: The Best of Hank Ballard & the Midnighters* (Rhino)
The Drifters, *Let the Boogie Woogie Roll—Greatest Hits (1953- 1958)* (Atlantic)
The Platters, *Magic Touch: An Anthology* (Mercury)
Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers, *Best of Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers* (Rhino)
Dion & the Belmonts, *Everything You Always Wanted to Hear by Dion & the Belmonts* (Laurie)
The Coasters, *50 Coastin' Classics* (Rhino)
The Clovers, *Down in the Alley: The Best of the Clovers* (Atlantic)
The Moonglows, *Blue Velvet: The Ultimate Collection* (Chess)
Various Artists, *The Best of Doo Wop Uptempo Vol. 1-2* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Best of Doo Wop Ballads Vol. 1-2* (Rhino)

Books

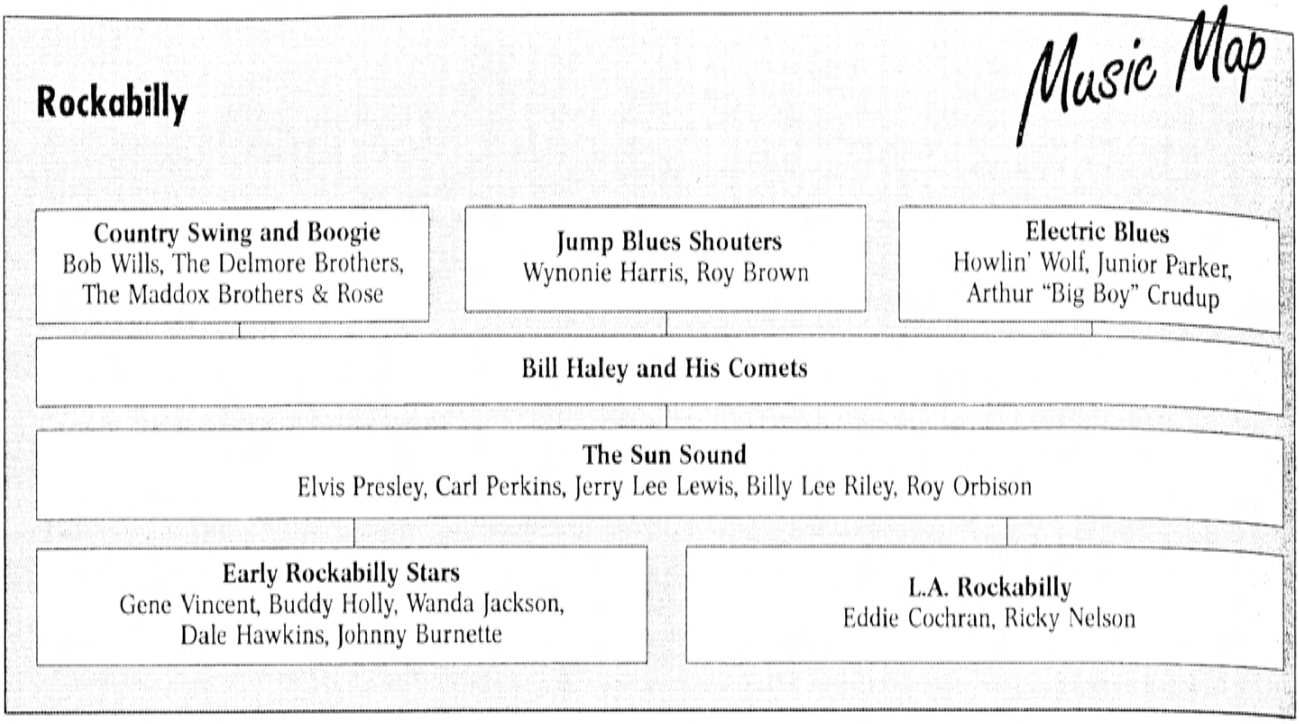
Doo Wop: The Forgotten Third of Rock 'N Roll, by Dr. Anthony Gribin & Dr. Matthew Shiff (Krause Publications, 1992)
They All Sang on the Corner, by Phillip Groia (Phillie Dee Enterprises, 1983)

–Richie Unterberger

Rockabilly

If rock 'n' roll can be called the child of rhythm and blues and country & western music, no style is a purer blend than rockabilly. The first form of rock 'n' roll performed by white musicians, its duration of mass popularity was brief, but the best of it remains among the most exciting and frenetic rock 'n' roll ever waxed.

Even in the segregated American South of the early 20th century, Blacks and whites often had cause to interact with each other on a daily



basis. The interaction carried over to music, and white hillbilly country performers have reflected the influence of the blues and other African-American music since they began recording, as a listen to Jimmie Rodgers will attest to. Just as blues became jazzier, faster, and more electric throughout the 1940s and early '50s, so did country, through swing bands like Bob Wills and the Maddox Brothers. The Delmore Brothers, starting as a more traditional hillbilly harmony act, anticipated much of rockabilly's mania when they added a thumping country boogie beat to the equation on their finest recordings in the late '40s. Nearly forgotten performers like Arthur Smith and Hardrock Gunter laid down country boogie sides that brought the guitar to the forefront.

Considering that most rockabilly musicians of importance came from the South, it's ironic that the first records that could be termed as honest-to-god rockabilly were issued by a northerner, Bill Haley. The Philadelphian had been pursuing a hillbilly career with generally dismal results until 1951, when he covered Jackie Brenston's "Rocket 88" (which is itself often cited as one of the very first rock 'n' roll records). Although they aren't nearly as well known as his huge rock 'n' roll hits like "Rock Around the Clock," the sides he cut for the small Essex label between 1951 and 1954 are groundbreaking early rockabilly; the 1952 single "Rock the Joint," in fact, is almost identical in melody and arrangement to "Rock Around the Clock." Haley was no Elvis vocally, and the steel guitars and jump beats of his Comets betrayed lingering influences of hillbilly and swing music. But he was the first to bring together R&B and C&W with such force, although nobody knew quite what to call the music at the time. There were certainly numerous musicians in the South experimenting with primitive rockabilly-like sounds by mid-1954. Sam Phillips and his Memphis record label, Sun Records, were chiefly responsible for honing the sound and capturing it on vinyl.

Often quoted as having said that he could make a fortune with a white singer who sounded Black (though he has denied saying this in such explicit terms), he found the perfect vehicle for doing so with Elvis Presley, who recorded five singles for Sun between mid-1954 and the end of 1955. Supported by guitarist Scotty Moore and bassist Bill Black, this was rockabilly, if not rock 'n' roll, at its best and purest; as great as his subsequent achievements were, by critical consensus this handful of 45s ranks as Elvis' finest work. Presley didn't set off a mass wave of imitators right away; he was primarily a regional sensation until his contract was bought by RCA. Sam Phillips used the money from the sale to develop his own formidable stable of rockabilly performers. Carl Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes" almost beat Elvis' "Heartbreak Hotel" to the top of the charts, and although Perkins was never able to duplicate the success, Sun generated a wealth of great rockabilly hits and misses over the next few years by Jerry Lee Lewis, Billy Lee Riley, Sonny Burgess, Carl Mann, and Roy Orbison. The Sun Sound—echo-chamber vocals, crisp electric guitar leads, and slap-back bass—became the standard of rockabilly excellence, often imitated, never recaptured. Presleymania overran the country in 1956, setting off a wave of rockabilly recordings, nationally and (more often) regionally distributed, that was similar in some respects to the garage band explosion of a decade later. Hundreds of performers found their way into studios in Tennessee, Texas, California, and other locales, embracing the new sound with a hepped-up enthusiasm that often bordered on mania. The singles were usually crudely recorded and extremely basic and derivative, their not inconsiderable saving grace being their infectious energy.

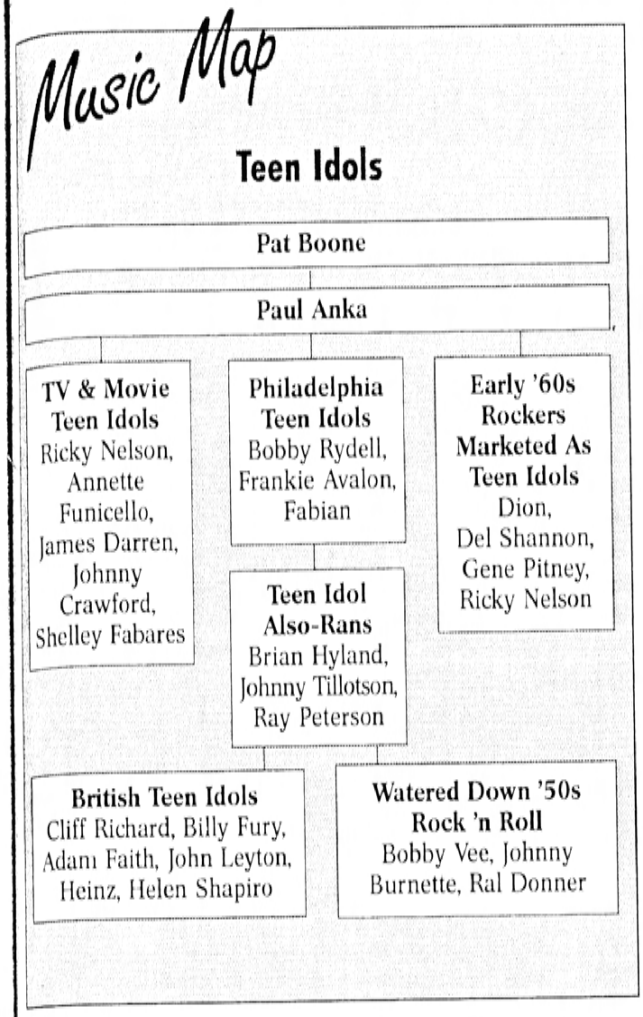
While the Sun Sound was the pinnacle of rockabilly, several performers established legends of their own outside of Sam Phillips' studio. Gene Vincent's 1956 sides, featuring his breathy vocals and the speed-of-light guitar of Cliff Gallup from his backing band the Blue Caps, were usually brilliant. Eddie Cochran brought a sophisticated brand of teenage rebellion to his rockabilly hits, which helped pioneer the use of overdubbed guitars and vocals. Ricky Nelson recorded first-class rockabilly pop in Hollywood with the help of ace guitarist James Burton. Johnny Burnette and his trio recorded some of the raunchiest Elvis-derived rock 'n' roll of the time, including the first rock version of "The Train Kept A-Rollin'." Dale Hawkins cut a crackling classic with "Suzy Q," and Wanda Jackson's raspy rockabilly sides rank as the finest rock 'n' roll recorded by a female singer in the 1950s. Rockabilly began to fade as a commercial force around 1958, not just because of fickle popular taste, but because of the rapid evolution of rock 'n' roll itself. One of the greatest rockabilly singers, Buddy Holly, displayed a facility for melodic invention that branched into all forms of pop-rock, and had a far-reaching influence on all of pop that extended to the British Invasion. Along with the Everly Brothers and Ricky Nelson, he began gravitating towards a more gentle, melodic sound that was not as structurally limited, if not as energetic, as pure rockabilly. Elvis was moving toward more straightforward rock material, and then toward pop after his hitch in the Army.

Those performers that stuck with the basic rockabilly sound faced diminishing returns. Some, like Gene Vincent, simply vanished from the charts, although they maintained loyal audiences, especially overseas. Roy Orbison, never comfortable as a rockabilly singer in the first place, reinvented himself as a masterful crooner of pop-rock ballads. Jerry Lee Lewis' career was crippled by scandal. Eventually he would find success in the country & western mainstream, a path followed by many other singers who had achieved limited success with rockabilly.

Rockabilly never returned to the charts in a significant way after the '50s, though several acts have scored big hits in the style, such as Billy Swan and the Stray Cats. A huge influence on the early Beatles, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and others, rockabilly was instrumental in establishing the focus of rock 'n' roll on the electric guitar-bass-drums combination, with a simple joy and force that has helped inspire generations of musicians.

Recommended Recordings

Elvis Presley, *King of Rock 'n' Roll: Complete '50s Masters* (RCA)
Buddy Holly, *Buddy Holly Collection* (MCA)
Gene Vincent, *The Screamin End: The Best Of* (Razor & Tie)
Carl Perkins, *Original Sun Greatest Hits* (Rhino)
Jerry Lee Lewis, *18 Original Sun Greatest Hits* (Rhino)
Johnny Burnette, *Tear It Up* (Solid Smoke)
Eddie Cochran, *Legendary Masters* (EMI)
Ricky Nelson, *Legendary Masters* (EMI)
Wanda Jackson, *Rockin' with Wanda* (Capitol)
The Collins Kids, *Introducing Larry and Laurie* (Epic)



Bill Haley and His Comets, *Rock the Joint!* (School Kids')
Various Artists, *Rock This Town Vol. 1 & 2* (Rhino)

Books

Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock 'n' Roll, by Colin Escott with Martin Hawkins (1991, St. Martin's)

Last Train to Memphis, by Peter Guralnick (1994, Little, Brown & Co.)

Elvis: The Illustrated Record, by Roy Carr & Mick Farren (1982, Harmony)

Remembering Buddy: The Definitive Biography of Buddy Holly, by John Goldrosen and John Beecher (1987, Penguin)

The Day the World Turned Blue: A Biography of Gene Vincent, by Britt Hagarty (1984, Blandford Press, UK)

Ricky Nelson: Idol for a Generation, by Joel Selvin (Contemporary, 1990)

–Richie Unterberger

Teen Idols

To many avid rock historians, the teen idols—who were firmly entrenched on the top of the charts between the death of Buddy Holly and the rise of the Beatles—represent the greatest threat to rock's survival that the music ever weathered. Wimpy, overwhelmingly bland and safe, their connection to rock 'n' roll was often tenuous, and their commercial ascendancy has even been discussed as a conspiracy by the music business and sundry other moral authorities to rob rock 'n' roll of its vitality.

In retrospect, that seems fairly unlikely, though there's no doubt that the more conservative elements of the entertainment industry and the status quo as a whole felt more comfortable with these performers. Owing as much or more to traditional Tin Pan Alley and middle-of-the-road values than pure rock 'n' roll, their massive success nonetheless didn't come close to stamping out the forces that gave birth to the explosive soul, surf, and British Invasion sounds that reclaimed the airwaves after only a few years.

"Teen idols" were by no means a phenomenon that began with the rock 'n' roll era; bobbysoxers had been pining to the sound of mainstream pop crooners for a good decade or more before Elvis hit the scene. As far as rock was concerned, the original teen idol was Pat Boone, whose first hits were bowdlerized versions of rockers by Little Richard and Fats Domino. As Greg Shaw pointed out in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll,* Boone "began as a safe alternative to Elvis, and is still a safe alternative to just about everything."

The first two teen idols to achieve mass success after Boone could not have defined the polar extremes of the genre better. There was Paul Anka, whose early hits were mainstream ballads with mild rock 'n' roll trimmings, and who exemplified the style at its most operatic and melodramatic. Then there was Ricky Nelson, whose success was virtually guaranteed by his popular weekly TV series, and whose rockabilly records were better than they had any right to be.

The Philadelphia teen idols of the late '50s—Bobby Rydell, Frankie Avalon, and Fabian—patterned themselves after Anka much more than Nelson. Recorded on the local Cameo-Parkway, Chancellor, and Swan labels, they were launched into national success with regular appearances on American Bandstand, hosted by Dick Clark, who sometimes held financial interests in the record companies of the singers he pushed in this manner. Rydell, at least, could sing; few would contest that Avalon and Fabian were promoted more on their appearance than their limited vocal abilities, and both would move into movies and television work as their chief focus after their initial musical success.

It worked the other way around as well, of course; established teenage television stars with meager vocal abilities were hustled into recording studios to capitalize on their screen images. Ex-Mouseketeer Annette Funicello became one of the first big female teen idols in this fashion, and Ed "Kookie" Byrnes, Connie Stevens, Johnny Crawford, James Darren, and Shelley Fabares also got onto the hit parade after they were already established TV performers. Artistically, this was the weakest wing of the teen idol genre; unsuited for singing in the first place, their material often sank to the level of drivel, with a few unexpected choice items thrown in, usually from Brill Building songwriters.

A great many teen idol singers had one or two big hits in this era without establishing a long recording career. Mark Dinning ("Teen Angel") and Ray Peterson ("Tell Laura I Love Her") capitalized on the short-lived vogue for teen death melodrama; Troy Shondell, Johnny Tillotson, Brian Hyland, and even a young Tony Orlando were merely some of the more successful of the legions of young faces who were packaged for the young, middle-class, white, predominantly teenage audience in this era./ Then there were the singers who happened to be packaged as teen idols, but who were probably good enough to have succeeded anyway. Dion, Gene Pitney, and Del Shannon, as well as Ricky Nelson, all fall in this category; their music sometimes contained the melodramatic hallmarks of the teen idol style, but they were genuine pop-rock innovators each and every one, and have too often been dismissed as superfluous by listeners more concerned with these performers' images than their actual accomplishments.

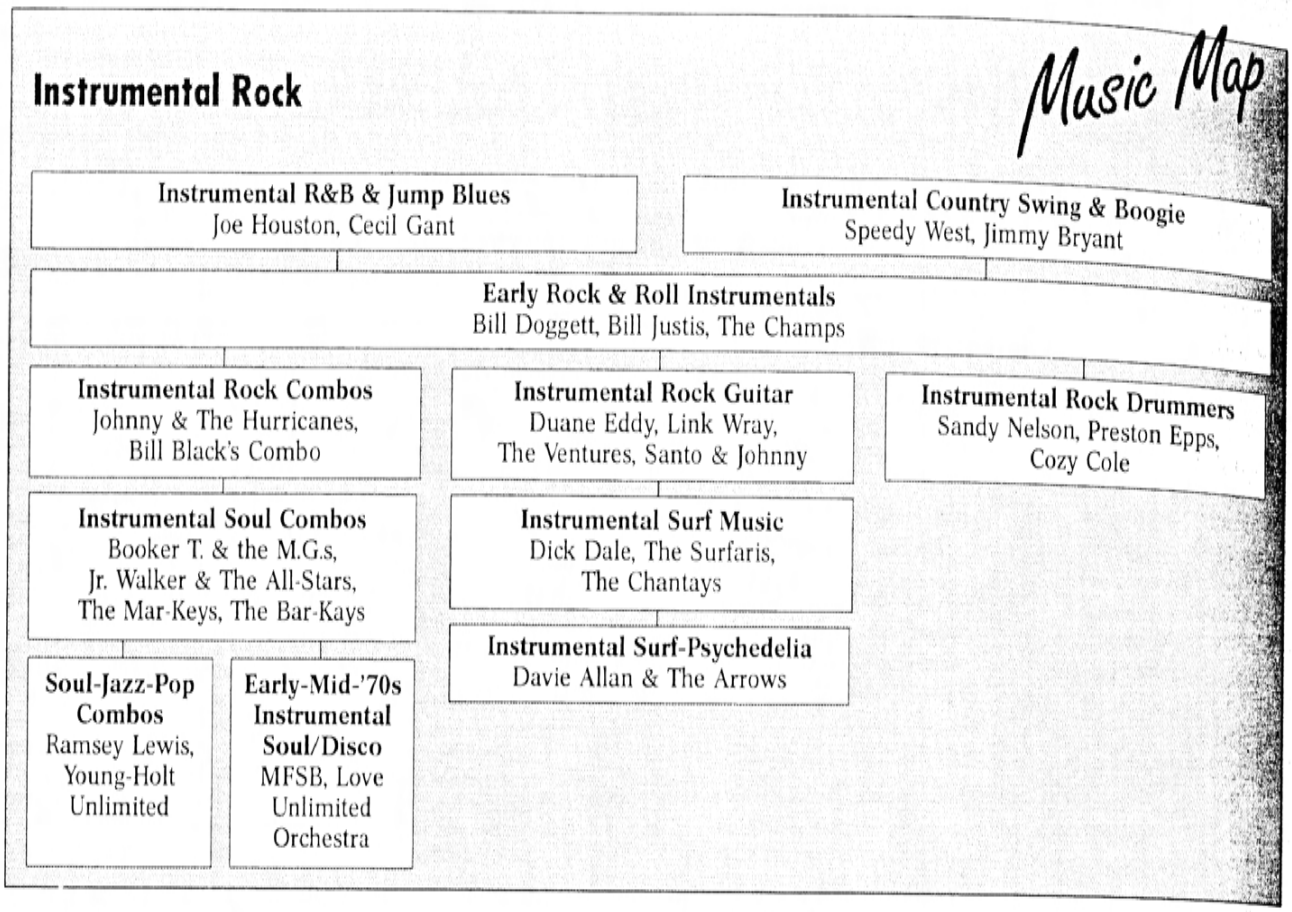
And there were also teen idols whose music was obviously a watered-down version of early rock 'n' roll forms. Bobby Vee was a transparent Buddy Holly clone, though much softer; Ral Donner was the most accurate Elvis Presley soundalike, though he took after Elvis' pop-rock ballads rather than the King's rockers; and Johnny Burnette had a brief career as a mainstream teen idol after having moderate success as one of the best early rockabilly singers. Finally, there was an entire wing of British teen idols, although they had virtually no success in the States. Cliff Richard was by far the biggest, followed by a stable of singers with unlikely movie-star names, most managed by British impresario Larry Parnes. Billy Fury was the best of them; Adam Faith, John Leyton, Heinz, Helen Shapiro, and others were also big in their homeland before they largely sank into irrelevance after the rise of the Beatles in 1963.

The teen idol style was already on the wane before the Beatles landed in America in early 1964; Motown and other forms of soul music were on the rise, girl groups were big, surf sounds were at their crest. The manufacturing of face and image over content and ability that characterized the teen idol era has repeated itself, to a smaller extent, ever since, though one may call them the preteen idols now. Bobby Sherman and David Cassidy, the Bay City Rollers, Tiffany, Debbie Gibson, Milli Vanilli, New Kids on the Block—all strongly echoed the teen idol era, and sold millions of records despite the wrath of rock critics the world over, as other teen idols will do in the future.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Teen Idols* (Rhino)
Dion, *24 Golden Greats* (Arista)
Gene Pitney, *Anthology 1961-1968* (Rhino)
Del Shannon, *Greatest Hits* (Rhino)
Pat Boone, *Greatest Hits* (MCA)
Paul Anka, *30th Anniversary Collection* (Rhino)
Ricky Nelson, *The Best of Rick Nelson Vol. 1 & 2* (EMI)
Annette Funicello, *Annette: A Musical Reunion with America's Girl Next Door* (Disney)
Bobby Vee, *Legendary Masters* (EMI)
Ral Donner, *She's Everything* (Murray Hill)

–Richie Unterberger



Instrumental Rock

Except for a brief period at the end of the '50s and the early '60s, instrumental rock hasn't been a major commercial force. There have always been instrumental rock hits, of course, and the best instrumental rockers have acted as key inspirations to many of the best rock 'n' roll musicians.

Even before rock 'n' roll became the nation's dominant popular music in the mid-'50s, instrumentals were common in the R&B, jump blues, and country boogie that ranked as rock's chief ancestors. Raunchy R&B saxophonist Joe Houston and lightning-fast country boogie steel guitarist Speedy West were just two of the primarily instrumental musicians who were key influences on first generation rock 'n' rollers. In 1956, organist Bill Doggett's "Honky Tonk" became the first massive instrumental hit of the rock era, although it was more notable for the sax riffs of Clifford Scott than the playing of bandleader Doggett.

The earliest rock 'n' roll instrumental hits, such as the Champs' "Tequila," featured the sax as the lead instrument, but in 1958 Duane Eddy was responsible for changing the emphasis of instrumental rock to the guitar. With his distinctively low, twanging leads (augmented by Steve Douglas' superb saxophone), Eddy was one of the most popular singles artists of his era. His material can sound somewhat repetitious and dated these days, but he was a major influence on the next generation of rock guitarists, from George Harrison on down.

The Ventures were perhaps even more influential, offering a sleek sound with dual lead guitars and crisp drumming. A key building block of instrumental surf music, the group inspired countless nascent guitarists and were extremely popular, especially overseas, where the English language wasn't as key a component of rock music.

Link Wray, although nowhere near as successful as Eddy or the Ventures, may have been the most innovative guitarist of the era. On his 1958 hit "Rumble" and numerous excellent non-hit followups, he pioneered guitar fuzz and distortion on vicious rockers. He was cited as an influence by Pete Townshend, who with several other British guitarists would take Wray's sound a few steps further in the distortion and feedback-riddled guitar leads of British Invasion and psychedelic rock.

In Southern California, Dick Dale developed a reverb-heavy sound with his Fender Telecaster that became known as "surf music." Though relatively few surf instrumentals were big national hits (the Surfaris' "Wipe Out" and the Chantays' "Pipeline" were the biggest), the surf scene was huge in California, and of course a big influence on the Beach Boys, who (along with Jan & Dean) developed a vocal surf sound that became an important part of early- and mid-'60s rock 'n' roll.

The years 1958-1963 were also riddled with many exciting hits, big and small, by performers who were never heard from again, or only managed to run off two or three big tunes. Besides guitarists like Santo & Johnny and Lonnie Mack, drummers (Sandy Nelson, Preston Epps, Cozy Cole), organists (Dave "Baby" Cortez), saxophone-driven combos (Johnny & the Hurricanes), and even bass players (ex-Elvis Presley sideman Bill Black) got in on the act with memorable hit tunes.

Instrumental rock was already decreasing in popularity when the British Invasion overran the States, making vocalists a near necessity. In the years between the initial rock 'n' roll explosion and the Beatles, however, instrumental performers were responsible for some of the most exciting and gutsy rock 'n' roll available. A key force in the preservation of rock's most exciting elements, instrumental rock was also hugely popular at a local level, and many musicians who wet their chops in instrumental combos went on to join, or develop into, important '60s rock groups. In any case, mid- and late-'60s rock groups never neglected instrumental rock entirely—Paul Butterfield's "East West," the Rolling Stones' "2120 South Michigan Avenue," the Who's "Underture," Quicksilver Messenger Service's "Gold and Silver," the Yardbirds' "Jeff's Boogie," Pink Floyd's "Interstellar Overdrive," and Country Joe & the Fish's "Section 43" are only a few of the great hard rock and psychedelic instrumentals of the era. While the British Invasion is often thought of as a death knell for instrumental rock, instrumentals remained a key strand of soul music for the next decade. The most popular and influential instrumental soul combo were Booker T. & the MG's. In addition to backing most of the greatest performances on the Stax/Volt label, the Memphis group also ran off a long string of marvelously taut instrumental hits of their own. The Mar-Keys and the Bar-Kays were also popular instrumental exponents of the Memphis soul sound. Saxophonist Junior Walker took Motown to its grittiest extremes on his instrumentals (though he often used vocals as well).

There was also no shortage of one-shot soul instrumental hits. Cliff Nobles ("The Horse"), jazzman Hugh Masekela ("Grazing in the Grass"), Billy Preston ("Outa-Space"), Love Unlimited Orchestra ("Love's Theme"), MFSB ("TSOP"), and the Average White Band ("Pick up the Pieces") all had mammoth pop hits with soul instrumentals, although these groups by and large didn't limit their material to instrumentals exclusively. Ramsey Lewis developed a breed of soul-jazz-pop in the mid-'60s, as did his ex-sidemen Young-Holt Unlimited, who hit the Top Ten when they added a lot of straight funk and came up with "Soulful Strut."

While rock and soul instrumentals haven't been nearly as prevalent in the 1980s and '90s as they were in earlier decades, instrumentals will always be a presence in the music, as surprise hit singles and as a testament to the power of guitars, saxophones, drums, and other instruments to move listeners without the benefit of vocals.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Rock Instrumental Classics, Vol. 1: The '50s* (Rhino)

Various Artists, *Rock Instrumental Classics, Vol. 2: The '60s* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Rock Instrumental Classics, Vol. 3: The '70s* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Rock Instrumental Classics, Vol. 4: Soul* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Rock Instrumental Classics, Vol. 5: Surf* (Rhino)
Duane Eddy, *Twang Thang: The Anthology* (Rhino)
Link Wray, *Rumble! The Best of Link Wray* (Rhino)
The Ventures, *Walk, Don't Run: The Best of the Ventures* (EMI)
Booker T. & the MG's, *The Very Best of Booker T. & the MG's* (Rhino)
Booker T. & the MG's, *Best of Booker T. & the MG's* (Fantasy)
Dick Dale, *King of Surf Guitar: Best of Dick Dale* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Guitar Player Presents Legends of Guitar, Surf: Vol. 1* (Rhino)

–Richie Unterberger

British Rock 'n' Roll Before the Beatles

For virtually everyone outside the British Isles—and for many who were born and raised there—the story of British rock begins with the Beatles. Britain did have rock 'n' roll performers in the late '50s and early '60s, but they were really no more than a footnote to the real thing, which shook the UK in 1963 as the Beat Boom, and the world in 1964 as the British Invasion. This little-known scene has its interest, though, and even its gems, though they're few and far between.

When rock 'n' roll became an international phenomenon in the mid-'50s, Britain, it would seem, was more equipped to emulate the music on its home shores than almost any other country outside North America. After all, the primary barrier to singing rock 'n' roll is linguistic, and as the second-largest English-speaking nation in the world, Great Britain at least didn't have that particular obstacle to worry about. But the indigenous music of the UK, with the possible exception of British Isles folk, had little parallel with the stew of blues, country, gospel, and Tin Pan Alley pop that gave birth to rock 'n' roll in the States. It took a long time for the country's performers to come to grips with these influences, and master a vocabulary that would enable British rock to hold its own in the international marketplace.

British rock 'n' rollers sprang up almost immediately in the wake of Bill Haley and Elvis Presley; Wee Willie Harris is usually credited as the first, and Tommy Steele was the most successful of the very first batch. The earliest British rock 'n' roll records were, it could be said, hardly rock 'n' roll at all; often they were cover versions of American rock hits that framed the songs in much more conventional and saccharine pop arrangements. In this respect, the British music industry was reacting along similar lines as some American labels, who responded to rock 'n' roll's ascendancy by whitewashing R&B hits with sterile pop covers, or developed teen idols whose music was only marginally connected to the real thing. A more important British development was the popularity of skiffle, principally popularized by Lonnie Donegan, who had first come to prominence as a traditional jazz and blues performer in Chris Barber's band. Skiffle's appeal, in the manner of garage and punk music right to the present day, was that it didn't take a great deal of technical proficiency to perform: you needed a few chords on guitar and banjo, a washboard for percussion, and a repertoire of a few folk songs. Donegan was a hugely successful singer in the late '50s in Britain (his "Rock Island Line" was also a big hit in the States), and many of the skiffle groups he inspired, such as the Quarrymen (soon to become the Beatles), would become key players in the British Invasion. Another Chris Barber sideman, Alexis Korner, would become mentor to key figures of blues and R&B-based rock groups the Rolling Stones, Kinks, Yardbirds, and others, though his contributions really fall beyond the scope of pre-Beatle British rock.

In the meantime, however, the teenagers in these skiffle bands had to suffer through bland pop-rock, or a bland facsimile of such, on their own hit parade. The most popular of the early British rock singers was Cliff Richard, a sort of mini-Elvis who actually managed some respectable rock 'n' roll on his earliest singles in the late '50s, especially on his debut hit, "Move It." He was backed by the Shadows, a tight unit who scored many instrumental hits on their own, emphasizing spare, precise (one might even say clean-cut) riffs. Cliff Richard and the Shadows are remembered fondly by many in British rock circles, and Shadows guitarist Hank Marvin is cited as an influence by many British guitar heroes. But listening to their peak output several decades later, one suspects that this may be more due to nostalgia than quality; the majority of their repertoire consists of watered-down derivations of American pop, pop-rock, and instrumental rock. Shadows bassist Jet Harris, sometimes in collaboration with Shadows drummer Tony Meehan, did have some nifty, growling instrumental hits just before the Beatles broke.

There were quite a few British teen idols in the late '50s and early '60s, usually with fanciful show-business names such as Johnny Gentle, Marty Wilde, Vince Eager, Adam Faith, and Duffy Power (the last of which, surprisingly, turned out to be a decent cult blues-rock performer in the '60s). Like their American cousins, they were innocent and harmless to the point of dopiness. The best of them, Billy Fury, managed to cut some fair, and self-penned, approximations of American rockabilly on his 1960 LP *Sound of Fury* with the help of guitarist Joe Brown (who would have some hits of his own in the early '60s). Fury was also an inspiration to Malcolm McLaren when he was casting about to form the Sex Pistols—but again, one suspects nostalgia as an ingredient for this latter-day respect; Fury was a competent singer, but he too went heavy on the drippy ballads for the hit parade, and as a rockabilly singer, he would have been an also-ran in the States.

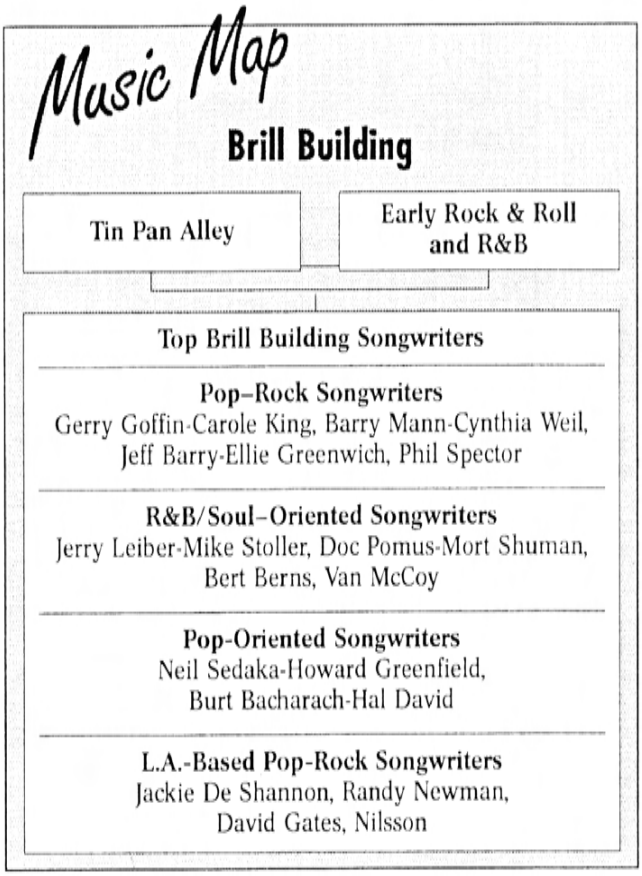
Amidst all the dross, there were some genuine fierce British rockers in these dark days. Tony Sheridan, though he never got a chance to adequately showcase his talents on record, was of course an inspiration to the early Beatles, who backed him on several German recordings. Vince Taylor managed several respectable Gene Vincent-type numbers, most notably "Brand New Cadillac."

The best by far, though, and indeed the best pre-Beatle British rockers by a wide margin, were Johnny Kidd & the Pirates. Their late-'50s and early-'60s singles were tough, rockabilly-influenced performances that came off as a cross between Jerry Lee Lewis and Gene Vincent. Kidd was also an underappreciated factor in establishing the dominance of guitar in '60s British rock; several of his songs featured superbly menacing riffs from session players like Joe Moretti that were quite advanced for their time, especially the one from "Shakin' All Over," perhaps the only true pre-Beatle classic of British rock, and the only one which became a rock standard (in versions by the Who, Guess Who, and others). Kidd, alas, was already in a decline phase when the Beat Boom hit, and died in a car crash in 1966.

Besides the Pirates, the hardest rocking British band of the early '60s were Screaming Lord Sutch and the Savages. Sutch—a colorful figure who wore long hair years before it was fashionable, shamelessly emulated Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and ran for Parliament advocating such causes as the right of teenagers to vote and pirate radio—wasn't much of a singer. But his band did play real rock 'n' roll of the hard-driving sort at a time when that was rarely done in the British Isles, and his early-'60s singles (most recorded after the Beatles had debuted), though hardly classics, had a sense of hard-driving reckless fun that anticipated the spirit of the British Invasion. His bands also provided early schooling for such mainstays of British rock as Nicky Hopkins and Ritchie Blackmore (who also recorded some sides as a teenager in the early '60s as part of the instrumental group the Outlaws).

Sutch and the Outlaws were both produced by Joe Meek, a major figure who has merited an entire biography. Meek was the very first British producer to establish his own production company for leasing masters to labels, ensuring control over his product. A legendary eccentric obsessed with the occult and UFOs, Meek imprinted his recordings with as distinctive a sound as any other producer. Compression, sped-up vocals, otherwordly organs, howling wind, and ghostly choruses combined into a sort of space-age sound which was quite futuristic for its era, and is best heard on the Tornados' instrumental "Telstar," which topped the charts on both sides of the Atlantic over a year before the Beatles broke in America.





Had Meek only been working with more talented acts and better material, there would be no question of his important stature. As it was, he usually favored simpering teen idols, anonymous instrumental groups, and cringingly dippy material, though he almost always added adventurous production that made the records stand out in the vapid early-'60s British scene. He did manage some tough-rocking sides with the Outlaws, Heinz, Tornados, and especially Screaming Lord Sutch, and sustained his success into the early British Invasion with the Honeycombs. As a producer he was ahead of his time, but his taste in material was rendered hopelessly passé by the Beat Boom, and he died in sordid circumstances (a combination murder-suicide) in early 1967.

The weakness of pre-Beatle rock is reflected in the near-total lack of cover versions of early British rock tunes by British Invasion bands. Though most of those groups' early repertoires were dominated by rock 'n' roll covers, they rarely looked to their own countrymen. *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*, for example, documents the hundreds of songs the group were known to have performed onstage before 1963; only about ten odds and ends by British performers appear, by singers like Lonnie Donegan and Joe Brown.

What was happening, was that it was necessary for an entirely new generation of musicians—one which had grown up listening to and playing rock 'n' roll—to emerge to really play the music properly. The Beatles, and hundreds of other beat combos, looked to the US for inspiration, not their own land. And when they had mastered their instruments, performance, and finally songwriting enough to offer quality material on record, the result turned the British music industry on its head literally within months. The old guard hung on for a few more hits; in some cases, such as Cliff Richard's, they maintained a reasonable degree of popularity.

In the US, British pop hits only crossed over very occasionally. When they did make it into the American hit parade, they tended to be rather quaint pop novelty items, such as Laurie London's "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands," the Caravelles' "You Don't Have to Be a Baby to Cry," and Frank Ifield's "I Remember You" ("Telstar," though real instrumental rock, was also a novelty). Early British rock never meant a thing in the States, and that's why the Beatles and other British groups couldn't get a foothold in the US in 1963; the industry had no reason to expect anything that they couldn't find, cheaper and better, in their own backyard. With "I Want to Hold Your Hand" in early 1964, that all changed—for which we can all be thankful—on both sides of the Atlantic.

Recommended Recordings

Lonnie Donegan, *Collection* (Castle, UK)
Cliff Richard, *20 Rock 'n' Roll Hits* (EMI, UK)
Various Artists, *Roots of British Rock* (Sire)
Billy Fury, *Sound of Fury Plus 10* (PolyGram)
Jet Harris & Tony Meehan, *Diamonds & Other Gems* (Deram, UK)
Johnny Kidd & the Pirates, *Complete Johnny Kidd* (EMI, UK)
Screaming Lord Sutch, *Story* (no label)
The Tornados, *Telstar: The Original Sixties Hits of the Tornados* (Music Club, UK)
The Shadows, *Shadows Are Go!* (Scamp)
The Outlaws, *Ride Again (The Singles As & Bs)* (See for Miles, UK)
Joe Meek, *It's Hard to Believe It: The Amazing World of Joe Meek* (Razor & Tie)

–Richie Unterberger

Brill Building Sound

Rock 'n' roll is usually thought of as a hybrid of several types of American roots music—the blues, country and western, R&B, gospel, and others. The influence of mainstream American popular songwriting (embodied by the conglomerate of professional composers and publishers dubbed Tin Pan Alley), on rock's early development is sometimes overlooked. While rock 'n' roll was to a significant degree a reaction against the overly professional, sentimental, and sterile conventions of pre-rock American pop, the best of Tin Pan Alley's melodic and lyrical hallmarks were incorporated into rock 'n' roll to raise the music to new levels of sophistication.

The songwriters most crucial to this process congregated in the early '60s in a New York block known as the Brill Building. Home to leading music industry publishers, it also bred a stable of young songwriters who were just as steeped in rock 'n' roll and rhythm and blues as Tin Pan Alley, if not more so. Several of the most prominent worked for Aldon Music, a publishing firm headed by Al Nevins and Don Kirshner—the same Don Kirshner who would later mastermind the Monkees' hits and act as a legendarily bland master of ceremonies for network TV rock specials.

Many pop-rock songwriters worked in the Brill Building in the early '60s, but several teams carved a legendary legacy, including Gerry Goffin & Carole King, Barry Mann & Cynthia Weil, Jerry Leiber & Mike Stoller, Jeff Barry & Ellie Greenwich, and Doc Pomus & Mort Shuman. Responsible for literally pages worth of hits in the late '50s and first half of the '60s, they matched Tin Pan Alley's highest standards of inventive melodies and lyrics, but they were clearly different from their predecessors. The rock 'n' roll market demanded tunes targeted at teenagers, with earthier concerns than the classics of the '30s and '40s. For many of these songwriters, the task hardly required an adjustment; they were barely out of (or even still in) their teens, and they were going through the pangs of young love and searches for identity themselves. For good measure, Goffin-King, Mann-Weil, and Barry-Greenwich were married to each other, infusing their work with a passion that was actually grounded in their real-life romances.

Brill Building compositions were placed all over the pop-rock map, but had their greatest impact and success with girl groups. It was a heavenly match: girl groups sang about young love with forlorn and passionate innocence, and were largely based near New York City, but very few were songwriters, and they needed suitable material; young Brill Building songwriters wrote about young love with forlorn and passionate innocence, and were largely based near New York City, but needed suitable performers. Most of the classic hits by the Ronettes, Chiffons, Shangri-Las, Dixie Cups, and Little Eva originated at the Brill Building, as well as a few classic one-shots and misses.

Other prime outlets for Brill Building material were teen idols like Connie Francis, Bobby Vee, James Darren, and Neil Sedaka (the last of whom was one of the most successful Brill Building songwriters himself, often in collaboration with Howard Greenfield). These tended to be the most lightweight Brill Building confections, at times even approaching disposable, as a listen to a James Darren greatest hits compilation confirms. Uneven quality couldn't be helped; the songwriters were under tremendous pressure to deliver tunes in a near-assembly-line fashion, and couldn't be expected to come up with "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" or "On Broadway" every time out.

Leiber-Stoller and Pomus-Shuman, however, usually wrote for pop-flavored R&B and early soul acts. Leiber-Stoller wrote (and produced) most of the Coasters' classic comic vignettes, and Pomus-Shuman penned several of the Drifters' hits. Both teams also wrote some of the greatest Elvis Presley songs of the late '50s and early '60s; Goffin-King and Mann-Weil, for their part, would supply songs for the Drifters and Phil Spector's great productions with the best blue-eyed soul act of the '60s, the Righteous Brothers.

Other notable Brill Building mainstays included Phil Spector, a great songwriter and even greater producer; Bert Berns, who also wore both songwriting and production hats, though he worked in a more of a pop-soul vein; and Bacharach-David, who probably owed the most to Tin Pan Alley classic traditions, although that didn't prevent them from writ-

ing some great pop-rock songs for the Shirelles, Dionne Warwick, and others. And for every Goffin-King, it must be remembered, there were dozens of much less successful hopefuls scuffling around the edges of the Brill Building crowd, including future folk-rock stars Paul Simon and Jim McGuinn, and future disco king of the "hustle," Van McCoy.

Though Phil Spector is by far the most legendary producer with Brill Building associations, most of the great Brill Building songwriters were also great producers, although they weren't always credited on the label. Several of them were also great performers, and it has been said that the demos they cut were often as good or better than the versions recorded by the performers to whom they were given. Barry Mann, Carole King, and Jeff Barry & Ellie Greenwich (the latter pair as the Raindrops) actually had some hit records on their own, though they much preferred to run things behind the scenes.

There were also quite a few Los Angeles-based songwriters who, though not based at the actual Brill Building, operated in an almost identical fashion. David Gates, Jackie De Shannon, Randy Newman, and Nilsson were some of the best; eventually, each of them would become singing-songwriting stars in their own right.

The British Invasion turned the focus of rock 'n' roll on performers that wrote their own material, and while that didn't spell the end of the success of the great Brill Building songwriters, it meant some adjustments were in order. Girl group records were still hugely successful in 1964, the first year of the British Invasion, but it was soon obvious that their time was coming to an end. The irony was that John Lennon and Paul McCartney owed a great deal to the Brill Building, openly declaring Goffin and King as their greatest songwriting influences, and covering Brill Building classics by the Shirelles, Cookies, and Isley Brothers. Manfred Mann ("Do Wah Diddy Diddy"), Herman's Hermits ("I'm into Something Good"), and other British Invasion groups also took Brill Building covers into the top of the charts.

Occasionally Brill Building songwriters actually managed to supply fresh material to British Invasion groups, as Mann-Weil did with the Animals, and Bert Berns did with Them and Lulu. But inevitably, the proliferation of self-contained rock groups, not to mention soul songwriters who wrote their own material, meant less of a need for professional tunesmiths. And the fact was, both the world and the songwriters were changing as fast as everything else was in the '60s; the composers wanted to express more mature concerns, and much of the rock audience had progressed beyond adolescent love affairs.

The principal architects of the Brill Building coped with these changes in varying fashions. Some became jingle writers; some (Ellie Greenwich) eventually wrote musicals; some (Jeff Barry) wrote and produced bubblegum for the Archies; some (Phil Spector) retired; some (Bacharach-David) moved from pop-rock to MOR pop. The most resourceful became singer-songwriter stars themselves—not only the aforementioned L.A. composers, but also Carole King, who became a superstar as a solo act. The legacy of the Brill Building was enormous, setting the standard for pop-rock songwriting that has been emulated ever since, by everyone from the Beatles on down.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Brill Building Sound* (Era)
Phil Spector, *Back to Mono* (ABKCO)
The Drifters, *All-Time Greatest Hits & More: 1959-1965* (Atlantic)
The Coasters, *50 Coastin' Classics* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Colpix-Dimension Story* (Rhino)
The Shangri-Las, *The Best of the Shangri-Las* (Mercury)
Neil Sedaka, *All-Time Greatest Hits* (RCA)
Various Artists, *The Red Bird Story* (Charly, UK)
Various Artists, *The Best of the Girl Groups, Vol. 1* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Best of the Girl Groups, Vol. 2* (Rhino)

–Richie Unterberger

Girl Group

The story of the "girl group" sound—which reached its commercial and artistic peak in the early and mid-'60s—is not just the story of the performers. More than any other style in rock 'n' roll, it was the product of more or less equal partnerships between the singer/performers, songwriters, and producers. The result was one of the most vital links between the birth of rock 'n' roll and the British Invasion, the arrival of which gradually eroded the presence of girl groups on the charts even as it acknowledged enormous debts to the genre.

Girl groups were more polished than the early rock 'n' roll pioneers, more innocent than the soul music that was originating at the same time, and as firmly planted in Tin Pan Alley as rhythm and blues. While it wasn't the rawest or most artistically expressive pop music, few forms of rock were as affecting, romantic, and tuneful. They also provided the forums and mouthpieces for some of pop-rock's most talented songwriting teams, as well as laying the foundation for groundbreaking orchestral production that lent an increased sophistication to rock 'n' roll.

The Chantels, led by the heart-wrenching vocals of Arlene Smith, are generally acknowledged as the first girl group. Their Top 20 hit "Maybe" (1958) had obvious roots in gospel and doo wop, but also displayed yearning, innocent, and vulnerable qualities not apparent in the suaver male doo wop outfits.

It was the Shirelles, however, who really established girl groups as a major force with their No. 1 hit, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow?," in 1960. Significantly, that hit also featured many of the classic girl group trademarks—sweeping orchestral strings, full background harmonies, and a lead vocal that projected soul, warmth, hope, and uncertainty. The Shirelles scored a half-dozen Top 20 singles in the next couple years (along with several memorable lesser hits), and ranked as the most successful female vocal group of the era.

The song was written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, who would go on to write many girl group classics in the next few years, and were one of the hottest songwriting teams of the Brill Building sound. Named after a complex of music publishing offices on Broadway in New York, it also gave birth to the partnerships between Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich, and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil. These teams were responsible for the lion's share of the best girl group recordings, investing rock 'n' roll with the best melodic and lyrical qualities of classic pop, while retaining a feel for the rhythm and blues roots of the performers. Less celebrated writers like Luther Dixon (who wrote several songs for the Shirelles) and a pre-disco Van McCoy also contributed classics to the genre.

It took Phil Spector to launch the girl group sound to its pinnacle. The producer set material from the cream of the Brill Building crop (as well as his own original compositions) to grandly majestic, orchestral arrangements that achieved an unheard-of density without sacrificing any of the music's passion and melody. The Crystals, the Ronettes, and Darlene Love (who sang uncredited vocals on some of the Crystals' biggest smashes) were the most talented pilots of Spector's grandiose "Wall of Sound" productions, most of which were released on his own label, Philles.

While the Shirelles and Phil Spector's acts were the most prominent girl groups in the years preceding the British Invasion, the sound was emulated by several one- or two-shot groups, and less-celebrated producers, with great success. The Chiffons, Claudine Clark, the Cookies, the Jaynetts, Little Eva, and the Exciters all contributed timeless classics. And there were dozens—if not hundreds—of worthy singles in the style that, for one reason or another, didn't become blockbusters, although they had most or all of the essential elements.

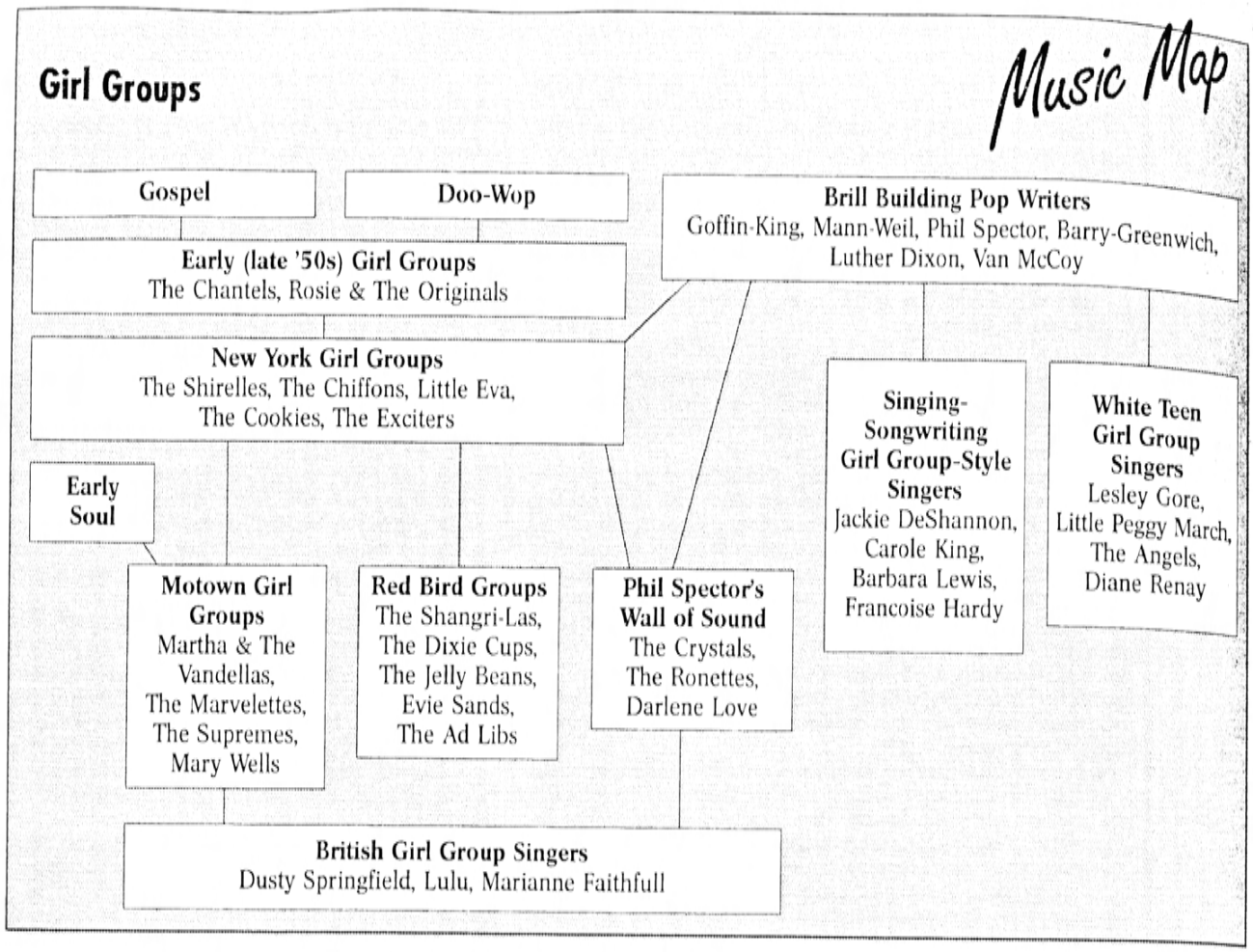
Most of the great girl groups were Black, with clear affinities for R&B and doo wop, but the most innocent qualities of the sound (and occasionally the most soulful ones) were projected in many records by white teen girl singers as well. Lesley Gore was the most renowned of these performers, who also included the Angels, the Raindrops (with Ellie Greenwich on lead vocals), and one-shot artists like Diane Renay and the Murmaids.

While the arrival of the Beatles in 1964 is often thought of as the beginning of the end for the girl groups, girl group records were actually as successful as ever during that year. The rise of the Red Bird label, featuring the Dixie Cups and the Shangri-Las (who both scored No. 1 hits in 1964), did much to boost the style's commercial fortunes.

Although financial problems caused the Red Bird label to fold within a few years of its founding, the years 1964 and 1965 saw the label shine brightly indeed, and found songwriters like Jeff Barry, Barry Mann, Ellie Greenwich, Jerry Lieber, and Mike Stoller overseeing most of its output from the producer's booth. Producer and songwriter Shadow Morton—almost as idiosyncratic a talent as Phil Spector—created some of the greatest girl group records with the Shangri-Las. These tough-talking but tender-hearted Queens teens may have made the sassiest and most heart-wrenching girl group mini-operas of all.

Although the burgeoning Motown empire wasn't heavily rooted in the girl group sound, 1964 saw the release of break-through discs by Mary Wells, the Supremes, and Martha & the Vandellas that owed heavy debts to the style. Relying heavily on the production and songwriting talents of Smokey Robinson and Berry Gordy, Jr. (among others), their sound was nonetheless grittier and bluesier than the New York school, and their personas (on record and in performance) more distinctive.

There's no doubt that girl groups were among the British Invasion groups' chief influences. John Lennon has stated for the record that he and Paul McCartney hoped to duplicate the success of Goffin and King with their songwriting partnership, and the Beatles' early albums included covers of hits by the Shirelles, the Cookies, and the Marvelettes. Manfred Mann, despite their R&B roots, scored their biggest US hits with covers of songs by the Exciters ("Do Wah Diddy Diddy") and the Shirelles ("Sha La La"), and several other British groups, ranging from Herman's Hermits and the Searchers to the Mindbenders, also made it big with girl group covers. However, the most successful British groups—the Beatles first and foremost among them—were those that relied primarily upon their own material. And it was this shift in



emphasis toward self-contained rock groups that played their own instruments that spelled the end of the girl groups as a major force, although singers like Jackie DeShannon, Dusty Springfield, Lulu, Evie Sands, Barbara Lewis, and others continued to produce classic recordings (and sometimes score major hits) in the girl group vein throughout the '60s.

The girl group sound, though, never really went away. You can hear it in many female vocal groups, self-contained and otherwise, through the present day. In the case of some soul groups (such as the Pointer Sisters) or new wave bands (the Bangles, Blondie, and the Go-Go's), the influence is worn quite cheerfully on the sleeve. More subtly, its echoes are heard in all rock that relies upon orchestral production, harmonies, and/or crafty, melodic compositions to send its message.

Recommended Recordings

The Shirelles, *The World's Greatest Girl Group* (Tomato/Rhino)
The Shangri-Las, *It's My Party: Mercury Anthology* (Mercury)
The Shangri-Las, *The Best of the Shangri-Las* (PolyGram)
The Ronettes, *Best of the Ronettes* (ABKCO)
The Crystals, *Best of the Crystals* (ABKCO)
The Chiffons, *Best of the Chiffons* (Laurie)
The Supremes, *Anthology* (Motown)
Martha & the Vandellas, *Live Wire! The Singles 1962-1972* (Motown)
Mary Wells, *Looking Back 1961-1964* (Motown)
Lesley Gore, *It's My Party: Mercury Anthology* (Mercury)
The Marvelettes, *Deliver: The Singles 1961-1971* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Best of the Girl Groups, Vol. 1 & 2* (Rhino)
The Exciters, *Tell Him* (EMI)

Books

Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound, by Alan Betrock (Delilah, 1982)
Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow? Girl Groups from the 50s On . . . , by Charlotte Greig (Virago, 1989, UK)

–Richie Unterberger

Surf

In terms of commercial impact, surf music was a short-lived phenomenon. The vast majority of popular surf recordings were waxed between 1961 and 1965; even then, their success was often confined to an isolated region (more often than not, Southern California). Yet its influence upon the sound of the rock 'n' roll guitar is incalculable. Felt by hundreds of artists, it continues to surface, in a much modified form, to this very day.

Between the time when the initial explosion of rock 'n' roll died down in the late '50s and the British Invasion, instrumental rock was more responsible for keeping alive the raunchiest and wildest aspects of the music than any other style. It was also responsible for keeping the electric guitar at the forefront of the music, and surf music was certainly the most guitar-oriented style of instrumental rock 'n' roll, though splashing drums and honking saxes were also prime features of the sound.

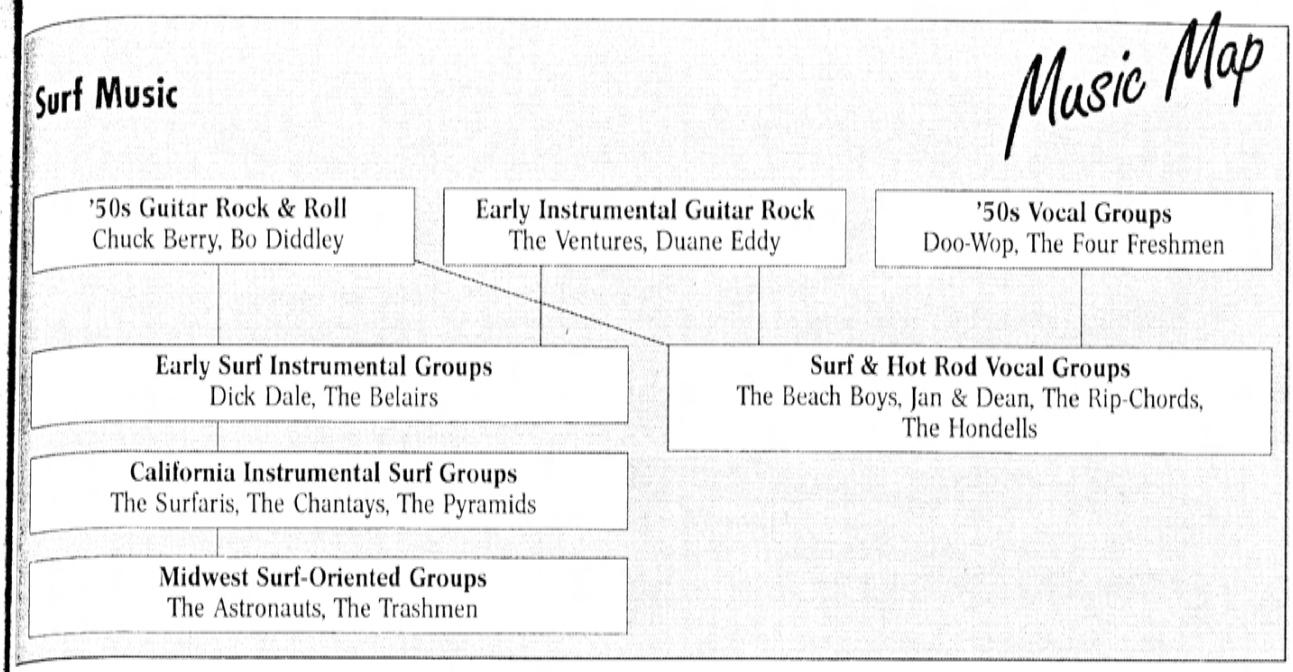
Southern California-guitarist Dick Dale is roundly acknowledged as the father of surf music. In the late '50s, he developed its trademark reverb sound. Whether intentionally or otherwise, the "wet," full echo of surf guitars evoked the rides and waves of surfing, which in the early '60s was still an emerging teenage sport that was little known outside of Southern California and Hawaii. Ironically, Jimi Hendrix, who intoned "you'll never hear surf music again" on "Third Stone from the Sun" from his debut album, has been said to have been influenced by Dale, who like Hendrix played his guitar left-handed and upside-down.

