SPECIAL CLASSIC ROCK EDITION

NEW

100 GREATEST ROCK SONGS

VOTED FOR BY YOU!

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE GREATEST SONGS EVER WRITTEN

STARRING: LED ZEPPELIN, QUEEN, PINK FLOYD, AC/DC, THE BEATLES, RUSH, GUNS N' ROSES & MORE...

Digital Edition

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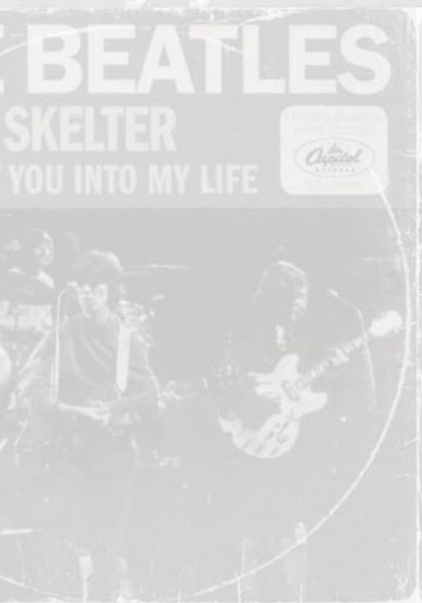
FIRST EDITION

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only you can rock me
100438

HEY JOE
JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE
KICK OUT THE JAMS
vogue
SERIE FASHION
MOTOR CITY

Queen
Bohemian Rhapsody

smoke
deep pu


BEATLES
SKELTER
YOU INTO MY LIFE
Capitol

THE BEACH BOYS
GOOD VIBRATIONS
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LIGHT MY FIRE
the doors


Lynyrd Skynyrd
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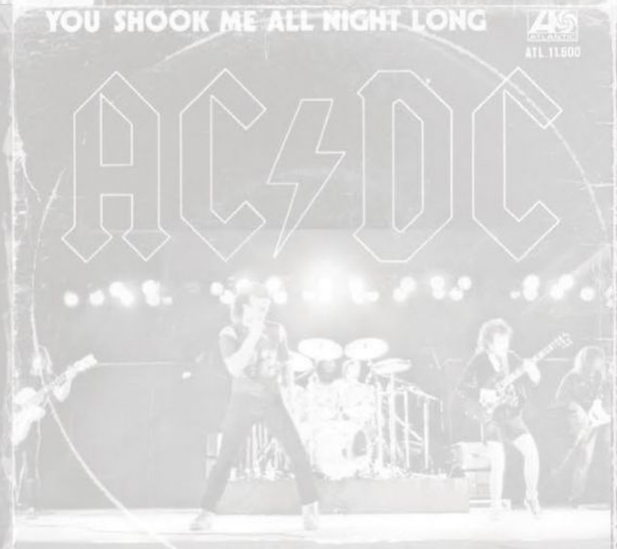

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YOU SHOOK ME ALL NIGHT LONG
AC/DC


RUSH

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Put a group of music fans in a room and sooner or later the question will come up: what's the greatest rock song ever written?

The answer depends on how many people you're asking, because you can put money on the fact that every person in that room will have a different reply. For one it might be Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven*. For another it might be *Bohemian Rhapsody* by Queen. Someone else might choose Pink Floyd's *Comfortably Numb*, AD/DC's *Whole Lotta Rosie*, Deep Purple's *Smoke On The Water* or Budgie's *In The Grip Of A Tyrefitter's Hand* (OK, maybe not that last one, though it's an unsung classic).

We knew that would be the case when we put together this list of the 100 Greatest Rock Songs Of All Time, but were we going to let that stop us? No, of course not. Still, rather than sit in a darkened room and cook up the list ourselves, we decided to throw it open to the people who really count: *you*.

Here's how we did it: a few months ago we asked people on *Classic Rock*'s Facebook and Twitter pages to vote for their favourite song. We drew up a longlist of more than 200 contenders, but also gave everybody the chance to pick something that might not be on the list. After several weeks of sweating over hot abacuses, we finally emerged with the definitive list of 100 songs, as voted by you.

And here it is, in this publication you're holding right now. You'll find more than 50 years of rock history crammed into its pages, from early classics by the likes of the Kinks, the Stones, The Beatles and Hendrix to more recent anthems from Soundgarden and Alter Bridge. It's a celebration of the great and the good of rock'n'roll, written by some of the finest journalists working today.

And what did you vote as No.1? Well, we don't want to ruin anything, but (Spoiler Alert!) it's not Budgie's *In The Grip Of A Tyrefitter's Hand*. Sorry, gents.

We hope you have as much fun reading it – and arguing about it – as we did putting it together. Enjoy…

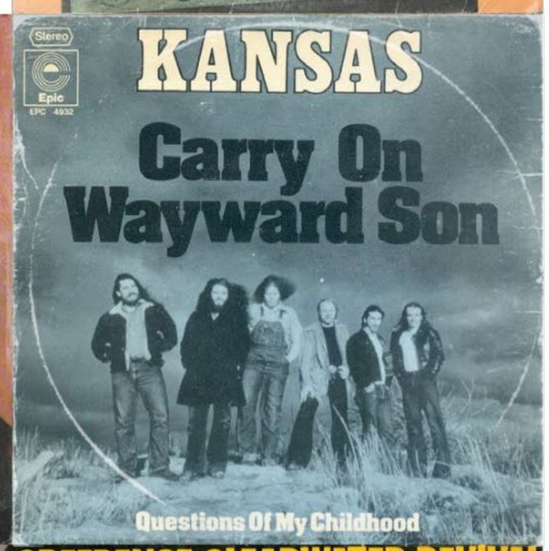


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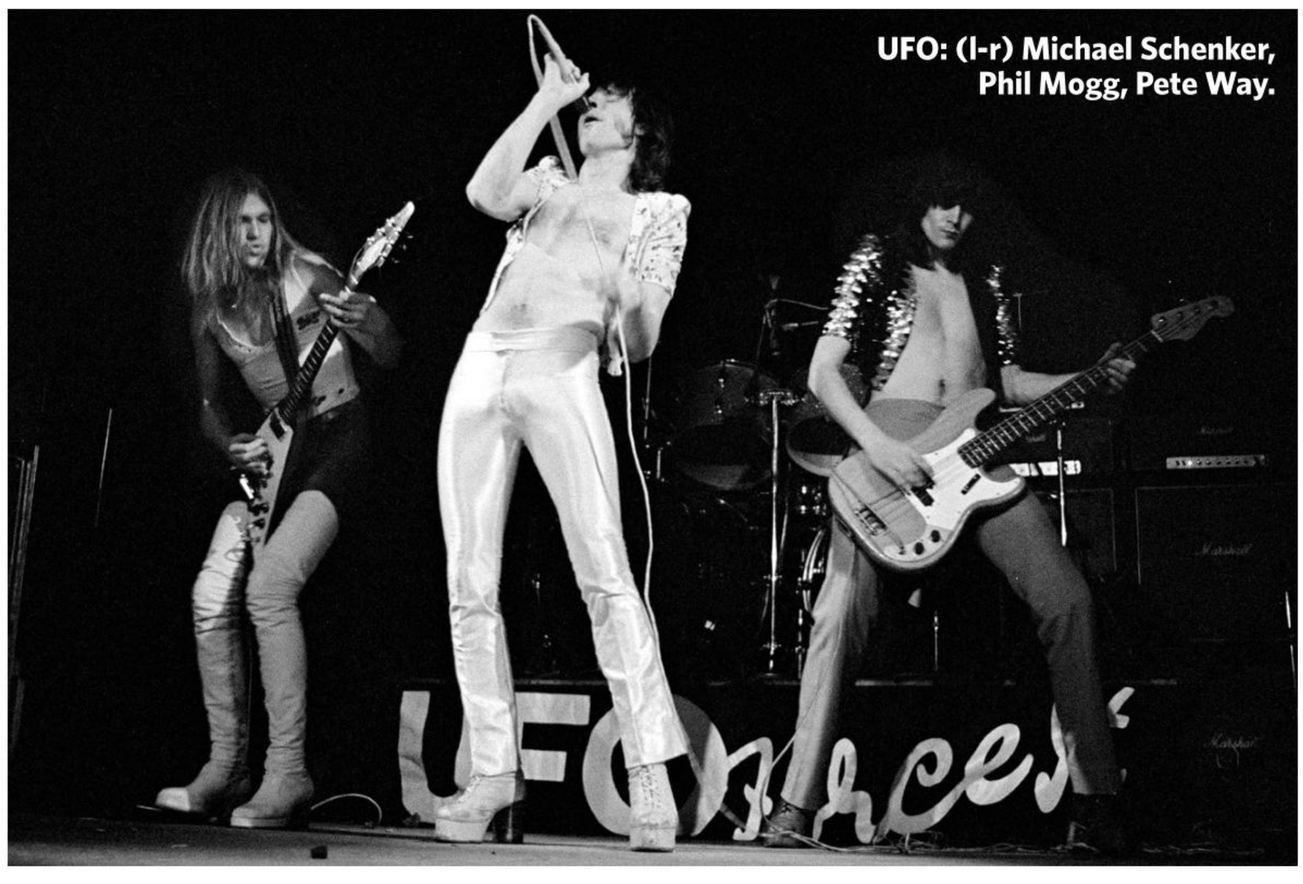
124 No.1: Queen – *Bohemian Rhapsody*

Could it have been anything else? Bismillah, no! Inside the 'mock opera' that sprang from Freddie Mercury's fevered brain.

100 *UFO*
Doctor Doctor

Initially released in May 1974 on UFO's third album *Phenomenon*, *Doctor Doctor* would become their biggest worldwide hit, although it took the success of their double-live album *Strangers In The Night* five years later to take the song belatedly into the UK charts.

Phenomenon marked a brand new start for the London band. It was the first record to feature 17-year-old maverick German wunderkind guitarist Michael Schenker, recruited from the Scorpions. Schenker's fluid, melodic technique helped to propel UFO away from the space-rock of their first two albums, towards a style with far more commercial appeal.



UFO: (l-r) Michael Schenker, Phil Mogg, Pete Way.

It was the newcomer who conceived the song's cornerstone chugging riff. He recorded a rough version into a hand-held cassette recorder. "I was so excited that I played it to [UFO singer] Phil Mogg as we came out of the escalator of the Underground on the way to a meeting at Chrysalis Records," says Schenker. He loved it."

With its couplet '*She walked up to me and really stole my heart/And then she started to take my body apart*', it would be easy to interpret Mogg's lyric as a true-life tale of a failed romance that had screwed him up. Apparently not.

"[Drummer] Andy Parker and [bassist] Pete Way had become friendly with some nurses," says Mogg. "We'd started touring, and for some unknown reason those two developed some kind of urinary infection after mucking around on the road. Need I say any more?"



YEAR RELEASED
1974

PRODUCER
Randy Bachman

If The Who's *My Generation* contains the most famous stutter in rock'n'roll, then Bachman-Turner Overdrive's *You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet* runs it a close second. And it all came from a family in-joke.

"Way back when, my brother Garry, one of four Bachman boys, had a speech impediment; he stuttered and stammered," says BTO singer and guitarist Randy Bachman. "For the chorus I copied the way he'd say: 'You ain't seen n-n-nothing yet', and also the way he stumbled on 'f-f-forget', and the way he said 'b-b-b baby'."

Bachman had already notched up a massive hit with his original group The Guess Who's 1970 anthem *American Woman*. BTO themselves had sold more than a million copies of their single *Takin' Care Of Business* earlier in 1974. But it would be You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet that assured the Canadians of immortality.

"I was rehearsing and producing BTO's third album," he recalls. "We needed an FM Top 40 hit,

YEAR RELEASED
1974

PRODUCER
Leo Lyons

Mogg admits that the band were quietly worried if it was perhaps "just a bit too poppy for us". Their fears proved justified, at least initially – when it was released as a single, it failed to chart in the UK or US. Undeterred, the band kept it in their live set, where it blossomed into a bona fide arena rock anthem.

Five years later, *Doctor Doctor* closed the first side of UFO's majestic double live album *Strangers In The Night*, its hard-rocking boogie strains now ushered in by a lilting enticement from Schenker and guitarist Paul Raymond. When the live version was released as single, it gave UFO their very first Top 30 hit. It remained a cornerstone up to the point UFO played their farewell tour in 2019.

"We did try to drop it once and it didn't go down very well," Mogg says. "The tour manager burst into the dressing room and told us there had been all sorts of complaints. We had to go out again and do it, just to keep the peace."



99 *Bachman-Turner Overdrive*
You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet

something light with a heavy bit in it. At that time, I was inspired by Traffic's Dave Mason and his song *Only You Know And I Know*, which had a dang-a-lang rhythm, and the Doobie Brothers' *Listen To The Music*. So I copped those jangling rhythms, changed the chords and then added some power chords of my own."

Bachman liked it, but not enough to finish it off. It would have been shelved had their artist liason man at Mercury Records not intervened.

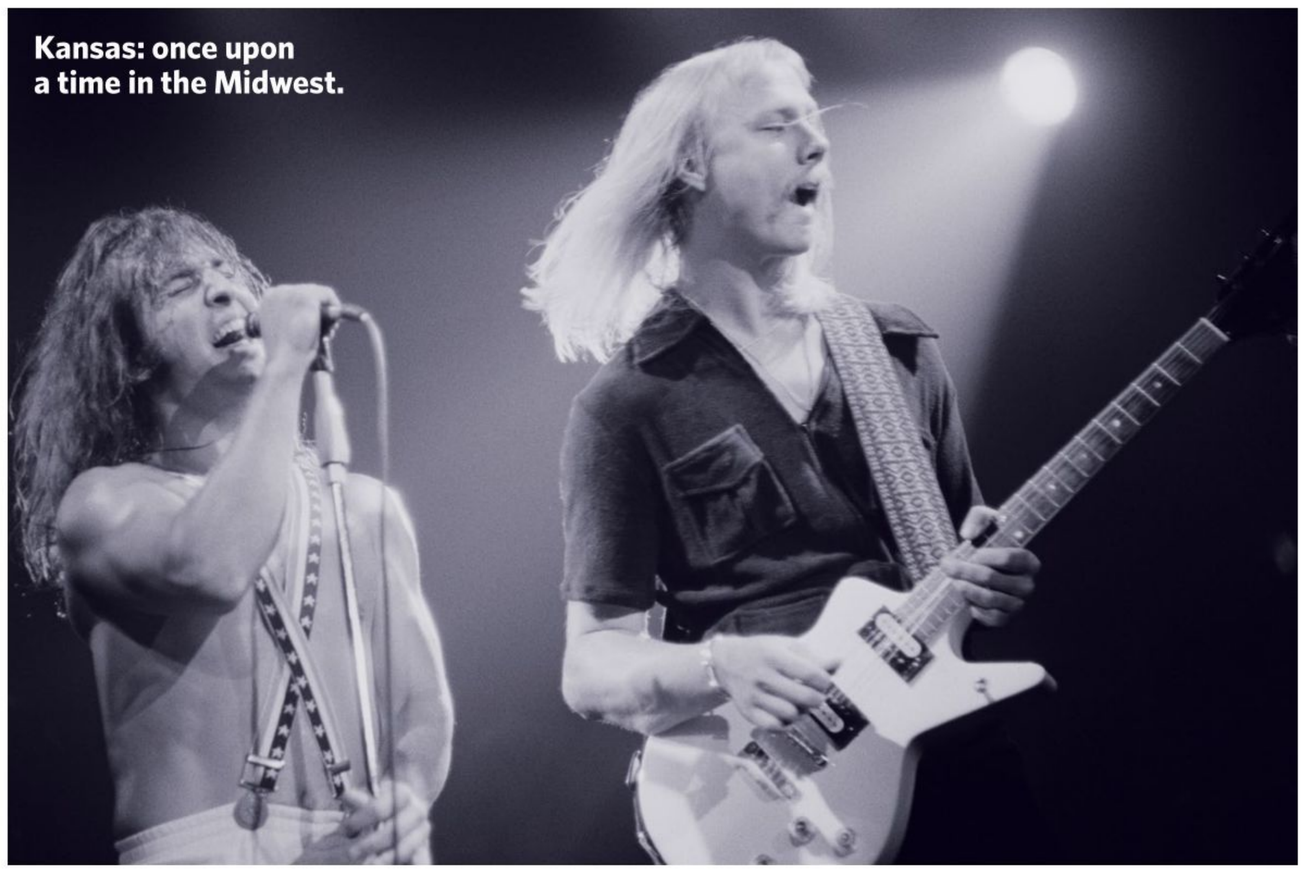
"He loved the album that became *Not Fragile*, but he couldn't hear a radio single," says the singer. "He said: 'We need a hit.' I'd just done a 90-day tour, so I told him: 'Take it or leave it. But I do have this real bad work track with an awful Van Morrison impression.' Within 10 seconds he said: 'Put that on the album now.' A few weeks later he calls me and says the record is huge."

Stomping over the airwaves in the late summer of 1974, *You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet* is a watershed moment, signalling the last gasp of rock's sensibly tasteful period. Predating the imminent implosion that was new wave, in New York first and London second, it was a fun – rather than angry – release valve.

"I've been in gas stations in America, in the maddest parts outta nowhere, and seen women's panties and brassières for sale – even some men's underwear – with 'You ain't seen nothing yet' written on the crotch," says Bachman. "And there's me thinking: 'I own this phrase!'"


BTO: rock's second-most famous stutterers.

98 *Kansas*
Carry On Wayward Son


Kansas: once upon a time in the Midwest.

With the possible exception of *(Don't Fear) The Reaper*, there isn't another song from the classic rock era that so perfectly encapsulates the elusive feel of what it felt like to walk the earth during this tempestuous, messy, beautiful and dangerous decade of the 1970s. It is the enduring, melodic thunder that echoes through the decades, the one everyone knows the words to, despite never owning - or even consider owning - a Kansas record. It builds, layer upon layer, until you feel the embrace of the goddamn angels.

Kansas – a hard working but largely unremarkable prog band from the Midwestern backwater of Topeka – were three middling albums in when they created the monolithic *Leftoverture* LP. In contemporary times – even by the dawn of the 80s – hitless bands would be cut loose well before Kansas arrived alive in 1976.

But this was the era of the golden god, and Don Kirschner – owner of Kansas' label and all around kingmaker – saw something in his scrappy young group, so he decided to let them have one last shot. And Kansas took it.

Guitarist Kerry Livgren wrote *Carry On Wayward Son* in one fevered night. The band rehearsed it the next day in the vacant strip-mall store they called a rehearsal space and knew they had something special. It was a late addition, but made the album, and almost immediately it swamped stations all over the US. It rose to No.11 on the Billboard chart and helped the album shoot to No.5. It also gave the



YEAR RELEASED
1977

PRODUCER
Neil Young, David Briggs, Tim Mulligan

In keeping with Neil Young's spontaneous nature, *Like A Hurricane* was written on the fly. Young and some drinking buddies were bar-hopping in La Honda, California, in the summer of 1975, when they stopped off at a local scenic spot to do a few lines of cocaine.

"I wrote the *Like A Hurricane* lyrics on a piece of newspaper in the back of [friend] Taylor Phelps' 1950 DeSoto Suburban, a huge car that we all used to go to bars in," Young explained in his memoir, *Waging Heavy Peace*.

When he got home, the Canadian worked out the chords on a keyboard mounted in an old pump organ in his front room.

"None of the original guts were left inside the thing, but it looked great and sounded like God with this psychedelic Univox Stringman inside it… I played that damn thing through the night. I finished the melody in five minutes, but I was so jacked I couldn't stop playing."

Unable to sing due to a recent injury to his

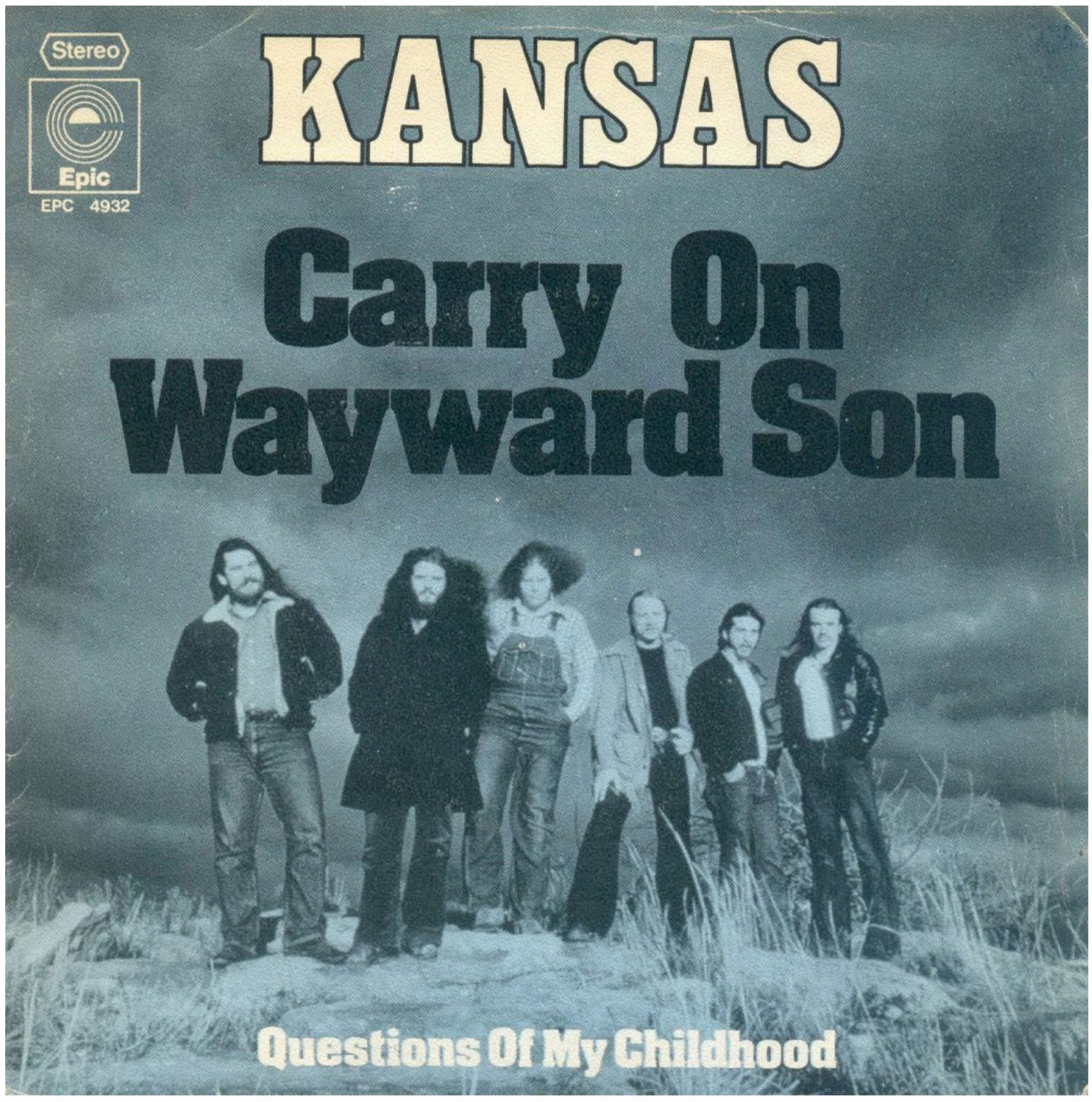
YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
JEFF GLIXMAN

band enough prominence and leeway to follow up a year later with a new album and a new single, one that would prove an even bigger smash – *Dust in the Wind*.

But if you think that ball of shmaltz is better than this one, you're crackers. *Carry On Wayward Son* is a prime -–maybe the most prime – example of the kind of gorgeously excessive, meticulously produced, high-concept arena rock that ruled the airwaves that entirity of the 1970s, much to the chagrin of snarly teenage upstarts everywhere.

Kansas was the kind of band that directly inspired the punk assassins of 1977, their bloated prog-for-dummies fantasy fiction blathering anathema for knife-wielding Johnny Rottens everywhere. And they had a point. But that point is mute every time those majestic crunching power chords punch in. The song is magical, powerful, epic. It will live on forever. And it deserves to.



GETTY X2

97
Like A Hurricane

vocal chords, Young jammed it through with Crazy Horse at his ranch, where *Like A Hurricane* eventually fell into place. Recorded in November '75, the song emerged as one of Young's longform signature pieces, an eight-and-a-half minute epic that ranks alongside *Down By The River, Cowgirl In The Sand* and *Cortez The Killer* in terms of scale and fierce grandeur.

It begins as it means to carry on, with a guitar solo. And while the verses are tender – '*Once I thought I saw you/In a crowded hazy bar/Dancing on the light/From star to star*' – the music is savage, driven on by Young's distorted guitar and Frank 'Poncho' Sampedro on the Stringman synth. The rhythm section of Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina, meanwhile, never allow the tension to slacken. Young squeals into his second extended solo, before leading the charge over stinging minor chords towards an exhausted finish.

The chorus borrows from Del Shannon's *Runaway* for its opening chord progression, the reedy fragility of Young's voice in sharp contrast to the heavy clamour of the music around him. He would later describe the attitude of *Like A Hurricane* as "pure and innocent."

The song finally cropped up on 1977's *American Stars 'N Bars*, Young's eighth album, and quickly became a live favourite. It has since appeared on a host of compilations and in-concert collections, and remains one of Young's most durable creations.


Neil Young: 'I was so jacked I couldn't stop playing it.'

96 *Alter Bridge* Blackbird



High flying birds: Alter Bridge in mid-flow.

Alter Bridge are one of the humblest bands you'll ever meet. Trying to extract any semblance of cockiness or trumpet-blowing out of them is like expecting humility from Gene Simmons; it just won't happen. So when even they admit that a song of theirs is pretty good, you know it means something.

"As songwriters those are the moments you dream of," Alter Bridge frontman Myles Kennedy has said, of the moment he and guitarist Mark Tremonti first listened back to *Blackbird* – the millennial generation's brooding, muscular answer to *Stairway To Heaven*.

Alter Bridge are one of few rock bands today who consistently fill arenas. Yet they still feel a bit like dark horses, not least because this, their biggest song, is no straight-shooting radio hit. Clocking in at over seven minutes, and inspired by an old friend of Kennedy's named Mark Morse, who tragically passed away as the song was being written, *Blackbird* is the ultimate riposte to anyone who says modern-day arena rockers are all soulless bros.

Cooked up in the Nashville condo where the band were writing their second album (eventually titled *Blackbird* itself), the song is a classic Alter Bridge cocktail, blending Kennedy's singer-songwriter inspirations (Chris Whitley, Jeff Buckley, Lennon and McCartney) with Tremonti's meatier metal background. There's a moody but delicate guitar motif (preceded, when they play it live, by the opening part of the Beatles' *Blackbird*), beefy guitars in the chorus, a melody that's by turns strapping and tender, even *Dark Side*-era Pink



YEAR RELEASED
1966

PRODUCER
Chas Chandler

Jimi Hendrix, session guitarist turned solo superstar, was primed to explode when he landed smack in the middle of London's burgeoning psychedelic rock scene in September 1966. Former Animals bassist Chas Chandler had imported Hendrix into Britain, impressed with his performances in New York, and it had been decided that his first single would be *Hey Joe*, a traditional song whose authorship was and still remains unclear.

You'll have heard the stories of such how British guitar potentates as Pete Townshend and Eric Clapton were awe-struck by Hendrix's otherworldly abilities when they saw this new American kid play his first, low-key shows in London. Now imagine what the public at large, most of whom couldn't tell the front end of a Fender from the back end of a frying pan in those far-off days, felt like when they first heard the scintillating solos on *Hey Joe*.

YEAR RELEASED
2007

PRODUCER
Michael 'Elvis' Baskette



GETTY X2

Floyd sensibilities in its Gilmour-esque solo.

Typically, the ever-modest Myles Kennedy wasn't entirely happy with the finished product. "There's an effect on there that maybe was a little heavy to my taste," he said of the section he shared with Tremonti, "which is called a Uni-vibe, that's a very Hendrix-y effect. Maybe I'd pull that down a little bit because it definitely wraps around the overall sound pretty intensely."

Regardless, there's an uncliched, straight-from-the-heart directness about the song that resonates with fans dealing with grief and heartache.

"That's the thing about music, if it is that honest and the emotions are that pure, that should happen," Kennedy said. "That's what art should do, it should resonate with you."

And perhaps it's Alter Bridge's modest, average Joe manner that makes *Blackbird* feel especially… well, *real*. Proof that iconic rock songs aren't the sole preserve of peacocks and egotists – or, indeed, of rock stars past.

95 *Jimi Hendrix Experience*
Hey Joe

Not to mention the lyrics, which concern the confession of the titular Joe as he plans to murder his *'old lady'* after he *'caught her messing 'round with another man'*. By the song's end the crime has been committed, which must have been something of a shock for the average British rock listener. It was as if the sound of ancient blues had been reborn in hard-rock form; the ghost of Robert Johnson, reanimated.

Hey Joe was released in December 1966 after label owners and The Who's managers, Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, recruited bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell to join their newly-discovered hero in The Jimi Hendrix Experience. *Hey Joe* was backed with Stone Free, a Hendrix original, and distributed by RCA. Appearances on the TV shows *Ready Steady Go*! and *Top Of The Pops* helped the single to climb to Number Six in the UK – and Hendrix's trajectory, which we now know was to burn brightly but briefly, was set in motion.

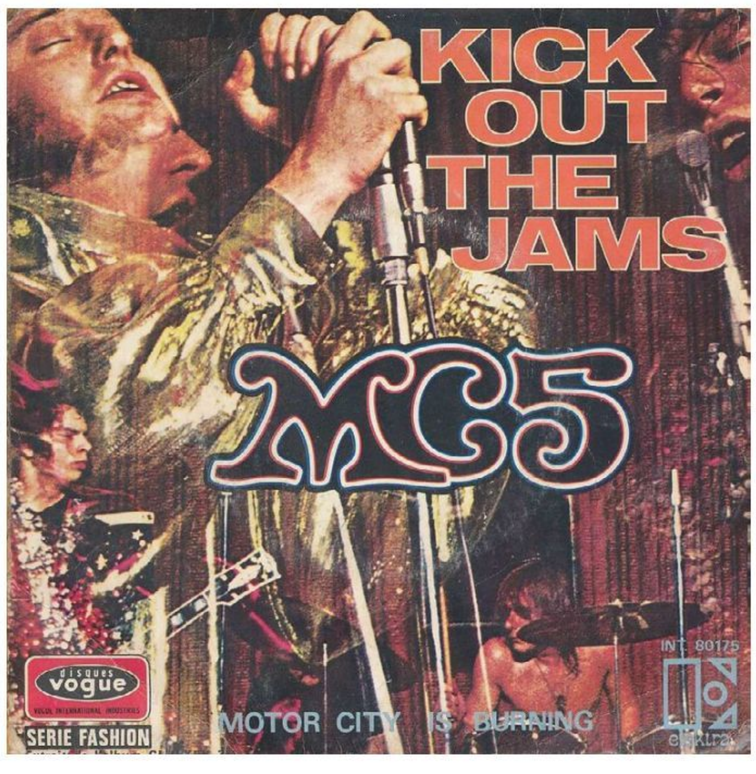

Groovy, baby!: Swingin' London gets a taste of Hendrix in 1966.

Hey Joe is not Hendrix's most incendiary performance, musically or politically – consider *Fire* and *All Along The Watchtower* or even *The Star Spangled Banner* for that. It's not his most psychedelic, most subversive, or his most epoch-shaping song, depending on your point of view. But *Hey Joe* was the gateway to his artistry for the public of 1966, and as a vehicle for the total summation of Hendrix's skills at this early point in his career, it's unbeatable.

94 *MC5*
Kick Out The Jams

Detroit's Motor City 5 were a force of nature. An explosive collision of high-energy rock'n'roll, psychedelically inclined free jazz, radical left-wing politics, acid-expanded consciousness and revolution-sparking raw power.

But the 5's essential magic wasn't best served within the cold confinement of a recording studio, as guitarist Wayne Kramer explains: "Playing live was what we did best. Most bands did three albums and then a live album, so we thought we'd be revolutionary and break out with a live album first. It also worked better for the label. MC5 didn't know how to work in the studio, so a studio record could have cost Elektra a fortune and been a lengthy, gruelling process."



Consequently, their debut album, *Kick Out The Jams*, was recorded live at Detroit's Grande Ballroom across two nights on October 30 and 31, 1968 and captured the band at their most inspired and inspiring. From Brother JC Crawford's rabble-rousing opening 'testimonial' rap, through the libertine excesses of *Come Together*, the proto-punk ack-ack assault of *Rocket Reducer No.62* and the taut, zeitgeist-mirroring passion of *Motor City Is Burning* to the spiralling space-rock blaze of *Starship*, it delivers sweat, volume and passion in spades, but is best remembered for its notorious title track with its unforgettable introductory exhortation to "Kick out the jams, motherfuckers!"

Before we deal with the repercussions of Motherfuckergate, which we surely must, let's examine the story behind the song behind the profanity. At this point in time every one of the band's original compositions was simply credited to 'MC5', but who actually wrote it?

"We were commune-ists," Kramer says laughing. "We had this all-for-one, one-for-all… I hesitate to call it a business structure. We just saw ourselves as one unit, but it was [vocalist and lyricist] Rob Tyner and I that wrote *Kick Out The Jams* in the kitchen, smoking a joint."

KOTJ still sounds like a statement of intent. A forthright four-word manifesto, hammered home with an attention-grabbing, exclamatory 'motherfucker'.

"Tyner was really speaking to us, the rest of the band. Sometimes I was critical of him, and what he's saying is: 'Let me be who I am.' Because who he was was fantastic. He was your dream lead singer, and he wrote lyrics that work so well, on so many levels. What do we mean when we say 'Kick out the jams'? If you're going to do anything, do it full measure, don't equivocate, be all the way in."

On another level, *KOTJ* is an entirely punk statement. Possibly the first. Eight years prior to the Sex Pistols, here was an exhortation to set aside complacent noodling for short, sharp shocks. To quite literally kick out 'the jams', of which there were plenty in the MC5's contemporaneous late-60s music scene, not least from the Grateful Dead.

"They were the recipients of much of our harassment," Kramer says. "All those San Francisco bands, we were tough on everybody. This was the era of the twenty-minute guitar solo, the forty-minute drum solo. The MC5's roots are in Little Richard and Chuck Berry. That's where we were based and everything grew out from there, and we went from Little Richard to Sun Ra, all wrapped up in the era of Vietnam, civil rights and youth rebellion."

And so to the 'motherfucker' of the matter. It was certainly a noun that provoked a reaction. So how quickly did the situation escalate from offended Elektra executives to the MC5 being dropped by the label?

"In the blink of an eye." says Kramer. "We knew *'Kick out the jams, motherfucker'* was never going to get played on the radio, so we recorded a *'Kick out the jams, brothers and sisters'* version for the single. We instructed Elektra to wait until it peaked in the chart before releasing the album. Because when the album's released the shit's gonna hit the fan, but we'll have won already by having a hit single. Well, once they saw the single taking off they rushed the album out. And when kids came home with this record and mom and dad heard 'motherfucker', you could hear the outrage reverberate across America.

"Elektra asked us, could they put out a clean version of the album. We said no and they did it anyway. We'd already had a major disruption in our relationship, and then, because our contract said we had control of our advertising, and a local store refused to carry our records and we called them on it in very graphic street language and sent Elektra the bill [Detroit's Hudson's department store refused to stock MC5 product so the band ran a full page ad in a local underground paper that read simply 'Fuck Hudson's' and included Elektra's logo]. That was the final straw and Elektra fired us."

The 5 subsequently signed to Atlantic and made yet more history, but even now, over 50 years on, *Kick Out The Jams* retains its vital intensity.

"I never tire of playing it." Kramer enthuses. "It's exciting every time. Even acoustic. Excitement's built into the song's DNA. There's no way to play that song and be boring. It can't be done."

YEAR RELEASED
1969

PRODUCER
Jac Holzman and Bruce Botnick



GETTY/ MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

MC5: the original Motor City Madmen.

93 *ZZ Top*
Sharp Dressed Man

The early 80s was a time of reckoning for many veteran rockers. Androgynous bands with drum machines and synths were on the rise, as were post-punk new wavers with tick-tock guitars and skinny ties. The future for a hirsute boogie blues trio from Texas might've seemed as bleak and foggy as a Cure song. Especially since Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill and Frank Beard looked like 18th century prospectors.


ZZ Top: prospecting for 80s MTV gold.

But in one of the greatest surprise reinventions ever, ZZ Top added a few drops of new wave and romanticism into their brew and struck gold. Or rather platinum. Their 1983 album *Eliminator* sold over 10 million copies in the US alone. The first single *Gimme All Your Lovin'* got a lot of radio play, but barely cracked the Top 40. The second, *Got Me Under Pressure*, missed the mark. But the third time was the charm. *Sharp Dressed Man* went Top 10 and became one of the most-played songs of 1983.

Singer-guitarist Gibbons recalled the inspiration. "I went to see a film. The credits were rolling, and one of the players was described as 'Sharp Eyed Man.' That started it. The track had this heavyweight bass line from a synthesizer. You know who was popping at this time? Depeche Mode. I went to see them, and it was a mind-bender. No guitars, no drums. It was all coming from machines. But they had blues threads going through their stuff. I went backstage. I had to meet these guys. They were surprised, like 'What brings you



YEAR RELEASED
1972

PRODUCER
Bob Ezrin

Pitched somewhere between the nagging ner-ner-ne-ner-ners of the class clown and the staccato clarion blasts of Miles Davis's *Milestones*, *School's Out*'s opening guitar riff is the unmistakable sound of youth gone wild. Chuck Berry's idealized, sweet sixteen American dream skewed through the dark prism of vintage Who Shepherd's Bush surliness.

Guitarist Glen Buxton had been playing with the riff for some time, imbuing it the hoodlum cool that characterized his magnetic whatcha-rebelling-against? street-punk personality, so when Alice Cooper – still the name of the band, not just their singer – were looking for a signature song for an album initially envisaged as a concept work about high school, Buxton's delinquent riff fit the bill perfectly. When was allied to a lyric wherein Alice set out to capture "the greatest three minutes of your life… the last three minutes of the last day of school…" it couldn't fail.

YEAR RELEASED
1983

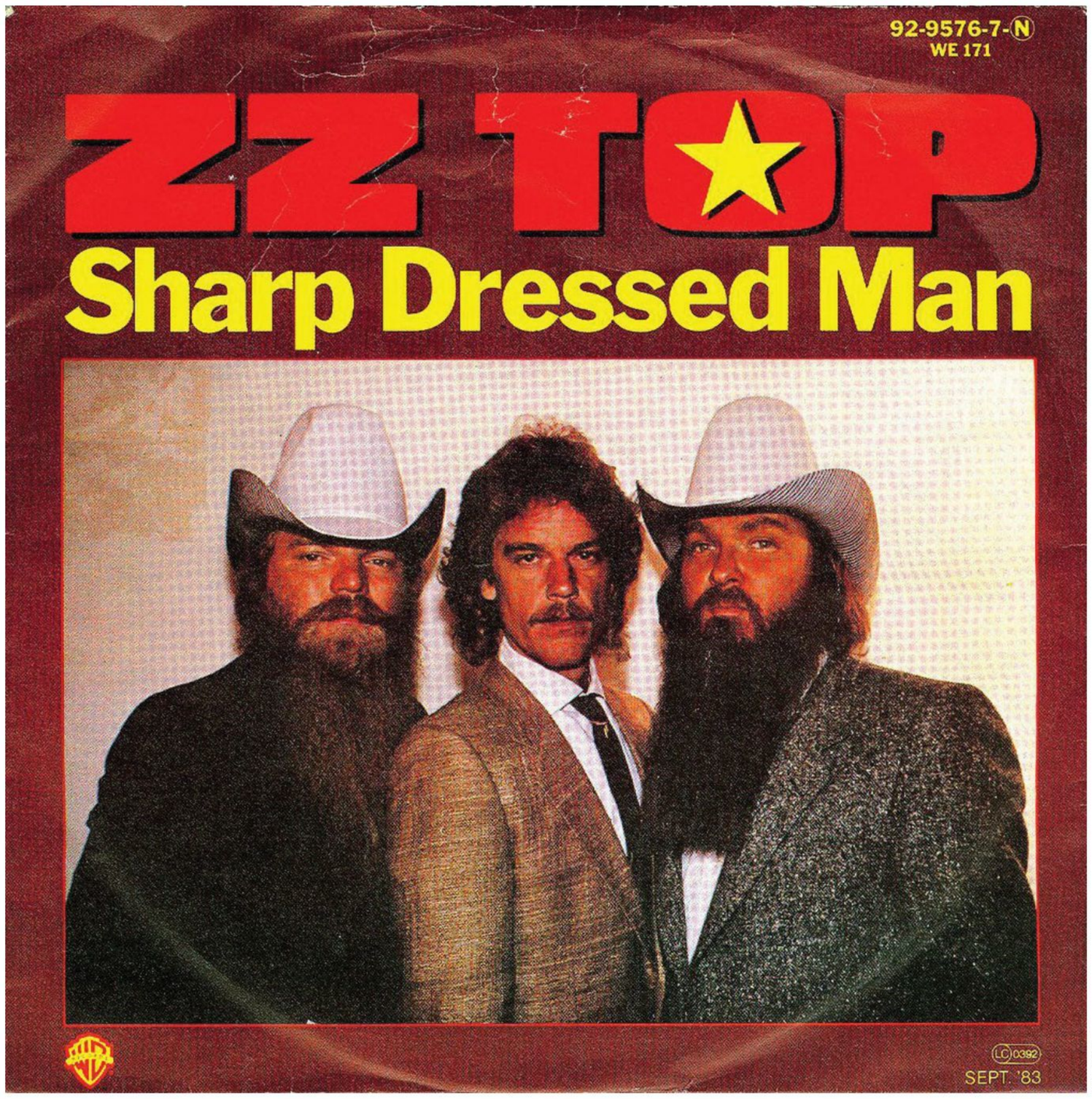
PRODUCER
Bill Ham

here?' I said, 'Man, the heaviness.' We became friends. Martin Gore was a guitar player trapped behind the synthesizers. He was like, 'Man, let's talk guitar.'"

The track, produced by Bill Ham, mixed Top's crunchy distorted guitars with a Euro-rhythm weave of drum machine and synth bass, a new twist on their signature sound.

But more unlikely than Top's kinship with frosty-haired Brits and use of Linn drums was how they slotted into MTV's nascent video craze. The now-classic clip for *Sharp Dressed Man* featured the band coaching an innocent young guy into the ways of fast cars and fashion, and into the arms of three sexy young women (oh, those scoop-neck leotards).

"What became known as 'the video era' started off as a complete, non-designed, unplanned uprising," said Gibbons. "For us, pretty girls and fast cars made for a good combo."



GETTY X2

92 *School's Out*
Alice Cooper

We've all been there. All dreamt of 'no more pencils, no more books', imagined ourselves dancing on the smoking ruins of a school that's been mysteriously *'blown to pieces'*.

School's Out arrived into the summer of 1972 as an irresistible force. Alice and his Coopers (Buxton, Dennis Dunaway, Michael Bruce, Neal Smith) looked exactly like everything your parents had ever warned you against: the most unsavoury characters extant. The sort of people that, in between chugs of Thunderbird, would casually obliterate your school. Meanwhile, behind the horror of their collective public image, the band were compositional perfectionists. In the rehearsal room, they'd swap song sections around on a blackboard. Once producer Bob Ezrin had applied his studio sorcery to proceedings, classics transformed into epics.

There's a lot to love about *School's Out*. The way Dunaway and Smith's bass and drums lock together on the choruses, pounding out a facsimile of countless feet marching toward the school gates. Buxton's stinging guitar inserts. The choir of school children that emerge from the growing ferment like Midwich brats with serious issues, bad attitudes and axes to grind. The way they ultimately explode into joyous squeals at the sound of the final bell.

But *School's Out*'s finest ingredient, its 'Hope I die before I get old' passport to mmortality moment, comes at the end of verse two. As Alice spits *'We can't even think of a word that rhymes'* literally millions of tongue-tied, hormone-pumped, inarticulate teens identify like mad. Eddie Cochran would have been proud.


Hell bent for slither: Alice Cooper and friend.

91 *The Rolling Stones*
Brown Sugar


'Slurring and mumbling': Jagger and Richards in their pomp.

The vivid, chopping guitar riff that launches the Stones' first great single of the 1970s is the ultimate realisation of what had become the band's signature sound, putting the eclectic pop of their early days for ever behind them. This was straight ahead, state-of-the-art rock and roll.

Mick Jagger first sketched out the song during the filming of *Ned Kelly*, sitting alone in the Australian outback with an electric guitar to exercise an injured hand. By the time it came to record the track, Jagger was slurring and mumbling words as confounding as The Kingsmen's *Louie Louie*, but leaving enough clues to suggest the man was singing happily about heroin, slavery and eating pussy.

"God knows what I'm on about on that song," Jagger told *Rolling Stone* in 1995. "It's such a mishmash. All the nasty subjects in one go."

The band laid down the track during a three-day session at Muscle Shoals Sound in Alabama. fresh from a UAS tour which had left them in fine playing form.

"The way they did those songs, Jagger stayed on the floor with a hand-held microphone, walking around between musicians until he had all the lyrics nailed," remembers Jim Dickinson, the session man who played piano on the track "and then he went in the control room with the engineer as the band played the rhythm track, at which point Keith took over the floor."

At one point, Dickinson recalled a problem within the rhythm section. Charlie Watts' tom-tom was clashing harmonically with the bass, so it was suggested that he retune the drum.

"No," the sticksman replied casually, "I don't ever tune my drums."

For a moment no one seemed concerned by this declaration, until the Stones' utility man Ian Stewart said, "Wait a minute; you can't just say



YEAR RELEASED
1964

PRODUCER
SHEL TALMY

"It was the first heavy guitar riff rock record," says Kinks guitarist Dave Davies, adding that he really doesn't like the term 'heavy metal'. Still, the sheer simplistic brutality of *You Really Got Me* was not only a crucial element of metal, but also punk. It's slack-jawed and punchy, wastes neither time nor energy. It's the sound of youthful impatience. The apotheosis of lust. Or, as Dave puts it: "a love song for street kids."

It wasn't meant to be that way. One of the first five songs that Dave's brother Ray ever wrote, *You Really Got Me* was supposed to be a sophisticated walking blues, the sort of smooth and easy 12-bar one might expect of Big Bill Broonzy, Lead Belly or, perhaps more appropriately considering the song started its life on piano, Gerry Mulligan. The tempo and style remained comparatively sedate right up to the point that it was recorded as The Kinks' third Pye single. Producer Shel Talmy's sluggish original version

YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
Jimmy Miller



GETTY X2

blatantly, 'I don't tune my drums.' That's a terrible thing to say." Watts remained unconvinced: "Why should I tune something I'm going to go out there and beat on? I'll just go out there and hit it and it'll change."

The Stones would later re-record *Brown Sugar* during a joint birthday party for both Richards and keyboard player Keys, and were joined by Eric Clapton and Al Kooper at Olympic Studios. The song was worked over for another half-hour, but not even that kind of firepower could capture the special ambience of the band's three days at Muscle Shoals.

"Everything they did was at the peak of their competence," says Dickinson. "They reached the point where they did as well as they could do it, and that was their take. It was never discussed: 'Should we do this again? Is this a good take? Is this too slow? Is this too fast?' When Charlie Watts got up from the drums it was a master take, and that was it. Nobody talked about it."

90 *The Kinks*
You Really Got Me

buried the guitars in reverb and the band were determined to re-record, but the record company weren't prepared to pay out for a further session due to the The Kinks' first two singles having bombed. Ultimately, the band dipped into their own pockets and transformed the song into the restless beast we all know and love.

The stripped-to-the-bone rebore of the core riff (inspired by Jimmy Giuffre's *The Train And The River*, finally nailed while working out the chords to The Kingsmen's *Louie Louie*) and its distorted guitar sound that launched a million garage bands was achieved by Dave setting about the speaker cone of his Elpico 'Little Green' AC55 amp with a razor blade and then boosting its volume through a Vox AC-30.


The Kinks: a crucial element of metal and punk.

The frantic guitar solo, that follows Ray's heartfelt scream of *'Oh no!'* (apparently deployed to cover up Dave audibly telling Ray to "fuck off" as he offered encouragement), was not, despite apocryphal tales, played by Jimmy Page. Page, by his own admission, did play on some Kinks recordings, but not on *You Really Got Me*.

To focus exclusively on *You Really Got Me* as a guitar record, remarkable only for Dave's 'invention' of the riff, is to do sole composer Ray a severe disservice, because his vocal performance is utterly extraordinary: the very definition of the sex-crazed lout; mod-era juvenile delinquency incarnate. Terminally frustrated rock'n'roll angst to the bone.

89 *Van Halen*
Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love

Van Halen's 1978 debut was a year-zero for virtuosity, the warp-speed instrumental *Eruption* establishing in two minutes flat that the metallers' eponymous guitarist had the fastest fingers on the West Coast. Perhaps it was that same reputation for quicksilver two-hand tapping and violent tremolo abuse that meant Eddie Van Halen was reticent to show his bandmates the lick he'd been kicking around in private.

"I figured out something melodic instead of just going for it," the guitarist said in 1980. "When I wrote *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love*, I thought it was the lamest song I ever wrote in my life. It took me six months before I worked up the nerve to show the guys."


Van Halen: always playing with fire.

By EVH's eye-popping standards, *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love* was a rudimentary doodle, not much more than an up-and-down picking pattern on a handful of open-position chords. As the guitarist said in *Guitar World*, it was a musical piss-take, too, lampooning the punk bands whose route-one neanderthals was the polar opposite of his own flashing-blade virtuosity.