"For most surf instrumentals," wrote surf music authority John Blair in his liner notes to *Guitar Player Magazine Presents Legends of Guitar: Surf, Vol. 1,* "a small electronic device called a reverberation unit, or 'reverb' for short, was used to create the distinctive 'surf' guitar sound. Although several companies had reverbs on the market, the one made by the Fender Musical Instrument Company (introduced in the summer of 1961) was the popular choice of most surf bands . . .

"[Dick Dale] used Fender amplifiers and even had the company customize a special left-handed (he played upside-down and left-handed) gold metalflake Stratocaster guitar, which he still plays. In fact, Dale's close association with Fender enabled him to 'roadtest' new equipment for the company. The powerful Dual Showman amplifier, introduced in late 1962, was developed with Dale's help."

On vinyl, the surf craze kicked off with Dale's late-1961 single, "Let's Go Trippin'." Although it was only a regional hit, its influence was tremendous, and within months, dozens of bands—virtually all of them based in Southern California—were playing surf music. Hundreds would record surf singles and albums before the fad started to fade in the mid-'60s. Although they were not Californian, and would certainly not identify themselves as a surf group, the dark, reverberant guitars of the Ventures—then reaching the peak of their massive popularity—were also formidable influences on these groups.

On a national level, the impact of instrumental surf bands was notable, but much slighter. The Chantays ("Pipeline") and the Surfaris ("Wipe



Out") scored huge national hits, but few others dented the Top 40, let alone the Top Ten. The Pyramids' early-1964 single "Penetration" was the last big national instrumental surf hit.

While most surf groups were based in Southern California, the genre was not strictly confined to this region. The Astronauts (from Colorado) and the Trashmen (from Minneapolis) were the most successful of the not inconsiderable number of landlocked bands who played surf music, or at least made a few stabs at it. The Trashmen, indeed, went to the Top Five with "Surfin' Bird" in early 1964; only the Beatles, then hitting the US with full force, kept them from the top spot. One of the very best instrumental surf groups, the Atlantics, were not even from the US, but from Australia, where they scored some massive hits in 1963 and 1964.

Surf music would achieve its most lasting influence not with instrumentals, but with vocal groups, in particular the Beach Boys. There's no doubting that Dick Dale was a profound influence on the Hawthorne, CA group, who covered Dale's "Let's Go Trippin'" on their second album, *Surfin' USA*. They recorded a few other surf instrumentals on their first few albums as well, but from the beginning, they were primarily a vocal group, heavily influenced by Chuck Berry, the Four Freshmen, doo wop, and other styles. They were the first group, however, to successfully sing about the surf music phenomenon, adding complex harmonies and clever lyrics to the driving guitars and chugging rhythms. In their wake, some groups like the aforementioned Astronauts and Trashmen tried to play the field with both instrumental and vocal numbers.

Other California vocal acts were quick to jump on the bandwagon, but besides the Beach Boys, only Jan & Dean (who were occasionally beneficiaries of songs and harmonies by Beach Boy-leader Brian Wilson) were a significant success, commercially or artistically. Jan & Dean had been a modestly successful duo for years before latching onto the surf fad, and—like the Beach Boys—they would soon adapt the surf sound to hot rod lyrics emphasizing cars and drag racing. Acts like Ronny & the Daytonas ("G.T.O.") and the Rip Chords ("Hey Little Cobra") hit the Top Ten with one-shot hits in the same style, but were out of their depth when they tried to mine it for memorable follow-ups.

Indeed, after 1963, the Beach Boys—still remembered by many listeners primarily as a surf group—left the subject behind for good. They soon broadened their scope leagues beyond even hot rods and girls to create challenging, personal pop-rock on a competitive level with the British Invasion groups that sounded the death knell for surf music at the beginning of 1964. Even Jan & Dean's hits were not solely limited to surf and hot rod tunes, though their career came to a skidding halt with—ironically—severe injuries suffered by Jan Berry in a car crash in 1966 on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles.

The Beach Boys' harmonies, though, left their stamp on countless other groups. The Who's Keith Moon was a huge surf music fan, and the manic splashing of his drum kit owes something to the bashing rumble of surf ensembles; the Who's own harmonies owed surprisingly large debts to the Beach Boys. The lineups of several obscure surf groups included members who went on to fame in surprisingly different contexts. The Crossfires, for example, evolved into the Turtles, and the Jesters, led by Jim Messina, also featured Glenn Frey of the Eagles.

Three decades later, few groups play surf music, although Dick Dale made a surprisingly strong comeback on record and as a national touring act in the early '90s. Echoes of the style, however, live on whenever you heard a reverbed guitar or sweet, high vocal harmonies in a rock 'n' roll song.

Recommended Recordings

The Beach Boys, *Good Vibrations* (Capitol)
The Beach Boys, *Surfin' USA.* (Capitol)
The Beach Boys, *Surfer Girl* (Capitol)
Jan & Dean, *The Legendary Master Series* (EMI)
Dick Dale, *King of the Surf Guitar: The Best of Dick Dale* (Rhino)
The Astronauts, *Surf Party* (RCA)
The Trashmen, *Best of the Trashmen* (Sundazed)
Various Artists, *Guitar Player Presents Legends of Guitar— Surf, Vol. 1* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The History of Surf Music, Vol. 1* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Surfin' Hits* (Rhino)
The Atlantics, *The CBS Singles Collection 1963-1965* (Canetoad, Australia)
The Surfaris, *Wipe Out! The Best of the Surfaris* (Varese Sarabande)

Book

The Beach Boys, by David Leaf (1985, Courage)

–Richie Unterberger

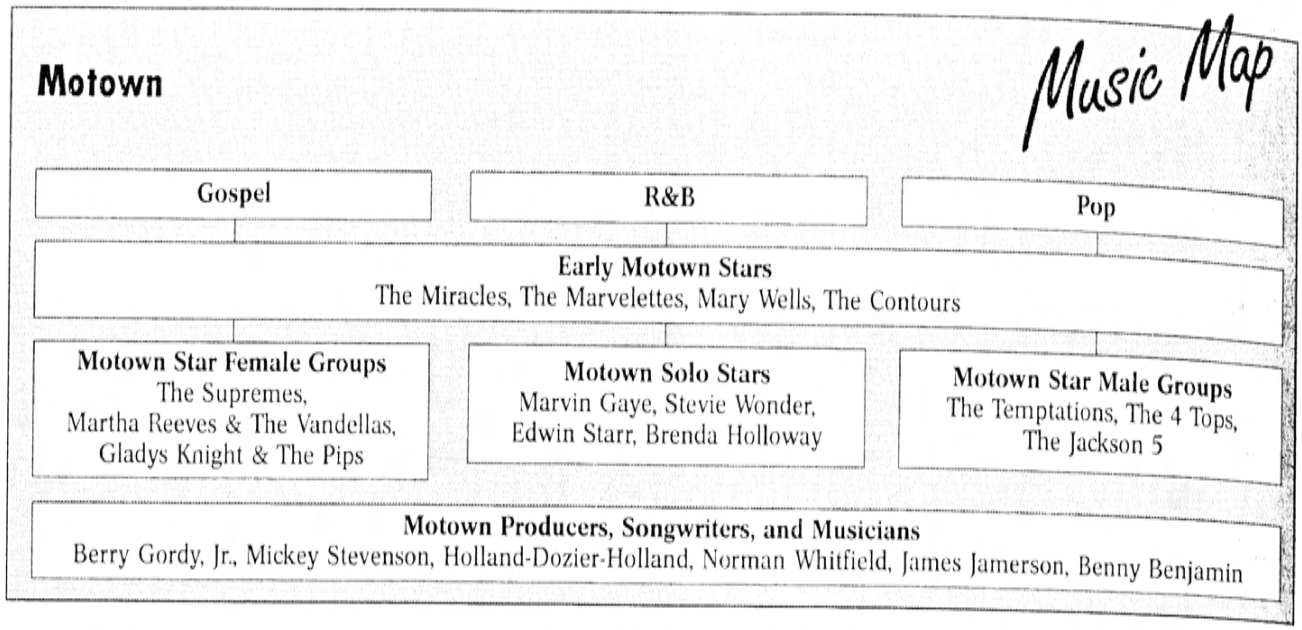
Motown

Many labels have left their mark on rock 'n' roll—Sun, Atlantic, Chess, Stax/Volt, Stiff, and lots of others left a permanent imprint on the music's legacy by honing distinctive styles and attitudes. Only one label, however, is immediately identified as a genre of its own. And not just by scholars and record collectors—Motown, to anyone who's listened to popular music since 1960, is not just a label in the middle of a record, but a sound that ranks among the most distinctive in rock history.

In its heyday, the Detroit label was home to the most commercially successful synthesis of R&B and pop ever produced. Motown developed many superstars, but performers were only part of the story. Equally important were the songwriters, including such masters as Smokey Robinson and the Holland-Dozier-Holland team; producers (who often doubled as songwriters); the (often uncredited) backing musicians, like bassist James Jamerson and drummer Benny Benjamin, who gave the music its rock-solid foundation; and the vision of owner Berry Gordy, Jr. You could almost always identify a Motown Record: instantly hummable melodies, pulsing bass lines, punchy tambourines and handclaps, rousing horns and violins, and vocals that evoked a gospel flavor with the call-and-response lines between the lead and backup singers.

The Motown empire, which eventually grew into the biggest Black-owned business in America, was a success story as unlikely as those of Elvis or the Beatles. A former boxer and failed jazz record-store owner, Gordy was a struggling hustler on the edges of the R&B music business in the late '50s, writing some hits for Jackie Wilson. In 1959, he borrowed money from his family to start an independent production company. After leasing hits by Marv Johnson and Barrett Strong to other labels, Gordy formed his own labels. The releases would appear both on Motown and other imprints like Tamla, Gordy, and Soul.

Motown quickly established itself in the early '60s with hits by the Miracles, the Marvelettes, and Mary Wells. It was Gordy's increasingly



refined and systematic production techniques, however, that would ensure that the label continued to succeed and grow. The Motown sound has often been compared to an assembly line, drawing upon the influence of Detroit's automobile plants, with performers, songwriters, producers, and musicians embellishing a basic tried-and-true blueprint. If it were indeed true that Motown's formula was nothing more than an assembly line, it most likely would have exhausted itself quickly. Motown's, and Gordy's, genius was that it was able to spin almost infinite variations on its hugely appealing recipes, while still retaining an instantly recognizable sound, endearing itself to millions of listeners through both innovation and familiarity.

Motown releases might have shared many general similarities, but in time its superstars would develop strong identities of their own. The Miracles, paced by Smokey Robinson (who wrote many of Motown's best songs, both for the Miracles and other artists), handled both romantic ballads and uptempo dance tunes; the Temptations were the most polished soul group of their day; the Four Tops were gritty and emotional; Mary Wells and the Marvelettes recorded the most soulful girl group singles around; child prodigy Stevie Wonder developed into a magnificently gifted songwriter and instrumentalist; Martha Reeves & the Vandellas were Motown at its most feverish and gospel-influenced; Diana Ross & the Supremes were, aside from the Beatles, the most successful pop group of the '60s; Marvin Gaye, along with Stevie Wonder, would prove to be the most eclectic and innovative singer-songwriter on the Motown roster, not even reaching his maturity as an artist (like Wonder) until the 1970s; Junior Walker cut the label's earthiest, most party-oriented R&B.

These were the superstars; there were other fine performers who recorded a notable body of work for Motown in the 1960s, including Gladys Knight, Brenda Holloway, Edwin Starr, Kim Weston, Tammi Terrell, and the Contours. The label's roster was so deep, in fact, that some illustrious artists were neglected; the Spinners didn't do much of anything until they left Motown in the early '70s, the Isley Brothers had only one big hit during their several years there (perhaps because of their inability to truly adapt to the Motown formula), and early-'60s soul star Chuck Jackson had only minimal success after moving to Motown.

Even the stars sometimes expressed dissatisfaction about how they were promoted and directed by Motown, but they most likely knew that their success was at least equally attributable to the label as to their own talents. The point was underscored by Mary Wells' surprise decision to leave Motown in 1964 just after her No. 1 hit, "My Guy." Lured away by a big contract and the promise of a movie career, Wells never had another big hit; without the estimable Motown team, she was just another soul singer. The loss of Wells was covered by the burgeoning careers of other Motown stars, but Gordy faced a much more serious problem in late 1967, when the songwriting and production team of Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, and Eddie Holland demanded an accounting of their royalties. After initiating a suit against Motown, the trio left the label to establish a company of their own. For a few years, Motown's fortunes were unaffected; they launched the Jackson 5 as superstars, and producers such as Norman Whitfield infused Motown with contemporary funk, psychedelia, and social commentary on tracks like the Temptations' "Cloud Nine," "Psychedelic Shack," and "Ball of Confusion."; Motown's golden age truly ended, however, in 1971, when the company moved from Detroit to Los Angeles. Around this time, the careers of some of Motown's mainstays, such as Martha Reeves and the Marvelettes, had petered out; Diana Ross had already left the Supremes. Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder recorded some stupendous album-length statements in the 1970s that showed their full gifts as songwriters and performers for the first time; they also expanded their lyrical concerns beyond the romantic themes that Motown had largely stuck to. But Motown no longer bred scads of stars, or honed a distinctive sound; they were simply a soul/R&B record label, albeit a very big and successful one.

When people talk about the Motown sound, they're referring to those 1960s and early '70s recordings. The most successful label of its day, and the most successful independent label of all time (it's now part of MCA), it was the most influential factor in establishing African-American music as an integral part of mainstream US culture.

Recommended Recordings

Smokey Robinson & the Miracles, *Anthology*
Mary Wells, *Looking Back 1961-1964*
Martha Reeves & the Vandellas, *Live Wire! The Singles 1962-1972*
The Marvelettes, *Marvelettes' Greatest Hits*
Marvin Gaye, *Anthology*
Stevie Wonder, *Looking Back*
The Supremes, *Anthology*
The Temptations, *Emperors of Soul*
The Four Tops, *Anthology*
The Jackson 5, *Anthology*
Junior Walker, *Greatest Hits*
Gladys Knight & the Pips, *Anthology*
Brenda Holloway, *Greatest Hits & Rare Classics*
Edwin Starr, *Motown Superstar Series Vol. 3*
Various Artists, *Hitsville USA: The Motown Singles Collection 1959-1971*

Book

Where Did Our Love Go?: The Rise and Fall of the Motown Sound, by Nelson George (St. Martin's, 1985)

–Richie Unterberger

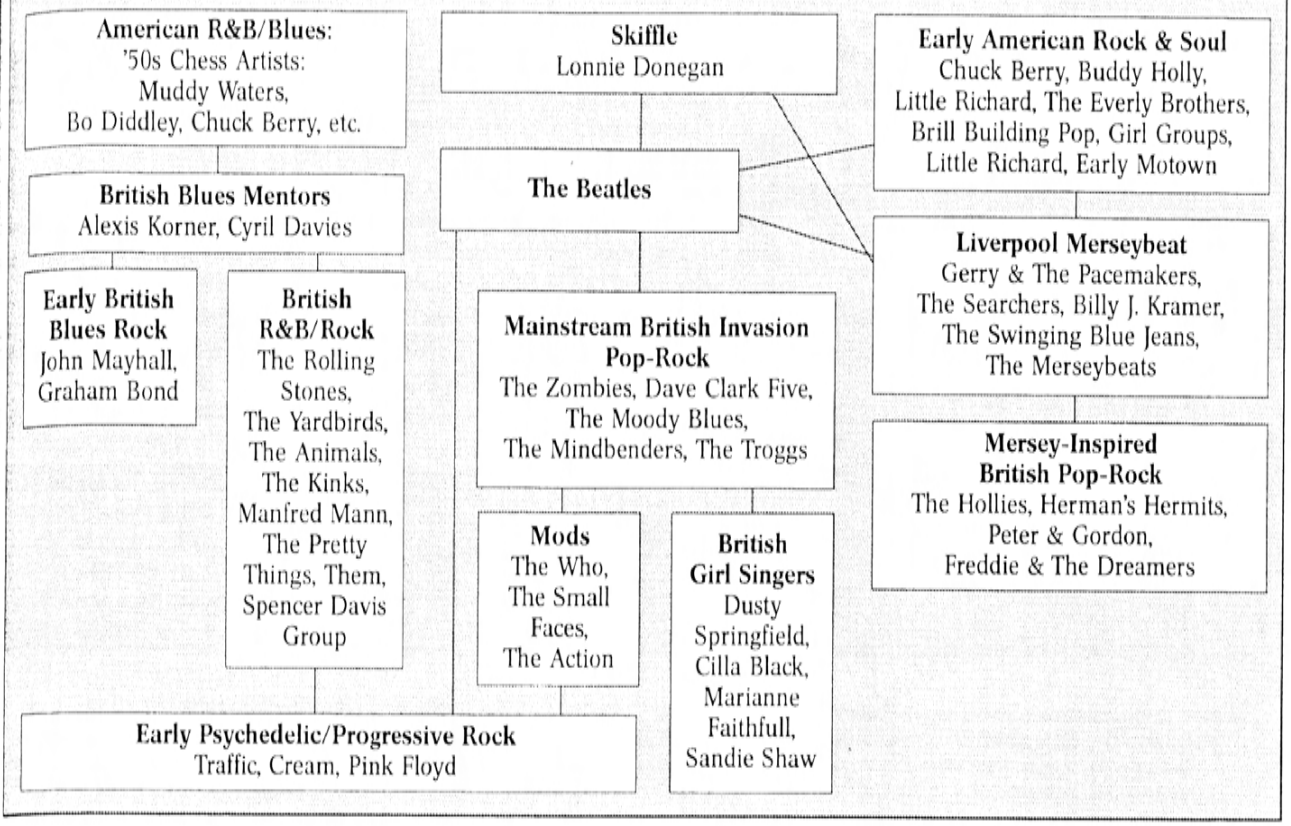
British Invasion

Of all the movements that have shaken the world of rock 'n' roll in the last 40 years, the British Invasion ranks among the very most exciting and important. Only the music's actual birth as a popular phenomenon with the rise of Elvis Presley is comparable; the punk/new wave explosion of the mid-'70s, while equally unexpected and revolutionary, lacked the British Invasion's across-the-board impact on mainstream popular music and culture.

The British Invasion has sometimes been unfairly disparaged as a bunch of white guitar groups re-selling second-hand, vintage American rock 'n' roll and R&B to a public that had forgotten it, or had never been exposed to it in the first place. While it's true that early American rock and soul were the performers' chief inspirations, the best of the groups broke immense ground as performers, songwriters, and stylists, introducing many of the attitudes and innovations that are taken for granted as part and parcel of rock music today. The British Invasion had its roots in the country's skiffle craze of the mid-'50s, sparked by Lonnie Donegan. Innumerable British teenagers were inspired to form groups based

The British Invasion

Music Map



on the simple (and cheap) instrumentation of guitars and washboards. The watered-down folk and blues sound of skiffle can sound unbearably stilted today, but many of those teenage musicians quickly graduated to electric guitars and drums as the focus of their interest shifted to classic early American rock 'n' roll.

There was a homegrown British rock 'n' roll scene in the late '50s and early '60s, but it was overpopulated by pale imitations of American rock, clean-cut instrumentals, and teen idols who offered little more than slightly reworked MOR ballad fare. Tours by American rock 'n' rollers were uncommon, and rock 'n' roll itself was only played on the radio a few hours per week, which meant that young British musicians and listeners devoted to rock 'n' roll had no alternative but to create a grass roots scene themselves. While Liverpool was by far the biggest breeding ground for the Beat Boom, with hundreds of bands in action by the early '60s, groups were sprouting up all over the British Isles—in Manchester, London, Belfast, and elsewhere. While early pioneers of rock were dying, retiring, being crippled by scandal, or falling into commercial disfavor in the United States, these British musicians maintained a fanatical devotion to their idols' music. Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly were arguably the most influential heroes of this generation of musicians, but the British also revered a wide range of other great American performers, including the Everly Brothers, Elvis, Gene Vincent, girl groups, the early Motown acts, and many more.

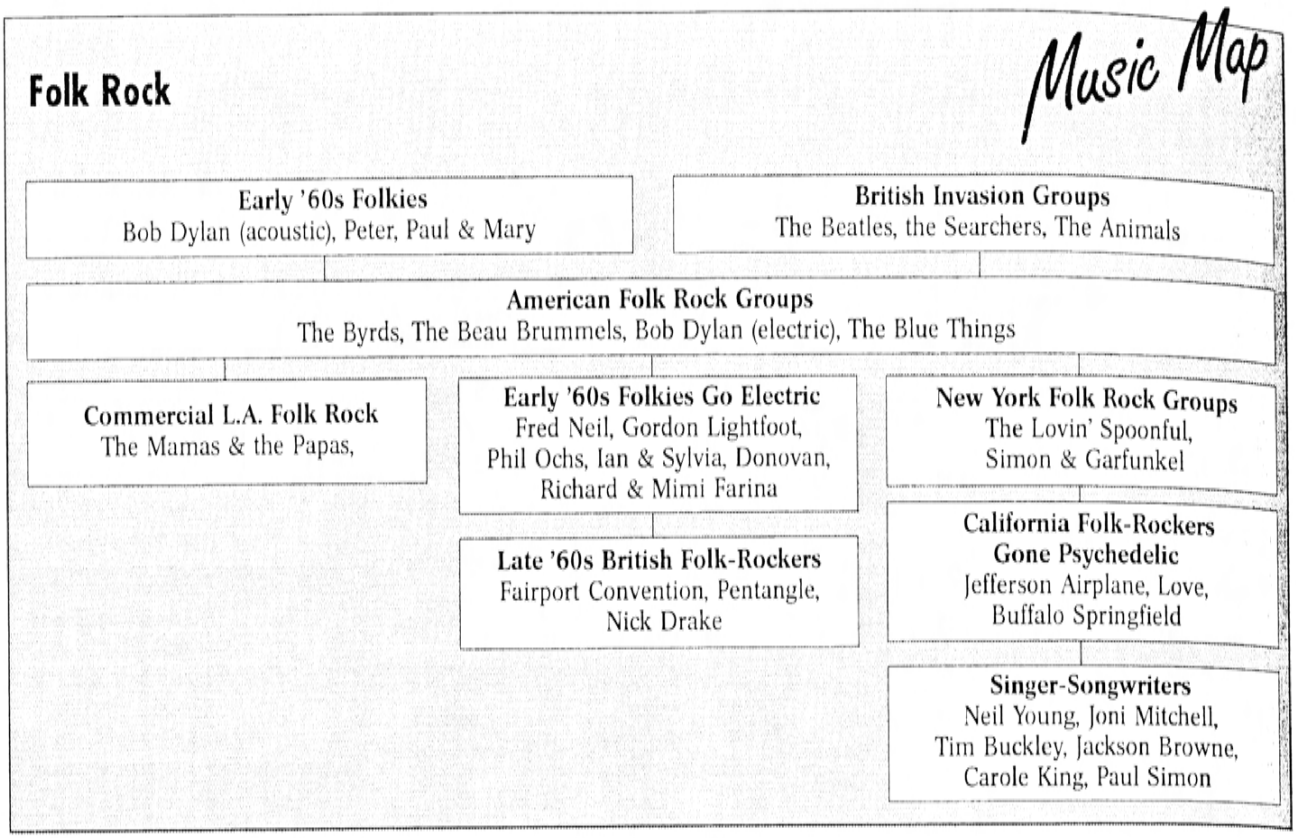
A listen to the Beatles' early recordings leaves no doubt about their adulation for, and mastery of, the styles of their heroes; but they added a lot more of themselves. They were pioneers in so many areas: writing most of their material at a time when that was rarely done; devising melodies and harmonies that were more inventive than any others that had been used in rock 'n' roll; writing and performing as a self-contained group with distinctive individual talents and personalities, rather than having a star with anonymous backing musicians as their lineup; and embodying the spirit of rebellious youth with their energetic performances, humor, and nonconformist attitudes. They, and the best of their fellow British groups, did this with a giddy exuberance that has rarely been matched in the history of rock 'n' roll.

The impact of Beatlemania—which blanketed Britain in 1963, and the United States the following year—could not be overestimated, not only in terms of commercial success (as in the oft-quoted statistic of how the Beatles claimed the Top Five singles in the US one week in early 1964), but in how it changed rock 'n' roll itself. Sometimes unfairly criticized as a "safe" alternative to the moodier and blacker Rolling Stones, the Beatles displayed an enormous versatility that refutes such categorizations. They could rock as hard as anyone when that suited them, but more important, they were pop's greatest eclectics, constantly evolving and experimenting in their successful quest to create the most diverse and innovative body of work ever produced by a rock group.

The first flush of "beat" bands, as they were called initially, to overtake Britain and (slightly later) the United States were often from Liverpool, and tended to emulate the Beatles' lightest, most innocuous features. Dubbed "Merseybeat," guitars and harmonies were to the fore, as were bouncy, irresistible melodies (sometimes in the form of actual Lennon-McCartney compositions that the Beatles had rejected for their own recordings). Cute and clean-cut, the recordings of Gerry & the Pacemakers, Billy J. Kramer, Freddie & the Dreamers, and Herman's Hermits have fared poorly in latter-day jaded rock critiques due to their lightweight, at times insipid content. But this shouldn't obscure the glittering harmonies and chiming guitars of the Searchers, the Hollies, and Peter & Gordon, who were probably the best bands that followed the mold of the Beatles' most pop-oriented recordings.

The Beatles' greatest challenge came from the London-based R&B scene, by groups who drew from American electric bluesmen like Muddy Waters and Chess Records rockers like Bo Diddley. Schooled by early British bluesmen like Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies, the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, Manfred Mann, the Kinks, the Pretty Things, the Who, and non-London acts like the Animals, the Spencer Davis Group, and Them took the bulk of their early repertoires from obscure blues and R&B recordings, investing them with accelerated tempos and a reckless guitar-based approach. As personalities, they took the Beatles' anti-establishment stance further, rebelling against society more openly and wearing their hair even longer.

The difference between these R&B cultists and the Beatles is not nearly as great as it has sometimes been portrayed. The Beatles and the R&B groups often covered the same songs, not just those by Chuck Berry, but songs by many others; the Beatles, the Stones—and for that matter, Freddie & the Dreamers—all recorded the early Motown tune "Money." The Stones' first big British hit was a cover of Lennon-McCartney's "I Wanna Be Your Man"; their second was a cover of a Buddy Holly song. Manfred Mann covered obscure girl group tunes for their biggest hits, and the Kinks would draw upon British music hall traditions for their most creative work. All the groups from this earthier faction would come to pen their own material, often placing a premium upon melodic invention and harmonies.



Sometimes overlooked in this battle of supposed opposites were the groups that favored neither the R&B nor dippy pop approach, instead focusing their efforts on masterful straightforward rock. The Zombies were probably second only to the Beatles in their breathtakingly adventurous melodies; the Dave Clark Five pounded out tuneful rockers with glorious abandon; the first incarnation of the Moody Blues sang haunting pop-rock tunes that borrowed from R&B, soul, and the Brill Building sound.

In 1964 and 1965, the march of the British Invaders seemed endless, but in the face of a volatile rock scene, it became clear that only the bands that could both write their own material and evolve stylistically would survive. The Beatles, Stones, Who, and Kinks were the only British bands to maintain a high standard of work throughout the '60s, expanding their songwriting talents and instrumental resources at a dizzying pace. Bands like the Yardbirds and Zombies briefly exhibited similar resources for pioneering psychedelia and experimentation before folding due to internal and external pressures. Groups like Gerry & the Pacemakers, the Dave Clark Five, and the Searchers fell off the map commercially due to their inability to write top-notch material or evolve with the times. And a few, like the Hollies and Manfred Mann, survived by incorporating enough progressive elements into their brand of pop-rock to remain hip (and commercially successful).

While a few first-rate bands like the mod Small Faces and the crude Troggs emerged in 1966, that year saw the impetus of the original British Invasion start to fade. A second generation of bands sprang up that took progressive experimentation, cohesive albums, and self-contained songwriting as a given. Some (Traffic, Cream) featured veterans of the first wave of the invasion; others (Pink Floyd) owed little to the movement at all.

In reality, though, the British Invasion has never stopped. Artists from the British Isles continue to invade the American, and indeed the international, audience at a rapid pace, if not nearly as phenomenal a rate as the heady days of 1964 and 1965. Folk-rock, garage-rock, and psychedelia grew directly out of the innovations of the best British Invasion groups. And rock 'n' roll owes much of its climate for artistic freedom and individual expression—not to mention its harmonies, melodies, and guitar-based ensemble sound—to the road paved by the Beatles and their followers.

Recommended Recordings

The Beatles, all of their albums, though *The Beatles 1962-66* (Capitol) has their biggest early hits.
The Rolling Stones, *The Singles Collection* (ABKCO)
The Who, *Meaty, Beaty, Big and Bouncy* (MCA)
The Kinks, *Greatest Hits* (Rhino)
The Yardbirds, *Greatest Hits, Vol. 1* (Rhino)
The Animals, *The Complete Animals* (EMI, UK)
The Zombies, *Singles As & Bs* (See for Miles, UK)
Manfred Mann, *Best of the EMI Years* (Griffin)
The Dave Clark Five, *The History of the Dave Clark Five* (Hollywood)
The Hollies, *30th Anniversary Collection* (EMI)
Them, *Them Featuring Van Morrison* (Parrot)
Various Artists, *The British Invasion Vol. 1-9* (Rhino)
The Pretty Things, *Get a Buzz: The Best of the Fontana Years* (Fontana)
The Small Faces, *The Small Faces* (PolyGram)
The Spencer Davis Group, *The Best of the Spencer Davis Group* (Rhino)

Book

The British Invasion, by Nicholas Schaffner (McGraw Hill)

Videos

A Hard Day's Night (also available as CD-ROM from Voyager)
The Compleat Beatles

–Richie Unterberger

Folk-Rock

In the early '60s, any suggestion that the folk and rock 'n' roll worlds would intertwine to create a hybrid called folk-rock would have met with utter disbelief from both camps. The folk community prided itself on its purity, which meant acoustic instruments and songs of substance; they regarded rock 'n' roll as vulgar and commercial. Rock 'n' rollers, for the most part, were utterly ignorant of folk traditions, and unconcerned with broadening their lyrical content beyond tried-and-true themes of romance and youthful partying. Yet within a few years, folk and rock not only combined into a new form of popular music, but became hugely successful and influential.

By 1964, Bob Dylan had already done much to revolutionize contemporary folk music by singing about topical issues and, (after a couple of years), abstract personal and romantic concerns in a poetic and uniquely expressive fashion. Dylan harbored a secret admiration for the Beatles and other major British Invasion bands, a fascination which was mutual. It was only a matter of time before each started to influence the other.

The roots of folk-rock can be detected in a few pre-1965 recordings by the Searchers and Jackie DeShannon (who helped introduce the ringing, circular 12-string guitar riffs that became one of the music's major trademarks), as well as in that of the Beau Brummels. It is noticeable in the Animals' superb bluesy interpretation of the traditional folk standard "The House of the Rising Sun," and the Beatles' own "I'm a Loser." It took the Byrds, however, to really kick the movement into gear with their electric version of Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," which topped the charts in mid-1965. The first and best folk-rock band, the Byrds may have been comprised of ex-folkies who had only picked up their electric instruments a year or so before they became superstars, but they were, if

anything, influenced more by the Beatles than Dylan. They were once quoted as saying (albeit tongue in cheek), that they based their sound on "21% Beatles, 11% Zombies, 8% Dillards, 18% Dylan, 14% Pete Seeger, 16% Searchers, and 12% trial and error/ignorance/accident/originality." Leader Roger McGuinn's chiming 12-string guitar set the sonic standard for the new genre, as did the group's beautiful choral harmonies and superb interpretations of songs by Dylan and Seeger, traditional folk ballads, and their own first-rate original material.

Dylan himself moved into folk-rock around the same time as the Byrds on his *Bringing It All Back Home* album, which was divided into electric and acoustic sides. The subsequent *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde* were full-bore electric rock records, marrying Dylan's intense, at times surrealistic poetry to a tough beat, provided by soon-to-be-stars in their own right-musicians such as Mike Bloomfield, Al Kooper, and the Band. His conversion to rock 'n' roll outraged much of his original constituency, which was more than offset by his legions of new fans; indeed, all three of his albums from 1965 and 1966 made the Top Ten, as did the singles "Like a Rolling Stone," "Positively 4th Street," and "Rainy Day Women No.12 & 35."

The success of the Byrds and Dylan ignited a firestorm of emulators and imitators. The Lovin' Spoonful, from Dylan's own stomping ground of Greenwich Village, were the era's greatest exponents of good-time folk-rock; the Mamas & the Papas, led by ex-folkie John Phillips, were at the head of a slickly produced L.A. variation of the sound; Sonny & Cher, the most commercial of the bunch, latched on to a few of folk-rock's most saleable attributes on their first batch of smashes, and went on to highly successful careers in pop's mainstream. Donovan, one of the most talented mid-'60s folkies to follow in Dylan's footsteps, went not only electric, but psychedelic. Producers added 12-string guitars and a rhythm section to an old track by Simon & Garfunkel; after "Sounds of Silence" became a No. 1 hit, the duo became one of the most successful folk-rock acts of all time. Obscure regional groups like the Leaves (from L.A.) and the Blue Things (from Kansas) recorded some wonderful folk-rock singles and even albums that were in the same class as the hits by the top folk-rock stars.

The "rock" in folk-rock was always more prominent than the "folk"; all of the aforementioned acts had a highly commercial sense of melody, grafting guitar patterns and somewhat more personal, topical lyrical concerns from folk music into their own superb pop-rock creations. Performers approaching the hybrid from the folk side were less frequent and less commercially successful, but singer-songwriters like Fred Neil, Phil Ochs, Gordon Lightfoot, Ian & Sylvia, Richard & Mimi Farina, and others proved willing and able to electrify their sound with positive commercial and artistic results.

Folk-rock was not only a tremendous success on the charts in 1965 and 1966, but tremendously influential in expanding the sonic and lyrical vistas of rock as a whole. The Beatles were already addressing more personal concerns on the mid-1965 tunes "Help" and "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away"; *Rubber Soul*, issued at the end of the year, was one of folk-rock's greatest triumphs. Many of the early psychedelic bands from San Francisco were comprised of renegade folkies, and while groups like the Jefferson Airplane and the Beatles themselves would move beyond folk-rock to psychedelia fairly quickly, there's no doubt that folk-rock whetted their appetites for lyrical and instrumental experimentation and innovation.

While folk-rock's commercial heyday was in 1965 and 1966, in truth it has been a strong presence in rock ever since, fading only as a marketing term for a sound that was initially perceived by the industry as a fad, not a permanent addition to the rock 'n' roll lexicon. In 1967, L.A. bands Buffalo Springfield and Love released classic recordings that drew upon folk-rock as their core, adding elements of eclecticism and psychedelia. In the late '60s, British groups like Fairport Convention and Pentangle achieved perhaps the purest folk-rock blend, with nearly equal balances between the electric and the acoustic, and between modern compositions and traditional numbers. The singer-songwriter movement of the late '60s and early '70s was not as prone to electric guitars and group ensembles, perhaps, but also took folk-rock as its chief inspiration. The harmonies, ringing guitars, and chord patterns of classic folk-rock live on in countless contemporary acts, ranging from bands like R.E.M. to singers like Tracy Chapman.

Recommended Recordings

The Byrds, *Mr. Tambourine Man* (Columbia)
The Byrds, *Greatest Hits* (Columbia)
Bob Dylan, *Blonde on Blonde* (Columbia)
Bob Dylan, *Highway 61 Revisited* (Columbia)
The Lovin' Spoonful, *Anthology* (Rhino)
The Beatles, *Rubber Soul* (Capitol)
Donovan, *Troubadour: The Definitive Collection 1964-1976* (Epic)
Simon & Garfunkel, *Collected Works* (Columbia)
Buffalo Springfield, *Buffalo Springfield* (1973 double-LP compilation) (Atco)
Love, *Forever Changes* (Elektra)
The Mamas & the Papas, *Creeque Alley* (MCA)
The Blue Things, *Story Vol. 1-3* (Cicadelic)
The Beau Brummels, *Best of the Beau Brummels* (Rhino)
Richard & Mimi Farina, *The Best of Richard & Mimi Farina* (Vanguard)
The Leaves, *1966* (Panda)

Book

Timeless Flight: The Definitive Biography of the Byrds, by Johnny Rogan (1990, Square One, UK)

–Richie Unterberger

Garage Rock

For those who prize adolescent, primitive energy as one of rock 'n' roll's best features, the garage rock bands of the '60s rank at or near the top of the rock 'n' roll pyramid. Ignored and sometimes scorned by critics in its heyday, garage rock proved an influential inspiration for the punk rock explosion of the '70s. It experienced a renaissance of sorts in the '80s among the rock underground and collector community if nowhere else.

Largely a North American phenomenon, the garage band movement began in the wake of the British Invasion in 1964. There were already plenty of young, white rock groups throughout the US, but they were usually found playing instrumental (sometimes surf) rock or heavily R&B-influenced "frat rock," and were largely unconcerned with writing their own songs or making individualistic, rebellious statements. The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kinks, Animals, and others changed that overnight. Caught off-guard by this unexpected onslaught, teenage groups put the focus on loud electric guitars and grew their hair long in attempts to emulate their heroes.

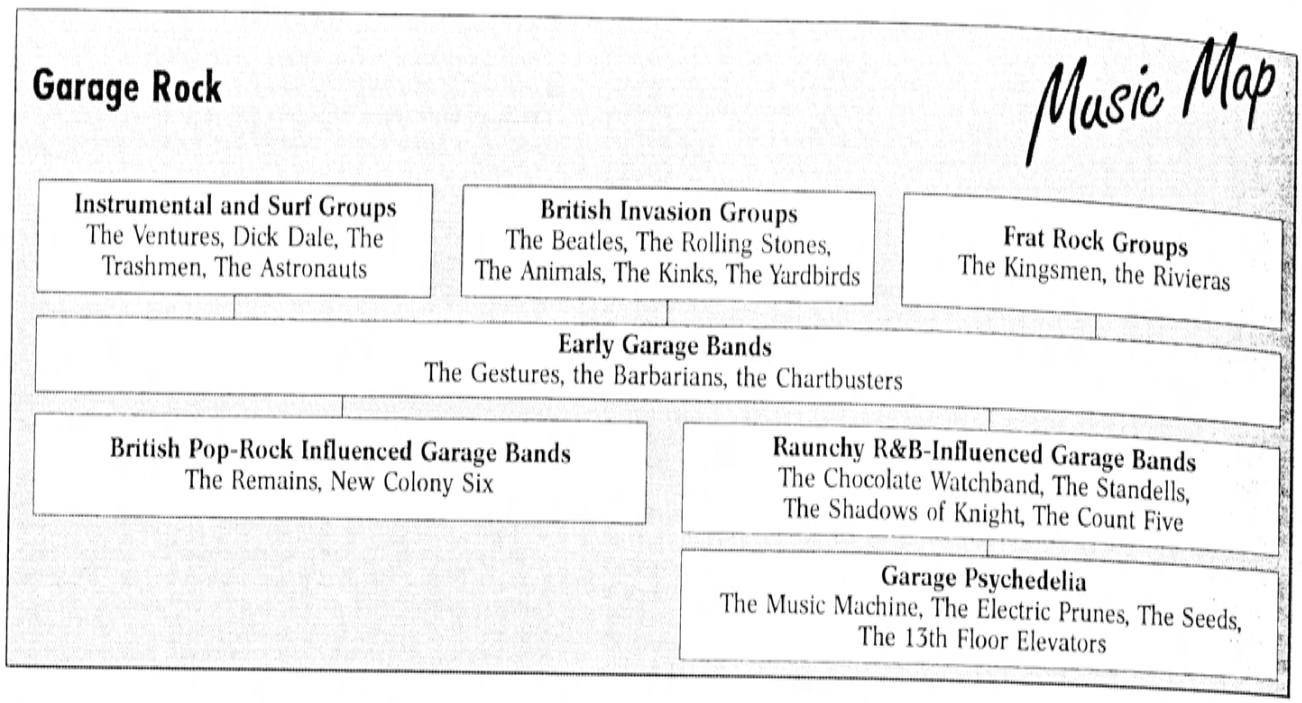
What emerged was a distinctly cruder and more adolescent variation of the British Invasion sound (which itself had been largely inspired by American rock and R&B in the first place). It is not accurate to say that the garage groups matched the talents of their British idols, or of American outfits like the Byrds; they were usually considerably younger and less sophisticated, and lacked the songwriting skills or instrumental finesse of the era's major groups. By way of compensation, perhaps, they placed a premium on sheer outrageousness: over-the-top vocal screams and sneers fought it out with loud guitars that almost always had a fuzz-tone attached. Garage bands were so named after the habitual practice space of the musicians, who were overwhelmingly white, suburban, and teenaged. While scattered 1964 recordings by groups like the Gestures and the Barbarians served as early blueprints for the sound, it didn't blanket the country properly until 1965, when virtually every major city (and many minor ones) became home to dozens of new guitar groups hungering for a piece of the action—which meant parties, girls and, of course, records.

These records were usually pressed on tiny local labels, and usually only heard within a 50-100 mile radius (if they were heard on local radio at all). Occasionally they were picked up for nationwide distribution by a larger company; more occasionally still, they became bona fide national hits. The Shadows of Knight, the Count Five, the 13th Floor Elevators, the Standells, the Seeds, ? & the Mysterians, and the Gentrys were among the lucky few who hit this jackpot, although their time in the spotlight was brief.

An enormous amount of records were released by garage bands in the '60s, particularly between 1965 and 1967. California and Texas were probably home to more of these bands per capita than any other state, but the number of groups that recorded, let alone played, was staggering. Detroit, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Phoenix; they all were home to large local scenes supporting several dozens of bands, much in the manner of today's alternative rock and punk communities. There are a great many generic garage band recordings: fuzzy variations of the "Satisfaction" or "You Really Got Me" riffs, simplistic lyrics about cheating girlfriends, inept guitar solos and cheesy organ riffs. There are also a great many great garage band records by bands that combined their energy with sharp songwriting skills, compelling hooks, or sheer unpredictable mania.

The Texas bands favored galloping rhythms with bigger-than-life fuzztones; the California bands often copped folk-rock and psychedelic licks from their own local heroes; Midwest groups sometimes drew upon trends in soul music; New England groups were more prone to use Zombies-like keyboards and melodies; Cleveland acts showed a strong affinity for Merseybeat and British power pop. But the bands from these territories had a lot more in common than not; all of them kept abreast of the latest trends in British rock, folk-rock, and psychedelic music.

A number of factors conspired to slow the momentum of the garage phenomenon around 1967 and 1968. Facing college, lack of national success and, worst of all, the military draft, many of the bands simply didn't stay together for very long. Increasingly homogenous national radio airplay and distribution meant less of a chance for regional labels to succeed or get their records played, and hence less opportunities for



local talent to enter the studio. And the fact was, a lot of the garage bands were outgrowing the pop-rock of the first wave of the British Invasion, and moving—as their inspirations were—towards more progressive and psychedelic sounds, with lyrics that, for better or worse, addressed more mature concerns than picking up girls and adolescent rebellion. Almost immediately forgotten by rock historians, garage music began its comeback when future Patti Smith Group guitarist Lenny Kaye compiled the original *Nuggets* album in 1972. This double set featured the most popular garage band recordings by the likes of the Standells, Seeds, Chocolate Watch Band, and others; Kaye helped coin the term "punk rock" in his liner notes, in reference to bands such as these that celebrated rock 'n' roll at its most primal and least self-conscious. Adding a measure of contemporary lyrical content and attitude, bands like the Sex Pistols would embellish this prototype and give birth to modern punk rock a few years later.

The *Pebbles* series of the late '70s took the *Nuggets* approach several steps further, unearthing even rarer and rawer garage band recordings from across the nation. Eventually numbering dozens of volumes, *Pebbles* in turn kicked off a deluge of '60s garage band reissues and compilations; often great, sometimes awful, these numbered in the hundreds by the late '80s. Contemporary groups like the Fuzztones, the Pandoras, Thee Fourgiven, and dozens of others played garage revival music in the 1980s, though in truth they never approached the authentic qualities of the best of the '60s garage, and never made a significant impact on either the mainstream or underground rock scenes.

The reissues introduced young and old listeners to scores of fine bands, ironically giving them their greatest international exposure decades after they had broken up. Some, like the Remains or the Music Machine, were arguably too talented and innovative to be lumped in with the garage crowd in the first place. Others, like Zakary Thaks, the Chocolate Watch Band, and the Rising Storm, personified teenage rock 'n' roll at its most enjoyable. All of the above-mentioned groups—and quite a few others—were nearly as good as the more accomplished and more famous British and American hitmaking bands of the era, and deserve belated recognition as first-rate '60s rock 'n' rollers.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Nuggets Vol. 1-12* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Pebbles Vol. 1-10* (AIP)
The New Colony Six, *At the River's Edge* (Sundazed)
The Chocolate Watch Band, *Best of the Chocolate Watch Band* (Rhino)
The Standells, *Best of the Standells* (Rhino)
Zakary Thaks, *Texas Band* (Moxie)
The Music Machine, *Best of the Music Machine* (Rhino)
The Rising Storm, *Calm Before* (Arf Arf)
The Remains, *The Remains* (Epic)
We the People, *Declaration of Independence* (Eva, France)
The Shadows of Knight, *Dark Sides: The Best of the Shadows of Knight* (Rhino)
The Mystic Tide, *Solid Sound* (Distortions)
The Lemon Drops, *Crystal Pure* (Cicadelic)

–Richie Unterberger

'60s Rock from Non-English Speaking Territories

Throughout its history, rock 'n' roll has been inextricably linked with the English language—the first tongue, after all, of the nation of its birth, the United States. Up to the present, and most likely for some time to come, the great majority of internationally distributed and acclaimed rock 'n' roll has been produced in English-speaking countries: the US, Canada, and (especially starting with the British Invasion) the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Almost from the start, however, other countries (mostly in Continental Europe) got in on rock 'n' roll, and it remains a fairly obscure fact that the '60s produced much interesting rock from non-English-speaking countries.

There were already quite a few instrumental rock ensembles recording in Europe, especially in Scandinavia, whose Spotniks (a Ventures-like outfit) had an international reputation; Danish guitarist Jorgen Ingmann had a No. 2 US single with the instrumental "Apache," which was a huge hit for the British group the Shadows in most other territories. Some prominent American and British acts actually boasted key members from the Continent, like the Easybeats (guitarist Harry Vanda, from Holland), the Standells (Tony Valentino, from Italy), the Velvet Underground (Nico, from Germany), and Manfred Mann (Klaus Voormann, a friend of the Beatles from their Hamburg days). The Beatles and the British Invasion had just as immense an impact on most European countries as in the US, and numerous Continental groups launched a beat/R&B/punk response of their own, along the same lines as the garage rock phenomenon in North America.

With rare exceptions, these groups sang in English, even managing the occasional crossover hit in the US; Holland's Shocking Blue ("Venus") and Spain's Los Bravos ("Black Is Black") are two of the most famous examples. It was a measure of just how immense Anglo-American cultural imperialism had become (and so remains) that these groups rarely sang in their native tongue. If they were seeking worldwide demographic audiences, this certainly made sense. English being the most widely understood language in entertainment and international commerce.

Yet given that most of these acts had a miniscule chance of denting non-native charts, it seems unlikely that they catered their material to international tastes. It's more likely that they perceived the English language as an intrinsic element of rock 'n' roll, and would feel foolish translating English songs, or writing rock 'n' roll in a different language. Given that they were not writing in their native tongues, it's impressive how much good original material emerged from some of these groups. In most cases you can hear their indigenous accents awkwardly penetrating their most willing attempts to sound American or English (although in the best groups' cases, these traces are usually slight).

Scandinavian groups usually exhibited the slightest accents and the greatest English proficiency, and it's no surprise that many of the most competent bands emerged from this region, especially Sweden. The Tages, who recorded some excellent mod rock in the British Invasion style, may have been the best of the bunch, and they actually lived and recorded in England for a while in an attempt to break through to a wider market. Many acts recorded one or two fine records, and the best compilation of this vibrant scene is *Searchin' for Shakes: Swedish Beat 1965-1968.*

Swedish groups, generally speaking, were the most able imitators of British Invasion styles while the Dutch bands were more distinctive and idiosyncratic. The raw R&B-rock of the Pretty Things and the Downliners Sect was a surprisingly huge influence on this scene (these two groups were bigger stars on the Continent than the UK). Holland, a small country, gave rise to an astonishing number of groups in the mid- and late-'60s, many of whom harbored a distinctively regional predilection for morose R&B/beat/punk with lingering European folk influences. The Outsiders (no relation to the American pop-rock band of the same name), who recorded a wealth of first-rate original material (both "beat" and psychedelic) in this vein between 1965 and 1969, may have been the very best '60s group to emerge from a non-English-speaking nation, although they remain unknown overseas to all but a small cult. Les Baroques, the pre-hard rock Golden Earrings, and the absurdly sloppy Q65 are also revered by hardcore '60s collectors, and there have been quite a few *Pebbles*-like compilations of Dutch beat-punk.

In general, both the musical quality and English competence drop the further south you travel in Europe when surveying '60s groups—a function of cultural differences that found the youth of these countries less fluent in the language and less exposed to rock culture in general. French and Spanish rock acts, in fact, usually sang in their native language. Many of them were dreadful, but occasionally they were quite good: Los Cheyenes (from Barcelona) laid down some dynamic Kinks-like punk, and Ronnie Bird (from France) was a decent singer in the British mod style with a good band that sometimes featured American expatriate Mickey Baker (of Mickey & Sylvia fame). Be aware that most '60s groups from the European countries where the Romance languages are spoken, particularly from Italy, hold latter-day interest mostly as novelty items. Not at all beat or garage, but definitely worth hearing, is the French chanteuse Francoise Hardy, who wrote and sang some delightful pop-rock (and straight pop), sometimes in a Spectorish girl group or Marianne Faithfull vein. Hardy became a star by singing in French, but made quite a few English recordings as the decade wore on; some were good ("All Over the World" even made the British Top 20 in 1965), but soon she moved to MOR pop.

Germany played more than a minor role in '60s rock, but mostly as a training ground for British bands, particularly in Hamburg, where the Beatles and many others developed their chops in front of rowdy audiences. The homegrown German groups, however, were generally no great shakes, often displaying an awkward martial sense of rhythm and vocal phrasing. To some degree, this crops up in the recordings of the best German beat band, the Lords, who compensated for their shortcomings with a good sense of humor, an unusual reverbed guitar sound run through Lesley amps, and some good original material and remarkably inventive covers.

Go WAY down south, to South America, and you'll find a couple of the best non-Anglo '60s bands. The Shakers (from Uruguay), despite occasional blatant broken accents, were among the best early Beatle imitators; most of their material was original, and unlike most acts attempting to emulate the early Liverpool sound, they went for the gutsier aspects of Merseybeat, not the wimpier ones. Los Mockers were to the Shakers what the Rolling Stones were to the Beatles; phrased differently, the Rolling Stones were to Los Mockers what the Beatles were to the Shakers. These fellow Uruguayans, who wrote most of their own songs, aped the mid-'60s Stones quite well, better in fact than many similarly inclined American garage bands. Surprisingly, material by both Los Mockers and the Shakers is readily available on CD.

While the psychedelic era didn't produce as many notable efforts from non-Anglo groups as the Beat Boom, some odds and ends stand out. Of particular interest were Holland's Group 1850, a weird hybird of Pink Floyd, the Mothers of Invention, and their own mid-'60s beat-punk roots. Savage Rose, from Denmark, were one of the very few groups of this sort to earn international acclaim; many of their early records also saw release in the United States, where they toured in the early '70s. Featuring the wild range and child-like timbres of lead singer Annisette, they recorded an erratic, but generally intriguing, series of albums in the late '60s and early '70s that rank not only among the most interesting rock records from non-English-speaking countries, but among the most interesting late psychedelic/early progressive rock recordings from anywhere.

Continental rock, indeed, would make a much bigger impact in the progressive rock era in the '70s, via acts like Kraftwerk, Focus, Vangelis (who started in the late-'60s Greek band Aprhodite's Child), and P.F.M. There were also honest-to-god pop stars ABBA, featuring members that had honed their licks in '60s pop-rock bands. The earlier generation of Continental and South American rock, however, remains known only to hard-bitten collectors. For the international audience, though, it's much more accessible today than it was in its heyday, and has been anthologized in numerous *Pebbles*-like compilations (occasionally in the *Pebbles* series itself), which catch up on the dozens of groups that only managed one or two notable songs. For the '60s specialist looking for new artists to collect, it's an area ripe for exploration.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Searchin' for Shakes: Swedish Beat 1965-1968* (Amigo, Sweden)
The Outsiders, *The Outsiders* (Pseudonym, Holland)
The Outsiders, *CQ* (Pseudonym, Holland)
The Tages, *1964-68* (EMI, Sweden)
Los Mockers, *Los Mockers* (Get Hip)
The Shakers, *All the Best* (EMI, Brazil)
Savage Rose, *The Savage Rose* (Polydor)
Savage Rose, *Dodens Triumf* (Polydor)
Francoise Hardy, *L'Integrale Disques Vogue 1962/1967 (The Complete Vogue Recordings)* (Vogue, France)
Ronnie Bird, *1965* (EMI, France)
Various Artists, *Transworld Punk Vol. 1-2* (Crawdad)
Various Artists, *Pebbles Vol. 15: The Netherlands 1965-1968* (AIP)
Los Cheynes, *Historica de la Musica Pop Española No. 0* (no label)
Group 1850, *1967-1968* (Mercury, Holland)
Various Artists, *Flight to Lowlands Paradise: The Netherlands, Pt. 1 & 2* (Moxie)
Les Baroques, *Such a Cad: The Complete Story of Les Baroques* (Patio Music/Purple Eye)

–Richie Unterberger

Psychedelic Rock

Psychedelia represented rock 'n' roll at its most breathtakingly adventurous and innovative—and sometimes, at its most foolish. While the most self-conscious experiments of the mid- and late '60s have dated badly, the best psychedelic rock had an exhilarating recklessness that has been difficult to recapture in the ensuing decades.

Psychedelic music was fed by many sources. The desire to emulate the effect of mind-altering drugs in sound is its most sensational feature. But the musicians who pioneered psychedelia were equally driven by a hunger to expand rock's boundaries and enhance its eclecticism by incorporating influences from Middle Eastern music and improvisational jazz. This went hand-in-hand with exploring the frontiers of amplified sound and instrumental textures (primarily on the electric guitar), as well as lyrics that addressed the burning social and psychological issues of the day.

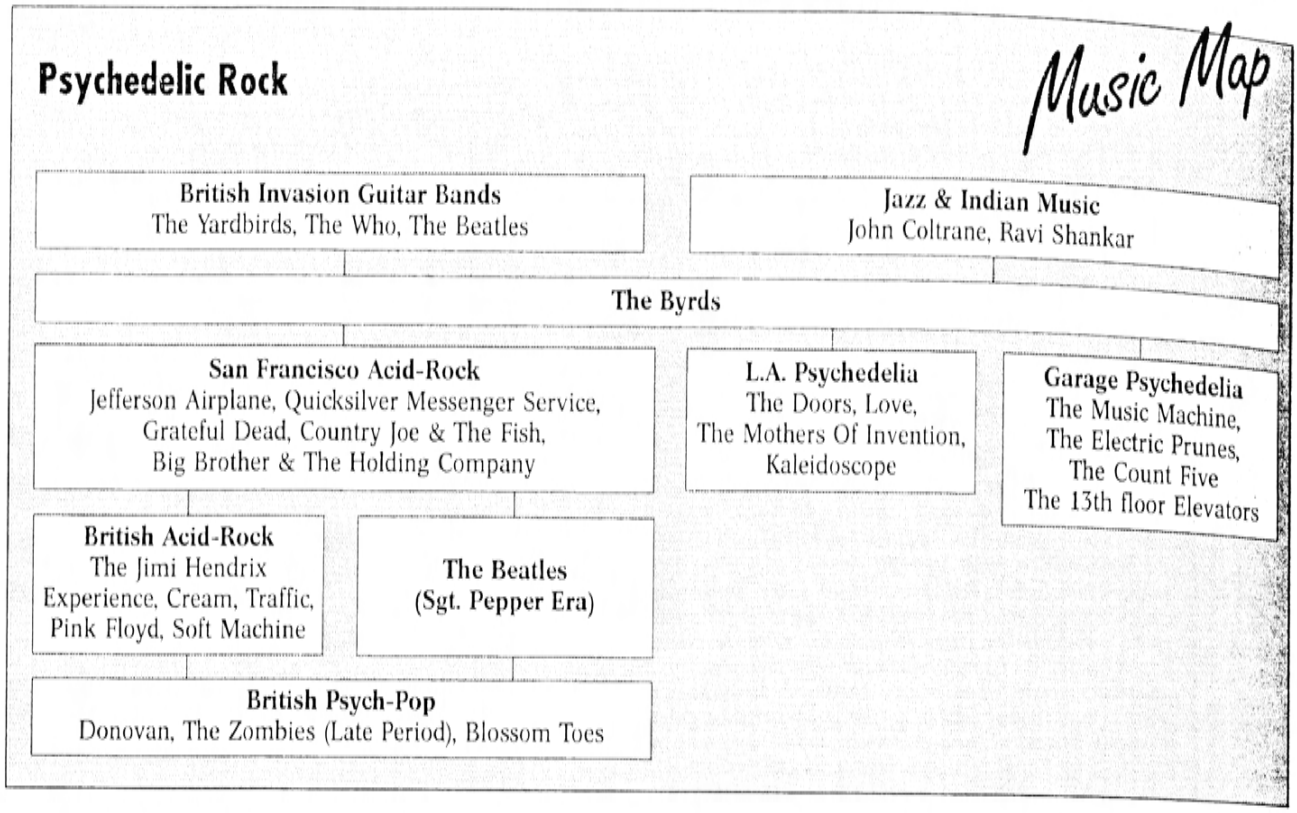
Trying to pin down the first psychedelic record is nearly as elusive as trying to name the first rock 'n' roll record. Far-fetched claims have been advanced for songs running from the Tornados' futuristic 1962 No. 1 instrumental "Telstar" to the Dave Clark Five's massively reverb-laden "Any Way You Want It." In 1964, the Beatles introduced guitar feedback on "I Feel Fine"; a year later, they introduced the sitar to rock on "Norwegian Wood." But two groups from different sides of the Atlantic with somewhat similar names, the Yardbirds and the Byrds, were really the most responsible for sounding the psychedelic siren.

With their ominous minor key melodies, hyperactive instrumental breaks (called "rave-ups"), unpredictable tempo changes, and use of Gregorian chants (most notably on the single "Still I'm Sad"), the Yardbirds helped define the manic eclecticism that would characterize early psychedelic rock. Jeff Beck's fuzzy, distorted guitar sustain laid the blueprint for psychedelic guitar.

Their early 1966 hit "Shapes of Things" was arguably the first out-and-out psychedelic rock song, with its blistering feedback breaks, veering tempos, and stream-of-consciousness lyrics that owed nothing to traditional romantic themes. The Yardbirds' psychedelic peak was brief, but subsequent 1966 recordings—"Over Under Sideways Down" and "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" especially—found them approximating speed-of-light trips, drug-induced or otherwise, with nervy but taut daring.

Just a couple months after "Shapes of Things," the Byrds flew into uncharted territory with "Eight Miles High." While the group always claimed that the title referred to an airplane flight, the impressionistic lyrics were taken by many to reflect the psychedelic drug experience, while the furious guitar and bass breaks reflected the group's assimilation of John Coltrane's free jazz and Ravi Shankar's Indian music. The single's B-side ("Why") and many of the songs on their 1966 album *Fifth Dimension* crashed through similar sonic frontiers. Although the Byrds would trade in their spacesuits for cowboy threads in just a couple of years, they continued to produce exciting psychedelic-influenced music through the end of 1967.

Ideas traveled fast in the crucible of 1966 rock, and within a few months many of the era's top bands were flashing psychedelic colors on their recordings. The Beatles' mid-'66 single "Rain" used backwards guitars and vocals, and their *Revolver* album was by far their most eclectic pre-'67 work, imbued with churning, distorted guitars, coy references to drug trips, and even quotes from Timothy Leary's version of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The Rolling Stones used the sitar—perhaps to its greatest effect in a rock 'n' roll song—on "Paint It Black," and constructed



a dense morass of psychedelic sound and lyrics on "Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing in the Shadow?" Donovan forsook his acoustic guitar for storybook wanderings in densely orchestrated musical arrangements that drew from both Indian sitars and fog-bound British moors. Garage bands, already attuned to distorted guitars via their attempts to emulate the fuzz riffs on Stones classics like "Satisfaction," went the extra nine yards into all-out freakouts on cuts like the Magic Mushrooms' "It's-A-Happening."

In the United States, psychedelic music took root most firmly in California, particularly San Francisco, where an increasingly large bohemian community had been living the psychedelic lifestyle for a year or two before it infiltrated rock 'n' roll. In 1965 and 1966, disaffected folk musicians formed the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, the Charlatans, the Great Society, Country Joe & the Fish, Big Brother & the Holding Company, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and many other less famous combos with equally (for the time) outrageous names. It took them a while to get a handle on their electric instruments, as some of their tentative and awkward pre-'67 recordings can attest to. But after honing their chops on the fertile Haight-Ashbury scene, they introduced a whole new spacy element into the psychedelic brew with their searing guitars and euphoric melodies.

The British strain of psychedelia tended to be more whimsical and fairytale-ish than the West Coast brand of acid-rock. Ethereal organs and mellotrons often set the tone of the generally more symphonic arrangements; the lyrics, occasionally wry to the point of surrealism, were often populated with eccentric British character types, or took a storybook, child's-eye perspective. The Beatles brilliant early-1967 "Strawberry Fields"/"Penny Lane" single was the apex of this genre, and newly emerging bands like Pink Floyd and Traffic, as well as less successful but equally intriguing underground acts like the Soft Machine and Tomorrow, also mined this field with great success.

1967's "Summer of Love" saw psychedelic music at its pinnacle. The Beatles released their definitive psychedelic statement, *Sgt. Pepper*, the San Francisco groups made an international impact via the Monterey Pop Festival; Pink Floyd, the Jefferson Airplane, and Traffic issued their best psychedelic albums. Jimi Hendrix and Cream became international superstars with guitar-based acid-rock that had its roots in the Yardbirds' innovations. The Doors' first album explored the dark and mysterious crannies of psychedelia with an impact that neither they nor anyone else would match. Even the Rolling Stones joined the psychedelic bandwagon, with an underappreciated LP, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, which was accused by many of being an ersatz *Sgt. Pepper* despite including several first-rate songs.

Psychedelic music was a strong presence in rock 'n' roll throughout the rest of the '60s, but there's no doubt that the genre began to become tired and self-indulgent as the decade approached its end. Following the lead, perhaps, of Bob Dylan's calm and simple *John Wesley Harding*, the Beatles, Byrds, and Rolling Stones all released albums in 1968 with a decidedly earthy and back-to-basics tone (although they didn't eschew progressive experiments altogether). Cream, Traffic, and the original Jimi Hendrix Experience broke up; Pink Floyd's leader, Syd Barrett, became the era's first acid casualty after their brilliant debut album; the Doors peaked early and couldn't repeat the fluid consistency of their own debut, despite releasing several worthy attempts. Pre-heavy metal groups like Iron Butterfly and Blue Cheer emulated the roar of psychedelic guitar growl without paying any heed to the style's more subtle attractions. And quite a few groups presented psychedelic clichés—long guitar solos, florid lyrics, effects-happy production—without saying much of anything original.

Many of the trimmings of psychedelic rock would form the backbone of progressive rock and heavy metal, which devoted themselves to the most extreme ends of the genre—ambitious, neo-classical epics on the one hand, mind-melting guitar distortion on the other. While groups ranging from Echo & the Bunnymen to Sonic Youth have (usually erroneously) been termed neo-psychedelic at one time or another, psychedelia has retreated from the front of rock's collective consciousness since about 1970 or so.

In its time, however, the psychedelic sound fueled some of the '60s' finest moments, influencing most of the top rock acts to some degree. While groups like the Who, the Beach Boys, Love, and Buffalo Springfield could not exactly be called "psychedelic," some of their finest recordings—"I Can See for Miles," "Good Vibrations," Love's *Forever Changes* LP, Buffalo Springfield's "Expecting to Fly" and "Broken Arrow"—betray a strong psychedelic influence, and could not have been made without the inspiration of their more overtly trippy peers. The intricate arrangements and heavily amplified/distorted guitars of psychedelic productions broke ground that has been utilized routinely in rock recordings from the late '60s to the present day.

Recommended Recordings

The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Capitol)
The Beatles, *Magical Mystery Tour* (Capitol)
The Yardbirds, *Roger the Engineer* (Edsel)
The Byrds, *Fifth Dimension* (Columbia)
The Doors, *The Doors* (Elektra)
The Jefferson Airplane, *Jefferson Airplane Loves You* (RCA)
Pink Floyd, *Piper at the Gates Of Dawn* (Capitol)
The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Are You Experienced?* (Reprise)
The Great Society, *Collector's Item* (Columbia)
The Mothers of Invention, *We're Only in It for the Money* (Rykodisc)
The Rolling Stones, *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (ABKCO)
Donovan, *Sunshine Superman* (Epic)
Cream, *Disraeli Gears* (Polydor)
Traffic, *Mr. Fantasy* (Island)
The Misunderstood, *Before the Dream Faded* (Cherry Red)

–Richie Unterberger

San Francisco Sound

Since the mid-'60s, the San Francisco Bay Area has produced numerous influential and important groups, both mainstream and underground, popular and obscure. When people talk about "The San Francisco Sound," however, they're usually referring to the psychedelic acid rock played by many of the area's bands in the late '60s. Innovative, indulgent, both innocent and ambitious, these groups spread their bohemian, drug-charged messages of peace, love, and musical freedom throughout the world, and retain a vociferous cult following to this day.

In rock 'n' roll's early days, the Bay Area produced some notable rock 'n' roll and R&B singers, such as Bobby Freeman and Jimmy McCrack-lin, but it was far from a hotbed of either talent or record production. The first self-contained rock group of note to emerge from the city—and indeed, the first American band of note to successfully emulate the sounds of the British Invasion—were the Beau Brummels, who also helped lay the groundwork for folk-rock with their first-rate songwriting and melodic harmonies.

Usually disdained as a teenybopper group of sorts by the underground rock community that emerged a year or two later, the Beau Brummels in fact could rightfully claim to be the true forefathers of the San Francisco scene. Their minor-key melodies, acoustic/electric guitar blends, and soaring harmonies in particular were adopted as key elements by many of the bands that followed in their wake. Other, more commercial folk-rock acts from the Bay Area, such as the Vejtables and the We Five, also recorded underrated prototypes of the early San Francisco sound, especially with regard to the blend of male and female harmonies in the case of the two aforementioned artists.

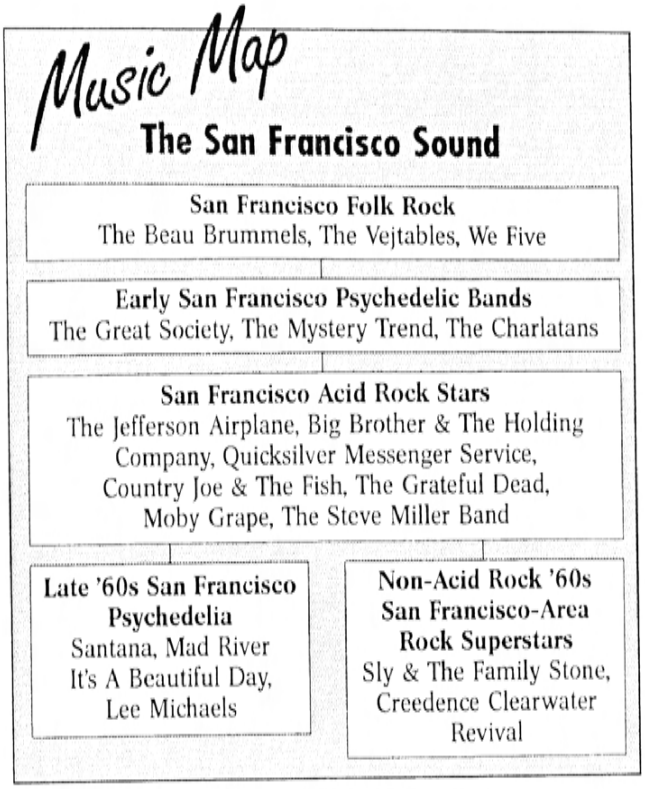
What made these bands unhip in the eyes of the underground was not so much their sound as their attitude and approach; they had commercial images and aimed for hit singles. In the city's youth culture, particularly in the neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury, a self-consciously bohemian community was emerging, concerned not so much with achieving conventional success as artistic expression, experimental drug use, and the overall exploration of alternatives to "straight" society. The Charlatans are usually credited as the first group to reflect the attitudes of this nascent counterculture.

The Charlatans, truth be told, were much more important as social figures than musical innovators. They helped set the standards of nonconformist images with their attire and loose attitudes, but musically they offered rather unexceptional material, heavy on folk, blues, and jugband influences, and were unable to land a record deal until way past their prime. The scene was developing fast, though, and within a matter of months several important groups emerged that placed a far greater primacy on the sustain-laden electric guitars, soaring harmonies, distortion and feedback, Indian and jazz influences, and stoned romantic whimsy that came to characterize the best San Francisco psychedelic rock. The ingredients varied, but overall it could be said that the bands strove to create, often in a drug-influenced fashion, the musical equivalent of the changes that were expanding their social and personal horizons.

The Jefferson Airplane, featuring a staggering array of vocal and instrumental talent and possessing exceptionally strong folk-rock-derived material, were the best of these groups. They were also the first band to become national stars with their 1967 Top Five album *Surrealistic Pillow*, which contained the hits "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit." Both were sung by Grace Slick, who had actually left underrated psychedelic pioneers the Great Society to join the Airplane in 1966. Though not as tight instrumentally as the Airplane, the Great Society featured equally innovative material that made effective, often thrilling use of raga-like guitar lines and improvisations. Grace Slick had sung both "White Rabbit" and "Somebody to Love" with the group before jumping ship for the Airplane; the Society immediately disbanded, though their legacy is preserved on a couple posthumous albums of live material.

In 1966, several groups following the Airplane model began to achieve considerable popularity on the local circuit. The only one to rise to a comparable level of international fame (and then only briefly) were Big Brother & the Holding Company, who would have most likely been also-rans in the psychedelic sweepstakes if not for the addition of Janis Joplin as their lead vocalist. Their (more particularly, Joplin's) electrifying appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 vaulted them to stardom almost overnight, but they had trouble both getting along and penning first-rate material, and Joplin left the group to go solo shortly after *Cheap Thrills* topped the charts in 1968.

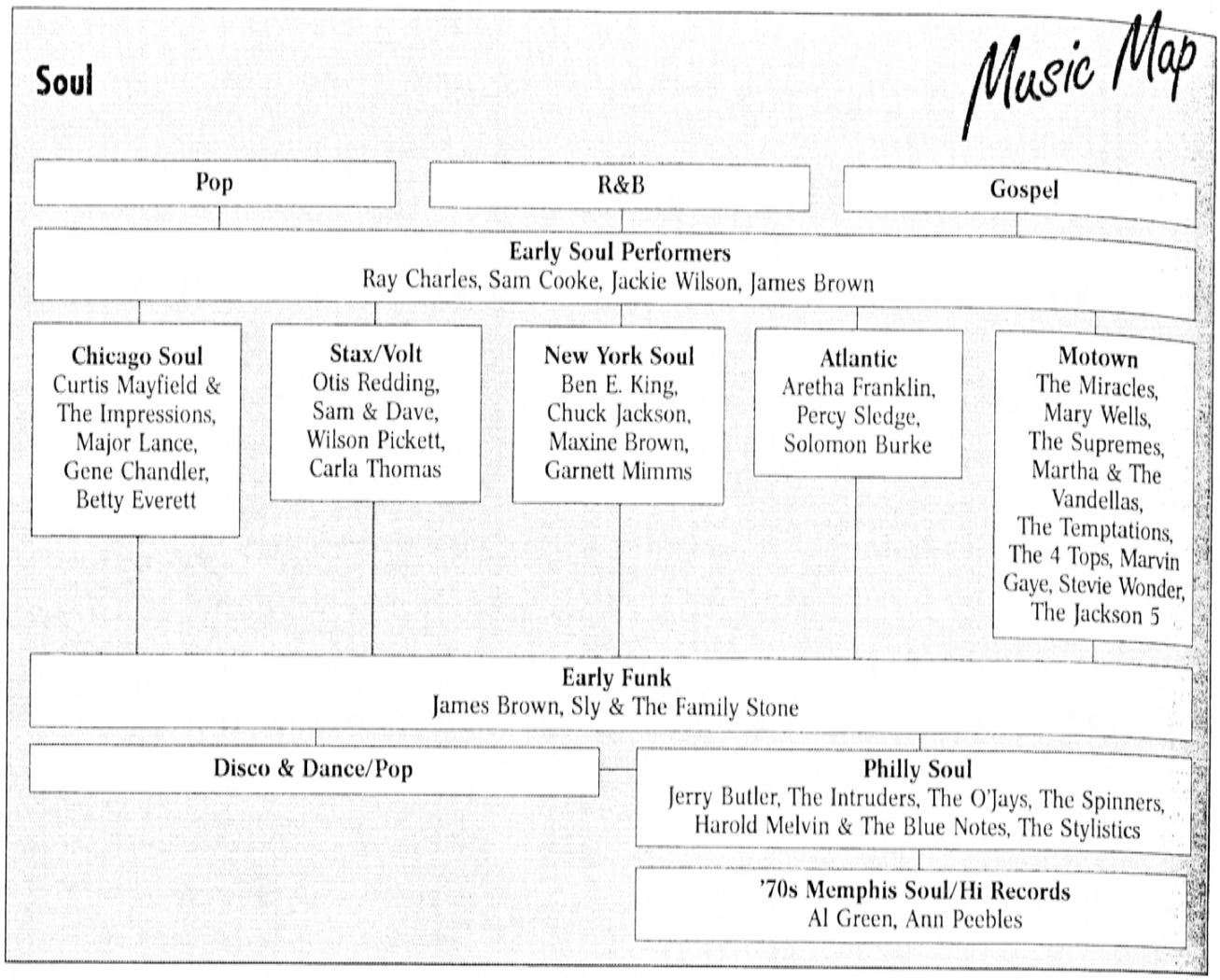
The Monterey Pop Festival acted as a general lightning rod in drawing attention to the exploding San Francisco scene, which peaked in the summer of 1967, known as the "Summer of Love." Several of the bands performing at the festival already commanded huge local followings before committing their work to vinyl. The Grateful Dead and Quicksilver Messenger Service specialized in both blues-rock and improvised jams; both featured virtuoso instrumentalists (particularly lead guitarists Jerry Garcia of the Dead and John Cippolina of Quicksilver), but neither had consistently first-rate songwriters or vocalists. They, and several other San Francisco groups, found it nearly impossible to duplicate their live magic on record, and their late-'60s albums can sound kind of pale and tame in comparison to the glowing memories of their live performances.



A few other major groups of the era took much tighter approaches to their songwriting and recording, without forsaking the loose and joyful ambience that ranked as the San Francisco sound's most ingratiating traits. Country Joe & the Fish wrote both sharp political satire and druggy anthems, although they exhausted their supply of first-rate original material after their fine 1967 debut. Moby Grape were probably the tightest act of the era, at least initially, with three guitarists and five competent songwriters; their debut was an acclaimed collection of fiery straightahead rock with heavy blues and country influences, but their momentum dissipated almost immediately due to severe internal disputes and external pressures. The Steve Miller Band, initially the most blues-oriented of the area's acts, made their mark with psychedelic-tinged, bluesy late-'60s rock.

In addition to these internationally acclaimed bands were several acts that tapped into the San Francisco vibe with erratic, at times enthralling, results. It's a Beautiful Day, Mother Earth, and Lee Michaels (the last of whom is not always strictly identified with the scene) made worthwhile recordings; other decent acts such as the Other Half, Mad River, the Mystery Trend, and Frumious Bandersnatch are nowadays known only to record collectors and those who saw them in their heyday. Sly & the Family Stone and Creedence Clearwater Revival were both superstars, and both plugged into the progressive elements of the San Francisco Sound to some extent, but they were never really considered a big part of it; Sly & the Family Stone drew upon soul as much as psychedelia, and Creedence played rock in a more classic and economic tradition. And there were many obscure bands who played the city's live circuit, or released a record or two of sloppy loud guitars, half-baked psychedelic songwriting, and boring jams, that are deservedly forgotten.

The golden glow of the San Francisco Sound began to rapidly dissipate in the late '60s, principally due to the mundane reasons that erode many important rock genres. Some of the era's best groups, such as the Airplane, Moby Grape, Quicksilver, and Big Brother, suffered important personnel losses, ran short of inspiration and top-flight material, and eventually broke up. Haight-Ashbury, originally a haven for youths seeking alternatives to corrupt mainstream society, suffered heavily from some of the same ills as the larger community, such as excessive drug use, crime, and poverty. The bohemian musicians that had emerged from such communities to become stars no longer lived in the neighborhood, and fresh talent didn't emerge to replenish them. The city's live circuit of psychedelic concerts, spearheaded by Chet Helms and Bill Graham, also dried up, fundamentally



changing the intimate performer-audience relationships that helped make the scene special.

Santana, which combined psychedelic rock with Afro-Latin influences, was the last superstar group to emerge from the San Francisco psychedelic community. By the early '70s, it was basically over, though of course a few of the genre's pioneers—such as Santana, the Grateful Dead, and Steve Miller—enjoyed long, successful, and increasingly mainstream careers. The San Francisco sound was a vital cog in the best psychedelic rock, and, along with the best British Invasion and folk-rock groups, was crucial in establishing rock as a vehicle for literate, self-consciously adventurous expression that drew from all manner of musical and social influences.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Nuggets Vol. 7: Early San Francisco* (Rhino)
The Beau Brummels, *Best of the Beau Brummels* (Rhino)
The Charlatans, *The Amazing Charlatans* (Big Beat, UK)
The Jefferson Airplane, *Jefferson Airplane Loves You* (RCA)
The Great Society, *Collector's Item* (Columbia)
Janis Joplin, *Janis* (Columbia/Legacy) (box set, includes recordings with Big Brother & the Holding Company)
Country Joe & the Fish, *Electric Music for the Mind and Body* (Vanguard)
Moby Grape, *Vintage: Very Best* (CBS)
Quicksilver Messenger Service, *Quicksilver Messenger Service* (Capitol)
The Grateful Dead, *Live/Dead* (Warner Brothers)
The Steve Miller Band, *Children of the Future* (Capitol)
Santana, *Santana* (Columbia)

Books

Summer of Love, by Joel Selvin (1994, Dutton)
San Francisco Nights, by Gene Sculatti & Davin Seay (1985, St. Martin's)
The Haight-Ashbury, by Charles Perry (1984, Rolling Stone Press)
Grace Slick: The Biography, by Barbara Rowes (1980, Doubleday)
Pearl: The Obsessions and Passions of Janis Joplin, by Ellis Amburn (1992, Warner Books)

–Richie Unterberger

Soul

More than almost any other genre of the rock era, soul is a wide-ranging and immensely diverse style that can only be delineated in the sketchiest manner within a few paragraphs. Peaking in the 1960s, it helped define the African-American experience with a passion, pride, and optimism rare in any art form.

Broadly speaking, soul was the combination of rhythm & blues, gospel, and pop. The gospel ingredient was most evident in the supremely emotional, pleading, and jubilant vocals and harmonies. Rock-solid rhythm sections, punchy horn arrangements, and tight instrumental and vocal ensemble work were also frequent hallmarks of the classic soul sound.

The forefathers of soul were veterans of 1950s rhythm & blues. Ray Charles was perhaps the first to merge gospel, pop, and rhythm and blues in a style that we recognize as a direct ancestor of soul with his 1954 hit "I Got a Woman." Other important pioneers were Jackie Wilson, Sam Cooke, and James Brown. They came from somewhat different backgrounds—Wilson from the R&B vocal group tradition, Cooke from straight gospel as the lead singer of the Soul Stirrers, Brown from the "chitlin" circuit—but they shared an appetite for constantly modernizing their sound with both pop crossover material and R&B-based work that put their emotions at the fore with an arresting grit, naked emotion, and increasingly mature lyrical concerns.

As R&B grew into soul in the early '60s, the arrangements became more intricate, as did the harmonies (though they were often rooted in doo wop, as is obvious from listening to the early work of the Miracles and the Impressions). Romance was usually the subject, but it often was a more complex, adult, and bittersweet form of love than the adolescent fare of much early rock 'n' roll and R&B. Songwriter/performer/producers like Smokey Robinson and Curtis Mayfield put a greater personal stamp on their product than was customary in the 1950s. The session players at labels like Stax/Volt and Motown, though sometimes uncredited on the releases, set a level of instrumental discipline and virtuosity that remains among the benchmark standards of musical excellence in contemporary popular music. Starting with the Drifters, strings were often used to tastefully embellish the material without detracting from the performers' gutsy power.

There were literally hundreds of soul performers who laid down bodies of work that endure several decades later. In many cases, the artists

themselves grew enormously over the course of their career, and cannot be conveniently pigeonholed into a certain subgenre or peak output—Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, and Stevie Wonder are only a few of those. There were certain regional styles that developed, although soul was such a nationwide, overlapping phenomenon that these too cannot be categorized too rigorously, and great acts like the Isley Brothers couldn't be conveniently pigeonholed into any certain school.

By far the most successful style of soul was the kind that came to be identified with Motown Records in Detroit. Emphasizing melodic hooks, bright, clear production, and an extraordinary roster of talented vocalists, Motown was the most successful independent label of its era, crossing over to the pop charts for literally hundreds of Top 20 hits during the 1960s. Instrumental in bringing the sounds of Black America into mainstream American life, Motown has been disdained by some latter-day critics for a formulaic approach, and for appealing to whites, teenagers, and pop listeners more than other kinds of down-home soul music. These are really fairly ridiculous assertions. Motown was if anything more popular with Black audiences than white ones, and its legendary performers—Smokey Robinson, the Temptations, Martha & the Vandellas, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, the Supremes, Mary Wells, the Four Tops, the Jackson 5, and many others—released an astonishingly large and diverse body of classic work in the 1960s and beyond.

Motown's most serious rival for soul supremacy was the Stax/Volt label, based in Memphis. With Booker T. & the MG's (stars in their own right) usually providing the backing, these records offered a funkier, rootsier brand of soul, with generally rawer vocals and a heavier reliance on horn riffs. Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Carla Thomas, and Sam & Dave were the biggest stars to emerge from the Stax/Volt label, which was absorbed into Atlantic in the late '60s. Atlantic Records itself was one of the most influential soul labels, with gritty soul sensations like Solomon Burke and Percy Sledge. A great deal of soul with a similarly down-home Southern sensibility also emerged from the legendary studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama; Muscle Shoals players backed Aretha Franklin on many of her greatest sides.

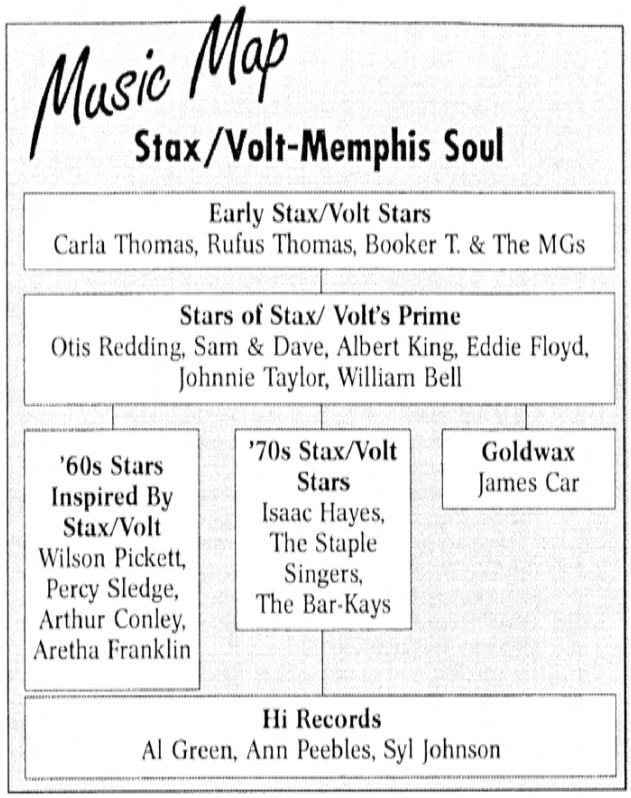
In Chicago, performers like the Impressions, Jerry Butler, Betty Everett, Major Lance, and Gene Chandler established their own distinctive regional sound, prominently featuring blaring horn charts and smooth harmonic interplay. New York had a somewhat more pop-oriented, "uptown" sound, typified by Chuck Jackson and Maxine Brown, although as always there were rootsier exceptions like Garnett Mimms, and artists who combined the best of both worlds, like Ben E. King (both as lead singer of the Drifters and as a solo artist). Philadelphia soul records leaned toward doo wop-like group harmonies, eventually evolving into a serious rival of Motown's production machines with the ascendance of Gamble & Huff and Thom Bell.

By the late '60s, soul was changing with the times. Motown-producer Norman Whitfield expanded the label's lyrical scope into psychedelia and social consciousness with songs like the Temptations' "Cloud Nine." James Brown pioneered funk music with his incredible churning rhythms backing increasingly assertive statements of Black pride. Sly & the Family Stone merged hippie concerns and funk on a string of hit singles and albums. In the early '70s, Motown veterans Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder broke free of the label's hit-oriented production process to issue vastly influential, album-length statements. The Philadelphia sound, string-drenched and impeccably produced and harmonized, took soul to another level of slickness. In Memphis, Al Green established himself as an heir to Otis Redding with Hi Records and the Memphis Horns.

Soul diminished as a commercial presence in the mid-'70s, as funk and disco began to put more emphasis on danceable rhythms than songwriting and singing. Al Green, seen by some fans as the standard-bearer of the classic soul sound, turned to gospel; the once-thriving Stax/Volt empire collapsed in a confusing mess. Much Black soul music became increasingly middle-of-the-road, leading to the new genre of urban contemporary music. Soul is still very much alive, of course, in the harmonies and production that continue to inform contemporary African-American popular music, whether in funk, disco, dance-pop, or rap. The "classic" soul style lives on in different ways—old stars continue to release and record new material for a specialized audience, and veteran performers like Tina Turner and Patti LaBelle have achieved new levels of superstardom with their updated brand of contemporary soul.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Soul Shots* series (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Complete Stax-Volt Singles 1959-1968* (Atlantic)
James Brown, *Star Time* (PolyGram)
Otis Redding, *Otis! The Definitive Otis Redding* (Rhino)
Aretha Franklin, *Queen of Soul: The Atlantic Recordings* (Rhino)
Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions, *Anthology 1961-1977* (MCA)
Sam Cooke, *Man & His Music* (RCA)



Ray Charles, *Birth of Soul* (Rhino)
Ben E. King, *Anthology* (Rhino)
Sly & the Family Stone, *Anthology* (Epic)
Al Green, *Al Green's Greatest Hits* (Hi)
The Isley Brothers, *Story, Vol. 1* (Rhino)
Wilson Pickett, *A Man and a Half: The Best of Wilson Pickett* (Rhino)
Jackie Wilson, *Mr. Excitement* (Rhino)
Solomon Burke, *Home in Your Heart* (Rhino)

Books

The Blackwell Guide to Soul Recordings, edited by Robert Pruter (Blackwell, 1993)
Where Did Our Love Go? The Rise and Fall of the Motown Sound, by Nelson George (St. Martin's Press, 1985)
Sweet Soul Music, by Peter Guralnick (Harper & Row, 1986)
Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music, by Gerry Hirshey (Times Books, 1984)

–Richie Unterberger

Stax/Volt and the Sound of Memphis Soul

Aside from Motown, the Memphis-based Stax label (along with its Volt subsidiary) was the most successful and influential soul record company of the '60s. The comparison shouldn't be taken too far: Motown was far more successful than Stax/Volt, which never crossed over into the pop market nearly as heavily as their Detroit-based competition. In its salad days, the Stax/Volt sound was nearly as identifiable as Motown, and embodied many of the most distinguishing traits of Southern soul, or "deep" soul, as it's sometimes called.

Stax was founded in the early '60s by Jim Stewart and his sister Estelle Axton, shortly after they'd taken teenaged Carla Thomas (daughter of R&B-legend Rufus Thomas) into the Top Ten on the Satellite label with the early soul ballad "Gee Whiz." In the Thomases, Stax already had a couple of first-class R&B/soul singers who would score consistent hits into the early '70s. The next Top Ten hit on Stax, the Mar-Keys' instrumental "Last Night," was a breakthrough on a couple levels. The combination of sleek horn lines, sharp guitar licks, and organ was a blueprint for the Stax soul sound; equally important, some of the Mar-Keys' members eventually formed the nucleus of Booker T. & the MG's, which virtually became Stax's house band for the next decade.

The MG's also ran off a series of instrumental hits that made them stars in their own right. On these, you can hear the sound of Memphis soul stripped down to its essence: the bluesy, surgeon-sharp leads and chords of guitarist Steve Cropper, the choked organ of Booker T. Jones, and the super-tight rhythm section of Duck Dunn and the late Al Jackson. When they played sessions, they were often augmented by the Memphis Horns, whose similarly spare but beefy riffs also came to characterize the Stax/Volt sound. In contrast to the brilliant assembly-line precision of the Motown factory, the Memphis studios created a looser

and funkier groove, a reflection of the more casual atmosphere of both the control room and the region itself.

The instrumental backing was just one key part of the Stax/Volt-Memphis equation. The material, penned by such greats as David Porter and Isaac Hayes, had much more of a country influence than most '60s soul. Mind you, you'd never mistake it for Grand Ole Opry fodder, but the melodies, chord changes, and plaintive, emotive tone of much of the material betrayed the melting pot of Black and white southern influences, even in a society as segregated as the American South was in the 1960s. Memphis had been an important blues center for decades, and that influence was also apparent in both the material and the arrangements (with bluesman Albert King, Stax/Volt would successfully merge blues and soul). And the vocals betrayed a strong gospel feel—not that gospel wasn't strongly felt in the soul being produced everywhere else in the United States as well.

Stax/Volt releases were hugely successful in the R&B and soul charts, but not nearly as big with white pop audiences, though there were plenty of Top 40 entries on the label throughout the '60s. Several explanations could be offered for this, none of them necessarily correct or valid; the Stax/Volt sound was certainly grittier, slower, and more R&B-based than the most successful pop-soul of the period. Stax/Volt performers were certainly heroes to many white rock musicians, from the Rolling Stones on down. A 1967 tour of Europe by the Stax/Volt Revue (documented on several recordings) was a huge success, enabling the musicians to realize for the first time just how much of an impact they were making internationally.

The sessionmen and songwriters were crucial cogs in the Stax/Volt machine, but as with Motown, one shouldn't overlook the fact that the singers were the most important factor. Carla Thomas, Rufus Thomas, as well as names which are revered nowadays mostly by hardcore soul fans, such as Johnnie Taylor, Eddie Floyd, and William Bell—all made the songs their own (and often wrote the songs as well). The most popular Stax/Volt acts of the mid-'60s were Sam & Dave, who brought the gospel elements of Memphis soul to the forefront, and Otis Redding, one of the most revered vocalists in rock and soul history. Redding, already a soul superstar, seemed poised for a breakthrough to wide pop stardom after a hugely successful appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967. It happened, but only after Redding's death, in the wake of which "Dock of the Bay"—a classic which pointed to new introspective and personal directions for both Redding and Stax/Volt—went to No. 1 in early 1968.

Redding's death notwithstanding, Stax/Volt seemed poised to enter an era of great prosperity in the late '60s, but the empire became unraveled in a series of mammoth mishaps which rank it among the most tragic stories in the rock business. In 1968, Stax/Volt ended its partnership with Atlantic, opting for bigger corporate distribution. Atlantic, which had arranged for Wilson Pickett to record a clutch of mid-'60s classics at Stax's studios that were Stax/Volt recordings in all but name, took the Redding and Sam & Dave catalogs with them.

Stax, frustrated by the economics of leasing studio facilities to outside labels and performers, had already restricted itself to in-house projects in 1966. Atlantic's Jerry Wexler responded by approximating the Stax sound (extremely successfully, from both aesthetic and commercial viewpoints) at other southern studios, including Fame and Muscle Shoals in Alabama, and Criteria in Miami. Mid- and late-'60s classics by Percy Sledge, Arthur Conley, Aretha Franklin, and others may not be Stax/Volt recordings, but sonically they would certainly fit into the label's vision comfortably.

Stax continued to score hits well into the 1970s with a vast roster, including several of their most dependable '60s performers, and new additions such as the Staple Singers and Isaac Hayes. With the dissolution of Booker T. & the MG's, the Stax sound grew more diffuse, though it retained much of its earthy identity. But in the mid-'70s, Stax ran into a quagmire of financial troubles that are too labyrinthine to detail in less than a few pages. In early 1976, it was closed by order of a federal bankruptcy court judge.

Stax/Volt, incidentally, didn't have a monopoly on Memphis soul. The small Goldwax label issued releases in the '60s that are coveted by deep soul collectors, particularly those recordings by James Carr, esteemed by some cultists as one of the greatest soul vocalists ever. As noted above, the sound of Stax/Volt was successfully emulated and recreated at other studios. And in the early '70s, Hi Records, featuring the Hi Rhythm Section and, often, musicians who had played at Stax/Volt (such as the Memphis Horns), established itself as a major source of the era's best funky soul. Al Green was the label's only superstar, but other Hi performers like Ann Peebles and Syl Johnson enjoyed a lot of success among the soul audience with recordings that are usually judged superior to the ones issued by Stax/Volt in the early '70s.

When Stax/Volt shut its doors, though, it was a major blow to the city's music scene, eliminating a prime source of work and inspiration for many of the city's brightest talents (some of whom had moved on to other music centers anyway). Arguably, it was a blow from which the region has yet to recover; since the advent of Sun Records, Memphis had been a central location for much of rock, R&B, and soul's finest moments, but today it's somewhat of a musical ghost town in terms of local production. The Stax/Volt story is exhaustively detailed in the liner notes of the three Stax/Volt box sets, and journalist Rob Bowman is currently working on a book about the label.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles Vol. 1 1959-1968* (Atlantic)
Various Artists, *The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles Vol. 2 1968-1971* (Stax)
Various Artists, *The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles Vol. 3 1972-1975* (Stax)
Booker T. & the MG's, *The Very Best of Booker T. & the MG's* (Rhino)
Carla Thomas, *Gee Whiz: The Best of Carla Thomas* (Rhino)
Otis Redding, *Otis! The Definitive Otis Redding* (Rhino)
Wilson Pickett, *The Exciting Wilson Pickett* (Atlantic)
Sam & Dave, *Sweat 'N' Soul* (Rhino/Atlantic)
Johnnie Taylor, *Chronicle* (Stax)
James Carr, *Essential James Carr* (Razor & Tie)
Al Green, *Greatest Hits* (Hi)
Various Artists, *Hi Times: The Hi Records R&B Years* (The Right Stuff)
Rufus Thomas, *The Best of Rufus Thomas* (Rhino)

—Richie Unterberger

Blue-Eyed Soul

"Can white men sing the blues?" That's been a point of contention in the worlds of rock and soul since white musicians began singing music with heavy debts to rhythm & blues. White attempts to sing African-American-derived music have often been embarrassing (if sometimes touching in their naivete). But at the same time, some whites have crossed into the world of R&B and soul with a natural ease that proves that music, like all good things in life, is color-blind. During soul music's heyday, a handful of whites handled the challenge with confidence, giving rise to the relatively small but important sub-genre of soul music called blue-eyed soul.

The roots of blue-eyed soul could probably be traced back as far as Elvis Presley's legendary Sun singles, on which he masterfully interpreted a handful of blues and R&B classics. It can also be detected in the many Italian-American doo wop singers during that music's last phase, as well as early '60s acts like Dion and the Four Seasons who borrowed heavily from R&B phrasing and harmonies.

The first of the classic blue-eyed soul acts, and one which was instrumental in defining the genre, were the Righteous Brothers. Hailing from Orange County, CA, of all places, Bill Medley and Bobby Hatfield looked very white, but sounded Black. After teaming up with Phil Spector in the mid-'60s, they reeled off a brief string of huge hits that were as soaked with gospel feeling as any African-American soul, but were unable to maintain their artistic or commercial momentum after their association with Spector ended.

The most successful blue-eyed soul group of the '60s were the Rascals. Young veterans of New York's Italian-American rock 'n' roll scene, they flavored their strong (and mostly original) material with horns, harmonies, and a touch of British Invasion energy. Although they worked within the self-contained rock band format, playing their own instruments and writing their own songs, their sound owed as much, if not more, to soul as '60s rock trends. They were also one of the relatively few blue-eyed soul acts to successfully change with the times, writing increasingly reflective and sophisticated material, culminating with the rabble-rousing anthem "People Got to Be Free" in 1968.

Blue-eyed soul acts tended to spring up in the proximity of regions with active soul scenes. Detroit's biggest contribution to the genre were Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels, who served up some of the sweatiest soul-rock hybrids ever waxed. Motown couldn't help but influence a lot of the city's white rock and garage bands, and the Motor City sound is reflected in Michigan's fine regional rock hits of the time by the Rationals and the early singles of Bob Seger.

White southern performers also absorbed the inflections of deep soul into their own earthy sounds. John Fred and Tony Joe White displayed the influence of New Orleans and Louisiana R&B and soul in their brand of swamp pop; Bill Deal and the Rhondels played a kind of soul frat-rock that drew from the "beach music" cult of the Carolinas; Roy Head drew upon the melting pot of Texas blues and R&B for one of the mid-'60s' best one-shot hits, "Treat Her Right." In Memphis, Dan Penn, a white Alabaman who helped write many great deep soul records, produced hits by the Box Tops; teenage lead singer Alex Chilton's vocals were so unnaturally gravelly that many listeners were convinced he was Black. In Los Angeles, there were several Latin soul-rock-R&B acts, the best of which were Thee Midniters (although the group also played convincing Rolling Stones-styled garage rock).

The line between R&B-influenced rock 'n' roll and blue-eyed soul is a thin one that was skirted by many of the British Invasion's finest performers. Certainly Eric Burdon (of the Animals) Stevie Winwood (of the Spencer Davis Group and Traffic), and Van Morrison were extremely soulful singers, even if their material and the sound of their backing groups were more rock-oriented than classic soul grooves. Georgie Fame probably fit the classic blue-eyed soul mold more than any other British Invasion performer, although he also owed quite a bit to Mose Allison's brand of jazz. Dusty Springfield was the best female blue-eyed soul singer of the '60s, though she also sang girl group, rock, and pop ballad material; at the end of the '60s, she traveled to Stax studios in Memphis to cut *Dusty in Memphis*, considered by many listeners as one of the finest white soul albums of all time.

It's worth pointing out that many classic soul records of the '60s by Black performers featured white musicians. Booker T. & the MG's, an integrated ensemble featuring the economic, biting licks of white guitarist Steve Cropper, played on most of the great Stax/Volt soul hits of the '60s, as well as cutting a lot of instrumental soul smashes on their own. Stax/Volt's strongest rival in the field of deep southern soul was the Muscle Shoals Studio in Alabama, which also featured white musicians on many of their sessions, backing soul greats from Aretha Franklin on down. Duane Allman may be mostly known for helping to found Southern-rock with the Allman Brothers, but he also played guitar on sessions by Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Clarence Carter, and King Curtis.

The heyday of blue-eyed soul, like soul music itself, was in the 1960s; after that decade, it was a more scattered presence, although acts like Hall & Oates, the Average White Band, Boz Scaggs, Robert Palmer, David Bowie (in one of his many phases), the latter-day Bee Gees, and Billy Swan all carried the blue-eyed soul torch to large degrees. Contemporary acts like Michael Bolton and George Michael have also been labeled as blue-eyed soul, although their material owes more to classic MOR pop than the original pioneers of the style.



Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Soul Shots Vol. 6: Blue-Eyed Soul* (Rhino)
The Righteous Brothers, *Anthology 1962-74* (Rhino)
The Rascals, *Anthology (1965-1972)* (Rhino)
Mitch Ryder, *Rev-Up: The Best of Mitch Ryder & the Detroit Wheels* (Rhino)
The Box Tops, *The Best of the Box Tops: Soul Deep* (Arista)
Dusty Springfield, *Dusty in Memphis* (Rhino)
John Fred & the Playboys, *The History of John Fred & the Playboys* (Paula)
Tony Joe White, *The Best of Tony Joe White* (Warner)
Georgie Fame, *20 Beat Classics* (RSO)
Thee Midniters, *The Best of Thee Midniters* (Rhino)

–Richie Unterberger

Blues-Rock

The blues and rock 'n' roll are often divided by the thinnest of the margins. Blues, more than any other musical style, influenced the birth of rock 'n' roll, and the amplified electric blues of Chicago, Memphis, and other cities during the 1950s was separated from the new music only by its more traditional chord patterns, cruder production values, and narrower market. The term "blues-rock" came into being around the mid-'60s, when white musicians infused electric blues with somewhat louder guitars and flashy images that helped the music make inroads into the white rock audience.

Many of the early blues-rockers were British musicians who had been schooled by Alexis Korner. Helping to organize the first overseas tours by many major American bluesmen, Korner—as well as his former boss Chris Barber, and his early collaborator Cyril Davies—was more responsible than any other musician for introducing the blues to Britain. More important, he acted as a mentor to many younger musicians who would form the R&B-oriented wing of the British Invasion, including Jack Bruce, members of Manfred Mann, Eric Clapton, and, most significantly, the Rolling Stones, whose lead vocalist, Mick Jagger, sang with Korner before the Stones were firmly established.

The Rolling Stones featured a wealth of stone cold blues in their early repertoire. They and other British groups like the Yardbirds and Animals brought a faster and brasher flavor to traditional numbers. They would quickly branch out from 12-bar blues to R&B, soul, and finally, original material of a much more innovative and rock-oriented nature, without ever losing sight of their blues roots.

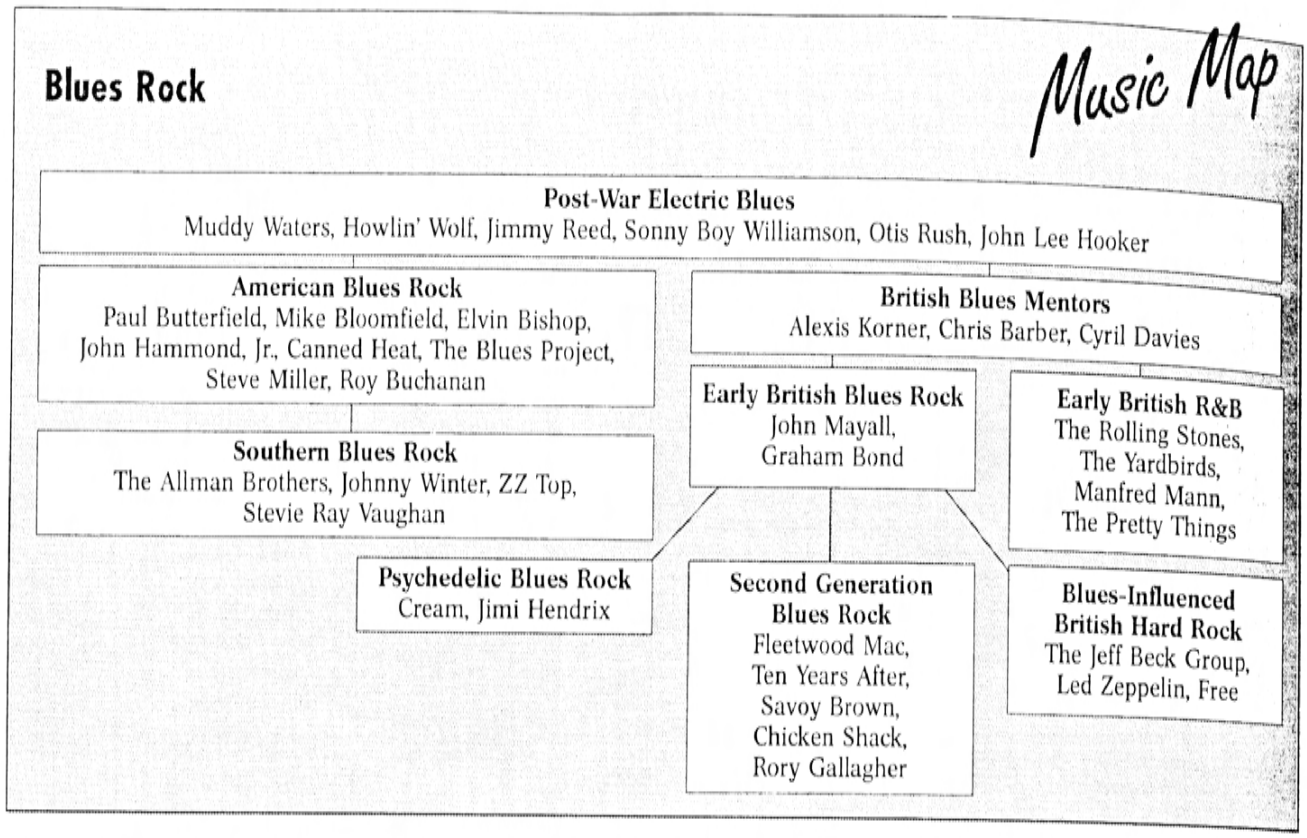
Several British acts, however, were more steadfast in their devotion to traditional blues, sacrificing commercial success for purism. These included the early Graham Bond Organisation (who featured future Cream members Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker) and, more significantly, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. In early 1965, Mayall's group provided a refuge for Eric Clapton, who left the Yardbirds on the eve of international success in protest of their forays into pop-rock. His sole album with Mayall, *Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton* (1966), was an unexpected Top Ten hit in the UK. Clapton's lightning fast and fluid leads were vastly influential, both on fellow musicians and in introducing tough electric blues to a wide audience.

While Clapton would rapidly depart the Bluesbreakers to form Cream (who took blues-rock to more amplified and psychedelic levels), Mayall continued to be Britain's foremost exponent of blues-rock, as a bandleader of innumerable Bluesbreakers lineups. Many musicians of note were schooled by Mayall, the most prominent being Clapton's successors, Peter Green and future Rolling Stone Mick Taylor. Like Clapton, Green left Mayall after just one album, forming the first incarnation of Fleetwood Mac with a couple of members of Mayall's rhythm section, John McVie and Mick Fleetwood. Under Green's helm, Fleetwood Mac were the finest British blues-rock act of the late '60s. They invested electric Chicago blues with zest and humor, but their own material—featuring Green's icy guitar tone, rich vocals, and personal, often somber lyrics—was more impressive, and extremely successful in Britain, where they racked up several hit albums and singles.

As a bandleader of rotating lineups featuring budding guitar geniuses, Chicago harmonica player Paul Butterfield was Mayall's American counterpart; the two even recorded a rare EP together in the late '60s. The Paul Butterfield Blues Band's first pair of albums featured the sterling guitar duo of Mike Bloomfield and Elvin Bishop, as well as bona fide African-American Chicago bluesmen in the rhythm section. Willing to tackle soul, jazz, and even psychedelic jams in addition to Chicago blues, they were the first American blues-rock band, and perhaps the best.

While blues-rock was less of a commercial or artistic force in the US than the UK, several other American blues-rockers of note emerged in the '60s. Canned Heat were probably the most successful, reaching the Top 20 with "On the Road Again" and an electric update of an obscure rural blues number, "Going up the Country." Steve Miller played mostly blues, with Barry Goldberg and as the leader of his own band, in his early days before tuning into the psychedelic ethos of his adopted base of San Francisco. Captain Beefheart was briefly a white counterpart to Howlin' Wolf before heading off on a furious avant-garde tangent.

In New York, Bob Dylan used Mike Bloomfield on much of his *Highway 61 Revisited* album, and teamed with the Butterfield Band for his enormously controversial electric appearance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. John Hammond recorded blues-rock in the mid-'60s with future members of the Band, and Dion cut some overlooked blues-rock sides after being exposed to classic blues by Hammond's father, the legendary Columbia A&R man John Hammond, Sr. The Blues Project, led by Al Kooper, often reworked blues songs with



rock arrangements, although their vision was too eclectic to be pigeonholed as blues-rock, also encompassing folk-rock, pop-rock, and psychedelia.

The influence of the first generation of blues-rockers is evident in the early recordings of Jimi Hendrix, and indeed Jimi would always feature a strong element of the blues in his material. Albert King and B.B. King couldn't exactly be called blues-rockers, but their late '60s material betrays contemporary influences from the worlds of rock and soul that found them leaning more in that direction. Early hard rock bands like Led Zeppelin, Free, and the Jeff Beck Group played a great deal of blues, though not enough for purists to consider them actual blues acts.

The blues-rock form became more pedestrian and boogie-oriented as the '60s came to a close. From Britain, Ten Years After, Savoy Brown, Climax Blues Band, Rory Gallagher, Chicken Shack, Juicy Lucy, and Foghat all achieved some success. In the US, blues-rock was the cornerstone of the Allman Brothers' innovative early '70s recordings (which in turned spawned the blues-influenced school of Southern-rock), and Johnny Winter had success with a much more traditional approach.

While blues-rock hasn't been a major commercial force since the late '60s, the style has spawned some hugely successful acts, like ZZ Top and Foghat, as well as influencing all hard rock since the late '60s to some degree. The success of Stevie Ray Vaughan in the 1980s, and groups like Blues Traveler and Spin Doctors in the 1990s, shows that its audience is far from dead. And it is a cliché, but it is often true, that many white listeners would be unaware of Black blues performers if they hadn't been led to them through the work of white blues-rock bands.

Recommended Recordings

John Mayall, *Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton* (PolyGram)
John Mayall, *London Blues (1964-1969)* (PolyGram)
The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, *East-West* (Elektra)
Fleetwood Mac, *Black Magic Woman* (Epic)
Fleetwood Mac, *Then Play On* (Reprise)
Jimi Hendrix, *Blues* (MCA)
The Graham Bond Organisation, *The Sound of '65* (Edsel)
Canned Heat, *Best of Canned Heat* (EMI)
Cream, *Fresh Cream* (Polydor)
John Hammond, Jr. *So Many Roads* (Vanguard)
The Allman Brothers, *At Fillmore East* (Polydor)
Duffy Power, *Little Boy Blue* (Demon/Edsel)

Books

Blues—The British Connection, by Bob Brunning (1986, Blandford Press)

–Richie Unterberger

Country-Rock

Country-rock is one of the hardest rock 'n' roll styles to map and define. Country music, of course, was integral to the birth of rock 'n' roll, and has continued to exert a huge influence on rock until the present. You can find innumerable examples of rock 'n' roll performers that are heavily soaked with country, from Elvis Presley to Elvis Costello. As a label and as a movement, however, country-rock is primarily identified with a school of bands in the late '60s and early '70s that brought the modern and irreverent qualities of rock to the more traditional musical values of country music.

There are many antecedents to country-rock; the close harmonies and acoustic guitars on much of the Everly Brothers' material foreshadows much of it. In the mid-'60s, Del Shannon recorded an entire album of Hank Williams tunes, George Jones and Gene Pitney teamed up for an LP of duets, and the trashy British R&B/punk band the Downliners Sect recorded a bizarre straight country album that was unnoticed commercially and unsuccessful artistically. Several of the '60s top groups dallied successfully with countrified rock 'n' roll at times, such as the Beatles (especially around the *Beatles for Sale* period, on tracks like "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party"), the early Byrds ("Satisfied Mind," "Mr. Spaceman," "Time Between"), and Buffalo Springfield ("Go and Say Goodbye," "Kind Woman"); all of these bands placed a premium on close harmonies, and could incorporate country signatures into their sound with natural ease when the spirit moved them.

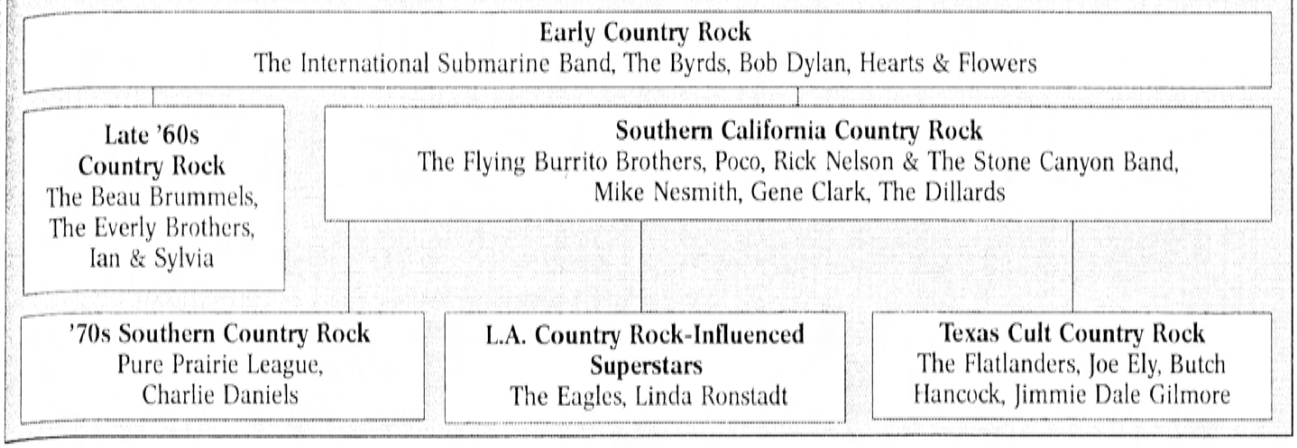
The term "country-rock" actually began to get used and thrown around in 1968, when most of the major rock acts were retreating from their psychedelic experiments into a "back-to-basics" approach. Bob Dylan, who had never embraced psychedelia in the first place, led the way with his *John Wesley Harding* album. Dylan had recorded in Nashville before, but this early 1968 effort was far more basic in instrumentation and far more country in tone. In 1969, he would largely eschew his inscrutable wordplay for basic homilies on *Nashville Skyline,* as well as record an entire unreleased LP with one of his chief mentors, Johnny Cash.

The true god of country-rock, though, was guitarist and singer Gram Parsons. As the leader of the International Submarine Band, he recorded an album in 1967, *Safe at Home,* that prominently used pedal steel guitar. The LP is seen by some scholars as the first true country-rock record, although it was little noticed upon its release. Shortly afterwards, Parsons joined the Byrds, and was almost single-handedly responsible for altering the band's focus from folk-rock to country-rock. Byrds leader Roger McGuinn had been entertaining the idea of an ambitious double album with heavy use of electronics, but the project was scuppered in favor of *Sweetheart of the Rodeo.* The 1968 release is almost universally hailed as one of the first and best country-rock efforts.

The Byrds' country-rock era was short; Parsons left the band after a year. Longtime Byrds bassist Chris Hillman left the group around the

Country Rock

Music Map



same time, and the pair quickly teamed to form the nucleus of the Flying Burrito Brothers. Parsons only stayed with the band for a few albums, but these works, also prominently featuring Sneeky Pete Kleinow on pedal steel, are the purest and most influential country-rock hybrids, and rest among the few major country-rock recordings that are not in reality closer to rock than country.

Country music may have sprung from the southern states, but country-rock primarily flourished in Southern California. Other country-rock acts of note in the late '60s included the little-known Hearts & Flowers, who actually surfaced before 1968, but were classified as folk-rock at the time, and Poco, featuring former Buffalo Springfield members Richie Furay and Jim Messina. In northern California, the New Riders of the Purple Sage established themselves as a more countrified and laidback cousin of the Grateful Dead in the early '70s.

Some veteran acts primarily associated with other forms of rock and folk became country-rockers for a time in the late '60s. Folk-rock pioneers the Beau Brummels went to Nashville to record *Bradley's Barn* at the legendary studio of the same name; the Everly Brothers' *Roots* was their most critically acclaimed post-early-'60s work; Ian & Sylvia moved from contemporary folk to country as a duo and leaders of the band Great Speckled Bird; Rick Nelson had an artistic renaissance while fronting the Stone Canyon Band, which featured future Eagle Randy Meisner. Former Byrd Gene Clark recorded country-rock on his own and as part of Dillard & Clark. The Dillards themselves, primarily known as a bluegrass act before the late '60s, had already acted as important figures in folk-rock by helping teach the Byrds harmony vocals, and employing Dewey Martin on drums before he left to join Buffalo Springfield. On 1968's *Wheatstraw Suite*, they became one of the few noted country-rock performers to move into the style from country rather than rock.

Country-rock wasn't big commercially, and may have made its greatest impact in terms of its influence on other performers. The Band, the Grateful Dead, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and George Harrison, for instance, could not be called country-rock performers by any means, but all recorded some impressive country-rock material on their late-'60s and early-'70s albums. Gram Parsons was a big influence on the Rolling Stones around this time, and on Keith Richards in particular, though it should be pointed out that the Stones had fused country and rock as far back as 1966 on "High and Dry." Still, their *Let It Bleed* and *Sticky Fingers* albums had quite a few country licks, most famously on "Wild Horses" (which appeared as a cover by the Flying Burrito Brothers before the Stones released their own version).

Country-rock hasn't gotten much attention as a movement since the early '70s. Commercially, it found its greatest success in the mid-'70s on hits by the Eagles (who featured ex-members of the Burritos, Poco, and the Stone Canyon Band) and Linda Ronstadt, who absorbed country-rock into their brands of soft rock and pop. Southern bands like Pure Prairie League and Charlie Daniels had some success with more southern-fried sounds, and Southern-rock bands like the Allman Brothers, the Ozark Mountain Daredevils, and Lynyrd Skynyrd recorded some country-influenced material, although their focus remained blues-rock and hard rock. In the 1980s and 1990s, it could be argued that Nashville has been a lot more successful in borrowing from rock than the other way around.

Country-rock arguably never recovered from the death of Gram Parsons in 1973, but it's remained alive and kicking, if hardly omnipresent. Elvis Costello made an all-out country album, albeit a commercial flop, in 1981 with *Almost Blue*; country music informs much of Neil Young's work, in whatever decade that he's working; alternative rockers like the Meat Puppets and the Jayhawks have leaned heavily on country-rock at times. Texas eccentrics Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, and Jimmie Dale Gilmore (all of whom have played with each other at some point) have formed a sort of extended family for their brand of maverick country-rock. Once in a while a country-rock band will get a big push, like Lone Justice, but the hybrid seems to resist huge commercial success.