"*Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love* was originally supposed to be a punk-rock parody. It was a stupid thing to us, just two chords. It didn't end up sounding punk, but that was the intention."

But as producer Ted Templeman knocked the debut album out of them at LA's Sunset Sound over the summer of '77, *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love* emerged as a front-runner, its tense groove darkening the frivolous mood. *'I've been to the edge,'* sings an uncharacteristically



YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
Bad Company

It was the end of 1969 and Paul Rodgers was a long way from home. The Middleborough-born singer and his bandmates in Free had pitched up at a sun-dappled hippie commune outside San Francisco where Rodgers felt the muse strike.

"I was staying at this camp in California when I started to come up with the lyrics and music to *Feel Like Makin' Love*," the singer recalls. "I did feel like making love at the time. I think I probably was in love – that happened a lot."

Free never did record *Feel Like Makin' Love* before they split in 1973, though Rodgers didn't forget about the song. It was in September 1974, when his post-Free outfit Bad Company were recording their second album, *Straight Shooter*, that the singer put it forward for consideration.

"I played it to Mick [Ralphs, Bad Company guitarist], but I knew it still needed something," says Rodgers. So he threw in that big chord in the chorus [the muted 'duh-duh' that marks the

YEAR RELEASED
1978

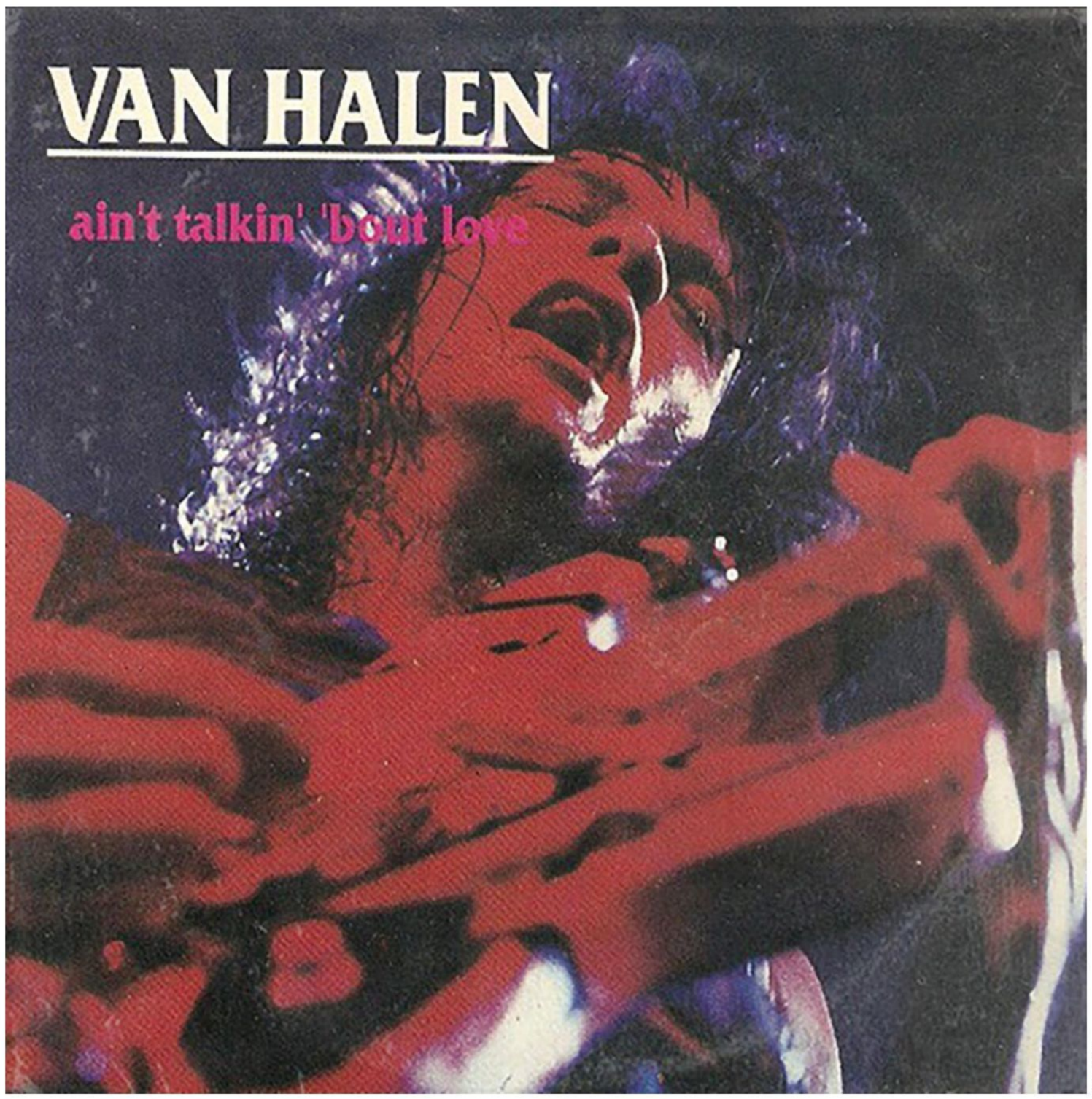
PRODUCER
Ted Templeman

vulnerable-sounding David Lee Roth, as the band drop to a whisper. *'And then I stood and looked down/ Y'know I lost a lot of friends there, baby, got no time to mess around.'*

Then came one of EVH's most interesting solos: light on flash, but melodic and evocative, with an offbeat Eastern-sounding tone. "I doubled the solo section with an electric sitar," he remembered. "It could have been a Coral, but it looked real cheap. It looked like a Danelectro. I never really knew it was an electric sitar, because it didn't sound like one. It just sounded like a buzzy-fretted guitar. That thing was real bizarre."

For all his early reservations, Van Halen had to admit: "Kids go nuts for it". And even the next generation of the punks whose noses the song had set out to tweak were taking notes.

"When I started," recalled Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong, "I had this guitar teacher who showed me how to get those Eddie Van Halen sounds like on *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love*."



GETTY X2

88 *Bad Company*
Feel Like Makin' Love

shift from country ballad to chest-beating rocker], and I said: 'Yeah! That's it.' It's an example of how you can have an idea floating around, then you're with the right musician at the right time and it just takes off."

"The thing that was nice about it is that it goes from this very tender verse to these big, heavy chords and then comes back again. It gets raucous, but it's a kinda controlled raucousness. The simplicity of it was the magic."

Released as a single in the summer of 1975, *Feel Like Makin' Love* reached No.10 in the US and No.20 in the UK, helping *Straight Shooter* to sell three million copies. The singer has never revealed exactly who inspired the song's lyric – "It's been a long time and I don't want to get into trouble" – but suggests its everyman feel played a big part in its success. "I think that opening line is interesting in its simplicity," he says. "'Baby, when I think about you, I think about love' says a lot in a few words."

Feel Like Makin' Love remains the most enduring song in Bad Company's back catalogue. For his own part, Rodgers believes the lusty subject matter has created an even more enduring legacy. "I've heard it's responsible for a whole generation being conceived," he laughs, "although that could be an exaggeration."


Bad Company: the men behind the song that made a thousand babies.

87 *Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers*
Refugee

Released after a period that had been dominated by disco, *Refugee* helped reassert the dominance of guitar rock at the butt-end of the 1970s, turning the band that made it into a household name in the process.

The anxious, minor-key guitar that opens the song came to guitarist Mike Campbell late one afternoon while he sat listening to John Mayall's version of *Oh Pretty Woman*, which featured a very young, pre-Rolling Stones Mick Taylor on guitar. It was Taylor's playing that was the real inspiration for *Refugee*.



Blond ambition: Heartbreaker-in-chief Tom Petty.

"I had a Gibson guitar that I wanted to try, and I wanted to come up with some chords that I liked that I could play some lead over," Campbell explains. He recorded a few other guitar ideas on a four-track tape recorder, and eventually, without having given it a title, gave a cassette of it to Petty to listen to.

"I didn't think much about it," says Campbell. "Then the next rehearsal we had he said: 'I worked on your tape and I got some words to this song.' I said: 'Oh, really?' He played it to me, and I was just blown away."

The song bristled with a tension that had been dialled down in earlier Heartbreakers' songs such *American Girl* and *Listen To Her Heart*. Some of that tension undoubtedly came from the struggle the band had recording it.

"We were still pretty green in the studio, and we were getting used to [producer] Jimmy Iovine and [engineer] Shelly Yakus who were both very meticulous with the drum sounds," Campbell



YEAR RELEASED
1994

PRODUCER
Michael Beinhorn

In 1994 it was about to become commonplace to accuse Oasis, then emerging into stardom, of shamelessly ripping off the sound of the Beatles – but a far more blatant example of Fab Four idolatry came the same year from Soundgarden and their song *Black Hole Sun*. Not that this mattered to the Seattle foursome's fans, then or now – the song has become not only Soundgarden's best-known release but one of the landmark singles of the mid-90s. From 1994 on, the names of Kim Thayil (guitar), Ben Shepherd (bass) and Matt Cameron (drums) were widely known – and frontman Chris Cornell was a bona fide superstar.

Recorded with a Leslie speaker, the guitar parts in *Black Hole Sun* are its most Beatle-esque feature, but there's added impact from the earworm vocal melodies, the dynamic impact of the choruses and Michael Beinhorn's sympathetic production. Add an unnerving video, in which the characters' faces stretch into strange shapes,

YEAR RELEASED
1979

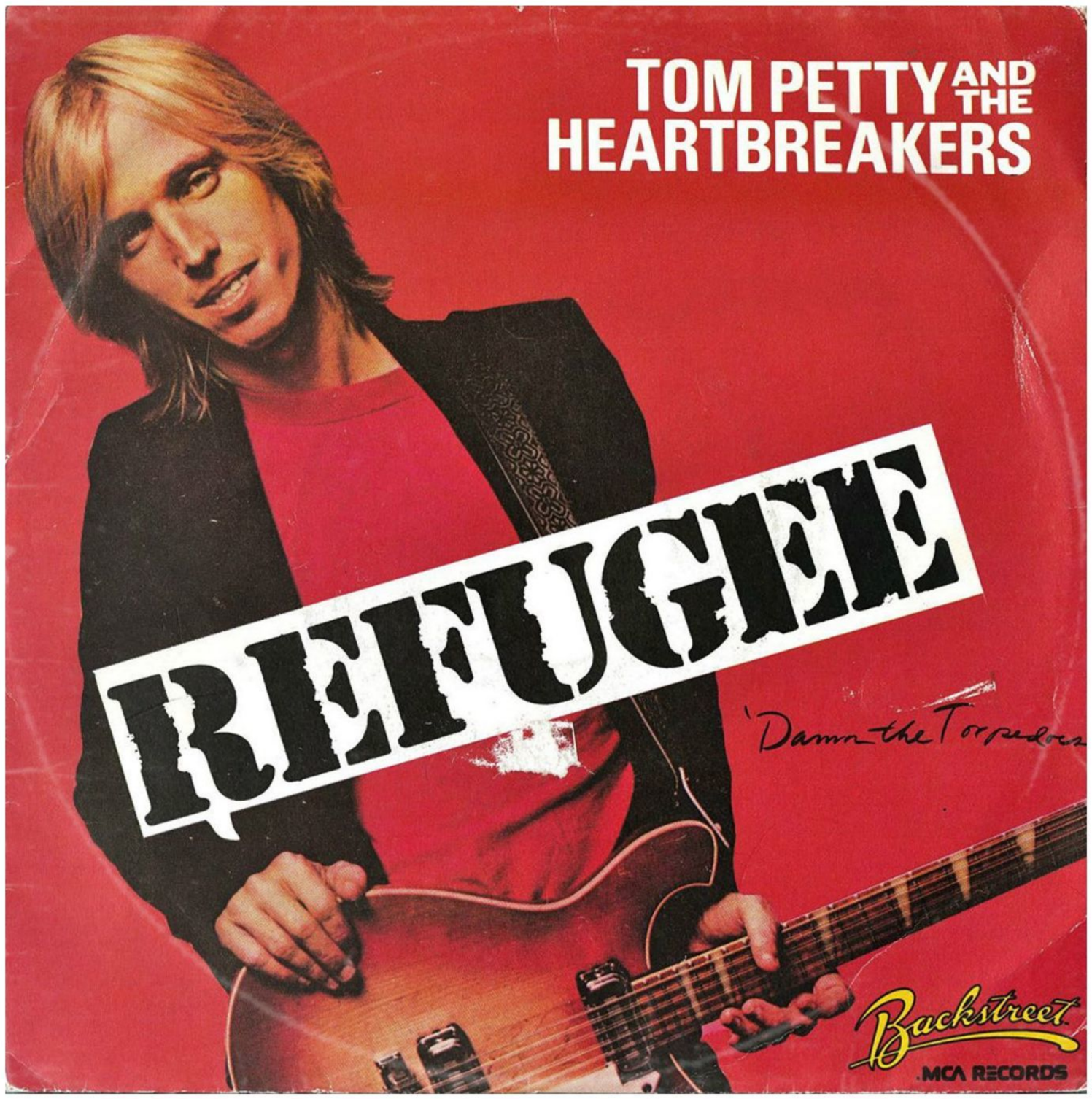
PRODUCER
Jimmy Iovine

remembers. "The first day it'd be like: 'Move the snare drum over there.' 'Try a different snare drum.' 'Let's try a different microphone.' This went on for days, just trying to get the snare to sound right."

They had almost recorded the entire album, yet they still couldn't get *Refugee* right. Drummer Stan Lynch was even temporarily dismissed due to his constant bickering with Iovine. All in all, it took them over 100 takes to get it right – and they might have taken more, had they not had to turn in the finished album to the label.

"Even when it was out we were thinking: 'Oh, we should have cut it again.' It never ended," says Campbell.

Their efforts paid off. The song became a staple of Heartbreakers' sets, right up to Petty's death in 2017. "Everything we've ever done we compare to *Refugee* or *American Girl*. It's an albatross," Campbell laughs. "But it's a good problem to have."



GETTY X2

86 *Soundgarden* Black Hole Sun

and it's little surprise that *Black Hole Sun* was rewarded with such success. It charted worldwide and has subsequently been covered by a long list of musicians, notably Peter Frampton.

The song's bigger mission, however, was to draw Soundgarden from the grunge niche – on the brink of implosion in '94, thanks to the suicide of the movement's de facto leader, Kurt Cobain of Nirvana – to the mainstream. The group belonged there; after all, they had always been among the most inventive members of the grunge wave. Heavier than Nirvana, more introspective than Pearl Jam, less angst-ridden than Alice In Chains, Soundgarden absorbed a wide range of influences into their sound.

Black Hole Sun was one of five singles released from Soundgarden's fourth album, *Superunknown*, and one of two to win a Grammy, the other being '*Spoonman*'. It won the Best Hard Rock Performance award in early 1995 and marked the band's commercial high point. The 1996 album *Down On The Upside* was released as tensions within Soundgarden reached breaking point, and a split followed in '97.

The quartet reformed in 2011 after a 14-year hiatus and reaped their due rewards, quite possibly because Cornell's solo work in the interim had been patchy at best. Their second bite at the cherry was relatively brief, sadly, as Cornell committed suicide in 2017. *Black Hole Sun* may or may not be his best song, depending on who you consult, but it is likely to remain his best-known composition in perpetuity.


Soundgarden: the late, great Chris Cornell, second right.

85 *Jimi Hendrix Experience*
Purple Haze

Prior to the release of Hendrix's second single in March 1967, mainstream audiences had yet to enjoy the full Jimi experience. His arrival into the UK the previous September, had caused a sensation among the select few – Beatles, Stones, Clapton, Townshend – who'd encountered him playing live, but his debut single *Hey Joe* (a relatively sedate blues number written by Billy Roberts) wasn't entirely representative of Hendrix's revolutionary modus operandi.


The Jimi Hendrix Experience: if you go down to the woods today...

"That record isn't us," Hendrix was keen to point out, "The next one's gonna be different."

The next one was *Purple Haze*. The premier release on The Who's Track Records label, this was the sound of the future. Its dissonant interpretation of psychedelia only seemed to render all previous pop-psych prosaic, redundant and twee. From its opening deployment of a distorted 'diabolus in musica' tritone, to its disorienting fade of spiralling speeded-up guitars and muttered vocal asides, it had an inner darkness at odds with the prevailing 'it's all too beautiful' mood of an imminent summer of love. It was irresistible.

Jimi Hendrix looked like no-one had ever looked before. His exotic ethnic mix (African-American and Cherokee), inability to look bad in any item of clothing, casual blend of shy charm with sexual magnetism and unruly haze of the singularly most psychedelic hair in history (skyward tendrils that gave every impression that he was simultaneously receiving direct communiques from the cosmos while plugged into the mains) was a perfect recipe for instantaneous icon status. Hendrix represented freedom, licentiousness: cool. Granted, there were



YEAR RELEASED
1966

PRODUCER
Brian Wilson

In pursuit of his ultimate 'teenage symphony to God', Brian Wilson spent an awful lot of time and money. Obviously, focussing on the financial in the face of such great art is inappropriately grubby and sordid, but $75,000 is $75,000. Even more so when you consider that back then you could buy a three-bedroom house and a Ford Cortina for less than the price of today's iMac Pro. And still have change for a portion of hash.

That said, Brian was a genius, and indulged as such. Rather than just imagine what a cello and Electro-Theremin might sound like when in tandem with LA's most sought after session players, The Wrecking Crew, he'd make it happen, and hang the expense.

Good Vibrations lasts for 3 minutes and 35 seconds, Wilson burned through over 90 hours of tape to render its elements just so. Ultimately though, all of his unprecedented effort was worth it, because not only did *Good Vibrations*

YEAR RELEASED
1967

PRODUCER
Chas Chandler

musicians who were considered cool prior to Hendrix, but it was Hendrix who ultimately defined the term. And in 1967, *Purple Haze* was the coolest thing anyone had ever heard.

As if that wasn't enough, when sold by Hendrix on *Top Of The Pops*, it was also the coolest thing they'd ever seen. As clangorous explosions erupt from his instrument, Jimi's 'kissing the sky', hip-thrusting his guitar from behind, tonguing, tickling, seducing sounds of abandon from over-cranked amps, eyes closed in apparently orgasmic ecstasy. It was a hard watch with parents in the room. What Hendrix and Chas Chandler did in order to attain the sound of Purple Haze is explicable: there were multiple journeys back and forth to various studios, headphones waved around microphones, half-speed recording, Fuzz-Face and Octavia pedals, but blissfully ignorant of such inconvenient truths, it's easy to confuse the sound of *Purple Haze* with the sound of divine intervention.



GETTY X2

84 *The Beach Boys* Good Vibrations

prove to be a work of timeless brilliance, the 60s encapsulated in a single, magically evocative recording, it also revolutionised recording techniques beyond all recognition. It brought the impossible within reach, facilitating a future that we now look back upon as rock's golden age.| No *Good Vibrations*, no *Sgt Pepper*, no *Dark Side Of The Moon*, *no Tubular Bells*, and on and on.

Perhaps what's most amazing about *Good Vibrations* is how rapidly pop fans assimilated the impossible. As it poured from a million transistor radios, as it did in 1966, no one staggered back from their speakers shouting 'Electrickery!' at the sound of its intrinsic impossibility. They just soaked it up, grew their hair and prepared to tune in, turn on and, to the best of their ability, freak out.

So how was the magic made? Musically, Wilson recorded distinct elements evoking very different moods, and stitched them together, hiding his joins with vast reverb. Tony Asher was called in to write the lyric, but aside from persuading Brian to go with 'Vibrations' rather than 'Vibes', bowed out, leaving Mike Love to come up with the words. Which he apparently knocked off on the way to the studio. The central Electro-Theremin meanwhile isn't a pure Theremin, it's operated with a knob. Which, as all proper Theremin players will tell you, is cheating. But still, we'll forgive Brian that. After all, nobody's perfect.


The Beach Boys: Brian Wilson, third right.

83 *Dire Straits*
Sultans Of Swing

YEAR RELEASED
1978

PRODUCER
Muff Winwood

No poetic licence was needed when Mark Knopfler wrote the lyric for Dire Straits' 1978 debut single, *Sultans Of Swing*. Operating out of a Deptford council flat and gigging hand-to-mouth across their South London manor, the band were uniquely qualified to chronicle this wee-small-hours world of live music, with its cast of jobbing musos, dingy boozers and disinterested, half-cut punters. The song's title, he explained, was sparked by watching a hack jazz band play to a mostly empty pub, before grandly signing off: "Goodnight and thank you. We are the Sultans Of Swing."



That title had something about it, felt Knopfler, but he admitted the music dragged until he tried it on his first Fender Stratocaster and revised the chord changes. "It just came alive as soon as I played it on that '61 Strat," he said. Even then, reflected bassist John Illsley, the song's magic owed less to the arrangement as the execution, with Knopfler's unmistakable bob-and-weave electric fingerstyle decorating his prematurely grizzled vocal. "The whole thing is incredibly simple, it's the playing that makes it intriguing. It's that rolling rhythm on the guitar and a very simple bass and drums approach."

Against the backdrop of British punk, *Sultans Of Swing* was elevated, too, by Knopfler's dazzling outro solo: a quicksilver flourish whose final pull-offs walked the tightrope of technical flash and rare soul. The bandleader had little time for the accolades: "It was just more or less what I played every night."

Strangely, given its parochial lyric, *Sultans Of Swing* cut little commercial ice in Britain, but was lapped up by a US market whose shoes had never stuck to the pub carpet in the capital's sarf-east. "The radio stations started playing it like crazy," said Illsley. "And because America picked up on it, it came back to the UK and got released again. It started spreading like wildfire. I suppose you could say *Sultans Of Swing* was the one song that started it all off. People have said we were lucky, but I say: 'Well, what does luck mean?' The fact of the matter is that it was a bloody good song."

Added to that, as Knopfler reminded *Guitarist* magazine, it would be several more years before the band traded the song's smoke-filled lounges for the ivory tower of stardom. "I was 28 when *Sultans* broke," he said. "It was number one all over the world, but I didn't get any money from it for ages, and we were still living in Deptford for a good while…"

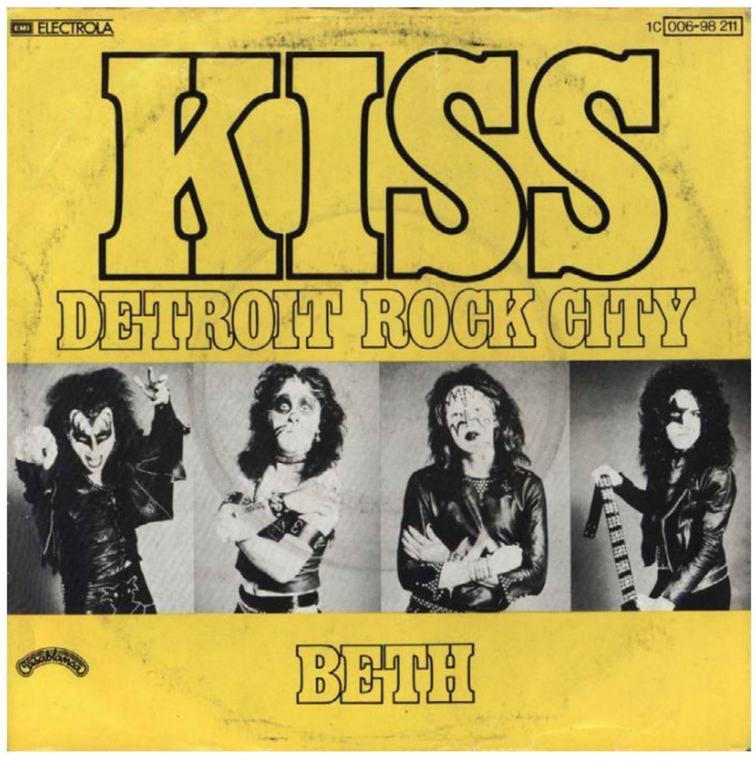
82 *Kiss*
Detroit Rock City

YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
Bob Ezrin

With their fourth album, *Destroyer*, Kiss reached for the stars and created their masterpiece. Their first three studio records were simplistic rock'n'roll, banged out fast. For *Destroyer*, they hired Bob Ezrin, producer of Alice Cooper and Lou Reed. As a result, Kiss sounded bigger, better and smarter. And they never sounded, bigger or smarter than on the juggernaut of an opening track that is *Detroit Rock City*.

The song was partly inspired by the true story of a fan who was killed on the way to a Kiss gig, hence sound of a car radio and noise of smashing vehicles that bookended the song. "On a previous tour somebody had gotten hit by a car and killed outside the arena," said Paul Stanley. "I remember thinking how weird it is that people can be on their way to something that's really a party and a celebration of being alive, and die in the process of doing it. So that became the basis of the lyric."



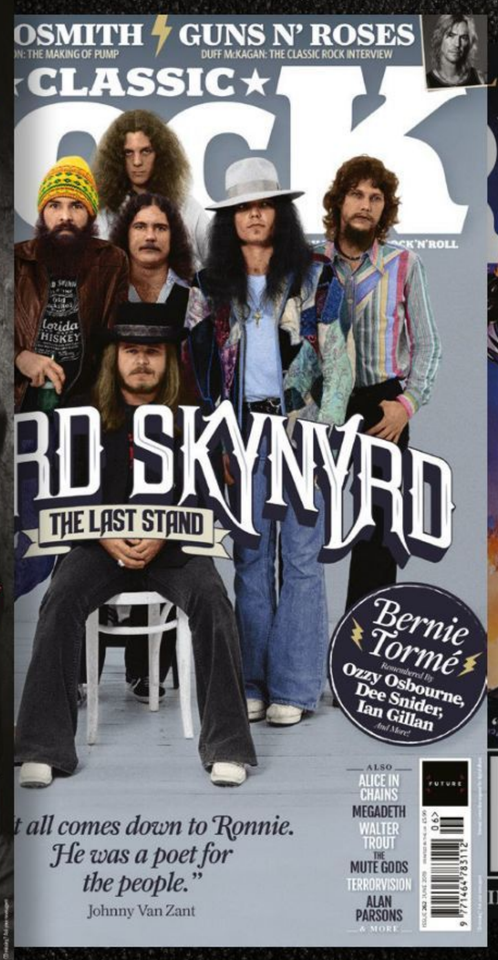
But equally, it was a salute to the city namechecked in the title. It was in Detroit, not their home town of New York, that Kiss found their biggest audience in their early days. In return, the band gave the Motor City its own rock anthem. "The first town that opened its arms and legs to us," as Stanley quipped.

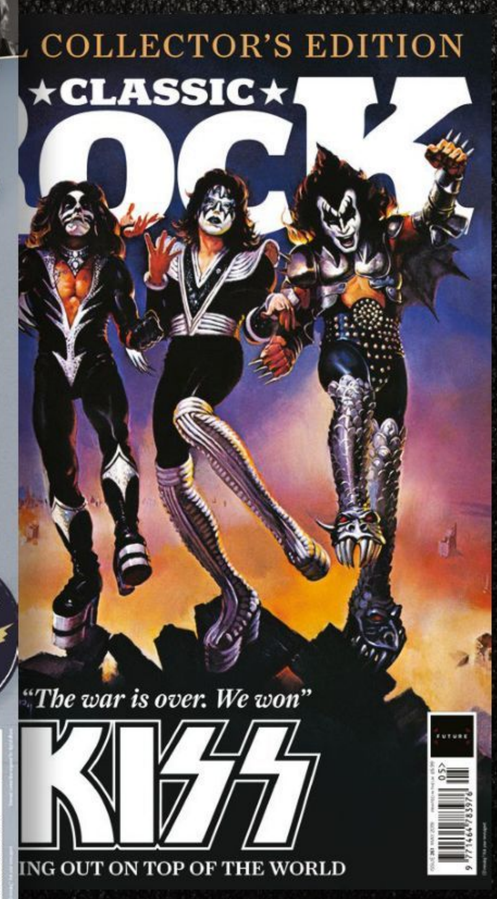
Urged on by Bob Ezrin, this was a fitting tribute – a 150mph rocket of a song, propelled by a bassline lifted from Curtis Mayfield's blaxploitation classic *Freddie's Dead* and featuring Stanley and Frehley's iconic push-me-pull-you twin guitar solo.

Detroit Rock City opened both *Destroyer* and 1977's *Alive II* with an almighty bang. Today, no Kiss show is complete without it.



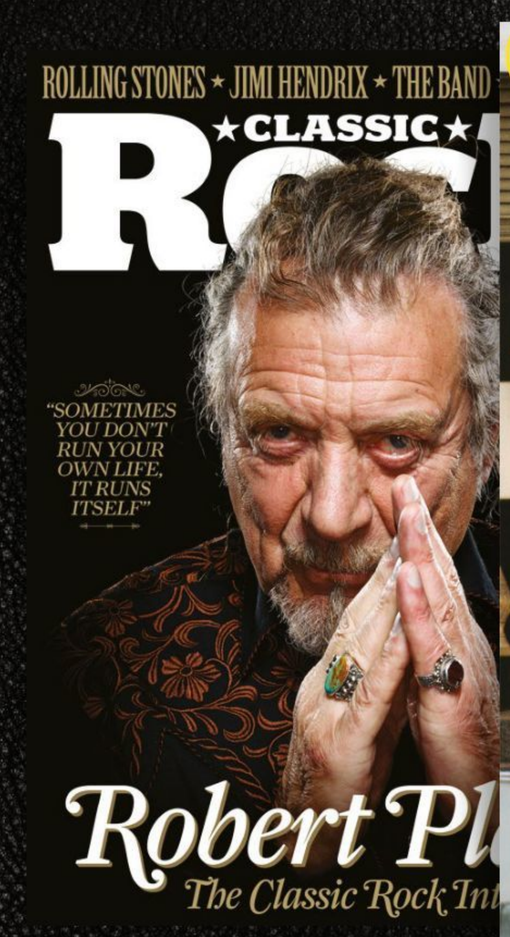


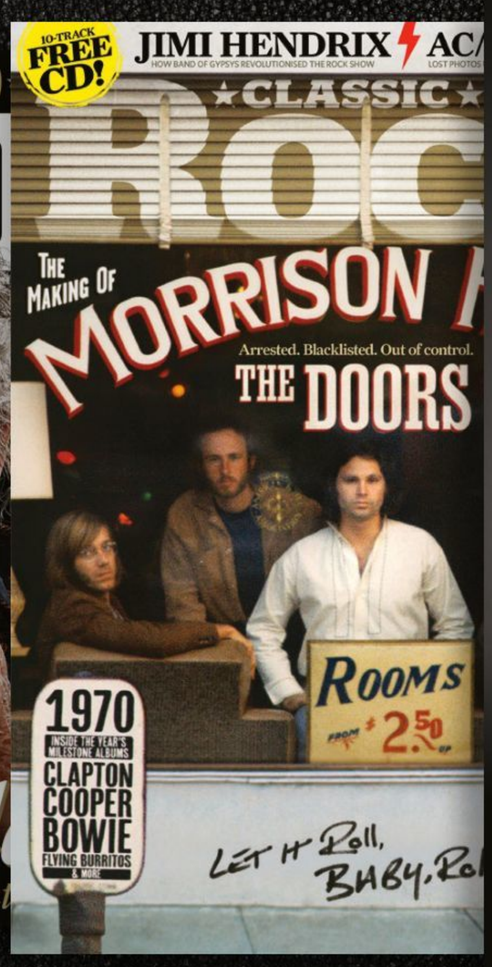




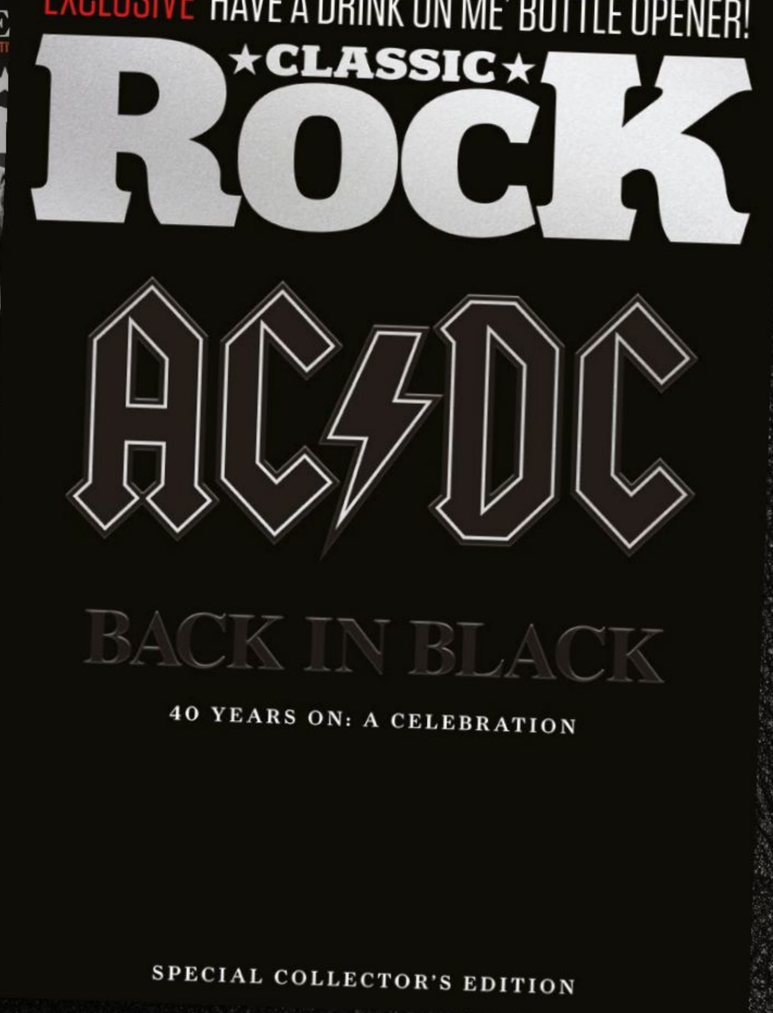
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HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK'N'ROLL





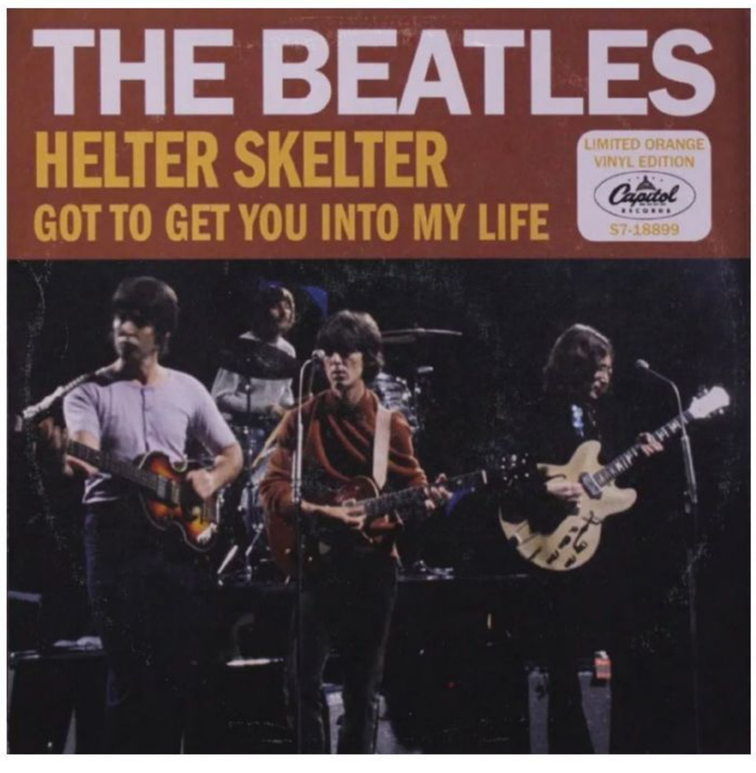




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81 *The Beatles*
Helter Skelter

In the summer of 1968, Paul McCartney was reading *Melody Maker* when he stopped on a quote from Pete Townshend. "Pete said: 'We've just made the raunchiest, loudest, most ridiculous rock'n'roll record you've ever heard," McCartney recalled. "I never actually found out what track it was, but that got me going, just hearing him talk about it. I was always trying to write something different, trying to not write in character, and that one little paragraph was enough to make me make a move. I thought we should a do a song like that, something really wild, and I wrote *Helter Skelter*."



McCartney was thinking about the fairground slides of his childhood, coupled with the sense of social unrest in the world that summer. "I was using the symbol of a helter skelter as a ride from the top to the bottom – the rise and fall of the Roman Empire – and this was the fall, the demise," he said.

On July 18 The Beatles learned the song and recorded three extended takes at Abbey Road Studios. The first two were 10 and 12 minutes respectively, the third stretched to 27:11. A four-minute excerpt of the latter, released on *Anthology 3*, has the song being played at half speed, almost like a second cousin to *Yer Blues*. McCartney may have also been toying with an alternative title, as other bootlegs show him occasionally singing *'Hell for leather'* instead of *'Helter Skelter'*.

When the band revisited the track on the night of September 9, they were, according to assistant engineer Brian Gibson, "completely out of their heads". In a marathon seven-hour session, they completed 18 takes, with Ringo on drums, John on bass and Paul and George on guitars. It was only the second song the band had recorded on EMI's new eight-track machine. With each take, the group edged closer to the maelstrom that McCartney had originally envisioned.

"We got the engineers to hike up the drum sound and really get it as loud and horrible as it could," McCartney recalled, "and we played it, and said: 'No, still sounds too safe. It's got to get louder and dirtier."

Chris Thomas, who was filling in as producer for George Martin, recalled: "It was a pretty undisciplined session. George Harrison had set fire to an ashtray and was running around the studio with it above his head, doing an Arthur Brown!" [George's stunt was inspired by *Fire* by The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, which was a big UK hit that summer].

The final take, number 21, recorded at 2:30 am, was the keeper. It ended with a blare of feedback, and the immortal scream from Ringo: "I've got blisters on my fingers!"

"That wasn't a put-on," McCartney said. "His hands were actually bleeding at the end of the take, he'd been drumming so ferociously. We did work very hard on that track."

Even with the familiarity of The Beatles' catalogue 50 years on, *Helter Skelter* still has the power to startle. Sequenced on the White Album after Lennon's acerbic ballad *Sexy Sadie*, that fuzz guitar intro is like a chainsaw roaring into life, starting a relentless groove that sounds like it's boring a hole into the studio floor. There's a hypnotic spiral about the track, and for connoisseurs of rock screams, McCartney's extended howl at the 2:35 mark remains one of the most electrifying moments of the 60s.

Helter Skelter's overall air of foreboding took on a much darker hue the following year when cult leader Charles Manson became obsessed with it – and the entire White Album – as some kind of coded prophecy for an apocalyptic race war. He was convinced that he was the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through secret messages The Beatles had sought him out to lead a violent revolution. As Manson later said during his murder trial: "It is not my music. I hear what it relates. It says 'rise'. It says 'kill'. Why blame it on me? I didn't write the music."

In August 1969, when Manson and his followers murdered the family of Leno LaBianca in Los Angeles, they painted 'Helter Skelter' on the fridge in the victims' blood. This lurid detail didn't come out until a year later, during Manson's trial, when his lawyer tried to convince a jury that the motive for his murders was a misinterpretation of The Beatles' song.

"Manson interpreted that *Helter Skelter* was something to do with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse," McCartney said. "I still don't know what all that stuff is; it's from the Bible, Revelations. I haven't read it so I wouldn't know. But he interpreted the whole thing – that we were the four horsemen, *Helter Skelter* was the song – and arrived at having to go out and kill everyone. It was frightening, because you don't write songs for those reasons."

The tarnish of the Manson association with Helter Skelter faded slightly over time, and the song was covered by many bands, including U2, Oasis, Mötley Crüe, Aerosmith and Stereophonics. It's been a staple of Paul McCartney's live shows since 2004, and remains The Beatles' most full-on rock moment.

"That was really all I wanted to do – to make a very loud, raunchy rock'n'roll record with The Beatles," said McCartney. "And I think it's a pretty good one."

YEAR RELEASED
1968

PRODUCER
GEORGE MARTIN



The Beatles: turning up the 60s.

GETTY

80 *The Doors*
L.A. Woman

Not much ran smoothly for The Doors. And so it was with sessions for their sixth album, *L.A. Woman*. In November 1970, regular producer Paul Rothchild, unconvinced by what he was hearing in the studio, decided to quit. Enter engineer Bruce Botnick, who joined the band in their old rehearsal space, the Doors Workshop, on Santa Monica Boulevard. It was a back-to-basics move that mirrored the eventual tone of the album itself. Gone were the symphonic flourishes and painstaking exactitude of their most recent work, replaced instead by a freer, garage-blues sound that harked back to their beginnings.


The Doors: 'Mr Mojo Rising' and friends.

This was most keenly expressed on the title track. One one level, it's a simple song about barrelling down the LA Freeway, lights a-blur and the wind at its tail. But it's also a conflicted homage to Los Angeles as a living entity, a promised land of midnight alleys and Hollywood bungalows, peopled by the lost and lonely. As drummer John Densmore remarked in the documentary, *The Story of L.A. Woman*: "The metaphor for the city as a woman is brilliant - cops in cars, never saw a woman so alone…The physicality of the town and thinking of her and how we need to take care of her. It's my hometown."

Musically, *L.A. Woman* shifts through the gears. Densmore's tight rhythm and Ray Manzarek's descending organ riff hurry it along, before Jim Morrison's vocals (mimic'd after each line by Robby Krieger's



YEAR RELEASED
1977

PRODUCER
David Bowie, Tony Visconti

One afternoon in July 1977, David Bowie was looking out of the window of Hansa Studio in Berlin when he noticed a couple kissing near the Berlin Wall.

"I always said it was a couple of lovers by the Wall that prompted the idea for *"Heroes"*," Bowie said. "Actually, it was [producer] Tony Visconti and his girlfriend. Tony was married at the time, so I couldn't talk about it. It was very touching because I could see that Tony was very much in love with this girl, and it was that relationship which sort of motivated the song."

The most famous song to emerge from Bowie's famed 'Berlin period' had already been started by Bowie and Brian Eno in the weeks before, with Visconti behind the mixing desk. Using Eno's so-called 'oblique strategies' cards (aphorisms that encouraged lateral thinking), Bowie came up with a restricted chord progression that he threw out to his studio band,

YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
Bruce Botnick, The Doors

bluesy guitar) open the throttle. Elvis's former bassist Jerry Scheff adds a sense of propulsion, as does rhythm guitarist Marc Benno.

Morrison's repeated phrase – *'City of Night, City of Night'* – takes its cue from John Rechy's underground novel of the same name, which depicts a demi-monde of hustlers, fiends and illicit sexual trysts, partly set in Los Angeles. Hurtling through eight minutes of dark psychedelic blues, the song heads for optimum pick-up when Morrison begins to intone *'Mr. Mojo Risin"* (an anagram of his own name) over and over. As his vocals become more frenzied – *'Risin'!, Risin'!'* - the symbolism is obvious.

The Doors debuted *L.A. Woman* at the State Fair Music Hall in Dallas that December. But it was to be the song's first and last outing. Within three months of its parent album's release in early 1971, Morrison was dead. The legend continues to endure, of course, not least via what Krieger calls "the quintessential Doors song."



79 *David Bowie* "Heroes"


David Bowie: '*"Heroes"* felt anthemic, almost like a prayer.'

who ran with it, building an eight-minute groove into a triumphant crescendo.

The underlying riff came from guitarist Carlos Alomar, with the hypnotic pulse provided by bassist George Murray and drummer Dennis Davis. After the basic track was done, Eno overdubbed shuddering atmospherics by twiddling knobs on his EMS Synthi, a mini-synthesizer built into a briefcase. The final touch was added by guitarist Robert Fripp: a soaring series of aria-like feedback loops. Fripp marked with adhesive tape the spots on the studio floor where he could lock into certain singing tones. For a guitarist known for playing while seated, it's interesting that one of his most enduring performances came from stepping and swaying.

The finished track sat for weeks while Bowie waited for the right lyrical spark, which eventually came from the lovers by the Wall. Delivered in one of his greatest vocal performances, the us-against-the-world theme of his lyric was full of odd poetic touches, like the lines about the dolphins. As Bowie says, he often used a William Burroughs-inspired cut-up method of writing, taking random text from a book or magazine and reshuffling it.

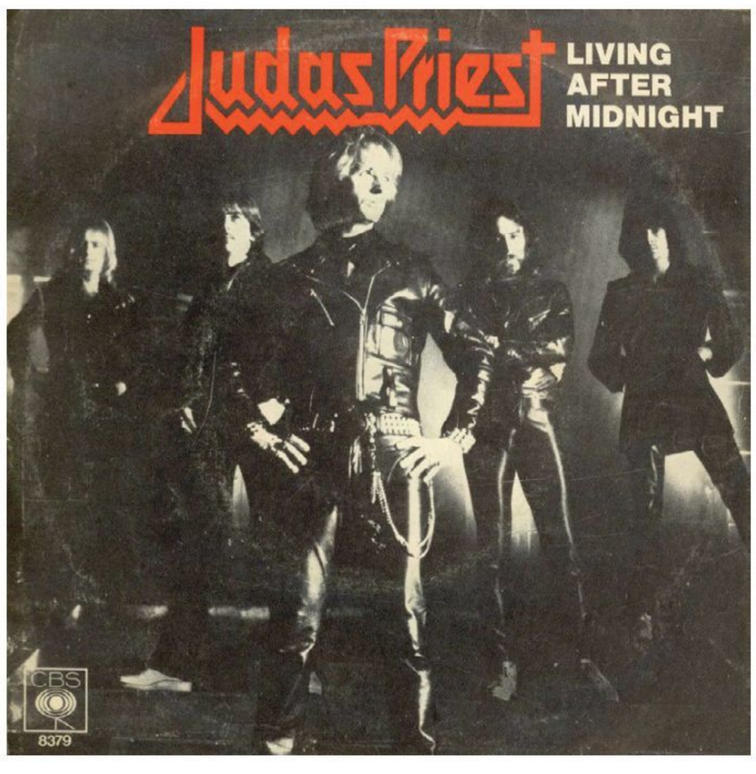
"Heroes" was released as a single in September 1977. It only reached No.24 in the UK, and didn't chart at all in the US. But the emotional power of the song continued to resonate as it became one of Bowie's cornerstone songs. Ten years after recording it, Bowie performed it live at the Platz der Republik Festival, with the Berlin Wall as a backdrop.

"There were thousands of East Berliners on the other side that had come close to the wall," he recalled. "When we did *"Heroes"* it really felt anthemic, almost like a prayer. I've never felt it like that again."

78 *Judas Priest*
Living After Midnight

In the spring of 1980, Judas Priest released an album that was to prove so successful within the parameters of its genre that it would almost come to define the term 'heavy metal'. *British Steel*, the Birmingham group's sixth studio record, was a masterclass in leather-and-studs bombast.

More than three decades on, *British Steel* remains a cherished gem from the golden age of British metal. What separated Judas Priest from the heavy metal crowd was their ability to marry the primal, industrial pounding that had reverberated around their industrial-heartland birthplace to a bloody good chorus.



"Although I say so myself, *British Steel* is a very, very good album," says guitarist Glenn Tipton. "We had gone into Tittenhurst Park, the home of Ringo Starr, who'd bought it from John Lennon, after a previous attempt at another studio, and with only half of its songs written. Until that point, we'd never worked that way before.

"I'll always recall that 1980 was a great summer, and being in such an inspirational surrounding definitely rubbed off on us," he continues. "What came out was a set of very simple yet effective songs that, I'd like to think, helped to shape what else was going on [in heavy rock music] at the time."

Living After Midnight, the first of the album's three huge hit singles (the others being *Breaking The Law* and *United*), was among the songs conceived at Tittenhurst, near Ascot.

"One night while we were there, John Lennon was on the TV playing *Imagine*, and of course it was very weird to be in the actual room where he'd been filmed," Tipton remembers. "You could almost visualise the white piano in the corner."

In an equally eerie scenario, singer Rob Halford got the inspiration for the lyrics for *Living After Midnight* as his bandmates kept him awake by blasting out riffs and drum beats in the studio below.

"He came downstairs to complain and said: 'Hey, guys, come on. It's gone midnight.' Which shouldn't really have bothered such a heavy metal icon as Rob," Tipton says, laughing at the memory.

"It was 4am and we'd been working all day," Halford protests. "But when I said what I did, the guys went: 'That's a brilliant title. Write it down."

"Rob's comment proved to be a spark for a very important song for us," says Tipton. "It was one of those lucky spontaneous things that sometimes just happen."

If the song's swaggering, chest-beating, nocturnal-themed lyric – *'I'm getting hotter by the hour/Loaded, loaded'* – seemed to set up Halford as a bit of an all-conquering, love-'em-and-leave-'em sex machine, then the singer has no complaints.

"Yeah," he smiles when reminded. "It made me sound like Clint Eastwood from *A Fistful Of Dollars*, clutching a condom."

Living After Midnight begins with a drum intro from the then newly arrived Dave Holland (formerly of Trapeze), and then it goes straight to the chorus.

"I really don't know why it turned out like that," Tipton admits. "Sometimes the simplest ideas just work out the best. Maybe that was in the back of our minds."

"There's a lot to be said for the very famous phrase that goes: 'Don't bore us, get to the chorus,'" says Halford. "In this instance we took it pretty literally."