Recommended Recordings

The Byrds, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* (Columbia)
The Flying Burrito Brothers, *Farther Along: The Best of the Flying Burrito Brothers* (A&M)
The International Submarine Band, *Safe at Home* (Rhino)
Hearts & Flowers, *Now Is the Time / Of Horses, Kids and ForgottenThings* (Edsel)
The Beau Brummels, *Bradley's Barn* (Edsel, UK)
Poco, *Pickin' up the Pieces* (Epic)
The Everly Brothers, *Roots* (Warner)
The Dillards, *Wheatstraw Suite* (Elektra)
Bob Dylan, *John Wesley Harding* (Columbia)
Various Artists, *Hillbilly Fever Vol. 5* (Rhino)
The Flatlanders, *More a Legend than a Band* (Rounder)
Neil Young, *Harvest Moon* (Reprise)

Books

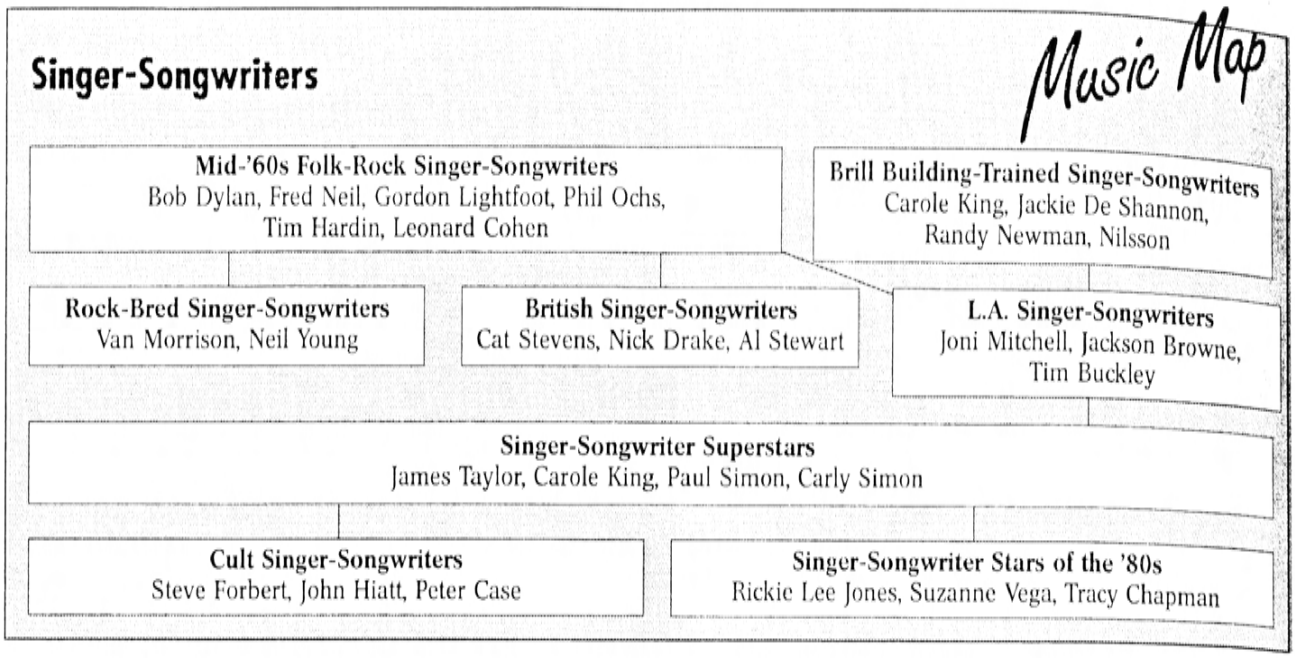
Gram Parsons: A Music Biography, by Sid Griffin (Sierra, 1985)
Hickory Wind: The Gram Parsons Story, by Ben Fong-Torres

–Richie Unterberger

Singer-Songwriters

The definition of a rock singer-songwriter is elusive. Chuck Berry, the Beatles, Marvin Gaye, Patti Smith, Elvis Costello, Paul Westerberg, Liz Phair—are they not all singers and songwriters of the first degree? Of course they are, but none of them fit the label of a singer-songwriter that has been applied since the form's heyday in the late '60s and early '70s. Generally speaking, singer-songwriters put the emphasis on their material, rather than their vocal delivery, stylistic signatures, or musical backing (although those factors were certainly important). Both the compositions and the arrangements are written primarily as solo vehicles, rather than with full rock 'n' roll bands in mind. Singer-songwriters almost exclusively play guitar and piano; quite a few play both. More than most rock styles, singer/songwriting records draw from folk and acoustic music. There are a higher percentage of women using the singer-songwriter format than you'll find in almost any other form of rock. The material tends toward the introspective, sensitive, romantic, and confessional, though it is not as wholly self-absorbed as some critics claim. They are not singles-oriented artists (though there have been quite a few massive singer-songwriter hit singles), but craft albums as complete, flowing statements.

The golden age of singer-songwriters was in many respects a blend of American contemporary folk and professional pop-rock songcraft. In the early '60s, Bob Dylan was more responsible than any other songwriter for pioneering personal expression and idiosyncratic lyrics; when he moved from acoustic folk arrangements to folk-rock, many of his peers followed. In the mid- and late '60s, Fred Neil, Tim Hardin, Phil



Ochs, and Gordon Lightfoot were some of the more notable folkies who followed Dylan into singer-songwriter territory.

There was also a school of songwriters who came to the singer/songwriting camp from the opposite direction of pop-rock. Composers like Randy Newman, Jackie De Shannon, Nilsson, and Carole King began their professional careers primarily as songwriters supplying material for pop acts, not as performers in their own right. De Shannon—an extremely underrated pioneer of the singer-songwriter genre—was the first of these to become a recording star on her own. By the late '60s, many others had stepped out from behind the scenes to begin singing their own songs, even if their voices and images didn't conform to normal commercial music business standards of what was marketable.

Not all came from one wing or the other, of course. Leonard Cohen was already an established poet when he ventured into the musical arena with material that ranks among the most literary rock ever committed to vinyl. Laura Nyro, one of the first critically acclaimed singer-songwriters, drew upon soul and Tin Pan Alley. Neil Young and Van Morrison were seasoned rock 'n' roll performers as members of influential '60s bands, although Young's work has been too eclectic and, at times, fiercely rocking for him to be classified as a singer-songwriter in the classic mold. Paul Simon, as many have pointed out, drew equally from pop and folk traditions, and was a veteran folk-rock star as half of Simon & Garfunkel before moving into more personal territory as a solo act.

Singer-songwriters were overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and well-educated; unsurprisingly, perhaps, many were based in Southern California or the Northeast, particularly Los Angeles or New York City. Los Angeles was always a chief wellspring of folk-rock, and in the late '60s, many talented singer-songwriters emerged that helped define the sound's folk-pop, laidback milieu. The best of these, Joni Mitchell, actually (like Neil Young) hailed from Canada, but was based in L.A. by the time she began recording.

Mitchell's acoustic guitar- and piano-based sound, along with her intimate vocals and largely romantic themes, was a prototype of sorts for the singer-songwriter genre, although she moved on to experiment with jazz in both her vocals and arrangements after reaching superstardom in the mid-'70s.

Other important Southern California singer-songwriters were Randy Newman, who infused the form with humor and (occasionally bitter) satire, and Jackson Browne, whose even-tempoed, easygoing ruminations have defined, for better or worse, the mellow L.A. rock sound in the minds of many listeners. A more eclectic singer-songwriter from the region was Tim Buckley, who dovetailed with psychedelia, jazz, soul, and just plain strange vocal experimentation within the singer-songwriter format.

As far as bringing singer-songwriters to Middle America, no performer was more influential than Carole King, who had already enjoyed a long career dating back to the early '60s as one of America's most successful songwriters. Her 1971 album *Tapestry* remains one of the best-selling recordings of all time. James Taylor, perhaps, was King's closest counterpart; his cover version of King's "You've Got a Friend" (from Tapestry) made it to No. 1, and his 1970 album *Sweet Baby James* epitomized the calming soft rock trends of the early '70s.

Singer-songwriters weren't as big a deal in Britain, but several did emerge that put their own spins on the form. Al Stewart took a more narrative, fanciful, and third-person approach; Nick Drake delved into dark and ambiguous themes that the stars found uncomfortable, or were unwilling to explore. Cat Stevens, the most successful British singer-songwriter of the '70s, was also the most similar in sound and content to his American counterparts.

Singer-songwriters—like almost everything else, but even more so—were a target of early punk and new wave performers, who disdained what they viewed as the genre's self-satisfied, complacent hippie homilies. The style, however, had already crested by the time punk arrived. The huge stars remained popular, sometimes at the same plateau (Paul Simon), more often at steady but diminishing levels. New crops of talent, however, did not arrive; there were occasional waves from performers like Rickie Lee Jones, and critical cults for artists like Steve Forbert, Peter Case, and John Hiatt, whose sheafs of good press never translated into major record sales.

Suzanne Vega and Tracy Chapman were by far the biggest singer-songwriter stars to emerge after 1980, and others like Shawn Colvin, Joe Henry, and Luka Bloom continue to make their mark, although usually more with the critics than the masses. And the influence of the singer-songwriter is strongly felt in dozens, if not hundreds, of artists not strictly identified with the style, ranging from Stevie Wonder and Bruce Springsteen to Mary-Chapin Carpenter and Bob Mould.

Recommended Recordings

Joni Mitchell, *Clouds* (Reprise)
Carole King, *Tapestry* (Epic)
Tim Buckley, *Goodbye & Hello* (Elektra)
Paul Simon, *Negotiations & Love Songs 1971-1986* (Warner Brothers)
Leonard Cohen, *Songs of Leonard Cohen* (CBS)
Nick Drake, *Fruit Tree* (Rykodisc)
James Taylor, *Sweet Baby James* (Warner Brothers)
Jackson Browne, *Late for the Sky* (Asylum)
Randy Newman, *12 Songs* (Reprise)
Neil Young, *After the Gold Rush* (Reprise)
Suzanne Vega, *Suzanne Vega* (A&M)
Tracy Chapman, *Tracy Chapman* (Elektra)

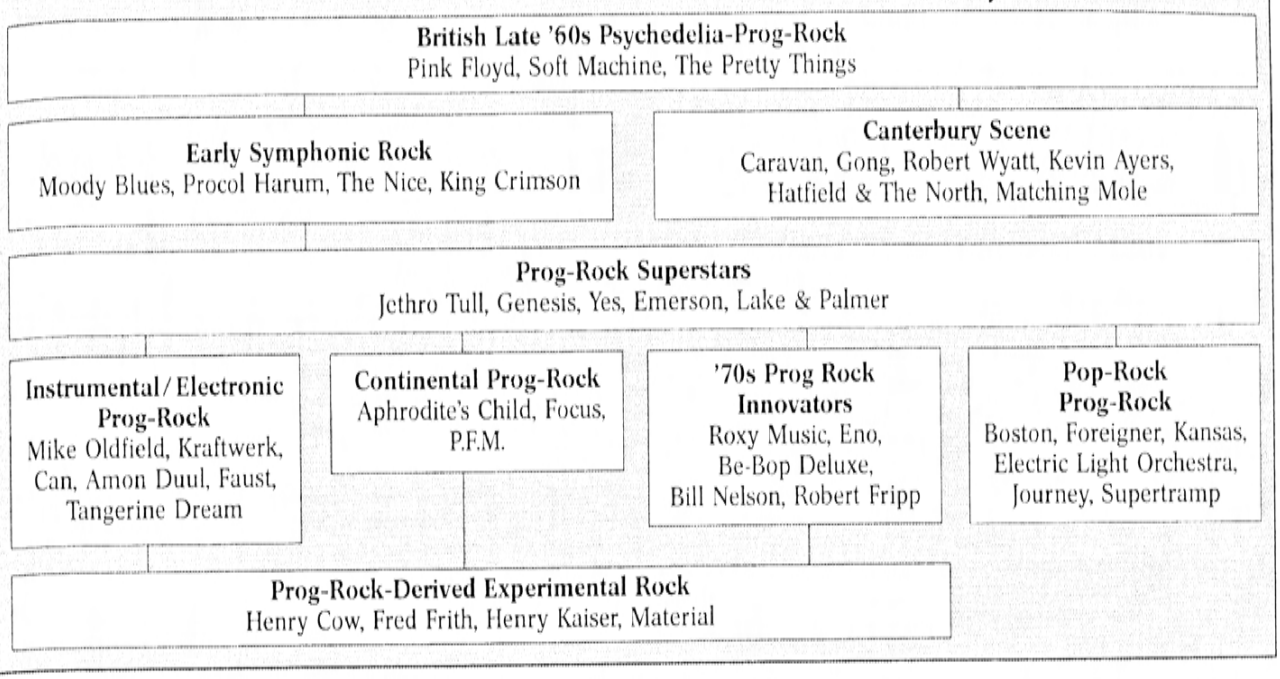
–Richie Unterberger

Art-Rock/Prog-Rock

The names—King Crimson; Renaissance; Van Der Graaf Generator; Magma; Nektar; Barclay James Harvest—seem like echoes out of a distant geological age. Some, like King Crimson and Pink Floyd, have redefined and reinvented themselves with new memberships and sounds. A few, like Yes, Jethro Tull, and the Moody Blues, still tour to sell-out audiences. But for a time, the biggest of them completely ruled the FM airwaves, dominating the radio spectrum as well as filling pages and covers across the rock press. They routinely sold millions of albums, and from 1971 until 1976, they rivaled the success of the pop music's biggest stars. The music is "progressive rock," also sometimes known as "art rock," or "classical rock"—bands playing *suites*, not songs—borrowing riffs from Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner instead of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, and using language closer to William Blake or T.S. Eliot than to Carl Perkins or Willie Dixon. It filled the early and mid-1970s with a

Progressive Rock

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phantasmagoric array of sounds and personalities, and carried rock music to levels of sophistication that would've astonished rock 'n' roll's early pioneers. Today, however, progressive rock is the most reviled of all rock genres of the 1960s or 1970s; critics and ordinary listeners still openly snicker at the sight of an ELP or Moody Blues CD. How did a genre once so successful achieve such ignominy in scarcely more than a few years? Progressive rock actually had respectable roots, as a cousin to—and offshoot of—psychedelia. Up until the mid-1960s, rock 'n' roll was considered music for teenagers seeking a good time, usually aimed more at the body than the brain. It was Bob Dylan who made rock 'n' roll grow up, merging folk music's seriousness of purpose with electric instruments into something louder and more cerebral than any music ever before aimed at "kids." There were others who followed in Dylan's wake, most notably the Byrds and Simon & Garfunkel. None of this was lost on the Beatles, who were also expanding their own perceptions of the world; by the time they were working on their second movie, *Help*, John Lennon was already writing more serious, reflective songs like the Dylan-esque "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away." The Beatles also played a key role by introducing to their sound the mellotron, a keyboard instrument originally marketed as a competitor to the Hammond organ, and using tape loops to create the sounds of various combinations of instruments and voices. Other groups had used it, but the Beatles made it the instrument of choice.

It was inevitable that progressive rock would evolve out of this environment. Opening rock 'n' roll to seriousness on any level, and succeeding with it, was like letting a genie out of a bottle; the increasing use of hallucinogenic drugs only heightened the adventurous nature of both bands and their audiences, further increasing the demands placed upon newer bands to look farther and wider for sounds that they could call their own. Classical music was just another source of inspiration, like jazz and blues, when prog-rock began in earnest in June of 1967: rock impressario and ex-Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham was getting ready to send his new star, R&B singer P.P. (Pat) Arnold, out on tour and assembled a backing group for her. Christened the Nice, they featured keyboard wizard Keith Emerson, a jazz and classical music aficionado who'd studied music as a boy—something none of the Beatles had done. The Nice soon overwhelmed Arnold, mixing classical music and jazz with Dylan songs ("She Belongs to Me"), Beatles songs ("A Day in the Life"), and even a touch of Italian movie soundtrack composer Ennio Morricone. Soon, P.P. Arnold was largely forgotten, and the Nice's first album, *The Thoughts of Emerlist Davjack*, was released.

While the Nice was still making its name at various festivals, Pink Floyd was making a similar noise, if not the same sound, around the club scene in London, mixing nursery-rhyme style lyrics, high amplification, and extended instrumental jams. Eventually, with the departure of lead singer/guitarist Syd Barrett, the songs became less important than the long jams, and Pink Floyd made the jump from psychedelia to progressive rock. Procol Harum, formed out of the remnants of an R&B-based band called the Paramounts, rode the charts for months on the single "A Whiter Shade of Pale," adapted from a Bach chorale. The record, a studio creation by the songwriting team of Gary Brooker and Keith Reid, was not fully representative of the sound they finally developed, and the accompanying album had a somewhat different sound, but the single seemed to prime the airwaves for more of the same.

Ironically, they were all beaten to the punch by a group from whom nobody would've expected anything significant, much less a genre-defining record. In 1967, the English Decca label decided to produce an album promoting their advanced stereo system, and needed a band to pair with an orchestra in a rock version of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*. The Moody Blues, a struggling onetime R&B group, were chosen, and in short order, the band and producer Tony Clarke abandoned Dvorak and came up with a lushly orchestrated piece of rock/pop mysticism called *Days of Future Passed*. The LP appeared in the fall of 1967, just in time to attract teens who'd worn out their copies of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* and wanted another album in the same vein, and the Moody Blues soon developed the cosmic consciousness needed to sustain their new sound, making more prominent use of the Mellotron to replace the orchestra. They also served as something of a model for a trio called Giles, Giles & Fripp, who recorded for Decca before re-emerging in 1969 as King Crimson under the leadership of guitarist Robert Fripp. Crimson sounded vaguely like the Moody Blues, but could play circles around them, using the Mellotron almost as a weapon (albeit very skillfully) rather than a backing instrument.

Apart from the Moody Blues, none of these acts were major international successes, however. The Nice got lots of press, but never managed to go over commercially. The group had a couple of built-in problems—their label, Immediate, suffered from major financial difficulties, which precluded any tour support when they played America; also, they were basically an instrumental outfit, lacking a solid lead singer in their lineup. King Crimson also got a lot of press, but the group was already in the process of breaking up by late 1969. Pink Floyd was a cult band, still redefining its sound in the wake of Syd Barrett's departure. Jethro Tull, which had started out doing blues, was still working out whether it was a jazz, folk, or classically-oriented group; Yes, which had been formed in 1968, was still a folk-pop group; and Barclay James Harvest never had a hit during their formative years .

Keith Emerson solved his problem—and progressive rock's larger problem—by breaking up the Nice. He hooked up with King Crimson's Greg Lake and Carl Palmer from the Crazy World of Arthur Brown to form Emerson, Lake & Palmer. If the Nice was progressive rock's first band, ELP was its first supergroup. Their self-titled 1970 debut album, complete with material appropriated from composers Janacek and Bartok, was a hit, and the single "Lucky Man" performed respectably on AM radio. The more ambitious FM outlets were even better served by "Take a Pebble," which regularly took nearly a quarter hour out of many an FM deejay's night-time schedule, while "The Three Fates" and "The Bar-

barian" showed off organ and synthesizer playing on a level of intensity and volume that few rock listeners had ever heard. There were a lot of efforts in this vein happening around that time. Folk-rockers the Strawbs added a keyboard wizard of their own named Rick Wakeman to the lineup, who, in turn, added extended piano and organ solos to their concerts. Pink Floyd moved back into long form composition with *Atom Heart Mother*, an album with a total of three tracks, one of which ran 25 minutes. Even Deep Purple, not yet the heavy-metal phenomenon of the 1970s but a band adrift in search of a sound, cut its *Concerto for Group and Orchestra*. Yes was already moving in a progressive direction, and ELP's sales made it easier for them to take the plunge with *The Yes Album* (1971), which was dominated by extended multi-part songs. It was during the early stages of recording their next album, *Fragile*, that Rick Wakeman made the leap from the Strawbs, and the classic Yes lineup was in place.

The big success among folk-based bands, however, was Jethro Tull, who, with a sound that combined English folk tunes, scatology, and adolescent sexuality, became heroes to millions of high school boys with their albums *Aqualung* and *Thick as a Brick*. Those albums relied on extended strings of lyrics, in much the same manner that ELP and King Crimson relied on extended instrumentals. Genesis, who came into music as a Moody Blues soundalike, had begun experimenting with longer songs on outre subjects, and their music blossomed in 1971 with the release of *Nursery Cryme;* their two subsequent albums, *Foxtrot* and *Selling England by the Pound*, would carry them into realms of lyrical sophistication that would find them compared to T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and make ELP sound juvenile by comparison. By 1971, with the release of ELP's second album, *Tarkus*, Yes' *The Yes Album*, Procol Harum's *Broken Barricades* and Pink Floyd's *Meddle*, the message was clear: audiences couldn't get enough.

A few American outfits tried to compete in the progressive arena, but mostly prog-rock remained a European phenomenon, and the permutations were fascinating. Germany and France yielded a few competitors in the field, including Kraftwerk, Magma and Nektar (a quartet of Englishmen based in Germany), while Italy's Premiata Forneria Marconi (better known as PFM) was an answer to ELP and King Crimson, with a lighter, less gothic sound than their English counterparts. Some of these groups were genuinely more daring and experimental, and almost deliberately less commercial. A few jazz-based bands, including Soft Machine and Gong, made a strong case for themselves, although their music took some effort and discipline to absorb. Van Der Graaf Generator and their leader Peter Hammill mixed heavy metal intensity with long-form progressive rock and came up with huge sound paintings, sonic murals of considerable beauty. Caravan, by contrast, was almost a folk group, its music quieter but no less compelling, at least for those who got to hear it.

In 1973, Pink Floyd, who'd always sort of been threatening to find a major audience but never had, suddenly did just that. Their album *The Dark Side of the Moon* turned into a sales monster, lingering in the No. 1 spot and the top selling reaches of the US charts for what seemed like forever and remaining on the charts for more than a decade. The problem, finally, was that no one could follow up their work reliably: the *Dark Side* follow-up, *Wish You Were Here*, took three years to be released, while at some point, ELP, King Crimson and Procol Harum, among others, seemed simply to be repeating themselves—albeit in louder, longer, and more ornate form—from album to album. Yes was fortunate in having three writing members and five virtuoso-level players to rely on, and their music advanced significantly from *The Yes Album* to *Fragile* to *Close to the Edge*. Yes' songs also got longer, until their new album for 1974, *Tales from Topographic Oceans*, was a double-LP consisting of four long tracks—they were beautiful songs, but so demanding that even keyboard player Rick Wakeman bailed out after the accompanying tour. The rot started to set in during 1976, the year ELP released their live album *Welcome Back My Friends*. Suffering from poor sound and uninspired playing, this triple album seemed a shadow of the triple-disc Yes live album, *Yessongs*, which had obviously inspired ELP's release. The release of the ELP double-album *Works*, essentially halves of three solo albums with a group effort for the last side, stretched the devotion of fans and critics even thinner. And by this time, even the Moody Blues, the most commercially successful of all of these bands, had split up. The end came quickly: by 1977, the new generation of listeners was even more interested in a good time than the audiences of the early 1960s, and they had no patience for 30 minute prog-rock suites or concept albums based on Tolkien-esque stories. The British punk bands led the charge, condemning Pink Floyd and other arena acts in the progressive rock scene.

Soon, it became clear that prog-rock bands were dinosaurs headed for the boneyard. The artists themselves seemed to bear this out: it was ten years or more past the psychedelic era that had helped spawn progressive rock in the first place, and the members of most of the oldest groups of the scene had been playing and recording professionally for a decade. ELP was barely functioning as a unit, and not producing music with any energy; Genesis was redefining themselves, in the wake of several lineup changes, as a pop-rock band; and Yes was back to doing songs running four minutes, not 40 minutes, and even releasing singles. By 1980, most of these groups were off the front pages of the rock press and out of the headlines, and their albums sold poorly. Few critics were saying anything kind in the press, and the public no longer really cared. Soon, progressive rock was forgotten, though a few echoes lingered; the metal band Marillion tried to pick up the lyrical density and imagery of Genesis' early work, and a few of the original bands, including Yes and the reformed Moody Blues, also held on. But for all intents and purposes, an era had ended.

Recommended Recordings

Progressive-Psychedelic

The Nice, *Nice No. 3* (Immediate/Charly)
The Nice, *Ars Longa Vita Brevis* (Immediate/Charly)
Moody Blues, *In Search of the Lost Chord* (London)
Moody Blues, *On the Threshold of a Dream* (London)
Moody Blues, *To Our Children's Children's Children* (Threshold)
Giles, Giles & Fripp, *Cheerful Insanity of Giles, Giles & Fripp* (Decca)
Pink Floyd, *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (EMI)
Pink Floyd, *A Saucerful of Secrets* (EMI)
Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon* (EMI)

Art-Rock

King Crimson, *Court of the Crimson King* (EG)
King Crimson, *In the Wake of Poseidon* (EG)
Genesis, *Nursery Cryme* (Atlantic)
Genesis, *Foxtrot* (Atlantic)
Genesis, *Genesis Live* – (Atlantic)
Genesis, *Selling England by the Pound* (Atlantic)
Genesis, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (Atlantic)
Mike Oldfield, *Tubular Bells* (Virgin)
David Bedford, *The Odyssey* (Virgin)
David Bedford, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Virgin)
King Crimson, *Starless and Bible Black* (EG)
Peter Sinfield, *Still (aka Stillusion)* (Voiceprint)

Classical-Rock

ELP, *Emerson, Lake & Palmer* (Rhino)
ELP, *Works Vol. 1* (Rhino)
Ekseption, *Ekseption 5* (Philips)
Renaissance, *Ashes Are Burning* (One Way)
Renaissance, *Turn of the Cards* (Sire)
Renaissance, *Prologue* (One Way)
Jan Akkerman, *Tabernakel* (Atlantic)
PFM, *Photos of Ghosts* (Great Expectations)/

Space-Rock

King Crimson, *Larks' Tongues in Aspic* (EG)
Yes, *Yessongs* (Atlantic)
Yes, *The Yes Album* (Atlantic)
Yes, *Fragile* (Atlantic)
Yes, *Close to the Edge* (Atlantic)
Yes, *Tales from Topographic Oceans* (Atlantic)
ELP, *Brain Salad Surgery* (Rhino)
Peter Banks, *The Two Sides of Peter Banks* (One Way)
Starcastle, *Starcastle* (Epic)
Pink Floyd, *Atom Heart Mother* (EMI)
Nektar, *Remember the Future* (Passport)

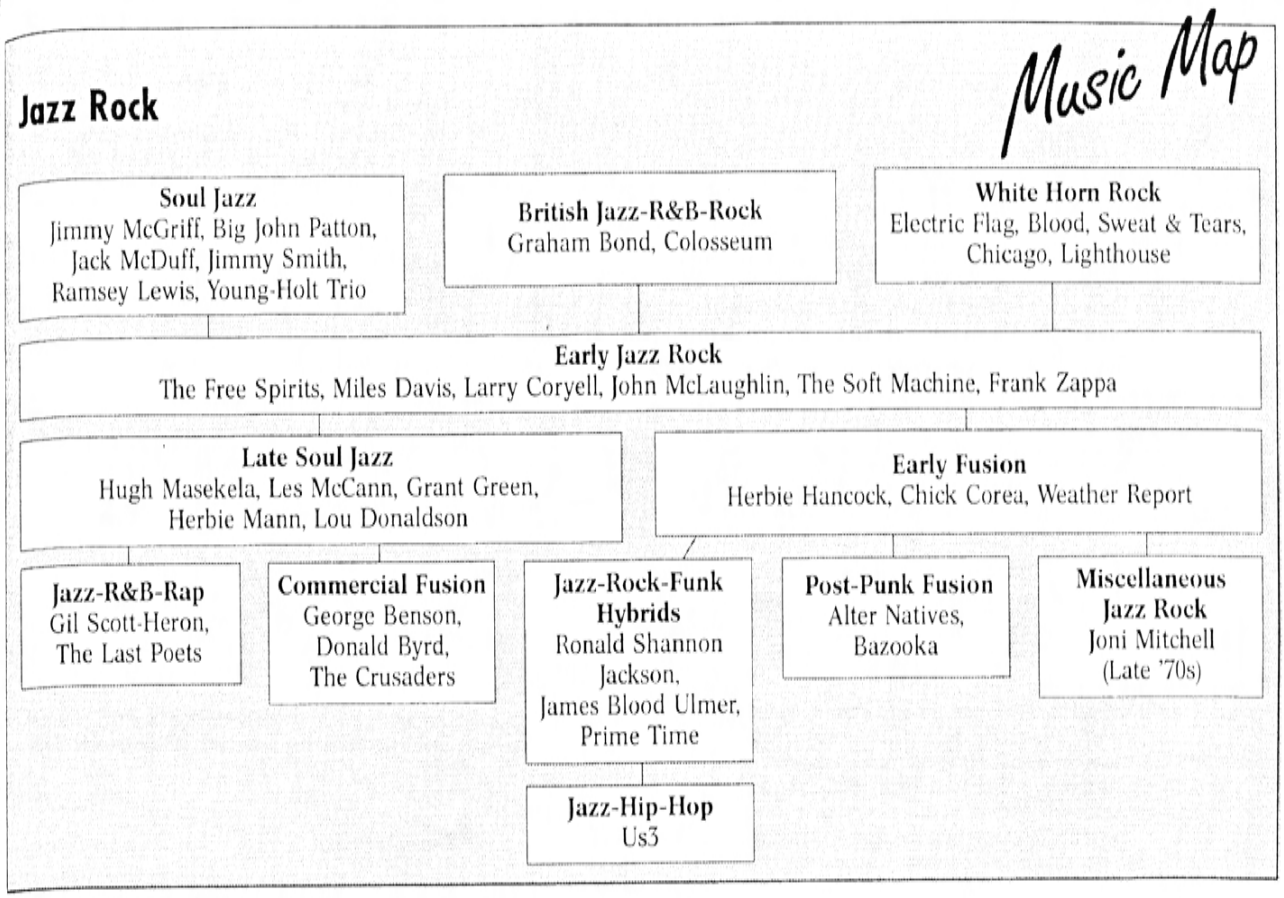
Hybrid-Progressive (Jazz/Classical/Folk)

Jethro Tull, *Thick as aBrick* (Chrysalis)
Focus, *Focus III* (Sire/IRS)
King Crimson, *Lizard* (EG)
Strawbs, *Bursting at the Seams* (A&M)
Strawbs, *Grave New World* (A&M)
Strawbs, *From the Witchwood* (A&M)
Gentle Giant, *Acquiring the Taste* (Vertigo)
Gryphon, *Red Queen to Gryphon Three*
Amazing Blondel, *Fantasia Lindum* (Edsel)
Magna Carta, *Seasons* – (Dunhill/Vertigo)

—Bruce Eder

Jazz-Rock

More than most such sub-genres, jazz-rock is a hybrid that has resisted true alchemy. The impulse to blend the basic drive of rock with the improvisational verve and rhythmic complexity of jazz is a challenge that has been taken up by many. Not only has it been successfully faced by few, but the results often prove more weighted toward either rock or



jazz than a true fusion of the styles. Half a century ago, rock and jazz were much more closely intertwined than they are today. In the big-band and swing era, jazz was a much more dance-oriented music; early R&B and jump blues acts that helped lay the foundation for rock 'n' roll drew much of their boogies, riffs, and rhythms (as well as instrumentalists) from jazz. Artists like Joe Turner and Jay McShann could have been classified as either jazz or R&B, but as rock 'n' roll grew into a full-grown giant and jazz evolved toward bebop, the styles took substantially divergent paths.

Jazz's influence on rock 'n' roll during the '50s and '60s wasn't negligible. Lots of R&B and soul bands, including those of Little Richard, Ray Charles, and James Brown, featured musicians from jazz backgrounds. Respected jazz musicians like Barney Kessel played on many rock 'n' roll sessions to help pay the rent, and drummer Cozy Cole crossed over to the rock 'n' roll market with his instrumental smash "Topsy." In the mid-'60s, the Byrds openly credited John Coltrane as an influence on early psychedelic landmarks like "Eight Miles High," and used South African jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela as a prominent sessionman on a couple of their singles. Notable '60s groups like the Doors, Zombies, Blues Project, Paul Butterfield, Manfred Mann, Traffic, and Santana clearly displayed important secondary jazz influences. Jazz was also an important element in Van Morrison's late-'60s album *Astral Weeks*, which featured the rhythm section of noted jazz players Richard Davis on bass and Connie Kay of the Modern Jazz Quartet on drums.

Not to be overlooked, either, is '60s soul-jazz, a form which attracts little critical attention today, but was quite popular in its day—indeed, it might have been the most popular form of jazz with urban, African-American audiences. Using organs, vocals, and R&B riffs with greater frequency than other jazz musicians, the most popular performers in this sub-genre would include Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, Big John Patton, and Jack McDuff. Ramsey Lewis and the spinoff combo Young-Holt Trio (later to become Young-Holt Unlimited) had a more pop-oriented take on soul jazz that led to substantial Top 40 success.

"Jazz-rock" as a self-conscious label, however, didn't evolve until the late '60s. The first, and to this day, the most successful, acts to be widely identified as jazz-rock bands weren't so much jazz-rockers as R&B-oriented white rock bands with jazzy horn sections. The Electric Flag, featuring Mike Bloomfield, Buddy Miles, and Nick Gravenites, were the first of these; Blood, Sweat & Tears and Chicago became huge stars, although the MOR nature of their hits led some critics to dub them as "wedding band" or "barmitzvah" soul.

A more ambitious, although obscure, jazz-rock record that predates any of the bands in the above paragraph was the sole album by the New York-based Free Spirits, featuring the young Larry Coryell on guitar. This interesting but erratic effort came much closer to truly striking a midpoint between rock song forms and jazz instrumentation, although the songs remained in the neighborhood of three minutes, and the vocals were fairly weak. Concentrating more on the jazz and instrumental side of things, Coryell became one of the leading early jazz-rock and fusion performers as the leader of Eleventh House and as a solo artist.

Several British '60s bands featured players that emerged from a jazz background, most notably the Graham Bond Organization. Besides the leader, they featured Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker in their pre-Cream days, and, for a time, guitarist John McLaughlin, although they quickly gravitated toward the R&B and blues sounds of the day. Bruce and Baker have occasionally recorded respectable jazz albums right up to the present, and Bond-John Mayall spinoff-band Colosseum were probably the best jazz-oriented act to emerge from the British R&B-blues scene. The most successful British jazz-rock band of all, and indeed the one act that could be termed to have truly fused the two styles more than any other, were the Soft Machine. Starting as an underground psychedelic group (and a very good one), their late-'60s and early-'70s albums turned toward an increasingly improvisational and instrumental sound, retaining rock elements in Mike Ratledge's buzzing organ and Robert Wyatt's brilliant drumming and soulful vocals.

For most critics, though, the true peak of jazz-rock was reached by Miles Davis on his early-'70s recordings. Impressed by Jimi Hendrix and other late-'60s rock musicians, Davis brought electric guitars and keyboards into his band, culminating in the landmark 1970 LP *Bitches Brew*, roundly acclaimed as one of the most influential jazz recordings of all time. That record featured guitarist John McLaughlin, who would immediately become a leading jazz-rock figure himself, not only as a solo artist, but also with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and in collaborations with Miles, ex-Davis drummer Tony Williams and Carlos Santana.

Other jazz musicians took the cue from Davis, always a leader and innovator, and added electric instruments and rock-influenced rhythms to their sound. Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Weather Report were the best of these groups, although it's fair to say that, even more than Davis, they were really "rock-influenced jazz," not "jazz-rock." The compositions were usually instrumental, the melodic themes and improvisations clearly from the jazz tradition; the rock influence was felt in the electric instruments and the forceful funk of the arrangements.

Not unsurprisingly, jazz-rock quickly turned in a more commercial, watered-down direction that resulted in the style known as "fusion." As work became harder to find in the struggling jazz scene of the late '60s, notable jazzmen like Lou Donaldson, Herbie Mann, Les McCann, Hugh Masekela, and Grant Green had already been turning in a jazz-soul direction as a means of both broadening their horizons and survival. Many jazz players, usually for brief periods, brought electric instruments and funk rhythms into their arrangements during the 1970s,



resulting by and large in unimpressive, at times embarrassing, results. Guitarist George Benson and trumpeter Donald Byrd, to name two of the most obvious examples, found much greater commercial success as pop-fusioneers than with their more critically-respected straight jazz efforts of the '60s.

Jazz-rock hasn't been a big critical or commercial deal since the mid-'70s, but occasional innovators have produced interesting efforts along the lines of the best jazz-rock pioneers. Frank Zappa couldn't properly be considered a jazz-rock musician, but several of his '70s recordings, most notably *Hot Rats*, rank among the most ambitious blends of rock and jazz principles. Guitarist James Blood Ulmer and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson (whose band, the Decoding Society, featured future Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid) were both students of the Ornette Coleman school of harmolodics. The best of their records have melded jazz improvisation, funk rhythms, and visceral electric drive as well as anyone. Coleman himself drew on jazz-rock innovations with his Prime Time band. Streetwise jazz poets Gil-Scott Heron and the Last Poets helped lay the foundation for rap music. Defunkt merged jazz and funk rhythms without, at least at the beginning, pandering to watered-down commercial fusion interests. And, most unpredictably, folk-rock star Joni Mitchell delved heavily into jazz improvisation in the late '70s with the help of sidemen Jaco Pastorius and Pat Metheny, and put lyrics to Charles Mingus' last compositions (at his request) on the 1979 album, *Mingus*.

The jazz-rock fusion continues to tempt musicians intermittently in the '90s. Several bands on the alternative rock label SST, most notably Alter Natives and Bazooka, played what was essentially improvisational jazz with fierce electric guitar-driven arrangements. The downtown New York avant-rock-whatchamacallit scene is too eclectic to be figured easily into the jazz-rock equation, but many of its performers are clearly strongly influenced by both worlds. Under the pseudonym Buckshot LeFonque, leading contemporary jazz musician Branford Marsalis took a stab at jazz-funk-R&B-soul-hip-hop. British act Us3 grafted hip-hop samples onto classic Blue Note jazz recordings, sparking some occasionally inspired jazz-hip-hop crossover recordings in the jazz community itself.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Blue Funk: The History of the Hammond Organ* (Blue Note). More quality soul-jazz was recorded on the Blue Note label than any other, and this compilation includes tracks by most of the biggest stars of the genre: Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff, Grant Green, Big John Patton, Lou Donaldson.

The Free Spirits, *Out of Sight, Out of Sound* (ABC). Pretty hard to find these days, this stakes a strong claim as the first jazz-rock record.

The Electric Flag, *A Long Time Comin'* (Columbia). The best of the records by late-'60s white rock groups to be classified as "jazz-rock."

Miles Davis, *Bitches Brew* (Columbia). Still the most influential and respected jazz-rock recording.

The Soft Machine, *3rd* (Columbia). Their most successful pure jazz-rock outing, although their earlier, more psychedelic rock-flavored albums weren't too shabby either.

John McLaughlin, *Devotion* (Restless). It's really a matter of taste as to which early-'70s McLaughlin album stands as his best, but rock listeners might find this one more approachable, as it uses Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsies rhythm section.

Frank Zappa, *Hot Rats* (Rykodisc). One of his most jazz-rock-oriented recordings, this largely instrumental 1970 effort features some of his best guitar playing.

Herbie Hancock, *Head Hunters* (Columbia). The album that broke fusion as a commercial force, though those looking for something a bit more adventurous in the jazz-rock vein might try the early-'70s LPs he released just prior to this effort.

Gil-Scott Heron, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (Flying Dutchman). The leading jazz-R&B-rock poet.

Miles Davis, *Pangaea* (Columbia). Arguably the most recklessly electric of Davis' fusion sessions, featuring the guitar pyrotechnics of Pete Cosey. Those looking for something slightly less experimental should try *Agharta*, recorded on the same day.

Joni Mitchell, *Mingus* (Asylum). The central recording of Mitchell's jazz-rock phase, a period which inspired much debate among both fans and critics.

James Blood Ulmer, *Are You Glad to Be in America?* (Artists House). None of Ulmer's records could exactly be termed as accessible, but this strikes the best balance between funk-R&B grooves and harmolodics.

Ronald Shannon Jackson, *Decode Yourself* (Island). None of Jackson's albums particularly stands out as his most influential; this 1985 Bill Laswell-produced session is one of the more accessible.

Bazooka, *Blowhole* (SST). A group that, like others on the SST label, pursues the elusive goal of wedding Ornette Coleman to post-punk attitude and eclecticism.

Various Artists, *Stolen Moments: Red, Hot & Cool* (GRP). The best jazz-hip-hop compilation, featuring some of the top talents from both worlds.

–Richie Unterberger

Bubblegum

Considering bubblegum's fairly meager legacy—a few dozen hits in the late 1960s and early 1970s—it inspired a lot of heated discussion and revisionism. It arose at a time when the listener demographic for rock was expanding rapidly; originally marketed almost exclusively to teenagers, those teenagers were now growing up, leaving their teens, and continuing to buy and play rock 'n' roll. At the same time, the purchasing power of pre-teens was growing. Too young in most cases to appreciate the subtleties of *Tommy* or "Cloud Nine," they needed a simple form of rock 'n' roll to identify with, and bubblegum was created to satisfy their desires.

While 1967 was a year that saw rock and soul shake with paroxysms of change, it also saw million-selling singles by the Monkees, who starred in a show whose audience was composed more of small kids than any other type of viewer. It also saw hits by singers like Tommy James, whose simple but catchy pop-rock was probably vastly more popular with pre-teens than post-adolescents. Although the Monkees' and Tommy James' best work holds up today as outstanding pop-rock, at the time it pointed the way for even more simple and naive music. And although the Monkees eventually played their own instruments on their records, industry insiders were well aware that their early hits were crafted by studio musicians, and knew that bona fide self-contained groups weren't strictly necessary to create smash records.

Most of the early bubblegum records were manufactured at Buddah Records by the production team of Jerry Kasenetz and Jeff Katz. Emphasizing repetitive, throbbing bass lines, simple sing-along lyrics, cheesy organs, and insinuatingly (some would say obnoxiously) catchy melodies, their hit singles by the Ohio Express and the 1910 Fruitgum Co. were played by sessionmen—the "groups" didn't exist outside of the studio. Dubbed "bubblegum" for its childish qualities, mass production values, and instant disposability, it was celebrated as such in the minor 1969 hit single "Bubble Gum Music," released by the unforgettable Rock & Roll Dubble Bubble Trading Card Co. of Philadelphia 19141.

It didn't take long for the Archies, masterminded by brilliant Brill Building tunesmith and producer Jeff Barry, to establish themselves as the most successful bubblegum group. "Jingle Jangle" and particularly the No. 1 hit "Sugar Sugar" were unavoidable if you were within earshot of a radio in 1969; the latter song's qualities were recognized by Wilson Pickett, who made the tune his own in a soul cover version. Another studio-only group, the Archies' records were tied in to a cartoon series based on the famous comic strip, with Archie, Jughead, and the gang playing the songs on the program.

The cross-promotion value of the Monkees' and the Archies' television programs was duplicated by the Partridge Family, the Banana Splits, and to some degree by Bobby Sherman, a pre-teen idol. The Partridge Family themselves were picking up a fumble by the Cowsills, a clean-cut pop-rock family act that the Partridges were loosely based upon (although the Cowsills' arrangements were somewhat more sophisticated than the bubblegum norm). When the Partridges peaked,

they in turn were supplanted by the Osmonds, a bubblegum version of the Jackson 5 (who, naturally, also had their own TV cartoon series around this time). The Partridges and Osmonds even inspired the briefly successful imitators, the DeFranco Family.

In bubblegum's prime, there were also several huge one-shot hits by "artists" destined never to be heard from again. The Cuff Links' "Tracy," from 1969, featured the same singer who took the lead for the Archies. Daddy Dewdrop ("Chick-A-Boom"), the Pipkins ("Gimme Dat Ding"), and Crazy Elephant ("Gimme Gimme Good Lovin'") were some of the others whose tunes continued to echo in the brain long after their equally silly monikers had faded from memory. A few pop-rock veterans got some mileage out of bubblegum, like Tommy Roe, who cut bubblegum hits with "Dizzy" and "Jam up Jelly Tight"; the Troggs even recorded a bubblegum single, "Hip Hip Hooray," modeled after the Ohio Express.

Bubblegum was savaged by the rock press, who were outraged that simple clap-trap like "Yummy Yummy Yummy"—records by groups that didn't even exist outside of the studio—could sell millions of copies while sensitive, literate efforts of progressive rockers and singer-songwriters struggled to be heard. After bubblegum had faded and punk emerged in the late '70s, some critics took a revisionist stance, hailing bubblegum for its innovative production techniques and for boiling pop-rock down to its irreducible essence. It's often been pointed out that one of the first songs the Talking Heads performed was the 1910 Fruitgum Co.'s "1-2-3 Red Light," and the simple throbbing rhythm and lyrics of numbers like "Psycho Killer" have a distant relation to bubblegum, although no one's going to confuse *Remain in Light* with music aimed at pre-teens.

Bubblegum's influence continues to hover in all music aimed at the record-buying public's youngest segment, who don't care if their heroes wrote the songs or even played on the records. Bubblegum was hardly one of the high points of rock history, but even the most serious-minded listeners are probably fooling themselves if they can't admit to the ingratiating catchiness of hits like "Tracy" and "Sugar, Sugar."

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *The Best of the Ohio Express & Other Bubblegum Smashes* (Rhino)

Various Artists, *The Best of the 1910 Fruitgum Company & Other Bubblegum Smashes* (Rhino)

Various Artists, *Bubblegum Classics Vol. 1-3* (Varese Sarabande)

The Archies, *The Archies' Greatest Hits* (Kirshner)

Tommy Roe, *Greatest Hits* (MCA)

–Richie Unterberger

Heavy Metal

Heavy metal is the bastard son of rock 'n' roll. For years, critics tried to ignore its existence, as parents attempted to prevent their children from listening to it. Nevertheless, heavy metal emerged in the early '70s as arguably the most commercially successful form of rock 'n' roll. In the past 25 years, heavy metal has gone in and out of fashion, adapting itself to the times but always remaining near the top of the charts in some form.

At its core, heavy metal is an adolescent experience. Teenagers —primarily white males—form its main audience, buying the records, wearing the bands' T-shirts, and going to the shows. Because of the number of adolescent fans, some critics dismiss heavy metal as simplistic, primal pounding. Certainly, a fair share of metal is nothing but three-chord riffing, yet most metal bands place a premium on technical skill. From Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page to Eddie Van Halen to Metallica's Kirk Hammett and Soundgarden's Kim Thayil, metal guitarists have always been innovators in technique, speed, and skill. In every subgenre of heavy metal, the guitar is the center of the music. The songs are assembled around the riff, with the guitar solo taking prominence. By and large, heavy metal is rock 'n' roll with all of the roll stripped out—the blues remains, but it doesn't swing. All of the rhythms are fairly rigid, almost military in origin. Bombast is the key—from the drums to the guitars, it's about being as loud as possible.

Most trends in rock 'n' roll last a finite amount of time. Like psychedelia, many listeners expected metal to fade after its initial glory days of the early '70s. And it did fade slightly for a couple of years in the late '70s, but it came back in a newer, tougher form. In each decade, heavy metal always finds its specific audience. In the '70s it was either mystical or boogie-oriented. In the '80s, it was pseudo-glam bubblegum in the mainstream and brutal, fast doom-mongers in the underground. In the '90s, the doom-mongers reigned supreme, as the lines between heavy metal and punk became indistinguishable.

Heavy metal's roots can be traced to the British Invasion, particularly the two-chord opening of the Kinks' "You Really Got Me." "You Really Got Me" didn't swing, it pounded, laying the groundwork for the simplistic hard rock of AC/DC and the scores of boogie bands of the mid-'70s. For all their sheer firepower, the Kinks didn't revel in the pompous, improvisational instrumental sections that defined metal, as much as the catchy, simplistic riffs. It wasn't until Cream that rock 'n' roll had a band that pushed the boundaries of blues-based rock. Cream attempted to make rock an improvisational art such as jazz. While their records could often be surprisingly pop, the band stretched all rock conventions in concert, spending over ten minutes on one song and letting each instrument improvise. More importantly, they were deafeningly loud. Soon after Cream's debut, Jimi Hendrix appeared and he pushed those boundaries even further, bringing a new sonic vocabulary to rock with distortion and feedback. Although they were nowhere near as accomplished as Cream or Hendrix, Blue Cheer pushed the volume up as far as it could go. The result wasn't much more than volume, yet its primal roar earned the group the distinction of being labeled the first heavy metal band.

The group that wrote the blueprint for the conventional four-piece heavy metal band was the Jeff Beck Group. Keeping the power trio format of Cream and Hendrix, the Jeff Beck Group added a charismatic frontman to the lineup in the person of Rod Stewart. The interplay between the guitarist and the singer became enormously influential, and most heavy metal bands followed the pattern in the following years.

Shortly after the Jeff Beck Group's first album, Led Zeppelin was formed. The Jeff Beck Group may have provided the template, but Led Zeppelin was the definitive heavy metal band. Like the Jeff Beck Group, Led Zeppelin performed blues standards at a crushing volume and featured long trade-offs between vocalist Robert Plant and guitarist Jimmy Page. The band was also made up of superior musicians, as well as songwriters and arrangers, leading the music into a territory that was blues-based but couldn't reasonably be called blues-rock. Zeppelin also brought in touches of British folk, country music, rockabilly and rock 'n' roll to the mix, as well as a lyrical fascination with the occult and medieval imagery that traded time with their sexually oriented songs.

For much of the early '70s, fantastical imagery dominated heavy metal, both through Led Zeppelin and their closest competitors, Black Sabbath. In contrast to the meticulously arranged and surprisingly subtle shifting dynamics of Zeppelin, Sabbath just flailed away at their guitars, creating an impenetrably slow and heavy sludge. Sabbath never sang about sex – they sang of "Warpigs" and "Iron Men." However, their slow beat, gargantuan guitars, and Ozzy Osbourne's wail made them seem grittier and more down to earth. In turn, they would influence nearly as many bands as Led Zeppelin, many of whom forgot about what Sabbath sang about and concentrated on the grimy, dirty riffs.

While Zeppelin and Sabbath ruled the theaters and arenas of America and Britain, they had some competition from the thick boogie of Foghat and Grand Funk Railroad, who attracted legions of fans with their simple, by-the-books, heavy blues-rock. However, Foghat and Grand Funk never had the lasting influence of Alice Cooper. With a stage show designed to shock—filled with fake blood and decapitations —and music to match, Alice Cooper created a grandly theatrical form of heavy metal that also was quite pop-conscious. Not only could the group grind out teenage anthems like "School's Out" and "I'm Eighteen," but they also wrote songs like "No More Mr. Nice Guy" which essentially was a pop song dressed up with loud guitars. Led by the heavily made-up Vincent Furnier (who eventually adopted the name Alice Cooper as his own), the group's flamboyant stage shows and melodic metal set the stage for the pop-metal of the '80s.

Although neither band could officially be termed heavy metal, the New York Dolls and T. Rex had an impact in the metal world. T. Rex's influence wouldn't be felt until the '80s, when a number of bands, particularly Def Leppard, adopted the group's sleek, simple riffs and pretty look. The New York Dolls, however, had immediate impact. Dressing in drag and playing a hard, raunchy variation of the Rolling Stones' swagger, the Dolls never sold many records, but bands such as Aerosmith and Kiss built on their trashy retro-chic look and the group's sleazy hard rock. Aerosmith was tamer than the Dolls, never indulging in the group's stylistic excesses, but they made the basic blues-rock of the Stones and the Dolls heavier without losing any of the bluesy swing. Lead vocalist Stephen Tyler was a flamboyant frontman, halfway between Mick Jagger and David Johansen, with a penchant for crude double entendres. Aerosmith's heavy blues-rock didn't quite fit in with the lunkheaded thud of Foghat, and it was much grittier than the mystical visions of Zeppelin and Sabbath. It took the band some time to find an audience, but the proto-power ballad of "Dream On" and the lean *Toys in the Attic* broke the band into the big-time.

Kiss, on the other hand, was all about pure theatrics. Every member of the band was disguised in heavy makeup and ridiculous costumes and was never seen without their makeup. Their stage show was more theatrical than Alice Cooper's, complete with elaborate light shows, dry ice, and fake blood. Accordingly, their music also expanded on Alice Cooper's blueprint, making the heavy guitars heavier and the melodies poppier. For the latter part of the decade, Kiss was among the most popular heavy metal bands in America.

Queen arrived at roughly the same time as Aerosmith and Kiss, although their music could hardly have been more different. Taking their direction from Led Zeppelin's most majestic moments, Queen created a meticulous, multi-layered sound that featured dozens of guitar and vocal overdubs. The band provided a bridge between progressive rock and heavy metal by adopting the pretensions of prog-rock with the melodic sensibilities and loud guitars of metal. Queen was also the most eclectic heavy metal band since Led Zeppelin, adding elements of pop, English music-hall, folk, opera, rockabilly, and, eventually, disco and new wave. That off-kilter musical sensibility was part of the reason the group's music was influential over the years, with bands as diverse as Metallica and Smashing Pumpkins claiming Queen as an inspiration.

AC/DC was the last of the important heavy metal bands to emerge in the mid-'70s, and they were completely different than the orchestrated bombast of Queen. Crude and vulgar, both lyrically and musically, AC/DC were rock hooligans of the highest order; in their own words, they rode the "Highway to Hell." Angus Young's rhythm guitar stripped the riffs down to their barest essentials, while Bon Scott's piercing shriek was positively primal in its power. The rhythm section pounded away, and they had a sense of groove that was missing from most metal bands of their era. But nothing could take away from the all-mighty riff, which was the one important thing in AC/DC's music. With their minimalistic power and working-class image, it could be argued that AC/DC were proto-punks, stripping rock 'n' roll to its core. But neither AC/DC nor any punk rocker would agree.

In the late '70s, heavy metal began to fall out of favor, as disco and punk captured the imaginations of mainstream audiences and critics, respectively. Van Halen helped reverse that trend. Releasing their first album in 1978, the group carried out the metal prototype of a lead singer/lead guitarist interplay to ludicrous extremes. Lead vocalist David Lee Roth treated his frontman role as vaudevillian performance art, while lead guitarist Eddie Van Halen spat out a series of amazingly fast leads. Van Halen's guitar pyrotechnics—which included popularizing the two-handed tapping technique, allowing for guitar licks that sounded faster and more complicated than they actually were—didn't simply expand the boundaries of the instrument, they wrote a whole new book. Throughout the next two decades, most guitarists copied and developed Van Halen's techniques, making his style a familiar part of the musical language. Guitarists from Kirk Hammett through Toto's Steve Lukather to Bon Jovi's Richie Sambora helped incorporate Van Halen's style into speed-metal, pop, and pop-metal.

Van Halen quickly became multi-platinum superstars, capable of selling out arenas. As soon as they reached that status, a new batch of heavy metal bands emerged from the British underground. Dubbed the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, the bands took Sabbath's heaviness, made it leaner and tougher, and dressed it in leather. At first, their lyrical concerns were just as drenched in mysticism as Sabbath, but the groups began singing about death, depression, sex, and life in more realistic terms, at a faster, relentless speed. Judas Priest and Iron Maiden were the leaders of the movement, yet bands like Diamond Head were equally influential among the emerging ranks of speed-metal bands like Metallica and Anthrax. But more than any other band, Motörhead helped create speed-metal—and, in the process, break down the doors between punk and metal. Motörhead took their cues from punk and the Ramones in particular, making their music harder, faster, louder. All of Motörhead's music sounds the same, but that doesn't dilute the impact of its rampaging riffs and Lemmy's bark.

In the early '80s, America developed its own underground metal scene, which expanded on the bleak, hard heavy metal of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal while adding a greater reliance on technical proficiency, and intricate, multi-layered compositions. The band that would bring that movement to popularity was Metallica, a Californian band that emphasized exceptionally tight, fast playing and stark lyrical imagery. *Kill 'Em All*, their 1982 debut, articulated their bleak, percussive vision and caused an instant underground sensation.

However, the group didn't begin to earn mainstream attention until the middle of the decade, when they released their masterpiece, *Master of Puppets*, in 1986. In the meantime, a slicker, more pop-oriented variation of heavy metal began to dominate the pop charts in the early '80s, after new wave began to fade away. AC/DC had their commercial breakthrough in 1980, but that turned out to be a fluke, since no other band followed them to the top of the charts. Quiet Riot's version of Slade's "Cum on Feel the Noize" was a hit in 1983, but what really broke metal into the mainstream was Def Leppard's *Pyromania*.

The rise of pop-metal had a great deal to do with the emergence of MTV. Pop-metal bands tended to be better-looking than the gritty heavy metal bands of the '70s, which made MTV more receptive to their videos. After Def Leppard's success with "Photograph" and Pyromania, legions of pop-metal bands began filtering into MTV and the mainstream. Van Halen had a major hit in 1984 with the aptly titled *1984*, and Mötley Crüe had a Top Ten hit with the sleazy glam-metal of *Theatre of Pain* in 1985. But it wasn't until Bon Jovi's breakthrough in 1986 that pop-metal became a genuine commercial force.

Like most pop-metal bands—who critics derisively tagged "hair bands" because of their stylized, blow-dried appearance—Bon Jovi emphasized the pop melodies in their music, using loud guitar riffs and solos as an embellishment, not as the primary force. They had slick rockers like "You Give Love a Bad Name" and power ballads like "Wanted: Dead or Alive." A veritable flood of bands followed Bon Jovi through the door, including newer bands like Poison and revamped veteran rockers like Whitesnake. Mötley Crüe managed to straddle the line between pop-metal and sleazy, Los Angeles glam-metal, becoming one of the most popular rock 'n' roll bands of the latter half of the decade. Pop-metal had a prominent place on the pop charts all the way into 1991, when post-punk alternative rock made a commercial breakthrough with Nirvana's *Nevermind*.

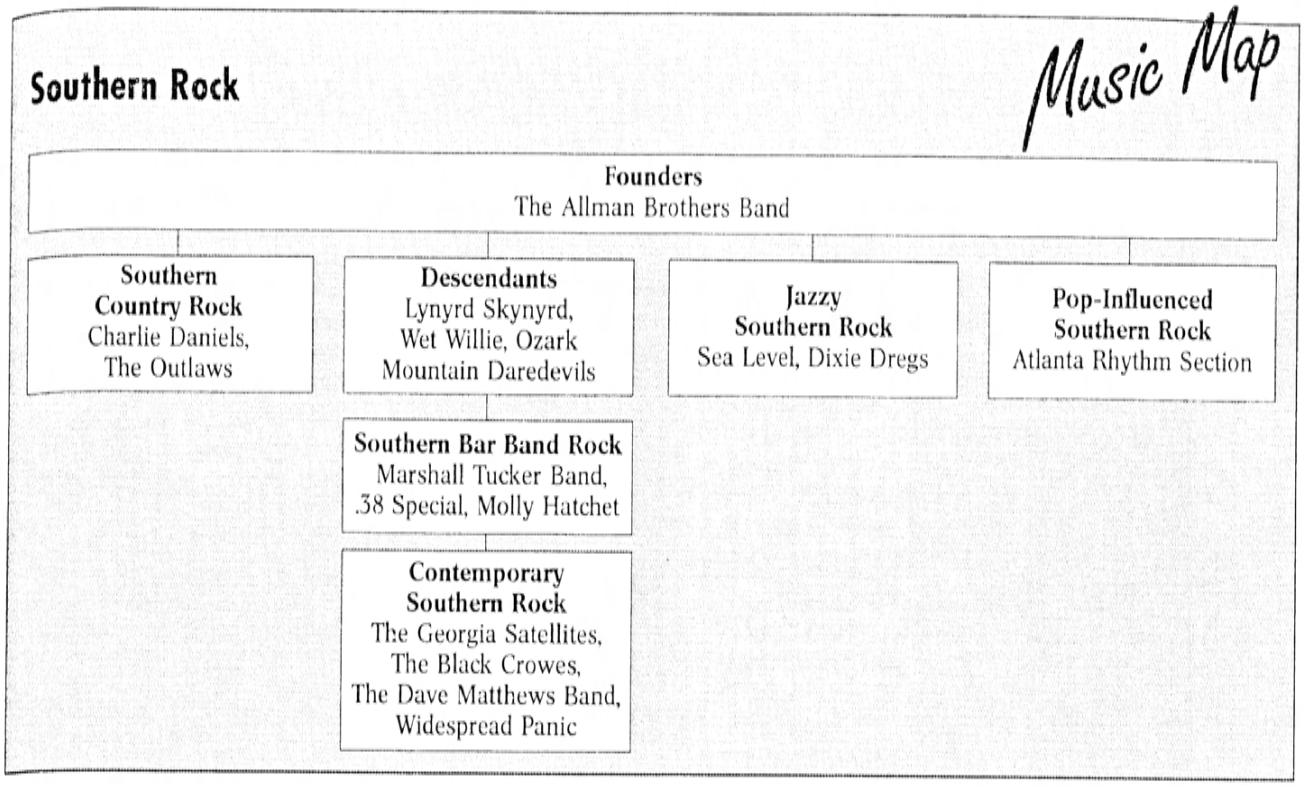
As pop-metal ruled the charts, a dirtier, harder brand of metal came to the forefront, as well. In 1988, the Los Angeles band Guns N' Roses had a hit single with "Sweet Child o' Mine." The band's album had been out for a year, but it immediately began selling following the hit single, eventually hitting No. 1. Guns N' Roses updated the raunchy hard rock of Aerosmith with a nihilistic, punk-rock fervor, opening the doors for the mass commercial acceptance of such speed-metal bands as Metallica, Megadeth, Anthrax, and Slayer. Before, most metal bands were relegated to MTV's Saturday night ghetto, *Headbanger's Ball*, which provided an excellent forum for both new and established bands. Metallica immediately reaped the benefits of the more accommodating airwaves, earning a Grammy nomination and critical acclaim in mainstream publications.

While pop-metal—Guns N' Roses and their offspring, as well as speed-metal bands—became a hot chart item, a handful of bands in the alternative underground were sketching out a brazen fusion of punk and heavy metal, led by the sludgy, heavy riffs of Soundgarden and the pompous art-rock and metal of Jane's Addiction. Both bands received heavy college airplay and positive critical response, earning a small but dedicated following that continued to grow throughout the end of the decade. Jane's Addiction, in particular, became a powerful force in breaking down the barriers between album-rock radio and alternative rock before Nirvana's *Nevermind* in 1991. Not only did the group's second album, 1990's *Ritual de lo Habitual*, receive prominent MTV airplay, but their lead vocalist, Perry Farrell, organized the group's farewell tour, Lollapalooza, as a traveling festival designed to feature alternative bands (most of whom had metal leanings like Jane's themselves), such as Living Colour, Nine Inch Nails, Ice-T's Body Count, and the Rollins Band.

Throughout 1991, metal bands like Skid Row and Mötley Crüe dominated the charts, but it was Metallica's commercial breakthrough, *Metallica*, that signaled the tastes of the mainstream audience were beginning to change. Guns N' Roses delivered their long-awaited second album, *Use Your Illusion I & II*, in the fall of 1991, but they were soon eclipsed by Nirvana's *Nevermind*, as were all of the pop-metal bands that were ruling the singles charts. *Nevermind* not only ushered in alternative rock as a major commercial force, it re-wrote the book for metal bands, forcing all the previous pop-metal groups to toughen up their charts. Most of these efforts were unsuccessful, since there were legions of bands ready to claim the heavy metal audience.

Nirvana was adopted by certain portions of the metal audience, yet they were never really heavy metal. However, their fellow Seattle bands, Alice in Chains and Soundgarden, were decidedly heavy metal and they became genuine arena-rock stars in the early '90s. Alice in Chains fell in between Sabbath and Van Halen, turning out a grinding, heavy rock that was determinedly grim and bleak. Soundgarden recaptured the majestic heaviness of Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath with 1991's *Badmotorfinger* and 1994's staggering *Superunknown*, which became their commercial breakthrough. More than any other metal band since Metallica, Soundgarden captured the imaginations of both the critics and the audience, establishing themselves as a major force in the '90s. Quasi-metal bands like Smashing Pumpkins had their roots in '70s metal groups like Sabbath and Queen and were quite popular, yet their musical approach and attitude connected them with alternative audiences, not metal. No matter how loud they played, they sounded soft.

While alternative metal had become mainstream, a new underground of heavy metal bands had developed. Inspired by the fast, grim visions of Metallica and Slayer, as well as cult bands like the Accused and Napalm Death, these legions of bands were dubbed death-metal, black-metal, and grindcore, according to the minute variations in their sound. Outsiders could not distinguish between Emperor and Brutal Truth, but there were differences in their music nevertheless. Black-metal, which became the most popular term for the trend, was a defiantly underground phenomenon, with most mainstream publications ignoring it completely; it wasn't allowed any airtime on MTV, since the network cancelled its long-running heavy metal program, *Headbanger's Ball*. Nevertheless, the black-metal cult grew quite large by the middle



of the decade—large enough to make Slayer's 1994 album debut at No. 1. As the rock 'n' roll of the '90s has proven, heavy metal has become part of rock 'n' roll's heritage, working its way into several different forms of pop music. Nevertheless, there's always a metal underground, filled with unrespected and unsavory groups, ready to take over. In addition to the black-metal cult, many of the pop-metal bands of the '80s have retreated to the club circuit, which may mean that they are sowing the seeds of a future comeback. In either case, it's clear that heavy metal will never go away.

Recommended Recordings

Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin II* (Swan Song)
Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin IV* (Swan Song)
Black Sabbath, *Paranoid* (Warner Bros.)
Black Sabbath, *Masters of Reality* (Warner Bros.)
Deep Purple, *Machine Head* (Warner Bros.)
Aerosmith, *Toys in the Attic* (Columbia)
Alice Cooper, *Greatest Hits* (Warner Bros.)
Queen, *Sheer Heart Attack* (Hollywood)
AC/DC, *Highway to Hell* (Atco)
AC/DC, *Back in Black* (Atco)
Motörhead, *The Best of Motörhead* (Roadrunner)
Judas Priest, *British Steel* (Columbia)
Van Halen, *Van Halen* (Warner Bros.)
Def Leppard, *Pyromania* (Mercury)
Metallica, *Kill 'Em All* (Elektra)
Metallica, *Master of Puppets* (Elektra)
Slayer, *Reign in Blood* (Def American)
Guns N' Roses, *Appetite for Destruction* (Geffen)
Mötley Crüe, *Decade of Decadence* (Elektra)
Jane's Addiction, *Ritual de lo Habitual* (Warner Bros.)
Soundgarden, *Superunknown* (A&M)

—Stephen Thomas Erlewine

Southern-Rock

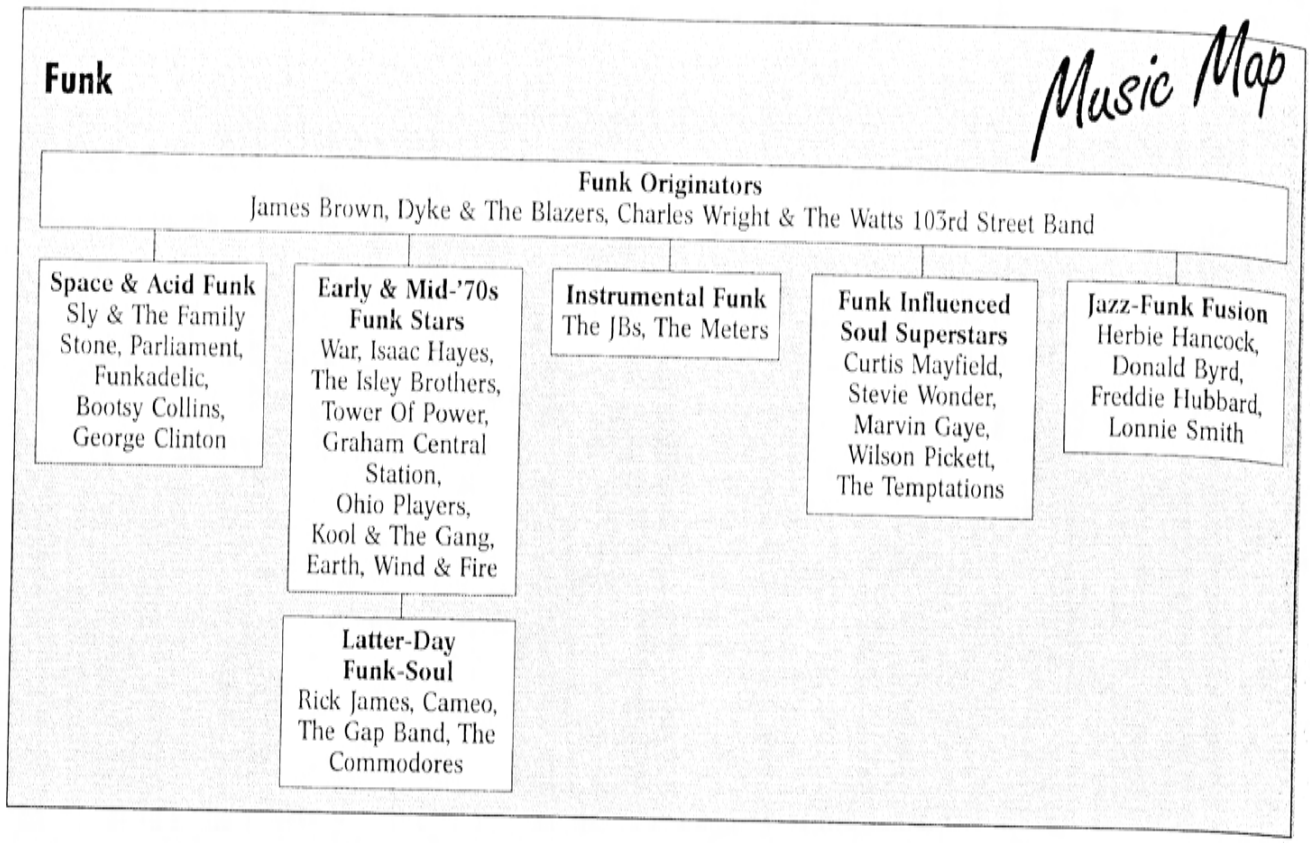
While the South, more than any other American region, was responsible for breeding rock 'n' roll, it lacked a readily identifiable white rock band sound after the decline of rockabilly. Southern-rock groups were hardly unknown in the 1960s; John Fred & the Playboys, the Boxtops, and Bill Deal & the Rondels rank among the most talented blue-eyed soul performers, and there were occasional bands following the British Invasion and folk-rock trends, such as the underappreciated Gants. Soul music, of course, thrived in Memphis, New Orleans, and other southern regions throughout the '60s, and white session musicians (especially the white half of Booker T. & the MG's) contributed mightily to the sounds crafted at Stax/Volt Records and the Muscle Shoals and Fame studios.

But Southern-rock, as an identifiable style, didn't come into its own until about 1970. Like many sub-genres of rock 'n' roll, Southern-rock peaked very early in its development. Its story is more tragic than most, perhaps, because it fell from grace not so much from the usual reasons of flagging inspiration and rampant imitation, but from sudden tragedies that tore the heart out of its two flagship groups.

Southern-rock proper began with the Allman Brothers, who had already made some recordings in California as the Hourglass; lead guitarist Duane Allman was a respected session player, contributing to records by Aretha Franklin, Boz Scaggs, and (after the Allmans were established) Eric Clapton. The Allman Brothers established the blueprint for Southern-rock in their heavy debts to roots music forms: the blues was foremost, as were boogie, soul, and hints of country. They weren't at all like either the early rockabilly performers or the contemporary soul musicians, however, in that the guitar-dominated thrust of their arrangements was clearly inspired by the leading hard rock and psychedelic bands of the day, such as Cream and Jimi Hendrix.

While the Allmans were to some degree responsible for some of Southern-rock's lesser attributes—the endless jams, the repetitive boogie riffs—they executed these with more subtlety and polish than any of their descendants, and at their best demonstrated a real facility for combining muscular rock with improvisation. Anchored by Gregg Allman's soulful vocals and the twin lead guitars of Duane Allman and Dickey Betts, the group became stars after the release of the double LP *Live at the Fillmore East*, still one of the most popular live rock recordings of all time. Duane Allman was killed in a motorcycle accident in late 1971, shortly after the release of *Fillmore East*, and bassist Berry Oakley died in eerily similar circumstances a year later. The band has continued to record to the present day, at times with great commercial success, but has never approached the artistic heights of their original lineup.

In the wake of the Allmans' success, several other Southern-rock bands arose to mine the same territory of rootsy boogies and guitar-driven stomp, usually with considerably less subtlety. The most successful, both critically and commercially, were Lynyrd Skynyrd. Attracting important and influential fans in Al Kooper (who produced their debut) and Pete Townshend (who had the group open for the Who during a tour in the early '70s), Lynyrd Skynyrd boasted three lead guitarists. As songwriters and performers, they helped establish the good ol' boy (or, as some would put it less kindly, redneck) image of Southern-rock, and helped define '70s guitar rock with "Freebird," which vies with "Stairway To Heaven" as the most overplayed classic rock song of all time. At the same time, they could show uncommon lyrical subtlety for the genre, as well as economic, hook-savvy smarts. They were one of America's most popular bands by 1977, when lead singer Ronnie Van Zant and guitarist Steve Gaines died in a plane crash. Subsequent recordings by the group, as well as the spinoff Rossington-Collins Band, didn't measure up to those by the Zant-fronted lineup. While no other Southern-rock bands of the '70s approached the Allmans or Lynyrd Skynyrd in popularity or influence, quite a few of them were big. The Charlie Daniels Band and



the Outlaws were the most country-influenced; the Dixie Dregs and Sea Level (both of whom recorded for the Allmans' label, Capricorn) the jazziest; Wet Willie the most R&B and gospel-influenced; the Ozark Mountain Daredevils and the Atlanta Rhythm Section, briefly stars, the most pop-influenced. American blues-rock performers with southern roots like Johnny Winter, Edgar Winter, ZZ Top, and Elvin Bishop were sometimes lumped in the Southern-rock school, although they were really on the edge of the style both geographically and stylistically.

The bar band boogie hallmarks of Southern-rock always go over big live, and several fairly generic bands rose to a level of considerable popularity without offering anything particularly valuable, and, at their worst, perpetuating the worst "redneck rock" stereotypes of brawling, good-time southern boys. Included in this category would be .38 Special and Molly Hatchet. The Marshall Tucker Band, originators of a seemingly endless stream of competently indistinguishable Southern-rock albums, epitomized the common denominator of the genre.

As a big commercial force, Southern-rock didn't last into the 1980s. Many notable alternative rockers, such as R.E.M. and the B-52's, came from the South, but their allegiance was to punk, pop, and new wave, not the blues, country, soul, and hard rock of the '70s Southern-rock groups. The Georgia Satellites and the Black Crowes had big chart albums in the '80s and '90s, though their hard rock was less identifiably Southern than their '70s ancestors. Like most rock styles, Southern-rock will continue to command a significant audience that occasionally results in artists that break out nationally. The mid-'90s success of Widespread Panic and the Dave Matthews Band proved its current viability, though these groups do not so much develop the Southern-rock tradition as keep it alive.

Recommended Recordings

The Allman Brothers Band, *Beginnings* (Polydor)
The Allman Brothers, *Live at the Fillmore East* (Polydor)
Lynyrd Skynyrd, *Gold & Platinum* (MCA)
Various Artists, *Rebel Rousers: Southern Rock Classics* (Rhino)
The Ozark Mountain Daredevils, *The Best* (A&M)
The Dixie Dregs, *The Best of the Dixie Dregs* (Grand Slamm)
The Charlie Daniels Band, *A Decade of Hits* (Epic)
The Atlanta Rhythm Section, *A Rock and Roll Alternative* (Polydor)
Sea Level, *Sea Level* (Capricorn)
Wet Willie, *The Best of Wet Willie* (Polydor)
The Georgia Satellites, *The Georgia Satellites* (Elektra)
The Black Crowes, *Shake Your Money Maker* (Def American)

–Richie Unterberger

Funk

Bridging the classic soul era and the dawn of disco, funk was R&B at its most rhythmic, earthy, and (occasionally) wild and experimental. Not as hugely successful with the masses as soul or disco, it has proven to be about as influential, strongly affecting not just all post-1970 R&B, but also contemporary rap and alternative rock music.

What exactly puts the "unk" into "funk" can be hard to pigeonhole, but there are some basic traits which distinguish it from mainstream soul and rock music. The emphasis, above all, is on the rhythm, and on the bass and drums of the rhythm section. The accent is often placed on the downbeat, or the first and third beats of 4/4 patterns. The function of the guitar becomes more rhythmic than melodic, often employing what has been called "scratch" or even "chicken scratch" staccato bursts of percussive strings; the horns also take a stronger rhythmic role than in traditional soul music, used for percussive riffing and punctuation as well as taking solos or providing harmonic support.

The rhythms, though, are often anything but simple, building upon each other and playing in counterpoint to build a polyrhythmic drive. Both the lead and backup singers often do their part to add to the excitement with chants, grants, and screams. The lyrics have at times been quite sophisticated and socially conscious, but more often are principally concerned, like the music itself, with stream-of-consciousness grooves, built around slogans and exhortations to dance and party. Adding to the ferment are unpredictable influences from psychedelic and hard guitar rock, Latin music, doo wop, and other elements of the melting pot of American rock, soul, and pop.

Few would dispute that James Brown is not only the Godfather of Soul, but the Godfather of Funk as well. The ignition of the funk explosion can for most intents and purposes be boiled down to his landmark mid-'60s singles "Out of Sight" and especially "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," the first smashes to incorporate the syncopated horns, stream-of-consciousness lyrics, and staccato guitars that would become funk trademarks. Although it would be a few years before the music began to be called funk, in the last half of the '60s Brown would continue to lay the funk prototype with workouts like "Cold Sweat" and "There Was a Time" that grew increasingly polyrhythmic, jazzy, and improvisational, pushing the melody to the background in favor of the churning beat and Brown's inimitable screams and groans.

The word "funk" itself began to enter the R&B/soul vocabulary with Dyke & the Blazers' R&B dance hit "Funky Broadway." Several theories and explanations of the origins of the actual word "funk" have been offered, the most likely being that, like rock 'n' roll and jazz, it was a euphemism for sexual activity, though "funk" often stood for smelly, gritty, or earthy stuff within the African-American community. By the end of the 1960s, it had come to stand for the greasiest and earthiest variant of soul music.

Although James Brown's early-'70s work was not nearly as commercially successful with the pop audience as the recordings of his 1965-69 peak (though they remained huge R&B sellers), with time they have come to be viewed as nearly as important and influential. These discs found him getting deeper and deeper into the polyrhythmic funk

groove, with increasingly basic workouts that in time came to resemble one continuous (if often compelling) performance. His backup band of the era, the JB's, are now recognized as some of funk's greatest musicians, particularly guitarist Jimmy Nolen and horn-players Fred Wesley, Pee Wee Ellis, Maceo Parker, and Clair Pinckney; they also cut many underappreciated instrumental funk workouts on their own.

Another influential Brown sideman, although he was only with the band for a few years, was bassist Bootsy Collins, who was instrumental in boosting his instrument's importance in the funk mix. After leaving Brown in the early '70s, Bootsy teamed up with George Clinton to become a vital cog in what many funk fans regard as the finest exponents of the genre, Parliament-Funkadelic. Clinton was a veteran R&B/soul performer who changed gears radically around 1970, constructing elaborate funk heavily influenced by the acid rock of Jimi Hendrix, as well as touches of jazz and psychedelia. Almost anything went with Clinton and his troops, including spacy jams, inscrutable self-mythologizing and unfathomable concept opuses about spaceships and funk itself, though the bands never lost their slightly absurd sense of humor.

The Parliament-Funkadelic family tree is among the most twisted and difficult to follow in rock history, with a revolving door of musicians who often played in both Parliament and Funkadelic (for tangled contractual reasons, Clinton led similar groups recording under both names, sometimes simultaneously). It grew more complex when Bootsy Collins became a solo star in his own right, with a similarly (perhaps even more excessive) cosmic vision, as a solo act and leader of Bootsy's Rubber Band. Both Clinton and Collins remain active and influential musicians to this day, as both individual artists and collaborators with other heavyweights.

Although they are usually categorized as a soul act rather than a funk one, Sly & the Family Stone also did a great deal to cross-fertilize soul and psychedelia to come up with some of the most adventurous funk of the early '70s. Larry Graham's distinctive finger-popping bass sound has become perhaps THE most single identifying characteristic associated with funk, and Sly Stone's commentaries on racial injustice and people power rank as some of the genre's most sophisticated lyrics. While their early, more soul- and pop-flavored work of the late '60s is equally important, their 1971 album *There's a Riot Goin' On* is their deepest foray into hardcore funk, and remains one of the few funk LPs that hits as deep with its words as its grooves.

The late '60s and early '70s saw several other less important but interesting groups make their mark in the funk parade. Dyke & the Blazers and the Watts 103rd St. Rhythm Band (most famous for "Express Yourself") were among the style's earliest practitioners. After an apprenticeship with Eric Burdon, War stormed the charts in the early and mid-'70s with a series of hits that incorporated Latin rhythms, loose, jazzy grooves, and vague social pontifications. The Meters took the sound of New Orleans R&B, already a bedrock of much post-1950 R&B, soul, and rock, into the funk era, largely on instrumentals (at least at first). Isaac Hayes took endless bubbling funk monologues onto both album and single charts, as his "Shaft" took the wah-wah guitar signatures often found in funk to their limit.

There were also funk classics in the early '70s committed to vinyl by performers who are really best categorized as soul musicians, but were deeply influenced by the funk groove. These years certainly saw some of the best work of soul giants Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, Wilson Pickett, and Marvin Gaye, all of whom drew heavily upon the expanded lyrical and musical grooves opened up by funk. The Isley Brothers, always one of soul's most eclectic stars, became close to an out-and-out funk band after beefing up their guitars and arrangements under the influence of Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone. Even more traditional soul vocal groups like the Temptations and O'Jays delved quite heavily into funk for a time to come up with some of their most memorable hits.

Opinions differ on the matter, but it could be argued that the early '70s saw funk at its peak. The music remained extremely popular through the mid-'70s, though, with less sophisticated acts who either concentrated on the dance-and-party element (Kool & the Gang, the Ohio Players, Graham Central Station) or the slicker, more soul- and harmony-influenced variants (Earth, Wind & Fire, the Tower of Power). As for the original innovators, James Brown had seemingly run out of fresh ideas by the middle of the decade, accused even by his backup musicians of not only repeating himself but copying his imitators. Sly Stone fell victim to well-documented substance abuse and financial problems, and the Parliament-Funkadelic clan, while continuing to churn out music at the top of their game, were just too eccentric to truly catch on with the masses.

Disco, although it owed a great deal to funk in its dance rhythms, overran its ancestor in popularity in the mid- and late '70s. Some pop- and dance-oriented acts that owed a debt to funk did enjoy great success in the late '70s and '80s, though, including Rick James, Cameo, the Gap Band, and the Commodores. The influence of funk was also felt in the jazz world with the advent of fusion, particularly in the work of Herbie Hancock, Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard, and Lonnie Smith.

If anything, funk has undergone a renaissance in the 1990s. Bootsy Collins and George Clinton are both venerated pioneers who continue to record critically respected albums and draw huge crowds on the club circuit, although they don't chart like they did at their peak. Funk was a big element in the mix of the '80s biggest Black superstars, Michael Jackson and Prince, and funk classics are sampled constantly (some would say excessively) by contemporary rappers. And even some of the biggest white alternative rock acts, such as the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Faith No More, and Primus, draw heavily on funk's rhythms and in-your-face attitudes, if not delivering as much soul as its progenitors.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *In Yo' Face! The Roots of Funk, Vol. 1/2* (Rhino)
[Note: this is volume one-half, or the "prequel" to the *In Yo' Face* History of Funk Series listed below]
Various Artists, *In Yo' Face! The History Of Funk, Vol. 1-5* (Rhino)
James Brown, *Love Power Peace: Live at the Olympia Paris 1971* (PolyGram)
Various Artists, *James Brown's Funky People Parts 1 & 2* (PolyGram)
The JB's, *Funky Good Time* (PolyGram)
Dyke & the Blazers, *Dyke's Greatest Hits* (Original Sound)
Charles Wright & the Watts 103rd Street Band, *Express Yourself: The Best Of* (Warner Brothers)
Sly & the Family Stone, *There's a Riot Goin' On* (Epic)
Parliament, *Tear the Roof Off* (Casablanca)
Funkadelic, *Music for Your Mother* (Westbound)
Bootsy Collins, *Back in the Day: The Best Of* (Warners)
War, *Anthology (1970-1994)* (Rhino)
The Meters, *Funkify Your Life: The Meters Anthology* (Rhino)
Curtis Mayfield, *Superfly* (Curtom)
James Brown, *Foundations of Funk: A Brand New Bag: 1964-1969* (Polydor)
James Brown, *Funk Power 1970: A Brand New Thang* (Polydor)
James Brown, *Make It Funky: The Big Payback: 1971-1975* (Polydor)

–Richie Unterberger

Philly Soul

The last major movement of the classic soul era to make a wide impact, Philadelphia soul represented the style at its sweetest, and soul production at its most sophisticated. Its severest critics would contend that much of the genre was overly slick, the most lightweight of which helped set the ground for the more mechanized elements of disco and urban contemporary. Others would praise the music for almost exactly the same reasons, seeing the Philly sound as soul at its most romantic, ushering in an era of elaborate instrumental and vocal arrangements that continue to play a large part in Black pop music today.

The hallmarks of Philadelphia soul—the lush, buoyant strings and horns, the smooth group harmonies with a touch of street corner *a cappella*, the insistent danceable rhythms and smoldering ballads—were often the handiwork of an extremely small clique of producers. Most of the classic Philly soul recordings of the late '60s and first half of the '70s were devised by the producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff (who worked as a team), as well as producer Thom Bell (who sometimes arranged material for Gamble-Huff). Their extremely prolific output, maintaining enough diversity to ensure continuing public interest while stamping each record with distinctive Philly soul qualities, was reminiscent in some respects of Motown's production line during their 1960s' glory days. Gamble & Huff, like Motown, also used a house band of sorts, a core group of musicians that contributed mightily to establishing a sound that could be identified with their records.

None of this could have been accomplished without first-rate singers, both soloists and groups, and the Philly soul stars, like those of Motown, were distinctive talents in their own right. They did differ from their counterparts in that while Motown's stars were largely tapped from their Detroit base, the Philadelphia performers were often (though not by any means always) transplants. Indeed, after the Philly sound had become a major industry force, established soul stars like Wilson Pickett, Dionne Warwick, and Lou Rawls would travel to the city specifically to record with top producers. There was generally less grit involved in the Philadelphia studios, and though it's a matter of conjecture whether the performer's role was more or less limited than it was at Motown or other soul centers, there's no doubt that production was just as important, if not more, as material or performance.

Gamble and Huff were young veterans of the Philly music scene who began scoring their first big national hits in the late '60s with smooth vocal groups like the Intruders and Delfonics and more raucous, dance-oriented records with Archie Bell & the Drells. It was a long-running association with Jerry Butler, already a star with many popular Chicago soul recordings under his belt, that really got them on a roll. The team

rode high through the mid-'70s with hits by the aforementioned acts and Joe Simon, Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes (featuring Teddy Pendergrass), and above all the O'Jays, who may have done more than any other act to define the Philadelphia soul sound.

Thom Bell oversaw a smaller roster, and generally pursued a slightly smoother sound. His big acts were the Stylistics, whose creamy harmonies sailed on top of the frothiest Philly soul hits, and the Spinners, who found massive success in Philadelphia studios after years of recording as also-rans for Motown and other labels.

While Gamble-Huff and Bell dominated the Philly scene, they didn't produce every last hit of the era by any means. In particular, Bunny Sigler helped produce some successes for Gamble-Huff's Philadelphia International label, and Peter DeAngelis (who cut his teeth with, of all people, Frankie Avalon and Fabian) arranged and produced Philly soul records for Eddie Holman that both recalled and stood up to the best that Gamble-Huff were churning out at the same time.

Philadelphia soul hits occasionally boasted strong, socially aware lyrics, especially on some of the O'Jays hottest sellers; "Back Stabbers" in particular is often cited as one of the hardest-hitting reflections of urban street life in soul music. By and large, though, they focused on the joys and sorrows of romance, not civil rights or expanding consciousness. That didn't affect commercial sales in the least, but did perhaps limit their impact upon the world of rock at a time when the pressure for lyrical significance was high. David Bowie, always looking for something new to sink his teeth into, brought a lot of Philadelphia soul into his work in the mid-'70s when he unpredictably terminated his arty glam rock phase and traveled to Sigma Sound Studios, where many classic Philly soul hits were recorded, to cut some of his most commercially (though not critically) successful work.

With a rhythmic and elaborate production line already in place, the Philadelphia sound was more equipped than any other soul scene to face the disco era. Indeed, the mid-'70s saw many of the biggest early disco hits emerge from Philadelphia, including recordings which found stalwarts like the O'Jays adapting to the new trend, and new disco acts like the Trammps. Not as critically esteemed as the earlier Philadelphia soul productions, they were nonetheless extremely successful in the marketplace. But the Philadelphia sound, as practiced by Gamble-Huff and their brethren, had spent most of its power as a major artistic force by the end of the '70s, much as Motown lost most of its impetus after the '60s. Unlike Motown, though, the Philadelphia producers didn't maintain a respectable sales profile, largely dropping from sight after the early 1980s. Philadelphia soul lingers, however, in almost all urban contemporary soul and R&B, both by veterans like Patti LaBelle and newcomers like Boyz II Men.

Recommended Recordings

The Delfonics, *Best of the Delfonics* (Arista)
The Intruders, *Super Hits* (Philadelphia International)
Archie Bell & the Drells, *The Best Of* (Rhino)
Jerry Butler, *Iceman: The Mercury Years* (PolyGram)
The O'Jays, *The O'Jays in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia International)
Eddie Holman, *I Love You* (Varese Sarabande)
The Stylistics, *Best of the Stylistics* (Amherst)
The O'Jays, *Greatest Hits* (Philadelphia International)
The Spinners, *One of aKind Love Affair—The Anthology* (Atlantic)
Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes, *Collector's Item* (Philadelphia International)

–Richie Unterberger

The Roots of Punk

When punk flowered in the mid-1970s, it took enthusiasts and detractors alike by surprise. It seemed to many that there was no precedent for music so venomous, angry, brittle, fast, and loud. In fact, the elements that would coalesce into punk had been building, on a very underground level, for about a decade before punk became big news with the emergence of Patti Smith, the Ramones, and the Sex Pistols. Often despised and ignored by the masses in their own time, the critical perspective afforded by several decades of hindsight has belatedly anointed these trailblazers—the Velvet Underground, the Stooges, the MC5, Jonathan Richman, and others—as bands whose importance and influence extended way beyond their minimal commercial impact.

Although punk rockers sometimes liked to paint themselves as outcasts who pit themselves in deliberate opposition to all rock 'n' roll traditions, the seeds of punk rock can be traced right back to the birth of rock itself. The wildest early rockabilly and R&B performers sang and played with a shamanistic, primitive abandon that has been matched, but never exceeded. Ditto for the early British Invasion bands, and more specifically the teenage American garage bands that followed in their wake in the mid-'60s. Rock critic (and future Patti Smith Group guitarist) Lenny Kaye helped canonize these groups on his *Nuggets* compilation in the early 1970s. At the same time, he and other historians like Greg Shaw devised the term "punk" to categorize these kinds of bands, for whom raw energy and sneering attitude were more important than musical virtuosity or sophisticated production.

However, the first group whose work contained demonstrably audible parallels to what we've come to know as the punk/new wave sound were the Velvet Underground. Starting as components of Andy Warhol's traveling pop art/performance ensemble The Exploding Plastic Inevitable, the Velvets were not, as some have implied, totally alienated from the currents affecting music and popular culture in the 1960s. To a large degree, though, they deliberately ran against the grain of both pop-rock and psychedelia. They didn't ignore melody, but placed a higher premium on dense guitar assaults, primitive rock energy, grating feedback/distortion, and occasional willfully atonal excursions into the avant-garde. Lyrically, they took on topics like drug use/abuse, gender confusion, sadomasochism, and urban sleaze that were all but ignored by other rock groups of the day. Much of this commentary was inspired by their New York Lower East Side community, and in fact the Fugs had already begun to document this to an extent (and break similar lyrical taboos) on their early records, although their music did not match the Velvets in lyrical or aural power.

While it's fashionable in some critical circles to pigeonhole the Velvets as loud, defiantly inaccessible outcasts who created the most scabrously sensational sounds they could, in fact that's only part of the picture. Like all truly great rock bands, the Velvets were a versatile bunch, capable of affecting, tuneful folk-rock and tender love songs as well as needle-on-11 screechers such as "Sister Ray" and gothic harbingers of doom such as "Venus in Furs" and "All Tomorrow's Parties." In fact, after the departure of John Cale under tense circumstances in 1968, the Velvets became a considerably more conventional, guitar riff-driven band, though no less powerful or ambitious. The thread that makes their diverse work of a piece is the underlying, unblinking honesty behind the songs and the performances. The Velvets didn't try to sweep conflict under the rug, or wrap their message in feel-good sentiments; they told things as they were, though their grimiest sketches (such as "Heroin") attracted more attention than their not-infrequent joyful rockers.

Two late '60s Detroit bands took the Velvets' primitive aspects to more basic, outrageous, and guitar-dominated extremes. The first to emerge, the MC5, actually had strong roots in the mighty and prolific Ann Arbor, Michigan garage scene. Their early singles for the local A-Square label were one- and two-chord bursts of blurry guitar distortion and shouted vocals; not a totally foreign territory to garage bands, perhaps, but it had never been committed with such metallic mayhem. As if any more outrage were needed, the MC5 began to make their lyrics consciously anarchistic and provocative, reflecting the influence of their manager, noted leftist John Sinclair. The roots of both the Sex Pistols and heavy metal can be heard on their debut album, *Kick out the Jams*, a nonstop (and wearying) assault. While the album actually reached the top 40, management, drug, and personnel problems plagued the group throughout the remainder of their short existence, and they played it much safer on subsequent records before breaking up in the early '70s.

Less political and more minimalist were MC5's Ann Arbor chums, the Stooges, paced by the over-the-top antics of lead singer Iggy Pop. There weren't many sophisticated words, or indeed many words at all, in the Stooges' lyrical vocabulary; that's because, as members of the band have remarked since, they wanted every word to count. The group's first two albums, even more than *Kick out the Jams*, anticipate the Sex Pistols with both the mounds of fuzzy guitar chords and the brooding, nihilistic, shouted/chanted lyrics. With characters as volatile as Iggy and the Gang, long-term stability could have hardly been part of the game plan; the group changed personnel numerous times and struggled with serious drug problems before imploding by the mid-'70s, although they managed to regroup for one more respected recording, *Raw Power*, prior to their final demise.

Historians sometimes paint the Velvets, Stooges, and MC5 as outlaws before their time who were reviled by hippy-dominated audiences that shut their eyes to the realities these brave souls were willing to face. It's certainly true that these bands didn't attain nearly the same level of visibility as the Beatles and Stones, or even Santana and James Taylor. But it isn't true that they went totally unappreciated in their own time. Often they attracted critical raves, not just in underground rock magazines like *Creem*, but *Rolling Stone* as well. Many FM stations played their music, and although their audiences were small (partly because of lackadaisical label promotion), they were devoted, approaching a cult-like fervor. Sometimes members of the audience were inspired to form their own bands, as Velvet Underground fan Jonathan Richman was.

But Richman's band, the Modern Lovers, made barely any impact whatsoever in the early 1970s. That's due, in large part, to the fact that they didn't release any records at the time, although they made some recordings with John Cale and (at separate sessions) Kim Fowley that didn't see the light of day for several years. Time, though, has proven their early work to be nearly as influential as those of the other pre-

punk pioneers. The irony is that the Modern Lovers—who also featured future Talking Head Jerry Harrison, and future Car David Robinson—were more accessible than the MC5 or the Stooges. Not nearly as confrontational or dependent upon bludgeoning, over-amped guitars, the Modern Lovers were nonetheless similar in their use of primitive, riff-driven arrangements. And their lyrics, if not as violent, were just as angst-ridden—Richman was not just an outcast, but a neurotic nerd outcast, going on at arresting length about destructive affairs with emotionally disturbed women, abstaining from drugs and sitting in his room, and genuinely torturing himself with alienation. Like the Velvets, though, Richman could be downright jubilant at times, as on his anthemic ode to rock 'n' roll, "Roadrunner." By the time the Modern Lovers' debut was finally released in 1976, the original and best lineup was long gone and the sound tamed. Richman went on to an increasingly strange career of child-like folk/pop that was not without its highlights, but not nearly as nervy as his early material.

The hotbed of American punk was New York City, and most of the first-wave punk/new wave acts, such as Patti Smith, Television, Richard Hell, and Blondie, were performing years before their first official releases. There was one band, though, that had already broken up by the time CBGB's really began hopping. These were the New York Dolls, and in comparison with all the bands mentioned in this piece so far, they can sound the most conventional to latter-day ears. And indeed, at the time, they were more apt to be labeled a glitter band than a punk band (not to mention that the term "punk" was barely even bandied about until years later). The Dolls did adhere to a basic, if somewhat trashy, prototype that placed much more value on attitude and raunch than the players' somewhat limited (though by no means amateurish) abilities. Only managing to record two albums before their breakup, they made little impact beyond New York City (where some critics adored the band). Their long-term impact was substantial; Malcolm McLaren helped manage the Dolls during their dying days, an experience which sparked ideas for molding a band of his own back in London, the Sex Pistols.

While it would be British bands like the Sex Pistols and the Clash that were really responsible for moving punk into high gear, in the early 1970s there were far fewer antecedents for the movement in the UK than in the US. One school of rock that did anticipate some elements of punk's outrageousness and flirtations with decadence was glam rock. As practiced by T. Rex and others, glam did put the focus on earthy expression and basic guitar riffs, features that progressive rockers and singer-songwriters didn't hold nearly as dear. David Bowie is often mentioned as a precursor of sorts to punk, but if that's so, the evidence is much more in his attitude than his meticulously crafted songs and records. But, as Bowie biographers Roy Carr and Charles Shaar Murray once pointed out, Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Siouxsie Sioux, Joe Strummer, Poly Styrene, Elvis Costello, and Billy Idol are "all children of Ziggy Stardust. The punks did as Bowie had done and encouraged Mott the Hoople's Ian Hunter to do: they dropped the all-pervasive fake-American rack 'n rowl voice and sang in the identifiable accents of their hometowns, and they took to the visual vocabulary of Bowie's make-up and costume with a crazed ingenuity."

In his glitter-rock phase, ex-Velvet Underground leader Lou Reed was far more popular in Britain than his native land; the album that broke him in the UK, *Transformer*, was co-produced by none other than Bowie himself. While the solo work of the ex-Velvets could not be said to be nearly as influential as what they recorded together, the individual efforts of Reed, Cale, and Nico were inspirational to all sorts of musicians looking for something expressive and out of the ordinary in the oft-stale musical climate of the early to mid-'70s. Reed's street-talk sing-speak, though muted in much of his early solo albums, was one of the basic models for the punk vocal style, in which it was more important to convey a tough, savvy attitude than sing "well" in the conventional sense. Nico's desolate, moaning ruminations on things metaphysical and inscrutable were an important root of goth-rock (itself an offshoot of punk and new wave). Cale's most important contributions to the birth of punk, in retrospect, were as a producer; he oversaw the most seminal works of the Stooges, the Modern Lovers, Nico, and Patti Smith (*Horses*).

Patti Smith, like Television, Blondie, and Richard Hell, made some recordings before her first widely available full-length release. In each case, these have only been heard by a small clique of hardcore fans, on limited edition independent singles, bootlegs, private tapes, and official CDs that were released long after the acts had passed into legend. In a fashion, these can be considered to show the "roots of punk," although the performers were actually first-wave punk/new wave performers themselves. But anyone with a serious interest in the history of the scene should check these out, the most important of them being Patti Smith's "Hey Joe" single and *Free Music Store* bootleg (taken from a radio broadcast before a drummer had joined her group); Television's "Little Johnny Jewel" single, along with demos from the same mid-'70s period (which appear on the bootleg *Double Exposure*); and Blondie's 1975 demos, finally released officially on 1994's *Platinum Collection*. The most intriguing relics of the lot, though, are the astonishingly abrasive cuts recorded in April 1973 by the Neon Boys, who featured both Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell (these were later issued on Hell's *Past And Present* EP).

Other than New York, the only hotbed of pre-punk activity in the United States was Cleveland. The Electric Eels' "Agitated"/"Cyclotron" single (recorded in '75, but not issued until '78) is perhaps the single most modern punk-like record cut before 1976, with ranting, nearly unintelligible lyrics delivered in the most grating way imaginable, while distorted, overmodulated guitars clang chaotically in the background. The tracks on the Eels' posthumous CD collections, issued only in the late '80s and early '90s (some featuring future Cramps drummer Nick Knox), are even less accessible, ranking not just as the most dissonant pre-punk, but as some of the most deliberately alienating and uncommercial rock music ever made; "Agitated"/"Cyclotron" were at least centered around crunching riffs. Other semi-legendary Cleveland bands like Mirrors and the Styrenes did a fair amount of recording, but little has ever been easily available; a cogent collection of mid-'70s Cleveland pre-punk is long overdue. Early demos by mechanical rock pioneers Devo (actually from nearby Akron, Ohio), some dating back as early as 1974, did surface on Rykodisc in the early 1990s.

A final Cleveland band, Rocket from the Tombs, may have been the most interesting of all, featuring David Thomas and Peter Laughner before those two formed Pere Ubu, as well as (for a brief time) future Dead Boy Stiv Bators. While their roots lay in '60s hard rock and heavy metal, what came out was artier, darker, rawer, different, and a definite foreshadowing of punk and new wave in its ominous alienation. Most of their material was original, and indeed several of their stronger compositions would be resuscitated in subsequent years by Pere Ubu ("Thirty Seconds over Tokyo," "Life Stinks," and "Final Solution") and the Dead Boys ("Ain't It Fun"). Nothing was officially released by the group, and even limited edition bootlegs of their tapes (which were actually broadcast on a popular FM Cleveland station in early 1975) are incredibly scarce. These tapes, though not up to "normal" studio standards, are not just some of the most seminal music of the birth of punk/new wave, but some of the most seminal rock music of any sort that has even yet to gain reasonable unofficial availability, though they have circulated among a small group of collectors for years. Thomas and Laughner proceeded along similar but artier directions on their first singles, before Laughner left; he died in 1977, leaving behind some solo recordings in a much folkier vein, wearing a debt to *Berlin*-era Lou Reed on his sleeve.

Part of the problem in classifying and collecting the music that was the roots of punk is that it was not thought of as pre-punk when it was being made, just as the music that led to rock 'n' roll was never labeled as pre-rock until long after the fact. At the time, it was just weird offshoots of the underground rock scene, some of which got reasonably wide critical attention, some of which was totally ignored, and hardly any of which was seen as part of the same cloth. The first edition of *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' roll*, for instance, published in 1976 on the eve of punk's birth, covers the Velvet Underground in its chapter on art rock, and the Stooges and MC5 in the heavy metal section. It wasn't until 1976 and 1977 that all of the elements coalesced into a reasonably broad-based movement in both the US and the UK, with the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Ramones, Patti Smith, and others leading the charge of punk and new wave into the public's consciousness. But like all important "cult" music that was misunderstood or underappreciated in its own era, the pre-punk pioneers—who often owed as much to pre-1970 rock traditions as their own futuristic innovations—have come to be regarded with as much respect as the first bona fide punk rockers.

Recommended Recordings

The Velvet Underground, *Peel Slowly and See* (Polydor)
The Velvet Underground, *1969: Velvet Underground Live* (Mercury)
The Fugs, *The Fugs First Album* (Fantasy)
The Fugs, *The Fugs* (Fantasy)
The MC5, *Babes in Arms* (ROIR)
The MC5, *Kick out the Jams* (Elektra)
The Stooges, *The Stooges* (Elektra)
The Stooges, *Fun House* (Elektra)
The Stooges, *Raw Power* (Elektra)
The Modern Lovers, *The Original Modern Lovers* (Bomp)
Lou Reed, *Transformer* (RCA)
Lou Reed, *Berlin* (RCA)
Nico, *The Marble Index* (Elektra)
The New York Dolls, *New York Dolls* (Mercury)
The New York Dolls, *Too Much, Too Soon* (Mercury)
Various Artists, *The Great New York Singles Scene* (ROIR)
Patti Smith, *Free Music Store* (bootleg)
Television, *Double Exposure* (bootleg)
The Neon Boys, "Love Comes in Spurts"/"That's All I Know (Right Now)" (part of Richard Hell's *Past and Present* EP, *Shake*)

Rocket From The Tombs, *WMMS Broadcasts* (bootleg tapes)

Books

From Velvets to Voidoids: A Pre-Punk History for a Post-Punk World, by Clinton Heylin (Penguin, 1993)

Up-tight: The Velvet Underground Story, by Victor Bockris (Omnibus, 1993)

Transformer: The Lou Reed Story, by Victor Bockris (Simon & Schuster, 1995)

Nico: The Life & Lies of an Icon, by Richard Witts (Virgin, UK, 1993)

–Richie Unterberger

Pub Rock

Defiantly unpretentious and unfazed by the zeitgeist, pub rock, despite being a short-lived permutation of British rock, was in essence a roots-rock retrenchment that flew in the face of British glam/glitter rock of the early and mid-'70s. Many of pub rock's proponents came from a mixture of mid-'60s British R&B, hippie folk-blues, and country backgrounds, and this conflation of similar styles led to some wonderfully spirited rock 'n' roll that, somewhat unintentionally, turned into a subtle rebellion by musicians against the machinations of the pop music industry. Pub rock never caught on in a big way; in fact some critics assert its heyday was only between 1971-74. Nonetheless, there were plenty of excellent pub rock bands, and many musicians who cut their teeth during this time went on to join some of the seminal English bands of the late '70s.

Although it shares many common elements with American roots-rock, pub rock is distinctly British; the result of a small but supportive community-based scene that focused in pubs around London. The scene coalesced around a former London jazz club, the Tally Ho, and soon spread to dozens of other pubs in the city keen to book rock bands. With glitter/glam rock dominating the British charts, pub rock musicians, fans, and the pub owners who booked them regarded this music as a way to reject the egregious trappings and slavish attempts at pop superstardom for something that was more honest, direct, and communal.

Ironically, the band that gets credit for jumpstarting pub rock is an obscure American R&B band, Eggs over Easy, who in 1972 gigged at the Tally Ho. Despite this jarring piece of history, it should be known that the English musicians inspired by the Eggs had been playing in mid-to-late-'60s blues, folk, and R&B bands such as the Action and Kippington Lodge (the latter featuring Brinsley Schwarz and Nick Lowe). British rock critic Pete Frame, who has written definitively about pub rock, notes three periods in the genre's development roughly spanning the years 1972-1975: first was the early Tally Ho period featuring bands such as Bees Make Honey (their moniker a tribute to Eggs over Easy), Brinsley Schwarz, and Ducks Deluxe; the second wave of bands included Kilburn and the High Roads (featuring Ian Dury), Chilli Willi & the Red Hot Peppers, and Ace; the third and final bunch of pub rockers were led by the Winkies, Sniff & the Tears, and the great Dr. Feelgood.

Of the aforementioned bands, the one perhaps most familiar to American audiences is Brinsley Schwarz. Named after their great lead guitarist, they, more than any other band, defined all that was good about pub rock. And, unlike many of their ilk (up until Dr. Feelgood), had the longest and most successful recording career and managed to get many of their LPs released in America. Despite a storied public-relations disaster wherein the band was flown to the Fillmore East for a showcase gig and slammed by American rock critics (effectively ending stateside interest in pub rock), Brinsley Schwarz set up a two-gigs-a-week residency at the Tally Ho, providing the inspiration for literally every pub rock band that came in their wake. Brinsley Schwarz broke up in 1975, bassist Nick Lowe went on to a solo career, as did guitarist Ian Gomm, while Schwarz and keyboardist Bob Andrews joined forces with ex-Ducks Deluxe guitarist Martin Belmont to form Graham Parker's phenomenal backing band, the Rumour.

Lowe's success and the rise of Graham Parker and the Rumour are a small indication of the kind of influence pub rock had on the next generation of British rock 'n' rollers. After Kilburn and the High Roads, Ian Dury embarked on a wonderful, if inconsistent, solo career; Elvis Costello's earliest musical days were with pub rockers Flip City and he found future Attractions drummer Pete Thomas in Chilli Willi & the Red Hot Peppers; Clash frontman Joe Strummer made his first records in a late-period pub rock band, the 101ers; even enigmatic avant-gardists the Residents had significant musical contributions made to their records by a pub rock vet, the late Phil "Snakefinger" Lithman, another ex-member of Chilli Willi. And lest one think that pub rock had no impact on the American Top Ten, remember the song "How Long," by pub rock veterans Ace, and featuring vocalist/keyboardist Paul Carrack, reached No. 3 in 1975.

Pete Frame argues (and he's right) that after the breakup of Brinsley Schwarz and Ducks Deluxe in 1975, pub rock was, for all intents and purposes, over. However, a wild, high-energy blues/R&B band from Canvey Island in Essex named Dr. Feelgood was the most vital band of the late pub rock era and served as a crucial link to early punk rock. Fronted by the late great Lee Brilleaux (who succumbed to cancer in 1994), and the inspired guitar playing of Wilko Johnson, the Feelgoods released their first LP, *Down by the Jetty* (recorded in mono) in 1975 and released four great LPs before Johnson's departure in 1977. The band soldiered on until Brilleaux's death (at the end Brilleaux was the lone original member) and made good records, but lacked the panache that Wilko supplied. Important to note is that the members of Feelgood lent the cash for pub rock-fan Dave Robinson to start his great independent label Stiff and give artists like Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello, Ian Dury, Wreckless Eric, the Damned, and Dave Edmunds a place to record.

In many ways, pub rock, because of its insularity, smallness, and disinterest in becoming an international pop phenomenon, was destined to last only a short while. And although it remains somewhat of a mystery to many American ears, the music that resulted from this scene retains its vigorous, incorruptible spirit. It was the music of the moment, played by musicians who cared more about sincerity and less about fame.

Recommended Recordings

Ace, *Five a Side* (Anchor)
Bees Make Honey, *Music Every Night* (EMI)
Brinsley Schwarz, *Brinsley Schwarz* (Capitol) and *Silver Pistol* (Edsel)
Chilli Willi & the Red Hot Peppers, *Bongos over Balham* (Mooncrest)
Ducks Deluxe, *Don't Mind Rockin' Tonight* (RCA)
Dr. Feelgood, *Malpractice* (Columbia) and *Stupidity* (Liberty)
The 101ers, *Elgin Avenue Breakdown* (Andalucia)
The Winkies, *The Winkies* (Chrysalis)

–John Dougan

Punk Music

English critic Jon Savage noted that history is made by those who say "No," and in 1976 there was no louder "No" than that of punk rock. Dismissed by the shortsighted as crude anti-musicality, punk dared to place itself in direct confrontation with the then-ruling rock hegemony: generally thirty-something pop stars content to reinvent and regurgitate clichés in a sort of stylistic stasis, a dire situation exacerbated by the tightly controlled mid-to-late-'70s FM programming style known as AOR (album-oriented rock) and glutted with a seemingly endless array of not-so-hard-rock and not-quite-so-heavy-metal bands that sounded as if they'd been created by record-label marketing departments.

From the start, punk angrily stood in direct contrast to the zeitgeist. Still, as with all rock genres and sub-genres, it was hardly an organic movement. Its antecedents included the noisy primitivism of the Velvet Underground, the mega-loud working-class anger of the Who, the high-energy guitar spuzz of the MC5 and the Stooges, and the androgyny of the New York Dolls (with a few dollops of Bowie and early Roxy Music for good measure). Of course as punk developed (Note: The first known use of "punk rock" as a genre identifier goes back to the early '70s, *Creem* magazine, and critics Dave Marsh and Lester Bangs), it metamorphosed into numerous subgenres that championed a host of influences as disparate as reggae, mid-'60s bubblegum, early psychedelic rock, art-rock, free jazz, and musique concrete. Literally anything fit the equation; it was just a matter of attitude and presentation.

In a purely historical sense, punk's timeline is 1975-1978, and even that's somewhat generous. But with its supernova long since faded and its style coopted by greedy major labels who turned it into the more sanitized "new wave," punk's impact is still being felt in the '90s. It almost singlehandedly revived the independent record-label network and helped start a legitimate network of underground journals and a new style of music criticism. Most importantly, it imbued a younger generation with the spirit that they too could become part of the great rock 'n' roll whatsis, thereby planting the seeds for the future development of many successful US and UK regional alternative rock scenes (e.g., Los Angeles; Minneapolis; Seattle; Athens, GA; Manchester, England). It's hard to imagine bands like the Replacements, Nirvana, and R.E.M. existing without the contributions of the Sex Pistols, Clash, the Ramones, and the Buzzcocks.

These days, the term "punk" seems almost quaint. And truth be told, the story of punk and its pervasive influence is only now being told. But as with rap and current heavy metal (two genres that share punk's attitude), punk always seemed to be about the unencumbered joy of self-expression: total, unequivocal and often unedited. If you listen to a handful of the records listed below, you'll soon hear that, even today, punk never seems too far from the pop zeitgeist, a range of influence far greater than its originators had in mind.

Books

Punk Diary, by George Dimarc (St. Martin's, 1994)

–John Dougan

British Punk

Taking cues from some American bands, as well as the English mini-phenomenon known as "pub rock," English punk transmogrified into an entirely different beast, one that also valued stripped-down, primal guitar rock and a DIY (do it yourself) attitude, but one that openly embraced multiculturalism (e.g., ska and reggae), politics (a dysfunctional late-'70s government), and radical philosophy (e.g., the French Situationists). With the galvanic Sex Pistols leading the way, English rock would never be the same, as the sybaritic excesses of the post-hippie era were replaced by angry kids yelling "no future" and referring to successful rock stars as "boring old farts."

Punk took Great Britain—both its entertainment industry and its general citizenry—by surprise. In the mid-'70s, the massive tornado of the British Invasion was a fading memory whose survivors sat atop the charts with pale echoes of their best work. Disco and soft pop-rock were the trends of the day, as they were in the US. The nation's economy was flailing, and more and more teenagers left school to go straight on the dole (a British equivalent of welfare), with little hope for financial success or social stimulation in the near future.

Malcolm McLaren, who with his wife Vivienne Westwood ran a boutique that catered to an ever-changing clientele seeking alternative fashions, was on the lookout for a band of loutish post-adolescents to use as a platform for his loosely held anarchist and Situationist ideas. He harbored aspirations to take over the New York Dolls' management, but when that band splintered, he looked to even scruffier, younger musicians that frequented his store. In late 1975, the Sex Pistols began to perform, with McLaren as their manager.

An "alternative" scene (though they didn't call it as such at the time) did exist in Britain on a small level, as "pub rock." In truth, bands like Dr. Feelgood, Eggs over Easy, Ducks Deluxe, and even the acclaimed Brinsley Schwarz sound pretty tame and unrevolutionary. What they shared with punk was a disdain for contemporary pop and progressive rock trends, and a love for basic, stripped-down, guitar-oriented music. Besides supplying punk with some of its early figureheads, such as the principal movers of Stiff Records and Joe Strummer (who left his pub rock band the 101ers to join the Clash), the pub rock performance circuit provided crucial live venues for punk acts when the music was struggling to get off the ground. Throughout 1976, the Sex Pistols built up a fierce underground reputation with their incendiary live shows (which were often as not, violence-ridden, chaotic affairs). In late 1976, their debut single "Anarchy in the UK," established punk's modus operandi: scabrous guitars, hyperkinetic rhythms, and inflammatory, venomous lyrics, with crude energy carrying the day.

The Pistols endured a complicated tangle of personnel, management, and label problems in 1977 that kept them from releasing a full-length album for about a year (although a couple more key singles appeared in the meantime). Other groups were already following their blueprint, however, and stepped into the breach that Johnny Rotten had opened. The most famous members of what has come to be called "The Class of '77" include the Damned; the Clash, who infused punk with revolutionary politics and reggae rhythms; the Jam, post-mods who modeled themselves after the early Who; and the Buzzcocks, whose nervous, accelerated rhythms didn't hide a keen grasp of pop hooks.

As with all momentous musical movements, these figureheads (they would have disdained the label "stars" at the time) were the tip of an explosion that saw many minor but important groups adding their voices to the clamor, as well as interesting one and two-shots leaping into the volcano. Generation X, the Adverts, the Vibrators, and the Saints (actually from Australia) recorded important early punk records; X-Ray Spex did a lot to smash rock stereotypes by featuring a half-Black teenage female with braces as their lead singer. Groups like Chelsea, Eater, Johnny Moped, and Slaughter & the Dogs are esteemed by collectors for the one or two memorable songs they had in them.

Today, early British punk records still sound exciting, but hardly the epitome of nihilistic shock. At the time, however, they could not have caused more of a sensation, inspiring equal measures of fervent praise and outright hostility. The tempo was FAST (although hardcore made it go even faster), the guitars and vocals slashing and LOUD, and the lyrics—much, though by no means all, negative in nature—addressed politics, sex, depression, and society with a frank realism that had rarely been heard in pop music, and never as part of a broad-based movement. The performers were not seasoned virtuosos, valuing inspiration and attitude above professionalism. Some listeners viewed the results as unbearably crude; others welcomed them as a necessary shot of air to blast rock 'n' roll out of its complacency.

Punk never took hold in the US as it did in Britain, although those who were converted took up the music with a passion that equaled their UK counterparts. The Sex Pistols found this out the hard way, with John Lydon (nee Rotten) leaving the group in early 1978 after the last show of a brief, legendarily chaotic tour of the States, where their album stopped just short of the Top 100.



British punk did not so much die out as mutate and diversify, as any vital musical style needs to do in order to survive. As liberating as the first wave of punk was, it was impossible to perform an endless loop of hyper-fast, bile-filled anthems, as the musicians' ambitions broadened and their skills improved. The Jam remained huge stars in their homeland through the early '80s. Like the Clash, who become stars in the US at long last after 1979's *London Calling*, they refined their sound and incorporated R&B, soul, and pop into their compositions without compromising their integrity. While original British punkers like Generation X and Sham 69 played themselves out almost immediately, others went into arty minimalism (Wire, the Fall), post-psychedelia (the Soft Boys), pop-punk (the Undertones, from Northern Ireland), or new wave (Siouxsie & the Banshees)

A fertile, more techno-oriented scene developed in the Buzzcocks' home territory of Manchester, spearheaded by Joy Division and other acts on Factory Records. And pub rock veterans like Nick Lowe, Elvis Costello, and Tom Robinson tapped into punk's energy to midwife new wave, which by 1980 had become the new label for a modified, tamed, but innovative offspring of the original punk explosion.

Recommended Recordings

The Sex Pistols, *Never Mind the Bollocks* (Warner Brothers)
Various Artists, *Anarchy in the UK—UK Punk I (1976-77)* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *The Modern World—UK Punk II (1977-78)* (Rhino)
The Clash, *The Clash* (Epic)
The Jam, *Snap!* (Polydor)
The Buzzcocks, *Singles Going Steady* (IRS)
The Adverts, *Crossing the Sea with the Adverts* (Link Classics, UK)
X-Ray Spex, *Germ-Free Adolescents* (EMI)
The Vibrators, *Power of Money: The Best of the Vibrators* (Continuum)
The Undertones, *The Undertones* (Rykodisc)
Generation X, *Generation X* (Chrysalis)
The Damned, *Damned Damned Damned* (Frontier)

Books

England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock, by Jon Savage (St. Martin's, 1991)

– Richie Unterberger & John Dougan

American Punk Rock

American punk rock was actively brewing years before the UK scene. The trade-off, perhaps, was that it was less explosive, less of a broad-based movement, less confrontational, and less concerned with disowning time-honored rock 'n' roll traditions. Still, it was not only a crucial source of inspiration for Britain's more volatile brand of punk, but a more diverse (though diffuse) movement whose effects were just as influential and long-reaching.