Both agree that the vision of producer Tom Allom, who had been retained after the band's live *Unleashed In The East*, was fundamental to the project's success. In those pre-sampling days, Allom suggested the band raid the studio's kitchen to rattle trays of cutlery as an enhancement of the ominous grind of Metal Gods. (He also recorded the sound of smashed milk bottles and a police siren for Priest's more commercial-sounding *Breaking The Law*.)

"We used to make our own samples in those days, and Tom had such great ideas. I sometimes think that even we [the band] overlooked his importance," Tipton offers. "He was such a diplomatic guy, and great at getting guitar and drum sounds. What an underrated producer."

Like the hilarious video for *Breaking The Law*, in which Priest robbed a branch of Barclays Bank in London's Wardour Street, armed with their Flying V guitars, and then made their getaway in an open-topped convertible, the video for *Living After Midnight* was a suitably ludicrous affair. Directed by Julien Temple and shot at Sheffield City Hall, it boasted Dave Holland playing an invisible drum kit.

"The air guitarists, and everybody piling onto a coach, those were early days of videos," Tipton says of Priest's comedic vent. "Although corny, I still think they were great."

Although *Living After Midnight* didn't chart in the US (it reached No.12 in the UK), the immediacy of it opened the door there for Judas Priest. "It was absolutely pivotal in breaking the band in many parts of the world," Halford says.

"Heavy metal is all about getting together with your mates, donning the gear, drinking a few beers and watching some great music," adds Tipton. "And in the morning you go back to work, school, college or whatever. It's therapeutic, nothing more and nothing less.

YEAR RELEASED
1980

PRODUCER
Tom Allom



Rob Halford: like 'Clint Eastwood clutching a condom.'

GETTY

77 *Cream*
Sunshine Of Your Love

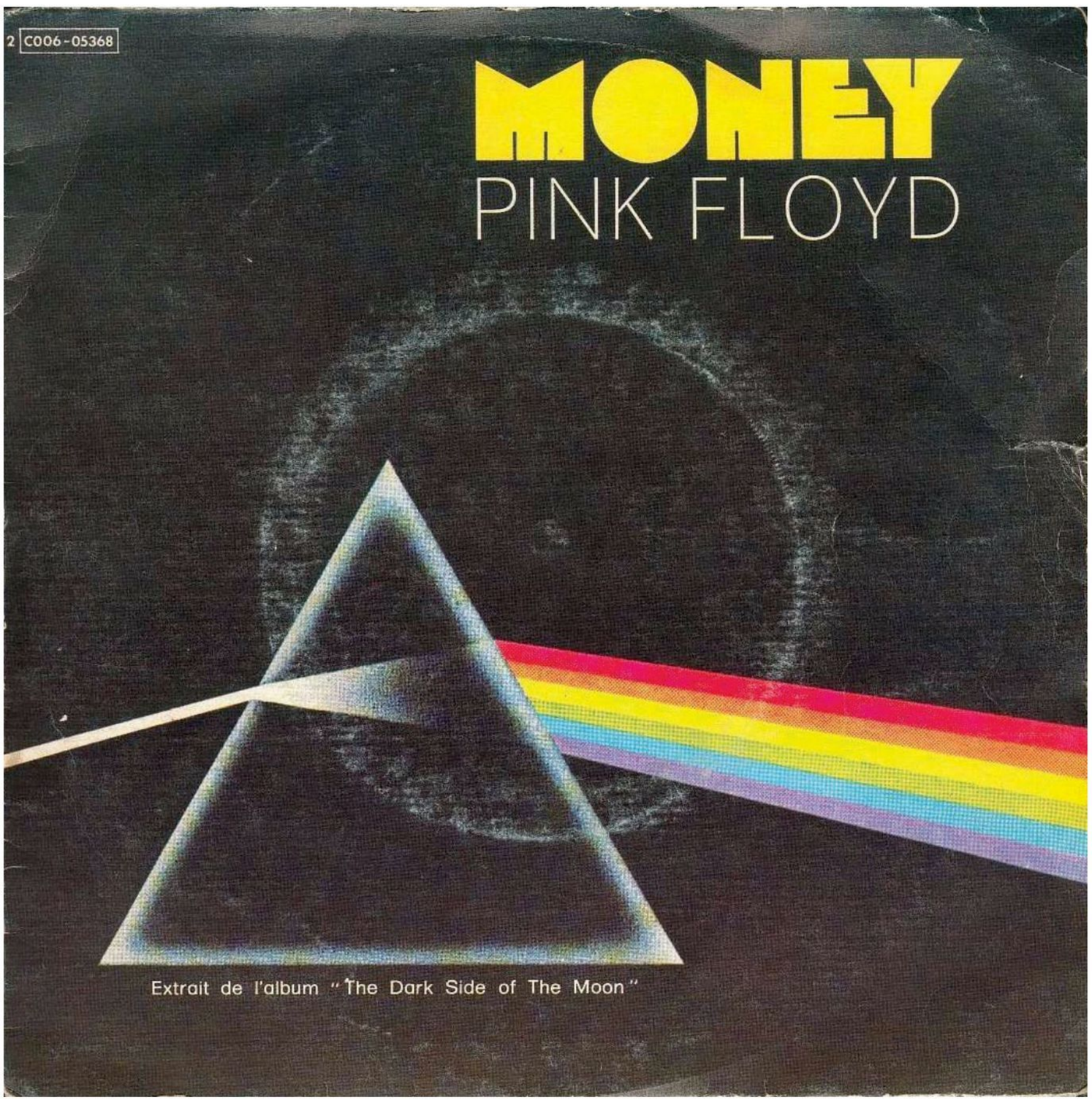
On January 29th, 1967, Jack Bruce came reeling out of Jimi Hendrix's show at the Saville Theatre in Covent Garden, went home and channelled his shell shock into – arguably – the defining riff of the Sixties. "I don't think Jack had really taken him in before," Cream bandmate Eric Clapton told *Rolling Stone*. "After the gig, he came up with the riff. It was strictly a dedication to Jimi."

"We'd been working all night," Cream's occasional lyricist Pete Brown added in a Songfacts interview. "Jack was playing stand-up bass, and he said, 'What about this then?' and played the famous riff. I looked out the window and wrote down, 'It's getting near dawn…'"


Cream: the original power trio.

For a band brought together by their mutual virtuosity – paying respect to the flashiest guitarist on the London scene – it's curious that Cream's most famous moment was little more than a mid-tempo seven-note descending bassline. Yet those seven notes worked their magic, while providing a spine on which Bruce's bandmates hung some of their career-best playing. Quoting the melody of *Blue Moon*, Clapton's deliciously languid solo found the hotshot guitarist reining in the flash, leaving weeping notes to hang, in the best showcase of his smooth, dark, so-called 'woman' tone.

Meanwhile, Ginger Baker pulsed on his toms with an almost hypnotic intensity – although the beat was a sticking point. In later years, Baker would claim he had the idea of emphasising the '1' and '3', but in documentaries, engineer Tom Dowd maintained it was his



YEAR RELEASED
1973

PRODUCER
Pink Floyd

There's the clank of a cash register. A jangle of coins. A tearing of till receipts. A loping bassline, built on just eight notes. And finally, David Gilmour's opening gambit (*'Money! Get away…'*). So begins Pink Floyd's first true international signature tune and their ticket to the stadium league.

Nobody could have predicted those impending plaudits when Waters arrived at Abbey Road in June 1972 with the bones of the song: an awkward 7/4 composition that tested both Nick Mason and guesting tenor saxophonist Dick Parry. "It's Roger's riff," noted Gilmour. "Roger came in with the verses and lyrics for Money more or less completed. We made up middle sections, guitar solos and all that stuff. We also invented some new riffs – we created a 4/4 progression for the guitar solo and made the poor saxophone player play in 7/4."

"Occasionally," Waters reflected, "I would do

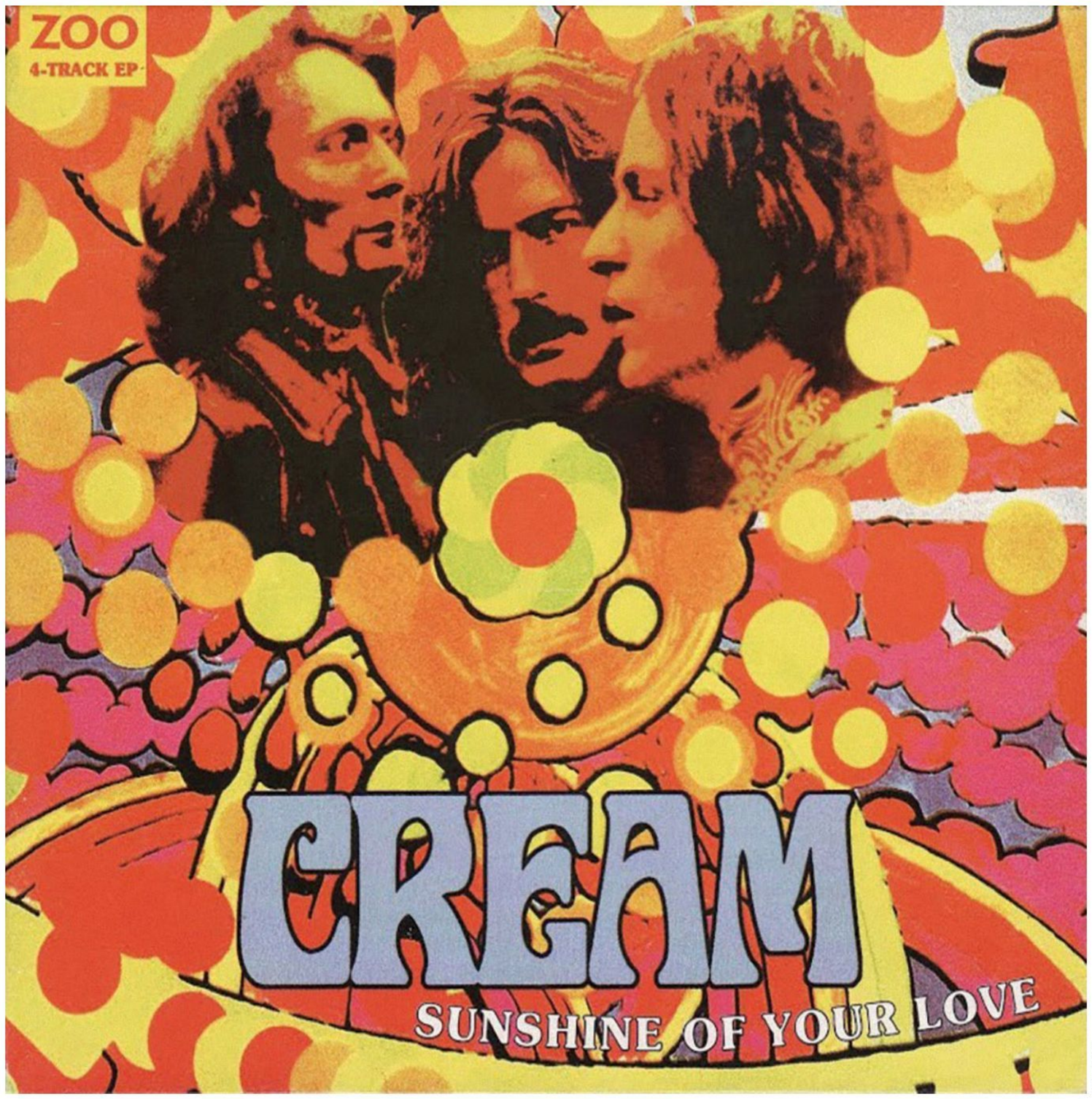
YEAR RELEASED
1967

PRODUCER
Felix Pappalardi

suggestion. "I said, 'Have you ever seen an American Western where the Indian beat – the downbeat – is the beat? When they started playing that way, all of the parts came together."

Bruce sensed that *Sunshine Of Your Love* could fly: the song had already been endorsed by Otis Redding and Booker T. Jones at Atlantic Studios. The suits were a harder sell, steering Clapton into the frontman role and bemused to be presented with woozy, hippy-ish fare rather than straight-up blues. Atlantic boss Ahmet Ertegun, recalled Bruce in the *Classic Albums* series, didn't sugarcoat his verdict: "He called it psychedelic hogwash."

But the bassist's vindication was emphatic. Released late in 1967, *Sunshine Of Your Love* would slow-burn to No.5 in the US, putting Cream into the American super-league. And almost a half-century later, when the song was the inevitable encore at the all-star tribute concert for Bruce – who died of liver disease in 2014 – it was hard to imagine a finer sunset.



GETTY X2

76 *Pink Floyd* Money

things and Dave would say, 'No, that's wrong. There should be another beat. That's only seven'. I'd say, 'Well, that's how it is'. A number of my songs have bars of odd length. When you play *Money* on an acoustic guitar, it's very much a blues thing."

For the studio take, Waters would re-record the sound effects that he had originally created in his garden shed by throwing coins into a bowl used by his wife for mixing clay. Yet the song's most dazzling moment came from Gilmour. Though the guitarist would self-deprecatingly refer to Money as "nice white English architecture students getting funky", there was searing soul in his solo, which adrenalises the song at the three-minute mark then drops its effects for the 'dry' section at 3:48.

While Floyd's management quickly identified *Money* as a potential "monster hit", the bandmembers themselves were ambivalent, feeling that the tricky time signature would hold it back, and also envious of Led Zeppelin's refusal to issue singles or pander to radio. "We didn't think anything would happen with *Money*," noted Rick Wright. "And suddenly, it just did."

And how. Released on May 7, 1973 – two months after parent album *The Dark Side Of The Moon* had topped the Billboard chart – Money climbed to No.13 in the US, announcing Floyd as rock heavyweights and making Waters's wealth-baiting lyric ring a little hollow. With *Money* in their locker the band found themselves harangued at shows across the planet

"It was quite a shock," Gilmour said, "to be confronted with people down the front all screaming for us to play *Money* – when previously our slightly more reverential audiences were sitting in absolute silence waiting to hear the next pin being dropped."


Pink Floyd: 'English architecture students getting funky.'

75 *Bob Dylan*
Like A Rollimg Stone

In May 1965, at the end of a two-month solo tour of the UK, Bob Dylan was considering giving up performing. "I was drained," he said afterwards. "I was playing a lot of songs I didn't want to play. I was singing words I really didn't want to sing."

On his flight home, Dylan wrote something that would change his mind. It was a 20-page stream of consciousness poem, what he jokingly called "a long piece of vomit." A few days later, in his Greenwich Village apartment, while looking it over, he hit on what he called the "slow motion phrase" of "How does it feel?" and that brought the song into focus.


Bob Dylan: stopped being a folkie and started being a rocker.

He edited the verses, setting them to a simple three-chord progression nicked from *La Bamba* by Ritchie Valens. While Dylan's interviews of the time are notoriously unreliable sources of information, one thing that he couldn't camouflage was his delight with *Like A Rolling Stone*, calling it the "best song he'd ever written."

On June 15, 1965, he brought it into Columbia Studio A in New York, running through it with producer Tom Wilson and a band led by prodigal blues guitarist Mike Bloomfield. Dylan had hand-picked Bloomfield for the session, though strangely insisted he not play "any of that B.B. King shit."

Early takes of the song were in waltz time, moody and a bit unfocused. Then the next day, a catalyst arrived in the form of Al Kooper.



YEAR RELEASED
1971

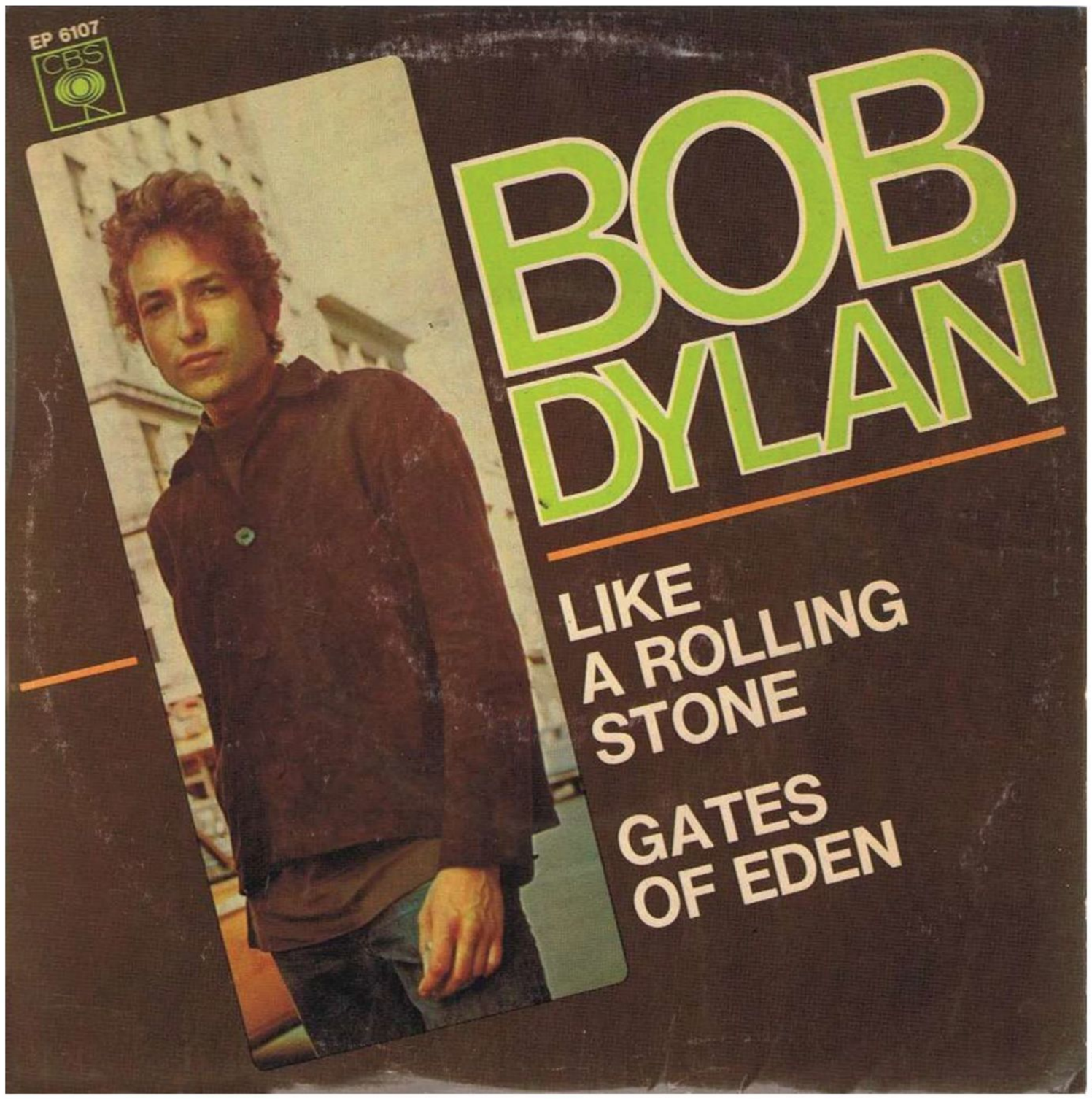
PRODUCER
Tony Visconti

The late Marc Bolan was never overly concerned with consistency. Take T.Rex's single *Hot Love*, for example, released on 12 February 1971. A full two and a half minutes of it – more than half its length – is filled solely by the repeated line *'La, la, la, la-la-la-laaaa'*. While we would never be so churlish as to label this lazy songwriting on the part of Bolan, it's hardly adventurous – which might make the casual observer assume the same of the follow-up single. Right?

Wrong. *Get It On*, released on July 2, 1971, is a singularly impressive bit of composition, whether we're referring to the slick, cheeky riff that anchors the song or the vivid imagery with which Bolan peppers his lyrics. Opaque, shimmering and rather beautiful, phrases such as *'hubcap diamond star halo'* appear to mean very little, but that never stopped John Lennon and Paul McCartney, did it?

YEAR RELEASED
1965

PRODUCER
Tom Wilson



GETTY X2

Bloomfield's presence denied the guitarist his usual spot, so Kooper played the Hammond B-3 organ instead. In one of rock's greatest happy accidents, he ignited the band to a once-in-a-lifetime groove.

But *Like A Rolling Stone* is first and foremost about words. Rhymes dovetail with rhymes, lines bend meter, images startle (*'Napoleon in rags'*). It's like proto-rap. And it's all delivered with sneering attitude (even the six-minute length was a middle finger to the 3-minute rule of the day). Sure, Dylan famously went electric at Newport a few months before, but this song is the pivot point where he stopped being a folkie and started being a rocker.

"I'd never written anything like *…Rolling Stone before,*" Dylan later said. "And it suddenly came to me that that was what I should do. After writing that, I wasn't interested in writing a novel or a play. I wanted to just write songs." And, didn't he?

74 *T.Rex*
Get It On



Marc Bolan and T.Rex: hubcap diamond star halos just out of shot.

The inspiration for the song, said Bolan, was Chuck Berry's *Little Queenie*; you can hear the ad-libbed line *'…and meanwhile, I'm still thinking'* from that song as *Get It On* fades out. The song was recorded at Trident Studios in London, and produced by Tony Visconti, who soon found greater success with David Bowie, Bolan's friend and arch-rival for the glam-rock crown.

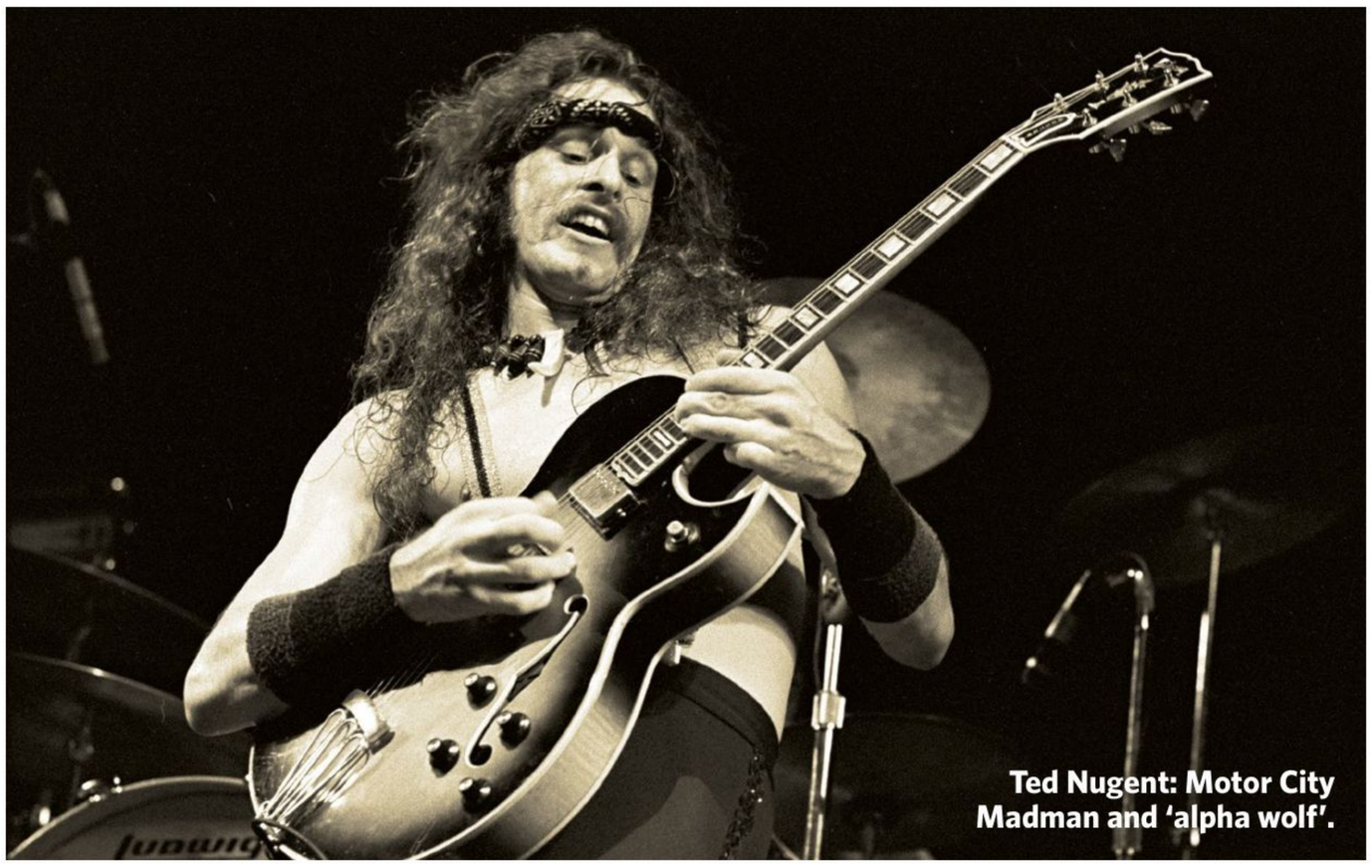
A stellar cast of session musicians gathered for the recording: Rick Wakeman played several piano glissandos, or slides, throughout the song, and was paid a princely £9 for his efforts; four saxophone tracks were played by Ian McDonald of King Crimson; and Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, previously known as The Turtles, sang backing vocals.

Get It On was the perfect summer song for 1971, occupying the top spot on the UK charts for four weeks, and reaching No.10 in the USA. In America, it was retitled *Bang A Gong (Get It On),* as a song of the same name by the group Chase already existed. This alternative title was rewritten as *Get It On (Bang A Gong)* on an insipid cover version in April 1985 by The Power Station, a short-lived supergroup formed by the late vocalist Robert Palmer, Andy Taylor and John Taylor of Duran Duran and Chic drummer Tony Thompson.

If nothing else, this version – a worldwide hit – reintroduced Bolan's song to a new generation of listeners. Sadly, the man himself didn't live to see it, having died in a 1977 car accident at the age of 29. His legacy is secured with this single and the other hits released in this golden early-70s period.

73 *Ted Nugent*
Stranglehold

In 1975, 26-year-old former Amboy Dukes frontman Ted Nugent signed to Epic Records as a solo artist. His debut album, titled simply *Ted Nugent*, was a huge hit in the US, selling two million copies and confirming the Motor City Madman as both a major star and one of the pre-eminent guitarists of his generation.


Ted Nugent: Motor City Madman and 'alpha wolf'.

The first track on that album was the ideal calling card. *Stranglehold* was an eight-minute masterpiece of build-and-release tension – the perfect vehicle for the Nuge's six-string pyrotechnics

"This earth shattering lick came about from a constantly developing jam session and, as usual, the lyrics were inspired by the sexually explicit pulse of defiance that permeated so much of me and my music more and more all the time," Nugent said of the song's orgins. "The song expresses my refusal to abandon my instinctive high energy, R&B-driven musical dreams in the face of constant pressure from management, producers, record companies, booking agents et al, to back down on the feedback guitar driven music that I so love."

Ironically, the never-knowingly-retiring Nugent ceded the vocal spotlight on Stranglehold – and the majority of the album's nine tracks – to singer Derek St Holmes. With St Holmes voice rattling the rafters and Nugent peeling off the killer licks, it was the perfect combination.

"It is so spontaneous and uninhibited,"



YEAR RELEASED
1972

PRODUCER
David Bowie

Historically cited as the song David Bowie gave away to an ailing Mott The Hoople, little knowing it would rapidly acquire the accolade of 'glam's greatest anthem', *All The Young Dudes* could never have packed its irresistible punch in the hands of its author.

While tailor-made to slot into the loose concept of Bowie's *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust* album (the *'news'* the dudes *'carry'* was, according to Bowie, the same news delivered by the weeping newscaster in Ziggy's *Five Years*: news of imminent quinquennial apocalypse), *Dudes* also carried a degree of menace. While inarguably glam to its core - Bowie wrote its lyric upon hearing Lou Reed's *Walk On The Wild Side* demo – the way Ian Hunter sells it, with braggadocio swagger, an assured gang-leader's sneer, he might as well be singing 'All The Young Droogs'. It's *Clockwork Orange* reimagined in a rock'n'roll context, and while Hunter looked a bit

YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
Tom Werman, Lew Futterman

Nugent said of the song. "The only thing we went back and overdubbed was Derek St. Holmes' vocals and my two tracks of harmonised feedback, which come in and out of the entire song. All the engineers and everyone kept saying, 'You can't do that, Ted.' And I said, 'Shut the fuck up!' Because I had the vision; I saw what the song could be, and I realised it."

Inevitably, Nugent bristled at the attention St Holmes received and dispensed with him by the end of the 70s, eventually stepping in to sing *Stranglehold* himself. "There's only one alpha wolf, and that's me," he explained.

Today, the Nuge is known as much for his divisive right-wing politics as his music. But *Stranglehold*'s eight freewheeling minutes transcends all that. As the Motor City Madman himself put it: "*Stranglehold* is the sexiest, grinding pure animal love song of all time."

And we're not arguing with a man who has a gun and knows how to use it.



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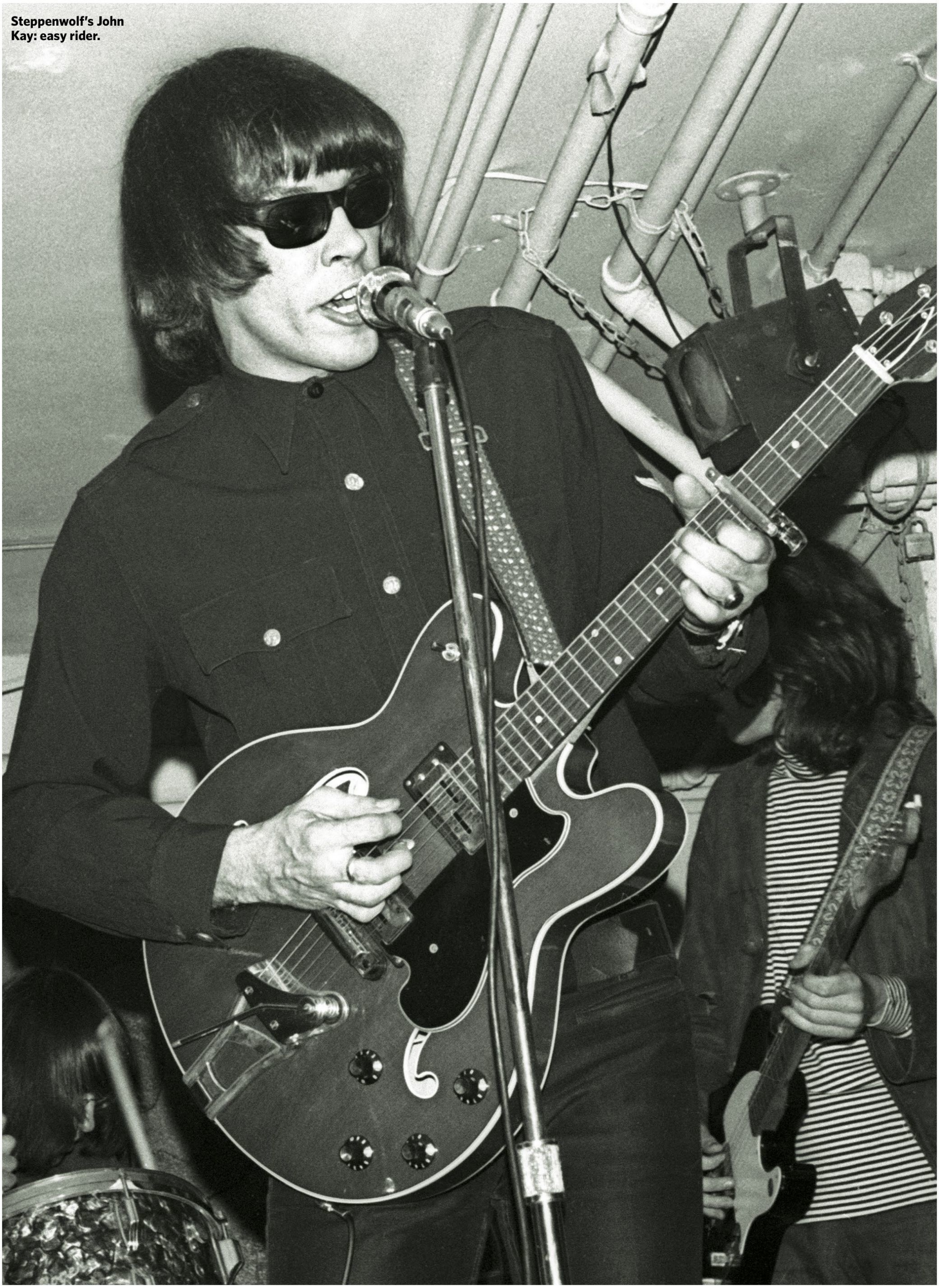
72 *Mott The Hoople*
All The Young Dudes

tasty, all merciless shades and stone face, Bowie wasn't about to scare anyone. *Dudes* captured the public's imagination and hit UK number 3 in August 1972. It was Bowie's biggest song to date (*Space Oddity* peaked at No.5 in 1969, and Starman – no matter how many times its iconic *TOTP* clip is repeated on BBC4 – will always be the 'Zeitgeist-defining' hit single that stalled at No.10 behind Donny Osmond's *Puppy Love*).

Mott recognised *Dudes*' potential as soon as a cross-legged Bowie played it to them on acoustic guitar. "You don't see many of them," Hunter remembers, "They don't grow on trees." But Bowie's *Dudes*' had yet to fulfil its potential. Recording at Olympic Studios in Barnes with Bowie as producer (and an uncredited Mick Ronson at his side), Mott's guitarist Mick Ralphs added a stunning descending guitar motif that transformed the song. But there was still something missing.

Hunter: "When we played The Rainbow some arsehole shouted 'you suck' or equivalent. I went, 'You're his mates, bring him down the front'. They brought him down the front and I poured a bottle of beer over him. Fast forward two weeks, we're in the studio working on *Dudes* and David's going 'This is boring. The end just keeps going around and round'. So I took the Rainbow chat and applied it to the back end of *Dudes*." And with the magic words "Hey, you there with the glasses..." Ian Hunter created a stone cold classic.


Mott The Hoople turning Bowie's cast-offs into gold.



Steppenwolf's John Kay: easy rider.

GETTY/ MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

71 *Steppenwolf*
Born To Be Wild

Mars Bonfire can pinpoint the exact moment he knew his song *Born To Be Wild* was going to be more than just a hit.

"I remember going to a screening of *Easy Rider*," recalls songwriter Bonfire. "I went into the restroom and there was a guy standing at the urinal, pissing away and singing *Born To Be Wild*. He'd only heard it once in the movie and it had already connected with him."

Easy Rider, released in 1969, was one of the first successful films to use popular music that wasn't a backdrop to the dancing and singing on screen. Like the previous summer's hit film *The Graduate*, it used music as pure soundtrack, with *Born To Be Wild* accompanying Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper riding their choppers from LA to New Orleans.



It's one of cinema's most iconic montages, but the perfect choreography was a fluke. "I didn't cut the film to the music," said Hopper, "I cut it to the picture. But later, when I put *Born To Be Wild* on there, it just worked, man."

But the song nearly didn't make the film at all. Hopper and Fonda were running low on funds as production neared completion, and they didn't have enough money to license the music they wanted. So they slapped the songs in place, invited the various musicians to private screenings and suggested they negotiate. It worked, and the rest is history.

Cut back to the beginning of the 60s. The young Mars Bonfire (born Dennis McCrohan) is taken by his father to see a matinee show by Ronnie Hawkins And The Hawks (who later evolved into The Band) in a Toronto club.

"I had just got my first electric guitar," Bonfire recalls. "As soon as they launched into *Hey Bo Diddley*, with Robbie Robertson using a pick between thumb and first finger and steel finger picks on the next two, playing a Telecaster run through an amp with distortion, I knew I'd heard the guitar sound of my dreams!"

In 1964, young Dennis joined local band The Sparrows, along with his drummer brother Jerry. The band were led by English expat Jack London, and the McCrohan brothers changed their surname to Edmonton to sound more British. With a revolving-door membership policy that may or may not have welcomed Neil Young at one point (it's complicated), the band eventually fired their singer and replaced him with German-born vocalist John Kay (né Joachim Fritz Krauledat) . They all wound up in California, where Dennis changed his name again (to Mars Bonfire) and began a solo career, while the rest of the band became Steppenwolf. But Bonfire's relationship with the band didn't end there. He had demoed *Born To Be Wild*, and after it had been turned down by several publishers, he took it to his old bandmates. The song still needed some work to turn it into the anthem we know today.

"I had been kicked out of my previous apartment for playing my guitar amplified, and had already got complaints in my new apartment," says Bonfire, "so I did the demo singing quietly and using an unamplified Telecaster. Luckily, when Steppenwolf agreed to do it, their guitar player Michael Wilk gave it the big guitar sound that I was dreaming of."

And those famous lyrics?

"I got to be a staff writer for Universal Music," Bonfire explains. "I had a regular income and could afford to buy my first car. I drove out to the beach, then I drove out to the desert and up to the mountains, and I had a sudden realisation that the area around Los Angeles was really stunning. It's very dramatic. So that's what caused me to come up with 'Get your motor running, head out on the highway'. At one point I was in the mountains during a thunderstorm. It was so heavy I had to pull aside and park. And that's when the phrase *'heavy metal thunder'* came to me."

Steppenwolf's recording was a huge hit in the summer of 1968, reaching No.2 on the US Billboard chart. Bonfire recorded more relaxed versions of the song for his first two solo albums. But it was its inclusion in *Easy Rider* in 1969 that turned it into an anthem for a whole generation. It's been covered and lampooned to the point of exhaustion (see sidebar, left), soundtracked dozens of adverts, and earlier this year it was one of six initial inductees into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame's new Singles category. Steppenwolf themselves have never been inducted.

Ironically, the song that has become perhaps the ultimate road anthem has given writer Mars Bonfire with a steady income that funds a low-key, off-road lifestyle.

"If it weren't for the incredible good fortune I've had with *Born To Be Wild* I'd probably be back on the production line at General Motors of Canada in Oshawa, Ontario – that was the only job I had been trained for," he says. "Its success has allowed me to pursue my lifelong interests in hiking, snowshoeing, weightlifting and target practice. All I ever really need are a pair of running shoes and some old clothes."

YEAR RELEASED
1968

PRODUCER
Gabriel Mekler

70 *Creedence Clearwater Revival*
Fortunate Son

1969 was a monumental year for Creedence Cleatwater Revival. The band had already scored two platinum-selling albums and a trio of massive hits – *Proud Mary*, *Bad Moon Rising* and *Green River* – by the time *Fortunate Son* was released in September. However, unlike most of their repertoire, which tended to fetishise the rural American South, *Fortunate Son* was a burning commentary on class and elitism, delivered against the sulphurous backdrop of the Vietnam War.


Creedence Clearwater Revival: working class heroes.

"I was mad at the spectre of the ordinary kid who had to serve in an army in a war that he was very much against," explained CCR songwriter and frontman, John Fogerty. "Yet the sons of the well-to-do and powerful didn't have to worry about those things."

The frontman barks out the verses with a vigour born of contempt: '*Some folks inherit star-spangled eyes/They send you down to war, Lord/And when you ask them, 'How much should we give?'/They only answer, 'More! More! More!"*

Fogerty had a specific persons in mind when he wrote the song: David Eisenhower, grandson of former US President Dwight D Eisenhower. In late 1968, the younger Eisenhower had married Julie Nixon, daughter of President-elect Richard Nixon, in a lavish ceremony in New York. Fogerty saw their union as a metaphor for the social and political divisions of the countercultural era. "You'd hear about the son of this senator or that congressman who was given a deferment from the military or a choice position in the military," he wrote in his 2015



YEAR RELEASED
1973

PRODUCER
Black Sabbath

Between 1970 and 1972, Black Sabbath released four albums that still stand as one of the greatest hot streaks in rock – *Black Sabbath, Paranoid, Master Of Reality* and *Vol. 4*. But when it came to making their fifth album, they found the tank was empty.

An attempt to write new songs in Los Angeles ended in failure. Panicked, the band returned to the UK and rented Clearwell Castle, in the Forest Of Dean. It was there that they finally kick-started things – and, with *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, produced one of the most memorable riffs in history.

"We set up the equipment in the dungeons of the castle, to try and get some vibe going," remembered Sabbath guitarist and riff lord Tony Iommi. "And then that was it – we came up with *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, and the rest came fairly shortly afterwards. The block had gone."

Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler was blown away when Iommi presented the riff to the rest of the band. "When Tony came up with the riff to

YEAR RELEASED
1969

PRODUCER
JOHN FOGERTY



GETTY X2

memoir, *Fortunate Son*. "They seemed privileged and whether they liked it or not, these people were symbolic in the sense that they weren't being touched by what their parents were doing. They weren't being affected like the rest of us."

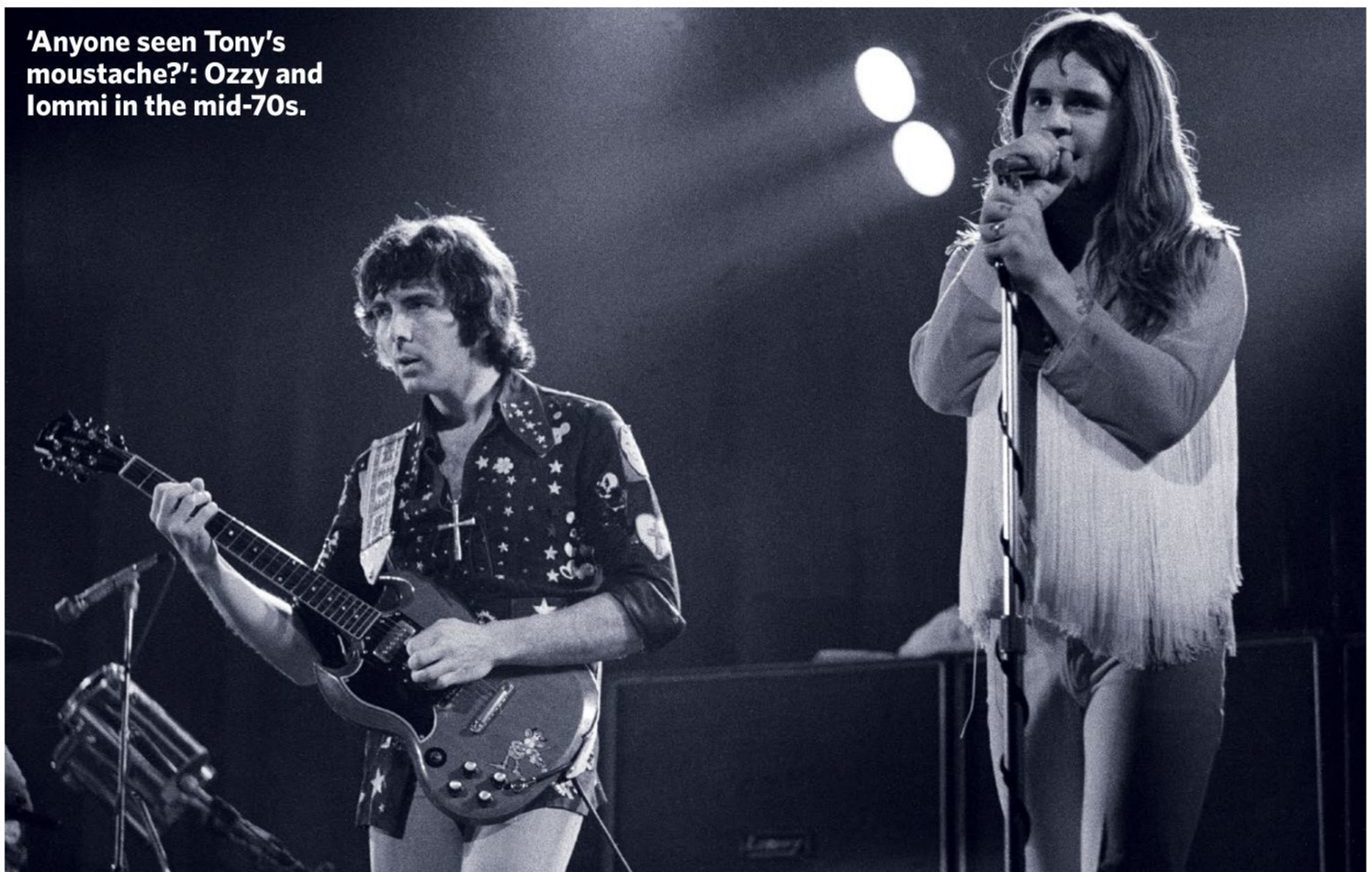
The song is all the more powerful for its sheer simplicity. Lasting less than two-and-a-half minutes, *Fortunate Son* opens with a two-note guitar twang and hurtles along with only a short pause for air. The wracked intensity of Fogerty's voice, already shot from recording *Down On The Corner* earlier that day, perfectly captures the rage and frustration at the heart of his subject matter. The chorus is an unbridled howl of protest: *"It ain't me, it ain't me/I ain't no military son/It ain't me, it ain't me/I ain't no fortunate one."*

Peaking at No.3 in the US in December 1969, a month after Nixon had appeared on television calling for national unity over the conflict in South East Asia, *Fortunate Son* only served to highlight the widening schisms in America

69 *Black Sabbath*
Sabbath Bloody Sabbath

Sabbath Bloody Sabbath, it was almost like seeing your first child being born. It was the end of our musical drought… It meant the band had a present – and a future – again."

While that signature riff is truly monumental, as with all the great Sabbath songs, there's more to it than one thing. *'Nobody will ever let you know/When you ask the reasons why,'* sings Ozzy, during a moment's respite from Iommi's razor-sharp blitzkrieg, lending the song a light-and-shade dynamic, while the song concludes with a long, instrumental jam section, a la *Children Of The Grave*.


'Anyone seen Tony's moustache?': Ozzy and Iommi in the mid-70s.

"The outro to *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* is the heaviest shit I have ever heard in my life.' said Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash. "To this day, I haven't heard anything as heavy that has as much soul."

As with the majority of Sabbath's early material, Butler was the song's lyricist. "The lyrics were about the Sabbath experience, the ups and downs, the good times and the bad times, the ripoffs, the business side of it all," he said. "*'Bog blast all of you'* was directed at the critics, the record business, the lawyers, the accountants, management, and everyone who was trying to cash in on us. It was a backs-to-the-wall rant at everyone."

Sabbath Bloody Sabbath was the first Sabbath song with a promo video. In it, the group don't mime the lyrics or fake playing their instruments as they waltz through what appears to be a forest.

"That was Geezer's garden we were walking around in," Iommi recalled of the 'forest' scene. "What I remember about that is that we just turned up and that was it, really: 'We're doing a video!'"

68 *Jethro Tull*
Aqualung

In 1969 Jethro Tull had a Top Three UK single with *Living In The Past* and also a No.1 album, *Stand Up*. They hadn't yet breached the US Top Ten though, coming close a year later with the folky/experimental *Benefit*. That accolade would come in 1971 with Aqualung. And what would become Tull's best-selling album began with one of their best-known riffs.

Ian Anderson recalled that, like much of the album, the title track emerged as a result of the singer-songwriter approach he brought to the project. "That came out of an acoustic jam, you've just got to have the imagination to hear that. You have to know that you can make it sing." Tull recorded *Aqualung* at Island Studios in London, and while the final arrangement of the title track explored the many styles they had brought together previously, with folk and rock in the mix, it also had a more metallic edge. In both tone and theory, the distinctive six-note guitar intro shared much DNA with the doomy, imperious riffs associated with the nascent Black Sabbath, even containing 'The Devil's Interval' itself, the tritone. Indeed, Tony Iommi had briefly been in the band in '68, replaced by long-time Tull alumnus Martin Barre. As well as livening the song with a brilliant solo here, Barre brings heft and menace to Anderson's tale of the heavy-breathing titular tramp who's '*Sitting on a park bench/Eyeing little girls with bad intent*'. But as the music broadens out and the album's prevailing acoustic aesthetic comes



Jethro Tull: folk-prog mavericks.



YEAR RELEASED
1991

PRODUCER
Rick Parashar

Rarely has a rock song deceived its audience so successfully as Pearl Jam's *Alive*. To the casual fan, thrilled by the stadium-rock riff and radio-tooled chorus hook upon its release in July 1991, this was a feel-good anthem with no strings attached. But to those in on the secret – not least the Seattle band's frontman and lyric-writer Eddie Vedder – *Alive* was a defiant shout from the murkiest emotional depths, exorcising poisonous demons of childhood. "It was a work of fiction based on reality," Vedder once explained. "In some ways, that song was a way to get it out."

It's interesting to note that the music for *Alive* pre-dated Pearl Jam themselves: the song had already been played live by the band's future lineup in their early group Mother Love Bone, with guitarist Stone Gossard recalling that "it was exactly the same arrangement, but [singer] Andy Wood had a completely different set of lyrics".

After Mother Love Bone ended with Wood's

YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
IAN ANDERSON, TERRY ELLIS

into play, Anderson treats the 'poor old sod' with some sympathy, as he bends to pick up dog-ends on aching legs. Anderson has credited his then-wife, photographer Jennie Anderson, with much of the song's earthy, quasi-Dickensian lyrical content. She had also given him early inspiration by showing him a set of photographs she had taken of homeless men in London while at art school.

At six and a half minutes, *Aqualung* didn't lend itself to AM radio play, and never came out as a single. But then Tull were already way past the stage of striving for hit singles.

"It was too long, too episodic," Anderson said later. "It starts off with a loud guitar and then goes into more laid-back acoustic stuff."

Nevertheless it set the tone for Jethro Tull's most iconic album, which hit No.7 in the US and No.4 at home. Along with *Living InThe Past* and *Locomotive Breath*, that eponymous song remains one of Jethro Tull's essential musical moments, as well as one of the all-time great prog anthems.