Some have argued that the true source of American punk rock lies in the incredibly active garage rock scene of the mid-'60s, and indeed the term "punk rock" was originally coined by critics like Dave Marsh,



Lester Bangs, and future Patti Smith Group guitarist Lenny Kaye to refer to these bands. In the late '60s, Detroit groups the MC5 and the Stooges played amphetamined rock driven by fuzzed-out guitars and baldly outraged (and outrageous) lyrics that sound all but indistinguishable from early punk records.

An equally important, artier strand of raw rock 'n' roll minimalism was pioneered in New York in the late '60s by the Velvet Underground. Not all of their work foreshadowed punk, but even their songs that didn't feature street-life vignettes and overamped guitars (and there were plenty of both, especially on their early albums) had a no-frills, unembellished attitude that acted as the standard for the many groups, in New York and elsewhere, that looked to them for inspiration.

Two American acts blazed lonely trails in the early '70s that midwived the birth of punk. In Boston, the Modern Lovers, led by Jonathan Richman, added youthful naivete to the Velvets' glorious primitivism. Their early '70s recordings rank among the most joyous and affecting proto-punk/new wave efforts, although, tragically, the original and best lineup of the band released nothing during their lifetime. The New York Dolls affected a trashy, sub-early Rolling Stones glam rock image that attracted raves from local critics, but made little national impact, although Malcolm McLaren's brief association with the band in their dying days gave him many ideas to pass on to the Sex Pistols.

The American punk scene coalesced around New York City's Lower East Side and, specifically, at Hilly Kristal's bowery club, CBGB's. By late 1975/early 1976, bands such as the Patti Smith Group, the Ramones, Talking Heads, Blondie, Television, and the Heartbreakers (featuring former New York Doll Johnny Thunders) had pretty much made this dive their home, and complacent old American rock now faced a significant challenge.

Suddenly there was a scene that offered cultural solidarity, if little in the way of stylistic unanimity: the fast, loud, tuneful minimalism of the Ramones was offset by Patti Smith's poetic incantations, Television's spiraling guitar duels, Blondie's sexy neo-Spector pop, the egghead pop of the Talking Heads, and the fierce synthesizer minimalism of Suicide. What connected these bands was a sense of purpose and community; they were angry outsiders who insisted that the only way to change rock 'n' roll was to dismantle it and rebuild it, thereby reclaiming it. That didn't actually mean they weren't cognizant of rock's best traditions: "Hey Joe," "Surfin' Bird," "1-2-3 Red Light," and old songs by the 13th Floor Elevators, Al Green, and Randy & the Rainbows were featured prominently in the early repertoires of one or the other of the bands listed above.

At the outset, these bands were more influential than popular on a national level, though Patti Smith did fairly well, and Blondie and the Talking Heads would eventually break through to superstardom. In fact, Television were far more popular in the UK, where their second album even made the Top Ten. The Ramones were also more popular there, and extremely influential; indeed, their "1-2-3-4!" brand of accelerated rock 'n' roll made them one of the only early CBGB's bands to fit most listeners' basic conceptions of punk rock. It's been claimed that Malcolm McLaren took the prototype safety pin and torn T-shirt punk look from Richard Hell, who helped ignite the scene with Tom Verlaine in the original Television lineup before fronting the Voidoids. Outside of New York, the US lacked a strong punk scene. With innovative but impossibly uncommercial groups like the Electric Eels, as well as more accessible acts like Rocket from the Tombs and Mirrors, Cleveland had an active proto-punk scene that lacked the exposure, either in a renowned club or on national record labels, necessary to spread its influence. Devo (not actually from Cleveland, but from the Ohio town of Akron) and Pere Ubu eventually broke through to widespread recognition with a style of new wave that was bleaker and more mechanized than most anything happening in New York. Many Boston bands would appear by the late '70s, on the whole more identified with power pop than punk.

In 1977, active punk scenes quickly sprang up in California, particularly in Los Angeles, which owed considerably more to the influence of early British punk—just making its inroads in the States via import records—than the New York bands. Generally, these groups played a harder, nastier, faster, more jaded type of punk. Not as commercial as either the London or New York punk acts—not that any of the California bands would have cared—the Dils, the Germs, the Avengers, and the Dickies laid the foundation for thrash/hardcore. X, very much a part of the early L.A. scene, would be one of the few to break out into any sort of large-scale success, by which time they'd tempered and diversified their original sound.

Isolated pockets of punk activity took hold in quite a few US cities, mainly ones with large youthful, artistic-leaning populations, such as Seattle and Austin. But the fact of the matter is, punk never seized the collective consciousness in the States, partly because of industry resistance to the music, and at least equally because many (perhaps most) rock listeners didn't like it. Nonetheless, American punk bands were a bedrock of much of the music of the 1980s and 1990s: the Athens, GA, new wave scene; alternative rock; the "no-wave" of New York avant-rockers ranging from Lydia Lunch and James Chance to Glenn Branca and Sonic Youth; hardcore; grunge—all of these developments derived key inspiration from the original punk bands.

Recommended Recordings

The Modern Lovers, *Modern Lovers* (Bomp)
The Patti Smith Group, *Horses* (Arista)
The Ramones, *All the Stuff & More, Vol. 1* (Warner Brothers)
Television, *Marquee Moon* (Elektra)
Blondie, *Blondie* (Chrysalis)
The Talking Heads, *Talking Heads '77* (Sire)
Various Artists, *Blank Generation—The New York Scene* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *We're Desperate—The L.A. Scene* (Rhino)
Richard Hell & the Voidoids, *Blank Generation* (Sire)
The Avengers, *Avengers* (CD Presents)
Suicide, *Suicide* (Restless)
Pere Ubu, *Terminal Tower* (Twintone)

Books

From the Velvets to the Voidoids, by Clinton Heylin (Penguin, 1993)

–Richie Unterberger & John Dougan

Post-Punk

For many artists and musicians, punk rock represented the relaxation of artistic conventions and restraints. While some musicians interpreted this relaxation as a cue to be vulgar and anti-social—and thereby laying the groundwork for the nihlistic hardcore movement—just as many interpreted it as a way for them to push musical boundaries. These artists were initially categorized as part of the new wave, but it became clear that the post-punk bands were more ambitious, serious and challenging than the pop-oriented new wave groups. As a result, they rarely had the same commercial success as new wave, but their records received greater critical acclaim and large cult followings that eventually turned into musicians themselves.

Post-punk was artier and darker than punk. It was less concerned with rock, preferring to concentrate on alternately haunting and abrasive textures, incorporating elements of the avant-garde, funk and worldbeat into their minimalistic rock 'n' roll. Essentially, it was assaultive art-rock, one that had little connection with the bloated prog-rock of the '70s, but owed a great deal to the experimental music of the Velvet Underground, the Who, Frank Zappa, the Stooges and Captain Beefheart. This aesthetic was alive and well before the New York strains of punk rock burst to life in the late '70s, as the Cleveland, Ohio-based Pere Ubu illustrates.

Pere Ubu were post-punk before punk even existed. Basing their weird, noisy urban blues-rock on British bands like the Yardbirds and the Who, Pere Ubu moved into dark, claustrophobic and strange directions with their first singles and 1978 debut album *The Modern Dance.* Their music was too odd for most listeners, yet its arty eclecticism and

bleak tone set the pace for much of American post-punk, not the least of which were their Akron, Ohio contemporaries Devo. Appearing a few years after Pere Ubu, Devo married their concept of humankind's "devolution" to noisy, herky-jerky synthesized pop and a striking visual style, where the band all looked like robotic clones of each other. Of all the post-punk bands, Devo tended to be a little catchier, yet their hooks were geeky, introverted and entirely arty and claustrophobic.

Since Devo had a clever visual concept, they were able to translate to MTV, thereby giving them a significantly larger audience. Not all of their American peers were as lucky. The Residents' performance-art avant-operas were nearly as old as Pere Ubu, yet they were barely noticed outside of metropolitan circles. All of New York's abrasive, nearly-unlistenable "no wave" scene, led by James Chance & the Contortions, remained obscure outside of the Big Apple. The Feelies were rarely heard outside of underground circles, yet their nervy, jangly pop would have great impact in the American indie-rock world during the '80s. One of the only American post-punk bands to reach both a large cult audience and the mainstream were Talking Heads, who had played both punk and new wave before they worked with Brian Eno on the groundbreaking, African-influenced *Remain in Light*.

On the whole, the Americans were defiantly, self-consciously arty and detachedly intellectual. Their British counterparts were just as arty, yet their music was darker and more emotional; it was angst, not intellectualism. The first wave of post-punks—Gang of Four, Siouxsie & the Banshees, Joy Division, Adam & the Ants—formed immediately after the Sex Pistols, and instead of following through on the Johnny Rotten's unbridled rage, they turned it inward, creating gloomy, atmospheric soundscapes that bristled with tension and claustrophobic angst. Gang of Four's blend of leftist politics, abrasive guitar noise and funk rhythms was invigorating, acclaimed and influential, yet they were rarely heard outside of small circles. Both Siouxsie & the Banshees and Adam & the Ants mined similar territory at first, making records that were dense with dissonant keyboards and angular guitars, and giving theatrical concerts. Joy Division and their lead Ian Curtis weren't as explicitly arty, but their music was even more introverted. Their two haunting, monolithic albums *Unknown Pleasures* and *Closer*, functioned as the touchstone for goth-rock, which was the subgenre that the Cure became known for. Initially, the Cure's music was jagged and fractured, yet quite catchy, but as their career progressed, they slowed their tempos down and began languishing in long, synth-driven soundscapes. But if any band was known for goth, it was Bauhaus, a quartet that specialized in slow, atmospheric textures punctuated by phased guitar and Bowiesque vocals.

By the early '80s, post-punk had distinguished itself from new wave, which had begun to break into the pop mainstream. Post-punk didn't aim for such success, yet it proved to be a mercurial phenomenon anyway. Many of the groups were short-lived, and those that did continue—Talking Heads, Adam & the Ants, Siouxsie & the Banshees, the Cure—altered the sound and attack as they grew artistically. Two other bands, Joy Division and Bauhaus, continued in new guises—New Order and Love & Rockets, respectively—and started to explore new stylistic ground. Most of these groups began moving away from the claustrophobic doom that distinguished early post-punk, moving toward cleaner, dissonant attacks. The Birthday Party and its leader Nick Cave picked up the gloomy slack, but other groups—such as the fractured Fall, the agit-rock Pop Group, the ringingly anthemic U2, the twisted roots-punk of the Mekons and the stark, cool neo-psychedelia of Echo & the Bunnymen and the Teardrop Explodes—fit into the newly redefined sound of post-punk.

Post-punk never died out, but it faded away in the mid-'80s, as its offspring began making records. By that time, the jangle-pop of R.E.M., the post-hardcore punk-pop of Hüsker Dü and the avant-rock of Sonic Youth had all taken center stage in the American underground, while the self-absorbed pop of the Smiths and the swirling noise of the Jesus & Mary Chain divided the British indie scene in two camps. While these groups were active, several of their forefathers were enjoying their greatest success. The Cure, New Order, Siouxsie & the Banshees, Nick Cave, Love & Rockets and the Fall continued to be major players into the early '90s, by which time their music had lost some of its initial shock. Some of the records sound dated and precious, but the best post-punk retains its power, and it's possible to hear its impact throughout contemporary rock, particularly in the epic soundscapes of Radiohead.

Recommended Recordings

Joy Division, *Unknown Pleasures* (Qwest)
Joy Division, *Closer* (Qwest)
The Cure, *Staring at the Sea* (Elecktra)
Pere Ubu, *The Modern Dance* (Blank/Rough Trade)
Talking Heads, *Remain in Light* (Sire)
Adam & the Ants, *Dirk Wears White Socks* (Do It/Epic)
Siouxsie & the Banshees, *Once Upon a Time* (Geffen)
The Feelies, *Crazy Rhythms* (A&M)
Gang of Four, *Entertainment!* (Infinite Zero)
Bauhaus, *In the Flat Field* (4AD)
U2, *Boy* (Island)
The Fall, *458489 A-Sides* (Beggars Banquet)
Birthday Party, *Hits* (4AD)
Mekons, *Mekons Rock & Roll* (A&M)
Echo & the Bunnymen, *Songs to Learn and Sing* (Sire)
New Order, *Movement* (Qwest)
The Pop Group, *The Pop Group* (Radar)
X, *Los Angeles/Wild Gift* (Slash)
The Slits, *Cut* (Antilles)
The Residents, *Meet the Residents* (East Side Digital)
Devo, *Are We Not Men? We Are Devo!* (Warner Brothers)

—Stephen Thomas Erlewine

New Wave

Punk rock may not have had the all-encompassing revolutionary effect that it originally was supposed to—after all, disco and pop still reigned on the charts after the Sex Pistols' disbandment—but it left a number of musical upheavals in its wake. At the time, every musical genre that followed punk was termed "new wave," in homage to the generation of French filmmakers that revolutionized the cinema in the '50s. Many hardline punk fans and critics complained about the term new wave and the music itself, claiming that it was designed to defuse the danger of punk, but in retrospect, the commercialization and broadening of punk culture was inevitable. Also, it seemed that new wave was quite different than post-punk, which tended to be more adventurous and self-consciously arty, as well as hardcore, which took the amateurish, thuggish tendencies of punk to an extreme. So where does that leave new wave? It is a catch-all term, collecting a variety of pop-oriented musics that weren't part of the mainstream, yet were melodic, catchy, idiosyncratic and quirky. new wave applied to everything from synthesized dance-pop to mod and ska-revivalists—as long as it relied on hooks and disregarded the pop mainstream, it was called new wave. There wasn't a specific sound, but there was a sensibility, one that was humorous, quirky and, most of all, not dangerous. It had the left-of-center sensibility, but none of the revolutionary danger, of punk rock.

In America, some of the very first punk bands indicated how the music would transform into new wave. With their ironic reworkings of '60s pop, bubblegum and garage rock, Blondie and the Ramones had the melodic sensibilities, as well as the visual gimmicks that would prove to be key to commercial new wave success. However, Blondie—who were blessed with Debbie Harry's sexy, photogenic looks—made the commercial crossover, and the Ramones remained a cult act, no matter how hard they tried to break into the pop charts with buzzingly catchy rockers like "Sheena is a Punk Rocker" and "Rock N Roll Radio." One of their New York contemporaries, Talking Heads, managed to become stars in the early '80s, after albums like *Talking Heads '77*, *More Songs About Buildings and Food* and *Remain in Light* had established their geeky, intellectual pop sense. Through these early records, Talking Heads became one of the leading American new wave bands, but their influence was overshadowed by the Athens, Georgia quartet the B-52's and the Boston quintet, the Cars.

With their celebration of B-movie kitsch, dissonant harmonies and jerky hooks, the B-52's developed a new rock 'n' roll lexicon. They were defiantly strange and weirdly funny, with distinctive visual gimmicks and aural hooks that were easily as revolutionary as the speedy guitars of the Ramones. Their aesthetic was borrowed by numerous bands, many of which turned out to be one-hit wonders, but there were a handful that took it as rallying cry. These generally turned out to bands that were major players in alternative rock—during the late '70s and early '80s, the sound of B-52's was only heard in clubs and colleges, since the mainstream radio accepted new wave in the form of the Cars. For a band that cribbed heavily from the Velvet Underground and Iggy Pop, the Cars were remarkably straightforward; their pulsating, minimalisitic rock 'n' roll played like arena rock since it emphasized the hook and loud guitars. Following the Cars, album-rock radio and many of its staple artists began incorporating new wave production techniques in an attempt to stay modern, and it resulted in some trashy, fun hits from veteran rockers that were generally clueless about punk. Of course, there were also bands like the Motels, Missing Persons and the Fixx whose sensibility was more akin to AOR than punk, but they were able to co-opt the new wave sound quite successfully. These bands provided the backdrop for the true sound of new wave, the multitudes of quirky, edgy pop singles that incorporated punk sensibility and culture within the confines of a three-minute pop single. The first to essay this idea successfully was Elvis Costello, a pub-rock singer-songwriter that became a sensation with his 1977 debut album *My Aim is True*. A smart, nervy collection of tight pop songs and ballads, *My Aim is True* illustrated that punk's energy could be harnessed in more accessible, straightforward

styles and it also established that the music could be the province of geeky outsiders instead of stylish hipsters or brutish thugs. Costello's geeky persona would echo throughout the new wave years, yet his initial impact was how he pushed older pub rockers like Nick Lowe and Graham Parker into the limelight. These pub-rockers, whose initial rejection of rock stardom conventions paved the way for punk, favored pop, rock and folk, and helped usher in an explosive era of singles that covered a wide spectrum of sounds and styles.

During the late '70s and early '80s, there were countless bands that mined the catchy, quirky guitar-pop vein of new wave. There were conventional power-pop bands like Bram Tchaikovsky, the Romantics, 20/20 and the Knack, as well as the revitalized rock 'n' roll of the Pretenders, the jittery pop of XTC, the inspired songcraft of Squeeze, the Police's savvy pop-reggae and the spruced-up retro-rock of Rockpile and its two leaders, Nick Lowe and Dave Edmunds. Almost simultaneously, the ska and mod revivals surfaced in England. The Specials, Madness and the (English) Beat spearheaded the ska revival, which had a stronger dance rhythm than most new wave variations, along with more humor. The Jam updated the stridently British rock of the Who and the Kinks, and countless bands tried to mimic the band's punchy attack and lead singer-songwriter Paul Weller's biting lyricism. Soon, such guitar-oriented bands gave way to the synthesized, danceable territory of synth-pop and New Romantics like ABC, Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet. Inspired by David Bowie and Roxy Music's detached glamor and robotic soul, the New Romantics had cool electronic surfaces, crooning vocals and a distinctive visual style, which incorporated teased hair and flamboyant clothing. Such striking visuals made them naturals for MTV, a cable television network that debuted in 1981.

MTV needed videos to fill their 24 hours of programming, and new wave, particularly New Romantics, became their key to success. Soon, these groups, who had already had significant success in England, began making inroads across America, not only in New York and Los Angeles, but also in the midwest. Elvis Costello, the Clash, the Go-Go's, the Police, the Cars, the Pretenders and Talking Heads became stars thanks to MTV and mainstream radio play, but MTV's most significant contribution was fueling the last great era of one-hit wonders. The network did play the Jam, XTC and the Specials, but these only became major cult acts in America. Instead, the US audience favored A Flock of Seagulls, Haircut 100, the Joboxers, the Buggles—an endless stream of bands that were united only by the fact that they had great videos and one or two hits.

Within a few years, MTV was a major force in the music industry, and they had helped make bands like Duran Duran and the Australian pop-rock combo Men at Work into international stars. But by that point, new wave was beginning to run out of steam. Several major bands, including the Clash, the Specials and the Jam broke up, while others, such as Squeeze, Elvis Costello and Madness had taken time off to restructure their sound. Furthermore, the record industry had pushed too many bands like the Motels that simply co-opted new wave, which helped the public reach a saturation point. Also, MTV began airing videos from veteran stars that successfully negotiated the music video, which meant they didn't have to air new wave all the time. So, new wave quickly disappeared, since only the major players were able to sustain careers. During much of the late '80s, it was ridiculed for its silly fashion and disposable music, but in the mid-'90s, it not only became the subject of a wave of nostalgia, but it became clear that many artists had been inspired by the music. A re-evaluation of the period, however, was far from imminent, since it remained a subject for easy ridicule. That ignores that new wave, for all of its crass tendencies, was a stellar time for pop singles.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Just Can't Get Enough: New Wave Hits of the '80s, Vols. 1-15* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *DIY: UK Pop, Vols. 1 & 2* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *DIY: US Power Pop, Vol. 1 & 2* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *A Checkered Past: The 2-Tone Story* (Chrysalis/2-Tone)
The Specials, *The Specials* (Chrysalis/2-Tone)
Madness, *Complete Madness* (Stiff)
The Pretenders, *Pretenders* (Sire)
Elvis Costello, *Armed Forces* (Rykodisc)
The Jam, *Snap!* (Polydor)
Squeeze, *Singles: 45's and Under* (A&M)
XTC, *Waxworks* (Geffen)
Talking Heads, *Sand in the Vaseline* (Sire)
Blondie, *Parallel Lines* (Chrysalis)
Duran Duran, *Decade* (Capitol)
Nick Lowe, *Labour of Lust* (Columbia)
The Go-Go's, *Return to the Valley of the Go-Go's* (IRS)
Adam & the Ants, *Antics in the Forbidden Zone* (Epic)

—*Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

Power Pop

While there is nothing inherently wrong with power pop, it's often seen as a post-punk major-label marketing scam, helped along by greedy do-anything-to-make-it musicians who were willing to trade in their spiky haircuts and alienation for skinny ties and sunny dispositions. As true as this is, it represents only a fraction of what can accurately be described as power pop. While it's very easy (and tempting) to dismiss this sub-genre as egregious, market-driven dross, the fact remains that power pop, even at its sleaziest and most manipulative, had a longer history than many people realize, producing some terrific bands and equally terrific music.

The musical sourcepoint for nearly all power pop is: the Beatles. Virtually all stylistic appropriations begin with them: distinctive harmony singing, strong melodic lines, unforgettable guitar riffs, lyrics about boys and girls in love; they created the model that other power-poppers copied for the next few decades. Other profound influences include the Who, the Kinks, and the Move, bands whose aggressive melodies and loud distorted guitars put the "power" in power pop. Actually, in order to be complete, it's safe to say that an authoritative genealogical tree of power-pop influences would include virtually all of the bands of the British Invasion and mod era. Which brings up a subtle, yet essential facet of nearly all (era notwithstanding) American power-pop bands—they seem, vaguely, British. That is, they sing with a slight English lilt to their voices, are likely to cover songs by British bands and, as was the case with many British mod bands, dress up rather than down. Even the most prominent American power-pop influence, the jangly folk-rock of the mid-'60s Byrds, had a British tinge to it *à la* the Searchers and the Hollies.

American power pop's first heyday (ironically, before it was called power pop) was the early '70s. Few American bands encapsulated the commercial popularity and influential cult status of early power pop better than the Raspberries and Big Star. Both recorded great records, and while Big Star's entire recorded output (thanks mainly to the talents of Alex Chilton) remains inarguably the best of the bunch, both bands approached their craft with a similar intent: to write smart, punchy, hook-filled songs. For the Raspberries, a Cleveland-based band built around the Brit-rock obsessions of vocalist Eric Carmen and guitarist Wally Bryson, it was a string of huge hits like "Go All the Way," "Tonight" and the autobiographical "Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)" that made them one of the best commercial rock bands of the early '70s. Granted, their songs were hardly deep, but as heartfelt evocations of romantic teen angst and the naiveté of young love, they remain unbeatable. Memphis natives Big Star, on the other hand, did record deep, emotionally complex songs on three amazing records (*No.1 Record, Radio City* and *Sister Lovers*) that went unheard in their day but contained the best songs of American power pop ("Ballad of El Goodo," "Mod Lang," and the stunning "September Gurls"). Rediscovered by a later generation of pop-loving rockers (most notably the Replacements' Paul Westerberg), Big Star, though never touching the commercial success enjoyed by the Raspberries, became significantly more influential and revered.

By the mid-to-late '70s, power pop's lifeline continued with fluke hits like Dwight Twilley's 1975 Top 20 smash "I'm on Fire." Twilley, a native of Tulsa, OK, along with partner Phil Seymour, recorded a wonderful debut record, *Sincerely*, that along with containing the aforementioned hit, is an excellent example of ebullient, tuneful, rockabilly-tinged power pop. Around the same time, Cheap Trick, a hard rock/pop quartet from Rockford, IL, capitalized on the strong vocals and good looks of lead singer Robin Zander, and the bizarre antics and the surreal lyrical narratives of guitarist Rick Neilsen, recording some of the finest pop-rock of the time. After three undeniably great records, the worldwide success of a so-so live album signalled the beginning of the end as Cheap Trick began living up to its name, their greatness reduced to formula.

Power pop, however, was not solely the province of American bands who wanted to sound British; there was a British power-pop "invasion" of sorts in the '70s. Badfinger was the most blatantly Beatles-influenced (they even recorded for the Beatles' Apple label and had Paul McCartney as a producer), but they produced some excellent, occasionally thrilling songs such as "No Matter What," "Baby Blue," and "Day After Day," all three Top 20 hits in 1970-71. Loaded with lush guitars, instantly recognizable melodies and two fine singers in Pete Ham and Joey Molland (a fellow Liverpudlian who bears a strong resemblance to McCartney), Badfinger was the model of a great power-pop band. Sadly, guitarist and songwriter Pete Ham committed suicide in 1975 effectively ending the band's career. By the mid-'70s English power pop was essentially the music of glam rock: stiff, boot-stomping rhythms that sounded like football (i.e. soccer) chants. Glam rock cranked up the guitars while sweetening the melodies, thereby making loud, bubblegum rock fodder perfect for radio. With artists such as Gary Glitter, the Sweet, Slade, and Suzi Quatro (an American who found great success in England) leading the way, glam rock produced a handful of good songs, one great band (Slade) and the obsequious marketing of negligibly talented teen idols

(e.g. Bay City Rollers) that would become common practice in the early-'80s power-pop sweepstakes. Power pop's nadir was reached, ironically, during an amazingly fertile period in its history. In the wake of Cheap Trick, excellent Midwestern power-pop bands like the Pezband and the Shoes (both from Illinois) made great records. On the West Coast, Jack Lee, Peter Case and Paul Collins formed the punk-pop Nerves; in Boston, the Real Kids released their debut LP; in Athens, GA, R.E.M. released the *Chronic Town* EP, a gem of Byrdsian power pop; and in New York, Chris Stamey and Peter Holsapple formed the dB's and released two of the smartest and most ambitious power-pop records ever made. Even in England, former pub rocker Will Birch of the Kursaal Flyers formed the Records, a snazzy little combo that released a couple of fine records and an unforgettable single, "Starry Eyes."

However, power pop of the late-'70s/early-'80s is also remembered for the slavish imitators and skinny-tie-wearing no-talents, writing second-generation Raspberries ripoffs, pouting and posing on destined-for-the-cut-out-bin album covers that major labels vomited at an alarming rate. They were faceless hacks like the Cretones, Fotomaker (sadly with ex-Raspberry Wally Bryson), the Producers, Sue Saad and the Next, the Romantics (who had two hit singles and are mostly remembered for their song "What I Like About You"'s use in beer ads), Tattoo, the Tourists (with future- Eurythmics Dave Stewart and Annie Lennox!), the Jags, the Sinceros, the Yachts, Yipes!, and countless other bandwagon jumpers. But, the sine qua non of power-pop condescension and sleaze was without a doubt, the Knack. Fueled by their malodorous 1979 No. 1 hit single, "My Sharona," the Knack singlehandedly gave power pop its bad name. Unctuous to the nth degree, obvious in their Beatle fakery, the Knack were less a band and more a marketing-department creation, who laughed all the way to the bank, were a trivia question by the mid-'80s, had the audacity to regroup in the early '90s (mainly because Knack leader Doug Feiger is a boyhood friend of hotshot producer Don Was), and recorded another lousy record, which didn't sell.

Although most people are loathe to use the term these days, power pop still exists. Alternarock bands like the Posies, Belly, Throwing Muses, Elastica, Echobelly, Urge Overkill and the Gin Blossoms are not too far removed from the power-pop days of yore. There are flashes of it in Nirvana, and even in retro-punk bands such as the Offspring and Green Day. Inevitably, there are also bands like Material Issue and Jellyfish, who are merely the next generation of Cretones and Jags, fobbing off style and mechanical reproduction as substance. Ultimately power pop is much better than the term implies, and it seems as though it's not willing to go away anytime soon—which is fine, just as long as skinny ties never make a comeback.

Recommended Recordings

Rhino's *DIY American and English Power Pop Anthologies* (Rhino)
Badfinger, *Straight Up* (Capitol)
Big Star, *No.1 Record* and *Radio City* (Stax)
Cheap Trick, *In Color* (Epic)
The dB's, *Stands for Decibels* and *Repercussion* (IRS)
Flamin' Groovies, *Shake Some Action* (Sire)
Go-Go's, *Go-Go's Greatest* (IRS)
Nick Lowe, *Pure Pop for Now People* (Columbia)
Pezband, *30 Seconds over Shaumburg* (PVC)
Raspberries, *The Raspberries' Best (featuring Eric Carmen)* (Capitol)
The Real Kids, *The Real Kids* (Red Star)
The Records, *The Records* (Virgin)
Scruffs, *Wanna Meet the Scruffs?* (Power Play)
Shoes, *Black Vinyl Shoes* (Black Vinyl)
Slade, *Best of Slade* (Polydor)
Sweet, *Best of Sweet* (Capitol)
Dwight Twilley Band, *Sincerely* (OCC)

–John Dougan

Hardcore & Thrash

Few rock listeners have noncommital, or even mixed, opinions about hardcore and thrash. The substantial majority will not only never develop a fondness for the music, but will always view it with active dislike; quite a few figuratively cover their ears and run as fast as they can in the opposite direction. On the other hand, its "core" audience, if you will, forms one of the most fiercely loyal and zealous subcultures in all of rock 'n' roll. The hardcore scene, love it or hate it, has exerted a substantial influence on rock 'n' roll, one that is felt in today's Top 40 more than it was in its early-'80s heyday.

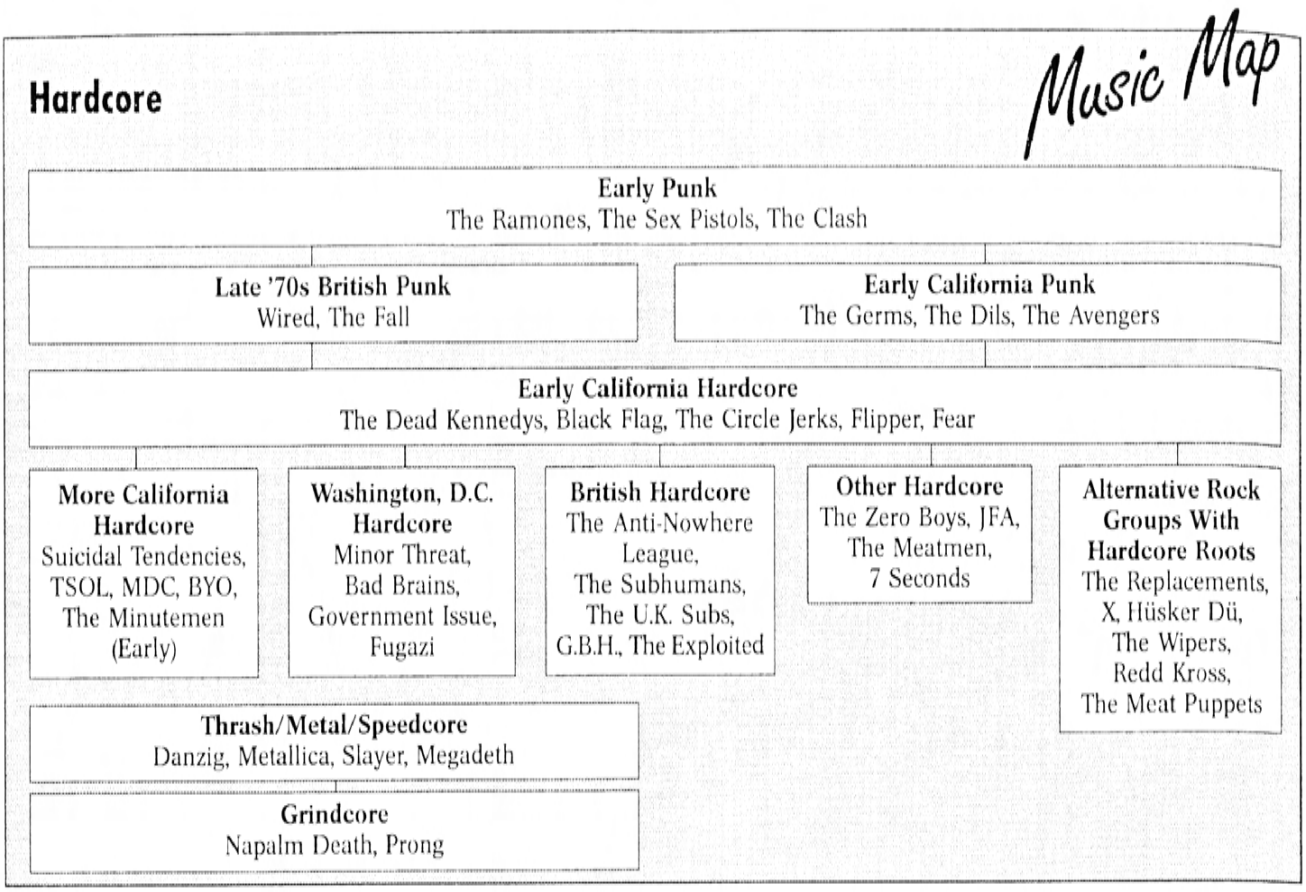
Hardcore, to use what by now has become a cliché, was harder, louder, and faster than its direct ancestor, early punk music. As shocking an assault as first-generation punk was on the heart of the rock industry, hardcore turned on the heat and tightened the screws. Lots of listeners already found the Ramones, Buzzcocks, the Clash, and other early punk giants impossibly fast, loud, and abrasive. Hardcore took the Ramones' trademark "1-2-3-4!" kickoff countdown and sped up the tempos as much as humanly possible, sticking largely to monochrome guitars, bass, and drums, and favoring half-shouted lyrics venting the most inflammatory sentiments the singers and songwriters could devise.

Hardcore's roots could be traced to the early American reaction to the supernova of 1977 British punk. In somewhat of the same manner as garage bands reacting to the British Invasion in the mid-'60s, American groups came up with a cruder and rawer variation. Many of these bands were based in California, particularly Southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area. Outfits like the Avengers, Dils, and Germs played a more jaded and nastier version of British punk. Shortly afterwards, other bands (who were often peers of the aforementioned acts) went the last nine yards into hardcore, although the line between "straightahead" punk and hardcore/thrash could be (and often still is) thin.

The giants of early hardcore were mostly Californians: the Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, Flipper, the Circle Jerks. Just as almost every city or university town had its punk scene, so they soon had their hardcore bands. Washington, D.C., home of Minor Threat, the Bad Brains, and many other groups, was arguably the biggest hotspot outside of the Golden State, but there were many groups in cities like Vancouver and Boston, to cite just the tip of the iceberg. British hardcore bands were not unknown—early records by Wire and the Fall were certainly hardcore keystones with their melodically minimal, percussive structures, and groups like the Anti-Nowhere League, the Subhumans, G.B.H., the Exploited, and the UK Subs had big international followings. Indeed, there were scads of hardcore bands all over the globe, but North America was always the chief breeding ground. Melody, it's fair to say, wasn't uppermost in the minds of most thrashers. Not infrequently, it wasn't a consideration at all. Energy and, much more often than not, outrage were paramount. As in rap music, the lyrics and the message took precedence, though hardcore never matched the textural and sonic variety of rap. The lyrics were often more pointedly sociopolitical than anything else around, and often pointed fingers: at the government, institutions, teachers, employers, and authority figures of every kind. There was always sexism, racism, the arms race, yuppies, and conformists of all kinds to share the blame as well. A lot of hardcore bands lacked a sense of humor, as people who dwell on such topics are wont to do, but a lot of them could also be quite funny. The Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, Suicidal Tendencies, and many other groups managed the difficult act of lambasting their targets with considerable humor, and songs such as "TV Party" (Black Flag) and "Institutionalized" (Suicidal Tendencies) provoked some honest-to-god belly laughs, and not exclusively from punks.

What is striking when listening to early hardcore is how melodic and poppy it can sound in comparison to later recordings in the genre, although it seemed unimaginably fast and devoid of melody at the time. Hardcore, more than the typical rock genre, didn't require much in the way of traditional instrumental and songwriting skills; virtually all hardcore records were released on small independent labels, often by the bands themselves. Given these low hurdles, the scene was soon crowded with generic bands. Some of the slightly-later-than-first-generation hardcore outfits garnered substantial followings: TSOL, the Wipers, MDC (which stood for Millions of Dead Cops, Multi-Death Corporation, Millions of Damn Christians, and other such phrases during various points in their existence), JFA (an acronym for Jodie Foster's Army), and Redd Kross (barely in their teens when they became nationally known) were some of the most famous. Each month (at its peak, each week) saw cheapo albums, singles, and tapes unleashed on the marketplace, many poorly recorded and virtually indistinguishable from track to track. Any back issue of the international flagship punk zine, *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll,* yields dozens of tiny reviews of bands from all over the place that are virtually forgotten, or were not even known at the time.

Hardcore, even more than most subcultures, was a sea of contradictions. It placed a premium on non-conformism, but a great deal of the music adhered to extremely clichéd conventions (the number of hardcore songs starting with a blast of guitar distortion, a shouted "1, 2, 1-2-3-4," followed by a dog-pulls-the-tablecloth-off-the-kitchen-during-dinner blur of chords, must number in the thousands). Its politics were generally well to the left of center (sometimes openly proclaiming anarchy), yet its fashions and sometimes even music were picked up by some Fascist and neo-Nazi youth. It placed great value on the message of the lyrics, which were often shouted so throatily as to be indecipherable. The music was played violently, confrontationally; the lyrics often preached tolerance, unity, and peace. Laudably, it championed racial and sexual equality; its performers and audience were usually white and male. It preached against apathy, and advocated social change, but often reduced larger society to cartoon stereotypes, and was defiantly inaccessible and uncommercial, ensuring that the vast majority of rock listeners (let alone the population) would never hear the music. And when performers with roots in the thrash community did attract a larger audience, they were invariably accused of selling out by large segments of said community.



While it may be true that such performers were attracted by the prospects of commercial success, the more difficult truth to swallow was that they also felt constrained by the melodic, lyrical, and stylistic limits of hardcore, which are more severe than most any other subgenre of rock. The Replacements, X, the Meat Puppets, and Hüsker Dü all started out as more or less hardcore acts; none broadened their success beyond a cult level until they broadened the scope of their music (and, it must be pointed out, all eventually betrayed the original punk/hardcore ideal by signing with major labels). All of these groups helped lay the foundation for "alternative rock," although none achieved the multi-platinum success of Green Day and Nirvana, who likely listened to hardcore quite vociferously at some points in their youth. In the mid-'90s, early hardcore "stars" like Henry Rollins (of Black Flag), Bob Mould (of Hüsker Dü), and Mike Watt (of the Minutemen, so-named for the brevity of their songs, and later of fIREHOSE) are genuine rock stars; they don't play hardcore anymore, but their music shows debts to the form, and they've rarely if ever compromised their product in exchange for sales. There are even rare cases of also-ran hardcore bands that radically changed their game plan and hit the commercial jackpot; the Beastie Boys are the example that towers above all others that could be placed in this category.

Unexpectedly, hardcore and thrash also had a substantial influence on some of the '80s and '90s biggest metal bands, who combined the guitar octane of metal with a degree of the faster tempos and lyrical consciousness of hardcore. Metallica, Slayer, Danzig (whose lead singer, Glenn Danzig, started out in the late '70s with punk/hardcore band the Misfits), and Megadeth have all done this to a large degree; the hybrid is sometimes called "thrash-metal," "death-metal" (actually not often an accurate designation), or "speedcore," among other terms. Prong, Napalm Death, and others mixed punky nihilism with grinding metal to come up with "grindcore." Groups like Helmet have achieved critical acclaim with artsy punk-metal blends that, like bleached hair, show hardcore roots if you listen hard enough. On the fairly rare occasions that hardcore stars (like Suicidal Tendencies) or groups with hardcorish leanings (like Social Distortion) were signed to major labels, they probed, or were urged into, a more hard rock, metalish direction.

When the hardcore community is noticed by the outside world, unfortunately, the consequences can be severe. No one knows this more than Dead Kennedys lead singer Jello Biafra, who also helps run the Alternative Tentacles label. In association with a poster included in a Dead Kennedys album, he and others were prosecuted by the Los Angeles City Attorney's office for distributing material harmful to minors. He was eventually acquitted, but the long and exhausting legal defense helped break up the Dead Kennedys.

Hardcore records are all but ignored by the media (even most of the alternative publications), but hardcore has retained a significant audience in the last decade, linked by a tight (some would say insular) network of zines, skateboarder cliques, and tiny performance spaces. Some acts, like 7 Seconds, the deliberately offensive Meatmen, and the long-gone BYO, were huge within the hardcore community while passing virtually unnoticed by the larger rock world. Very occasionally, bands like Fugazi (led by Ian MacKaye, formerly with "straight-edge" pioneers Minor Threat) achieve wide acclaim in the rock underground by broadening the hardcore base of their sound without alienating the hardcore base of their fans. *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll*, the punk journal, continues to review hardcore recordings by the boatload, and espouse a fervently radical sociopolitical view that some feel to be unhealthily rigid. When Jello Biafra had his leg mangled by slam-dancing thugs (who accused him of being a sellout rock star as they stomped on him) at a Berkeley, CA punk club with strong ties to the magazine in 1994, it was not so much the end of an era as a reflection of the long, strange road this most uncommercial breed of rock music has taken, and the contradictions it continues to embody.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Faster & Louder: Hardcore Punk, Vol. 1* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Faster & Louder: Hardcore Punk, Vol. 2* (Rhino)
The Dead Kennedys, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* (IRS)
Black Flag, *The First Four Years* (SST)
The Wipers, *Over the Edge* (Restless)
Bad Brains, *Rock for Light* (Caroline)
Hüsker Dü, *Metal Circus* (SST)
The Replacements, *Sorry Ma, Forgot to Take out the Trash* (Twin/Tone)
The Minutemen, *Double Nickels on the Dime* (SST)
Minor Threat, *Complete* (Dischord)
Suicidal Tendencies, *Suicidal Tendencies* (Frontier)
Fugazi, *Repeater* (Dischord)

–Richie Unterberger

Australian Rock

In 1975, most Americans' relationship with Australian rock consisted of maybe being able to sing the Easybeats' (who weren't native Australians) "Friday on My Mind." A geographically isolated continent, Australia's impact on the global rock 'n' roll market seemed tangential at best; touring was difficult, most people carelessly lumped you in with English bands, and there was a strong feeling that no matter how good you might be, your career was limited to the Western Hemisphere.

In fact, rock 'n' roll has been produced in Australia since the music made its first international impact in the mid-'50s. In 1957, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, and Little Richard became the first rock 'n' roll stars to tour the continent (in fact, it was during this tour that Richard

declared his intention to renounce rock 'n' roll for the ministry). Australia had its homegrown rockers in the late '50s and early '60s, like Johnny Rebb, who were unknown elsewhere in the world, and remain little-heard to this day even among rabid collectors and historians. The best of the pre-Beatle groups were the Atlantics, who recorded quite a few storming surf records that match the best instrumental surf music issued in Southern California around the same time.

Beatlemania had as great an impact in Australia as in the UK or US, and after the Beatles swept through Australia on a mid-1964 tour, many British Invasion-inspired combos sprang up throughout the country. One of the first, and the most famous by far, were the Easybeats, who created a mini-Beatlemania of their own (dubbed "Easyfever") on their home turf. Actually composed of musicians who had emigrated from Britain and Holland to Australia during their childhood or teens, the Easybeats boasted prolific writers in guitarists George Young and Harry Vanda. Much of their output during their mid-'60s prime bears a great deal of similarity to the Kinks, Small Faces, and of course the Beatles, with a bouncier, more pop-oriented feel. After moving to Britain in 1966, they had an international smash with "Friday on My Mind," as well as some lesser UK hits, and dabbled in increasingly sophisticated studio concoctions before packing it up at the end of the decade. They ultimately do not measure up to the level of greatness of the best British Invasion bands, but were indisputably the most original and influential Australian group of their time.

Australia was still something of a backwater in the '60s—major American and British groups didn't tour there often, sophisticated equipment and studios were hard to come by, and albums were a rarity, reserved for big stars like the Easybeats. Lacking first-hand exposure to their idols, or easy access to an international audience, Australian groups had to generate their own scene, much in the manner of regional garage groups in the United States. As with the garage bands, the result was often a rawer, less professional variation of the British Invasion sound.

At their best, the Australian garage groups were a match for the best American ones, compensating for their lack of virtuosity with an overdose of outrage. They're represented on a variety of compilations, which (as with American garage comps) mix gems with tedious genre exercises and unimaginative covers, although *Ugly Things Vol. 1* is recognized as one of the very best '60s garage anthologies from anywhere. Albums and compilations by some of the better and more prolific groups, like the Loved Ones, the Twilights, and the super-raw Missing Links, are spotty, but worth checking out for '60s collectors. The best '60s Australian group bar the Easybeats were the Master's Apprentices, who issued some terrific power-pop-garage singles in their early years, and evolved with the times through psychedelia and progressive rock, attaining some modest recognition in the UK after moving there for a time in the early '70s. Reissues of work by all of the bands mentioned in this paragraph, as well as *Ugly Things* and various other compilations, are available on the Raven label, the company primarily responsible for bringing some measure of belated acclaim to '60s Australian rock. (The Strangeloves, though billed as Australian when they hit with "I Want Candy" in 1965, were not the genuine article; they were in fact New York session musicians/songwriters, using the fake nationality as an attention-grabbing gimmick.)

The most successful Australian rock act of the '60s are not often classified as Australian. The Bee Gees were composed of three brothers who had emigrated from Britain as children; in 1967, they would move to England and successfully invade the British and American markets as lightweight Beatle emulators, becoming even bigger in the 1970s as they moved into disco. They'd been stars in Australia for some time before 1967, though. Their underappreciated 1964-66 work, though rarely heard, reveals them to be among the best British Invasion-wannabes from anywhere in the globe, often recalling the Hollies' best mid-'60s recordings.

Australian rock, like much rock from outside of North America or the British Isles, was extremely derivative and imitative of American and British trends, and the late '60s and early '70s produced many Australian clones of psychedelia, soul, progressive, glam, and other rock trends, almost without exception unworthy of close scrutiny. And Australian bands never rated more than a footnote until ex-Easybeats Harry Vanda and George Young decided to record the band started by George's younger brothers Angus and Malcolm. Ridiculed from the start by critics, and passionately loved by their fans, AC/DC went on to become (and continues to be) a hugely popular heavy metal band. Driven by Angus Young's spastic, mega-loud guitar playing and exhausting stage antics (while dressed up in a schoolboy's uniform), and Bon Scott's screeching tenor voice (Scott died in 1980, his spot filled by Scottish shrieker Brian Johnson), AC/DC stripped away all artifice, laying down a thudding, insistent, riff-driven feral assault that was as catchy as it was simple. In many ways AC/DC's no-frills faster-and-louder approach to rock 'n' roll anticipated what was to be a defining element of the early punk rock scene.

AC/DC, despite a "punky," anti-authoritarian attitude, were never truly a punk band (nor for that matter were they really Australian: Malcolm and Angus, like older brother George, were born in Scotland). They were more precisely the most successful practitioners of Australia's popular working-class hard rock/heavy metal scene, which included influential but lesser known bands such as the Angels (known later as Angel City) and Rose Tattoo. And while the aggressive attitude of these bands made a significant impact on young Australian punks-to-be, another important ingredient precipitating this genesis came in the early '70s when Ann Arbor, MI-native Deniz Tek emigrated to Sydney. A guitarist and fan of the hyped up, loud and direct, proto-punk motor sound of the Stooges and MC5, Tek joined forces with blonde, gruff-voiced Aussie native Rob Younger and formed the seminal (and arguably first) Australian punk band, Radio Birdman. In 1976, Radio Birdman released a scorching EP, *Burn My Eye*, following it up with a terrific steeped-in-the-Stooges debut LP, *Radios Appear* (the title taken from a Blue Öyster Cult song). But despite beating everyone else in getting a record out, and providing the critical impetus that influenced other bands, Radio Birdman were not the center of media attention (especially in the English rock press) for the then nascent Aussie punk movement. That recognition went to a quartet from Brisbane caled the Saints.

Co-led by Ed Kuepper and Chris Bailey, the Saints' debut, *(I'm) Stranded*, was every inch a classic late '70s punk rock record: Bailey's snarling, petulant vocals; the speedy, superdistorted guitars; the (mostly) brief songs; and one of the punk era's best tunes (one that could only be written by an Aussie band) about alienation, "(I'm) Stranded." Because they were the first of their ilk to get to England, the UK pop press enthusiastically dubbed them the Aussie punk band to be reckoned with, thereby cementing their reputation and causing "(I'm) Stranded" to be a hit single. The Saints became the band that (almost) singlehandedly informed the rest of the world that there was a thriving and interesting alternative rock and roll scene in Australia. Unlike Radio Birdman, who were finished by 1981 (Tek did, however, live out a dream by forming the short-lived New Race with ex-Stooges guitarist Ron Asheton and ex-MC5 drummer Dennis Thompson), the Saints (despite Kuepper's departure in 1978 to form the arty, psychedelic Laughing Clowns) continued to record into the '90s as Bailey took them from raw, blitzspeed punk into more deliberate, tuneful, and far less confrontational pop-rock.

As Australia's largest city, Sydney was the putative focal point of the burgeoning Aussie punk scene. However, many interesting, innovative bands were popping up all over the continent. Especially in Melbourne, a city with a rock tradition that went back to the mid-'60s and the much loved Loved Ones. Its large student population formed the sympathetic core for a more arty, avant-garde brand of punk that was less interested in fast guitars, and more interested in free-form musical and literary explorations. Seminal Melbourne underground musicians such as Ollie Olson in his bands Whirlywind and No created a churning din of sound, punctuated by vituperative lyrical broadsides, culminating in extreme performances that sometimes included self-inflicted violence and bloodshed. Still, with much of the student community supporting this sound, Melbourne was soon producing bands unlike anywhere else on the continent. (For an interesting fictional account of the early days of the Melbourne scene see the 1987 film *Dogs in Space*, which surprisingly features a fine performance by INXS lead singer Michael Hutchence.)

Few bands from the Melbourne scene were more interesting, and exhibited more promise, than did the Boys Next Door. Led by the doomy baritone voice and poetically-inclined pen of Jim Morrison acolyte Nick Cave and the twisted, noisy, gnarled guitar playing of Rowland S. Howard, the Boys released *Door Door* in 1979 and almost immediately became one of Melbourne's most influential punk bands. However, Melbourne wasn't big enough, nor centrally located to international audiences, for the Boys. By 1980, they had changed their name to the Birthday Party, moved to London, and became one of the post-punk era's most enduring and copied bands. Cave, after going solo in 1984, has had success that eclipses that of the Birthday Party and the Boys combined. With and without his backing band the Bad Seeds, Cave has pursued the darker impulses of rock 'n' roll, incorporating Delta blues and country music into his cauldron of musical ideas. As of this writing, Cave (with the Bad Seeds) has been a featured act on the Lollapalooza tour, published a novel, become a dad, and kicked a long-standing heroin addiction. He's now at the peak of his popularity, with a career that spans well over a decade and dozens of recordings.

By the early '80s, the punk-inspired deluge of bands had given Australia more musical recognition than ever before. New bands, influenced by Anglo and American punk rock, Radio Birdman, the Saints, and the Melbourne scene, sprang up everywhere, embracing punk's DIY ethos while replicating and reinventing rock 'n' roll. From the remote western city of Perth came the Kim Salmon-led Scientists; '60s psychedelic garage rock was reinterpreted by the Lime Spiders; hook-filled pure pop was the calling card of the Hoodoo Gurus; and a melancholic take on Beatles-inspired pop was offered up by Marty-Willson Piper, Steve Kilbey, and Peter Koppes in the popular Church. There were art-punks

Feedtime (who sounded like Flipper); the Melbourne-influenced King Snake Roost and Hunters and Collectors; the commercial hard rock of the Divinyls (great first record, everything else is worthless); the criminally overlooked Died Pretty; the over-amped pop of the Screaming Tribesmen; the extremely popular, but negligibly interesting, dance-rock of INXS (featuring Michael Hutchence); Rob Younger's post-Birdman outfit, the New Christs; hardcore punks the Cosmic Psychos and the delicately named Hard Ons; Brisbane's brilliant the Go-Betweens, featuring Grant McLennan and Robert Forster; and two very important Sydney-based bands: the Celibate Rifles and Midnight Oil.

Midnight Oil began as a punk-influenced band big with Sydney's sizable surfing community. Led by the imposing figure of surfer/lawyer Peter Garrett, the Oils, as they were affectionately dubbed by fans, began recording in 1978, but it wasn't until five years later, when they released *10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1*, that (thanks to its huge success in Australia) they established a toehold in the international rock marketplace. Early Oils music is loud, technically adept, and very aggressive, indicative of their fondness for punk. Also it was the kind of assertive, boisterous rock that went down well with the surfer crowds they played to in Sydney-area bars. By the time they recorded *10, 9, 8*. . . the Oils' music was becoming more polished and pop-oriented, but not so much so that it sacrificed the guitar-driven mania from whence they sprang. Longtime advocates for the environment and aboriginal land rites, and with the articulate Garrett acting as band spokesman, it wasn't long before Midnight Oil became the biggest Aussie rock act since AC/DC. Much of it was due to the enormous success of the single and video "Beds Are Burning" (from the 1987 album *Diesel and Dust*) and ferocious live shows. Although their recent efforts have not yielded a hit single the magnitude of "Beds Are Burning," the Oils have developed a devoted fan base, and continue to make solid, if much less aggressive, records that consistently sell in the millions.

The stripped-down, loud and fast, Ramones-inspired rock of the Celibate Rifles deserves special mention, for this Sydney-based band proved to be the best Australian rock band to emerge from the Radio Birdman/Saints era. With droll, deadpan lead vocals supplied by Damien Lovelock, the core of the Rifles was built around the rampaging guitars of Kent Steedman and Dave Morris. And while they valued power, speed, and volume, they weren't shy about tastefully adding horns, acoustic instruments, and slowing down the tempo. Perhaps too extreme and enigmatic to make a big splash in America, the Rifles did, however, develop a solid, supportive fan base in indie rock circles. However, they toured America sporadically, and as the '80s ended they seemed content to spend much of their time in Australia. Since they released their first EP in 1982, the Rifles' output has been frequently stunning, proving them to be the best Australian rock band you've never heard.

Aussie rock music is more diverse than the hard rock and punk-influenced rock that dominates American and British rock. Unfortunately, there are plenty of standard issue types like gruff-voiced Bob Seger wannabe Jimmy Barnes; hugely popular teenage soap star ("Neighbors") turned sexpot dance-pop singer Kylie Minogue; so-so hard rockers Cold Chisel; worthless, radio/MTV panderers like '80s popular one-shots Men at Work. Far more interesting are recent performers such as blues guitarist Dave Hole and aboriginal singer-songwriter Archie Roach, who have recorded exciting, very different-sounding records than what emanates from both the Aussie mainstream and alternative rock communities. The success of Archie Roach and the band Yothu Yindi (whose influences include mid-'80s aboriginal rock bands such as Goanna and the Warumpi Band) has created a new focus on music made by Australia's aboriginal population, resulting in other established, yet heretofore unknown, Australian performers finding more acceptance (and more fans) in the global pop community, and on previously monochromatic Aussie pop music radio. Artists such as Ruby Hunter, Kev Carmody (the Australian Bob Dylan), and Blek Bela Mujik send a clear signal that there is much more to contemporary Australian rock 'n' roll than simply white boys flailing away at guitars.

As more and more bands have received international acclaim, the Aussie music scene has been accorded more respect and, as a result, is more vigilantly watched by label executives for marketable bands. So, the next generation of Aussie bands, populated by up-and-comers like Silverchair, Spiderbait, the Mark of Cain, and the Joy of Noise, will have a much larger ready-made audience than did their predecessors. Even an old-timer like Deniz Tek has returned to the fray, teaming up with Celibate Rifle Kent Steedman in a part-time project that recaptures the high energy Detroit rock sound that played such a pivotal role in the development of punk and post-punk Australian rock. Despite being on the other side of the planet, the truth is, since the late '70s, rock 'n' roll has helped bring Australia a lot closer to the rest of the world and made it a lot more influential than anyone would have guessed.

Recommended Recordings

The Easybeats, *Absolute Anthology* (EMI, Australia)
Various Artists, *Ugly Things Vol. 1* (Raven, Australia)
The Bee Gees, *The Early Years Vol. 1 & 2* (Excelsior)
The Master's Apprentices, *Hands of Time 1965-72* (Raven, Australia)
AC/DC, *Back in Black* (Atlantic)
Radio Birdman, *Radios Appear* (Sire)
The Saints, *(I'm) Stranded* (Sire)
Midnight Oil, *10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1* (Columbia)
The Celibate Rifles, *Roman Beach Party* (What Goes On)
The Celibate Rifles, *Blind Ear* (EMI-True Tone, Australia)
Feedtime, *Shovel* (Aberrant/Rough Trade)
The Go-Betweens, *1978-1990* (Beggars Banquet/Capitol)
Divinyls, *Desperate* (Chrysalis)
Archie Roach, *Charcoal Lane* (Hightone)
Yothu Yindi, *Freedom* (Hollywood)
Birthday Party, *Hits* (Warner Brothers)
Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, *The First Born Is Dead* (Mute)
Died Pretty, *Free Dirt* (What Goes On)
The Hoodoo Gurus, *Stonage Romeos* (A&M)
The Scientists, *Weird Love* (Big Time)

Film

Dogs in Space (1987)

–John Dougan & Richie Unterberger

New Zealand Rock

New Zealand's influence upon the international rock 'n' roll scene has been limited by its size and isolation. The total population of the two islands that comprise the nation is about three million; considerably less than, for instance, the population of the San Francisco Bay Area. The country didn't even have a recording studio until 1948, and as recently as 1989, it took only 7500 units of sales to quality for a gold record. Yet its very size and isolation have also helped foster a brand of rock that may have been too idiosyncratic to flourish elsewhere.

The very first New Zealand rock 'n' roll record was cut way back in August 1955, when John Cooper recorded a version of "Rock Around the Clock." Much in the manner of its much larger neighbor Australia, there was plenty of homegrown Kiwi rock 'n' roll in the late '50s and '60s, especially after the British Invasion sparked the formation of self-contained guitar bands. Some of this was fairly good: Ray Columbus & the Invaders (British Invasion-styled pop) and the La-De-Das (British Invasion-styled R&B/rock) were about the best, and the best of the handful of outrageous New Zealand garage bands can be heard on the compilation *Wild Things*, which holds it own with most international '60s garage reissues of the sort.

The great majority of New Zealand rock and pop, however, was extremely, at times slavishly, derivative of British and American rock trends. To a large degree, this was also characteristic of Australian rock, but the best '60s Australian rock had a more distinctive flavor, and occasional international successes. Few listeners outside the Antipodes heard New Zealand rock until the moderate success of Split Enz, beginning in the mid-'70s.

At various times characterized as art-rock, new wave, or comedy-rock, Split Enz attracted the attention of Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera, who produced one of their early albums. Big stars at home, they also made splashes, in progressively smaller order, in Australia, the UK, and the US. Outside of New Zealand and Australia, they remain very much a cult item, despite their frequent pop-rock focus; listeners tend to either find them intriguingly offbeat, or gimmicky performers who epitomized some of new wave's sillier aspects. In the mid-'80s, Split Enz mainstay Neil Finn (eventually joined by his brother Tim) led Crowded House to international success with tuneful, just-left-of-mainstream pop-rock.

To this day, there continue to be a good many mainstream New Zealand rockers who are popular, or even stars, in their native country. Almost without exception, they are lesser variations on mainstream rock trends originating in the UK or US. There are several bands featuring blends of rock and the music of the indigenous Maori people of the islands, but these are rarely distributed internationally, and often lean more toward the tame pop-rock side of things than ethnic roots. Of much more interest to the inquisitive rock fan are the many alternative Kiwi bands, which emerged from a scene that really didn't get going until the late '70s and early '80s.

If there could be said to be a founding father of New Zealand alternative rock, the title would probably be awarded to Chris Knox. Singer in one of the country's first punk bands, the Enemy, he subsequently fronted the energetic new wave group Toy Love, probably the first alternative rock group of its sort to gain a lot of success in the islands. He subsequently teamed with Alec Bathgate to form half of Tall Dwarfs, who have produced quite a few albums of determinedly individual, eccentric, and funkily recorded punk- and new wave-influenced rock that set the tone for the New Zealand underground of the 1980s. Knox

has also recorded some similar albums on his own, and remains quite active in the scene to this day.

Tall Dwarfs were one of the first bands to record for the Flying Nun label, the company which has become almost synonymous with New Zealand underground/alternative rock. The small Kiwi punk scene of the late '70s had given birth to a few independent labels (Ripper and Propeller were the best known); those releases have rarely been heard overseas, and then usually on obscure compilations. Flying Nun, begun in 1981 by record-store manager Roger Shepherd, almost immediately placed several singles on the country's charts, and acted as a magnet for the best non-mainstream Kiwi rock talent. By the late '80s, it seemed as though virtually every alternative Kiwi rock act of note was affiliated with the company.

Although Flying Nun became home to a fairly diverse roster of artists, there are certain attributes which could be broadly applied to their sound, and by association, the New Zealand alternative scene as a whole. The bands were very much of the D.I.Y. generation spawned by punk and new wave, but placed a high premium on tuneful melodies and a sprinkling of pop hooks. They eschewed in-your-face booming hi-tech production, usually sticking to classic guitar-organ-bass-drums line-ups. At the same time, however, they weren't averse to embellishing their products with all manner of odd production touches, often in the four-track manner pioneered by the Tall Dwarfs. Without being slavishly reverent, their music betrayed strong debts to the psychedelia of the '60s, as well as the jangle-pop of the Byrds; the ghost of Syd Barrett's brilliant pop-psychedelia fusions is particularly strong, hovering over many if not most of the NZ groups.

An equally important factor in the warm reception granted New Zealand bands by alternative rock fans worldwide was the innocence, naiveté, and humility of the music. New Zealand is a modern society, but it is the most isolated of the English-speaking territories; overseas records, books, and films take months and years to arrive in the islands, if they become available there at all. In its low-key lifestyle, it's closer to the America of the 1950s than the 1990s. This relative lack of overwhelming outside influence, as well as the tight-knit camaraderie of a scene which remains a minority taste on its home turf, accounts to some degree for the originality of the Flying Nun product, right down to the artful, colorful, at times seemingly hand-drawn sleeves.

One could be forgiven for viewing the Flying Nun label as a sort of extended family of New Zealand rock groups; the groups tend to change personnel quite frequently, often joining or rejoining each other's bands, or forming spin-offs of their own. The label is based in New Zealand's largest city, Auckland, yet many of the musicians hail from the relatively small south island town of Dunedin, as well as its bigger south island neighbor Christchurch. Considering the rather limited population pool, Flying Nun cultivated an impressively lengthy roster of bands that made an international impression of sorts in the 1980s: the Chills, the Bats, the Clean, the Jean-Paul Sartre Experience, the Verlaines, Straightjacket Fits, and Bailter Space, on down to more cultish acts like Able Tasmans, Headless Chickens, and the Cake Kitchen.

On an international level, the most successful of these bands were the Chills, who have gone through a dozen or so lineups under the leadership of Martin Phillipps, and the Bats, whose guitar-dominated sound fit in most readily with the music favored by college radio in the late '80s. The Verlaines, the Jean-Paul Sartre Experience, and Straightjacket Fits also landed overseas licensing deals; Homestead, Rough Trade, and Communion were the prime outlets for NZ product in the US. Since the mid-'80s, appreciation for the Flying Nun sound has grown steadily overseas, especially in the United States. Granted these fans tend to cluster in big cities and university towns; San Francisco has a particularly large clique of Flying Nun aficionados, as do Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. If one were to judge by the large amounts of ink devoted to Flying Nun bands in underground rock publications and fanzines, one would assume that they were stars. They're not, actually, outside of the fairly small community of listeners who read them. Mainstream audiences have not so much never warmed to these groups as never heard them, although a couple (most notably the Chills) had major-label deals. The bands at least gathered enough of a following to enable them to tour the US, although in most cases these were limited to the East and West Coasts.

Lest one be tempted to think that Flying Nun remains the first and last word in New Zealand indie rock, other Kiwi indies such as Xpressway and IND have also released a few albums that have achieved international recognition, the excruciating noise-rock of the Dead C and the Syd Barrettisms of Alastair Galbraith being two of the more widely known examples. Flying Nun remains as active as ever in the mid-'90s, even though its roster seems increasingly static, the new acts often composed of spin-offs of groups that first recorded with the label in the 1980s. In judging the health of the New Zealand indie scene, one runs up against the isolation problem in reverse: it can take years for bands to get heard overseas, if they get heard at all. The islands can retain considerable pride, though, in schooling a brand of alternative rock that has rarely bowed to commercial pressures from the mainstream or the underground, while remaining accessible to all who managed to find it.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *Wild Things* (Flying Nun)
Split Enz, *History Never Repeats: The Best of Split Enz* (A&M)
Toy Love, *Toy Love* (WEA, New Zealand)
Various Artists, *Tuatara* (Flying Nun)
The Tall Dwarfs, *Hello Cruel World* (Homestead)
The Chills, *Kaleidoscope World* (Homestead)
The Clean, *Compilation* (Homestead)
The Bats, *The Law of Things* (Communion)
The Jean-Paul Sartre Experience, *Love Songs* (Communion)
The Verlaines, *Juvenilia* (Homestead)
Straightjacket Fits, *Hail* (Flying Nun)
Alastair Galbraith, *Seely Girn* (Feel Good All Over)

Book

Stranded in Paradise: New Zealand Rock 'n' Roll 1955-1988, by John Dix (1988, Paradise Publications, New Zealand)

–Richie Unterberger

Jangle Pop

In the early '80s, once punk rock spawned new wave and launched a move toward mostly English electronic and synth-pop bands, American jangle-rock (the sound characterized by the chiming acoustic and electric guitars of the Beatles, Byrds, Soft Boys and Big Star, and made famous in the 80's by R.E.M.) was the antidotal reaction. A new generation of folk-based guitar bands were born, but commercial radio, a new invention called MTV, and the baby-boomer-dominated staffs at the mainstream rock press were slow to catch on to the sounds. College radio and fanzines were the only available outlets for the new music and consequently, it would take years before the new generation of guitar-wielding musicians would be recognized as cornerstones to the foundation of what would become modern, melody-driven, alternative rock.

The word "jangle" was a reference to Bob Dylan's lyric in the Byrds greatest hit, "Mr. Tambourine Man": "in the jingle-jangle morning." Accompanied by the chiming guitar sound and luscious harmonies, also in evidence in the Byrds' (and Robyn Hitchcock's) version of Pete Seeger's "Bells of Rhymney," the terms "jangling," "ringing" and "chiming" were added to budding rock critic parlance to describe the sound. Fanzines like *The Bob, Matter, Tasty World* and the UK's *Bucketfull of Brains* all paid great attention to covering the genre. It was also the golden age of college radio, independent record stores, and tiny clubs, all of which played a large part in spreading the good word about the R.E.M. and Big Star-related bands (the dB's, Let's Active, Game Theory) and regional artists. The new bands were welcomed into the regional folks' hearts as well as literally into their homes, as the music inspired an unusual passion among record lovers.

R.E.M. were known as the leaders of the movement (if it could be called one) due to their higher profile, and guitarist Peter Buck was free with his endorsements of the aforementioned bands—as he proselytized on his cross-country trips, sleeping on people's couches, granting interviews to small fanzines and combing record stores—telling anyone who would listen about the new guitar rock and the records that excited him, past and present. Independent record stores were the hub of much of this type of exchange as store clerks and owners were also responsible for turning their customers on to the rich guitar-rock canon. Buck's rudimentary style, at his own admission inspired by Roger McGuinn's Rickenbacker, offered the chance to anyone who could hold a guitar the opportunity to play one (not so unlike punk rock) and the ensuing guitar-rock revival was often heralded as the "Return of the Rickenbacker."

It's hard to believe that a little-known band from North Carolina sparked the '80s guitar rock revolution, but all signs point toward the dB's reinventing "jangle-rock," before R.E.M. made it famous. The dB's, led by songwriters Chris Stamey and Peter Holsapple, cut two records (*Stands for Decibels* and *Repercussion*, the latter not coincidentally produced by Scott Litt who would later become R.E.M.'s producer) but had relocated from the South to New York, as regional bands at the time were wont to do. R.E.M. stayed and broke out of the tiny college town of Athens, GA, perhaps making theirs a more interesting story. They recorded their highly praised debut single, "Radio Free Europe," and *Chronic Town* EP at Mitch Easter's Drive-In studio in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and *Murmur* and *Reckoning* at Reflection Studios in Charlotte. Subsequently, industry attention became focused on the burgeoning scenes that were developing outside of the obvious urban centers and Easter and his recording partner Don Dixon got pretty busy on the heels of R.E.M.'s early, underground success. Though not all of the bands who recorded there—like Easter's own Let's Active, Athens' Art in the Dark, Mississippi's Windbreakers and New York's Bongos —were

makers of the shimmering guitar rock, they often got lumped into the category. Basically, anytime a band with a good pop hook added harmonies or acoustic guitars into the mix, they were given the guitar-rock subhead as there was no other place to put these bands during the dawn of MTV and the era of new technology that spawned synth-rock; it was a convenient catch-all.

Consequently, rougher bands like the punk Hüsker Dü and the drunk Replacements were also beneficiaries of the jangle-rock tag from time to time, no doubt due to Buck's perpetual endorsement of their virtues in the press, his guitar work on the 'Mats' jangly 1984 single, "I Will Dare," and Replacement Paul Westerberg's and the Hüskers' Bob Mould's own abilities to write great pop hooks. Early records by singer-songwriters Matthew Sweet and Tommy Keene were also influenced by the R.E.M./Drive-In sound.

Meanwhile on the West Coast, the Dream Syndicate were experimenting with guitar rock of a different sort, more along the lines of the sonic type as practiced by the Velvet Underground and Neil Young—though both artists held some sway with the janglers; the Velvets' "There She Goes Again" and Young's "Mr. Soul" were covered by bands too numerous to mention. But it was the Syndicate's brethren in the Los Angeles Paisley Underground like the Three O'Clock and Bangles who were paying homage to the soaring, harmony- and guitar-driven sound of Alex Chilton and Big Star's *No. 1 Record* and *Radio City*. L.A.'s the Long Ryders, particularly the group's leader Sid Griffin, were Byrds and Gram Parsons devotees, so country-rock and folk-rock became part of the package, as did good old American rock 'n' roll as played by L.A.'s Green on Red and Nashville's Jason & the Scorchers.

The attendant Hoboken scene sparked by the dB's and revolving around the club Maxwell's included the Richard Barone and James Mastro-led Bongos, and Doug and Janet Wygal's the Individuals. Their forebears in New York-based guitar pop were the Feelies.

Power pop was another crossover influence as groups like the Plimsouls had their greatest success with a shimmering guitar song, "A Million Miles Away," in 1983. Jules & the Polar Bears (Jules Shear), Cheap Trick and Badfinger are cousins to the sound, as on closer inspection, the jangle bands were pulling inspiration from a variety of pure pop sources. For example, the songs Lenny Kaye compiled on the first *Nuggets* record were also informing these bands—if it was guitar-driven and hooky, it qualified, and the pop and garage-rock side of '60s psychedelia was definitely embraced, as heard in L.A.'s Rain Parade and Boston's Lyres.

Perhaps the most significant development of all was that the jangle-rock movement was taking place in America, and the college rock charts were suddenly dominated by homegrown bands as opposed to the UK acts which they'd previously helped introduce to US audiences. (Though early records by Australia's the Church also fit the bill; the Smiths' Johnny Marr jangled, but Morrissey was too English). It also opened the door for local bands in each region that were practicing guitar rock, by garnering them airplay, record contracts and occasionally the ever-so-important Buck endorsement during R.E.M.'s countless cross-country treks. Northern California's Game Theory, New Haven's Miracle Legion and Minneapolis' Reverbs gained notoriety during the second wave of guitar rock. San Francisco's Translator and Wire Train had their jangle moments, particularly Translator with its 1982 college hit, "Everywhere That I'm Not," but faulty production left the bands saddled with the new wave tag. Perhaps they should have checked into the Drive-In.

Jangle-rock finally put to rest the notion that the only rock that emanated from the South was the vaguely racist and sexist blues-derived boogie that bands typically referred to as Southern-rock produced in the '70s. Bands appeared to grow on trees in Athens, like Kilkenny Cats, Oh-OK and Dreams So Real (refer to the soundtrack to the film, *Athens, GA.—Inside/Out*). It also shot down the idea that alternative and underground rock was inaccessible noise; akin to punk rock and not suitable for the masses.

Like punk, mixed gender bands were common as the groups aped the era of the Mamas & the Papas, the Mojo Men and the Velvets and fused the male-dominated '70s rock with female singer-songwriter rock. It's no coincidence that once bands like the Natalie Merchant-led 10,000 Maniacs experienced a modicum of popularity, it made way for the emergence of Suzanne Vega, Tracy Chapman and the Indigo Girls later in the decade, who, in turn, paved the way for the '90s wave of female singer-songwriter rock. Once Peter Case, formerly jangling with his Plimsouls, took a cue from John Hiatt and put down his electric guitar in favor of a subdued, coffeehouse-style delivery, more rockers followed suit and lightened up their attack. The move toward bands performing "unplugged" was partially due to the jangle-rock bands whose folk-rock melodies lent themselves to acoustic renditions that were performed mid-set, at college radio stations and in stores, long before it became the standard (check *Rainy Day*, a 1983 compilation of Paisley Undergrounders doing acoustic covers).

By the mid-'80s, even mainstream rockers like John Mellencamp had incorporated the jangle sound into their music; in particular, Mellencamp's folksy, 1985 *Scarecrow* album, which was arguably influenced by R.E.M. To be fair, there was an exchange going on—R.E.M. recorded *Lifes Rich Pageant* at Mellencamp's Belmont Mall studio the year after, partially inspired by an acoustic version of Mellencamp's "Small Town" which appeared as a B-side. As in any important movement, such exchange is key and leads to a number of other strings and tangents. *Lifes Rich Pageant* was a turning point for R.E.M.; a case could also be made for them borrowing the instrumental border-ska of Camper Van Beethoven (who accompanied them on tour) for their track "Underneath the Bunker" from the same LP. It also had them dabbling in the political-rock arena with their "Flowers of Guatemala."

Lyrics were not exactly at the forefront of jangle (after all, it was named for the guitars), unlike the folk-rock sounds of the '60s—but they weren't as simple and trite as its other cousin, power pop; such timeless rock 'n' roll themes as love and alienation cropped up often. Though their tenure was during the cold Reagan era, few bands engaged in the political arena since mixing politics with rock was considered foolish at the time (perhaps due to a gaffe made by Neil Young who seemingly endorsed Reagan). However, there was an unspoken thread of political correctness that ran throughout—as if to say all jangle-rock devotees came from a left-wing perspective. After keeping their mouths shut for years, R.E.M. became the most cause-concerned band around and their ever-present, offstage green politics contributed toward bands in general becoming more politcally aware.

In addition, Michael Stipe's mumble gave way to a more ethereal sound that was lost in the mix, rather than pointed lyrical accounts. Both factors partially explain why the genre was generally ignored and completely lost on the old-school writers at the mainstream music publications. Few had anything positive to say regarding this portion of the underground, relegating most coverage to fanzines and word of mouth, which is partially why by today's standards it took R.E.M. and others so long to break (in the case of R.E.M. it took six years!). Tight formats at MTV and commercial radio also contributed to the lockout since they did not allow for experimentation. Thus, airplay was confined to specialty programming (like IRS Records' "The Cutting Edge" weekly hour on MTV, wherein bands like R.E.M., Let's Active and Hüsker Dü were allowed to develop previously unseen on-camera personalities). Mid-decade radio opened up to incorporate "modern rock" (which would soon be coined "alternative") programming, but save for the latest records by R.E.M., their playlists were mostly comprised of the synth-pop songs college radio made popular in years prior.

As the decade wore on, it was taken for granted that the guitar had returned as the key instrument in rock 'n' roll and the world at large was ready for the takeover, while the media pretended to have been there all along. By the time Nirvana burst onto the scene, though they'd claimed R.E.M. as a prime influence, Kurt Cobain and other more melodious grunge rockers had turned the form upside down, cashing in the harmonies and delicate vocals, but retaining the guitar-driven spirit behind the melodies. What they also retained was R.E.M.'s take no prisoners, D.I.Y. model of how to be an "alternative" band, by ceaslessly touring, retaining artistic control and supporting humanist causes. Ironically, it was right around this time that R.E.M. became the biggest jangle-rock band in the world with their 1991 single "Losing My Religion" from the *Out of Time* record and subsequently traded in the chime for a darker sound, reclaiming their earliest influences, the Velvet Underground and the Stooges. Entering their second decade as a band, they released the moody *Automatic for the People*, and the thundering, metallic *Monster*.

In the '90s, the Velvets continued to be an overriding influence. However, it was the sound of Big Star's *Third/Sister Lovers* that became favored by former jangler David Roback (Rain Parade) who formed Opal (with the Dream Syndicate's Kendra Smith) then Mazzy Star with Chilton's record as his blueprint. Traces of Chilton's jangle from the first two Big Star albums, along with power pop and hard rock, were heard in the records of the Seattle-based Posies.

The Posies proved their love of jangle when Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow served as one half of the reformed Big Star with Chilton and Jody Stephens for a 1993 live album *(Columbia)* and tour. Scotland's Teenage Fanclub turned out an album in 1990, *Bandwagonesque*, that was wholly inspired by Big Star, and continue to work and refine their guitar-driven sound. In San Francisco, Scott Miller (ex-Game Theory) still pines at inflecting his music with authentic jangle sounds in his Loud Family.

Brit-pop, though supposedly British to the core, has traces of the jangle. Along with their obvious debt to the Beatles, Oasis' Manchester jangle, inspired by the Smiths, came to them via Marr who probably picked it up from Buck and the Byrds before the Smiths' 1984 debut.

Both the lo-fi and American indie-rock movements of the '90s were heavily indebted to jangle-rock. The three leading figures of lo-fi—Pavement, Sebadoh and Guided by Voices—used jangle as a foundation, capturing its spirit, if not necessarily its sound. Not coincidentally, all three

bands were either of college age or in their early twenties during the mid- and late '80s, and they took the do-it-yourself, self-sustained sense of community of jangle-rock to heart, staying on independent labels when they could have moved to the majors.

The Americana, occasionally jangling sounds of Wilco, Son Volt and Jayhawks can be traced immediately back to the Parsons-lovin' Long Ryders and raw, rockin' Jim Dickinson Memphis productions by Green on Red (*Here Come the Snakes*) and the Replacements (*Pleased to Meet Me*). The Gin Blossoms owe a great debt to Paul Westerberg and the Replacements; R.E.M. begat Live and Toad the Wet Sprocket, ad nauseum. But everyone should tip their hat to Bob Dylan, who, though never a favorite among jangle rockers, was the first to fuse rock with folk, and the gave the Byrds "Mr. Tambourine Man" to which to add their chiming harmonies and jangling guitars, making it accessible to the world.

Recommended Recordings

Big Star, *No. 1 Record / Radio City* (Fantasy)
The Soft Boys, *Underwater Moonlight* (Rykodisc)
The dB's, *Repercussion* (I.R.S.)
R.E.M., *Chronic Town* (I.R.S.)
R.E.M., *Murmur* (I.R.S.)
R.E.M., *Reckoning* (I.R.S.)
Let's Active, *Cypress / Afoot* (I.R.S.)
The Plimsouls, *Everywhere at Once* (Geffen)
Bangles, *Bangles* EP (Faulty)
Rain Parade, *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip/Explosions in the Glass Palace* (Enigma)
Dream Syndicate, *Tell Me When It's Over: The Best of the Dream Syndicate* (Rhino)
Three O'Clock, *Baroque Hoedown* EP (Frontier)
Richard Barone/James Mastro, *Nuts and Bolts* (Passport)
Various Artists, *Rainy Day* (Rough Trade)
Long Ryders, *10-5-60* EP (PVC)
The Replacements, *Let It Be* (Twin/Tone)
Robyn Hitchcock & the Egyptians, *Fegmania!* (Rhino)
Game Theory, *Real Nighttime* (Alias)
Camper Van Beethoven, *Telephone Free Landslide Victory* (I.R.S.)
Miracle Legion, *The Backyard* EP (Rough Trade)

—*Denise Sullivan*

American Alternative Rock

Like new wave before it, "alternative" is basically a meaningless term. Punk, heavy metal, funk, rap, pop, rock 'n' roll, singer-songwriter—everything fits under the term. Essentially, "alternative" is a catch-all for post-punk bands that appeared as new wave began to die out in 1983-84, and runs all the way into 1996, when alternative had become mainstream modern rock. Although there's nothing alternative about Live and Silverchair, their inspiration by R.E.M. and Nirvana were decidedly part of an underground, anti-mainstream rock 'n' roll movement. But what really distinguishes alternative pop-rock is how it reprocesses and reworks rock history, bringing together diverse strands into a whole. Alternative followed somewhat different paths in America and Britain; although the two countries have had bands that were big on both continents, like R.E.M., certain phenomena like Pearl Jam or the Stone Roses haven't translated particularly well. In addition, entire subgenres are isolated to either the US or the UK (funk-metal, for instance, has never been very popular in Britain.)

Alternative pop-rock has its basic roots in punk, new wave and hardcore; it does recall other genres, particularly '60s pop and heavy metal, but the entire subculture first emerged from the punk movement. To over-simplify things, the first American alternative bands were R.E.M. and Hüsker Dü. Both bands formed in the early '80s or late '70s, releasing records on small independent labels before moving to bigger indies and then the majors. In their wake, thousands of bands followed, both musically and ideologically. Hüsker Dü broke up without achieving any mainstream success, while R.E.M. soldiered on into the '90s, becoming one of the most popular rock 'n' roll bands in the world.

For most of the '80s, alternative rock remained the province of small clubs, independent labels, fanzines, and college radio, with the occasional song breaking into MTV and Top 40, or the occasional album receiving critical praise in mainstream publications like *Rolling Stone*. However, the commercial appeal of most alternative bands was nearly nonexistent. Instead, the bands built underground followings by touring constantly and releasing a low-budget album every year. New bands would form in their wake and soon there was a sizable underground circuit in America, with different parts of the country having different scenes.

R.E.M. immediately had the most impact, both commercially and musically. *Murmur*, the band's 1983 debut album, received enormous critical praise, helping the album chart in the Top 40. Legions of jangling imitators followed, and the group's success helped other southern guitar-pop bands like the dB's and Let's Active get exposure. Also, they helped kick off a group of bands dubbed "The Paisley Underground" that drew from the Velvet Underground and '60s psychedelia. R.E.M. toured non-stop throughout the decade, releasing a record each year and slowly expanding their following, setting the stage for their Top Ten breakthrough in 1987 with *Document* and "The One I Love." By that time, the group's ringing, chiming guitars and Michael Stipe's mumbling vocals had become commonplace on college radio.

While R.E.M.'s success provided a blueprint for many bands of the late '80s and '90s, Hüsker Dü's music had an equally large impact. Starting as a blistering hardcore band, the trio soon moved away from the confines of their subgenre. Without abandoning the loud guitars and furious tempos of hardcore, Hüsker Dü created a music that was both abrasive and melodic, filled with shards of noise and catchy hooks. *Zen Arcade*, a double album released in 1984, was their creative breakthrough, filled with concise pop and noisy, winding instrumental stretches. The group's last album, 1987's *Warehouse: Songs and Stories*, had a more polished sound than their earlier records, but it provided a template for the shiny punk-pop production of Nirvana's seminal *Nevermind*.

Hüsker Dü was signed to SST Records, the label founded by Black Flag leader Greg Ginn in the early '80s. SST was the most influential American independent label of the '80s, not only featuring Black Flag and Hüsker Dü, but also Sonic Youth, the Minutemen, the Meat Puppets, and Dinosaur Jr., among others. While they didn't necessarily pave the way for Sonic Youth—the New York band was already recording when Hüsker Dü came to prominence—Hüsker Dü's albums prepared both critics and audiences for the all-out noise experiments of the group. Sonic Youth was more self-consciously arty than either R.E.M. or Hüsker Dü, with their lyrics sounding like performance-art poetry and their songs essentially being long, winding dissonant soundscapes.

Hüsker Dü were also the leaders of the loose Minneapolis scene, which also included the Replacements and Soul Asylum, who both initially sounded a great deal like the Hüskers. However, the Replacements wound up providing a link between punk and traditional Stones/Faces rock 'n' roll, as well as narrowing the gap between R.E.M.'s pop and Hüsker Dü's noise. At that point in time, Hüsker Dü had broken up, R.E.M. had made a commercial breakthrough, the Minutemen were crippled by the death of D. Boon and Sonic Youth were inactive between 1988 and 1990, as they were preparing to move to a major label. Consequently, several different subgenres that had thrived underneath the reign of the SST bands and R.E.M. came to the forefont. In addition to the loud, sloppy punky rock 'n' roll of the Replacements and Soul Asylum, quirky alternative pop and noisy industrial rock dominated the late '80s American alternative scene.

Much of the alternative guitar-pop of the late '80s had its roots in the awkward, jangly music of the Feelies and the nervous, geeky folk-rock of the Violent Femmes, who both released their debut albums in the early '80s. The Feelies never sold many records at the time, yet their chiming guitar riffs helped pave the way for R.E.M. Unlike R.E.M., the Feelies' melodies and lyrics were twitchy and uptight, quite similar to the songs that Gordon Gano wrote for the Violent Femmes' self-titled debut. Both of the bands began a trend of geeky guitar-pop groups that emphasized their strangeness and bizarre humor. Since they were actively recording and touring at the time quirky guitar-pop became prominent, the Violent Femmes and the Feelies were part of the movement as well as being its forefathers. However, there were many other bands, from the jokey duo They Might Be Giants to the warped eclecticism of Camper Van Beethoven, that kept the music alive on the college charts. A number of off-kilter British guitar-pop bands fit into this trend as well, finding a larger following on American college radio stations than in their homeland. Robyn Hitchcock, the leader of the Soft Boys (who were an acknowledged influence on R.E.M.), was one of the British pop musicians who was warmly welcomed in the US. By this point in their career, XTC had a larger fan base in America than they had in Britain, which meant that their intelligent, meticulously crafted pop was prominently featured on American college radio.

In direct contrast to the good-natured, quirky pop of the Violent Femmes and XTC stood the legions of industrial and post-hardcore noise bands. While many industrial bands had their roots in European electronic groups, both the industrial and post-hardcore bands owed a great debt to Chicago's Big Black. Led by guitarist Steve Albini, Big Black created bleak, scathing, noisy soundscapes with two guitars, a bass, and a drum machine. The group's thin, tinny guitar roar became part of indie-rock's musical vocabulary, as did its shards of white noise. Their records, particularly 1986's *Atomizer*, prepared alternative audiences and college radio audiences for the jarring guitar grind of the Butthole Surfers, Scratch Acid and its offspring, the Jesus Lizard, and countless bands that appropriated the same noise as their own. Most of these

bands were also produced by Steve Albini, who continued to be a prominent figure in underground rock into the '90s.

Big Black's records also paved the way for industrial groups that spliced together noisy guitars, dense samples, and relentless drum-machine driven beats. European bands like Front 242, Einstürzende Neubauten, and KMFDM were pioneers in the music and gained a significant amount of American college airplay, but it was Chicago's Ministry that popularized the genre. Originally a synth-pop band in the early '80s, the group, led by guitarist/keyboardist Al Jourgensen, changed direction in the mid-'80s, incorporating elements of dance, heavy metal, electronic music and hip-hop. Ministry's artistic breakthrough, also the record that helped establish industrial music as a staple of alternative rock, was 1988's *The Land of Rape and Honey*. As the years progressed, Ministry began leaning toward heavy metal, helping to make industrial techniques part of mainstream rock. Just as important were Cleveland's Nine Inch Nails, led by Trent Reznor. Nine Inch Nails were more pop-oriented than any other industrial band, which meant they were the ones that brought the music to a wider audience. But by the time that their 1989 debut, *Pretty Hate Machine*, became popular in 1991, industrial music had become passé in most alternative circles.

What had replaced industrial rock as a favored source of noise were revamped versions of Stooges-style punk and heavy metal. After the rise of industrial and quirky guitar pop, the spiky punk-pop of the Pixies and heavy grandeur of Jane's Addiction were the two most popular bands in alternative rock. The Pixies returned a sense of punk brevity to alternative music, as well as working raw noise into pop song structures that were deliberately off-center. Their fractured, stripped-down punk-pop provided a blueprint for groups as diverse as Nirvana, Pavement, Weezer, and Radiohead, who all appropriated portions of the Pixies' music into their rock 'n' roll. Although the Pixies were stars in most of Europe, they never achieved commercial success in America. Jane's Addiction were among the first to break down the walls between alternative and AOR radio, which given their affection for ponderous heavy metal, wasn't surprising. Perry Farrell's lyrics may have had the performance-art shock of Sonic Youth, but the band's music was heavy metal in the vein of Led Zeppelin. Similarly, Seattle's Soundgarden reworked Zeppelin/Black Sabbath heavy metal territory, yet they injected a raw, punkish intensity to the familiar sludge. Both Jane's Addiction and Soundgarden received positive reviews in mainstream publications like *Rolling Stone*, earning them a sizable cult following.

Soundgarden was the first of the Seattle bands to earn wide-spread acclaim in America. In England, Mudhoney was the first Seattle band to earn positive reviews. Mudhoney's Stooges-soaked fuzz-toned 1988 single "Touch Me, I'm Sick," received a significant amount of acclaim in Britain, and the band earned a cult following in the UK by constant touring. To varying degrees, the success of Soundgarden, Mudhoney, the Pixies, and Jane's Addiction, as well as R.E.M., set the stage for Nirvana's breakthrough in late 1991.

Nirvana was the turning point for alternative rock as a commercially viable genre. Other bands had hits before them—particularly R.E.M. and Jane's Addiction—but Nirvana broke down the doors forever with their brand of punk-pop, which took equally from the Pixies, Sonic Youth, Soundgarden, and the Beatles. Following the No. 1 success of *Nevermind*—which symbolically knocked Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* off the top of the charts—bands that had been on the fringe became multi-platinum stars, including the funk-metal of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Primus, the industrial rock of Ministry and Nine Inch Nails, and the revamped arena-rock of Pearl Jam.

Although Nirvana's success did help send scores of bands, from Pearl Jam and Stone Temple Pilots to Green Day and the Offspring, to the top of the charts, it didn't eliminate the underground—it just gave it more exposure. Initially, this resulted in a flood of Seattle bands achieving considerable commercial success, including Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, and Offspring. Nirvana's breakthrough also popularized so-called "Generation X" and "slacker" culture. Slackers came in many forms, but no band embodied the aesthetic quite as well as the Beastie Boys. Initially a hardcore band, the Beasties turned to rap in the early '80s, recording *Licensed to Ill*, one of hip-hop's major commercial breakthroughs. In 1989, the group released *Paul's Boutique*, a dense collage of pop and literary references that virtually defined the multi-culturalism and junk culture aesthetic that dominated much of the popular alternative rock of the '90s. However, *Paul's Boutique* was a commercial failure. When the Beastie Boys released *Check Your Head* in 1992, they had returned to playing their instruments and created a record that fused punk culture with hip-hop culture.

While the Beastie Boys presented another commercially successful alternative to heavy alternative rock, a number of female rockers began to gain attention both in the rock press and, occasionally, on MTV. During the '80s, women had prominent roles in important bands like Sonic Youth (bassist Kim Gordon) and the Pixies (bassist Kim Deal). In the late '80s, a number of new female singer-songwriters emerged, particularly Michelle Shocked, Tracy Chapman, Sinéad O'Connor, and Kristin Hersh of the Throwing Muses. While Shocked and Chapman were essentially folkies, O'Connor and Hersh bent the rules of rock 'n' roll. O'Connor experimented with folk, punk, dance, and art-rock, creating a creative amalgam of styles that paid off with her 1990 commercial breakthrough, *I Do Not Want What I Have Not Got*. Under the direction of Kristin Hersh—and occasionally her step-sister, Tanya Donelly—Throwing Muses created a bracing music that had unpredictable lyrical and song structures which placed the band somewhere between punk, pop and folk.

The late '80s female singer-songwriters prepared the rock media for the onslaught of the early '90s, as well as directly influencing several musicians. In particular, the songs on Liz Phair's 1993 debut *Exile in Guyville* recall music that was made in the late '80s, but her music included elements of rock 'n' roll, power pop, Joni Mitchell-styled folk-rock, and lo-fi alternative rock. There were other singer-songwriters similar to Phair, particularly the blues-punk of England's P.J. Harvey, but most of the female rock 'n' roll acts of the early '90s were punk rock bands, with the occasional fusion of punk and heavy metal which recalled the music of Nirvana and Soundgarden. L7, Babes In Toyland, and Hole fit into this category, but there were underground bands like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile that sketched out an amateurish and politically confrontational form of punk labeled riot grrrl. There were also guitar-pop acts like Belly and Juliana Hatfield which were decidedly sunnier than their counterparts, but there were bands like the Breeders, led by Kim Deal, that straddled the line between arty punk and pop without surrendering to either side.

Because of a media-created desire to lump all of these acts under the banner of "women in rock," most of these bands received a fair amount of press, but only a handful—Belly, Breeders, Hole, and Liz Phair—sold many records. After the initial onslaught of Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Smashing Pumpkins, and Red Hot Chili Peppers, the groups that sold the most records were neo-punk rockers Green Day and the Offspring. Although it didn't sound much different than their two previous indie releases, Green Day's third album, *Dookie*, and the singles, "Long View" and "Basketcase," sent the group to the top of the charts in the summer of 1994; by the summer of 1995, *Dookie* had sold over eight million copies. Green Day's music essentially was revamped power pop with hints of the Clash and the Jam, but the band's success led to the multi-platinum breakthrough of the metallic punk band the Offspring, who adopted the look of a punk group and the attack of a metal band. In their wake, Green Day and the Offspring focused attention on the hundreds of punk bands that played on the West Coast, particularly Rancid and Pennywise.

For all their ties with independent rock 'n' roll and the underground, Green Day and the Offspring had little to do with alternative music by the time they broke into the mainstream. After Nirvana's breakthrough, the American underground divided into several factions that were all united by their desire to remain underground. There were neo-punk bands like North Carolina's Superchunk which developed devoted followings but never had any desire to break beyond the level of an indie-rock band. There were arty, minimalist pop bands like Unrest which were knowingly clever, post-modern and ironic, but made melodic catchy songs that were never destined to break out of their cult following because the band never intended them for anything larger than their cult audience. There were handfuls of country-rockers like Uncle Tupelo that imploded before they could reach any success.

Most important to the '90s American underground were the group of pop-rockers that were lumped under the "lo-fi" label, named after the poor sound of the band's generally homemade recordings. Beck helped popularize the subgenre with his debut album, *Mellow Gold*. However, *Mellow Gold* was not strictly a lo-fi record—it was too well-produced to fit that label. Nevertheless, Beck acted like a scavenger, much like the Beastie Boys, taking bits and pieces from different musical genres, recording songs that alternately recalled hip-hop, folk, garage-rock, and psychedelia. Beck's other records, the noisy *Stereopathetic Soul Manure* and the folky *One Foot in the Grave*, were genuine lo-fi records, but the success of *Mellow Gold* helped draw attention to the leaders of the movement, Sebadoh and Pavement. Both bands had earned a significant amount of critical acclaim, as well as sizable cult followings, before Beck, but his success began a trend in the rock press to lump all of the bands together. If any band embodies everything that is good and bad about lo-fi, it is Sebadoh. Led by former Dinosaur Jr. member Lou Barlow, Sebadoh isn't so much a band as it is a collective, with each individual member turning in their own songs. Barlow became the figurehead for the lo-fi movement, as he released an amazing amount of recordings in the early '90s under Sebadoh's name, Sentridoh, the Folk Implosion, and his own name. Essentially, Barlow is a post-punk singer-songwriter, writing fairly conventional pop songs that are distinguished by his recording techniques and the occasional burst of pop noise. Nevertheless, the aesthetic is as important as the songs for many lo-fi fans, and Lou Barlow's work provides plenty of good songs and bad songs, all characterized by the thin recording techniques.

The one band that transcends the label of lo-fi is Pavement. What was important about Pavement's music was not the aesthetics, but the concepts. The group reassembled a variety of different rock 'n' roll genres—from noise-rock to country-rock, hitting on power pop, folk-rock, rock 'n' roll, soul, etc. along the way—into a fractured, but tuneful, kaleidoscope of pop music. Unlike Beck's eclecticism, Pavement's songs—mainly written by guitarist/vocalist Stephen Malkmus—not only recontextualize familiar rock genres, they frequently subvert conventional pop structures. Pavement's three albums and numerous singles have earned them a sizable cult following as well as a wealth of critical praise, in effect, establishing the band as a leader of the post-Nirvana American alternative underground. Currently, they don't seem poised for a commercial breakthrough, but many observers felt that way about R.E.M. in 1985.

Recommended Recordings

The Feelies, *Crazy Rhythms* (A&M)
Violent Femmes, *Violent Femmes* (Slash)
R.E.M., *Murmur* (IRS)
Replacements, *Let It Be* (Twin/Tone)
Hüsker Dü, *New Day Rising* (SST)
Big Black, *The Rich Man's Eight-Track* (Touch & Go)
Throwing Muses, *Throwing Muses* (4AD)
Dinosaur Jr., *You're Living All Over Me* (SST)
R.E.M., *Document* (IRS)
10,000 Maniacs, *In My Tribe* (Elektra)
Ministry, *The Land of Rape and Honey* (Sire)
Sonic Youth, *Daydream Nation* (DGC)
Michelle Shocked, *Short Sharp Shocked* (Mercury)
Jane's Addiction, *Nothing's Shocking* (Warner Bros.)
Soundgarden, *Louder than Love* (A&M)
Mudhoney, *Superfuzz Bigmuff* (Sub Pop)
Pixies, *Doolittle* (4AD)
Nine Inch Nails, *Pretty Hate Machine* (TVT)
Nirvana, *Nevermind* (DGC)
Pearl Jam, *Ten* (Epic)
Liz Phair, *Exile in Guyville* (Matador)
Pavement, *Slanted & Enchanted* (Matador)
Beastie Boys, *Check Your Head* (Capitol)
Beck, *Mellow Gold* (DGC)

—Stephen Thomas Erlewine

British Alternative Rock

Two things separate British alternative rock from its American counterpart. By and large, it's considerably more pop-oriented. Of course, there are some exceptions, particularly goth-rock and shoegazing, but most of the bands concentrate on singles as well as albums. Secondly, it acknowledges dance and club culture freely, with pop-rock groups frequently experimenting with dance rhythms and textures. Both of these factors are part of the reason why very few British alternative bands were successful in America between 1984-1995. The other major factor is a tendency to write about specifically British concerns. From the Smiths to Blur, the lyrics of many British groups are dense with British references. However, 1994 and 1995 showed that the success of American alternative rock had begun to break down the barriers in the US for British bands, as Blur had a Top 60 hit, Oasis had a gold album, and Elastica had two charting hits, as well as a prime spot on Lollapalooza.

Like R.E.M. in the US, the Smiths functioned as the turning point between new wave and alternative rock. Hailing from Manchester, the group's layered guitar-pop recalled the Beatles and the Kinks, as well as various girl groups and less-celebrated '60s pop groups. Johnny Marr's innovative, ringing guitar riffs were offset by the literate, self-deprecating and viciously intelligent lyrics of Morrissey. In addition to his distinctive, clever lyrics, Morrissey's voice was unusual, alternating between mild crooning and abrupt yelps, particularly on the band's earlier records. Although the Smiths had only two Top Ten hits, the band's influence loomed large over the next decade, as various bands appropriated Marr's riffs and neo-'60s look. Morrissey's lyrical preoccupations became familiar as well, particularly his tales about English life. The Smiths' lifespan was quite short—their first album was released in 1984, their last in 1987—but no other British band since the Sex Pistols had as large of a musical impact as the Manchester quartet.

For the latter half of the '80s, British alternative pop-rock was dominated by the goth rock of the Cure, the dance-rock of New Order, and the noisy, neo-psychedelia of the Jesus and Mary Chain. The Cure had formed during the heyday of punk rock, yet their cult began to expand in 1983 and 1984, after which they had a series of best-selling albums and singles. Driven by slow tempos, droning guitars and keyboards, and Robert Smith's self-absorbed, morbid lyrics, the Cure appealed to some of the Smiths' audience, yet they were decidedly gloomier and less pop-oriented. Bands that copied the music of the Cure and Joy Division were quite popular in the late '80s, particularly Sisters of Mercy and Mission (UK).

Joy Division was arguably more important to goth rock than the Cure, but after the band's lead vocalist, Ian Curtis, committed suicide in 1980, the group moved in a different direction under the name New Order. Instead of relying on rock rhythms, New Order experimented with dance, disco, and club beats, creating a fusion between rock and dance which proved to be commercially successful and musically influential. Although not many bands immediately imitated the sound of the band, it laid the groundwork for the Manchester scene of the early '90s.

Although they used a drum machine on their earliest recordings, the Jesus and Mary Chain were as far away from the dance textures of New Order as possible. Instead, the band unearthed the droning noise of the Velvet Underground, adding more distortion, tighter song structure, and floating harmonies. The Jesus and Mary Chain, along with the gargantuan guitar roar of America's the Pixies and Sonic Youth, instigated a flood of bands in the '90s that relied on shatteringly loud guitars and ethereal, Beach Boys-derived harmonies.

During this time, a number of British acts found greater success in America than they did at home. While artists like the Cure and the Smiths were popular in both countries, certain musicians were virtually ignored in the UK but thrived on American college radio. Foremost among these groups was XTC. Although the group had hits when they first appeared at the height of punk and new wave, they failed to have more than one hit between 1984 and 1989. Nevertheless, the band's late-'80s albums of lush, psychedelic pop found a home in the American alternative scene, particularly 1987's *Skylarking*. Like XTC, Robyn Hitchcock was a new wave survivor, although his former group the Soft Boys were never anywhere near as popular as XTC. However, the Soft Boys' tough, ringing guitar-pop had an influence on many alternative bands of the '80s, particularly R.E.M. Once Hitchcock went solo, he gained a cult following in his native England and America, but had considerably more success in the US, thanks to support from college radio. His 1988 major-label debut, *Globe of Frogs*, marked the peak of his popularity, spending 15 weeks on the American charts. In addition to the off-center pop of XTC and Robyn Hitchcock, there were guitar bands that refined the jangling, multi-layered pop of the Smiths, making it smoother, more laidback and sophisticated. These bands, particularly the Housemartins, managed to sustain popularity on the British charts as well as American college radio.

However, the most significant British band of the late '80s and early '90s was the Stone Roses. Like their fellow Mancunians the Smiths, the Stone Roses specialized in an updated version of '60s guitar-pop. Unlike the Smiths, the Stone Roses were in debt to neo-psychedelic guitar-pop and experimented with club textures, particularly on the singles "Fool's Gold" and "One Love." But the key to the band's success was guitarist John Squire, who crafted songs that sounded like forgotten classics but were driven by an urgent energy and cocksure arrogance. The success of the Stone Roses opened the gates for a flood of bands that reworked the same territory, like the Charlatans and Inspiral Carpets. Of these bands, the Happy Mondays—who were also based in Manchester, giving way to the nickname "Madchester" for the entire pseudo-psychedelic dance scene—were the most noteworthy. Where the Stone Roses only flirted with dance music, the Happy Mondays immersed themselves in it, particularly in the funky rhythms and psychedelic drugs like Ecstasy. Shaun Ryder, the band's lead vocalist, wrote lyrics that were cryptically surreal and melodies that appropriated hooks from other pop songs (the Mondays' "Kinky Afro" had the same melody as Labelle's "Lady Marmalade").

At the beginning of the '90s, it appeared as if the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays would be the leading figures in British pop music for the next few years. However, the Madchester scene quickly collapsed. The Stone Roses became embroiled in a debilitating lawsuit with their record company which took two years to resolve; after the case was settled, they took another three years to deliver a follow-up album, ruining any chances of world domination. The Happy Mondays ran out of steam quickly, mainly due to Ryder's drug addictions. Within a year, British alternative rock was robbed of its two most popular bands, leaving the legions of the Jesus and Mary Chain imitators to come to the forefront. Well, initially they were imitators of the Jesus and Mary Chain. However, by the time the so-called shoegazers—dubbed "shoegazers" by the British music press for their tendency to do nothing but stare at the floor during concerts—came to popularity in 1991, they were mining the territory My Bloody Valentine established in the late '80s.

My Bloody Valentine formed before the Jesus and Mary Chain, but their records didn't gain attention until 1987, when they released a series of EPs, culminating in 1988's album *Isn't Anything*. MBV's music was louder and more ethereal than JMC's records, creating shimmering soundscapes constructed from dissonance and distortion and detached vocals. Soon, the band's influence eclipsed that of the Jesus and Mary

Chain, with numerous bands forming in its wake, including Ride, Lush, and the Boo Radleys. Out of all the shoegazing records released in 1991, My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* was the one that defined the entire scene.

Apart from shoegazing, the other major British musical development of 1991 was the release of Primal Scream's third album, *Screamadelica*. Compared to *Screamadelica*, the dance-oriented music of the Happy Mondays was positively tentative. Primal Scream employed a number of dance and techno producers, particularly Andrew Weatherall, to help them create their album. The group's basic compositions were clearly rock songs—the single "Movin' on Up" recalled both the Rolling Stones and Stephen Stills' "Love the One You're With"—but the producers took the songs into new territory with the inclusion of dance-club production techniques. The result was one of the most critically acclaimed albums of the year, as well as a commercial hit. More importantly, *Screamadelica* helped open the doors for techno and club music to be discussed seriously in the British music press, which helped the careers of such techno and ambient musicians like the Orb and the Aphex Twin, as well as dance-oriented bands like Massive Attack, Portishead, and Tricky.

However, neither Primal Scream nor the legions of shoegazers provided as much good copy as the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays, which is crucial for an industry with weekly music newspapers. For all of 1991 and most of 1992, the two trends dominated British alternative rock, along with the presence of American groups like Nirvana and Pearl Jam. The arrival of Suede in late 1992 kick-started a revival of British guitar-pop that reached its fruition two years later. Under the leadership of vocalist Brett Anderson and guitarist Bernard Butler, Suede created a pop-savvy fusion of glam-rock and the Smiths' guitar-pop. The band was praised by the music weeklies as the "Best Band in Britain" before their first single was even released, and Morrissey began covering "My Insatiable One" in concert, setting the stage for enormous expectations. By and large, Suede fulfilled the expectations, as they had a series of hit singles that all charted higher than the first, and their 1993 self-titled debut became the fastest-selling record in British history. The band single-handedly knocked the shoegazers off the front cover of the *Melody Maker* and *NME*, setting the stage for British alternative rock's breakthrough into the mainstream in 1994.

Suede may have become British stars in 1993, but they couldn't find a niche in America. During 1994, the band's star began to fade, as Butler left the group before the completion of their second album. That alone wouldn't have been enough to dim their stardom, but the band had created a monster with their debut album that soon outgrew the band itself. Over the course of 1994, no less than three bands emerged as massively popular artists, both commercially and critically. Of these bands, Blur was the first and most successful.

Blur had originally emerged during the height of shoegazing in 1991 with *Leisure*, a record that combined strands of shoegazing with the Madchester craze. Initially, they were popular, but they quickly fell out of favor. The group returned in 1993 with *Modern Life Is Rubbish*, a record that recalled the glory days of British pop, featuring elements of the Kinks, Small Faces, the Jam, and Madness. It was a moderate success, but its performance did nothing to indicate the magnitude of Blur's 1994 breakthrough with *Parklife*. Although it was as fiercely British as its predecessor, *Parklife* was more focused and featured stronger songs, several of which added elements of '80s synth-pop and new wave. "Girls and Boys," the album's opening dance-pop number, entered the charts at No. 5 upon its release in the spring of 1994, opening the doors for a year where British alternative rock became the dominating musical force in the country. By the end of the year, *Parklife* had gone triple platinum in the UK, establishing Blur as arguably the most popular band in the country.

As *Parklife* was beginning to take off in the spring of 1994, a new Manchester-based quintet called Oasis began receiving overwhelmingly positive reviews in the weeklies. By the end of the summer, Oasis had a genuine hit with "Live Forever," and their debut album, *Definitely Maybe*, had unseated Suede as the fastest-selling debut album in UK history. Oasis quickly became as popular as Blur, scoring a No. 1 single in the spring of 1995 with "Some Might Say;" by summer 1995, *Definitely Maybe* had gone triple platinum. In addition to Oasis and Blur, a flood of independent and alternative bands began ruling the British pop charts. The spiky new wave revivalism of Elastica, the elegantly wasted synth-pop of Pulp, the youthful exuberance of Supergrass, the streamlined Smiths guitar-pop of Gene, the Boo Radleys, and Shaun Ryder's new band, Black Grape, all enjoyed Top Ten hits on the pop charts, including several number ones. It was the equivalent of Nirvana's American breakthrough, as nearly every one of Britain's most popular bands had its roots in the alternative pop-rock scene of the past decade.

Recommended Recordings

The Smiths, *Singles* (Reprise)
The Smiths, *The Queen Is Dead* (Sire)
The Cure, *Staring at the Sea* (Elektra)
The Jesus and Mary Chain, *Psychocandy* (Def American)
New Order, *Substance* (Qwest)
XTC, *Skylarking* (Geffen)
Robyn Hitchcock, *Globe of Frogs* (A&M)
The Housemartins, *London 0 Hull 4* (Go!)
The Stone Roses, *The Stone Roses* (London)
The La's, *The La's* (London)
Happy Mondays, *Pills 'n' Thrills & Bellyaches* (Elektra)
My Bloody Valentine, *Loveless* (Sire)
Primal Scream, *Screamadelica* (Sire)
Suede, *Suede* (Columbia)
Blur, *Parklife* (Capitol)
Oasis, *Definitely Maybe* (Epic)

–Stephen Thomas Erlewine

Lo-Fi

Over the last several decades, there's been a more or less ongoing clique of staunch traditionalists who insist that hi-tech, glossy production values are taking the soul and spontaneity out of rock 'n' roll music. As rock heads into the 21st century—in an age where such technology-dependent musics as techno, ambient, and rap are gaining an unstoppable momentum, and multi-track recordings and "punch-in" vocals are standard practice—it's ironic that one of the most influential trends of alternative rock in the '90s has deliberately cast itself in opposition to studio sophistication. Called "lo-fi" artists, more by the rock underground than by themselves, they see simple, even primitive recording quality as an advantage, not a hindrance.

If you're so inclined, you can trace lo-fi right back to the beginning of rock 'n' roll, when thousands of rockabilly and doo wop artists recorded in primitive circumstances, lending to their records a unique naiveté that is impossible to re-create today. The garage bands of the mid-'60s, of course, often recorded in facilities as primitive as the ones they rehearsed in, a quality which was duplicated in the '70s by many of the early punk bands.

The difference between these earlier rock 'n' rollers and today's lo-fi artists is that, in all probability, virtually all of the earlier records sounded primitive due to financial limitations rather than conscious decision. If these rockabilly, garage, and even punks had been asked at the time whether they would like to be recording in more sophisticated facilities, with greater time and budgets at their disposable, the vast majority of them would likely have said yes without a second thought. While today's lo-fi artists are often limited by budgetary constraints as well, the defining difference is that they are by and large making a conscious choice to aim for the spontaneity and distinctive distorted, grainy sonic qualities that can arise from recording quickly on simple, even outdated, equipment.

Again, this approach isn't unique to the '90s, and in fact has pretty deep roots. On their second album, *White Light/White Heat*, the Velvet Underground deliberately turned their amps to 11 and gleefully watched the needles go into the red, ignoring the engineer's pleas to turn down the volume to eliminate distortion. The Beatles deliberately created distortion on tracks like "Revolution"; the Rolling Stones recorded some of "Jumping Jack Flash"'s guitars on cassette to get the right amount of dirt into the sound.

But lo-fi, as the label's applied in 1997, really has its roots in the do-it-yourself ethic that arose from the punk movement in the late '70s. One of its basic (if not always observed) tenets was that anybody could form a band, record their music, and issue it on their own label. By the early '80s, this was taken a step further by some independent artists, who realized that they need not even enter a studio to record their own music, or even "release" it through traditional vinyl means, instead recording at home, dubbing their own cassettes, and selling/trading those at gigs or through the mail. The fuzzy sound, distorted guitars, simple instrumentation, occasional mistakes: these were not viewed as flaws, but as actual enhancements, increasing the most intimate and personal quality of the performances, and the truest representation of the artists' visions. Many alternative acts of the '80s were lo-fi in this classic sense, although the label hadn't been created at the time. Page through any issue of alternative/underground publications such as *Op*, *Option*, or *Forced Exposure*, and there will be plenty of them, on vinyl, cassette, and eventually, compact disc. The K label, run by Calvin Johnson of Beat Happening, is (in retrospect) the most famous and influential repository of the lo-fi aesthetic. But there were innumerable others following the same path, most (but not all) rock-based, although they didn't achieve even a modicum of mainstream recognition: Jandek, Kath Bloom, Walls of Genius, Linda Smith, and Loren Mazzacane are but a few of the better underappreciated trailblazers of the genre. Content as well as attitude was needed to make this stuff work, as the music of the unspeakably, deliberately awful Happy Flowers, as well as literally thousands of cassette tapes, could attest to.

At the beginning of the 1990s, several alternative rock acts using the lo-fi aesthetic began to rise to levels of attention previously reserved for R.E.M. clones and British gloom-mongers. Chief among these were Sebadoh, formed by Dinosaur, Jr. castoff Lou Barlow; Pavement, a California band that seemed to positively pride itself on non-promotion and an elusive image; and Guided by Voices, an Ohio band that had been releasing their own albums for a good half-dozen years before suddenly getting "discovered" by listeners extending beyond their circle of friends.

Most likely, these bands achieved a level of recognition unattained by previous lo-fi pioneers because of the relatively pop-oriented base of their material. Guided by Voices, for instance, likes nothing more than to be compared to a lost power-pop British Invasion band; Pavement is frequently compared to Lou Reed. Don't be under any illusion, though, that listening to these guys is like putting on a Big Star or Go-Betweens record: there are frequent side trips into experimentalism, free-form song structures, and even downright noise. There's also no doubt of their love for lo-fi textures. Certainly the sound could be "cleaned up" by utilizing moderately more expensive, state-of-the-art studios and equipment, but they realize that deliberate distortion and muffled textures, used purposefully, have desirable aesthetic qualities that would be smothered by more state-of-the-art methods.

The rise of lo-fi brought belated appreciation to some of the progenitors of the genre. The New York noise group Pussy Galore was one of the root bands of lo-fi, especially with their almost legendary (if seldom heard) song-by-song cassette rendition of the Rolling Stones' *Exile on Main Street*. They gave birth to two more accessible, traditionally rock-oriented acts that draw on the lo-fi aesthetic to some degree—the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and Royal Trux (the latter of whom boasted that they never spent more than $1000 on recording an album until they hooked up with a major label). In New Zealand, Chris Knox, a pivotal figure in that country's punk/new wave scene, recorded intriguing alternative pop both on his own and with his partner Alec Bathgate in Tall Dwarfs, often hastily working on four-track equipment. Many other Kiwi alternative bands, associated with Flying Nun and other labels, prefer to work in similar no-frills fashions; Alastair Galbraith even told *Option* that he intentionally leaves clicks in place when he puts overdubs onto his four-track recordings.

Beat Happening, meanwhile, continue to work today, and Calvin Johnson is still busy organizing and promoting artists working with the lo-fi modus operandi for K records and cassettes with artists like Lois. He also provides an outlet for the less commercial recordings of Beck, who took lo-fi (in a cleaned-up fashion) to the Top 20 with his debut, *Mellow Gold;* his more acoustic-oriented, less-polished efforts can be found on his K release, *One Foot in the Grave*.

The mid-'90s also saw an enormous amount of critical attention lavished upon Jack Logan, discovered in his mid-30s almost by accident after making over 500 home recordings with friends in his small Georgia home. Several dozen of these were culled for a double-CD debut release which made many national critics' Best Of 1994 lists, although it didn't sell more than a few thousand copies. Also hailed by national publications were Palace Brothers, a floating ensemble built around Will Oldham, linking lo-fi to acoustic folk traditions. Palace Brothers are far darker than the relatively cheery and pop-based ruminations of Logan, but are positively jolly when juxtaposed with the more obscure Smog, a *nom de plume* for various projects of the reclusive Bill Callahan, who builds depressing but compelling, gripping soundscapes from the demons troubling his inner psyche. In this respect Smog, Palace Brothers, Beck, and other lo-fi hounds owe an oft-unacknowledged debt to Skip Spence, the brilliant but demented ex-Moby Grape guitarist. Spence's 1969 solo album, *Oar*, anticipated much of the lo-fi aesthetic with its minimal, goofy, and hushed, tormented ambience, constructed primarily as a one-man acoustical band.

One of the greatest lo-fi recordings was never released to the general public. Before gaining instant fame with her 1993 debut *Exile in Guyville*, Phair recorded lo-fi tapes of much of the material that ended up on the record (along with songs she recorded for her second album and ones she never released), using only multi-tracked tapes of her voice and guitar, for limited circulation (primarily to friends and acquaintances). Literally thousands of unauthorized copies of the tapes, dubbed *Girlysound*, have made the rounds with Phair fans, many of whom rank the songs among her best and most unaffected performances, despite the hissy fidelity. Phair is in some important respects a lo-fi anomaly; her two official albums are too elaborately produced to be classified as lo-fi, and *Girlysound* could be categorized with the many excellent bootlegs by famous artists which happen to have primitive sound quality, such as the Beatles' acoustic *White Album* demos. But unlike most of those superstar bootlegs, *Girlysound* has a minimalist and naked D.I.Y. outlook that could only have been produced in the age of lo-fi.

Lo-fi may have a much higher profile than ever as we go to press, but the vast majority of the music is still unheard even by much of the underground—not only by groups that have generated a modest buzz, such as Superchunk, the Grifters, the Silver Jews, and Portastatic, or the multitudinous and incestuous side projects of many of the top lo-fi bands. The fountain of lo-fi remains the bedrooms and basements of home recording artists, where those who prize feeling over polish pour their hearts out in a format that works in direct opposition to the unwritten rules of today's music studios, equipment manufacturers, and record labels.

Recommended Recordings

Beat Happening, *Dreamy* (Sub Pop)
Pavement, *Westing (By Musket & Sextant)* (Drag City)
Sebadoh, *Smash Your Head on the Punk Rock* (Sub Pop)
Beck, *One Foot in the Grave* (K)
Guided By Voices, *Bee Thousand* (Matador)
Liz Phair, *Girlysound* (bootleg tape)
Alastair Galbraith, *Seely Girn* (Feel Good All Over)
Tall Dwarfs, *Hello Cruel World* (Homestead)
Smog, *Burning Kingdom* (Drag City)
Jack Logan, *Bulk* (Medium Cool)
Lois, *Strumpet* (K)
Palace Brothers, *Palace Brothers* (Drag City)

–Richie Unterberger

Rap

The most popular and influential form of African-American pop music of the 1980s and 1990s, rap is also one of the most controversial styles of the rock era. And not just among the guardians of cultural taste and purity that have always been counted among rock 'n' roll's chief enemies—Black, white, rock, and soul audiences continue to fiercely debate the musical and social merits of rap, whose most radical innovations subverted many of the musical and cultural tenets upon which rock was built.