GETTY X2

67 *Pearl Jam* Alive

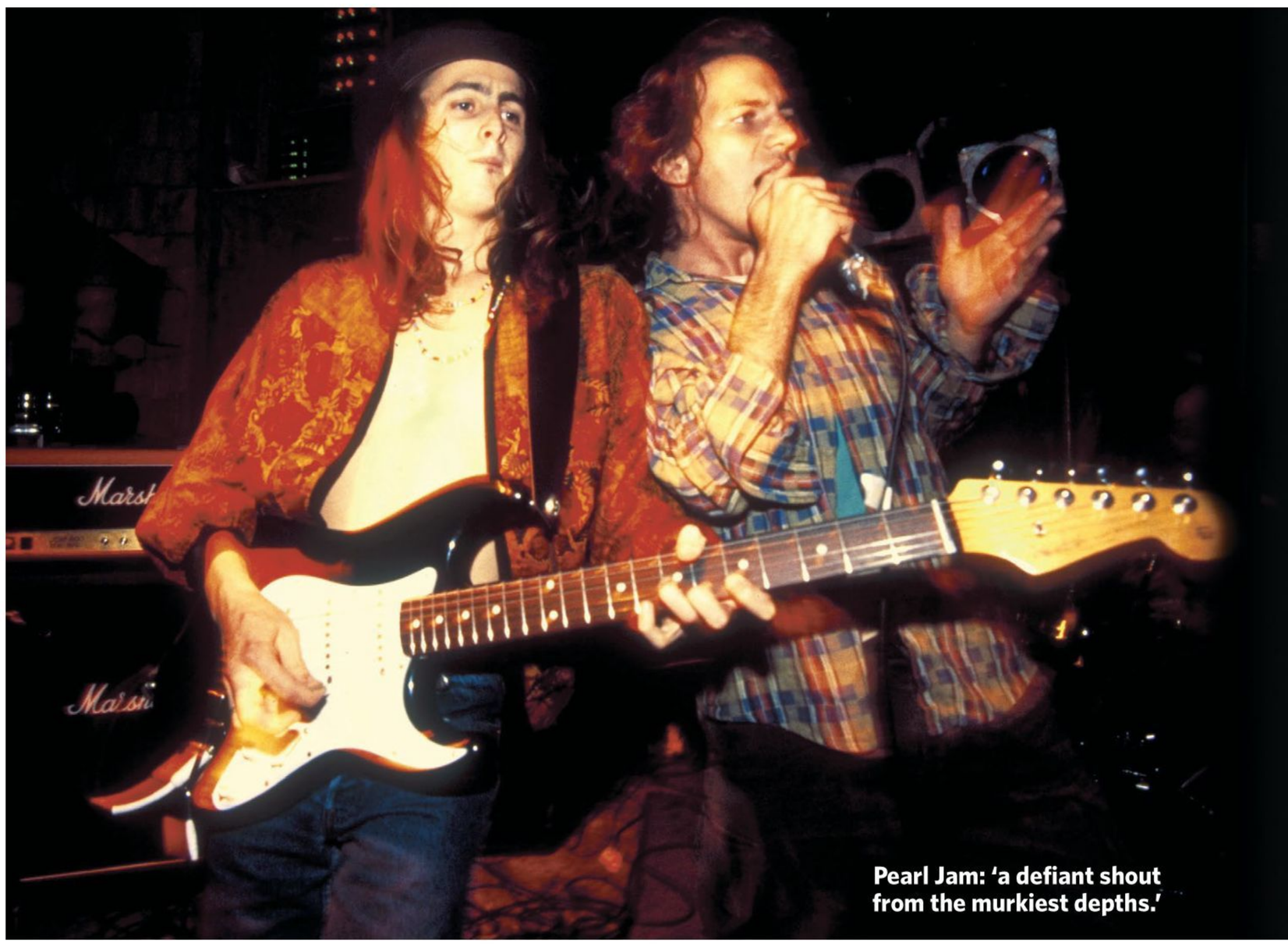
overdose, and Gossard mailed a demo to Vedder in San Diego, the singer took a darker tack while surfing in the foggy swells off Pacific Beach. "It all came together as a piece, just in the water," he recalls. "I didn't catch any waves that day, but, well, one – the big one."

If *Alive*'s chorus sounded euphoric and defiant, its verses were more troubled, Vedder chronicling a deceived child who is informed that *'what you thought was your daddy was nothin' but a…'*, and that furthermore, *'while you were sittin' home alone at age thirteen, your real daddy was dying'*.

Vedder knew of what he sang: he too had been unknowingly raised by a stepfather, discovering years later that his real parent had succumbed to multiple sclerosis.

"I think I would have just wanted to know if he loved me, and how much," the singer reflected. "By the time adolescence came along, I didn't really trust any adults."

The subject matter was hardly mass-market, but the band's thundering musical backdrop ensured *Alive* went overground, cracking the Top 20 in US and UK. Hearteningly, as the song became a benchmark of early-'90s alt-rock, Vedder found catharsis in its performances.



Pearl Jam: 'a defiant shout from the murkiest depths.'

"In the original story, a teenager is being made aware of a shocking truth that leaves him plenty confused," he said. "It was a curse – *'I'm still alive'*. But the fans lifted the curse. The audience changed the meaning for me."

66 *Ramones*
Blitzkrieg Bop

'Hey! Ho! Let's go!' This divine little ditty contains one of the most instantly recognisable chants in all of rock music history, all revved up and ready to go. A two-minutes-and-21-seconds blast of pure punk perfection, the song also served as the majority of people's introduction to the New York quartet, kicking off their classic self-titled 1976 debut in glorious fashion.



While the main songwriters of the original Ramones were thought to be Joey, Johnny and Dee Dee, it was in fact drummer Tommy Ramone who wrote the majority of Blitzkrieg Bop by himself.

"It's my song," said Tommy in 2009. "Dee Dee came up with the title, and changed a line from *'They're shouting in the back now'* to *'Shoot 'em in the back now.'* The rest of the song is mine."

With most mid-70s punkers drawing inspiration from The Stooges and The New York Dolls, Tommy explains that the Ramones were busy studying an unlikely source: "We were looking for a chant-type song, along the lines of The Bay City Rollers' *Saturday Night*. I was trying to think of ideas for something like that. Coming home from the grocery store one day, I just thought of a chant – *'Hey! Ho! Let's go!'* Which basically comes from a song called *Walkin' The Dog* by Rufus Thomas, where he goes, *'Hi ho's nipped her toes'*. When we were kids we used to goof around; when Mick Jagger sang the song for The Rolling Stones, it sounded like he was saying *'hey ho'*. It was a silly thing, but I remembered that from the past."

Tommy figured that the song was written sometime in 1974 – shortly after the Ramones formed – and recalled the time the germ of the idea for the song came to him: "The actual music and melody, I was fooling around with a guitar at Arturo's loft – Arturo Vega was our lighting guy – and I just started playing the riff. The song slowly came together. I went home, I liked that riff, and I just wrote the lyrics."

Which leads us to the subject of the song's lyrics. Many have tried – unsuccesfully – to decipher the song's true meaning over the years, but Tommy set the record straight once and for all: "The lyrics are basically about people going to a concert and having a great time." 'Nuff said.

Up to this point, the other Ramones members thought of themselves as the group's main songwriters, so the arrival of Tommy's song caused some anxiety. "They were upset because they thought it was a good song. That was their honest reaction! They thought they were the only ones who could write songs at the time. A lot of ego in the band. They couldn't turn that song down." It was immediately introduced into the group's live set, probably at CBGB (along with Television, the Ramones were one of the first rock bands to play at the club). But Tommy didn't recall the audience's initial reaction. "We go from one song to another; we don't wait for a reaction," he laughs.

It didn't take long for the band to realise that *Blitzkrieg Bop* was one of their strongest songs, however. "It became pretty much 'the anthem'. We started the album with it; when the album came out, it was the first song. It then became the 'go-to song'. Initially we used to put it as the third song – we'd warm up with two other songs, and then hit 'em with *Blitzkrieg Bop*, get the audience pumping their hands and all that stuff."

And what did he remember about recording the song?

"It was kind of strange. We were put into this really interesting studio that had been a beautiful art-deco radio station before being converted into a recording studio in the Radio City Music Hall building. It was a beautiful studio. But we were separated – we were each put in different rooms. It was a strange experience making that record. We knew it was an important song – I think it might have been one of the first songs we recorded, actually. We did that record really fast; it only cost $6,000. We did it quickly and without much fanfare."

Not many people know that *Blitzkrieg Bop* was issued as a single in November 1975 in the US – almost six months before the arrival of the Ramones' self-titled debut in April 1976. "I'm sure it was a different mix, but it was the same recording," Tommy added.

The song has since become one of rock's most renowned and enduring anthems. It's even played regularly at US sporting events to get the crowd pumped. Tommy's reaction to hearing *Blitzkrieg Bop* played at American football games was "sort of disbelief. It seems surrealistic."

The million-dollar question is a tricky one: does he think *Blitzkrieg Bop* is the greatest Ramones song?

"No," he replied, as modest as ever. "There are so many other great ones: *Rockaway Beach*, *Cretin Hop*. I think *Blitzkrieg Bop*… It's hard to say, since I wrote it. I'm very self-conscious about it. But people seem to like it."

YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
Craig Leon

Bruddas in arms: the Ramones in 1976.



GETTY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

65 *Heart* Barracuda

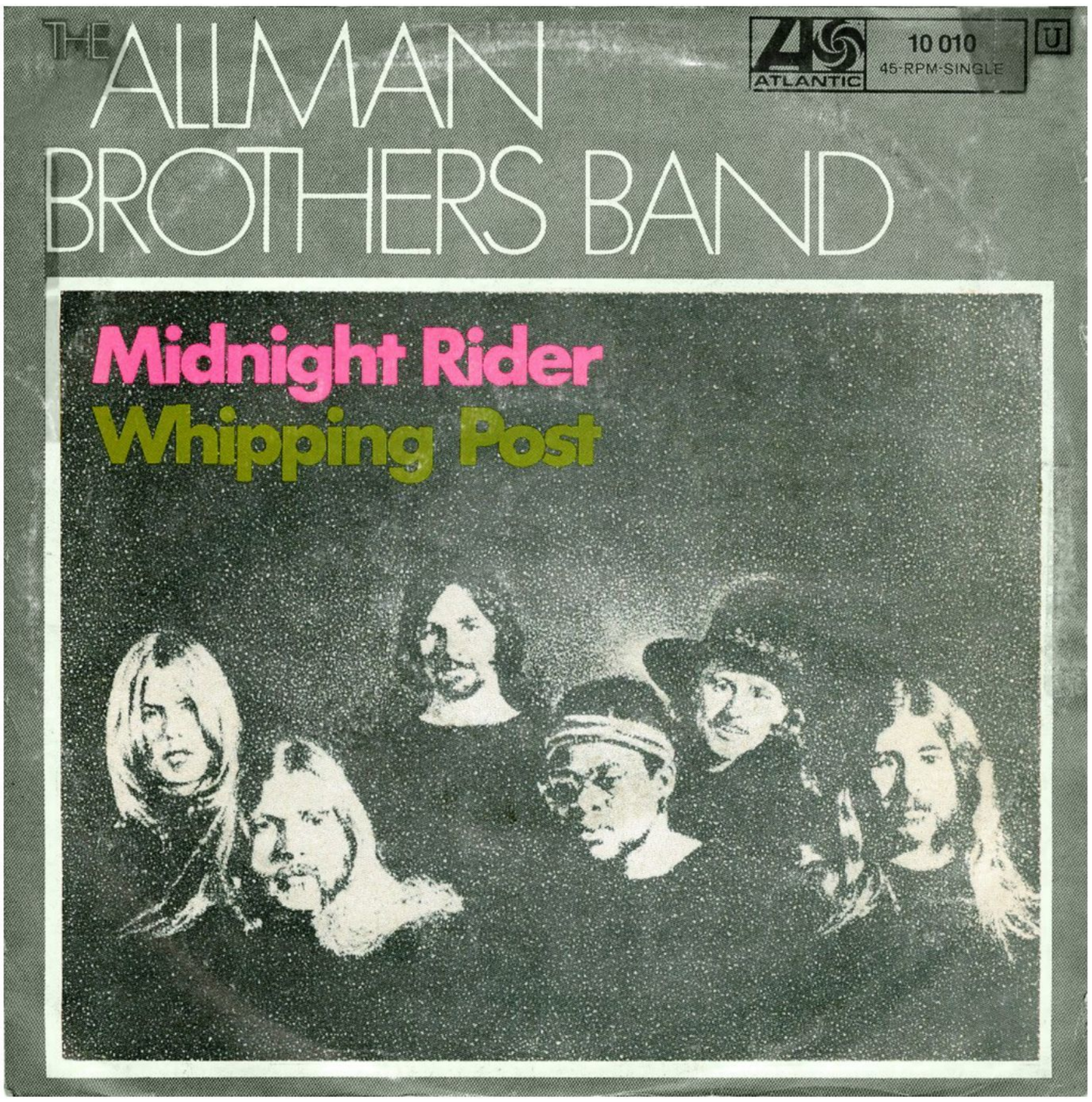

Ann and Nancy Wilson: sisters in arms.

In 1976, Heart were riding high. Their first album *Dreamboat Annie* had yielded two instant classics, *Crazy On You* and *Magic Man*. They were touring non-stop, winning fans as an opener for Rod Stewart and Steve Miller. To capitalize on their successful debut, their label, small Canadian indie Mushroom, took out an ad in the trade papers. It showed a cropped, bare shoulders photo of the Wilson sisters, making them appear as if they were naked. Beneath it was the caption "It was only our first time." The suggestion of an incestuous relationship was sleazy, but typical of the times.

"To Mushroom executives, it was a funny, badass sales technique," singer Ann Wilson said. "But to me and Nancy, who were raised by a feminist mother, we felt really violated."

The ad wasn't the only problem with the label. There was some dodgy accounting, and a sense of frustration that they didn't have the infrastructure to support the band's rise.

Cut to a Heart soundcheck a few weeks later. Guitarist Roger Fisher and drummer Mike Derosia were jamming on a galloping riff, part *Peggy Sue*, part *Bonanza*: dum-didda-dum-didda-dum. They recorded it on cassette as an idea for the next album. That same night, after the show, a record industry guy who'd seen the ad approached Ann Wilson with a smirk, asking, "How's your lover?" She pointed to boyfriend Mike Fisher, and the guy said, "No, your sister."



YEAR RELEASED
1969

PRODUCER
Tom Dowd

In 1969, the Allman Brothers were in Jacksonville, Florida, staying at the home of a friend. In the middle of the night, Gregg Allman woke from a dream with some music and lyrics in his head. Because bandmate Berry Oakley was in the next room with his wife and new baby, Gregg knew he had to be quiet if he was going to get his idea down. He couldn't find a paper or pen, so he ended up writing lyrics and notes using the only things available – an ironing board and the burnt end of a matchstick. It was the seed of the song that would become *Whipping Post*. For a number about a man who's helplessly awaiting more torture from the woman who betrayed him, words scrawled in ash seemed an appropriately poetic beginning.

As with many classic songs, *Whipping Post* had a different feel initially. Guitarist Dickey Betts recalled, "It was a ballad when Gregg brought it to us. It was a real melancholy, slow

YEAR RELEASED
1977

PRODUCER
MIKE FLICKER



GETTY X2

Back at the hotel that night, Ann wrote an angry poem about all the sleazy guys in the business.

She merged the poem with the galloping riff, and *Barracuda* was born. The song emboldened the band to leave Mushroom. They had a clause in their contract that if their producer Mike Flicker left, the agreement was null. Flicker, equally frustrated, left, and the band signed with Columbia. In response, Mushroom took five of Heart's demos, combined them with five live tracks and released an unauthorized album, *Magazine*. Heart sued to block it. They won, but had to finish the album for Mushroom. The label went under three years later.

Meanwhile, Heart's proper follow-up, *Little Queen*, featured *Barracuda*, which became a signature hit. Forty years later, it has new resonance with the #MeToo movement. "I hope the song will come in handy now when women are thinking about what they want to do and not do," Ann said.

64 *The Allman Brothers Band* Whipping Post

blues." Bassist Oakley's intro bass lick soon propelled the song in a new direction. Unusual for rock, *Whipping Post* had an unorthodox time signature. Or two, really – 11/8 on the intro, 12/8 on the verses.

"I just stumbled onto 'em," Allman later said. "I didn't know exactly what I was doing. I just did it. My brother said, 'That's good, man. I didn't know you understood.' I said something intelligent like, 'What's 11/8?' and Duane just said, 'Okay, dumb ass, I'll try to draw it up on paper for you.'"

Recorded at Atlantic Studios in New York in August 1969, the song took an entire day to get down on tape. It clocked in at five minutes and seventeen seconds. But once the band took it on stage, it quadrupled in length, a mélange of blues, rock, funk and fusion jazz (the 22-minute version on 1971's *At Fillmore East* is definitive). If one song epitomizes their concept of "hittin' the note," that interplay and musical telepathy they were famous for, it's *Whipping Post*. They played it at every show they ever did, and no two versions were exactly alike.

But while the Allman Brothers Band were rightfully proud of the song and its improvisational legacy, they remained resistant to easy labels. "I've heard that damn expression 'jam band' so many times," Gregg told me in an interview. "It's b.s. The Brothers are not a jam band. We're a band that jams."


Track stars: the Allmans screw up the Virgin Trains timetable.

63 *Scorpions*
Rock You Like A Hurricane



Teutonic titans the Scorpions were riding high in 1984. Two years earlier, the iconic *Blackout* had given them their first US Top 10 album. For the follow-up, *Love At First Sting*, they doubled-down on its predexessor's commercial aspirations, anchoring it with one of the greatest fist-pumping anthems of the era.

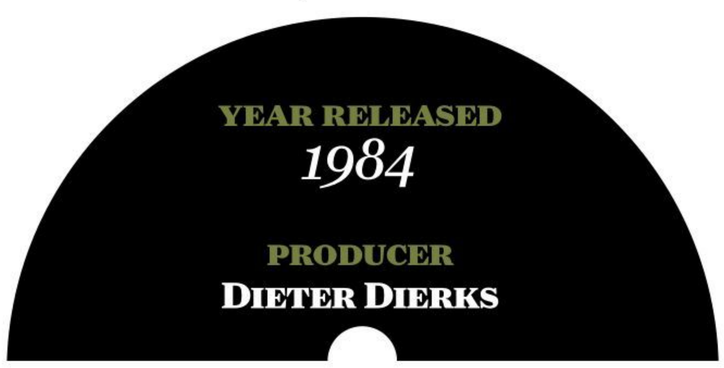
Rock You Like A Hurricane is peak Scorpions: a slab of adamantium-solid mid-80s metal, inspired by the band's appearance in front of 300,000 people at the famous US Festival in San Bernardino, California in 1983.

Like so many metal bands of the day, the Scorpions were strangers to the idea of political correctness. The lyrics contained the couplet: *'The bitch is hungry/She needs to tell/So give her inches and feed her well.'* "Girls always say they love that song," protested guitarist Rudolf Schenker. "It's instinct. It's rock'n'roll."

The video, featuring a parade of nubile women, also caused a storm. It was one of the things that prompted Tipper Gore to found notorious pro-censorship lobby group the Parental Music Resource Center, or PMRC.

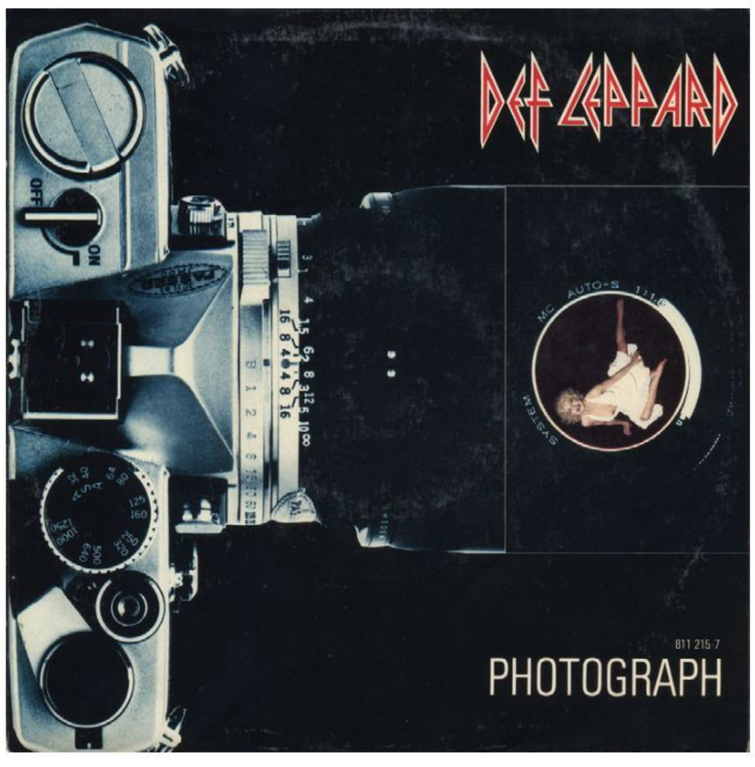
"Through the eyes of a six or eight-year-old, when they see these scantily clad women kind of rounded up by the band members and put in cages, and there's whips, and there's a sort of menace and there's a sort of a sexuality, they pick up on that," frothed Gore.

In the end, it made no difference. The song gave the Scorps a Top 30 hit in the US, and became their ticket to immortality. It became the unofficial anthem for countless US sports teams who featured the word "hurricane" in their name – Miami Hurricanes, Carolina Hurricanes – and in recent years it has appeared in everything from *The Simpsons* to *Stranger Things*. The Scorpions: they came, they saw, the rocked. Like a hurricane, naturally.



62 *Def Leppard*
Photograph





In January 1982, Def Leppard entered Park Gate Studios in Battle, East Sussex to make the follow up to their breakthrough album *High 'N' Dry*. Under the aegis of producer 'Mutt' Lange, they pieced together a record the likes of which had never been heard before: the gleaming pop-metal behemoth *Pyromania*. And *Photograph* was the perfect single with which to launch it.

Photograph embodied Leppard's brave new sonic world. Gone were the gritty AC/DC-isms of *High 'N' Dry*, replaced by machine-tooled melodies and Lange's hi-finish gloss, oven-ready for brand new music channel MTV.

Lange himself came up with the song's lyrical hook. "Mutt had the line *'All I've got is a photograph,'*" said Elliott. "I said, "That's a Ringo Starr song." He went, 'Nobody will ever notice.'

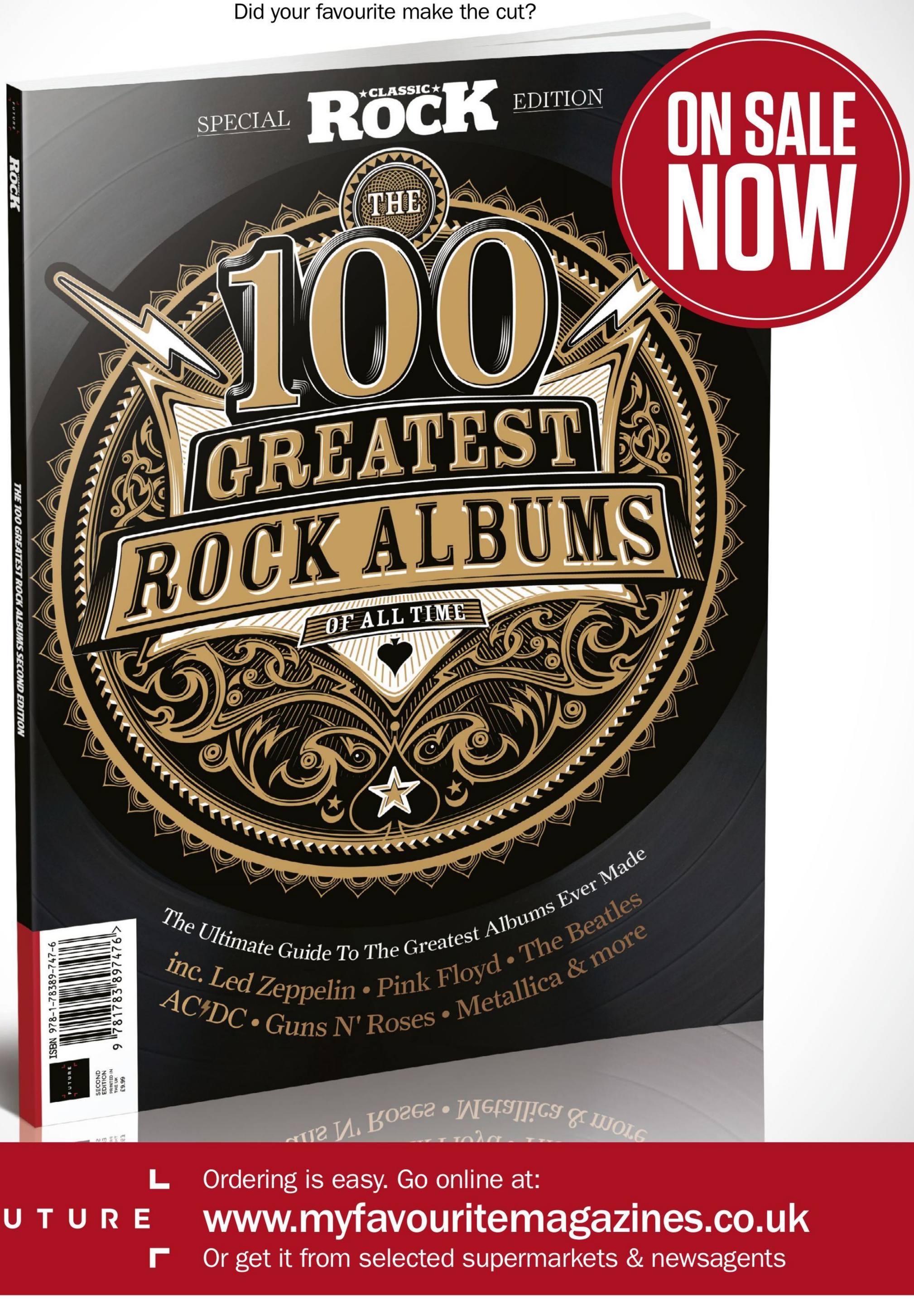
For Elliott, the songf title referred to someone or something "you can't ever get your hands one." The video featured footage of Marilyn Monroe, suggesting the iconic Hollywood star was its subject. "Over the years it's become exaggerated to Biblical proportions that *Photograph* was written about her," said Elliott. "I don't want to break anybody's heart here, but Marilyn Monroe was just another average actress to me."

The reception to *Pyromania* in Britain was decidedly cool, a hangover from Leppard allegedly "selling out" to America a few years earlier. In the US it was a different story: *Photograph* was a huge hit on radio and MTV. "*Photograph* blew out the door the way More Than A Feeling or Radar Love or Black Betty did," says Elliott. "I met George Michael and he said: 'I bought *Photograph* – great song!' That's when you know you're crossing over."

The single was the first proper stepping stone on Def Leppard's journey to megastardom, helping to push the sales of *Pyromania* into the multi-millions. It remains a staple of the band's live set today. "When I was a kid in Sheffield," he says, "I was this geeky twat who liked music and wasn't living in the real world. All I ever wanted was to be a star." It was *Photograph* that helped him achieve that dream.

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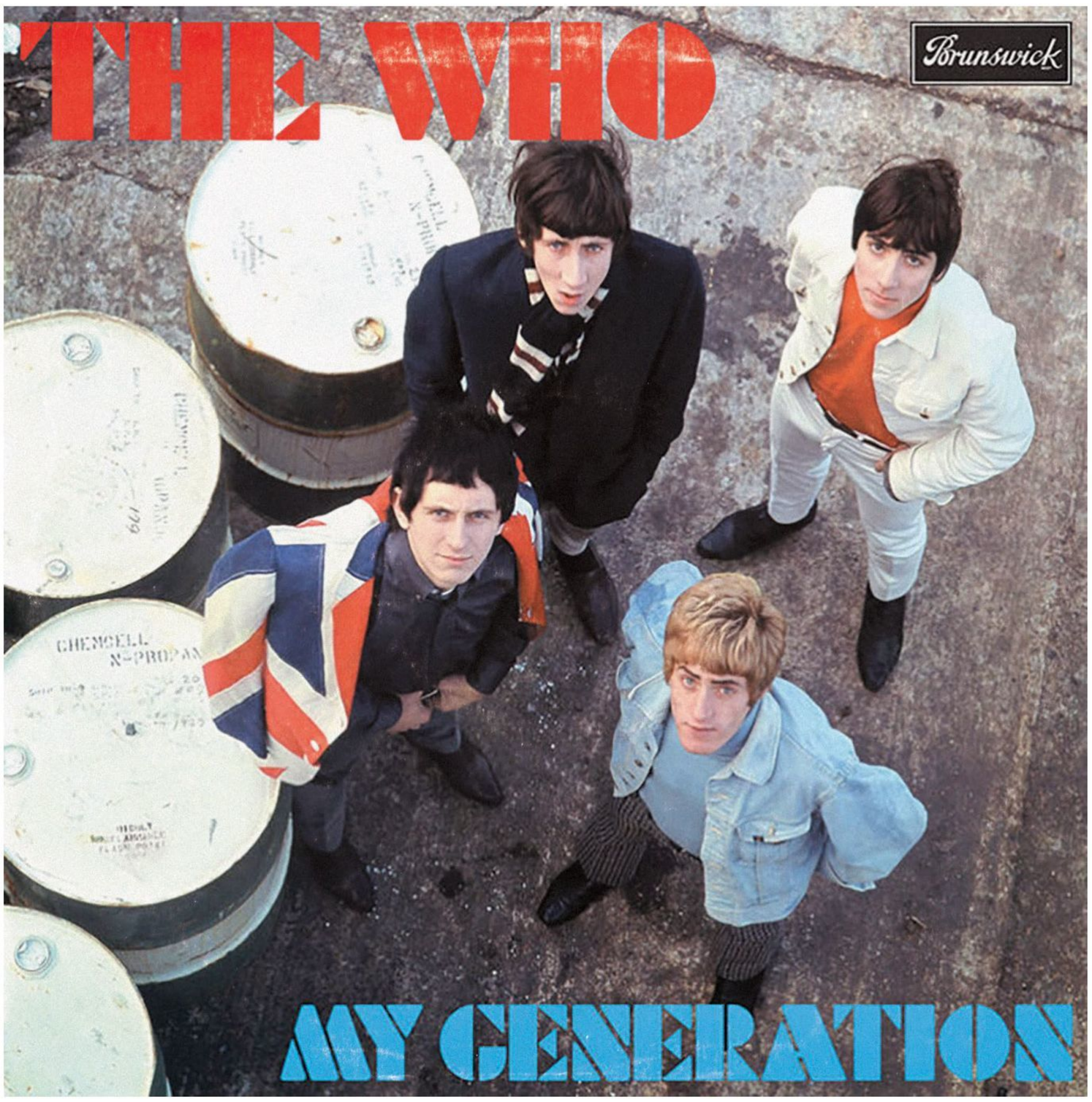
61 *ZZ Top*
La Grange


ZZ Top: born to boogie.

ZZ Top's First Album and *Rio Grande Mud* didn't trouble the US Top 100, but third time was a charm for That Little Ol' Band From Texas, with *Tres Hombres* hitting No.8 in October 1974. By then producer/manager Bill Hamm had the handle on how to harness the trio's seasoned blues power, and Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill and Frank Beard were really getting their songwriting going on. At the heart of *Tres Hombres*' success was this sleazy, low-slung boogie about the Chicken Ranch, a richly storied brothel outside the town of La Grange, Texas.

Founded in 1905 and later named Edna's Fashionable Ranch Boarding House, the establishment 'hosted' blue collar workers and millionaires alike, even once entertaining Bob Hope's entire road crew in the 50s. According to Gibbons, it was a rite of passage for young men to 'come of age' at Edna's: "There was a space set aside in every young Texan's life to get a fake ID to get into La Grange," he said. Hill recalls that Edna ran a tight ship: "You couldn't cuss in there. You couldn't drink. It had an air of respectability. Miss Edna wouldn't stand for no bullshit."

According to Gibbons the song itself came together very quickly, almost by accident, during an off-the cuff jam while they were recording *Tres Hombres* at Ardent Studios in Memphis. "We took a lunch break while the engineer was doing what he does, we were just goofing off and there it came." Though he's associated with the fat creamy tones of the Gibson Les Paul, Gibbons



YEAR RELEASED
1965

PRODUCER
Shel Talmy

Like all Pete Townshend's best songs, *My Generation* was a thrilling collision of body and brain. The title had high-brow roots, the Who leader inspired by the *Generations* collection by socialist playwright David Mercer. But the song's visceral clatter was fuelled by Townshend's ire at the mink-coated aristos who elbowed him aside near his digs in London's well-heeled Belgravia. Despite the iconic *'hope I die before I get old'* line, the songwriter later noted, it was wealth and class, more than age, that he despised – "and the fear that their disease might be contagious".

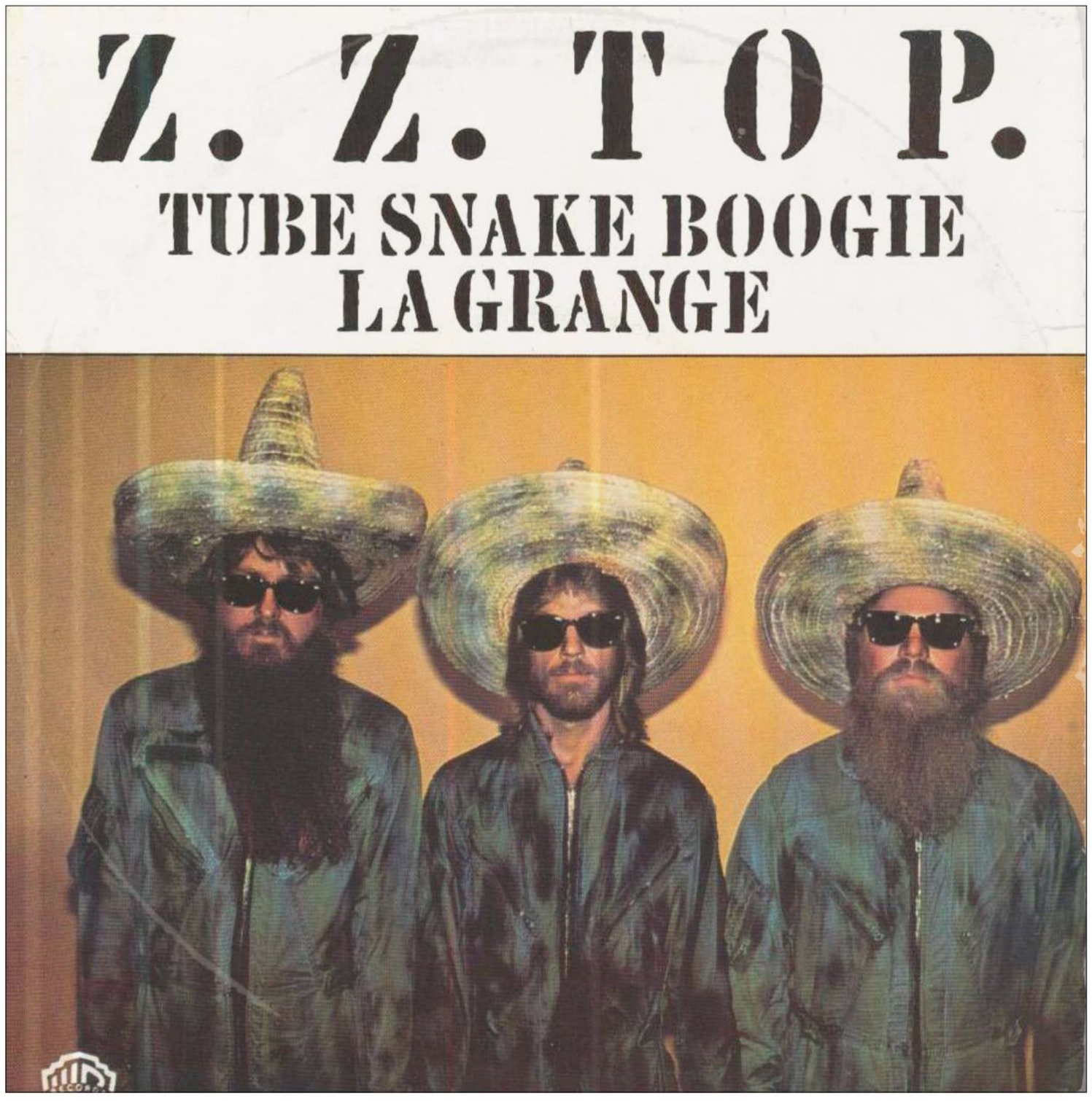
Townshend worked on *My Generation* during The Who's Scandinavian summer tour of 1965, but on his return, the original demo proved a torpid thing, "very much inspired by Mose Allison's *Young Man Blues*, my vocal casual and confident". Management saw the song differently, and pushed for a heavier riff and – after Townshend played them John Lee Hooker's

YEAR RELEASED
1973

PRODUCER
Bill Ham

told *Guitar World* that the song's grinding riff was played on a 1955 Fender Strat directly into a '69 Marshall amp, which also produced the song's trademark fuzzy tone. Delivered in a low, lascivious drawl that's part barroom braggart, part John Lee Hooker, the scuttlebutt lyrics – *'Rumors spreadin' 'round in that Texas town /'Bout that shack outside La Grange'* – were inspired by the gossipy tone of *Peggy Sue Got Married*, by another Texan great, Buddy Holly.

Edna was forced out of business in 1973 after a campaign by a crusading journalist, but not before inspiring the musical (and Dolly Parton/Burt Reynolds movie) *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*/, and ZZ Top's brilliant, bawdy tribute, which hit No.41 in the US in June '74, fuelling *Tres Hombres*' 81-week tenure on the Billboard album chart. The band finally performed in *La Grange* at the 2015 Fayette Fair and some 35,000 people showed up. No prizes for guessing what they encored with… ❶



GETTY X2

60 *The Who* My Generation

Stuttering Blues – the vocal tic that went down in history. Roger Daltrey had genuinely stammered as a child, but he was told to emphasise this. "[Manager] Kit Lambert came up and said 'Stutter the words – it makes it sound like you're pilled'."

No doubt, it appealed to the mischief of all concerned that Daltrey was able to let a stammered 'f' hang in the air, the listener braced for 'fuck' (before the singer resolved the lyric with the less inflammatory 'fade away').

Both as a single – and on the Marquee stage, where the song had its first live airing on November 2nd – *My Generation* let all four members shine. There was Daltrey's rabble-rousing vocal. Townshend's slashed chords. John Entwistle's rubber-band bass solo ("John was becoming the outstanding bass revolutionary of the day," noted Townshend, "and I wanted to provide him with a vehicle for his incredible playing"). Keith Moon's clatterous outro, chasing around the kit in a squall of feedback.

Together, they made the heaviest sound in the pop charts of 1965. If Townshend felt any guilt at sticking it to the establishment, then shortly before the song's release, he was reminded why he wrote it in the first place, as his 936 Packard V12 hearse was impounded on the orders of the Queen Mother. "She had to pass it every day and complained that it reminded her of her late husband's funeral. So I resentfully dedicated *My Generation* to the Queen Mother…" ❶



The Who: the heaviest sound in the pop charts.

59 *Nirvana*
Smells Like Teen Spirit

YEAR RELEASED
1991

PRODUCER
Butch Vig



Four brittle chords. A clatter on the drums. A foot on the overdrive pedal – and the grunge revolution was up and running. The components of Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* weren't complex, but that was precisely the point. This was the song that slashed and burned the hair-metal flotsam left over from the '80s, scrawled in a musical language that kids in bedrooms across the globe could understand.

The song that fired the starting pistol for '90s rock was born in a barn in Tacoma, Washington, where Nirvana's daily rehearsals would start with a freeform jam, recorded onto a boombox. Many of the riffs tossed between Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic and Dave Grohl were steals – "A lot of it was derivative of Pixies and Sonic Youth," recalls the drummer – but something stuck about the chords that became *Teen Spirit*.

As for the title, *Smells Like Teen Spirit* was less a clarion call to alienated youth, more an in-joke between Washington's alt-rock players. Teen Spirit was the deodorant favoured by Bikini Kill drummer and Cobain's recent girlfriend Tobi Vail; the riot grrrl outfit's frontwoman Kathleen Hanna had also graffitied the phrase 'Kurt smells like Teen Spirit' onto the Nirvana leader's wall. Even so, in light of a rejected lyric – *'Who will be the king and queen of the outcasted teens?'* – perhaps Cobain had one eye on his demographic.

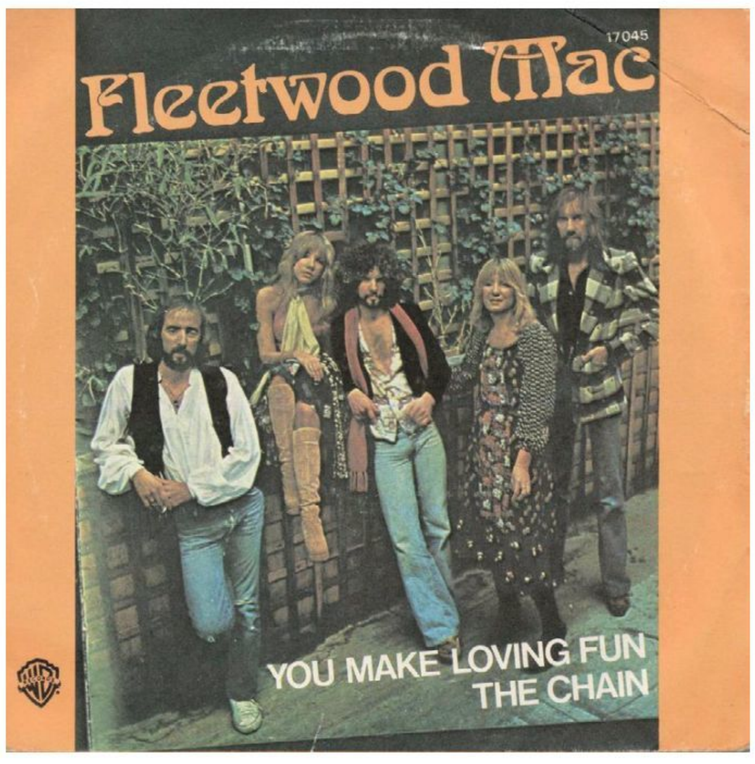
Teen Spirit was the first song the band played producer Butch Vig. "I remember pacing the room," he says, "going, 'Holy shit, this sounds so fucking good. Dave didn't have any mics on his kit, and Kurt and Krist had their amps at stun volume, but it just sounded perfect."

Grohl credited Vig for making the take released as a single in September 1991 "sound like Led Zeppelin's *IV*". But as *Teen Spirit* flew to No.7 in the UK, crashed the Billboard Top 10 and swept up swathes of fans with its heavy-circulation punk-high-school video, Cobain felt the first stirrings of a self-created monster. "There was that punk-rock guilt," says Grohl. "Kurt felt, in some way, guilty that he had done something so many people had latched onto."

58 *Fleetwood Mac*
The Chain

YEAR RELEASED
1977

PRODUCER
Fleetwood Mac, Ken Caillat, Richard Dashut



Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* was released in February 1977, for all the world as if punk rock wasn't about to emerge into the public eye, its surface gloss and unhurried confidence belying Fleetwood Mac's raw origins.

Over the previous five years or so, the group had slowly transformed from a rootsy blues act based on founder-member Peter Green's jaw-dropping guitar playing to a stately, LA-based machine occupying a status akin to rock royalty. Producers Ken Caillat and Richard Dashut, together with the band-members, had polished up a luscious, widescreen record in *Rumours* that was a universe away from those early days – and *The Chain* was the perfect embodiment of that transformation.

Talk about a song of two halves. The first, largely acoustic part of *The Chain* is a wondrous piece of folky blues, centred on the clean vocal harmonies of Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks. Listen out for the ethereal wails behind the words *'You can still hear me saying…'* and feel the depth of the composition. It's a sound that would later labelled as yacht-rock, anchored by Mick Fleetwood's sparse, unhurried drums.

Two-thirds of the way through, the song flips. The second part, the shorter, adrenalised portion introduced by John McVie's instantly-recognisable bass riff in A, was the BBC to soundtrack its Formula One motor-racing coverage from 1978 until 1996; The Beeb used it again from 2009 to 2015, although whether modern audiences had any idea where those iconic bass notes came from, who knows.

The genius of this last minute or so of the song lies in its simplicity. The guitars play the most polite solo in history, mostly racing along on a single note; McVie doesn't vary his bass part much, wisely giving it machine-like simplicity; and the listener is left to enjoy the heightened energy levels without any real interference from the band other than a repeated refrain of *'Cha-a-a-ain, keep us together!"* A great song doesn't need frills, and this one has none.

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57 *Def Leppard*
Pour Some Sugar On Me

It's no exaggeration to say that their 1987 album Hysteria took Def Leppard to hell and back several times over . Over three years of aborted sessions, a sacked producer and relentless bad luck, the band's fourth album was the 80s equivalent of Guns N' Roses' *Chinese Democracy*, swallowing an estimated five million dollars from the moment recording began in early 1984.

The record's emotional cost, however, became been even more expensive, after a car accident on New Year's Eve 1984 led to the amputation of Rick Allen's left arm. The band were forced into hiatus, while the drummer famously re-learned to play on a customised electronic kit. "You really would start to think that we were cursed," noted frontman Joe Elliott.



By the end of 1986 the ordeal was finally firmly behind them. Or so the band thought. As Elliott and producer Robert 'Mutt' Lange were tying up the loose ends of Armageddon It at Wisseloord Studios in Holland, the singer reached for the acoustic guitar that was kept in the control room.

"As far as we were concerned, that was the final track," Elliott remembers, "so we were having a five-minute coffee break. Mutt disappeared, and I went into the control room and started playing this thing. Mutt comes back and asks what it was. I said it was just this idea I'd got – no big deal. He said: 'That's the best hook I've heard in five or 10 years. We should absolutely do this song.' And, of course, I was thinking there was no way the guys were gonna go for it."

To start with, they didn't. "We'd finished the record and were just winding down," guitarist Phil Collen recalls. "And we'd already spent so long [on the album] that it was a bit like: 'Oh, fuck. Not another song that's going to take six months.' It didn't, of course. It actually took about 10 days, because we were getting the hang of it.

"The main problem with Hysteria was us dicking around with people like [original producer] Jim Steinman. That's what really took the time. Once Mutt got involved it went pretty quick. So although everyone went: 'Oh, fucking hell, not more studio time,' it was obvious that we had to do it."

As work on the new song began, Elliott's hook started to evolve, with a little help from their Midas-like producer.

"Mutt Lange saw the intro as this kinda country guitar lick, played with his fingers," Collen recalls. "I can't actually do that, so I changed it so it was played with a pick. Mutt had said: 'Just make it very gappy.' So I put this main riff in the gaps. It was really based on rap stuff; not your standard rock song. Run DMC was really popular back then, and the whole Aerosmith crossover thing [with *Walk This Way*] was just happening too, so we kinda stole that idea for the vocal. And the guitar part was really just to fill the gaps without going all the way through it. So there was plenty of space, like hip-hop or something like that."

With Lange acting as a buffer between the band and their label, keeping impatient executives away from the studio, Elliott, Collen, Allen, bassist Rick Savage and guitarist Steve Clark laid down the new track, which had the working title. *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. According to Elliott, the phrase was a "metaphor for whichever sexual preference you care to enjoy".

In stark contrast to the other tracks on *Hysteria*, the basic recording process for Sugar took less than two weeks.

While it's tempting to assume that *Pour Some Sugar On Me* was an instant smash hit, hard evidence shows otherwise. The song wasn't deemed good enough to be released as the first single from *Hysteria*; instead it followed *Animal* into the UK chart in October 1987, reaching an unspectacular No.18. "When we first released it in Europe it was ignored," Collen confirms.

In the US, meanwhile, *Women* had been chosen as the lead-off (it ultimately limped to No.80), followed by *Animal* and *Hysteria*. It wasn't until the following year, with sales of *Hysteria* stalling at three million, that the US record company finally released *Pour Some Sugar On Me* as a last-ditch attempt to claw back some of the album's huge production costs.