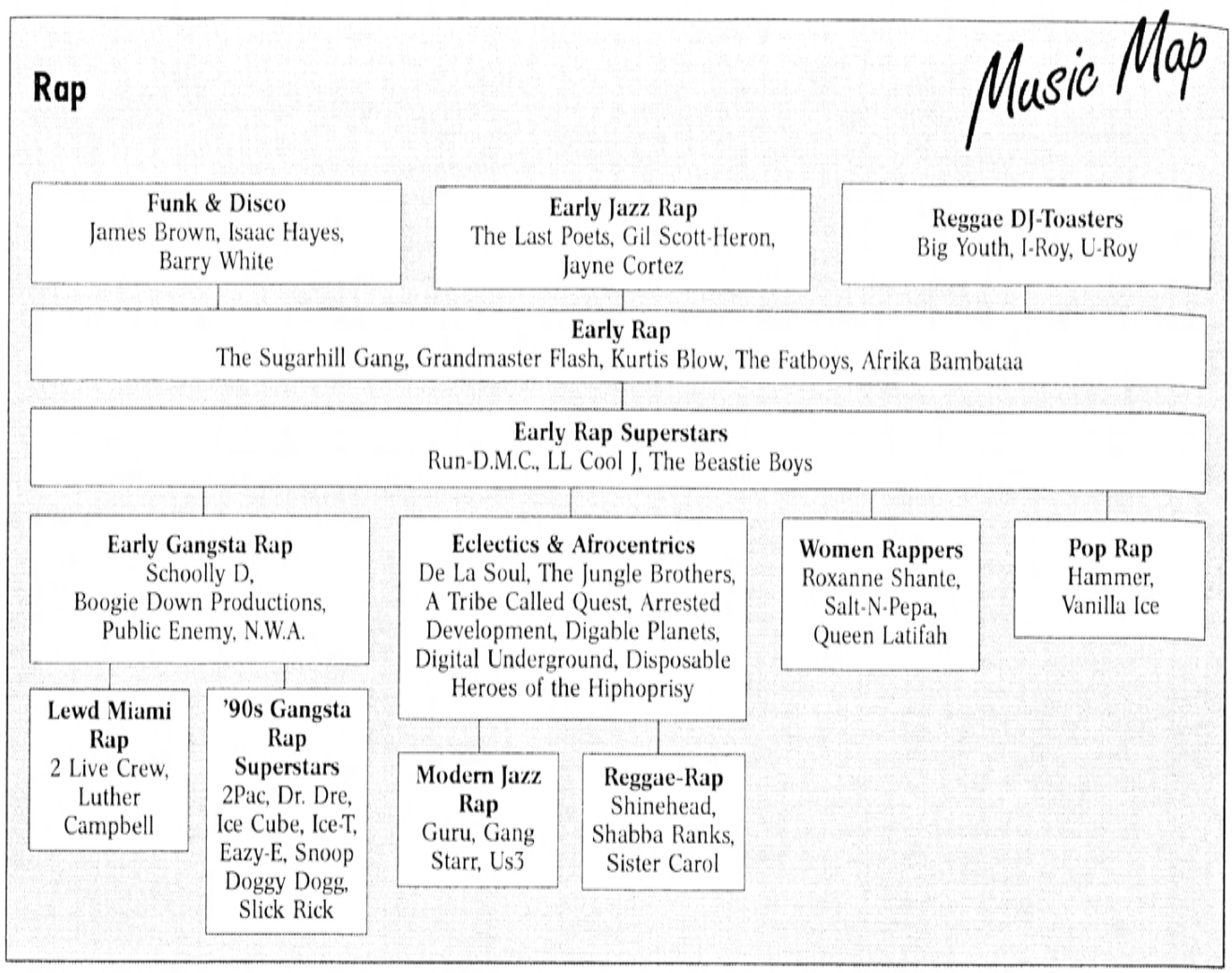
Antecedents of rap are easy to find in rock and other kinds of music. Music is often used to tell a story, often with spoken rhymes over instruments and rhythms. Talking blues, spoken passages of sanctified prose in gospel, and numerous hits that call out slogans and rhymes, from Bo Diddley's "Say Man" to Shirley Ellis' "The Name Game" to Jerry Reed's "When You're Hot, You're Hot"—you can find pre-raps in material by performers as diverse as Lou Reed, the Shangri-Las, and the Jimmy Castor Bunch, if you want to stretch it.

More direct paths leading to rap, though, can be found in a few of the trends of the late '60s and '70s. In R&B music, funk and disco stripped soul down to its most basic rhythms, foregoing much of the instrumentation and vocals used as embellishments. James Brown in particular is often cited as a forefather in his use of stream-of-consciousness raps over elemental funk backup, and he (and some other funk giants) have been sampled by modern-day rappers on innumerable occasions.

Two much more overlooked influences originated from outside of the R&B and rock mainstream. The Last Poets, Gil Scott-Heron, and Jayne Cortez set highly politicized tales of African-American and urban life against percussive jazz tracks in the early '70s. In reggae, the use of DJs, or "toasters," to rap over basic instrumental backing tracks when they took their mobile sound systems to dances became widespread. New York City, particularly Brooklyn and (more importantly in terms of rap's birth) the Bronx, was home to a large Jamaican community. Jamaican DJs (DJ Kool Herc has been credited as the first) mixed sounds from several turntables, a device which would become one of rap's trademarks.

Although mixing from large sound systems began to be employed at New York house parties in the 1970s, it didn't really emerge as a recorded sound until the Sugarhill Gang's "Rapper's Delight" in 1979. While many critics and listeners shrugged the song aside as a fluke novelty hit, the early rap sound—usually composed of slangy, boastful spoken rhymes over basic bass and percussion grooves—continued to spread in the early '80s, due in large part to the efforts of the Sugarhill label itself. Grandmaster Flash's hard-hitting 1982 single, "The Message," really stands as rap's watershed mark, with a massive impact belied by its relatively modest peak on the pop charts. No longer could rap be ignored as a frivolous micro-genre; here was straight-up social comment, reporting from the front lines of the ghetto with more immediacy than almost any newspaper or television broadcast.

From its inception, rap endured a lot of hostility from listeners—many, but not all, white—who found the music too harsh, monotonous, and lacking in traditional melodic values. However, millions of others—often, though not always, young African-Americans from underprivileged inner-city backgrounds—found an immediate connection with the style. Here was poetry of the street, directly reflecting and addressing the day-to-day reality of the ghetto in a confrontational fashion not found in any other music or media. What's more, you could dance to it, rhyme to it, bring it most anywhere on increasingly ubiquitous portable cassette players (dubbed "ghetto blasters"), and, in the best rock 'n' roll tradition, form your own band without much in the way of formal training.



The basic workouts of early rappers like Kurtis Blow and the Fat Boys (eventually referred to as "old school" rap) can sound a bit tame today, although the productions of veterans like Afrika Bambaataa and Keith LeBlanc have lost none of their luster. Many were still expecting the music to peter out before Run-D.M.C. came along. Rap was, and to a large degree still is, a singles-oriented medium, but these Queens men proved that rappers could maintain interest and diversity over the course of entire full-length albums. Combining hard beats and innovative production with strong material that emphasized positive social activism without ignoring the cruel realities of urban life, they found as much favor with the critics as the street. Among the first rap groups to climb the pop charts in a big way, they also were among the first to make big inroads into the white and Middle American audiences when they teamed up with Aerosmith's Steven Tyler and Joe Perry for the hit single "Walk This Way."

The mid- and late '80s saw rap continuing to explode in popularity, with the ascendancy of superstars like LL Cool J and Hammer (the latter of whom is often accused of providing a safe rap-pop alternative). Although most early rap productions originated in New York City and its environs, the music took hold as a national phenomenon, with strong scenes developing in other East Coast cities like Philadelphia, as well as West Coast strongholds in Los Angeles and Oakland. Production techniques became increasingly sophisticated; electronics, stop-on-a-dime editing, and—most importantly—sampling from previously recorded sources became prominent (although turntable mixing, along with the "scratching" produced by wiggling records back and forth, continued to be a strong ingredient). The increased emphasis on electronic beats led to the popularization of the term "hip-hop," a designation which is by now used more or less interchangeably with rap. The Beastie Boys, obnoxious white ex-punks from New York, brought rap further into the Middle American mainstream with their vastly popular hybrids of hip-hop, hard rock, and in-your-face braggadocio.

While rap had always forthrightly dealt with urban struggle, the late '80s saw the emergence of a more militant strain of the music. Sometimes dubbed "gangsta-rap," the hotbed of this school was found in the disadvantaged neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles, although performers like Philadelphia's Schoolly D proved that the genre was not specific to the area. Boogie Down Productions laid down a prototype that was taken to more extreme measures by N.W.A. (Niggaz with Attitude), who reported on the crime, sex, and violence of the ghetto with an explicit verve that some viewed as verging on celebration rather than journalism. Enormously controversial, and enormously popular with record buyers, several N.W.A. members went on to stardom as solo acts, including Ice Cube, Eazy-E, and Dr. Dre. Other boys from their 'hood also made their mark with inflammatory works, such as Ice-T and Snoop Doggy Dogg.

The most popular and controversial of the militant rappers, the New York-based Public Enemy, were perhaps the most political as well. Their brand of activism, like that of Malcolm X's two decades earlier, made a lot of people, including liberals, pretty uncomfortable, with their emphasis upon Black nationalism and careless anti-Semitic, homophobic, and sexist references. Groups such as Public Enemy ignited an ongoing debate in the media. Activist-oriented critics and audiences found a lot to praise in their music: powerful articulations against social and racial injustice, uncompromising portraits of realities that mainstream media shy away from, exhortations to the disadvantaged to empower themselves, and the sometimes overlooked fact that rap generated most of the few massive-selling independent releases produced outside of the corporate major-label machine. At the same time, they could not let the xenophobic tendencies of these acts pass unnoticed, or ignore the frequent quasi-celebration in much rap music of misogyny, drugs, and violence, and the status to be gained in the urban community by the practice thereof. Many rap and rock 'n' roll fans were also concerned parents, torn almost against their will between wanting to support the struggle against race and class oppression, and wanting to protect their children against possible identification with the violence- and obscenity-riddled content of the records themselves. Passionate advocates of civil liberties and free speech wondered, sometimes aloud, whether rappers were taking those privileges too far.

Rap began to lose some of its momentum midway through the '90s, as the genre became mired in copies of Dr. Dre's G-funk, gangsta rap and simpy fusions of R&B and hip-hop. Gangsta continued to rule the charts until 1996, when its sales began to slip. This was partially due to market saturation, but it was also true that gangsta had played itself out, and that it offered few fresh musical ideas. The tragic murders of Tupac Shakur in late 1996 and the Notorious B.I.G. a few months later were the symbolic end to the gangsta generation. Many critics claimed that their deaths would bring about change in the violence-obsessed hip-hop nation, but the truth is changes were brewing in the years that Tupac and Biggie were at their peak.

While gangsta was at the height of its popularity, the funky, hedonisitic bass-music scenes in the southern United States earned large followings, and the jazz-rap of Gangstarr, Us3 and French rapper MC Solaar all earned positive reviews, as did the reggae-rap fusions of Shinehead, Shabba Ranks and Sister Carol. The latter reached its peak on the Fugees' hit 1996 album *The Score,* which not only interlaced reggae rhythms with hip-hop, but also wove in smooth soul and R&B to provide a rich, eclectic music. *The Score* was accessible and clever, but the true innovations in hip-hop were emerging from the underground, most notably in the form of the Wu-Tang Clan. A large, loose-knit crew from Staten Island, the Wu-Tang returned hardcore rap to its edgy, minimalistic roots and under the direction of the RZA, they created a menacing, claustrophobic sound highlighted by scratching strings, disembodied pianos, haunting samples and stark beats. Their 1993 debut *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* became a word-of-mouth hit, and they released no less than six side projects, all coordinated by RZA, before reuniting for the 1997 double album *Wu-Tang Forever.* By that time, it was clear that the group's debut had prophesized a number of musical trends, from Dr. Octagon's strange lo-fi hip-hop to Tricky's hazy, scary soundscapes. In the wake of gangsta's death, the Wu-Tang, Tricky and Dr. Octagon & the Automater, along with the post-hip- hop electronica of the Chemical Brothers and DJ Shadow, illustrated that rap still had the potential to reinvent itself.

Recommended Recordings

Various Artists, *The Sugarhill Records Story* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Street Jams—Hip-Hop from the Top, Vol. 1-4* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Street Jams—Electric Funk, Vol. 1-4* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Hip-Hop Greats—Classic Raps* (Rhino)
Various Artists, *Def Jam Music Group: Ten Year Anniversary* (Def Jam)
Afrika Bambaataa, *Planet Rock* (Tommy Boy)
Run-D.M.C., *Together Forever: Greatest Hits* (Profile)
LL Cool J, *Radio* (Def Jam)
The Beastie Boys, *Licensed to Ill* (Def Jam)
Public Enemy, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (DefJam)
Boogie Down Productions, *Criminal Minded* (Sugar Hill Rap)
N.W.A., *Straight Outta Compton* (Priority)
De La Soul, *Three Feet High & Rising* (Tommy Boy)
Queen Latifah, *All Hail the Queen* (Tommy Boy)
Shinehead, *Unity* (Elektra)
Digable Planets, *Reachin': A New Refutation...* (Pendulum)
Various Artists, *Stolen Moments: Red, Hot + Cool* (GRP)
Ice-T, *O.G. Original Gangster* (Sire)
Salt-N-Pepa, *Blacks' Magic* (London)
Digital Underground, *Sex Packets* (Tommy Boy)
Arrested Development, *Three Years, Five Months & Two Days in the Life Of...* (Chrysalis)
A Tribe Called Quest, *The Low End Theory* (Jive)
Dr. Dre, *The Chronic* (Priority)
Wu-Tang Clan, *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* (Loud/RCA)
Tricky, *Maxinquaye* (Durban Poison/Island)
The Fugees, *The Score* (Ruffhouse)

–Jimmy James & Stephen Thomas Erlewine

Techno

Although no musical style evolves in a vacuum, techno is one of the few in recent times that appears to have been born almost fully-formed. Typically, that birth is traced to the early '80s and the emaciated inner-city of Detroit, where figures such as Juan Atkins, Derek May, and Kevin Saunderson, among others, fused the quirky machine music of Kraftwerk and Yellow Magic Orchestra with the space-race electric funk of George Clinton, the optimistic futurism of Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave* (from which the music derived its name), and the emerging electro sound elsewhere being explored by Soul Sonic Force, the Jonzun Crew, Man Parrish, "Pretty" Tony Butler, and L.A.'s Wrecking Cru.

Unlike much electro, however, which playfully explored themes of the video age, space travel, block parties, and b-boy braggadocio, techno's minor-key melodies and spare, repetitive rhythms exhibited a tragic, melancholic edge that seemed to more directly engage the political and cultural issues of late-20th-century urban America. Tracks such as "Clear," "Technicolor," "Night Drive (Thru Babylon)," "Strings of Life," and "Rock to the Beat" often expressed a disdain with the same technology they hoped could deliver a culture in the latter stages of decay. And while techno's concern for the liberatory potential of human-machine interface is often traced back to such European avant-garde figures as Luigi Russolo and Luciano Berio, the music's urban orientation and historical and cultural roots clearly distinguish it sharply from those traditions.

Early techno tracks (on such labels as Metroplex, Transmat, and KMS) were generally produced for limited-run 12-inch release, and although the global popularity of the music in the present day has ensured that many of them have remained in print, techno remained a local phenomenon until the records started showing up on European shores. Consequently, the explosion of techno onto London's emerging acid house scene in the mid- to late-'80s (itself a quixotic mix of Chicago and New York house) meant that many of the music's early creators became bigger "stars" in Europe than in America, a phenomenon that continues to this day (although techno was, and to a certain extent remains, antagonistic toward artist identity and stardom, a function of the music's reaction against certain characteristics of mainstream rock and pop). And while the UK dance music scene, as in America, has retained a decided predilection toward house music (with techno the music of choice in continental locales such as Germany and Belgium), the second phase of the music's evolution has largely taken place there, with labels such as Warp, GPR, Infonet, and Rephlex, and artists such as LFO, Richard H. Kirk, Richard James/Aphex Twin, Reload/Link, Germ, B12, and the Black Dog taking the spare electronic experiments of the early Detroit innovators to the next level of abstraction.

Elsewhere, techno's connection to the dancefloor continues to be emphasized, with functional and exploratory approaches that both stick with the music's roots and morph them into a range of related styles, including trance, acid, hardcore and gabber. As stated, techno's sparer, more rugged dancefloor face remains the dance music of choice throughout much of continental Europe (corporate-sponsored raves in Germany and Belgium routinely attract crowds in the tens of thousands), and the number of artists working either in direct tradition of the original Detroit sound or in a regional, often minimalist offshoot thereof remains quite high. Labels such as Tresor, Force Inc., D-Jax Up-Beats, R&S, and Structure/DJ Ungle Fever, among dozens of others, have been most active and influential. Japan has also produced a fair amount of notable techno artists, including Ken Ishii, Sosumo Yakota, and Naohiro Fujikawa, although the scene there is relatively small.

Techno's ongoing status in the United States as a marginal, underground music has meant that the style has been slower to evolve in its birthplace, although third-wave Detroit artists such as Jeff Mills, Stacey Pullen, "Mad" Mike Banks, Drexciya, and AUX 88 (as well as stubborn originators such as Carl Craig and Derrick May) continue to push the style forward. Ironically (or perhaps not so much), it's been the European reinterpretation of techno in electronic hybrids such as trip-hop, jungle, and the so-called "intelligent dance music" of artists such as Autechre, Aphex Twin, and the Black Dog which have opened American ears. Time will tell whether that will translate into what, in Europe and England, has become the next stage of Western pop music.

A BRIEF RUNDOWN OF TECHNO'S MANY FACES

Detroit

Early Detroit techno is characterized by, alternately, a dark, detached, mechanistic vibe, and a smooth, bright, soulful feel (the latter deriving in part from the Motown legacy and the stock-in-trade between early techno and the Chicago-style house developing simultaneously to the south). While essentially designed as dance music meant to uplift, the stark, melancholy edge of early tracks by Cybotron, Model 500, Rhythm Is Rhythm, and Reese also spoke to Detroit's economic collapse in the late '70s following the city's prosperous heyday as the focal point of the American automobile industry.

The music's oft-copied ruddy production and stripped-down aesthetic were largely a function of the limited technology available to the early innovators (records were often mastered from two-track onto cassette); the increasingly sophisticated arrangements of much contemporary techno (on through to hardcore and jungle), conversely, has much to do with the growth and increasing affordability of MIDI-encoded equipment and desktop digital audio. Second- and third-wave Detroit techno, too, has gained considerably in production, although artists such as Derrick May, Juan Atkins, and Kenny Larkin have sought to combine the peerless sheen of the digital arena with the compositional minimalism of their Detroit origins.

No longer simply contained within the 313 area code, Detroit techno has become a global phenomenon (partly as a result of the more widespread acclaim many of the original Detroit artists have found in other countries), buoyed by the fact that many of the classic early tracks remain in print (available through Submerge, at www.submerge.com). Today, Detroit's third wave are re-exploring the aesthetic commitment of the music's early period, with hard-hitting beats (Underground Resistance, Jeff Mills), soulful grooves (Kenny Larkin, Stacey Pullen), and a renewed interest in techno's breakbeat roots (Aux 88, Drexciya, "Mad" Mike, Dopplereffekt).

Although numerous documents of Detroit techno past and present exist, the best introduction to the Motor City sound is undoubtedly *True People: A Detroit Techno Compilation,* a sprawling two-CD set released on React Records in 1995.

Bleep

Generally associated with early Sheffield techno artists such as Robert Gordon, Richard H. Kirk, Forgemasters, and LFO, the bleep moniker was an onomatopoeic attempt to describe the squelching synth noises and quirky MIDI experiments of those artists' early 12-inches for Warp, Network, ZTT, and Vinyl Solution. Bleep is a direct precursor of the electronic listening music characteristic of the GPR and Warp labels (the latter of which Gordon helped found in the early '90s), and has since evolved into the "armchair" or "intelligent" techno of artists such as the Black Dog, Autechre, As One, Aphex Twin, and mu-Ziq.

Acid

Acid music, apart from early techno and electro, has also been America's longest running contribution to the global dance scene, with artists such as Robert Armani, DJ Pierre, Armando, Marshall Jefferson, and Freddie Fresh all being extremely influential in the German and Dutch scenes. The music's name derives less from the drug as from the caustic, abrasive synth squelches associated with the TB-303 synthesizer, the music's most prominent instrumental element.

Trance (also Hard and Goa)

Trance is a superfast offshoot of techno that uses sparse, repetitive structures, dense melodic textures, and high BPMs to induce a sort of mesmerized state. Popular for its psychedelic themes and often used in combination with hallucinogens to enhance the psychotropic effects, the style has been most popular in Germany, where artists such as Hardfloor, DJ Criss, Arpeggiators, and Cygnus X developed a harder-edge style known, appropriately, as hard trance. An increasingly ethnic-infused strain has also evolved through the mid-'90s known as Goa trance, which plays up the spacey, psychedelic side with movie samples and heavy basslines. Hardcore techno artists such as Joey Beltram and Dave Clarke have also helped to blur the line between trance and harder styles of techno, utilizing highly repetitive rhythms layered with slight, slowly morphing electronics.

Intelligent Techno/IDM

Shortform for Intelligent Dance Music, IDM as a musical genre is a relatively recent invention meant to account for new forms of electronic music composition which draw from styles such as house, techno, ambient, and electro while taking them in distinctly different, often more "musical" directions. Although often slighted for its racist connotations (recalling techno's African-American roots and contrasting them with a derivative style largely produced and consumed by white artists and audiences), for better or for worse the term has caught on as a generic placeholder for styles of dance-based electronic music seeking audiences outside the traditional milieu of the DJ and dancefloor. (Artists: Aphex Twin, Orbital, Biosphere, the Black Dog, Autechre, Richard H. Kirk)

Minimal

Minimalist techno, particularly in its European form, involves the stripping away of most of what could be referred to as techno's "musical" side to reveal only the basic pulse of the beat, fitted with a minimum of textural embellishment. Oddly enough, even within this framework, minimalist techno takes on a variety of different faces, from Mike Ink's Studio 1 and Detroit's Basic Channel, to Finland's Sahko label and artists such as ÿ. Variation often comes in the form of vague differences in technology, but usually the motive is the same—to abstract dance music away from the contingency of culture toward something like a "universal groove." The style is probably most popular in Germany, Belgium, and Northern Europe.

—Sean Cooper

Electronica

Electronica has become a manageable, one-word catch-all for a range of music styles which, taken together, many believe represent the next step in the evolution of Western pop. Although what the term actually means tends in large part to depend upon which side of the Atlantic Ocean it's spoken on, electronica in its broadest common significance refers primarily to artists drawing heavily on dance music styles such as house, techno, electro, and EBM (electronic body music) in ways not simply derivative of the dancefloor. Similar in some respects to the early working distinction between rhythm & blues and Rock 'n' roll, electronica tends to involve an adaptation or mutation of dance music compositional elements to other-than-DJ/dancefloor ends; in the context of contemporary electronic dance music, that generally translates into dynamic (rather than static), composed (rather than programmed), listener- (rather than dancer- or DJ-) oriented "songs" (rather than "trax"). If the term's distinction appears to turn only on contrast—that is, by negative comparison to dance music—it's because many of the artists credited with innovating the music (people like the Black Dog, Orbital, Terrace, Speedy J, Richard H. Kirk, the Future Sound Of London, Autechre, and Aphex Twin) saw themselves in contradistinction to dance culture and the limits it placed on its music. These artists were interested in producing music designed for other uses—home listening, primarily—which allowed for a wider range of influences (ambient, classical, jazz, non-Western musics, etc.) and a higher index of experimentation. Heavily influenced by the early techno-pop, hip-hop, and electro-funk of Kraftwerk, Cybotron, Man Parrish, Soul Sonic Force, and Ice-T, as well as the first wave techno and Acid House of Detroit and Chicago innovators, these artists brought a penchant for tunefulness and compositional dynamics—elements often lacking in club-borne dance music—to the creative fore.

Original wide-spread use of the term "electronica" derives in part from the influential English experimental techno label New Electronica, which, along with labels such as General Production Recordings, Warp, Evolution, and Rising High, was a leading force in the early 1990s in introducing and supporting dance-based electronic music more oriented toward home listening than dancefloor play. Because of that label's role in the birth of "intelligent techno" (itself a heavily loaded and controversial term referring to electronic listening music rooted in, but not simply reducible to, dancefloor techno), the term in the early part of the 1990s became used to loosely characterize groups such as Orbital, Autechre, Aphex Twin, As One, Global Communication, Sun Electric, the Black Dog, the Orb, Higher Intelligence Agency, Biosphere, etc.—in other words, bands that drew primarily from dancefloor techno in constructing more song-oriented music utilizing similar instrumental elements, compositional techniques, and organizational structures (four-on-the-floor or electronic breakbeats; synth pads and 303, 808, and 909 bass and drum sounds; simple melodies and deep basslines; minor-key chord progressions; etc.). As a result, electronica became more or less synonymous with terms such as "intelligent techno," "ambient techno," etc., and was considered distinct from other emerging forms such as jungle and trip-hop, each of which had its own set of defining characteristics (as well as often dauntingly complex litany of terms and microgenres).

A key component in the growth and popularization of the style was the *Artificial Intelligence* series released by the Sheffield-based Warp label starting in 1992, which presented many of the artists now thought to be formative to a wide audience for the first time (including Autechre, Speedy J, Richard H. Kirk, the Black Dog, and Aphex Twin). Previously a source of innovative but nonetheless clearly dancefloor-oriented house and techno (early singles from the label include Nightmares on Wax, Robert Gordon's Forgemasters, and LFO), Warp's two-part compilation series *Artificial Intelligence*, as well as subsequent full-lengths from Kirk, Black Dog Productions, Autechre, and Detroit techno artist Kenny Larkin drew a clear line in the sand between dance music and the "electronic listening music" that would soon become the label's focus. (The first volume of *Artificial Intelligence* pictured a computer rendering of a chrome figure, spliff in hand, reclining before the front-room hi-fi, sleeves of Warp and Pink Floyd records littering the floor.) The series also constituted America's first serious exposure to the new sound; Wax Trax!/TVT licensed the two compilations and have reissued a number of Warp's subsequent full-length releases.

In the United States, electronica has only very recently been appropriated and generalized by the music (and non-music) press to refer to any dance-based electronic music with a potential for pop appeal. As a result, the term has been used to describe everyone from the Chemical Brothers and the Prodigy to Orbital and Ken Ishii, to Alex Reece, Mo'Wax, the Sneaker Pimps, Goldie, and Aphex Twin. Aversions to excessive genrefication notwithstanding, the grouping together of such disparate artists seems symptomatic of larger tendencies within an American music industry which knows little (if anything) about the histories of the various styles these artists represent, a notion which has its antecedents in a largely rock-based music press and its bias—stemming in part from the legacy of disco—against music featuring predominantly electronic instrumentation, as well as a tendency to subsume all potentially significant popular music styles under the category of "rock." Where, in the European usage, the defining feature of electronica was usually its "listenability" (a value gauged within the context of the experimental electronic music underground, which usually had some understanding of the degree to which "song"-y derivatives of the music such as Orbital or Aphex Twin deviated from the more nuts 'n' bolts dancefloor fare of Derrick May, Jeff Mills, and Dave Clarke), in America the distinction seems to turn instead on the music's potential for popularity (read: profitability) via mainstream success: It was only, ironically, when several of these bands began gaining MTV exposure, commercial radio play, and major label recording contracts—despite the fact that the music had been widely popular outside of the US for nearly a decade—that "electronica" as a concrete category in the American music industry gained any viability.

"Electronic listening music" has also, of course, become big business on the other side of the pond, as well, with smaller indie releases routinely charting next to their Britpop brethren and artists such as Autechre, the Orb, and the Aphex Twin becoming the closest thing to pop stars the tenets of the genre and the limitations of its audience will allow. The steady adaptation of club culture to the demands of its elec-

tronic antagonists, however (as well as the fact that many of the artists and labels—including Scanner, Higher Intelligence Agency, and Coldcut, as well as Warp, Rephlex, Skam, and Leaf—have formed their own clubs), has also (ironically) meant that much of the first wave of dance music dissent has, to a certain extent, been reabsorbed *as* dance music (or at least club music, i.e. music one hears in a club). "Back room" club culture (previously the margin of experimental weirdness relegated to the literal "back rooms" of huge raves and weekly club nights) have also taken on a popular mythos all their own, with the vitality of free-form experimentation associated with them foregrounded in offshoot clubs such as the massive Heavenly club's Sunday Social (and perhaps best embodied by early genrecidal innovators Coldcut's *Journeys by DJ* mix CD, released in 1995). The result has pushed experimentation even further, with the "IDM" of first-wave electronic artists interminglings more directly with hip-hop, funk, industrial, jungle/drum 'n' bass, free jazz, and Indian and Southeast Asian musics, turning up some extremely interesting and innovative hybrids in the offing (from the schizoid electro-jazz/jungle of Atom Heart, Bisk, and Bedouin Ascent to the banging gabber-punk of Alec Empire's Atari Teenage Riot and the paranoid and depressed drum 'n' bass of, alternately, TPower and Panacea). Just how far this dynamic is capable of taking the music remains to be seen.

Several good introductions to the various strains—both hardline and "contemporary"—of electronica's eclectic face exist. An obvious place to start is, of course, New Electronica's early series *Global Electronic Innovations* (which, although heavily oriented toward Detroit techno, include many crucial early cuts), as well as Warp's two-volume *Artificial Intelligence* series. More contemporarily, the German label Studio !K7's two double-CD collections *The Freestyle Files* are excellent cross-sections of the rampant inbreeding of contemporary electronica. Those strapped for cash (most good new-school electronica comps tend to be import-only) should check out Nettwork's "greatest hits" package *Plastic*, as well as the label compilations licensed for stateside release by New York-based Instinct Records, which include Ntone (*Earthrise.Ntone.1*), Em:t (*Em:t 2000* and *Em:t Explorer*), and Compost (two volumes of *The Future Sound of Jazz*). For a taste of now-school breakbeat culture's influence on the music's formerly techno-heavy sound, Rising High's *Further Self-Evident Truths* and *Avant-Gardism*, Blue Planet's *State of the Nu Art*, and the Talvin Singh-compiled *Anohka: Sounds of the Asian Underground* are excellent entrees into electronica's more schizophrenetic offerings.

Recommended Recordings (* Indicates Top 10)

Various Artists, *Artificial Intelligence 2* (TVT/Warp)*
Various Artists, *Journeys by DJ: Coldcut* (JDJ)*
Various Artists, *Objects D'ART 2* (New Electronica)
Various Artists, *The Freestyle Files* (!K7)
Kraftwerk, *Computer World* (Elektra)
808 State, *UTD. 90* (ZTT)*
Aphex Twin, *Selected Ambient Works Vol. 1* (R&S)
As One, *Reflections* (New Electronica)
Mouse on Mars, *Iaora Tahiti* (American/Too Pure)
Higher Intelligence Agency, *Freefloater* (Beyond)*
Orbital, *In Sides* (Internal)*
Autechre, *Amber* (TVT/Warp)*
Locust, *Truth Is Born of Arguments* (Apollo)
The Black Dog, *Spanners* (EastWest/Warp)*
Future Sound of London, *ISDN* (Astralwerks/Virgin)*
mu-Ziq, *Tango n' Vectif* (Rephlex)
Reload, *A Collection of Short Stories**
Spacetime Continuum, *Emit Ecaps* (Astralwerks)
Plug, *Drum 'n' Bass for Papa* (Nothing/Blue Planet)
Atom Heart, *HAT* (Rather Interesting)*

—Sean Cooper

Ambient

Ambient music remains something of the scorned, dorky cousin of current electronic music. Dabbled in by scores of artists working primarily in other fields, but still for the most part too esoteric to attract a large audience, the music has been characterized as everything from dolled-up new age, to intellectual, over-indulgent dross, to boring and irrelevant technical noodling. Partly as a function of its relatively limited appeal, the definition of ambient remains extremely vague, a notion also related to the fact that artists considered to be working within its "borders" seem to be drawn from such a wide spectrum of different traditions; more "academic" experimental electronic (Chris Meloche, David Shea, Asmus Tietschens, David Toop, Oval), space music (Robert Rich, Steve Roach, Vidna Obmana, Klaus Shultze, Jeff Greinke, Alio Die), dub (Bill Laswell, the Orb, Mick Harris, Drome, Woob), ethno- or 4th-world electronic music (Jon Hassell, Banco De Gaia, Astralasia), gothic or industrial (Lustmord, Merzbow, Final, Aube, James Plotkin), and the vast contemporary hybridity of back-room club culture (everything from the KLF, Global Communication, and Mixmaster Morris to Biosphere, Higher Intelligence Agency, and Sun Electric, to Tetsu Inoue, David Moufang, L.T.J. Bukem, and Autechre). As dance-based electronic music has moved increasingly toward the indiscriminant intermingling of influences characteristic of trip-hop, electronica, and jungle/drum 'n' bass, ambient has shifted away from being a concrete genre and more toward a less identifiable (though no less specific) approach to sound, registering its influence in terms of space, color, and texture rather than the presence or absence of a backbeat, recognizable melodic or harmonic structures, etc.

Nonetheless, like other strains of experimental electronic music whose branches stretch into the most complex of arrangements, ambient has its roots, and historical evaluations of ambient music usually begin with Brian Eno. Although Eno's application of the term to his "background" composing of the late '70s itself had precursors in the "furniture music" of Erik Satie, the dadaist and futurist manifestos of Marcel Duchamp and Luigi Russolo, the proto- and high-modernism of Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky (as well as in non-Western musical and religious traditions such as Indonesian gamelan and African pygmy chanting), and New York School experimentalists such as John Cage, Morton Feldman, and LaMonte Young, it's with Eno that "ambient" music—i.e. music designed to be heard as an integral part of the environment in which it's played or listened to—first became an end in itself. And his series of recordings bearing the term (and subtitled things like *Music for Airports*, *Music for Films*, and *On Land*) remain watermarks. Formerly a member of pop/new wave group Roxy Music, Eno was among the first to integrate found sounds and field recordings into the context of the recording studio in order to construct an environment with his music—not necessarily (though in some cases) to re-create existing places, but to build from scratch a music which suggested a sense of context, one which could not only be heard but also experienced by the listener. It's also with Eno that ambient or "environmental" music was approached with predominantly electronic instruments; ambient has few contemporary examples of acoustic-based composers (Pauline Oliveros is one), although the combination of electronics and acoustic-based instruments is common (particularly among so-called electro-acoustic musicians such as Steve Roach, Carl Stone, and Michael Danna).

Of equal influence and importance to Eno's work was that of German synthesist Klaus Schulze, who represents something of the formalist arm of ambient's prehistory. Though aligned more directly with the European classical tradition than Eno (whose background in avant-garde pop and new wave had its consequence in the comparative subtlety and modesty of his music), Schulze's pioneering work in analog synthesis and his extended, highly conceptual compositions based solely on the timbral qualities of electronics were crucial in suggesting new directions for electronic music apart from not only its "pop," but also its academic and classical contexts. Although Schulze's earlier work was more immediately caught up in exploring (and exploiting) the sonic particularities of his medium (a notion which has tended to garner him more criticism than praise), Schulze increasingly sought the fusion of his technical mastery with elements of the lived environment; pieces such as his *Dresden Concert* drew liberally from nature recordings and source tapes which documented the bustle of everyday life, and his mid-'90s recordings with noted new school ambient composer Pete Namlook (of the Frankfurt-based Fax label) brought Schulze's formidable role in forging ambient's early aesthetic full circle.

Although much of the more visible instrumental electronic and electro-acoustic music produced in the late 1970s and early-to-mid-1980s appeared under the aegis of "new age"—a marketing phenomenon more than anything else, applied most often to musics linked by some method or other to relaxation, meditation, and/or escapism—even the overwhelming conservatism of that period had its antithesis in a range of musicians operating at the outer fringes of experimentation, pushing electronics-based composition into ever more challenging, abstract territory. Artists such as Steve Hillage (formerly of Gong), Harold Budd, early Tangerine Dream, Michael Stearns, Robert Rich, and Steve Roach, among others, sought to compose music as free as possible from the weighty baggage of both pop and classical, as well as Western academic and high cultural traditions, turning instead toward methods of composition and performance lacking conventional developmental structure—music which relied instead on programmatic elements such as repetition, texture, alternate tonality, and harmonic and subharmonic relationships (over and against the chordal, melodic, pentatonic, etc. concerns of most Western musical forms). Members of this loose agglomeration of artists often referred to their work as "space music"; not, as is often believed, because it sounded like it was from outer space (although in some cases this was true), but rather since the music tended to refer almost singularly and directly to the space in which it was heard, as well as the inner, more subconscious emotional and contemplative spaces of the listener. Although quite apart from Eno's definition, which

sought to locate music in some intermediate between foreground and background, space musicians sought to fuse the two in such a way that the music became the background of its own active exploration; the latter represented an extension of the former, since the relationship between music and the lived environment was the compositional preconception much of the music turned on.

Although the context was in many respects radically different, it was a similar impulse that led to ambient's renaissance in the late-'80s/early-'90s UK rave scene, the source of some of the most exciting innovations in not only the music's sound, but also its presentation. The by-now familiar construct of the "chill space"—that back-room alternative to the high-speed hedonism of main floor raves—was the nexus of that renaissance, with clubs such as Land of Oz (at London's massive weekly Heaven), Telepathic Fish, and Oscillate some of the first blips on the new ambient map. It was at clubs such as these that DJs like Alex Patterson (of the Orb), Mixmaster Morris (of Irresistible Force), and Jonah Sharp (of Spacetime Continuum) began blending together the early ambient experiments of Eno, Schulze, Hillage, Pink Floyd, Robert Rich, and Steve Hillage with everything from stereo test and demonstration records, *Songs of the Humpback Whale* and other nature and field recordings, minimalist classical, non-Western ritual and traditional musics, Jamaican dub, and, eventually, live electronics. As crowds began turning out specifically for chill rooms, all-ambient nights and even weekend-long ambient events became more common, with the appearance of recordings by the KLF (*Chill Out*), the Orb ("A Huge Ever-Growing Brain" and *Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld*, among others), Irresistible Force ("Space Is the Place" and *Flying High*), and the soon-to-be ubiquitous Pete Namlook (*Silence, Air, Dreamfish*) contributing momentum and a growing, non-club-based audience.

The proximity of chill rooms to rave culture meant much of the music reflected elements of acid house and techno, and hybrid terms such as "ambient house," "ambient techno," "ambient dub," etc. began to circulate, serving to differentiate this music not only from the more rigorously environmental experiments of the '70s and '80s, but also (and increasingly) from many parallel contemporary strains of ambient. Including such varied sources as the UK-based Beyond and Rising High labels; the (respectively) Frankfurt and Belgium-based Fax (Pete Namlook's prolific label) and Apollo imprints, as well as the electronic experiments of Mille Plateaux; dark ambient/industrial and isolationist artists such as Coil, Mick Harris, and Aube and labels such as Cold Meat Industries, Projekt, and Staalplaat; ambient soon, as journalist/producer David Toop put it, began taking on the properties of a "glue term," sticking to whatever it was thrown at. But ambient's steady demotion to the status of textual modifier also suggests the increasing fervor with which barriers separating styles were up for dismantling in the atmosphere of the mid-'90s post-rave experimental underground, a process that's given birth to more variations on the theme of electronic dance music in the past four or five years alone than in the previous two decades. This stylistic deconstruction has given birth to dozens of new genres, subgenres, and sub-subgenres (ambient dub, dark ambient, ambient jungle, electronica, post-rock, etc.) even as it's made the very pursuit of "genre" a mawkishly naive task. This is not to say ambient artists working more or less within the tradition of many of the music's earlier strains have ceased to exist—indeed, ambient's proliferation in the last several years has also contributed a sense of focus to artists pursuing one or another of its mutant strains—but rather that the palette of sounds which constitutes the raw materials of atmospheric or environmental music has broadened to such an extent that many of the definitional criteria of the music (lack of prominent percussion and/or a strong melodic presence, etc.) have been steadily reoriented or altogether abandoned.

Because of the range of musics (to say nothing of the ambiguity) implied by the term, no single, encompassing introduction to ambient exists. However, many good compilations are available which serve to fill in significant portions of the music's historical progression. Virgin's four-part *Ambient* series—each a two-disc set bringing together many of the biggest name artists from the '70s, '80s, and early '90s—is a good place to start. Also released by Virgin is the double-CD *Ocean of Sound*, compiled by musical historian David Toop to accompany his book of the same name (published by Serpent's Tail in 1995), and including everyone from King Tubby to Aphex Twin. Label compilations also provide good reference points (particularly with regard to the music's more recent mutations), with Beyond, Rising High, Instinct, Fax, Apollo, Warp, Silent, and Recycle or Die all reputable sources for high-quality various artist collections.

Recommended Recordings (* Indicates Top 10)

Various Artists, *The Ambient Cookbook* (Fax)*
Various Artists, *Ocean of Sound* (Virgin)
KLF, *Chill Out* (TVT)*
Irresistible Force, *Flying High* (Instinct/Rising High)*
Brian Eno, *Ambient 4: On Land* (EG)*
Pete Namlook, *Air 2* (Fax)
The Orb, *Orbus Terrarum* (Wau!/Mr. Modo)*
Robert Rich & B. Lustmord, *Stalker* (Fathom)*
Tetsu Inoue, *World Receiver* (Instinct)*
Global Communication, *76:14* (Dedicated)*
Vidna Obmana, *The Trilogy* (Relic)
Woob, *1194* (Instinct/Em:t)
Eno & Fripp, *The Essential Fripp & Eno* (Virgin/EG)*
Aphex Twin, *Selected Ambient Works Vol. II* (Sire/Warp)*
Throbbing Gristle, *Second Annual Report* (Mute)

Book

Ocean of Sound, David Toop (Serpent's Tail, 1995)

—Sean Cooper

Trip-Hop

Yet another in a long line of plastic place-holders to attach itself to one arm or another of the UK post-acid house dance scene's rapidly mutating experimental underground, "trip-hop" was coined by the English music press in an attempt to characterize a new style of downtempo, jazz-, funk-, and soul-inflected experimental breakbeat music which began to emerge around 1993 in association with labels such as Mo'Wax, Ninja Tune, Cup of Tea, and Wall of Sound. Similar to (though largely without vocals) American hip-hop in its use of sampled drum breaks, typically more experimental, and infused with a high index of ambient-leaning and apparently psychotropic atmospherics (hence "trip"), the term quickly caught on to describe everything from Portishead and Tricky, to DJ Shadow and U.N.K.L.E., to Coldcut, Wagon Christ, and Depth Charge (much to the chagrin of many of these musicians, who saw their music largely as an extension of hip-hop proper, not a gimmicky offshoot). One of the first commerically signficant hybrids of dance-based listening music to cross over to a more mainstream audience, full-length releases in the style routinely top indie charts in the UK and, in artists such as Shadow, Tricky, Morcheeba, the Sneaker Pimps, and Massive Attack, account for a substantial portion of the first wave of "electronica" acts to reach stateside audiences.

With immediate roots in the immensely popular UK acid jazz scene, trip-hop was born out of a dissatisfaction with that scene's creative wane toward the end of the '80s, as well as the increasing influence of the London acid house movement. As many have observed, while the US was steadily separating out the jazz influence from its funk (via Parliament-Funkadelic, the '70s disco-funk of the Gap Band and Zapp & Roger, and the '80s pop-funk of Prince), the UK was reinventing the one through the other, the result being acid jazz: Northern soul (a late-'70s style of dance-based groove music similar to rare groove), jazz instrumentation and voicing, and the solid rhythmic foundation of funk, often with a hip-hop beat. Popularized by labels such as Acid Jazz, Talkin' Loud, and Dorado and artists such as the Young Disciples, Corduroy, Groove Collective, and Incognito, the rise of acid jazz to commercial viability in the UK (as well as in the US; many indie labels were reissuing loads of European releases) was swift and ruthless. Like the latter stages of bebop, the music's polarization into, on the one hand, watered-down commercial accessibility and, on the other, increasingly esoteric chops-based noodling left many unsatisfied.

One way out seemed to be through an engagement of the more soulful possibilities of the acid house underground, a path taken by artists such as Soul II Soul, Galliano, and Massive Attack, many of whom added vocalists and rappers to attract a wider audience. Another way out—and one which appealed to a younger generation who grew up with a different musical perspective—was to focus on the music's hip-hop element, stripping away everything but the essentials and playing up the music's dusty beat. This was the path chosen by a loose affiliate of artists organized by DJ/producer James Lavelle, a DJ/producer and music writer for UK acid jazz mag *Straight No Chaser*. Lavelle sent out a call for demos in his monthly column, citing acid jazz's increasing irrelevance and encouraging hip-hop heads with a taste for experimentation to give him a shout. The first batch of demos he received—instrumental b-boy tracks from the likes of RPM, Palmskin Productions, and La Funk Mobb—became the first series of 12-inches released on his new label, Mo'Wax.

Unlike house and techno, hip-hop (the music, anyway) never really caught fire in England. While a handful of artists have been able to pull it off, melding hip-hop production with an authentically UK lyrical perspective, hip-hop's influence has mostly been in terms of fashion (track suits and fat-laced trainers), graffiti, and electro (the latter particularly among the waves of electronica artists—such as Autechre, the Black Dog, and Reload—who took the style in various new directions). While a large underground of fans of early hip-hop formed in the wake of mid-'80s Wildstyle tour, which brought the various cultural components of hip-hop to a large British audience for the first time, only a handful of distinctly British hip-hop records were released in subsequent years, and of those only a tiny portion you'd want to hear more than once (some

notable exceptions include Underdog and the Brotherhood). While UK sales of American hip-hop records continued to rise (particularly the more musically innovative acts such as Public Enemy and the Beastie Boys), there didn't seem to be an outlet for the growing scene's creative impulse.

This is where Mo'Wax (and, eventually, upstart labels such as Clean Up, D.C., and Represent) came in. While many of the tracks featured on the earliest Mo'Wax releases (and collected on the label's first compilation, *Royalties Overdue*) were in some ways indistinguishable from what was happening at the time in acid jazz, the more experimental B-side tracks—abstract, beat-centric slabs of funky downtempo weirdness with a bare minimum of jerky, effects-laden instrumental samples setting an immersive atmosphere—sounded amazingly fresh and suggested new directions for both acid jazz and instrumental hip-hop. Although it was hard to imagine the music impelling anyone onto the dancefloor, the records were a hit among DJs and bedroom-heads alike.

In retrospect, the pairing of straightahead material with more experimental gear on the flip looks pretty savvy, but the fact was the label (and the burgeoning scene as a whole) was still groping for a sound. Grope became seize, however, when a remix of a little known American rap group called Zimbabwe Legit made its way to Lavelle's record box. The track, "Doin' Damage," had been tearing up the American underground for months, and a remix by an unknown California producer, DJ Shadow, attracted his attention. Lavelle tracked Shadow (aka Josh Davis) down and commissioned a single, "In/Flux," which was released in late '93. A perfect blend of head-bobbing beats and frenetic sample collage, "In/Flux" got the balance of funk, jazz, hip-hop, soul, and stoned out ambience just right, and records nipping at its heels began appearing in droves over the course of the following year.

Mo'Wax's subsequent compilation, *Headz* (released toward the end of 1994 and including the best of the label's catalog to date, as well as a heap of exclusives from Shadow, DJ Krush, Lavelle's U.N.K.L.E. project, and even Autechre), set the watermark, and a scene started growing up around the label and others pursuing a similar sound such as Ninja Tune/Ntone, Wall of Sound, Cup of Tea, Chill Out, and former acid jazz powerhouse Dorado. As "back room" club culture started to shift from the droney bliss of ambient and dub to the free-for-all attitude embodied by the early Sunday Social parties held at London's Heavenly club, more and more beats could be heard issuing from back room bassbins. With more and more records appearing, and more and more one-offs and weeklies forming to promulgate the style, the English press needed a quick, easy reference point for the music. "Trip-hop" fit that bill perfectly.

The term was almost immediately disparaged (Shadow riffs on the dopiness of it in his intro to U.N.K.L.E.'s "Time Has Come," released by Mo'Wax in early '95), not least because its seemed, as usual, that another Black artform had been "discovered" and co-opted by the (predominantly) white music industry. And indeed, it wasn't long before the first wave of pop artists—Portishead, Bjork, Tricky, Massive Attack (although their '91 debut, *Blue Lines*, was also a big influence on Lavelle and company)—began incorporating the sound and hitting pay dirt on the pop charts. But the term's ugly ring had less to do with racial politics than the sense that the artists associated with it (even at the pop level) were trying to move the music forward, not capitalize on its novelty (which, given its etymology, was all the term managed to communicate). Although it remains in use (supplemented by a barrage of similar terms such as Brit-hop, downbeat, amyl house, dub-hop, etc.), for many "trip-hop" has yet to lose its taint of contrivance.

In the UK trip-hop has seen an astonishingly quick ascension to widespread popularity, rivaled perhaps only by jungle and even then exceeding it in terms of audience. Once-fledgling labels such as Mo'Wax, Ninja Tune, and Wall of Sound have since grown into release-a-week powerhouses, often prepping artists for major label success. The music continues to evolve, as well, with the music's early laziness proving little more than a blueprint for artists that have taken the style in any number of directions, fusing it with electro, techno, live funk, jazz, and soul, and drum 'n' bass. Now dabbled in by any number of Brit pop and indie rock artists (from Stereolab and Blur to Arab Strap and Day Behavior), the music has also broken well beyond the clubs (although it continues to thrive there as well).

Trip-hop has also been warmly embraced by both indie and major labels in the American industry, with small name artists (Sneaker Pimps, Baby Fox, Morcheeba, Lamb, Hooverphonic) stumbling into sizable domestic contracts, indie and subsidiary labels focused on promoting the sound (Shadow, Quango, WordSound, Ubiquity), and big players such as Mo'Wax, Cup of Tea, and Ninja Tune piggybacking distribution with majors or setting up shop on North American soil. Along with MTV and alternative radio's expanded coverage of "electronica," many artists have also been appearing (somewhat oddly) on any number of movie soundtrack releases (including *Suburbia*, *The Saint*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *City of Industry*).

Recommended Recordings (* Indicates Top 10)

Various Artists, *Headz* (Mo'Wax)*
Various Artists, *Ninja Cuts 2: Flexistentialism* (Ninja Tune)
Chemical Brothers, *Exit Planet Dust* (Astralwerks/Junior Boys Own)*
Nightmares on Wax, *Smokers Delight* (TVT/Warp)
Funki Porcini, *Hedphone Sex* (Shadow/Ninja Tune)*
Depth Charge, *Nine Deadly Venoms* (DC Recordings)*
DJ Krush, *Meiso* (FFRR/Mo'Wax)
DJ Shadow, *Endtroducing* (Mo'Wax)*
Wagon Christ, *Throbbing Pouch* (Rising High)
Tricky, *Maxinquaye* (4th & B'way)*
Massive Attack, *Blue Lines* (Virgin)*
DJ Food, *Recipe for Disaster* (Shadow/Ninja Tune)*
Req, *One* (Skint)*
Fila Brazillia, *Mess* (Pork)
Skylab, *No. 1* (Astralwerks/L'Attitude)*
Portishead, *Dummy* (London)

—Sean Cooper

Drum 'n' Bass

While the UK underground dance scene has been both an important point of introduction and a source of almost limitless expansion of American dance music forms such as disco, house, acid, techno, electro, and rare groove, England, it's often been noted, has never really had a dance music of its own. Not, that is, until jungle. Although jungle's most direct roots lie in the hardcore breakbeat style of techno, the music's mutation of hardcore, reggae, ragga, hip-hop, jazz, and dub, as well as its origins in social and economic factors such as race and class oppression, is a distinctly British mix. Born largely in the working-class suburbs of London's East End and the island's Eastern seaboard and now popular throughout England, as well as Europe and North America, jungle has coalesced since its birth into one of the most exciting and distinctive British musical movements since the 1960s rock explosion.

Like American hip-hop (to which it is often compared), jungle (or drum 'n' bass, a stylistic synonym used to describe the music's two main aesthetic components) is an extension of the larger breakbeat heritage which extends back to American funk, soul, and jazz. And like hip-hop, which uses samplers to capture drum break segments from old James Brown, Meters, Jimmy Smith, and Bob James records, jungle uses the beat as a jumping off point, starting with a four- or eight-bar break and cutting, splicing, rearranging, and recombining elements of the beat in almost endless variety. But it's this last element that gives jungle its unique place in the evolution of electronic music; where hip-hop and other sample-based forms of dance music work with beats in a more or less serial fashion (looping, combining, adding, subtracting, etc. rhythmic elements), jungle's approach is nonlinear and, increasingly, polyrhythmic, approaching beats, rhythms, and basslines as more or less malleable raw materials from which new musical ideas can be extracted.

One of the key developments in this approach has been the availability of cheap, relatively easy-to-use sampling technology and desktop digital sequencing tools such as Cubase and Vision, which allow for incredible control and variety. In many respects, these tools have made the music possible, as new techniques such as timestretching (extending a sample's length without altering its pitch) and the music's cut 'n' paste approach to rhythm have only recently been made possible through the explosion and subsequent economic democratization of digital audio.

Although, like most origin mythologies, jungle is fraught with intriguing stories of its birth and etymology (even extending to a street gang in Kingston, Jamaica known as the Junglists), most agree that somewhere down the line "jungle" took on a racist connotation stemming from its popularity among England's inner-city Black population (although, to a far larger extent than in America, England's inner cities are of mixed race and are stratified more by class). True or not, the term has been widely embraced by musicians and audiences alike, and remains a genus-type classification for the dizzying array of species of drum 'n' bass that have popped up in recent times (see below). In an historico-aesthetic sense, jungle's immediate roots lie, of course, in the English underground rave scene of the early '90s, when the repetitive banging of acid house and techno gave way to hardcore breakbeat techno. Although originally referring to a more rave-oriented strain of hardcore (so-called "happy hardcore," which translated many of the more escapist elements of acid-house and dancefloor techno into a breakbeat context), a more complex and abrasive strand of "darkside" hardcore soon began to grow in popularity, becoming the post-rave underground music of choice, particularly among urban inner-city and working class youth.

Drawing from the music's audience (and of course the musicians themselves), the music began incorporating more complex beat patterns and elements of reggae, ragga, dub, calypso, and other non-Western Black musics, mutating (through artists such as Rob Playford, 2 Bad Mice, SL2, Acen, and Urban Shakedown) into the high-speed breakbeat

madness of jungle's first wave. Though still the soundtrack of the urban English underground, by the time ragga jungle hit, a wider audience had begun to form around the revolutionary new sound, particularly as labels such as Suburban Bass, Kickin', Sound of the Underground, and Moving Shadow began to move into CD-based compilation releases, which helped spread the music into new geographies at a rapid rate. Though the clichés of ragga dated quickly (the booyaka chants, the Scientist samples, etc.), the basic skeleton of the music was refined and elaborated (in a less obvious fashion) in so-called hardstep and darkside, which aimed at preserving the intellectual and emotional impact of the music in a more mature, less gimmicky fashion. The following years would see a dizzying mutation and hybridization of styles, as jungle worked its way into every stylistic context imaginable (from Lee Perry and the Wu-Tang Clan to Soul Coughing and Everything but the Girl), with styles continuing to proliferate to the present day.

Like early hip-hop and, to a large extent, present day house and techno, drum 'n' bass remains primarily a 12-inch culture, with the bulk of artists and musicians engaged in nuts 'n' bolts music-making designed directly for DJs and dancefloors (although, like techno, the gap has begun to close a bit through wider popularity of ambient and "intelligent" styles and large-scale CD production and distribution). The rapid intermixing and evolution of styles is also fueled in part by widespread use of white labels, dubplates, and test pressings, which allow artists and DJs to gauge the popularity of a tune only hours after its been completed in the studio. (Dubplates and test pressings are wax and mylar versions of records—usually only playable ten to fifteen times—cut prior to mass production to insure proper manufacture.) A reasonably reputable DJ may spin anywhere from 10 to 50 percent dubplates in a set, with artists who also DJ often cutting their tunes months in advance of their release (if indeed they're ever released!) to build crowd excitement and anticipation.

As discussed above, like other recent directions in experimental electronic music, jungle has sectioned off into a dizzying array of subgenres and style classes (ragga, hardstep, darkside, jump-up, techstep, ambient) that can make getting a handle on it pretty frustrating. The following is a brief description of many of the most prominent:

Hardcore/Happy Hardcore

An urban working-class offshoot of techno, popular in the late '80s/early '90s, with looping, sped-up breakbeats and dense, angular basslines. A more mainstream, rave-oriented brand of "happy" hardcore remained even truer to the music's acid house roots, drawing wailing divas and upbeat piano and synth lines in close proximity to hardcore's brash rhythms. (Artists: Acen, 2 Bad Mice, SL2)

Ragga

Ragga jungle was one of the earliest and most widely embraced forms of drum 'n' bass not to rely overtly on the clichés of hardcore techno, and was a direct reflection of the rising embrace of drum 'n' bass among the street-level urban population (of which a sizeable portion are of African and Caribbean descent). Ragga jungle is characterized primarily by fast, complex beat patterns, deep, tight bass, and the use of sound system-type MC chanting sampled from old reggae, ragga, and dancehall records. Ragga also makes jungle's connection to African and Caribbean traditional and popular musics most evident, with rhythms recognizably descendent from nyabinghi and calypso-style drumming. (Artists: 2 Bad Mice, Rude Bwoy Monty, Shy FX, Amazon II)

Hardstep/Jump-Up

A spare, limber refinement of hardcore and ragga, which retains the hardness and rhythmic complexity of both while subtracting much of the bonus fat (rude bwoy chatter, excessive samples, etc.). Hardstep also carries more of a sense of progression, varying drum patterns more musically and focusing on bass as a melodic element. Although slight variations exist between hardstep and the more recently-applied jump-up (with the latter generally referring to a sprightlier, more dynamic brand of hardstep), the two are for the most part used interchangeably. (Artists: Ray Keith, DJ SS, Dillinja, DJ Zinc)

Darkside

A somewhat historically rooted term, darkside refers to a sparer, more pessimistic style of hardcore seeking to differentiate itself from the more above-ground, mainstream appeal of rave that by the early '90s was producing only the most repetitive and uncreative of music. Darkside artists stripped the bright melodies and sped-up samples from hardcore and replaced them with gloomy basslines, and less obvious melodic passages more reminiscent of Detroit techno than happy hardcore. Darkside is also something of a bridge between early hardcore and the increasing sophistication of the hardstep and experimental drum 'n' bass of DJ SS, Solo, Source Direct, and the Metalheadz artists.

Techstep

Techstep is similar to hardstep in its beat structures and attitude, but differs in the use of techno-type elements such as bleeps and synth squelches, as well as dense, heavily treated basslines. After the softening of drum 'n' bass in the wake of jungle's first wave of widespread popularity (major label signings, international tours, etc.), darker techstep-type jungle has risen to the fore of the underground, proving one of the most active and interesting splinter styles in its experimentalism. Labels on the bleeding edge of this style include Emotif, No U-Turn, Penny Black, and S.O.U.R., and a good introduction exists in Emotif's label compilation, *Techsteppin'*, as well as S.O.U.R.'s *Nu Skool Update*. (Artists: Ed Rush, Nico, Solo, Shapeshifter)

Ambient/Intelligent

First used to designate drum 'n' bass styles drawing heavily on atmosphere and environment, the term has come to have something of a negative connotation among the hardcore, referring to loopy, relatively unchallenging rhythmic programming and a predominance of sugary, pop-oriented melodic textures. Most likely the backlash has as much to do with the fact that it was the softer, jazzier ambient style drum 'n' bass that was the first to sever its roots with the underground, gaining popularity among a wide audience. (Artists: TPower, Omni Trio, Source Direct, Photek, 4Hero, Dave Wallace)

—Sean Cooper