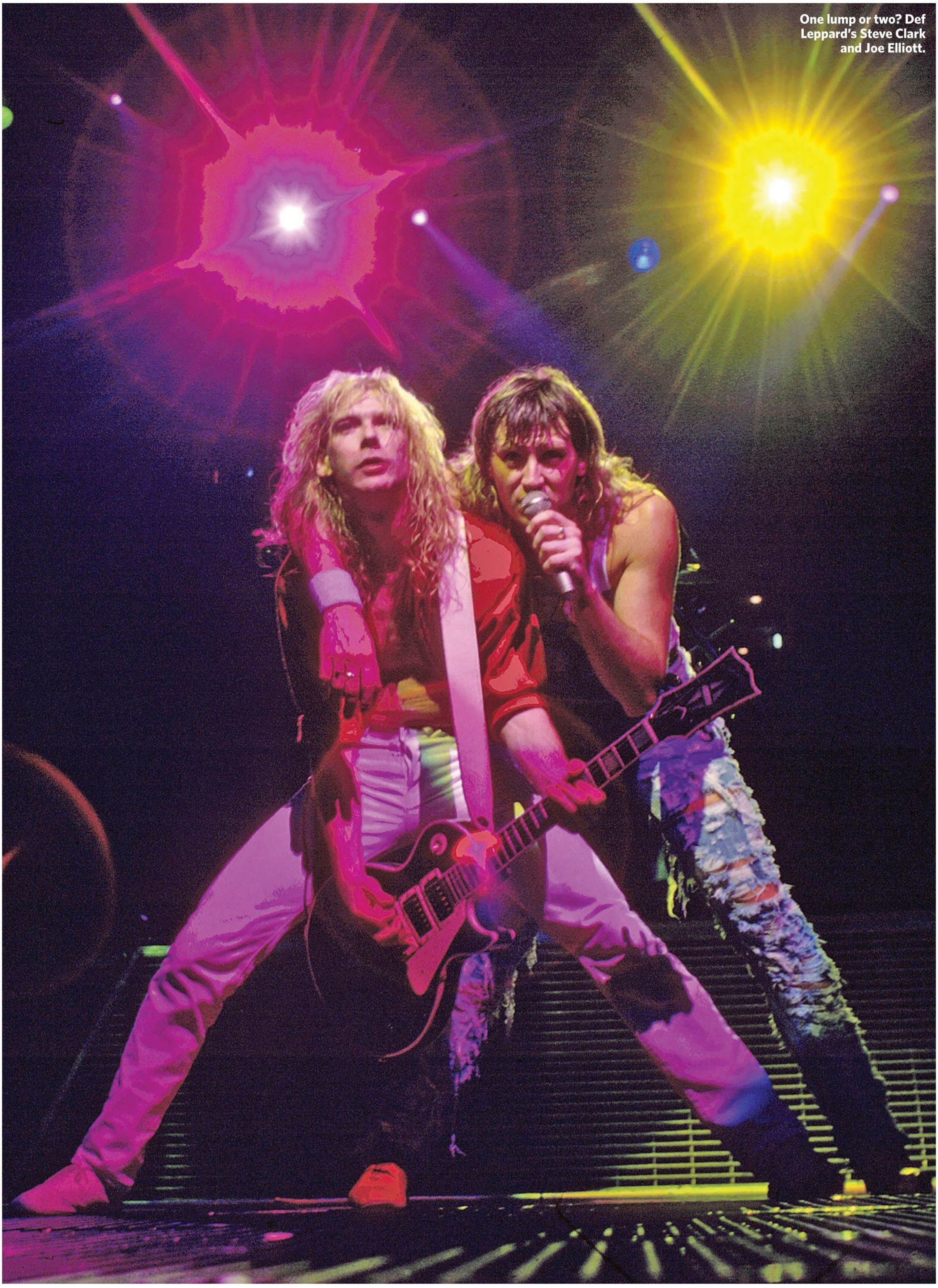
The result was nothing short of a phenomenon, with the popularity of *Pour Some Sugar…* on MTV helping to push the single to No.2 in the US Billboard charts and helping *Hysteria* to the top of the album chart.

"The song became a hit because strippers in Florida started requesting it on the local radio station," Collen recalls. "It had a second lease of life. *Hysteria* was all over bar the shouting, and then all of a sudden this song just got popular, and then the album went to Number One. It's really funny how it suddenly became cool because it was a stripping song.

"I still get a buzz from it," Collen adds. "For some bizarre reason, in America women seem to feel compelled to take their shirts off when we play it. *Pour Some Sugar On Me* is like anything; if you're rehearsing it in the rehearsal room, it's really fucking boring. But as soon as you play it in front of an audience who are into it, it makes all the difference."

YEAR RELEASED
1987

PRODUCER
'MUTT' LANGE



One lump or two? Def Leppard's Steve Clark and Joe Elliott.

GETTY

56 *Lynyrd Skynyrd*
Sweet Home Alabama

In 2007, Governer Bob Riley officially declared 'Sweet Home Alabama' as the promotional tag-line for Alabama state tourism. Yet the song behind the phrase is anything but the cuddly picture of 'authentic' southern life that the suits would have you believe.


Lynyrd Skynyrd: southern men.

It was written in the summer of 1973, partly as an indignant rebuke to Neil Young, whose songs *Southern Man* and *Alabama* had attacked the perceived bigotry of the south. Skynyrd's fearsome leader Ronnie Van Zant was having none of it. "We thought Neil was shooting all the ducks in order to kill one or two," he told *Rolling Stone*. "We're southern rebels, but more than that we know the difference between right and wrong."

The ever-belligerent Van Zant fired back at Young in the song's lyrics – *'Well I hope Neil Young will remember/A southern man don't need him around anyhow'* – but what really propels *Sweet Home Alabama* is its burning guitar riff.

Skynyrd guitarist Ed King had become intrigued by a guitar rhythm that Rossington had been tinkering with in the studio.

"Gary was playing a pattern that you can hear behind the verses," King said. "I put my guitar part on top of his as a counterpoint. But Gary's part was the catalyst that started the ball rolling."

King recalled that the song took just half an hour to write, but the solos had an altogether



YEAR RELEASED
1970

PRODUCER
Free, Roy Thomas Baker, John Kelly

Free began as a serious-minded bunch, each member steeped in the spirit of the British Blues Explosion. Most of their 1969 debut *Tons Of Sobs* and the eponymous follow-up consisted of meaningful blues tracts, and their concerts ticked along to a medium tempo. The story goes that after a particularly lacklustre college gig in Durham, Free headed for the dressing room to the audible indifference of the crowd.

"The applause had died before I had even left the drum riser," recalled drummer Simon Kirke. "It was obvious that we needed a rocker to close our shows."

A tune that always got the room shaking was their take on *The Hunter*, a raunchy, upbeat blues recorded by Albert King. "We couldn't drop it because it was too popular," remembered Paul Rodgers. "We knew we had to write a song with all those same qualities and a singalong chorus."

That night in Durham, Fraser consoled his

YEAR RELEASED
1974

PRODUCER
Al Kooper



GETTY X2

more mystic origin.

"I used to sleep with my guitar next to the bed," he explained. "The night after we wrote *Sweet Home Alabama* I had a dream in which I played both the short and long solos. I immediately woke up, got the guitar and started playing what I'd seen in the dream. At rehearsal the next day I just plugged the solos into the spots where we had rehearsed them and they fitted perfectly."

Once Van Zant had added the lyrics, Skynyrd had a ready-made Confederate classic. When *Sweet Home Alabama* was released in 1974 tore into the US Top 10. It was their first and biggest US hit single. Skynyrd's impassioned defence of their home turf even caught the ear of the man who inadvertently inspired it.

"Shit, I think *Sweet Home Alabama* is a great song," Neil Young subsequently said. "I've actually performed it live a couple of times myself."

55 *Free* All Right Now

bandmates, reassuring them things would be okay by riffing on a consolatory line, *'All right now, it's all right now'*. It stuck, and their biggest song was pieced together from there. Fraser wrote the timeless riff on piano, with Paul Kossoff then arranging it for guitar. If there were similarities with the Stones' *Honky Tonk Women*, Fraser claimed he was actually trying to channel the era's chord-meister, Pete Townshend.

If *All Right Now* showed Free's more frivolous side, it was driven home by their unparalleled musical pedigree. Kirke's cowbell-studded beat is rock solid, Fraser adds flamboyant, high-up-the-neck fills to his low-end bass groove, and Rodgers takes the of-its-time 'boy-pulls-girl' lyric and pours soul all over it. Besides that crunching riff, Kossoff plays his heart out through the song's soaring guitar soe:lo, cut short for the single edit by Island's Chris Blackwell, who could smell a hit.

First charting in June 1970, *All Right Now* song peaked at No.2 on the UK singles chart and at No.4 in the US. Its parent album *Fire And Water* also landed at No.2 in the UK, its momentum maintained by Free's turn at the massive Isle Of Wight Festival that year. In reaching that commercial high water mark one of the all-time great British rock bands gave us an enduring anthem. With 113 million Spotify hits and counting, it's still played on radio daily worldwide, still lovingly murdered by countless pub bands every weekend, still imitated by the legions of groups Free inspired.



Free: 'We knew we had to write a song with singalong qualities.'

54 *Iron Maiden*
Run To The Hills

Salt-of-the-earth Iron Maiden bassist Steve Harris is not a man given to unnecessary hyperbole, so when he says that his band's very first UK Top 10 hit "came out fantastic", you know it's got something going for it.

Released a month ahead of parent album *The Number Of The Beast*, *Run To The Hills* was the world's first taste of former Samson powerhouse Bruce Dickinson in his new role as Maiden singer. And what a taste it was: a breathless tale of European travails in the so-called New World, *Run To The* Hills is told from the perspective of both the foreign invaders and the oppressed Native Americans.



High plains drifter: Bruce Dickinson, the voice behind *Run To The Hills*.

"*Run To The Hills* was written in the rehearsal room," recalled Harris. "I came up with some riffs and we worked it out there and then. It was very spontaneous."

That spontaneity shone through. Earlier Maiden songs had bustled along with a street-fighter's cockiness, but this truly galloped – never had images of horses speeding across dusty plains fitted so perfectly.

Musically, the inspiration for the song came from the most unlikely of places: Frank Sinatra. Dickinson – who was not legally allowed a credit on the song due to contractual issues with Samson – had been watching a TV programme in which a musicologist broke down Ol' Blue Eyes' most famous number.

"The program was about why *My Way* was



YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
Neil Bogart, Kiss

At the end of 1974, Kiss were in trouble. Their self-titled debut album had shifted just 75,000 copies. The follow-up, *Hotter Than Hell*, had stalled at No.100 on the US chart. Kiss needed a hit, and they needed one fast.

Their label boss, Casablanca Records owner, Neil Bogart told frontman Paul Stanley, in precise detail, what kind of hit this should be. "He said, 'You need something that your fans can rally behind – a song that embodies what you're about,'" recalled Stanley.

The singer chose the right place to write it – in his room at the famous Hyatt House hotel on Sunset Boulevard, a joint that became known as 'The Riot House' after all the wild parties that been staged there, one of which involved Led Zeppelin's hard-drinking drummer John Bonham riding a motorcycle along the corridors. Paul took out an acoustic guitar and within a few minutes he had it.

YEAR RELEASED
1982

PRODUCER
Martin Birch



GETTY X2

the most popular recorded song in history," said Dickinson. "The musicologist came along and said, 'It's all in the rising sixth.'"

He took the advice onboard, factoring into the song. But it was his vocal performance that truly made the song: Dickinson sang *Run To The Hills* with the power of a man with a point to prove to the world, culminating in an unbelievable escalating scream that stands as one of the greatest ever laid down on tape.

One person who was blown away was Blaze Bayley, the man who would replace Dickinson himself as Maiden singer in the mid-90s.

"Listening to this as a young man on headphones on my parents stereo felt a little bit awkward," said Blaze. "I started to have the feeling that this music would break the stereo, because it was so different to the Satchmo my father listened to. This song still gives me some of the excitement of the first few times I heard it even now."

53 *Kiss*
Rock And All Nite

"Right away I had the lyrics: *'I wanna rock and roll all nite and party every day,'*" he said. 'It was very primal in that it really wasn't anything that I pondered. At that time I don't believe people talked about wanting to party. It was just a one-word description of a way of getting loose. Rocking and rolling all night and partying every day isn't so much a physical action as much as it's an attitude. It's a way of looking at life. It's a mindset – a mindset about liberation and celebration of the individual."

The song was completed with a verse from a work-in-progress Gene had, *Drive Me Wild*. "I never had the chorus," Gene said, "but I had this notion of a car as an analogy to a woman, the idea of, *'You drive me wild, I'll drive you crazy.'* So the pieces were basically stuck together. Take my verse and attach it to Paul's chorus and you've got a song."

When Neil Bogart heard *Rock And Roll All Nite*, he was ecstatic. But for all its populist genius, *Rock And Roll All Nite*, only made it to No.68 on the Billboard Hot 100 when it was released in April 1975. But it took on another life when a live version was extracted from the blockbusting *Alive!* album later that same year, reaching No.12 in the US.

Just as Neil Bogart had instructed, it was the anthem that defined the band. For the members of Kiss – and for rock'n'roll partiers everywhere – things would never be the same again.



Kiss: dressed to thrill.

52 *Meat Loaf*
Bat Out Of Hell

First of all, Bat isn't even the best song on the album. But it is the title track, and therefore the most representative of that mammoth, life-changing, world-eating magnum opus. Is there any other album ever produced that is viewed so favorably as one recognizable, self-standing entity? Did it even need singles? It was meant to be devoured in one ravenous sitting, and that's exactly how we all did it.


Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf: two of a kind.

If anything represents the concept of "album rock", it's *Bat Out Of Hell*. It IS album rock. And it's probably the greatest stand-alone rock album ever made. It's also completely ridiculous, albeit in the best way possible. Consider the source: Meat, a sweaty, overweight leather-lunged theater kid hungry for an arena, and Jim Steinman, the piano-plinking, black-gloved, Wagner-worshipping trickster who wanted to create immortal rock n' roll death operas. In any other era, they'd be sent to the loony bin or the unemployment line. Instead, they were locked in a room with Todd Rundgren, and gold was inexplicably spun in vast quantities.

Of course, no one knew it at first. Here's the crazy part. Well, the crazier part. *Bat*-the-album was released in 1977. *Bat*-the-single wasn't released until two years later. And let us not forget it's 10 minutes long (sure, there's a 4 and a half minute radio edit, but everybody knows that one is bullshit). *Bat* is completely inexplicable in every way, and



YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
Yes, Eddy Offord

Yes entered what most die-hard fans would consider their golden era in 1971 with their fourth album. *Fragile* was their first record to feature former Strawbs keyboardist Rick Wakeman, and by then the brilliant, eccentric Steve Howe was firmly in place as their guitarist and contributing composer. *Yours Is No Disgrace* and *Starship Trooper* had hinted at the progressive potential of the band on previous offering *The Yes Album*, and while they were touring that record fresh inspiration struck.

Their bus was headed from Aberdeen to Glasgow when singer Jon Anderson noted not just the magical Scottish countryside, with its mountains and lochs, but also the remarkable number of roundabouts they were having to negotiate. Howe recalled that he and Anderson wrote the song in their hotel room in Scotland, collating all the lyrical and musical ideas they had. "We had all these bits of music," he said later. "I was big on intros back then, and the classical guitar

YEAR RELEASED
1977

PRODUCER
Todd Rundgren

yet it was perfect for the time, place, emotions and parlances of the day. 1979 demanded *Bat Out Of Hell*, and when it finally got it, it steamed up countless cars blasting the song at make-out points all over the US and the UK.

The structure is your basic teenage death ballad, complete with leather-clad street gangs, gleaming motorcycles, a breathlessly beautiful teenage virgin, and *'even young boys down in the gutter'* foaming from the heat. Who knew you could foam from heat? It starts out as a theatrical piano ballad but you just know from the first chord that it's eventually going to explode into an orgy of over-amped hard rock madness, and that's just what it does. It entangles you in its drama, shakes you back and forth like a wolf with a rabbit, and leaves you bloody, bruised, and thoroughly satisfied. Steinman originally wrote it for a Peter Pan musical. We should all be eminently thankful that Meat showed up in his life.



GETTY X2

51 *Yes* Roundabout

intro I came up with for *Roundabout* was one of the most signature things."

While preparing for the *Fragile* recording sessions at Advision Studios in London, the pair presented the germ of the idea to the other members of Yes for input. Wakeman's reversed piano chord ushered it in, while Chris Squire's typically funky, fidgety bass and Bill Bruford's tricky, jazz-inflected drums gave the whole song movement as it progresses suite-like through its unpredictable structure. Howe's tender classical guitar and tough R'n'B electrics vie with Wakeman's burbling synths and organs, and the helium-high Anderson recites his lovable stoner-pastoral lyrics about the landscape that inspired them. Its virtuosic complexity couched in catchy melodies and wreathed in Anderson's hippie-spiritual spell, *Roundabout* encapsulates all the hallmarks that would see Yes hailed as one of the founding acts in the progressive rock movement.

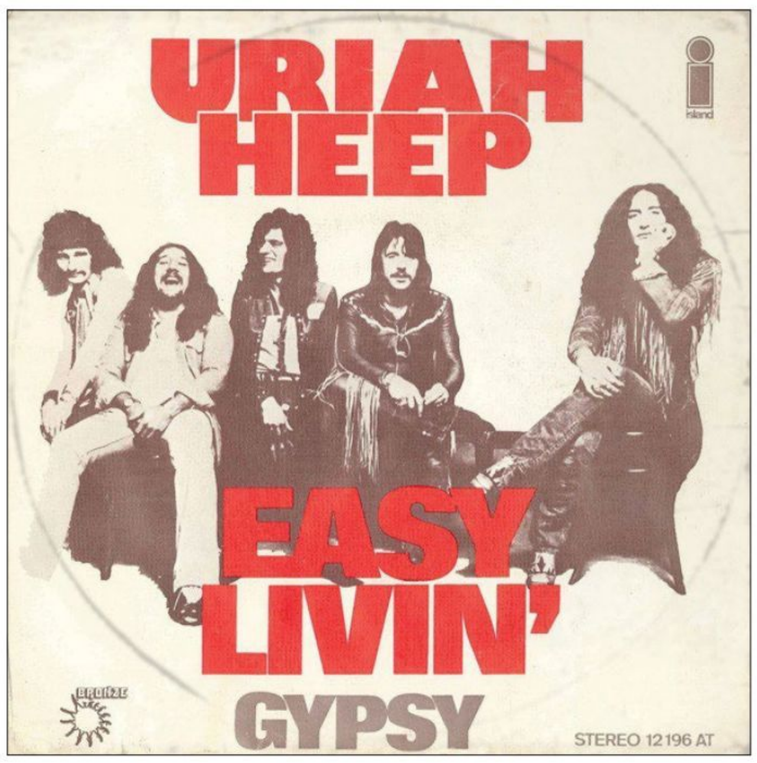

Yes: the progfathers.

The song was selected as *Fragile*'s opener and lead single, with Atlantic's cut-and-shut radio edit compacting the song from its majestic eight and a half minutes into just over three. The single didn't trouble the UK chart but it did them great favours in the US the following January, hitting No.13 on the Billboard Hot 100. Yes have existed in many incarnations in the half-century since they made this thrilling and influential signature piece, but this fan favourite and live staple has been a consistent presence in their canon.

50 *Uriah Heep*
Easy Livin'

Sometimes the course of life can be changed by an offhand comment. For Ken Hensley, Uriah Heep's keyboard player and guitarist throughout the 70s, that moment came during a taxi ride home after a marathon three-day studio session.

"We'd been rushing to finish an album before we left to go on tour," recalls Hensley. "We were having a conversation, and someone mentioned how people think we have such an easy life, how we just show up, collect the dollars and go home. The words 'easy life' stuck in my head. When the taxi dropped me off at my flat, I went in, put the kettle on, sat down at the piano, and within about ten minutes that song was finished."



The song was *Easy Livin'*, a galloping hymn to chasing hopes and ambitions even as they remain tantalisingly out of reach. Released as a single in 1972, it helped transform Heep from a mid-card rock band into arena-filling heavyweights. Almost 50 years after it was first released, it remains both their best-known song and one of the great anthems of rock's golden age.

With three albums already under their belt, Heep were far from unknown before they made *Easy Livin'* and its parent album, *Demons And Wizards*. They offered up a more grandiose alternative to Led Zeppelin or Black Sabbath. Hensley had done his time with an assortment of 60s pop and prog bands, and it showed – Uriah Heep favoured melodic bombast and musical intricacy over deafening bludgeon.

Heep had notched up a string of hit singles in Germany and cracked the UK Top 40 album chart. The flip side was increased pressure from their management and label to keep the success coming, churning out the hits.

"Looking back on it, there's absolutely no reason why we should have had to do an album every ten months," says Hensley. "But at the time I was relishing it. We had a whole lot of freedom to do what we wanted, which was wonderful."

Heep always had an unconventional internal dynamic. The band's two founders, guitarist Mick Box and singer David Byron, were close, having known each other since they were teenagers. Hensley joined the band in 1969. Relations between the latter and his bandmates were professional and cordial, but they were never especially close.

"I wasn't really friends with anyone in the band," he says. "It wasn't like we were enemies, but I didn't see any reason to socialise with them, as our interests outside of the band were completely different. We rarely collaborated in terms of writing the songs. Basically, I wrote all the songs by myself."

Despite that, the mood was electric when Heep entered West London's Lansdowne Studios to record *Demons And Wizards* in early 1972.

"It was five guys having the time of their lives in a recording studio,," says Hensley. "There was no stopping us. It was out of control but under control at the same time."

New songs such as *The Wizard*, *Circle Of Hands* and the two-part *Paradise/The Spell* were complicated and grandiose. By contrast, *Easy Livin'* was urgent and direct, powered by drummer Lee Kerslake's relentless shuffling beat and Hensley's grinding, stabbing keyboards.

"I knew when I wrote it that it was a great song," says Hensley. "And when the band converted it into what they did, I knew it was special."

Hensley had sung on a couple of Heep songs before, notably *Lady In Black* and the title track of the band's third album, *Look At Yourself*, but he wasn't tempted to step up for the mic this time around. "Not with a singer like David Byron around," he says.

Byron was a charismatic showman whose strident, ringing voice was a world away from the likes of Robert Plant or Paul Rodgers. If the music propelled *Easy Livin'* along the runway at high speed, then Bryon gave the song wings.

"He could take a song and turn it into magic," Hensley says of the singer, who died of alcohol-related illness in 1985. "He was a different singer – he leaned more towards pop than rock. And that's why he was virtually impossible to replace."

Easy Livin' was the second single to be taken from *Demons And Wizards*, released in the late summer of 1972. The groundwork Heep laid in America paid off. Radio picked up on it. Suddenly, Heep had their first US Top 40 single, dragging *Demons And Wizards* along in its wake.

"We never really saw it coming," says Hensley. "It hit radio hard – and in those days radio wasn't just hugely influential in America, it was influential everywhere. It was like riding on a magic carpet. We were playing sold-out arenas around the world, playing to thousands of people at festivals, making tons of money. Although I still don't know where most of it went."

Easy Livin' proved to be Heep's commercial high-water mark, at least in the US. Hensley left the band in 1980, leaving guitarist Mick Box to steer them ever since.

Unsurprisingly, Hensley has nothing but fond memories of the song that propelled Heep up into the superstar bracket. "I've played *Easy Livin'* with a lot of great musicians, but no one can play it like Uriah Heep did," he says. "It was a one-off."

YEAR RELEASED
1972

PRODUCER
Gerry Bron



Uriah Heep: Ken Hensley, second left.

GETTY/KEYSTONE

49 *Jimi Hendrix Experience*
Voodoo Child (Slight Return)


Jimi Hendirx: love and confusion.

The wah-wah guitar pedal was a relatively new invention in 1970, when Jimi Hendrix used it to devastating effect on the unforgettable introduction of *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*, and while that intro is the song's most memorable feature, Hendrix treats the entire composition as a vehicle for expression. He alternates between rhythm and lead playing at the blink of an eye, and both riffs and solos frequently pan from left to right to add to the swaying, hypnotic nature of the performance. His guitar parts are backed up by the solid, unwavering playing of bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell, who allow him the breathing space he needs to take the dynamics down and up.

Released in format somewhere between a single and an EP – *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* was backed with *Hey Joe* and Hendrix's immortal cover of Bob Dylan's *All Along The Watchtower* – the song remains another reason for Hendrix's reputation as a man for whom a guitar was not simply an instrument. As his devotees believe, his iconic Fender Strarocaster was a vehicle for the expression of his essential soul.

Which legendary guitarist hasn't played at least part of this song at some point or other in their career? It has been hailed as an all-time classic by Joe Satriani among many others, who praised it as the very peak of guitar creativity, and has been covered by players as varied as Yngwie Malmsteen, Stevie Ray



YEAR RELEASED
1968

PRODUCER
Jimmy Miller

It's hard to argue with Keith Richards' assessment that Jean-Luc Godard's *One Plus One* film was "a total load of crap". But one element of the French director's 1968 collage of Swinging London, at least, remains electrifying: the fly-on-the-wall footage of the Stones ensconced at Olympic Studios, birthing the wickedest song in their catalogue. *Sympathy For The Devil*, as initiated by Mick Jagger, under the influence of Bob Dylan and Charles Baudelaire, was not much to Richards' liking, either, but the track morphed before Godard's lens.

"The song turned from a Dylanesque, rather turgid folk song into a rocking samba – from a turkey into a hit – by a shift of rhythm," he wrote in Life. "The voice of [producer] Jimmy Miller can be heard on the film, complaining, 'Where's the groove?' on the earlier takes. There wasn't one."

But the *Sympathy For The Devil* that opened 1968's *Beggars Banquet* had no issues in that department. A snake-hipped, conga-rattling

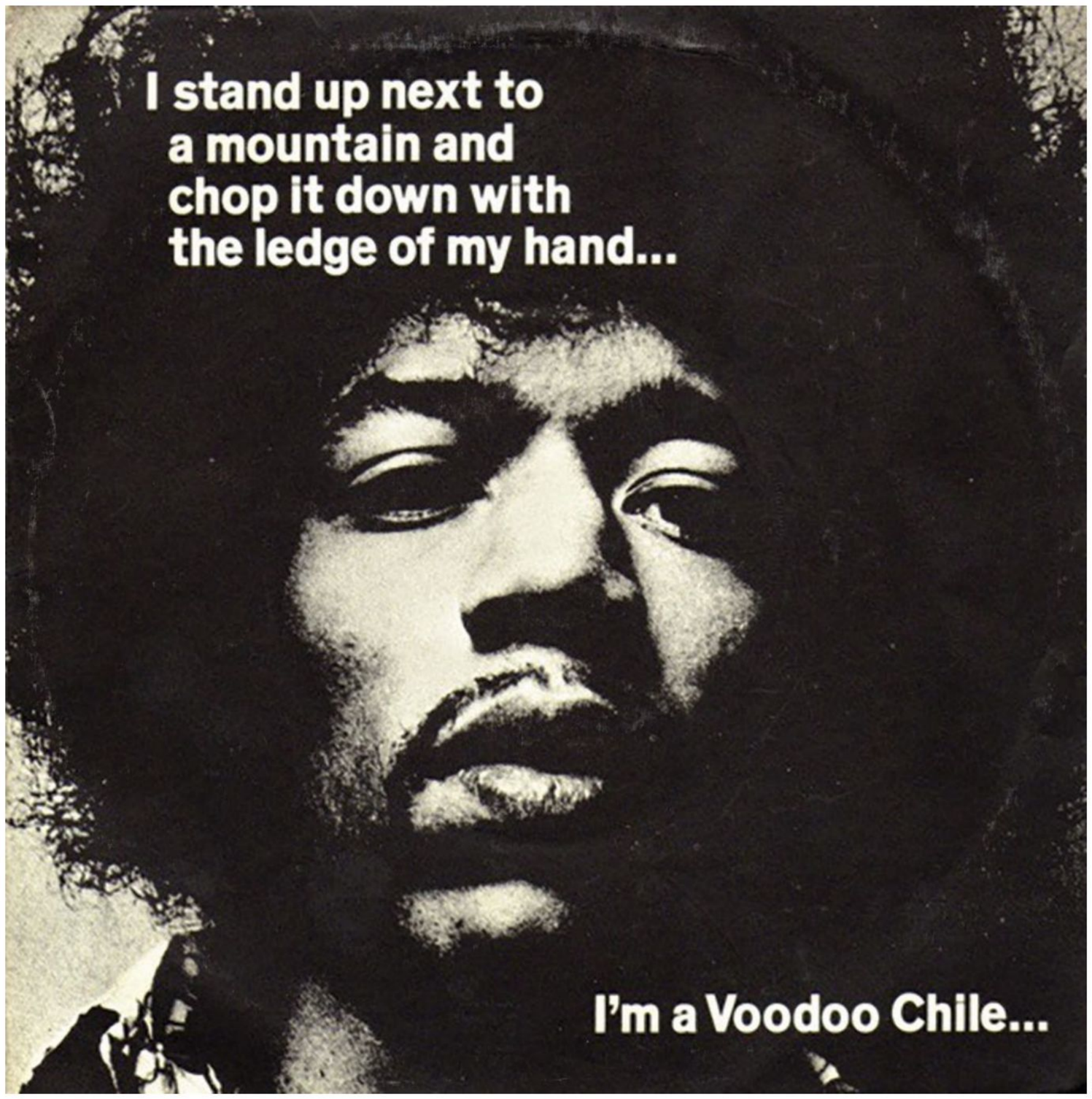
YEAR RELEASED
1968

PRODUCER
CHAS CHANDLER

Vaughan and Mick Mars of Mötley Crüe. Other bands who have taken a shot at the track include Extreme, Pearl Jam and Pride And Glory, the last of whom featured Hendrix devotee Zakk Wylde.

Note that this song is not to be confused with *Voodoo Chile*, a much longer and more freeform blues workout played alongside the great Steve Winwood. Both songs are found on *Electric Ladyland* (1968), the third and final album recorded by The Jimi Hendrix Experience. Indeed, *…Child* was based on *…Chile*, as a shorter, more succinct song that grew from the longer original, with the addition of several key parts such as that heavily wah-wah'ed introduction.

Just to add to the complexities, *…Child* was actually released after Hendrix's death in 1970 under the title *…Chile* as a single, without the distinguishing *(Slight Return)*. As the man himself said, was this love or just confusion?



GETTY X2

48 *The Rolling Stones*
Sympathy For The Devil

groove, the song had the stink of sex, decadence and voodoo. And while the band had rarely rolled so beautifully – "There are some instrumental switches," notes Keef. "I play bass, Bill Wyman plays maracas, Charlie Watts actually sings in the *'woo-woo'* chorus" – the main event was Jagger, singing in character as Satan and reflecting on the wars, genocides and atrocities in which he had a fiery hand (*'I rode a tank, held a general's rank/when the blitzkrieg raged and the bodies stank'*). Critically, Jagger's Lucifer is no pantomime villain, introducing himself as a "man of wealth and taste", demanding the listener's respect and accusing us of complicity: *'I* shouted out, *'Who killed the Kennedys?'/When after all, it was you and me.'*

Sympathy was an instant classic, still a cornerstone of setlists a half-century later. Just as important, it was a masterpiece of PR, consolidating the Stones' reputation as the outlaws of the British Invasion. "People seemed to embrace the image so readily," reflected Jagger.

For a song so steeped in fire and brimstone, it was appropriate that Olympic almost burnt down during Godard's shoot. "To diffuse the light, he had tissue paper taped up under these very hot lights on the ceiling," said Richards. "Halfway through, all of this tissue paper and the whole ceiling caught alight at a ferocious speed. It was like being inside the Hindenburg. Talk about sympathy for the fucking devil…"


***Devil* men: the Stones in 1968.**

47 *The Doors*
Riders On The Storm

The last track on the final Doors album recorded while their frontman was alive, *Riders On The Storm* could be viewed as a portent of impending doom. Not surprisingly, since its eerie whispered Jim Morrison outro, accompanied by the wash of Ray Manzarek's electric piano rain, indicates that Jimbo isn't going to be around much longer.

That said, the song sprang from a studio jam based around Stan Jones's cowboy epic *Ghost Riders In The* Sky. While Robby Krieger vamped surf-style, Morrison scribbled lyrics in his notebook. Once he had the verses, he asked the band to interpret the song and slow the tempo to a walking blues.


The Doors' Ray Manzarek and Jim Morrison: farewell to the Lizard King.

Morrison's words were dredged from memories of hitchhiking down dusty Florida roads as a teenager en route to visit his girlfriend Mary Werbelow. The idea of a solitary road trip also emerged in his unfinished film *HWY: An American Pastoral*, where he looms like a deranged Charles Manson – the killer on the road. Ray Manzarek and bassist Jerry Scheff hit upon the loping A-minor-to-A-major riff underpinning a dark jazz figure. Engineer Bruce Botnick raided his effects library for the distant desert thunder that appears as a motif.

Krieger's vibrato guitar solo is the perfect pathway leading from the deadly image of a slaughtered family to the invocation: *'Girl, you gotta love your man'* – which is possibly the most romantic few seconds in Morrison's 27 years on the planet. Viewed as either a paean to his partner Pamela



YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
Jack Douglas

Walk This Way is the most famous number from Aerosmith's 1975 masterpiece *Toys In The Attic*, but Sweet Emotion is the better song. One of the hallmarks of a classic is that you can recognise it from the opening bars, and what Steven Tyler calls "Tom Hamilton's slippery, slimy, melodically delicious" intro on *Sweet Emotion* is up there with the great bass riffs of all time.

"I remember going out on the roof of my house, smoking a bit of weed, then picking up the bass," Hamilton says of the song's genesis, "and this intro popped out. Then I started getting some guitar ideas for it. But I was shy about bringing my ideas into rehearsals. In New York, we had finished the basic tracks and had an extra day in the studio, and Jack [Douglas, producer] says: "Does anybody have any ideas that we haven't tried

YEAR RELEASED
1971

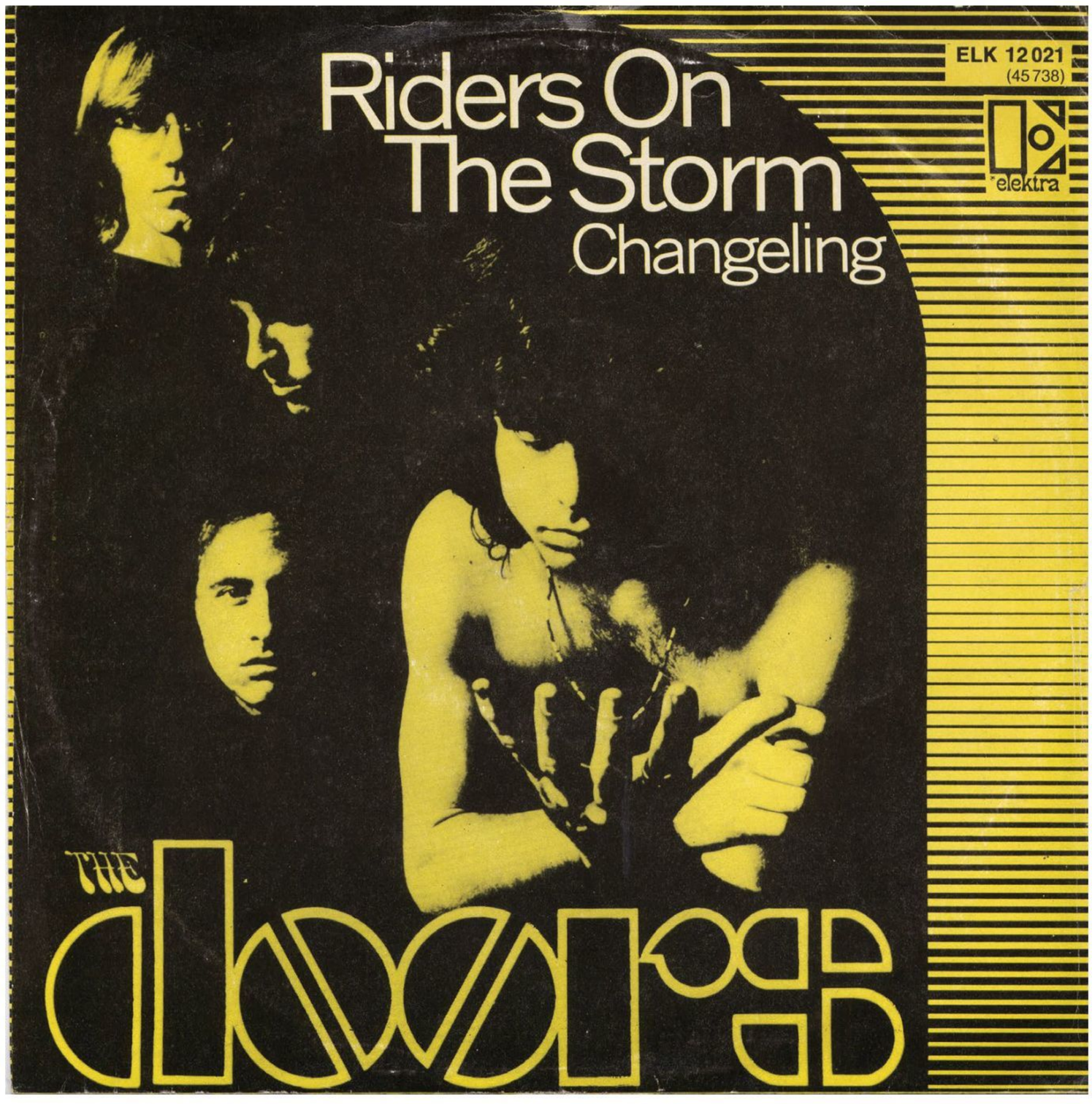
PRODUCER
Bruce Botnick, The Doors

Courson or as lyric poetry, it's a snapshot of a man who knew he was leaving The Doors and moving to Paris to woo his lover back.

The Doors performed *Riders On The Storm* twice: in Dallas, and during their ill-fated final performance, at The Warehouse in New Orleans (December 11 and 12, 1970), both suitable cities for those with a death fixation.

The basic eight-track was cut in December 1970 at The Doors' workshop at 8512 Santa Monica Boulevard, but Morrison's haunting finale was overdubbed at the mix-down in Elektra's studio in January, after which Jim went off to play softball with his pals and never sang on a Doors song again.

Released as a single in June 1971, it peaked at No.14 in the US chart shortly after Morrison's death, and at No.22 in Britain in October. In an eerie coincidence, *Riders On The Storm* was playing on Radio Luxembourg when the singer's death was announced. The rain fell like tear.



GETTY X2

46 *Aerosmith*
Sweet Emotion

yet?" I raised my hand and we started working on it. We cut the song the same day, and everybody was saying: 'Nice one, man!' After we finished, I went back to Boston. A month later the album was finished. When I heard the final version of *Sweet Emotion* it blew my mind. I never knew it would become one of our most popular songs. What a great feeling. Something I can cling to. I can put that on my name tag: *Sweet Emotion* Guy!"

Despite the title, the lyric found Tyler in attack mode. When they weren't on the road in the early 70s, Joe and Steven were roommates. Then Joe moved out to be with his girlfriend, Elyssa.

"I was angry at Elyssa because she stole my boyfriend, my significant other, my partner in crime," Tyler recalled. "It was like losing a brother. So now there was jealousy, this dark undercurrent humming along. And I put it into Sweet Emotion, which I pointed at Elyssa directly: *'You talk about things that nobody cares/ You're wearing out things that nobody wears/Calling my name but I gotta make clear/I can't tell ya honey where I'll be in a year.'"*

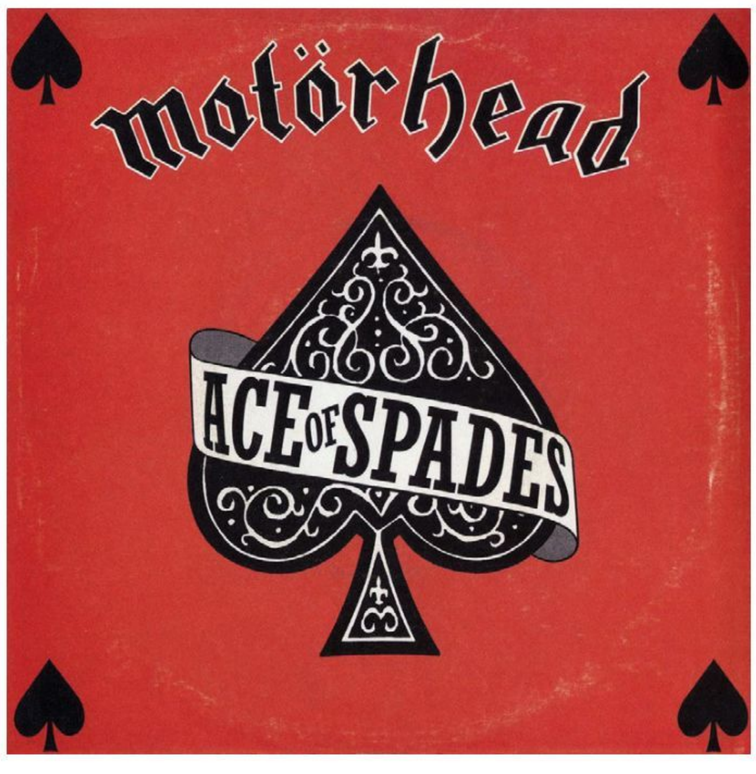
That mixture of pettiness and transcendence was pure Aerosmith. It's a recipe that has fuelled their greatest moments all the way down the decades, right up to the present day. But it's never quite lifted them to the same heights as it did here.


Steven Tyler and Joe Perry: 'pettiness and transcendence.'

45 *Motörhead*
Ace Of Spades

Motörhead had speed in their veins and wind in their sails when they entered the studio to record their fourth album, *Ace Of Spades*, in mid-1980. Their last release, the live Golden Years EP, had turned this gnarliest of bands into unlikely Top 10 stars. But it would be *Ace Of Spades* – particularly its unforgettable title track – that sealed their immortality.

From its overdriven bass intro to its squealing, hit-the-brakes ending two minutes and 48 seconds later, this gamblers' psalm would become not just Motörhead's signature song, but also one of the all-time great rock'n'roll anthems.



Naturally, the band themselves had no such ambitions when they holed up in Rockfield Studios, South Wales in early 1980 to begin rehearsing for the follow-up to the white-hot one-two of *Overkill* and *Bomber*, two brilliant albums released within seven months of each other in 1979.

"We went down to Rockfield for a couple of weeks, got in the vodka and everything else," guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke told *Classic Rock* in 2017. "Lemmy wasn't too up for rehearsing in those days – he had a nice bird up there with him, so he was distracted. But Phil [drummer 'Philthy Animal' Taylor] and I used to like playing, so after we'd finished fishing and fucking about and God knows what, me and Phil would have a little bash. It gave us an opportunity to work out some riffs."

Ace Of Spades was one of them. The band recognised its potential, and worked it up into a rough song and recorded an instrumental version at Rockfield. Back in London, they added vocals and overdubs. While not dissimilar from the finished version, it lacked two key components: that steel-plated central riff, and the breakdown that Lemmy memorably described as "the tap-dancing section".

Producer Vic Maile, who had previously worked with Lemmy's former band Hawkwind and who Clarke affectionately described as "a nice bloke, very soft, big hooter, short hair", played a big part in fixing both.

"Vic kind of questioned what we were doing with the song," said Clarke. "He made us look at that riff, so Lemmy and I started fucking around with it a bit. It was one of the only times we'd written in the studio."

Maile also had what Clarke called "his box of tricks" – a cardboard box full of items used to provide sound effects. Amid the maracas and rattlesnake tails was a set of woodblocks which would provide the clacking sound during the breakdown.

"He said: 'This is what we'll do'," explained Clarke. "We were pissed or speeding and we were totally against it. 'Well, we'll do it cos it's you, Vic, but we ain't gonna fucking use it.' He set up a nice Neumann mic, and the three of us stood there with the blocks. Of course, at first we're all doing it at different fucking times: 'Come on, Phil, for fuck's sake!' 'No, man, it's you!' But when we heard it, we thought: 'Oh, it's not bad.'"

With its turbo-charged new riff and memorable breakdown, the track was beginning to sound special. The final piece in the jigsaw was Lemmy's unforgettable lyrics – an attempt, he said, to cram as many gambling references in as possible: the high one, snake eyes, dead man's hand (and don't forget the joker…). In typical myth-making fashion, the frontman claimed to have written the lyric in the back of a Transit van while speeding down the motorway at 90mph.

"He might have written it in the fucking shitter for all I know," Clarke said with a laugh. "He used to do that. We'd say: 'Man, we need some fucking lyrics for this.' So he used to go for a shit and write the lyrics. But if he said he wrote it in a Transit van, then you've got to believe him."

Ace Of Spades reached No.15 in the UK when it was released in November 1980. It swiftly became a highlight of their live set. After Lemmy's death, an online campaign to get *Ace Of Spades* back in the charts pushed it to No.13, two spots higher than its original peak more than 35 years before.

Ironically, in his later years, Lemmy had mixed feelings about the song he played every night on stage with Motörhead. While he recognised its enduring quality, familiarity definitely bred contempt.

"I'm sick to death of it now," he wrote in his 2002 autobiography, *White Line Fever*. "We didn't become fossilised after that record, you know, we've had quite a few good releases since then. But the fans want to hear it so we still play it every night. For myself, I've had enough of that song."

Fast Eddie Clarke, passed away in 2018, had no such issues:."It's a fantastic track. It's got a natural speed, a velocity of its own, it's got a great arrangement and it rocks like a bastard," he said in 2017. "And Lemmy's lyrics are fantastic. I sometimes say to people: 'I used to be in a band years ago', and they say: 'Oh, which one?' When I say Motörhead, they look bemused. So I say: '*Ace Of Spades*' and the penny drops. They might not know Motörhead, but they definitely know *Ace Of Spades*."

YEAR RELEASED
1980

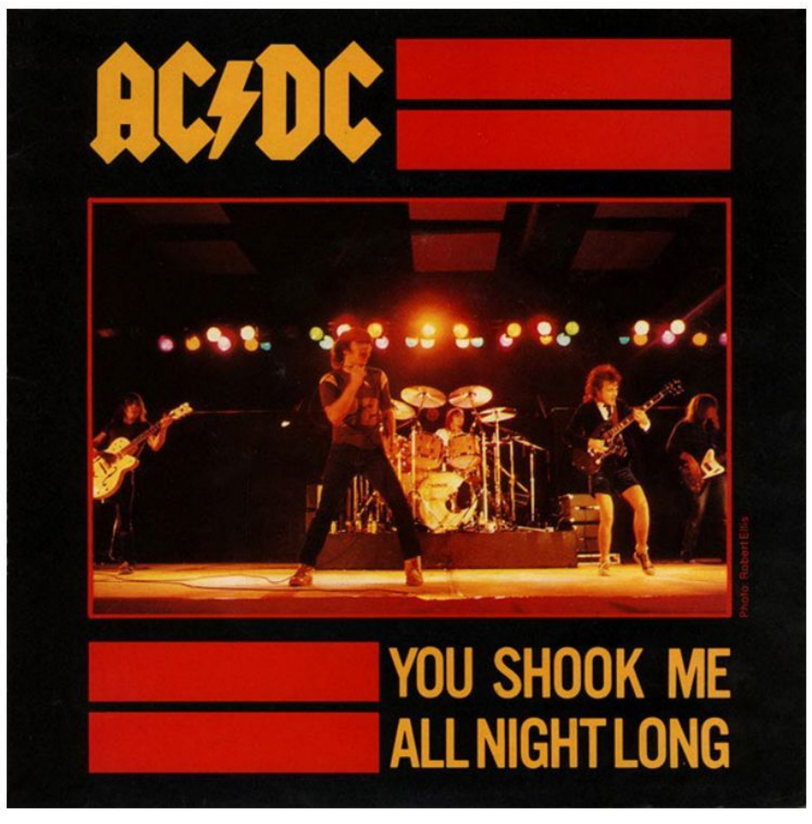
PRODUCER
Vic Maile



Motörhead: people "might not know Motörhead, but they definitely know Ace Of Spades," says Eddie Clarke.

GETTY/FIN COSTELLO

44 *AC/DC*
You Shook Me All Night Long



The first single AC/DC released after Bon Scott's death didn't sound like the work of a grieving band. *'She was a fast machine, She kept her motor clean,'* leered his Bon's replacement, Brian Johnson, in a manner his predecessor would have been proud of. Not the most politically correct song of all time, though a stone-cold classic.

Johnson had been tasked with writing lyrics – big shoes to fill, given Bon's way with words. But like Scott, he had a way with a double-entendre. On *You Shook Me All Night Long* he joked: *'She told me to come but I was already there.'* "I thought I'd gone too far with that, I must admit, but nobody seemed to mind," he admitted. "There's a lot of lovely ways you can do things."

According to Johnson, however, there was a further presence helping him out. Recalling how he wrote the lyrics to *You Shook Me All Night Long*, he said: "Something washed through me – this kind of calm. I'd like to think it was Bon, but I can't because I'm too cynical and I don't want people getting carried away. But something happened and I just started writing the song."

Back In Black producer 'Mutt' Lange had pulled off an impressive trick of the light on AC/DC's previous album, *Highway To Hell*. He polished up the band's sound and made the group commercially hotter, while losing none of their core identity. *You Shook Me All Night Long* again highlighted Lange's ability to bring a pop sensibility to a hard rock band as he helps the band deliver a singalong, 'arms around your best mate's shoulder' winner of a tune. After the tragedy of Bon Scott's death, AC/DC were back on track.



43 *Led Zeppelin*
Black Dog



"It is good, isn't it?" said Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin's fourth album. "You get the feeling of the creativity of this band. It's just coming in with full force."

That force was never more evident than on the album's opening track, the mighty *Black Dog*. Based on a cartwheeling riff bassist John Paul Jones had been 'inspired' to develop after listening to the similarly shaped *Tom Cat* by Muddy Waters, the track was named partly in punning reference to the source material, but mainly after an old black Labrador that hung around the gardens and kitchen at Headley Grange.

"He was an old dog," explained Page, "You know when they get the white whiskers round the nose?" When he vanished one night, "we all thought he'd been out on the tiles [because] when he got back he was just sleeping all day. And we thought: 'Oh, black dog' – cos we just called him black dog – 'he's been out on the razzle.'"

The almost impossible-to-copy rhythmic swing of the track (44 time set against 54) was a key indication of how far ahead of the rock game Led Zeppelin really were. Bands such as Grand Funk Railroad were touted as being successors to Zep's heavyweight crown, but their approach was devoid of the grace and timing of something like *Black Dog*.



While musos stroked their beards appreciatively over the peacocking riff and Plant's a-cappella vocals, based on Fleetwood Mac's *Oh Well* – for those in the know about Page's obsession with the occult it was assumed the title referred to some Baskerville-esque hellhound, a belief underscored by lines like: *'Eyes that shine, burning red/Dreams of you all through my head…'*

It was, of course, far more mundane than anyone actually imagined. But that didn't matter – as *Black Dog* proved, even Led Zeppelin's mundanity was more magical and mysterious than every other band's.

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42 *Metallica*
Enter Sandman



Metallica: 'torturing people longer than the CIA.'

Grunge was just around the corner when Metallica began writing their fifth album in July 1990, but already the band were suffering an existential crisis. The tempo-shifting assault and battery of 1988's … *And Justice For All* had visibly bored their crowds, drummer Lars Ulrich had developed a "major thing with AC/DC", and when the band wrote the route-one *Enter Sandman* as the first song for 1991's so-called Black album, it gave them a head-start on the 'adapt-or-die' dilemma that rival metallers would face in the court of King Cobain. "The ten-minute, twelve-tempo-changes side of Metallica had run its course," noted Ulrich. "We wanted to streamline and simplify things."

As the Black album's lead single and opening track, *Enter Sandman* announced in mile-high letters that changes were afoot. Lean and clean-picked, but no less malevolent for it, Kirk Hammett's riff was the song's spine and body, cycling throughout the five-minute duration, muscled up by James Hetfield's brutish, brick-wall crunch. "I had just been listening to *Louder Than Love*, the second Soundgarden album," Hammett told one radio interviewer. "I picked up my guitar, and out came that riff."

Just as significant a departure, after four albums of guttural thrash, was Bob Rock's cleaned-up production and Hetfield's newly enunciated vocal – all the better to hear his unsettling examination of childhood nightmares (*'Never mind that noise you heard/It's just the beast under your bed/In your closet, in your head'*). In fact, the frontman's original lyric had



YEAR RELEASED
1968

PRODUCER
GEORGE MARTIN

Not just another Beatles song, but which of them are? Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and Starr were hardly renowned for their strict adherence to a safe formula, yet *Hey Jude* was a truly extraordinary record. Being the first single to be released on their own Apple label and the first recorded to eight-track tape, it had to make an impression, and at over seven minutes long (including a 40-piece orchestra-enhanced four-minute coda longer than its preceding four verses) it was epic in every sense.

In its embryonic form Paul McCartney was so devoted to his latest composition that he played it at anyone who would listen (locals at a village pub he just happened to be passing, bands he was supposed to be producing). And John Lennon, despite the fact that relations between the two Beatles were close to their lowest ebb at the time *Hey Jude* was written, considered it to be the greatest song that Paul McCartney ever produced.

YEAR RELEASED
1991

PRODUCER
Bob Rock



GETTY X2

been about cot death (with the line *'disrupt the perfect family'* in place of *'off to never-never land'*), until management intervened. And while the sinister spoken-word bedtime prayer section smacked of plagiarism – bitter rival Dave Mustaine had used the same trick on Megadeth's *Go To Hell* – both camps had borrowed the passage from 18th century English essayist Joseph Addison.

Hitting a watershed #5 in the UK singles chart, and leading its parent album to sixteen-million-plus sales, *Enter Sandman* is the song that kick-started Metallica's transition from underground square-pegs to global megastars headliners. But for a supposed mass-market anthem, the song still has teeth. Consider the leaked government documents, which revealed US military had blasted terror suspects with the song at deafening volumes, to prolong capture shock, disorient detainees during interrogations and drown out screams". As Hetfield chuckled: "We've tortured people with it a lot longer than the CIA…"

41 *The Beatles* Hey Jude



The Beatles: midway through the 720th *'na-na-na'*...

McCartney wrote the basic song while driving down to visit Cynthia Lennon and John's five-year old son Julian shortly after the Lennons' separation following John's affair with Yoko Ono. It started life as *Hey Jules*, but as it fleshed out, its perspective broadened, 'Jules' became 'Jude' and it developed into a life-affirming hymn of strength-in-adversity, self-worth and self-belief.

McCartney presented its piano demo to Lennon with no little trepidation, but while their personal relations were never more fraught, business was business, and Lennon knew a hit when he heard one. Even as McCartney apologised for 'first-draft' lyrics, not least *'The movement you need is on your shoulder'*, Lennon tetchily retorted that not only was it fine, McCartney's demo was virtually complete as it stood.

Lennon seemed untroubled that the song was addressed to his son, mainly because he didn't believe it was. He considered it to have been written about himself. Furthermore, he managed to find not only tacit approval of his relationship with Yoko in its lyric, but also evidence of McCartney's disappointment at having been replaced by her in Lennon's life. McCartney, as a riposte to Lennon's claim it was about him, also claimed ownership: he was his own muse. Cue further biting retorts from Lennon, claiming that McCartney was probably chiding himself over leaving Jane Asher for Linda Eastman. Whichever way you carve it, it's one hell of a song. Eight million na-na-na-na-na-na-nah sales and counting…

40 *The Moody Blues*
Nights In White Satin


Original gansters: The Moody Blues in 1967.

First released in November 1967, *Nights In White Satin* was a masterpiece that bridged pop and symphonic prog, with a lyric ripped directly from Moody Blues frontman Justin Hayward's personal life – it finds him caught between ecstasy and despair, ruing the end of one love affair while embarking on another.

"There was a lot of emotion that went into the song," Hayward affirms. "I was nineteen or twenty at the time, living in a two-room flat in Bayswater with Graeme [Edge, Moody Blues drummer] and our girlfriends. I came back from a gig one night, around four or five in the morning, when the birds were just twittering, sat on the side of the bed and wrote a couple of verses."

Searching for some kind of metaphor for his emotional turmoil, Hayward remembered a recent gift he'd been given. "Another girlfriend, who was neither the one that had just dumped me or the one that I was then going with, had given me some white satin sheets. They just happened to be in my suitcase. They were very romantic-looking, but totally impractical."

When Hayward took the bones of the song he'd written into rehearsal the next day, his bandmates were less than enthusiastic, at least to begin with.

"I played it to the other guys and they were a bit nonplussed," Hayward recalls. "Then Mike said: 'Play it again.' So I did the first line, and he went [mimics the melody refrain] on Mellotron, and that's the phrase that started to get everybody



YEAR RELEASED
1987

PRODUCER
Mike Clink

Urban hell was a recurring theme on the Gunners' 1987 debut, *Appetite For Destruction*. But while opener *Welcome To The Jungle* painted the band's native Los Angeles as a Darwinian fleshpot sure to "bring you to your knees", the original vinyl's first side closed with *Paradise City*: a seven-minute jangle-rock anthem that – in the stadium-ready choruses, at least – represented the sunnier side. Ostensibly, this was a snapshot of a metropolis where the *'grass is green and the girls are pretty'*, so utopian that Axl Rose's howled refrain was laced with genuine longing: *'Take me home.'*

Just as it sounds, *Paradise City* was born from one of the notoriously fractious band's most harmonious moments. As Slash reflected in his autobiography, the lineup of Rose, Duff McKagan, Izzy Stradlin and Steven Adler had trekked to San Francisco to open for a band of "glam poseurs" named Jetboy, and as the rental van tore home, its increasingly drunk passengers crammed in the

YEAR RELEASED
1967

PRODUCER
Tony Clarke

else interested. Suddenly the others could see what parts they might play on it."

Shaped by producer Tony Clarke and arranger/conductor Peter Knight, Nights In White Satin became a sumptuous epic in the studio. It formed part of The Night, the closing track on the Moodies' second album, Days Of Future Passed, a dawn-to-darkness song cycle that made full use of the Mellotron's ability to simulate an orchestra.

An edited version of the song reached No.19 in the UK charts, marking the band's transition from R&B also-rans to torch-pop trailblazers. A reissued version became an even bigger hit in 1972, reaching No.2 in the US, while the song has inspired more than 60 cover versions and appeared on countless film soundtracks. There's even been a theme park ride named after it.

"There's a strange power to the song," says Hayward. "It gave us a style that suddenly seemed to work for us. I think it identified the Moodies' sound."



GETTY X2

39 *Guns N' Roses*
Paradise City

back with acoustic guitars, the country-flavoured opening riff fell off his fingers: "Duff and Izzy picked it up, and started playing it, while I came up with the chord changes. I started humming a melody and played it over and over. Then Axl chimed in: "Take me down to the paradise city'. 'Where the girls are fat and they've got big titties!', I shouted. Everyone improvised lyrics in rounds as if we were on a bus heading off to rock 'n' roll summer camp."

The guitarist fought against the song's most famous lyric as it appears on *Appetite* ("It was decided that the *'grass is green'* line – which I thought sounded totally gay – worked better, and although I preferred my alternate take, I was overruled"). But while fairweather fans who sent the single to No.6 in the UK and No.5 in the US only knew the chorus, *Paradise City* had a seedy underbelly, with the verse's darker nods to homelessness and poverty highlighting the gulf between idealism and reality. As Rose told *Hit Parader*: "The verses are more about being in the jungle, the chorus is like being back in the Midwest or somewhere."

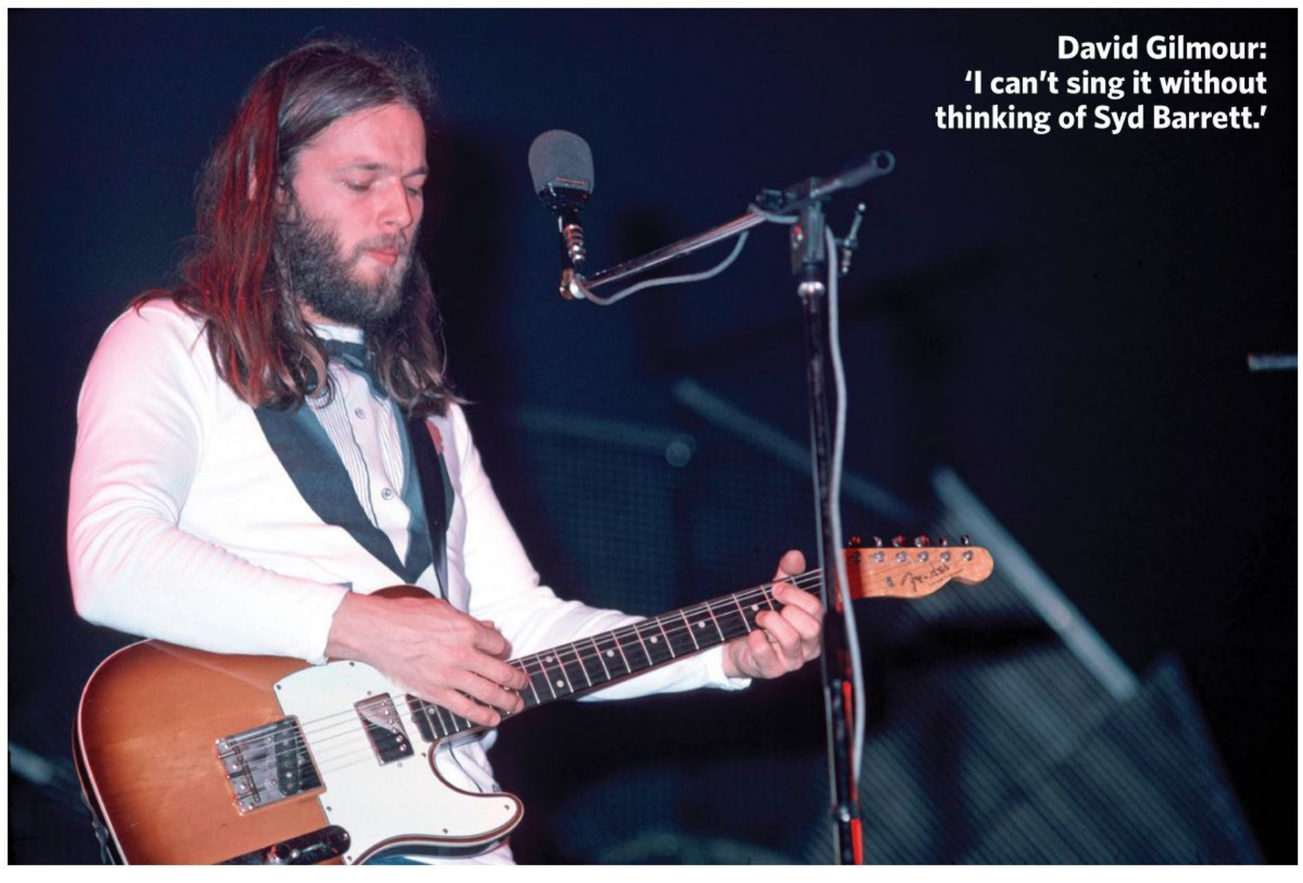
Meanwhile, even if he was outvoted, the impression that *Paradise City* remained Slash's song was underlined by the double-time outro and the guitarist's career-best solo: a virtuoso starburst that made every shredder in America take notice.

"The last time I saw Eddie Van Halen," noted Slash, "he really gave me some nice compliment on my solo in *Paradise City*…"


Guns N' Roses: the face of LA's 'seedy underbelly'.

38 *Pink Floyd*
Wish You Were Here

Rewind to January 1975, and Abbey Road hummed with bad vibes as Pink Floyd embarked on sessions for their ninth album, *Wish You Were Here*. With David Gilmour admitting to NME that 1973's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* had left them "creatively trapped", the follow-up album was the signpost to the great Floyd fallout.


David Gilmour: 'I can't sing it without thinking of Syd Barrett.'

And yet, even on a record that Gilmour remembers "started quite painfully", the title track brought a moment of easy serendipity and happy synergy between the members. "I had bought a 12-string guitar," he recalled. "I was strumming it in the control room of Studio Three at Abbey Road, and that [opening riff] just started coming out. Roger's [Waters, bassist] ears pricked up and he said, 'What's that?' I had a terrible habit of playing bits of songs by other people that were good. And I think Roger was a bit nervous asking, in case it came from something else, by someone else."

While Gilmour became "mildly obsessed" as he developed the guitar part, the band's brainwave was to open *Wish You Were Here* with the effect of a listener cycling through radio stations, alighting on Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, before finally settling on a distant-sounding 12-string riff, which is shortly joined by a warmer acoustic passage.

"The idea," he explained, "was that it was like a guitar playing on the radio and someone in their room at home, in their bedroom or something, listening to it and joining in. So the other guitar was supposed to be a kid at



YEAR RELEASED
1965

PRODUCER
Andrew Loog Oldham

Mick and Keith didn't fancy it as a single A-side, but in the halcyon days of the Brian Jones-era Stones, when the band was a six-way democracy and even Ian Stewart enjoyed an equal say in such crucial decisions, Jagger and Richards found themselves out-voted.

When you inhabit the mindset of the nascent Glimmer Twins it's easy to understand their reticence to release *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction*. They didn't hear stripped-back urgency, revolutionary fuzz guitar minimalism, an irresistibly surly soundtrack propelling a disaffected cri de coeur lyric, perfectly capturing an entire generation's overwhelming feelings of alienation. What they heard was an unfinished demo. When Keith awoke in the middle of the night with a riff nagging away at him, and bashed it out on a nearby acoustic into a portable cassette recorder before collapsing back to sleep, the riff he was hearing was a horn riff.

YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
PINK FLOYD

home joining in with the guitar he's listening to on the radio."

No less significant was Roger Waters's wistful lyric, with a standout couplet – *'We're just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl, year after year'* – that could be read as a nod to the bassist's unravelling marriage, but was principally a salute to original M.I.A frontman Syd Barrett.

"Although [*WYWH* opening track] *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* is specifically about Syd, and *Wish You Were Here* has a broader remit, I can't sing it without thinking about Syd," noted Gilmour in one documentary, "

Indeed, when the classic Pink Floyd line-up reunited in London at Live 8 in 2005, Waters and Gilmour made sure that the Hyde Park audience were in no doubt of *Wish You Were Here*'s subject matter as they performed the song on acoustic guitars. "We're doing this for everyone who's not here," announced the bassist, pointedly. "And particularly, of course, for Syd."



GETTY X2

37 *The Rolling Stones*
(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction

At this point in time (circa May '65), the Stones were deeply into their R'n'B/soul period. Four days after Mick Jagger wrote the lyric (lounging by a Florida swimming pool) the band set to work, with acoustic guitars and Brian on harmonica at Chess Studios in Chicago, before a move to RCA in Los Angeles where Keith laid down a repeated guitar figure (played through a Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone) as a guide to where the all-important brass parts were to be over-dubbed. But they never were.

Ultimately issued, according to Richards, as a substandard mix of a work in progress, the band first learned of *Satisfaction*'s release, when they heard it on the radio. "At first I was mortified," Keith recalls "Ten days on the road and it was number one nationally. The record of the summer of '65. So I'm not arguing."

Best not to. *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* defines the seductive vulgarity of the Stones' initial incarnation. Considered from today's perspective it sounds tame, positively polite, but in the up-tight, bowler-hatted, side-parted, pin-striped, pre-psychedelic sixties its distorted riff sounded like barbarians at the gate. Jagger's iconoclastic vocal, one moment the blasé whisper of the sated libertine, the next, sneering, contemptuous, demanding, refusing to know or accept its place.

If you want to hear *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* as it was originally envisaged by Mick and Keith, listen to Otis Redding's version on *Otis Blue*. If you want to hear the sound of history being made, stick with the Stones.



The Rolling Stones: *Satisfaction* guaranteed.

36 *Journey*
Don't Stop Believin'


Ba-da-bing!: *Sopranos* faves Journey.

When the screen cut abruptly to black and the strains of Journey's *Don't Stop Believin'* went silent at the finale of landmark 00s TV series *The Sopranos*, it might have symbolised the death of Tony Soprano, but it began a new life for Journey's enduring classic.

The song's revival provided an extraordinary new chapter in a fairytale story that began back in 1981 and continues to this day, *Don't Stop Believin'* has gone from humble beginnings to exist beyond the confines of genre. It has enjoyed an afterlife bathed in nostalgia for the version of American youth that it captured, a time long gone except in the memory.

But the song's huge success means that it's easy to lose sight of just what makes the song so great. Put simply, Don't Stop Believin' is a peerless example of musical genius. Everything about it is perfect, from the way Neal Schon's guitar comes twlnkling in from out of nowhere to elevate an already coruscating intro to celestial levels to Steve Perry's peerless delivery of the song's heart-burstingly optimistic message of optimism. And then there's *that* chorus – the melody that launched a thousand drunken singalongs.

Yet Journey's craft ran deeper than just their songwriting and musicianship. This was a band riding a creative high, even the most cursory listen to parent album *Escape* – still arguably the greatest AOR record ever released – reveals the aural



YEAR RELEASED
1986

PRODUCER
Bruce Fairbairn

You can thank the strippers of Vancouver for saving Bon Jovi's career. After two solid but underperforming albums, the New Jersey group knew they needed to hit the bullseye at the third time of asking.

Finishing up the album that would become *Slippery When Wet* in the Canadian city with producer Bruce Fairbairn, they were pretty sure they'd managed it. But to be certain, they did what any musician whose future was in the balance would do: they took it to a strip joint near the studio and blasted it out at full volume for the dancers and their customers.

"Thankfully everyone appeared to love it," recalled guitarist Richie Sambora. "That was such a big relief. I'm not too sure what we might have done if the reaction had been negative."

The strippers' instincts were on the money. *Slippery When Wet* would become one of the biggest-selling albums of the 80s. Its meteoric

YEAR RELEASED
1981

PRODUCER
Kevin Elson, Mike 'Clay' Stone

perfectionism that Perry in particular obsessed over. They were all sound freaks, none more so than the singer, whose knowledge of recording techniques and reproduction were matched only by his desire to get down on tape the things he was hearing in his head. He recalled spending two days in the studio trying to keep his spectacular longer notes on *Don't Stop Believin'* exactly in tune.

It's hard to go anywhere these days without being exposed to the song in some form. Aside from *The Sopranos*, it's made appearances in everything from *Glee* and *South Park* to *CSI* and *The Apprentice*. All across America innocent 'Stop' signs have been transformed into Journey tributes with the simple addition of two words, one either side.

Don't Stop Believin' has transcended its roots as a moderately successful early 80s rock song to become something bigger: an American national treasure.



GETTY X2

35 *Bon Jovi*
Livin' On A Prayer

rise was propelled by a trio of world-beating singles – *You Give Love A Bad Name*, *Wanted Dead Or Alive* and, making up the central prong of this magnificent trident, *Livin' On A Prayer*.

Livin' On A Prayer was the ultimate blue-collar MTV metal anthem – Bruce Sprinsgteen in hairspray and a tassled leather jacket. Co-written with hotshot songwriter Desmond Child, it centred around Tommy and Gina – a pair of working class Jersey Shore lovebirds trying to make their way in an unforgiving world. Inspiration for the song's protagonists came from close to home – Child based Gina on Maria Vidal, his ex-girlfriend and former bandmate in late 70s AOR-sters Desmond Child & Rouge.

"She worked as a waitress," Child revealed. "They called her Gina because she reminded them of [Italian actress] Gina Lollabrigida. So we started the song off with Johnny and Gina, because Johnny was my original name. And Jon said, 'I can't be singing about Johnny. My name's Johnny.' It was like, 'Okay, Tommy then.' And that's where Tommy and Gina were born."

The finished song was the perfect Reagan-era anthem – a tale of the triumph of love over adversity, delivered with the kind of commercial firepower that could flatten cities. Everything about *Livin' On A Prayer* was immaculate, from the brooding synth intro that gave way to the sound of jangling spurs and that instantly recognisable talk box effect, through to the genius-level "Whoah-oh!"s that rocketed its already-magnificent chorus up through the stratosphere and out into outer space.

Today, *Livin' On A Prayer* is the gold standard of 80s stadium rock, the unofficial anthem of New Jersey and, fittingly, the most-played song in the Garden State's strip clubs. Those dancers, they know the score.


Bon Jovi: the gold standard of 80s stadium rock.



GETTY/PAUL NATKIN

34 *Ozzy Osbourne*
Crazy Train

Summer '79, and West Hollywood's glitzy Le Parc Hotel has a nuisance guest. In the months since his ejection from Black Sabbath, Ozzy Osbourne has holed up in a suite he can scarcely afford, nursing "boxes of beer" and feeling "unhappy as fuck". Reports of the singer's state are sketchy – his most regular visitor is his dealer – but the rumour is that he's not long for the music industry, nor for this world.

"I really did think: 'This is the fucking end for me,'" Ozzy told *Classic Rock* in 2010. "I'd been booted out. I just got fucked up every day. Never went outside. Never even opened the drapes."

There is some debate over the roots of the band that resurrected Ozzy. His own recollection is that "one morning, Sharon just came round and told me: 'Get your shit together, I'll manage you.' Once she was in the picture, things got rolling." But bassist and co-writer Bob Daisley recalls the timeline differently, insisting Ozzy's future wife "had fuck-all to do with it when it started", and that he co-founded a line-up that was originally planned as an egalitarian band, not a star vehicle.



"It wasn't 'the Ozzy Osbourne solo record'," he said. "That's absolute bollocks."

Neither side, however, denies the impact of Californian guitarist Randy Rhoads. At their first meeting, at the offices of Jet Records in late 1979, Daisley recalls the ex-Quiet Riot guitarist as a wisp of a man. "I walk in and see this young guy. His clothes were very fitted, his hair was perfect, his nails were manicured."

Yet looks deceived. Rhoads brought a ferocious neo-classical guitar technique – and an irresistible riff that lit up the band's first writing sessions. Unusually, the *Crazy Train* lick was not in the standard metal keys of 'A' or 'E', marking the first time a guitarist had written to order for Ozzy's doomy holler. "In Sabbath," the Double-O noted, "they'd just write something and say, 'Put a vocal on that'. Randy was the first guy to make it comfortable for me."

Years later, questions would be raised over the authorship of the *Crazy Train* riff. "We were hanging out, and I showed Randy the riff to Steve Miller's *Swingtown*," said the guitarist's former Quiet Riot bandmate Greg Leon. "I said: 'Look what happens when you speed this riff up.' We messed around, and the next thing I know he took it to a whole other level").

Daisley, however, is adamant that "that signature riff in F-sharp-minor from *Crazy Train* was Randy's, then I wrote the part for him to solo over, and Ozzy had the vocal melody. The title came because Randy had an effect that was making a psychedelic chugging sound through his amp. Randy and I were train buffs, and I said: 'That sounds like a crazy train.' Ozzy had this saying 'You're off the rails!' so I used that in the lyrics."

Beneath the verse's piston-pump chug, however, the *Crazy Train* lyric tackled weightier themes than runaway locomotives. In echoes of Geezer Butler's observations on Sabbath's *War Pigs*, this new song carried an anti-conflict message, most notably in a final verse that referenced *'Heirs of a cold war, that's what we've become/Inheriting troubles, I'm mentally numb'*.

After fruitful rehearsals at Gloucestershire's Clearwell Castle, recording for Ozzy's *Blizzard Of Ozz* album began at Surrey's Ridge Farm studios in March 1980. While Daisley was given the nickname 'Sid Serious' for his perfectionism, Ozzy's behaviour was harder to call. "He'd start out pretty straight and sober, probably take a bottle of scotch in there with him," engineer Max Norman told KNAC. "He'd be nipping away at the scotch as we were doing a song… If he wanted to take a piss in the middle of the take, he'd do it right there on the floor."

By contrast, when it came to tracking the formidable Crazy Train solo, Rhoads was sober and laser-focused, playing and recording three near-identical passes of the tapping and dive-bomb-packed passage. "If you listen to *Crazy Train* real close," Norman told Jas Obrecht, "you'll hear there's one main guitar around the centre, and two others playing exactly the same thing, panned to the left and right. What happens is you don't hear them, you just hear it as one guitar. Randy was the best guy at overdubbing solos and tracking them that I've ever seen. I mean, he used to blow me away."

Released as a single in 1980, *Crazy Train* was only a minor hit (peaking at No.49 in the UK). But the song was a highlight of the subsequent Blizzard Of Ozz tour which lifted Ozzy out of the doldrums, and its influence on the guitar scene was inestimable.

"I remember the moment I first heard Randy," says Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello. "I was packed in the back of somebody's mom's hatchback in Libertyville, and *Crazy Train* came on. This blistering riff came at me, followed by an incredible solo, and of course there was Ozzy – I recognised his voice as the guy from Black Sabbath. By the end I was like: 'What just happened?' Randy was the greatest hard rock guitar player of all time."

YEAR RELEASED
1980

PRODUCER
Bob Daisley, Lee Kerslake, Randy Rhoads

33 *Led Zeppelin*
Rock And Roll

Having demoed some of their new ideas for their fourth album at Island Records' Basing Street studio in Notting Hill Gate, in January 1971 Led Zeppelin returned for two weeks to Headley Grange, the crumbling stone structure they had first lived and worked in the previous spring.

Sometime Rolling Stones piano player Ian Stewart and engineer Andy Johns arrived with the Stones' mobile recording studio loaded into a truck. Mic leads were run through the windows of the drawing room, its walls soundproofed with glued-on empty egg cartons. Stewart had brought his piano, and ended up adding his Johnnie Johnson 88-key style to a handful of works-in-progress, including what Jimmy Page would later describe as a "spontaneous combustion number" called *It's Been A Long Time* – soon to be retitled *Rock And Roll*.

As with so many of Zeppelin's best moments,



Led Zeppelin: it's been a long time...

Rock And Roll arrived out of thin air as the band were struggling to work on something else. "All of a sudden, between a take, John Bonham started doing the opening of *Keep A-Knockin'* by Little Richard," recalled Page. "He did that, and where the band would come in I came in with the riff that you all know. Dead on, straight in – straight in!"



YEAR RELEASED
1987

PRODUCER
Mike Clink

Guns N' Roses' debut album, *Appetite For Destruction*, defined them as the greatest rock'n'roll band of their generation. And no song was more definitive than its opening statement: Welcome To The Jungle.

It was one of the first songs written by the line-up that made Appetite For Destruction: singer Axl Rose, guitarist Slash, rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin, bassist Duff McKagan and drummer Steven Adler. At the time, Axl was living in Slash's mother's basement. And it was there that Welcome To The Jungle took shape.

"I had this riff," Slash recalls, "and I remember playing it for Axl on an acoustic guitar. I said: 'Check this out.'"

Axl liked what he heard. During the band's next rehearsal, that basic riff was developed into a fully structured song – one with a dirty, nasty groove. The title and lyrics came to Axl when he was visiting a friend near Seattle. Removed from

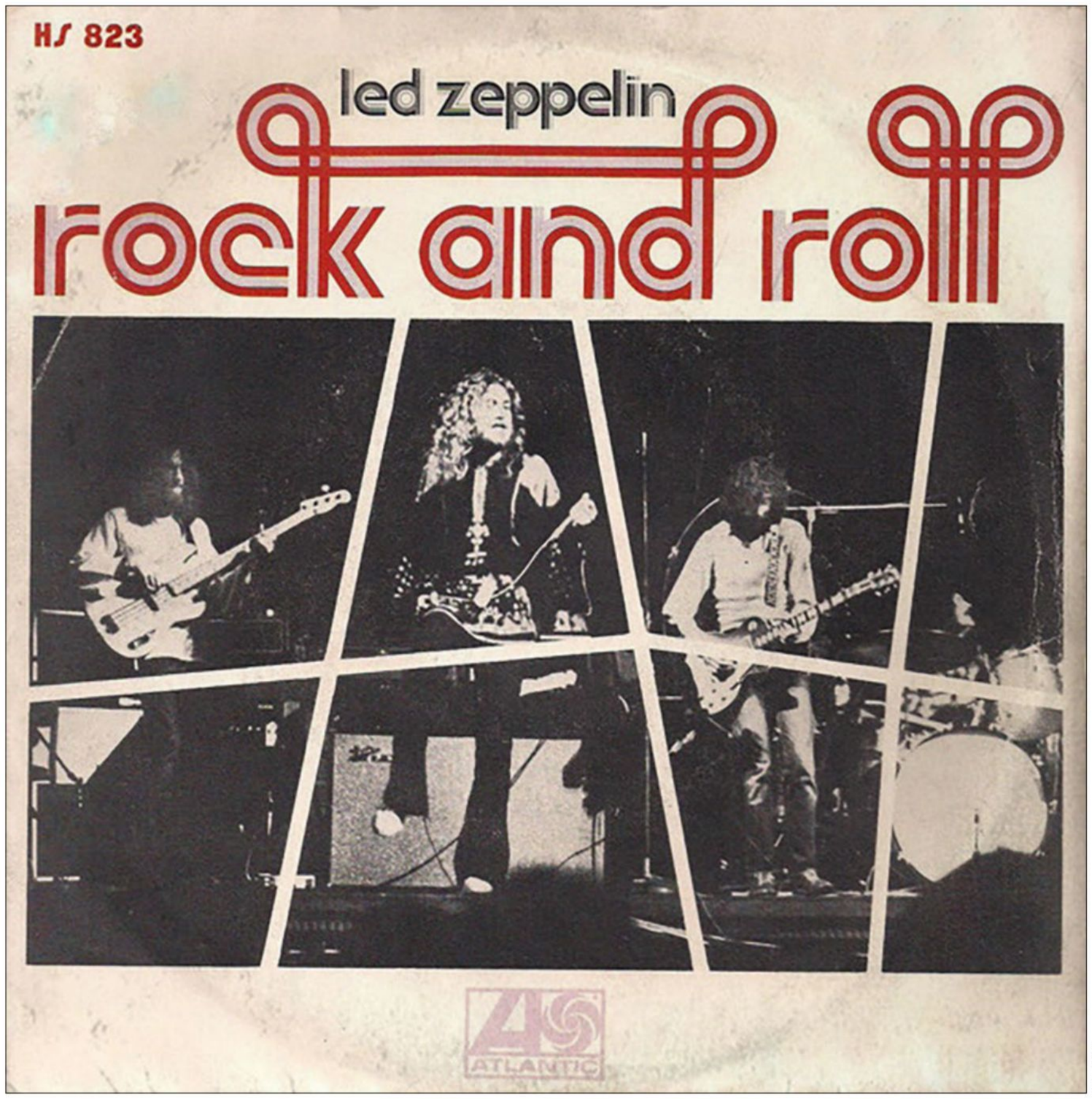
YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
Jimmy Page

It was, said Page, the sort of thing that could only have happened "all working together under those circumstances and having the freedom to be able to do that, not having to look at the clock, having the time to work on it when you really felt like you were connected to the work – never knowing quite what was round the corner".

Plant's lyrics, made up as he sang along, referenced The Diamonds, The Monotones and The Drifters as he sought to get a cohesive theme going, while elements of Page's guitar solo date back to *Train Kept A-Rollin'*. But you didn't need to know any of that to pick up on the retro yet futuristic feel of a number that looked back while clearly running forward in headlong fashion.

As such, *Rock And Roll* was the most obviously direct throw-down assault on the senses since *Whole Lotta Love*, a solid-gold crowd pleaser that would become one of the highlights of all Zep's live shows for the rest of their career.



GETTY X2

32 *Guns N' Roses*
Welcome To The Jungle

LA, the singer was able to reconnect with the feelings he had on arriving in the city in 1982 as a wide-eyed, 20-year-old escapee of rural Indiana, He wrote of the struggle for survival in this place: 'Ya learn to live like an animal/In the jungle where we play.' In one line, he alluded to the hedonistic impulses that threatened to derail his band: 'When you're high you never ever wanna come down.'



Nice 'n' sleazy: GN'R in 1987.

Amazingly for a song so raw and so full of bad vibes, it was a Top 10 hit in the US. It was the band's debut US single (in the UK, it followed *It's So Easy*), and as soon as the video picked up heavy rotation on MTV there was no stopping The Most Dangerous Band In The World. By July 1988, *Appetite For Destruction* was the No.1 album in the US.

For Slash, the song is testimony to the unique chemistry the original Guns had; something that is now lost forever. "*Welcome To The Jungle* has this high-velocity, high-impact, aggressive delivery," he says, "but there were a lot of emotional subtleties in the song that the band really grasped. If Axl went here, the band went with him. I really love that about the band and the music and how it all came together. There was something magical in all of that."

31 *The Who*
Baba O'Riley


The Who: Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend in full flight.

There seemed no end to Pete Townshend's ambition come the turn of the 70s. Not content with the success of sprawling rock opera *Tommy*, The Who's creative linchpin started work on an even more demanding project. The complex storyline of *Lifehouse* – set in a dystopian future where rock'n'roll has ceased to exist and society is enslaved by technology - involved theatre, astrology, philosophy and film. It was too much for Townshend to realise in the end, leading to a nervous breakdown. But he was able to salvage parts of *Lifehouse* for *Who's Next*, the band's 1971 studio album.

Baba O'Riley was one of those pieces. Beginning with a loop from Townshend's favourite new toy, the ARP synthesizer, the song grows wings with the introduction of piano and Keith Moon's crashing drums. By the time Townshend's fat power chords have entered the fray and Roger Daltrey makes his opening gambit – *'Out here in the fields/I fight for my meals'* – The Who are in full flight.

Its title brings together two prime influences. Meher Baba was the Indian spiritual master whose teachings had become central to Townshend's life, while minimalist musician Terry Riley had turned his head with his wondrous modal compositions. In *Baba O'Riley*'s original form within *Lifehouse*, under the working title *Teenage Wasteland*, the protagonists are groups of itinerant teens who live outside the framework of society.

The finished version, however, was inspired by The Who's experience at the Woodstock Festival in



YEAR RELEASED
1982

PRODUCER
Martin Birch

"Woe to you, oh earth and sea, for the devil sends the beast with wrath…" Has there ever been a more ominous introduction to a song than the spoken-word intonation that ushered in the title track of Iron Maiden's classic 1982 album *The Number Of The Beast*?

Maiden had fired singer Paul Di'Anno in the summer of 1982. His replacement was ex-Samson frontman Bruce Dickinson, though he might have regretted his decision when it came to recording this Steve Harris-penned track, partly inspired by a nightmare the bassist had after watching horror movie *Damien: Omen II*. Producer Martin Birch insisted the singer perform take after take of the semi-whispered vocal intro until he got it right.

"I got pissed off to the extent that I was trashing the room," recalled Dickinson. "When the tape was on, Martin asked me if I could do the scream at the end of the first verse. I was like, "Oh, willingly.'"

YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
The Who, Glyn Johns

August 1969. Townshend remembered "the absolute desolation of teenagers at Woodstock, where audience members were strung out on acid and 20 people had brain damage. The irony was that some listeners took the song to be a teenage celebration. 'Teenage Wasteland, yes! We're all wasted!'" Townshend himself takes over on vocals during the bridge: *'Don't cry/Don't raise your eye/It's only teenage wasteland.'*

As the song surges towards its climax, guest Dave Arbus (of Bristol proggers, East Of Eden) adds a violin solo that accelerates into a folk jig and a suitably breathless finale. *Baba O'Riley* is simply one of the defining moments in The Who's recorded catalogue. Even Townshend admits to having a soft spot for it. As he once told *Rolling Stone*: "I just hope that on my deathbed I don't embarrass myself by asking someone, 'Can you pass me my guitar? And will you run the backing tape of *Baba O'Riley*? I just want to do it one more time.'"



GETTY X2

30 *Iron Maiden*
The Number Of The Beast

The band wanted horror icon Vincent Price to read the song's intro speech, but he proved too costly – they instead went for voice actor Barry Clayton. The song's lyrics concern a man who stumbles across an occult ritual, only to be dragged into it. Famously, the titular number was 666 – the mark of the biblical Beast Of Revelation. At one point, the lyrics began to spill over into real life.

"On the Sunday we were working on the track *The Number Of The Beast*, it was a rainy night and I hit this van," Martin Birch said. "I looked in the back of the van and it's got about half-a-dozen nuns in the back. And then this guy starts praying to me. A couple of days later I took my Range Rover in to be repaired, and when they give me the bill it was 666 pounds."

Predictably, America's religious right didn't see the funny side, assuming Maiden were Satanists despite the song's cautionary message. "They completely got the wrong end of the stick," said an exasperated Steve Harris. "They obviously hadn't read the lyrics. They just wanted to believe all that rubbish about us being Satanists."

The Bible bashers couldn't prevent *The Number Of The Beast* becoming one of the songs on which Maiden's legend is built on. When Maiden play it live, it only takes a couple of seconds of that ominous intro before the fans are bellowing with such enthusiasm that the rest of the speech disappears. Proof that the devil really does have all the best tunes…


The *Beast*-ie boys: Iron Maiden with new singer Bruce Dickinson.

29 *Rush*
The Spirit Of Radio

Over the years, many established bands have attempted to update their sound, but Rush are one of the few bands that managed to pull it off. The Canadian trio's stylistic change can be traced back directly to *The Spirit Of Radio*, the opening track from their 1980 album *Permanent Waves*.

"I think that was a time when we made a concerted effort to move away from the long thematic songs, especially the full-side songs into something shorter," says bassist/vocalist Geddy Lee.

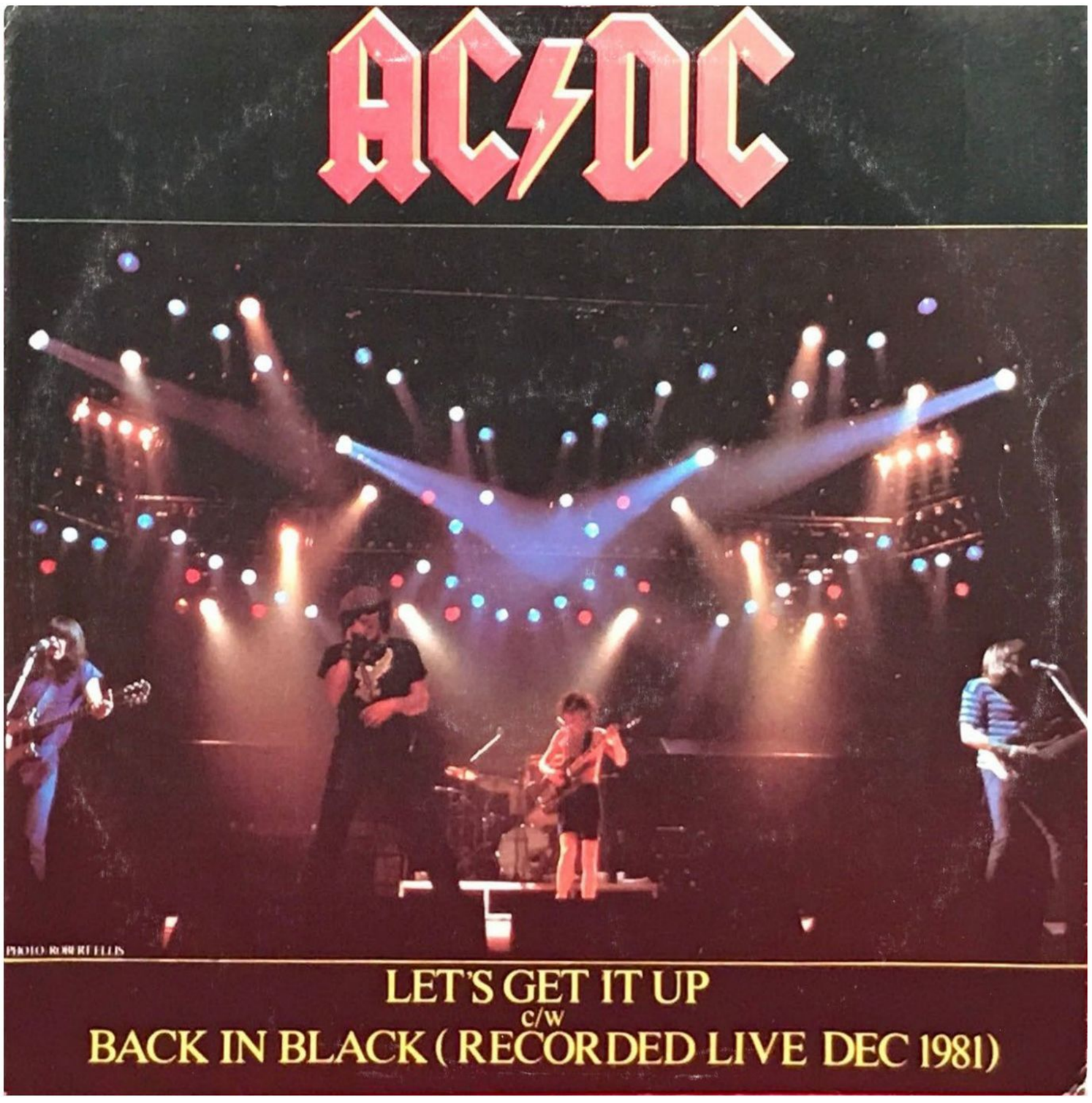


Rush: radio gaga.

Drummer Neil Peart wrote the lyrics to *The Spirit Of Radio*, as he did with virtually all Rush songs from 1974's *Fly By Night* album onwards. The song mourned the loss of the freefrom nature of FM radio in North America, towards a more monetised formula.

"The title was a common motto for radio stations at the time," says Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson. "Like, you'd hear [speaks in a DJ voice] 'The Edge, 102!' There was a station here in Toronto, CFNY, that used that as their call motto. But it wasn't really specifically about them – it was more about the idea."

Also included in the song's lyrics is a tip of the cap to Simon And Garfunkel's late 60s classic *The Sound Of Silence*: *'The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls, and tenement halls/And whispered in the sounds of silence'* became *'The words of the profits are written on the studio wall, concert hall/*



YEAR RELEASED
1980

PRODUCER
'Mutt' Lange

The Beano-era AC/DC's signature tune had no right to sound so indomitable. Having sold their first serious units with 1979's *Highway To Hell*, Bon Scott's lonely death had left the band "wrapped up in grief", and it took an intervention by the late singer's father to galvanise them. Recruiting Brian Johnson in April 1980 was a chink of light, but when the lineup reached the Bahamas' Compass Point Studios to start *Back In Black*, even the weather seemed complicit in their plight. "It was pissing down and all the electricity went out," recalled Johnson. "We had to lock the doors at night because [the owner] had warned us about these Haitians who'd come down and rob the place."

But from these hopeless straits, AC/DC snatched the greatest escape – and single finest song – of their five-decade career. On paper, Back In Black wasn't much more than a three-chord, open-position riff that guitarists Angus

YEAR RELEASED
1980

PRODUCER
TERRY BROWN



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Echoes with the sounds of salesmen.' "Just a play on words – Neil being a little clever," Lifeson says.

Fitting in with the song's lyrical meaning, Lifeson had a clear vision of what he wanted the opening guitar riff to sound like: "I just wanted to give it something that gave it a sense of static – radio waves bouncing around, very electric."

The band's transformation into a new, pop-friendly format was embodied by the unexpected burst of reggae in the break-down section, inspired by their appreciation of The Police. It worked – *The Spirit Of Radio* gave this perennial albums band their very first UK Top 20 single. Fitting, given the song's subject.

"We're always surprised when we have a hit anywhere. We've never really been a radio band," says Lifeson. "But, ironically, it made sense. I think it's a fairly catchy song. It's got some good pace to it, got a good chorus; I think the guitar riff and the sequencer underneath it is a very catchy musical moment."

28 *AC/DC*
Back In Black

and Malcolm Young had knocked around on the Highway To Hell tour. "Malcolm came in and played me a couple of ideas he had on cassette," recalled the younger brother, "and one of them was the riff for Back In Black. In fact, I was never able to do it exactly the way he had it on that tape. To my ears, I still don't play the thing right."

But what a riff. Straining at the leash during Phil Rudd's count-in, then landing with a monolithic thud, it was a pocket-sized symphony, brimming with attitude and reaching far beyond the hard-rock demographic into the mainstream. In a world still reeling from Eddie Van Halen's *Eruption*, this was a lick that anyone could play (Ozzy Osbourne's virtuoso future sideman Zakk Wylde recalled learning Back In Black and breathing a sigh of relief: "Thank God, I can play guitar"). But nobody played it quite like AC/DC.


AC/DC: *Back In Black* was a 'touching handover'.

Many didn't get past that deathless riff. But for those that did, at heart, Back In Black was a touching handover between two singers, with a lyric that found the incoming frontman saluting the old one. "They said, 'It can't be morbid, it has to be for Bon and it has to be a celebration'," noted Johnson in one interview. "I just wrote what came into my head, which seemed like mumbo-jumbo. 'Nine lives. Cats' eyes. Abusing every one of them and running wild'. The boys got it though. They saw Bon's life in that lyric."

27 *Aerosmith*
Dream On



Dreamin' on: Aerosmith see their name in lights.

Aerosmith frontman Steven Tyler was once asked about his band's aspirations when they got together in the wilds of Massachusetts all those years ago.

"We weren't too ambitious when we started out," came his reply. "We just wanted to be the biggest band on the planet."

By the mid-70s, they'd accomplished that ambition. But the Bad Boys From Boston did more than just repackage the Stones' low-down rock'n'roll and sell it back to America. They also bequeathed the power ballad to the world in the shape of the majestic *Dream On*, a song whose whisper-to-a-scream dynamics hitched the energy of rock to the showstopping drama of Broadway.

Tyler wrote the song in his parents' living room a few years before he joined Aerosmith. He knew it was promising, but it was only when he brought it to Perry and Whitford that he realised how special it was. "Sitting there working it out on guitar and piano, I got a little melodramatic," the singer said. "The song was so good it brought a tear to my eye."

When it came to recording *Dream On* during sessions for Aerosmith's self-titled debut album, the band found British-born producer Adrian Barber to be more hindrance than help. Tyler decided to take matters into his own hands, albeit with a little chemical assistance.

"I put the string section on *Dream On* sitting at this Mellotron while a friend of mine kept laying out lines of crystal THC that I was snorting while I was playing," he admitted.



YEAR RELEASED
1970

PRODUCER
Rodger Bain

The song that made Black Sabbath immortal began as an afterthought. It was June 1970, and the Birmingham metallers assumed their second album – tentatively titled *War Pigs* – was in the can. "Then the label suddenly said, 'You don't have enough songs,'" recalls guitarist Tony Iommi. "We didn't know what to do. Within a few minutes I came up with the riff to *Paranoid*, played it to the other guys and they liked it, so off we went. That's how simple *Paranoid* was – we wrote and recorded it in a day. We didn't want a hit single and we didn't expect it to be a single. We just did it as a filler track."

If Iommi's lean ascending lick was instantly memorable, Geezer Butler's rush-written lyric hardly suggested a crossover hit, the bassist supplying Ozzy Osbourne with a stormy diatribe whose unravelling narrator loses his woman and sees only despair in the world. When it came to the subject of mental health, Butler was no

YEAR RELEASED
1973

PRODUCER
Adrian Barber

Not everyone was as convinced. "To me, rock'n'roll's about energy and putting on a show," said guitarist Joe Perry. "I didn't really appreciate the musicality of it until later, but I did know it was a great song, so we put it in our set. We also knew that if you played straight rock'n'roll you didn't get played on the radio and, if you wanted a Top 40 hit, the ballad was theway to go."

At least that was the idea. Aerosmith was released in January 1972, reaching a modest No.59 in the Billboard Charts. But like so many great songs, it was a slow-burner. *Dream On* became central to Aerosmith's set, and when it was reissued in 1976 it gave them a Top 10 hit.

Years later, Tyler looked back on the track's popularity. "It was just this little thing I was playing, and I never dreamed it would end up as a real song or anything," he said. "It's about dreaming until your dreams come true." For Aerosmith, *Dream On* was the point where those dreams really did become reality.



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26 *Black Sabbath* Paranoid

dilettante: the bassist would later tell *Classic Rock* of his history of self-harming with knives and pins ("It was the only thing that could get me out of it"), and examined the toxic relationship between paranoia and depression. "I didn't really know the difference between [them]. It's a drug thing; when you're smoking a joint you get totally paranoid about people, you can't relate to people. There's that crossover between the paranoia you get when you're smoking dope and the depression afterwards."

The song's troubled subject matter aside, Butler argued that releasing *Paranoid* as a single was out of the question, given its similarity to Zeppelin's *Communication Breakdown*.

"When Tony came up with the riff," he told *Classic Rock*, "me and Ozzy spotted it immediately and went: 'Naw, we can't do that!' In fact we ended up having quite a big argument about it. Guess who was wrong?"

Once Paranoid pricked up the ears of label executives, the song's momentum was unstoppable: released in August 1970, it achieved Sabbath's career-best chart placing (No.4 in the UK), prompted a name change for the album, and drove that to an unprecedented UK No.1. None of which, it turned out, suited Iommi.


Park life: Sabbath celebrate the success of *Paranoid*.

"The *Paranoid* single attracted screaming kids," he wrote in 1998's *Reunion* sleevenotes. "We saw people dancing when we played it and we decided that we shouldn't do singles for a long while after that to stay true to the fans who'd liked us before we'd become popular."

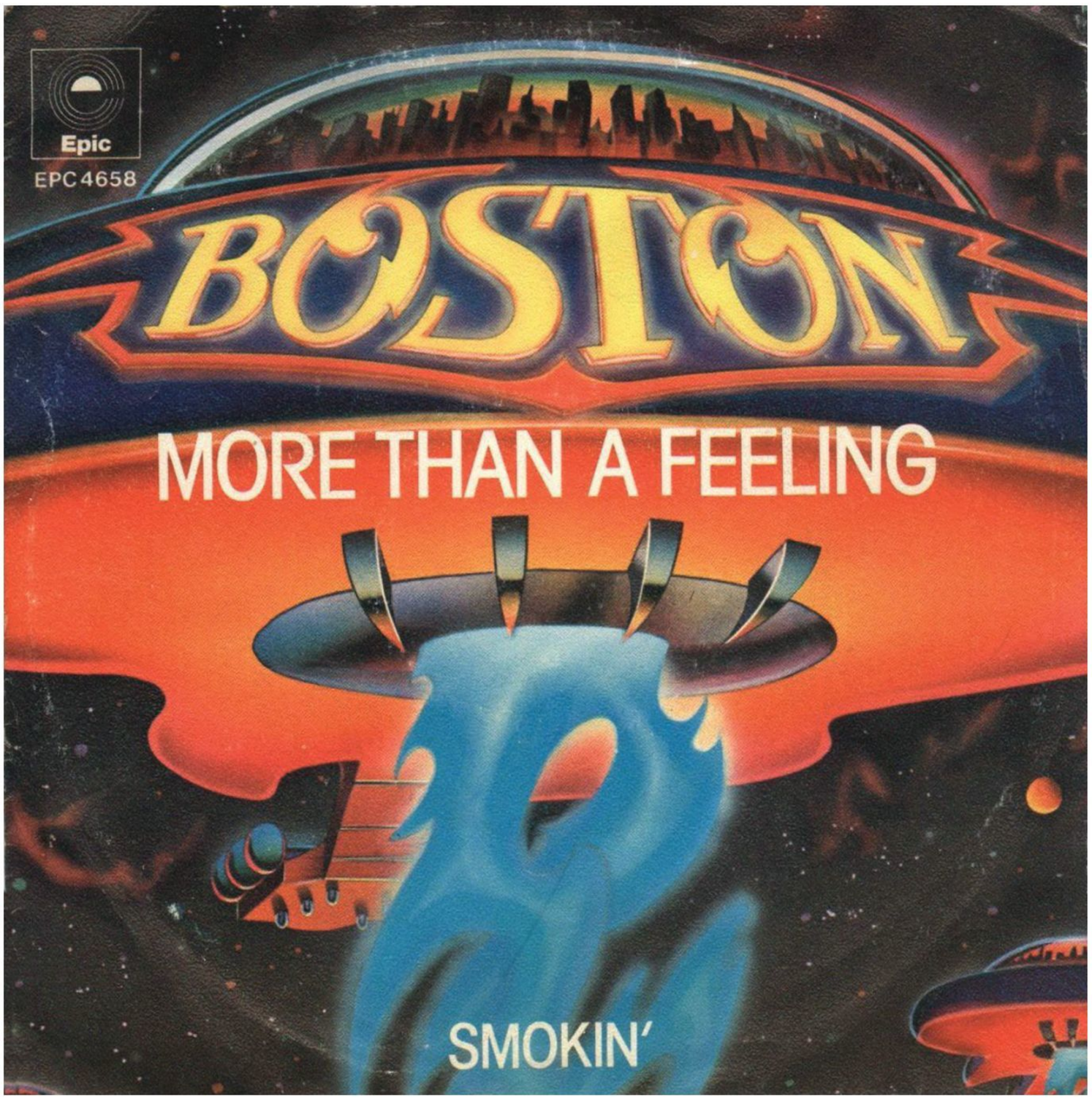
25 *Bruce Springsteen*
Born To Run


Bruce Springsteen: the future of rock'n'roll.

It was 1974, and Bruce Springsteen was feeling the twin pressures of critical acclaim and commercial apathy. The artist dubbed "the future of rock 'n' roll" in a much-quoted review by critic (and Springsteen's future manager) Jon Landau was two misfiring albums down, his major-label paymasters growing restless. "Cult artists don't last on Columbia Records," reflected Springsteen in his autobiography. "We miss this one, contract's up, and in all probability, we'll be sent back to the minors deep in the South Jersey Pines. I had to make a record that was the embodiment of what I'd been slowly promising I could do. It had to be something epic and extraordinary."

The genesis of *Born To Run* was less grandiose, Springsteen sketching the song while sat on the end of his bed, in a rented New Jersey cottage, with the '50s rock 'n' roll pioneers spinning from his record player into his subconcious. Later, he would salute Duane Eddy for the wiry guitar riff, Roy Orbison for the wounded croon, Chuck Berry for the car-and-girl imagery, and Phil Spector for the "ambition to make a world-shaking mighty noise, that sounded like the last record on Earth".

Despite having those giants in his corner, the song didn't come easy. Springsteen was still tinkering six months later, penning and binning clichés until he could "feel the story I was aching



YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
John Boylan, Tom Scholz

The story of Boston is the story of one man and his pursuit of perfection. For Tom Scholz, the leader of the group since its inception in the mid-70s, music is not just a vocation, it's an obsession. It was his genius – as a songwriter, arranger, multi-instrumentalist and producer – combined with a meticulous work ethic that made Boston one of the most successful rock acts of all time. And no song encapsulates them better than *More Than A Feeling*.

Former M.I.T. graduate Scholz was working as a technician at Polaroid in the early 70s when he recorded a demo feature several of the songs that would eventually end up on Boston's debut album, including *More Than A Feeling*.

"I cobbled something together from a few tape machines, some that I had bought as junk and got the parts," Scholz recalled. "I built my own little cheap demo recorder to start with, and gradually put a better studio together over the

YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, MIKE APPEL

to tell": a young couple fleeing the *'death trap'* and *'suicide rap'* of a US nowhere-town. Even then, the E Street Band struggled to flesh those bones, the lineup only nailing the magic take as the next act beat on the door of 914 Recording Sound Studios in Blauvelt, New York. "We had it," recalled Bruce. "We only did it once. But once is all you need."

As the fulcrum of 1975's *Born To Run* album, purposefully sequenced five tracks in, the song was everything Springsteen had shot for: a deathless anthem of escape and redemption, driven by kick-your-teeth-in drums, the feral growl of brass, and that eternally hopeful guitar riff, doubled by a chime that felt as cinematic as the lyric. Reaching No.23 in the US, and plastering its author across magazine covers from *Time* to *Newsweek*, the song ensured his career would never be the same again – but already Springsteen could feel his pact with the Devil. "I believed that along with the jackpot would come its terrible twin. I was right…"



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24 *Boston*
More Than A Feeling

years. This was where I did most of the work and developed *Peace Of Mind*, *Rock & Roll Band* and *More Than A Feeling*."

The process literally took years to complete, Scholz playing all the instruments himself and recruiting Brad Delp to sing on the tracks. After several labels turned them down, they were finally snapped up by Epic Records. Tom Werman, Epic's producer, recalled the moment he heard the demos: "After *More Than A Feeling*, which sounded quite like the final product, I stopped the tape. I couldn't believe that this music was actually available to us."

Scholz always knew that this was a special song. That's why it was placed as the opening track on Boston's self-titled album, and released as the flagship single. 40 years on, *More Than A Feeling* remains his and Boston's definitive statement. Everything about it is perfect: the melody, the arrangement, the multi-layered production, Brad Delp's wonderfully emotive lead vocal, a guitar sound like nothing ever heard before, and, of course, that revving riff famously echoed in Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit*.

A top five hit in the US, More Than A Feeling launched Boston's career in spectacular fashion. It also gave rise to a whole new subgenre: Adult Orientated Rock. After this, the floodgates opened for Foreigner, Journey, Toto and so many others to follow. Unquestionably, *More Than A Feeling* is Tom Scholz's masterpiece.


Boston: mainman Tom Scholz, centre back.

23 *Blue Öyster Cult*
(Don't Fear) The Reaper

Originally a track on Blue Öyster Cult's *Agents Of Fortune* album in 1976, *(Don't Fear) The Reaper* reached No.12 in the US, and also took the band into the UK Top 20 for the first (and last) time.

BÖC's biggest ever hit was born when guitarist/vocalist Donald 'Buck Dharma' Roeser sat down in 1976 to write songs for the East Coast group's fourth studio album. They had just returned from their first European tour, and were enjoying life as a big album-selling act. Having a hit single would make life all the more comfortable.



Roeser had already invested in a TEAC four-track tape recorder – what was then state-of-the-art technology. It was an important acquisition: "It completely changed the way that Blue Öyster Cult wrote songs," Roeser says now. "We all had TEAC machines, and they enabled us to flush out our nascent arrangement ideas into something that was so much more presentable to the rest of the band."

The introductory guitar lick for the song had come first, followed by the first two lines: *'All our times have come/Here but now they're gone'*. The rest, Roeser recalls, came together fairly easily over a two-month period while the band toured and rehearsed.

To this day, conjecture has surrounded the song's afterlife-themed subject matter. With a flowery and memorable guitar motif as its central theme, its haunting strains reminded us that the (Grim) Reaper is never too far away. Many times since the song's release, however, Roeser has denied suggestion that the song is about suicide.

"And I'll do so again right here," he insists. "That was never what I had in mind when I wrote it. It's more to do with recognising the inevitability of death, and postulating and celebrating the hope that there is an afterlife."

With its lyrical reference to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet being *'together in eternity'*, it's easy to see why people might assume the song is about a suicide pact.

"They're just a couple whose love – you assume – survives suicide," he explains. "It's not necessarily about suicide, but of course the Romeo and Juliet part was what made people believe that had inspired the song."

Roeser also puts paid to another couple of persistent myths surrounding …*Reaper*. One is that an almost fatal health scare of his own had given him the idea for it. The other is that Patti Smith supplies backing vocals on it .

"I wasn't what you'd call close to death, but a doctor did diagnose that I had a heart condition," he says of that illness. "Of course, it did cause me to start pondering my own mortality. My general health is good again now, but the incident definitely provided me with some timely food for thought. And Patti Smith was in our circle at the time," he adds, "but she didn't sing on that particular track."

The song's crucial line: *'Forty thousand men and women every day'* was a ball-park figure of how many people Roeser believed would pass away in any given 24 hours: "I had no way of knowing the exact numbers for sure, it was just guesstimate on my part."

And the following reference: *'Another forty thousand every day – we can be like they are'* alluded to spirits being reborn in earthly form to replace those that had died?

"Forty grand leaving, and then coming back again, every day. In other words, the population turns over but all of these life forces never truly go away."

Despite all of it, it would be unfair to call *(Don't Fear) The Reaper* depressing or morbid. It's actually haunting and uplifting. "To me, the mood of the music is eerie," Roeser offers. "That's the description I'd prefer to use."

Nevertheless, some people were only too willing to embrace the song's more sinister connotations, and for a while Blue Öyster Cult found their concerts picketed by placard-wielding do-gooders accusing them of doing the Devil's work.

"Our image certainly didn't help," says Roeser. "Right from the start we'd purposely cultivated a dark and mysterious persona. In the Bible Belt, those kind of people did sometimes start to get the wrong impression of what we were saying."

In later years, …*Reaper* was used in the closing credits for *The Simpsons*, was quoted in Stephen King's book *The Stand*, and its use of cowbell was even lampooned on hit US TV show *Saturday Night Live*. Has Roeser ever wondered how life might have been different had he not written it?

"Sure… briefly. It's kinda hard to say if we'd still be having this conversation now had I not. Had the song not been a hit and helped Blue Öyster Cult to become successful, there's every chance I'd have gone down the engineering or production side of music. Who can say for sure?"

"Its appearance in The Simpsons was one of this band's proudest moments," he chuckles. "I'm highly amused at the way it has rippled out into popular culture. I still enjoy playing it, and it doesn't bother me that we're still obliged to do so night after night. Some bands' signature songs make me cringe, ours doesn't.".

YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
David Lucas Murray Krugman Sandy Pearlman



GETTY

Blue Öyster Cult: Donald 'Buck Dharma' Roeser, left.

22 *Rainbow*
Stargazer

YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
Martin Birch

Less than a year after he walked out on Deep Purple, Richie Blackmore delivered a masterpiece with Rainbow's second album, *Rising*. On an album loaded with mighty tracks – *Tarot Woman, Starstruck, A Light In The Black* – the crowning glory was *Stargazer*, a nine- minute epic that combined Blackmore's love of classical music with vocalist Ronnie James Dio's vivid, fantastical lyrics.



Blackmore had largely dispensed with the musicians that had recorded the band's debut album, *Richie Blackmore's Rainbow*, retaining only singer Dio. The new line-up, featuring bassist Jimmy Bain, drummer Cozy Powell and keyboard player Tony Carey, had been broken in on a US tour. It was on that tour that they debuted several new songs, including *Stargazer*, before flying to Munich to begin recording the album that would become *Rising*.

The track was built around a cello-inspired main riff, but the highlight was Blackmore's uninhibited lead playing and searing slide work –a recent addition to his already superhuman repertoire. The sweeping, Eastern scales add to the grandiosity.

"It's amazing how many guitarists use the same old lines," says Blackmore. "They never dare touch Arabic or Turkish scales." For added grandeur, Blackmore brought in the Munich Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor Rainer Pietsch. But not everything went to plan.

"The orchestra was too flowery, and there was too much detracting from the simple melody," Blackmore says in retrospect. "We kept taking out parts, and I felt sorry for Rainer because he was so proud of this grandiose piece he had written. We got down to the bare bones, and mixed in some Mellotron to even out the orchestra not sounding cohesive or in tune."

The finished song was the towering centrepiece of the album – a monumental tale of enslaved villagers building a tower of stone for a wizard to fly to the stars from. With Dio's voice flying higher than it ever would over Blackmore's earth-shaking riff, the sound swelled by the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, this was nothing less than their *Kashmir*. There are many epic Rainbow tracks, but this is the mother of them all.

21 *AC/DC*
Whole Lotta Rosie

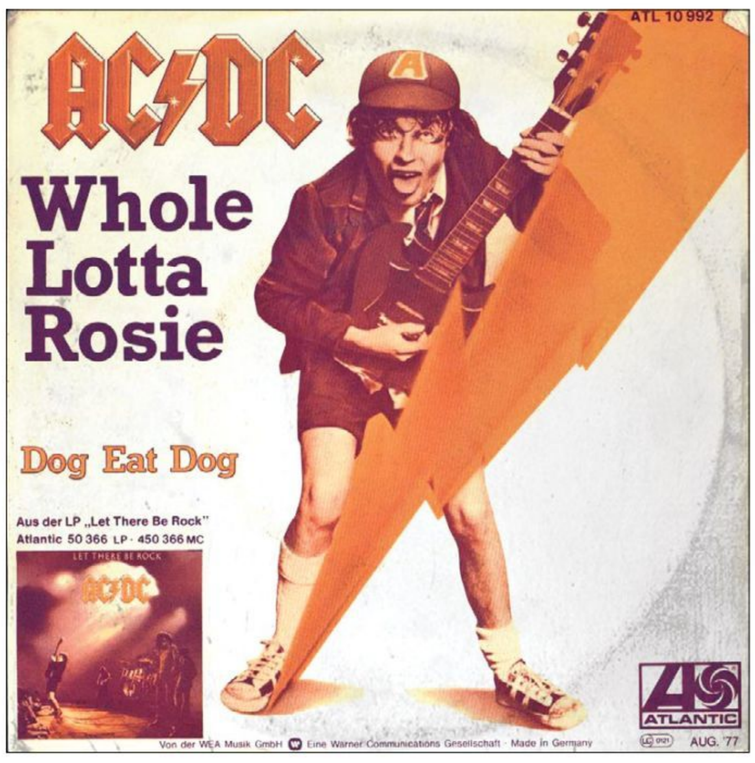
YEAR RELEASED
1977

PRODUCER
Harry Vanda, George Young

When future *Classic Rock* writer Geoff Barton launched a new heavy metal magazine named *Kerrang!* in 1981 it featured a poll of the 100 greatest heavy metal tracks of all time, as voted by the public. At number one, ahead of *Stairway To Heaven, Free Bird, Smoke On The Water* and *Stargazer*, was *Whole Lotta Rosie*.

It could have been very different. Originally called *Dirty Eyes*, the band initially struggled to make the song work. It only clicked after a week of work. And yes, the titular character was based on a real person.

"She was a Tasmanian girl," explained former bassist Mark Evans. "A massive girl. Bigger than the lot of us put together. There was a brothel out the back of the hotel we used to stay at in Melbourne, St Kilda, and Rosie used to run it. Then one day Pat Pickett, Bon's best mate and our stage guy, came running in saying: 'You've got to come and have a look at this! He's fucked her!' So I went in to Bon's room, and you could see this massive fucking whale of a woman on the bed, and you could see a little arm sticking out underneath with tattoos on it. Pat said: 'Look, he's in there somewhere!' She was a good sport, though, Rosie, a real good person to have around. I can't confirm or deny whether Rosie was her real name, but we knew her as Rosie cos she had red hair."



The original version of the song was on 1977's *Let There Be Rock*, but the definitive version is on the following year's live album *If You Want Blood You've Got It*, where the first blasts of riffing are interspersed with chants of "Angus! Angus!" from a rowdy Glaswegian audience. The idea of AC/DC without *Whole Lotta Rosie* is unthinkable. Hell, the idea of rock'n'roll without it is unthinkable.

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20 *The Beatles*
A Day In The Life


The Beatle in 1967: drugs may be involved.

The unprecedented evolutionary leap forward The Beatles made in the fifty months that separated *Love Me Do*'s tentative two-chord, moon-June, puppy love beat romance and the complex psychedelic sophistication of *Strawberry Fields Forever* was always going to be a hard act to follow. In the opening months of 1967 the band set to work on a series of recordings that would comprise their *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. One of the first tracks they worked on was a John Lennon composition: a series of episodic trippy fragments; snapshots from a chemically-heightened state of consciousness where glimpsed newspaper headlines precipitate evocative streams of lyricism.

A report of the tragic car accident that led to the death of Guinness heir and personal Fab-mate Tara Browne melds into the tale of a half-recognised politician nodding out while tripping at traffic lights. Lennon's pharmaceutically-enhanced dreamscape then drifts to another reality, to seeing a film where *'the English Army have just won the war'*. He'd just finished shooting Richard Lester's *How I Won The War,* which begs the question, how stoned was he during filming?

With each section punctuated by Lennon's clear assertion that he'd *'love to turn you on'*, there's little doubt *A Day In The Life* is a composition with its roots in LSD. But before the whole song decided it could fly and jumped off the roof into oblivion, Paul McCartney was on hand to provide the pacifying joint of a pleasantly stoned and nostalgic middle-eight. Following a 24-bar orchestral bridge



YEAR RELEASED
1970

PRODUCER
Rodger Bain

It's ironic that Black Sabbath were often painted as misanthropic harbingers of destruction and misery, when in fact there was a hypermoralist, humanist core to many of bassist Geezer Butler's early lyrics. Originally titled *Walpurgis*, a title rejected by Vertigo as "too satanic", *War Pigs* was born out of conversations Butler had with returning Vietnam veterans on American military bases in Germany. The bassist was trying to paint a fantastical, Hieronymus Bosch-style vision of hell on earth, skewering "war-mongers… the real satanists… the people trying to get the working classes to fight their wars for them."

The song itself was spawned from one of Sabbath's early sojourns to mainland Europe. "We ended up playing in this one place in Zurich, the Hirschen club," recalled guitarist Tony Iommi. "The place was as dead as a doornail. But it gave us the opportunity to jam and write, because we had so long to play."

YEAR RELEASED
1967

PRODUCER
GEORGE MARTIN



that saw 40 classical musicians unaccustomed to improvisation, invited to take whichever route they fancied from the bottom note in their particular instrument's E major chord to the top, we're back in Liverpool. The alarm's gone off. We run for the bus, leg it up to the top deck, spark up a doobie and rapidly ascend into nicotine-stained nirvana.

A humdrum story from the Lancashire Evening Telegraph revealing that there are 4,000 potholes in Blackburn's roads accounts for one half of a final verse, while Lennon's friend Terry Doran's speculation that these probably amount to enough holes to fill the Albert Hall, accounts for the other. Another opiate-rush of an orchestral ascent takes us to the song's conclusion: a massive E major with George Martin on harmonium and Lennon, McCartney, Ringo Starr and roadie Mal Evans on three pianos. And George Harrison? As The Beatles' invention reached its zenith, George's only recorded contribution to *A Day In The Life* was to play maracas.

19 *Black Sabbath* War Pigs



Cross purposes: *War Pigs*-era Black Sabbath.

GETTY X2

It was there that Iommi hit upon its iconic two-chord riff, Butler and drummer Bill Ward's swinging, jazzy rhythm acting as a counterpoint to the stop-start dynamic. When they came to record the song, producer Rodger Bain and engineer Tom Allom also made an important contribution, underpinning Iommi's spiralling solo with a contrasting guitar line and speeding up the end of the song to accentuate its chaotic feel – a decision the quartet were initially uncomfortable with, but let go, correctly believing that no one would listen to them anyway.

More than half a century on, *War Pigs* is still one of the most ridiculously thrilling songs ever performed by human beings. You don't have to be aware of all the noted artists and bands that have covered it – ranging from Faith No More's straight but scintillating version from *The Real Thing* through to quirky art punks Alice Donut's trombone-led demolition on 1990's *Revenge Fantasies Of The Impotent* – to see how fundamental this epic and grandiose eruption of heavy, heavy thunder is to the entire genre of heavy metal.

War Pigs has become part of metal's sonic DNA, from its bewildering succession of colossal riffs to Geezer Butler's powerful anti-war lyrics, delivered with youthful aplomb by Ozzy Osbourne. It's a towering template for intelligent, rampaging heaviness that still sends shivers down the spine of most sensible listeners. And yes, Geezer did rhyme *'masses'* with *'masses'*, but so what? It's *War Pigs*. It rules – and those words do rhyme, let's face it.

18 *Thin Lizzy*
The Boys Are Back In Town



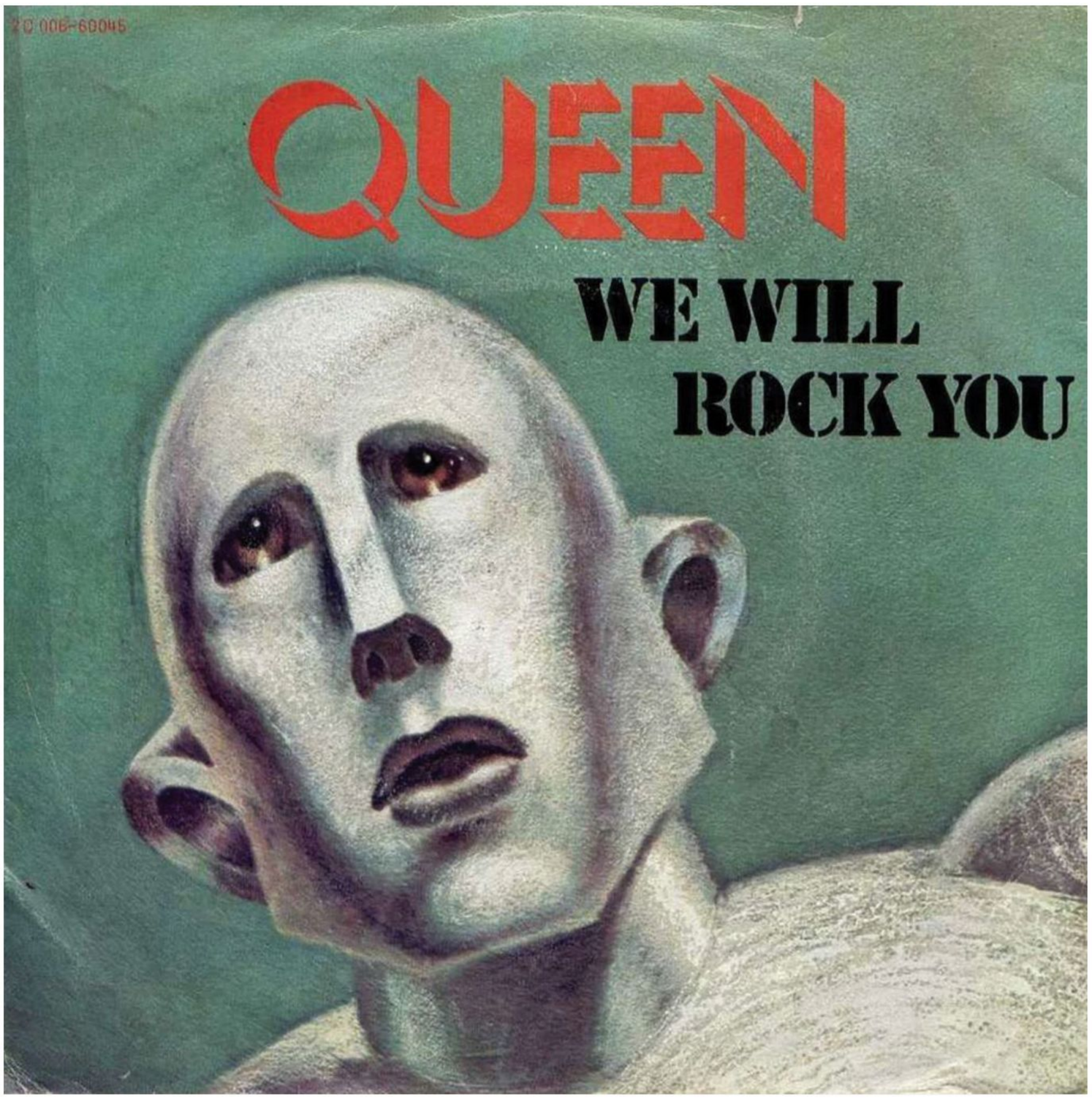
Thin Lizzy in 1976: the heart of Saturday night.

It seems crazy now that a band as beloved as Thin Lizzy would've ever needed a hit, but that's exactly where the band found themselves in 1976.

The band were still trying to break in America – frontman Phil Lynott's holy grail – but sales of their sixth album were sluggish, and it's not like the first five bothered the charts either. Attendance at gigs was sparse, and the label was growing impatient. And then it happened, quickly, inexplicably, wonderfully. A true rock n roll fairytale. A radio station in Louisville Kentucky picked it on *The Boys Are Back In Town*, creating a ripple that quickly engulfed the country. It rose to No.12 in the Billboard charts in the US (No.8 in the UK) and turned the band - briefly- into superstars stateside.

Lizzy were just as surprised as everybody else. They'd rejected it for the album, until one of their managers encouraged them to swap it in at the last minute. And with that, rock history was made.

Even on first listen, you can see why it had such a viral impact – it feels good. It feels great, actually, from the soaring twin guitars from Scott Gorham and Brian Roberston to Phil's intimate story-telling about blustery cool dudes chasing girls and breaking jaws. The song represented an ideal - the heart of Saturday night in the heart of the city during



YEAR RELEASED
1977

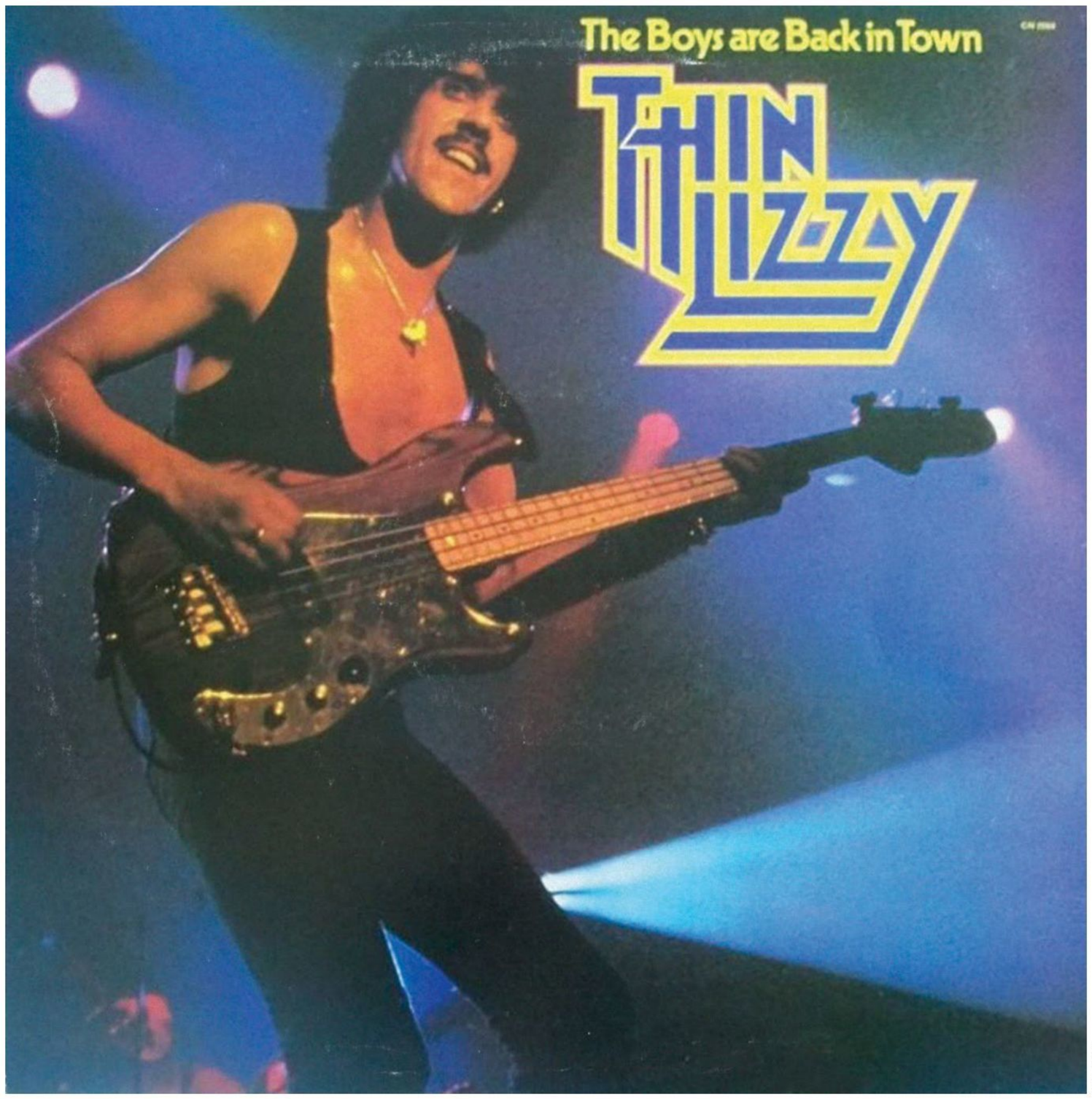
PRODUCER
Queen, Mike Stone

With its captivating 'dum-dum-DUM' rhythm and whiplash vocals, topped off by that marvellously bugling guitar solo, *We Will Rock* was the first real rock anthem to gain traction since the heyday of what we now think of as classic rock. Populist, all-inclusive, this was the 'come on in, the water's fine' rock anthem at its most affecting. A 'three ages of man' song for the people to sing along to; to clap their hands and stamp their feet to.

It's almost unthinkable that a song this wilfully primitive was written by the same band that created *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Released in 1977, at the height of the punk explosion, parent album *News Of The World* was Queen's attempt to get back to basics after the gloriously over-cooked one-two of *A Night At The Opera* and *A Day At The Races*, and its opening track perfectly encapsulated that

YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
John Alcock



GETTY X2

the heart of the summer - that no one else, before or since, has been able to accurately capture. The world of *Boys…* is the one you want to live in, the one you either aspire to or reminisce about over endless pints, crystalized in three glorious minutes. It was the feel-good song of the summer of '76, and it still is. It's the soundtrack to every knuckle sandwich you ever gave (or got), and it maintains a kind of timelessness that most bands can only dream of.

Sadly Thin Lizzy were never able to quite capture that lightning in a bottle again, and while the band continued to rise in prominence back home, they never really conquered the US. They're still mostly considered a one-hit wonder in America, but that's America's loss, really. And at least they got the band's boundless charm for one brief and vital moment. If this is not your favorite song, it should be.

17 *Queen*
We Will Rock You

spirit – aside from Brian May's solo, the song consist of nothing but percussion and vocals.

We Will Rock You was deliberately engineered for maximum interaction. The spark came after May noticed fans singing football anthem *You'll Never Walk Alone* at the end of a gig. "I went to bed thinking, 'What could you ask them to do?'" the guitarist said. "They're all squeezed in there, but they can clap their hands, they can stamp their feet, and they can sing," he noted. "In the morning I woke up and had the idea in my head for *We Will Rock You*."

The song was recorded in London's Wessex Studios, a disused church. Ironically, for all its percussive wallop, it didn't actually feature any drums. Instead, the rhythm came from the band, their roadies and even the studio's tea lady, Betty, stamping their feet on some old boards May found lying around. Multi-tracked, it sound like the war-dance of an invading army – precisely the effect they were going for.

We Will Rock You was released as a double A-side with the equally triumphalist *We Are The Champions*, the song that followed it on *News Of The World*. It proved to the perfect pairing: both songs were swiftly embraced by sports teams across the US. Today, *We Will Rock You's* elephantine stomp echoes around football stadiums and hockey arenas across America and the rest of the world. Altogether: Dum-dum-DUM. Dum-dum-DUM…


Queen: 'dum-dum-DUM!'

16 *Derek And The Dominos*
Layla


Eric Clapton: '*Layla* still knocks me out when I play it.'

"I'm incredibly proud of that song. To have ownership of something that powerful is something I'll never be able to get used to," said Eric Clapton of *Layla* in 1988. "It still knocks me out when I play it."

One of the most recognisable rock songs, *Layla* begins with a seven-note riff of awesome expectancy, followed by an intense, intoxicating cry of unrequited love: *'What'll you do when things get lonely?'*

It was directed at Pattie Harrison, wife of ex-Beatles George Harrison. Clapton was trying to lure her away from her husband, with whom he was good mates. That wasn't widely known when the song appeared in 1970 on the Derek And The Dominos album *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs*, but it was obvious to all concerned.

Sessions for the record had been sluggish before producer Tom Dowd took Clapton to see The Allman Brothers play during a break from recording in Miami. Within days, Clapton had invited Duane Allman to play on the album. Allman's presence suddenly kicked things into gear, transforming the atmosphere as he and Clapton brought out the best in each other.

Clapton's earliest version of the song was much slower than the finished one. What Allman did was to change the song's dynamic by speeding up the opening riff.

But it wasn't just the riff. Tom Dowd recalled layering six guitar parts on the track. "There's an Eric rhythm part, three tracks of Eric playing harmony and the main riff, one of Duane playing that beautiful bottleneck, and one of Duane and Eric locked up, playing counter melodies," Dowd



YEAR RELEASED
1968

PRODUCER
Jimi Hendrix, Chas Chandler

In 1985, Bob Dylan – who had written *All Along The Watchtower* back in 1967 – declared: "I liked Jimi Hendrix's record of this, and ever since he died I've been doing it that way… Strange how when I sing it, I always feel it's a tribute to him in some kind of way."

Praise indeed, and with these words Dylan revealed his understanding of the impact of Hendrix's cover, a wholly different beast to the more thoughtful original. The reverb-loaded intro of the new version manages to be impactful and atmospheric at the same time, and the famous solo which prefaces Hendrix's first vocal is clean, plangent and wistful – a far cry from the overdriven firestorm which he would unleash live.

Note that the name of Hendrix's game here is subtlety rather than ferocity; witness the simple bujt effective slides and swells which he employs in his solos for evidence. Two years into full-blown stardom, he was emphasising feel as

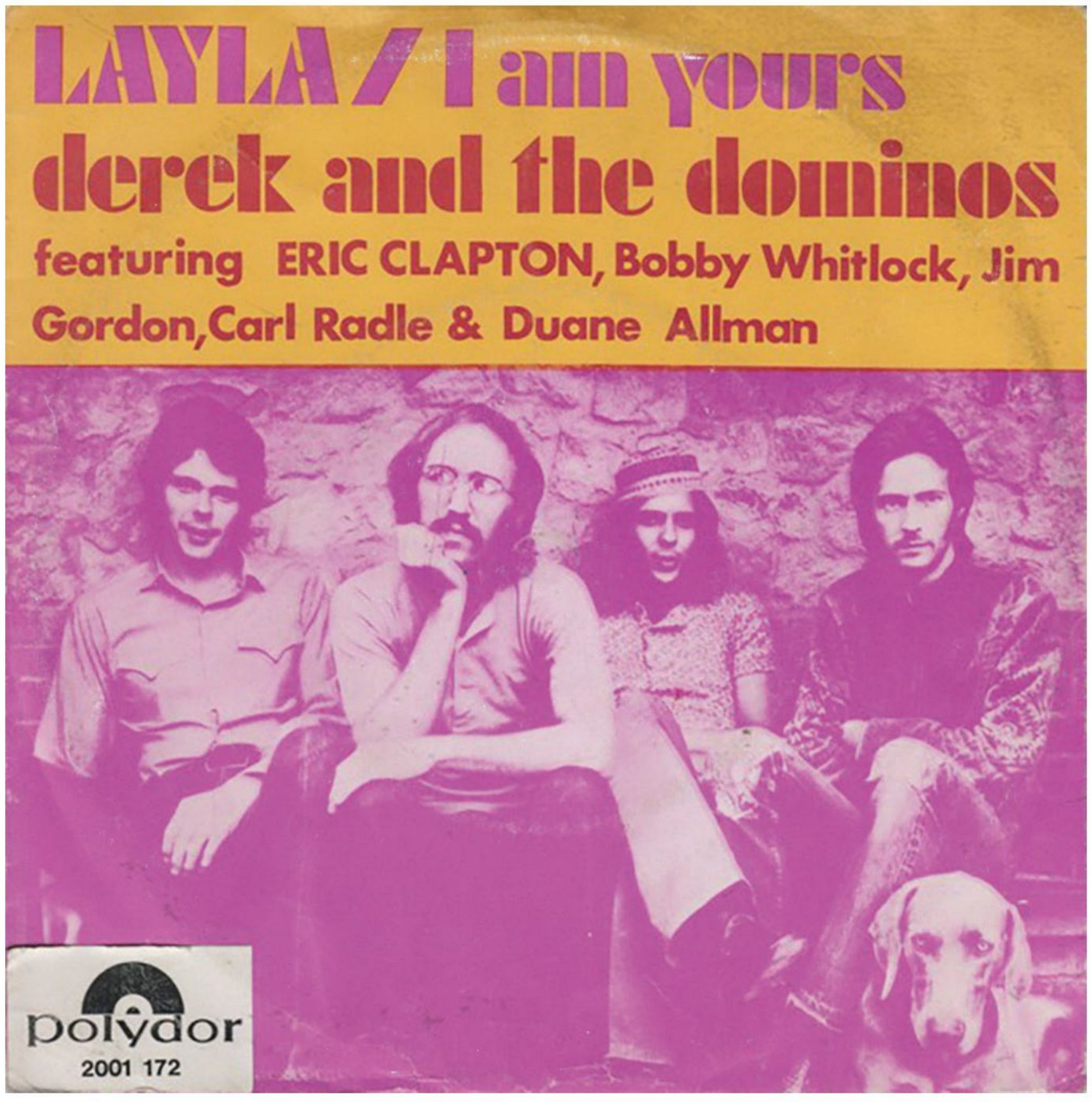
YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
Tom Dowd

said. "There had to be some kind of telepathy going on, because I've never seen spontaneous inspiration happen at that rate and level."

The finished number had a piano coda added three weeks after the song had been recorded. It was credited to drummer Jim Gordon, but *Layla* keyboard player Bobby Whitlock claimed that Gordon had stolen it from his then-girlfriend, Rita Coolidge – it certainly sounds similar to the Coolidge-penned *Time*, released by Booker T. and Rita's sister Priscilla in 1973.

The piano coda was not on the version of *Layla* released as a single in the US in 1971, which reached No.51 there. When the full, seven-minute version came out the following year it made No.7 in the UK and No.10 in the US. By that time Derek And The Dominos had broken up amid drug-fuelled paranoia, and Clapton was sinking into full-blown heroin addiction, leaving Layla to stand as testimony to a band that was never built to last.



GETTY X2

15 *Jimi Hendrix Experience*
All Along The Watchtower

much as ability, as a mature artist in the full bloom of his talent.

Hendrix, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell recorded the song in January 1968 at Olympic Studios in London. The session didn't go smoothly, due to tensions between the musicians: according to engineer Eddie Kramer, Redding walked out in the middle of the session; the bass part was initially played by Dave Mason of Traffic, who also contributed 12-string guitar. Hendrix, no mean bassist himself, eventually recorded Redding's part. Brian Jones, then of the Rolling Stones, was also present, and played a percussion instrument called a 'vibraslap', which accounts for the thud at the end of each bar in the introduction. Jones also played a piano part, although this was unused.


The Jimi Hendrix Experience: an artist in full bloom.

All Along The Watchtower still wasn't complete, however. The sessons moved to the Record Plant studio in New York City, where engineer Tony Bongiovi witnessed Hendrix adding layer upon layer of additional guitar tracks, erasing previous parts as we went along. Once the song was finally complete, it was kept for the *Electric Ladyland* LP in October '68, and released itself a month before the album.

The single reached No.5 in the UK and No.20 in the USA, two years before Hendrix's untimely death. His cover of Dylan's masterpiece is still widely accepted as the definitive version, not least by its writer.

14 *The Rolling Stones*
Gimme Shelter

"You get lucky sometimes," Keith Richards says of *Gimme Shelter*, the greatest song he ever wrote. "It was a shitty day. I had nothing better to do."

The tone is lightweight, almost laughable. Yet the song was wrought from the heaviest of materials. The Rolling Stones were still trying to climb out of the career-grave that their critically derided 1967 album *Their Satanic Majesties Request* had left them in, their plans thwarted by the rapidly disintegrating physical and emotional state of founder-member guitarist, Brian Jones.



Their 1968 follow-up, *Beggars Banquet*, recorded largely with just Keith on guitar, had been a classic, but their final hit with Jones, *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, had been their only chart single in the UK for 18 months. Now with Keith's old lady, Anita Pallenberg, filming sex scenes with Mick Jagger for the movie *Performance*, Keith's mind was all doom and gloom as he sat snorting coke and heroin at gallery owner Robert Fraser's Mayfair apartment one stormy day that autumn.

Lounging with his guitar in a room decorated with Tibetan skulls, tantric art and Moroccan tapestries, chain-smoking and depressed at the thought of Anita being with Mick, Keith began to strum as lightning flashed across the London sky.

"It was just a terrible fucking day," he recalls in his memoir, Life, "this incredible storm over London. So I got into that mode – looking at all these people… running like hell."

Leaning on the same open chords that had become his signature, he crooned, 'Oh, a storm is threatening, my very life today.' Sounded good. He continued to strum, added another line: *'If I don't get some shelter, oh yeah, I'm gonna fade away…'*

Six months later, when the Stones reconvened to begin work on their next album, *Let It Bleed*, the song of ultimate doom Keith had begun that stormy day, now titled *Gimme Shelter*, was among the first he and Jagger began working on with producer Jimmy Miller. It would be another six months, though, before they'd finished with it. In the meantime the Stones went through the most turbulent period of their career.

After Jones, who had officially been ousted from the group in June '69, was found dead in his swimming pool just three weeks later, the Stones went ahead with their planned free concert in Hyde Park, with new guitarist Mick Taylor. They also announced their first US tour for three years, due to start in November. First though, they had to complete the album.

Miller argued there was something missing from *Gimme Shelter*, something that would turn good into great.

They found what they were looking for in 20-year-old Merry Clayton. Suggested by producer and long-time Stones acolyte Jack Nitzsche, Clayton had made her name through duets and backing vocals for Ray Charles, Burt Bacharach and Elvis Presley, among many others.

She laughingly recalls how she was about to go to bed when she got Nitzsche's call: "I was pregnant and I thought, there's no way in the world I'm getting out of bed to go down to some studio in the middle of the night."

He husband, jazz saxophonist Curtis Amy, talked her into it.

"I'm wearing these beautiful pink pyjamas, my hair was up in rollers. But I took this Chanel scarf, wrapped it round the rollers so it looked really cute, went to the bathroom and put on a little lip blush, 'cos there's no way I'm going to the studio other than beautiful!"

Throwing a fur coat around her shoulders, she turned up at the studio "ready to work". She admits to being somewhat nonplussed when she read the lyrics Jagger handed to her.

"I'm like, *'Rape, murder…*? You sure that's what you want me to sing, honey? He's just laughing. Him and Keith."

They began the session, and the effect was instant. "You listen to the original tape you can hear Mick whooping and hollering in the background," Merry says.

It was the perfect opening track for *Let It Bleed*. Everything the Stones were glorified as – the greatest, most legendary, most daring and sophisticated and dark and evil and sexy and cool rock'n'roll band in the world – would be summed up in its four-and-a-half apocalyptic minutes.

There would be a grim postscript to the story of *Gimme Shelter*. While it became the most praised album-only track in the Stones canon – "Ecstatic, ironic, all-powerful, an erotic exorcism for a doomed decade," said *Newsweek* – it also became the emblem of the moment when the 60s dream flared into the 70s nightmare.

Released on the same day in December 1969 as the Stones' ill-starred appearance at Altamont Speedway in northern California, at which teenager Meredith Hunter was stabbed to death by Hells Angels, G*imme Shelter* would also become the all-too appropriate title of the Maysles brothers' documentary film of that debacle: the moment when the Stones' music seemed to become a mythic force unto itself. Or as the author and academic Albert Goldman put it: "An obsessively lovely specimen of tribal rock… rainmaking music [repeating] over an endless drone until it has soaked its way through your soul."

YEAR RELEASED
1969

PRODUCER
JIMMY MILLER

The Rolling Stones in 1969, with soon-to-be-deceased guitarist Brian Jones (centre).



GETTY/ MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

13 *Pink Floyd*
Shine On You Crazy Diamond

A cornerstone of the band's stellar cannon, David Gilmour has called *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* "the purest Floyd song", the summation of their mid 70s development. The entire thing unwinds across some 26 minutes, split over two parts, marked by Gilmour's distinctive four-note guitar figure and undergoing a series of inspired transformations that involve lap steel, distorted riffs, tenor sax and multi-tracked synths.


Diamond geezers: Floyd in 1974.

The seeds for the song emerged during a relaxed rehearsal session in London's King's Cross. "*Shine On You Crazy Diamond* was written with odd little musical ideas coming out of various people," recalled Roger Waters. "The first one, the main phrase, came from Dave; the first loud guitar phrase you can hear on the album [*Wish You Were Here*] was the starting point, and we worked from there until we had the various parts."

As was their custom Floyd road-tested the song on an American tour in 1974, and by the time they entered Abbey Road studios in January 1975, they had decided to split the song into two halves: *Parts 1-5* and *6-9*. The biggest problem was Waters's vocal sessions.

"It was right on the edge of my range," the bessist recalled. "It was fantastically boring to record, cos I had to do it line by line, doing it over and over again just to get it sounding reasonable."

Waters had conceived the lyrics as a tender tribute to Syd Barrett, then in the midst of a descent into mental illness. Like the music itself,



YEAR RELEASED
1987

PRODUCER
Mike Clink

If sleaze and danger were the initial selling points of Guns N' Roses' debut album *Appetite For Destruction*, what transported it from trash-rock cult status into the realms of all-time rock classic was the album's only near-ballad: *Sweet Child O' Mine*. With its captivating guitar motif and unashamedly poetic lyrics – *'Her hair reminds me of a warm safe place/Where as a child I'd hide'* – *Sweet Child...* proved there was more to Guns N' Roses than just a bad attitude.

Yet this classic song was very nearly consigned to the dustbin of history before it was even written. Slash, who came up with the immortal riff that powers the song while noodling on his guitar, very nearly discarded it. But Axl Rose spotted the nascent song's potential, and persuaded him to keep it, adding a set of heartfelt lyrics inspired by the singer's then-girlfriend Erin Everly. Even then, his bandmates were underwhelmed.

"It was kinda like a joke, because we thought: 'What is this song? It's gonna be nothing,'"

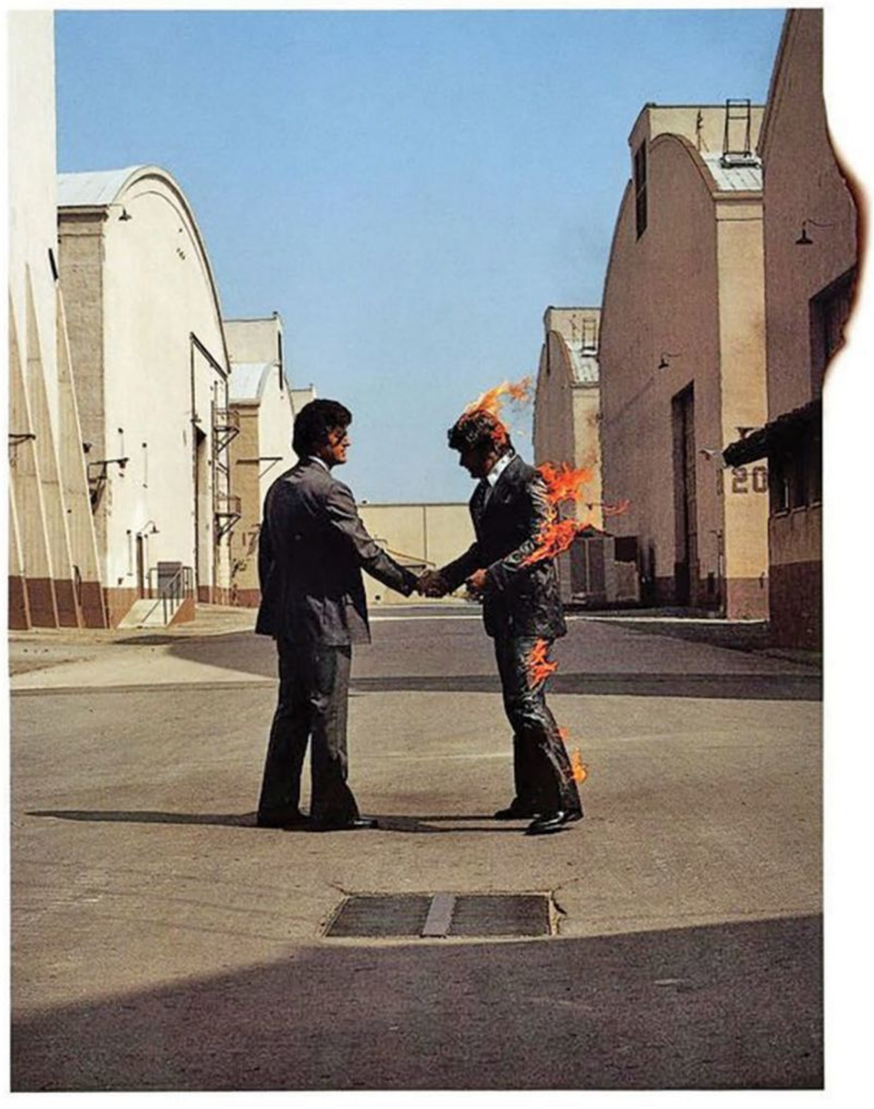
YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
Pink Floyd

it's a malleable construct, bittersweet feelings of regret tied up in the memory: *'Remember when you were young /You shone like the sun/Shine on you crazy diamond/Now there's a look in your eyes/Like black holes in the sky.'*

The recording of the song also coincided with one of the most famous incidents in Floyd mythology, when Barrett himself – bald, overweight and with shaved eyebrows – wandered into Abbey Road studios during the mixing stage of the track. It was some time before the band even recognised him. "He just, for some incredible reason, picked the very day that we were doing a song which was about him," Rick Wright recalled. "Very strange."

It was a weird but fitting coincidence, one which only deepened the sense of loss, longing and otherworldliness that pervades *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*. The song that emerged was more than just an iconic piece of music – it was an exorcism of sorts



12 *Guns N' Roses*
Sweet Child O' Mine

recalled bassist Duff McKagan. "Writing and rehearsing *Sweet Child O' Mine* to make it a complete song was like pulling teeth," added Slash. "For me, at the time, it was a very sappy ballad."

Slash's dislike of the song only deepened when it came to sessions for *Appetite* – it took him multiple attempts to nail the intro. "It really rubbed me up the wrong way," he said. "Even though I wrote the riff, I didn't know it was gonna turn into," he later said. "And so I came in with the chord changes for the actual solo part, which for me was the only redeeming part of the song."

Despite his reservations, *Sweet Child O' Mine* would become one of the cornerstone tracks on *Appetite For Destruction* – and the song that ultimately made Guns N' Roses superstars. When the album was released in July 1987, it was not a hit. It would take nine months of solid touring and the break-through on MTV of *Sweet Child O' Mine* before it finally nosed its way into the US Top Ten.

Axl's love letter to his paramour struck a universal chord with everyone who heard it, and that majestic riff is guaranteed to get anyone who hears it busting out the air guitar. Every rock fan knows it. Every non-rock fan knows it. Even the man who came up with it in the first place has come around to it.

"I hated it for years," said Slash. "But it would cause such a reaction – just playing the first stupid notes used to evoke this hysteria – so I started to appreciate it."



GN'R: 'Every non-rock fan knows *Sweet Child O' Mine*.'

11 *Led Zeppelin*
Whole Lotta Love

It wasn't the first great rock riff. It wasn't even the first great Led Zeppelin riff. But nothing echoes down the ages quite like the swaggering noise that kicks *Whole Lotta Love* into life and propels it towards greatness.

Ironically, it sprang from innocuous beginnings. "I came up with the riff on my houseboat along the Thames in Pangbourne," Jimmy Page told The Wall Street Journal in 2014. "I knew it was strong enough to drive the entire song, not just open it up."



Whole lotta Zep: the men behind the riff.

When he played it for his bandmates, they instantly agreed. "We felt the riff was addictive, like a forbidden thing," said Page.

It was the first song the band recorded for the new album, deliberately setting the tone for what was to come. In April 1969, Zeppelin decamped to Olympic Studios in Barnes, West London to lay down a rough mix with engineer George Chkiantz. Page wanted it to sound like nothing that had come before, insisting Chkiantz mic up John Bonham's drums for maximum volume and clarity.

But the guitarist's vision wasn't so focused that it was restrictive. There was plenty of room for experimentation. At one point he brought a Theremin to the studio, instigating the song's free-form middle section. "I knew what I wanted, and I knew how to go about it. It was just a matter of doing it," Page recalled. "I created most of the sounds with a Theremin and my guitar."

Everyone was caught up in the rush of creativity. Plant's voice wheeled and dived,



YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
The Who, Glyn Johns

At over eight minutes in length in its original album version, *Won't Get Fooled Again* supports the claim by late Motörhead mainman Lemmy that there has never been a heavier bunch of musicians than The Who. He didn't mean they were a heavy metal band, of course; what he meant was that their songs, playing style and performance attack required serious stamina to endure.

By six minutes or so into *Won't Get Fooled Again*, you'll know what he meant – the song is relentless. Townshend's lyrics are uncompromising, dealing with rebellion and inequality; Daltrey bellows them out, demanding that we *'meet the new boss... same as the old boss'*; and Moon pummels us into submission with a frenzy of tom rolls. Entwistle holds back, on the studio version at least, but if you were lucky (and brave) enough to witness the classic Who line-up playing the song live, you'll know that the bassist made up for his relative on-stage calm with truly monstrous volume.

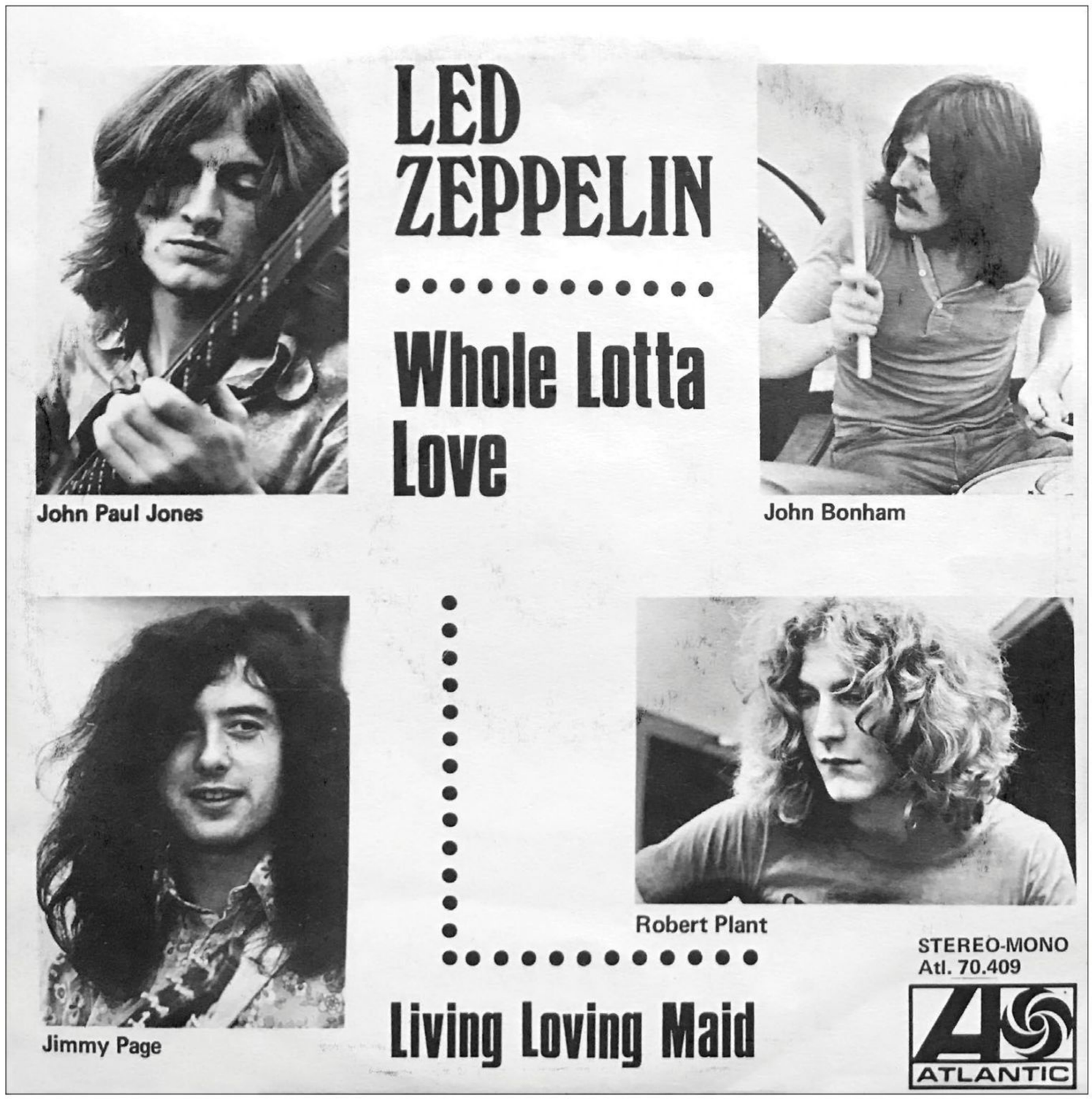
YEAR RELEASED
1969

PRODUCER
Jimmy Page

simultaneously strident and sensual. The orgasmic wails that brought the song to its climax remain the rawest expression of Zeppelin's sexuality. "Robert's vocals were about performance," said Page. "He was pushing to see what he could get out of his voice. We were performing for each other."

Plant's vocal acrobatics may have been something new, but his lyrics certainly weren't – he borrowed heavily from *You Need Love*, a 1962 track by bluesman Willie Dixon, who successfully sued the band. "I just thought: 'Well, what am I going to sing?'" Plant later admitted. "That was it, a nick. Now happily paid for."

In the end it didn't matter. The finished version – mixed by Eddie Kramer at New York's A&R Sound – became the band's first, and only, US Top 10 single, and the central riff quickly became one of hard rock's holy texts. Today *Whole Lotta Love* is more than just a rock staple – it's the song that unlocks Led Zeppelin.



GETTY X2

10 *The Who*
Won't Get Fooled Again

Of course, a master songwriter like Townshend – who had originally conceived the song for his aborted rock opera, *Lifehouse* – includes plenty of dynamic variation in *Won't Get Fooled Again*, notably the famous ARP 2500 synthesiser elements retained from the original demo. Towards the end of the song, an extended synth break takes the energy levels downward, while tension slowly mounts; repeated fills from Moon lead up to a phenomenal scream from Daltrey, essentially a shout of "Yeah!" that would strip the tonsils of any lesser singer.

Townshend always denied that its rallying-cry line "We're fighting in the streets" was any kind of specific call to action, *Won't Get Fooled Again* has an energising effect on anyone with a heartbeat. If you need further proof of the song's impact, take a listen to Van Halen's version, released on their 1993 in-concert album *Live: Right Here, Right Now*. That band, no strangers to musical pyrotechnics, and near-unbeatable as a live act at their peak, deliver a politely extravagant version that makes you wish for the depth and bleakness of the original.

Won't Get Fooled Again is it a defining statement from one of the greatest bands of them all. It has emotional significance for Who fans, too, as the last song which Moon ever played with the band when they ran through a set at Shepperton Studios on May 25 , 1978; the performance was filmed for a documentary, *The Kids Are Alright*. He died three months later of a sedative overdose.


The Who: relentless and uncompromising.

9 *AC/DC*
Highway To Hell

For Malcolm Young, AC/DC's rhythm guitarist, it was always about the riff. And with one in particular, as soon as he came up with it in the early days of 1979, he knew in his bones it was something special. As he put it, with the kind of bluntness and vulgarity that had always defined the band's work: "There were hundreds of riffs going down every day. But this one, we thought, that's good. It just stuck out like a dog's balls."

This staccato riff was perfect in its simplicity, reminiscent of Free's *All Right Now*. And from it came arguably the most important song of AC/DC's whole career. *Highway To Hell* was the title track of AC/DC's first million-selling album. In the UK it was the band's first Top 10 hit outside of their native Australia. Most significantly, as Angus Young said: "That was the album that broke us in America."



Part of its success was down to Robert John 'Mutt' Lange, a South African expat who had recently scored his first No.1 as a producer with the Boomtown Rats' *Rat Trap*. Lange was perfect candidate for the AC/DC job – a guy with a feel for rock music and a shrewd pop sensibility.

Lange was painstaking in his attention to detail. In contrast to George and Harry's relaxed approach, Lange placed an intense focus on tuning and rhythm. According to Tony Platt, who worked *Highway To Hell* as engineer: "One of Mutt's things that he brought to AC/DC was how to really work a groove." And with the vocals, Lange raised the bar even higher, coaxing the best out of Bon and also, as a strong singer himself, adding backing vocals to pump up the choruses.

All of this was evident in the first number recorded for *Highway To Hell*, the album's title track. Essentially, this was AC/DC as they always were. As Malcolm put it: "Just loud rock'n'roll, wham, bam, thank you, ma'am!" But with Lange working his magic it became something altogether bigger – a rock anthem to raise the dead.

The instantly arresting guitar-drum intro had been demoed with just Angus grinding away on guitar while Malcolm bashed at the drums. All was nearly lost when an engineer took the only cassette of it home, where his young son playfully unravelled it. Fortunately, Bon, who was always rewinding his own worn-out cassettes, put it back together the following day and the tune that was about to transform all their lives was restored.

But the song – in particular the title – had AC/DC's label, Atlantic, rattled. "The American record company immediately went into a panic," Angus said. "With religious things, I thought everywhere was like Australia. There they call them bible-thumpers, and it's a limited species. Very limited. Christianity was never a popular movement. It's that convict background!"

In reality, the title had come from something more mundane. Asked to describe the band's 1978 tour, Angus replied: "It's a fucking highway to hell." Of course, Bon Scott ran with the devilish in a lyric that raised two fingers to the so-called moral majority: *'Hey Satan/Payin' my dues/Playin' in a rockin' band/Hey mama/Look at me/I'm on my way to the promised land.'*

Just as Atlantic had anticipated, *Highway To Hell* incited outrage from America's so-called 'moral majority', not only for its title but also for the album's cover image, a group shot in which a sneering Angus sported devil horns and, for added effect, a forked tail. Angus laughingly recalled: "In America you had guys in bed sheets and placards with prayers on picketing the gigs. I said: 'Who are they here for?' And they said: 'You!' We heard all that stuff about *Highway To Hell* – that if you play it backwards you get these satanic messages. Fucking hell, why play it backwards? It says it right up front: *Highway To Hell*!"

By that point, the genie was out of the bottle anyway. Highway To Hell was released as the album's first US single, giving the band a long overdue breakthrough at American radio. Their contemporaries loved it. "My favourite AC/DC song would have to be *Highway To Hell*," says ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons. "Quite to my amazement, I heard my grandmother singing along with it, on key and with all the words! When asked how she came onto the song, she replied, "Oh my! Sounds like a fun highway to be traveling on!" How you gonna top that?"

The genius of *Highway To Hell* is its simplicity: a staccato riff, a thumping beat, and a route-one chorus. But it would soon be tinged by tragedy. On February 19, 1980, less than a month after the Highway To Hell tour ended, the singer was found dead in London following a night of heavy drinking. The exact circumstances of his death would be the subject of conjecture ever since.

Highway To Hell isn't just one of AC/DC's greatest songs. For the man who sang it, would become an epitaph: a defining statement of devil-may-care rock'n'roll attitude from a legendary hellraiser. In this song, more than any other, his spirit lives on.

YEAR RELEASED
1979

PRODUCER
'MUTT' LANGE



AC/DC's Bon Scott and Angus Young: 'the riff stuck out like a dog's balls.'

GETTY



Rush's Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee: never the Twain.

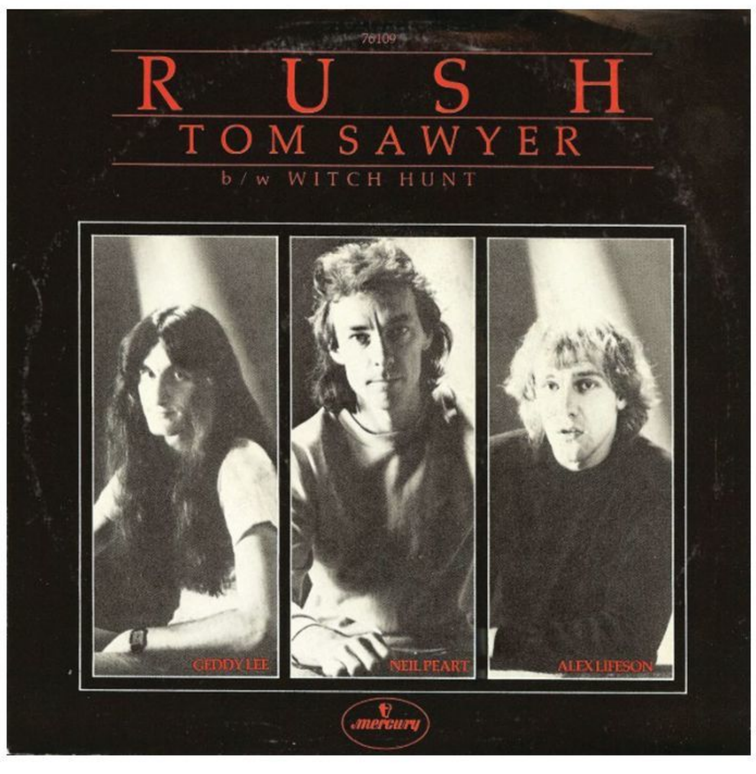
MICHAEL STUPARYK/GETTY

8 *Rush*
Tom Sawyer

YEAR RELEASED
1981

PRODUCER
Rush and Terry Brown

Within Rush's 37-year recording career there are a number of landmark songs: *Working Man* was their first track to get key radio airplay outside of their native Canada, and led to a worldwide deal with Mercury Records; 2112 secured the band's future when that Mercury contract hung in the balance; *The Spirit Of Radio* gave them the unlikely distinction of a UK Top 20 hit. But of all the songs in the Rush catalogue, the most famous is *Tom Sawyer*, the opening track from 1981's *Moving Pictures*, the band's greatest and biggest-selling album.



"*Tom Sawyer* is a real trademark song for us," says Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson. "Musically it's very powerful, and lyrically it has a spirit that resonates with a lot of people. It's kind of an anthem."

Rush had arrived at a crossroads when they came to write *Tom Sawyer*. In the 70s they had become the undisputed masters of progressive hard rock, famed for their epic conceptual pieces that played out over entire sides of vinyl. But with their first album of the 1980s – *Permanent Waves* – came a significant change.

"We began writing in a tighter, more economical form," says Lifeson. The result was that hit single, *The Spirit Of Radio*: a virtuoso-rock tour de force compacted into less than five minutes. And the song's lyrics fit neatly with this more direct approach. Drummer and lyricist Neil Peart had previously found inspiration in ancient mythology and science fiction, but for *Permanent Waves* his writing was simpler, his subject matter more worldly.

Tom Sawyer was the crystallisation of this new, modern Rush: a powerful, finely crafted hard rock song with a punchy yet deeply philosophical message. But it was also a song for which Rush were indebted not only to a giant of American literature, Mark Twain, but also to Canadian poet and lyricist Pye Dubois.

Dubois worked with the group Max Webster, who were based in Sarnia, Ontario, in the same province as Rush's hometown of Toronto. The two bands were close, recording a song together, *Battle Scar*, that featured on Max Webster's 1980 album *Universal Juveniles*. "

"But Pye was a strange fellow," says Lifeson. "He was very quirky, a bit of a nut, but he did write great lyrics. Around 1980 he sent a poem to Neil with an idea to collaborate on a song. The original draft was called *Louie The Warrior*."

The poem was based on Twain's 1876 novel *The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer*, which all three members of Rush had studied in school. Peart in particular identified with the book's central themes of rebellion and independence. What Dubois created in *Louie The Warrior* was, in Peart's words, "a portrait of a modern-day rebel". Says Lifeson: "Neil took that idea and massaged it, took out some of Pye's lines and added his thing to it." Peart chose the simpler title of *Tom Sawyer* and completed the lyrics with an element of autobiography. As he put it, "Reconciling the boy and man in myself."

Musically, *Tom Sawyer* was also a departure for Rush. Says Lifeson: "Structurally, the way the song develops is very interesting, going from that first verse into a bridge into a chorus and into the solo and then repeating. It wasn't a typical kind of structure for us at the time." Likewise, the music was written in an unorthodox fashion – for Rush, at least. "*Moving Pictures* was different for us in that it was more of a jam sort of thing," Lifeson explains. "That was certainly the case with *Tom Sawyer*. We were rehearsing in a little farm outside of Toronto. We would typically just go in and jam and develop songs that way."

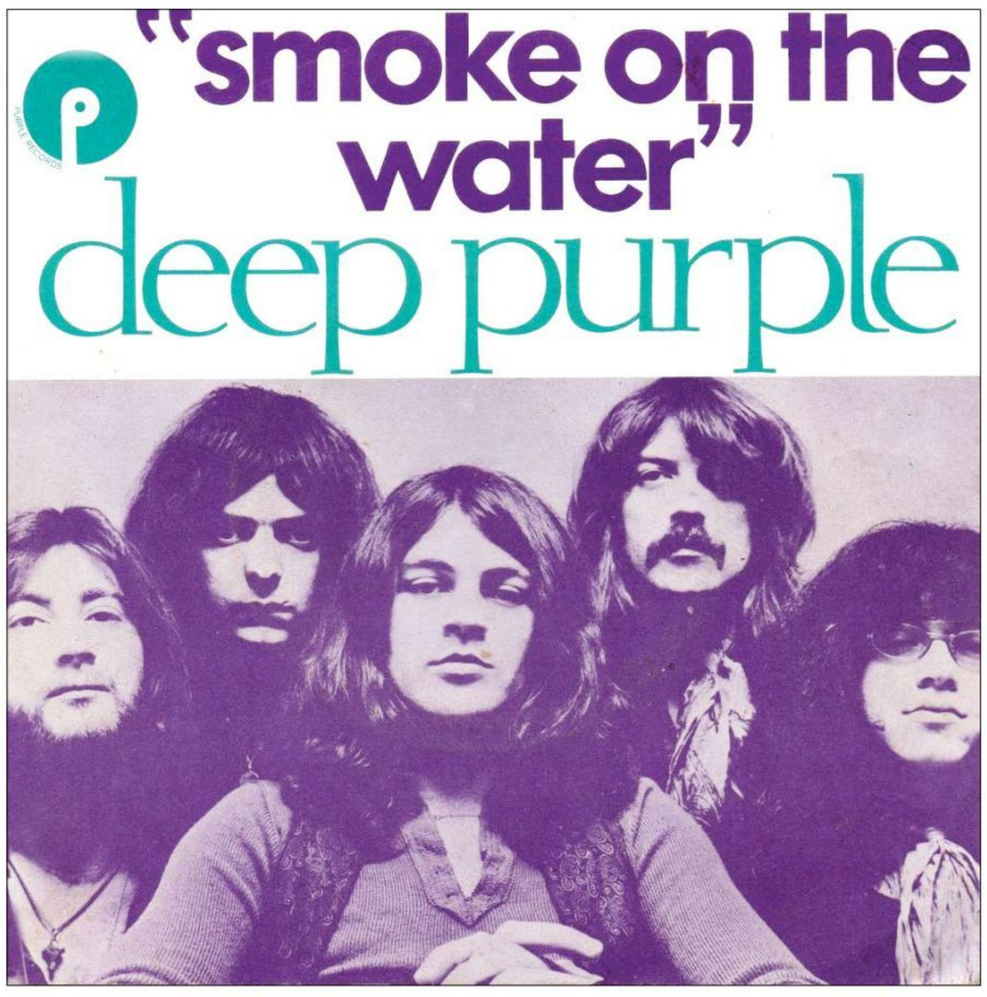
It was high summer when Rush wrote the songs for *Moving Pictures*. But by the time they began recording the album at Le Studio in Morin Heights, Quebec, a mean Canadian winter had set in. "It was the coldest I've ever been in my life, that's for sure!" Lifeson laughs. "We were living in a house beside a lake, and the studio was on the other end of the lake. If we were brave enough, we walked through the woods. It was beautiful, but it was minus 40 out there!"

Lifeson says of the recording: "On *Tom Sawyer*, the synthesiser is such a key part of that song. There was a good integration between the three of us and the keyboards. We still had that trio feel. Plus, we always felt that we had to replicate each song as faithfully as possible when we played it live, so *Tom Sawyer* was written in that way. There's no rhythm guitar under the guitar solo or anything like that."

It's a song that proved pivotal to the band's development. Geddy Lee has called it the "defining piece of music" from Rush in the early 80s. For much of that decade, keyboards took an increasingly important role in the band's sound. And all of three decades on, the power of this song, and its message, has not diminished. "There's a freshness about that sound that still stands out," Lifeson says proudly. "And there's something in the lyric that people have always related to very strongly – the spirit of independence and adventure. It's just one of those special songs."

7 *Deep Purple*
Smoke On The Water

Deep Purple's Mark II line-up released many great songs, but none have echoed down the years like *Smoke On The Water*. Released in 1972, it's one of the greatest rock songs of all time for at least two reasons. Firstly, it has that riff, one of the most memorable sequences of four notes ever arranged. Secondly, it deserves a prize from the Campaign For Plain English thanks to its helpfully literal lyrics, which detail the most iconic gig-gone-wrong in history



The band – Ian Gillan (vocals), Ritchie Blackmore (guitar), Roger Glover (bass), Jon Lord (organ) and Ian Paice (drums) – had visited Montreux, near Lake Geneva in Switzerland (*'We all came down to Montreux, on the Lake Geneva shoreline'*) in order to record a new album in a mobile studio without delay (*'To make records on a mobile, we didn't have much time'*). See? Add to this the immortal chorus line about a fire near the lake (*'Smo-o-oke on the water!'*) and there really isn't much room for misinterpretation.

As for that opening riff, it's one of those patterns that you hear once and you never forget, largely because every guitar store in the world has someone playing it. Lord played the riff in unison with Blackmore on a Hammond organ through an overdriven guitar amp to make up Purple's signature sound: together, the pair pretty much defined the tone of an entire genre of early-70s bombastic rock. Glover and Paice do what the best rhythm sections always do – play minimally and stay the hell out of the way – and it's left to Gillan to deliver a typically belting vocal performance.

As is so often the case with these epoch-shaping songs, neither Blackmore nor Lord had any inkling when they wrote *Smoke On The Water* that it would become such a huge hit and endure for decades to come. In fact, the song wasn't intended to be a single at first, and only came out a year after the parent album, *Machine Head*, had become a hit in its own right in 1972. When the single appeared, it was significant that its B-side was an in-concert version of the same song, which had become a live favourite among Purple fans in the months since its appearance on the LP.

Smoke On The Water was born in the most unassuming manner, as Blackmore once said: "I was jamming with Ian Paice at a soundcheck, because we often used to get to the shows early. I said to Ian, 'Give me a time or a measure that we haven't played lately', and he put down that particular beat, and I just went straight into that riff. It's related to a medieval way of playing, because in those days they played a lot in parallel fourths. That riff wouldn't sound the way it does if it wasn't played in parallel fourths. But Paicey and I just went through it and it sounded like a backing track. I feel that we did things in Purple which were a lot better than that, that didn't go anywhere."

The song's legacy is assured, believe us. For example, several attempts have been made to gather thousands of guitarists and have them play the main riff simultaneously, thus breaking a *Guinness Book Of Records* world standard. It also appears on more movie soundtracks than we can mention here, and has been covered by a plethora of groups from 'Weird' Al Yankovich to Black Sabbath – who played a heavier version of the song when Gillan joined them for the *Born Again* album in 1983. Subsequent versions of Purple, both with and without Gillan and Blackmore, have also played the song endlessly. Whether you enjoy these later renditions or not is probably down to how much of a purist you are about bands whose line-ups change over the years.

Perhaps unusually, the song remains as popular with the band as if does with the fans. As Gillan once said, "The thing about *Smoke On The Water* is that I don't know how many thousands of times I've sung it, but I've never once thought 'Oh no, not tonight'. Every time it's been fantastic. It's a simple song, it has a simple structure, it's got a narrative lyric, so it's always a story which has its own value. *Smoke On The Water* tells a story, and I think it will have its own spirit, its own life."

Enthusiasm for the song has spread across generations of musicians, Gillan also reported. "We once rehearsed with Joe Satriani in Japan, and Joe knew everything. When we were packing up to leave, he said, 'Aren't we gonna do *Smoke On The Water*? And we said, 'Well… we assumed you knew it, but we can run through it if you like'. So he started playing, turned to me with a big smile and said, 'I can't believe I'm playing *Smoke On The Water* with Deep Purple!'"

YEAR RELEASED
1972

PRODUCER
Deep Purple



Deep Purple's Ian Gillan: 'Every time I sing it, it's fantastic.'

GETTY

6 *Eagles*
Hotel California

Hotel California was to mainstream US radio what *Bohemian Rhapsody* was to its UK counterpart – the single that broke the mould and forced programmers to indulge the artists' creative whims despite the restrictive, three-minute format. And like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, it has grown into something much bigger than just a mere song – today it stands as the semi-mystical embodiment of an entire era and culture.



Don Felder was sitting on the couch of a rented beach house in Malibu, when he came up with the idea for the most famous American rock song in history. It was July 1975, and the guitarist was 18 months into his stint with the Eagles. They'd notched up their first No.1 with that year's *One Of These Nights*, Felder's first full album with them, and were on an upward swing that would soon gather pace like none of them could imagine.

"We'd just come off *One Of These Nights*, which was a very successful record for us," recalls Felder, "but we were under the gun to come up with a lot of ideas, so I had put together a reel of 16 or 17 song sketches, in this little reel-to-reel four-track TEAC tape recorder in my back bedroom. And I was sitting on the couch on a July day – in cut-off shorts, a t-shirt and flip-flops – playing guitar and just goofing around in this beach house in Malibu."

Maybe it was the sun glistening on the Pacific waves or the sound of his infant children playing on a swing on the beach, but a hypnotic chord pattern came into his head. He played it, then played it again, and then again, four or five times. He'd been doing this long enough to know the glimmerings of a great song when he heard them. And this sounded like it could be a great song.

"I thought, I have to go record some of this before I forget it. And so I ran into my back bedroom and turned on the TEAC and played about five times through the chord progression, then turned it off and went out to join my kids."

A few weeks later, he gave a demo of his idea to Eagles bandmates Don Henley and Glenn Frey, who heard something in it. "Felder had submitted a cassette tape containing about half a dozen different pieces of music," drummer and co-vocalist Henley remembered. "None of them moved me until I got to that one.. I think I was driving down Benedict Canyon Drive [in Los Angeles] at night, or maybe even North Crescent Drive the first time I heard the piece, and I remember thinking, 'This has potential; I think we can make something interesting out of this.'"

Henley christened it *Mexican Reggae*, a working title that perfectly encapsulated its sound. By the time they came to record it several months later, Henley and Frey had written a set of lyrics that nailed the cultural, spiritual and metaphysical confusion of mid-70s America. From its instantly recognisable penning lines - *'On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair'* – onwards, it presented a surreal, hallucinatory view of California that could only have been written by people who had grown up elsewhere.

"We knew we were heading down a long and twisted corridor and just stayed with it," Frey later recalled. "The Eagles take a look at the seamy underbelly of LA – the flip side of fame and failure, love and money."

It was Henley who was responsible for much of the song's vivid imagery, not least the titular hotel – reportedly based on The Beverly Hills Hotel.

"We were getting an extensive education, in life, in love, in business," said Henley. "Beverly Hills was still a mythical place to us. In that sense it became something of a symbol, and the Hotel the locus of all that LA had come to mean for us. In a sentence, I'd sum it up as the end of the innocence, round one."

The Eagles were notorious perfectionists, and it took them three attempts to get the song right. During the final attempt, at Miami's Criteria Studios, Black Sabbath were in the next room. "The Eagles were recording next door, but we were too loud for them," Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi recalled. "It kept coming through the wall into their sessions."

It wasn't just external influences that caused problems. When he turned up for recording sessions, Felder began playing a different solo, only for Henley to call a halt to proceedings and insist he play exactly the same thing he had done on the demo.

"Don Henley went, 'Stop, that's not right,'" said Felder. "And I said, 'What do you mean it's not right? We're just gonna make these solos up.' He said, 'No no no, you have to play them exactly like what's on your demo.'" Felder had to find the demo and then "sit in the studio and re-learn wha I'd already played a year before that."

It was the right call. The closing solo – a glorious duel between Felder and new guitarist Joe Walsh – lifted an already great song into the annals of immortality, sending it arcing into 30 million desert nights. Today, *Hotel California* remains not just the high point of the Eagles' fabled career, but the pinnacle of 70s American rock.

YEAR RELEASED
1976

PRODUCER
Bill Szymczyk



Eagles in 1976: the pinnacle of 70s American rock.

GETTY

5 *Lynyrd Skynyrd*
Free Bird

Few songs have defined a band or a genre quite as much as *Free Bird*. Lynyrd Skynyrd's ode to the freedom of the road and the people it leaves behind wasn't their biggest hit chart-wise – *Sweet Home Alabama* and *That Smell* both outdid it in the Billboard chart – but it became their passport to immortality and the unofficial anthem of the southern rock nation.

"It's about what it means to be free, in that a bird can fly wherever he wants to go," singer Ronnie Van Zant said in the 70s. "Everyone wants to be free. That's what this country's all about."

The roots of Skynyrd had been sown in 1964, when singer Ronnie Van Zant, guitarists Allen Collins and Gary Rossington and original drummer Bob Burns had met at a baseball game in Jacksonville and decided to form a band. By the end of the decade, they'd christened themselves Lynyrd Skynyrd, after a hated high-school sports teacher.



Van Zant was the unelected leader, although Rossington and Collins soon formed their own partnership. "Me and Allen played all the time," says Rossington, the sole surviving original Skynyrd member. "Even when we weren't practising with the band, we would play together at his house."

One day, Collins arrived at the hot tin-roofed shack the band used as their rehearsal room with the skeleton of a song he'd come up with. "That was one of the first things he'd ever wrote," says Rossington. "He'd only done maybe two or three things before that."

Collins played it to his fellow guitarist, who told him it was great. Ronnie Van Zant was less convinced. "Ronnie thought there were too many chord changes," says Rossington. "He said: 'I can't write lyrics to this, there's too much happening.' He just couldn't get it. He didn't hear nothing."

The famously intractable singer refused to budge, but that didn't stop Collins and Rossington from practising the song. Eventually their accidental war of attrition paid off.

"One day, Ronnie went: 'Okay, play it again.' He made Allen play it a bunch of different times. And finally he got a verse or a melody in his head. And he started practising that, playing Allen's chords. He wrote the lyrics just laying on the couch."

Ironically, Rossington says that the band initially saw Free Bird as just another song. "We didn't even think much of it at first," he says. But they swiftly realised they'd hit on something special the very first time the band played it live.

"It was at a place called the South Side Women's Club in Jacksonville," he recalls. "We played that song, but just the slow part. We didn't have the jam at the end then. We ended it before the guitars came in, but everybody still got off on it. They clapped us so much."

A demo of the song recorded in 1970 and included in the band's 1991 box set lasts just four minutes. That's how *Free Bird* sounded for a while. The band would play the first half of the song, fuelled by Ronnie's sorrowful vocals, wrapping it up after four or five minutes. But Collins and Rossington gradually started to add a short guitar outro.

"Just a minute or so," says Rossington. "But one night we were playing a club and Ronnie said: 'Play that a little longer, my voice is hurting, I need a break. So we played two minutes or three minutes. Then two days later his throat was all sore and he could hardly talk, and we ended up playing it ten minutes at the end, just jamming."

Collins and Rossington tightened up the outro and pianist Billy Powell added a mournful intro before the band went into the fabled Muscle Shoals studio in Alabama in 1973 to record what was supposed to be their first album. The Muscle Shoals album would remain unreleased until 1978. But the band revisited the song for their debut album proper, *Pronounced 'Leh-'nérd 'Skin-'nérd*, with producer Al Kooper. By then they were a well-drilled unit, with Ronnie Van Zant cracking the whip hard. *Free Bird* had stretched out to nine glorious minutes.

"The thing Ronnie did that was different from other bands was that he wanted that band to sound the same every night," Kooper said later. "He was not interested in improvisation at all. Every bit of Free Bird was planned out before I came into the picture. Every guitar solo was played exactly the same. I have never met a band that did that. It was pretty amazing."

Skynyrd's label, MCA, were reluctant to put it out as a single. "They thought it was too long to be a hit," says Rossington. "Mind you, so did we." But the song took on a life of its own on stage, and the record company changed their mind. Free Bird was eventually a hit in 1974, more than a year after it was originally released.

Today, more than 40 years after Ronnie Van Zant died in a plane crash, and almost 30 years since the song's original author Allen Collins died in a car crash, Free Bird remains Lynyrd Skynyrd's signature track and one of the cornerstones of the classic-rock canon. Even now, rolling down the road has never sounded so romantic.

"Jeez, most of our songs are about rolling down the road," Rossington says with a laugh. "*Sweet Home Alabama, What's Your Name?, Whiskey Rock-A-Roller, Travelling Man*. But I guess Free Bird is the ultimate one, and that's why it stuck."

YEAR RELEASED
1973

PRODUCER
Al Kooper



Southern fried: the classic Lynyrd Skynyrd line-up with Gary Rossington and Ronnie Van Zant (second and third right).

GETTY/ GEMS



'Nothing overblown, no hysterics': Zep in their *Kashmir*-era pomp.

GETTY

4 *Led Zeppelin*
Kashmir

YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
JIMMY PAGE

"I wish we were remembered for *Kashmir* more than *Stairway To Heaven*," Robert Plant said of the track that closes Side Two of *Physical Graffiti*. "It's so right; there's nothing overblown, no vocal hysterics. Perfect Zeppelin."

It certainly is. Indeed of all the many fine musical moments Zeppelin would accumulate throughout their eight-studio-album career, *Kashmir* remains one of their hallmark tracks. It's of the same order of class as previous touchstone moments *Whole Lotta Love* and *Stairway To Heaven* – that is, destined to transcend all musical barriers and become universally recognised as a classic. It was also arguably the last time they would scale such heights.

A musical and metaphorical drive toward some irresistible far-off horizon, *Kashmir* encapsulated Zeppelin's multi-strand approach to making rock music: part rock, part funk, part African dust storm.



Originally titled *Driving To Kashmir*, the song had begun as a lyric Plant had been inspired to write in the autumn of 1973 after a long, seemingly never-ending drive through "the waste lands", as he put it, of southern Morocco. Nothing, in fact, to do with Kashmir, in northern India, at all.

As Plant explained to journalist Cameron Crowe, it was about the road journey itself rather than a specific geographical location: "It was a single-track road which neatly cut through the desert. Two miles to the east and west were ridges of sand rock. It looked like you were driving down a channel, this dilapidated road, and there was seemingly no end to it." Hence, Plant said, the opening lyric: *'Oh let the sun beat down upon my face, stars to fill my dreams.'*

Musically, the juddering rhythm had erupted out of a late-night session involving Page and drummer John Bonham during one of the band's regular stays at Headley Grange, the haunted mansion in East Hampshire where they recorded so many tracks in the early 70s.

"It was just Bonzo and myself," Page said. "He started the drums, and I did the riff and the overdubs, which in fact get duplicated by an orchestra at the end, which brought it even more to life. It seemed so sort of ominous and had a particular quality to it. It's nice to go for an actual mood and know that you've pulled it off."

Recording was halted by the disappearance of bassist John Paul Jones, who had decided to leave Zeppelin after becoming appalled at some of the more 'vivid' off-stage scenes surrounding the band's notorious 1973 US tour.

It was only after the bassist was tempted back into the fold in early 1974 that the serious work on *Kashmir* was resumed, with Jones sketching out what would later become the orchestral parts with his Mellotron. While Plant was delighted with his evocative lyrics, the singer admitted to being "petrified" and "virtually in tears" at trying to sing along with *Kashmir*'s unusual rhythmic pattern.

"It was an amazing piece of music to write to, and an incredible challenge for me," he later recalled. "The whole deal of the song is… not grandiose, but powerful: it required some kind of epithet, or abstract lyrical setting about the whole idea of life being an adventure and being a series of illuminated moments."

The finishing touch was the addition of string and horn parts, recorded in May that year at Olympic Studios, in London, where overdubs were also laid down. The completed track was a truly epic rock classic, panoramic in scope, featuring the full-spectrum Zeppelin sound.

The scale of *Kashmir* fitted Page's increasingly lofty ambitions, his burning desire to prove wrong the naysayers who had hounded Led Zeppelin in the press since the band's inception. *Physical Graffiti* was an album all about scope (it included both the longest and shortest tracks the band would ever record), and *Kashmir* was to be the jewel in the crown; Page determined to showcase the "bigger palette" his band had at their disposal than rivals like the Stones, who Zeppelin outsold but had never matched for credibility.

There were also some moments where cloaked references to Page's ongoing obsession with the occult could be discerned: images of 'Talk and song from tongues of lilting grace' and a 'pilot of the storm who leaves no trace, like thoughts inside a dream' – pilot? Or Magus, perhaps?

Performed for the first time on the band's 1975 US tour, *Kashmir* became the new centrepiece of the set, Jimmy stomping around in his specially designed new suit embroidered with dragons, crescent moons, spangly stars, blood-red poppies and the 'ZoSo' emblem.

At their Earls Court shows, in May, Plant described *Kashmir* to the audience as a song about revisiting "our travels in Morocco… and the story of our wasted, wasted times". Two years later, during the band's last US tour he reflected: "I think I will go to Kashmir one day, when some great change hits me and I have to really go away and think about my future as a man rather than a prancing boy."

3 *Pink Floyd*
Comfortably Numb

Roger Waters was in agony. It was June 29, 1977, and backstage at the Philadelphia Spectrum he was suffering from such crippling stomach cramps that he faced a choice between cancelling that night's show or getting a tranquiliser shot that "would have killed a fucking elephant". Waters played the show, despite the muscle relaxant rendering him unable to feel his hands or raise his arms. And from that anaesthetised sensation came the seed for the key track on 1979's epic concept album *The Wall*.

The Wall was emphatically Waters's album – with troubled protagonist Pink a proxy for himself. *Comfortably Numb* began as a Waters tune titled The Doctor, which found the bassist rhyming *'listen'* with *'physician'*,*'condition'* and *'magician'* like an uninspired O-Level student. The bassist was naturally reluctant when David Gilmour pitched a chord sequence left over from his first solo album.



Producer Bob Ezrin persuaded him to not make the song so personal and to work with Gilmour instead. Waters would eventually accept the guitarist's contribution under duress, though he ensured he would claw back a degree of ownership by supplying lyrics and verse music for the song that would become *Comfortably Numb*.

But still there were ructions, with Waters and Bob Ezrin favouring a version with lush orchestration by Michael Kamen, while Gilmour preferred a leaner, harder take.

"I fought for the introduction of the orchestra on that record," recalled Ezrin. "This became a big issue on *Comfortably Numb*, which Dave saw as a more bare-bones track. Roger sided with me."

"We argued over *Comfortably Numb* like mad," said Gilmour. "Really had a big fight, went on for ages."

After much heated debate, the two warring sides thrashed out a compromise, with *Comfortably Numb* ultimately featuring a little of both men's visions. "On the record," Waters told Absolute Radio, "the first verse is from the version [Gilmour] liked, and the second verse is from the version I liked. It was a negotiation and a compromise."

Thankfully there was no such debate over Gilmour's celebrated guitar playing. *Comfortably Numb*'s drama escalated with each passing verse and required a similarly dramatic solo. The finished version of *Comfortably Numb* contained not one but two solos. The the first is just an aperitif; the second is the vintage red brought out from the cellar for special occasions only.

"I banged out five or six solos," said Gilmour. "From there I just followed my usual procedure, which is to listen back to each solo and make a chart, noting which bits are good. Then, by following the chart I create one great composite solo by whipping one fader up, then another fader, jumping from phrase to phrase until everything flows together."

The result was arguably the best song Pink Floyd ever recorded – one that took on another life during the extravagant shows the band played in support of *The Wall*, where *Comfortably Numb* found Gilmour playing his solo from atop the giant wall that had been constructed during the gig. In the pre-Internet age, it held audiences in raptures.

"It was a fantastic moment, to be standing up on there, and Roger's just finished singing his thing," said Gilmour. "I'm in pitch darkness and no one knows I'm there yet. And Roger's down there and he finishes his line, I start mine and the big back spots and everything go on, and the audience are all looking straight ahead and down, and suddenly there's all this light up there and their heads all lift up. Every night there's this sort of [gasp] from 15,000 people. And that's quite something."

On record and in concert, *Comfortably Numb* was a moment of true transcendence – one that rendered the bickering between the men that made it irrelevant. But the song would ultimately be the terminal nail in the coffin for Pink Floyd's most famous line-up. They followed up *The Wall* with 1983's dark *The Final Cut*, effectively a Waters solo album that just happened to feature the other members of Floyd. Waters left acrimoniously soon afterwards, instigating a bitter battle over the soul of Pink Floyd that would run for years.

"I think things like *Comfortably Numb*, were the last embers of mine and Roger's ability to work collaboratively together," Gilmour reflected.

Yet it has also built bridges. It was notable as the final song performed by the reunited line-up at Live 8 in 2005, and in May 2011 Gilmour joined Waters during the latter's show at the 02 Arena in London to play *Comfortably Numb* from the top of a recreation of the original Wall.

"Dave wanted to do this thing called the Hoping Foundation," said Waters. "Finally, I'd heard enough and I went: 'I tell you what. I'm gonna be doing a few nights in the O2. You come and do *Comfortably Numb* one of those nights, and I'll do the bloody Hoping Foundation.' And I thought he'd just go: 'Fuck off.' And he didn't. He went: 'All right.' So we did it."

YEAR RELEASED
1979

PRODUCER
Bob Ezrin



Waters and Gilmour: "We had a big fight over *Comfortably Numb*, went on for ages."

GETTY



Jimmy Page: chief architect of the 'Mount Everest of rock'.

GETTY

2 *Led Zeppelin*
Stairway To Heaven

Of all their records, Led Zeppelin's fourth album, released in November 1971, remains their most admired work. From Jimmy Page's unimpeachable riffs, through John Paul Jones' musical invention and Robert Plant's clarity of vocal to that titanic John Bonham drum sound, *Led Zeppelin IV* still emits a freshness and mystique that belies its age.

It didn't appear in a vacuum. The three or four years that lead up to it had been a time of unfettered ambition and boundary-pushing of the kind that had never been witnessed before in music. As rock's golden dawned, songs became increasingly more intricate and more epic. And nothing was as epic as *Stairway To Heaven*, the iconic track that would not just become Led Zeppelin's most famous song, but define an entire era.



Jimmy Page once said that for him, the antecedents of his most famous musical creation lay in the same *She Moved Through The Fair/White Summer/Black Mountain Side* guitar showcase he had already spent years fine-tuning. But those were mere building blocks. This was a cathedral.

Originally just known as 'The Long One', the bare bones of *Stairway* were laid down during Page and Plant's stay at their Welsh mountain retreat Bron-Yr-Aur in 1970. Nearly a year on, with the band now ensconced at Headley Grange, a former 18th-century poorhouse in Hampshire, it became the first song they tried to record for their fourth album. Plant and Bonham were sent to the pub, while Page sat down with Jones to work out the final version the band would tackle the next day.

The lyrics, written by Plant, came later as he and Jimmy were sitting by the fire. "I was holding a pencil and paper, and for some reason I was in a very bad mood," the singer recalled. "Then all of a sudden my hand was writing out the words: *'There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold/And she's buying a stairway to heaven…'* I just sat there and looked at the words and then I almost leapt out of my seat."

Page liked the lyrics so much that they became the first to be reprinted on a Zeppelin album sleeve. "The lyrics were fantastic," he said. "The wonderful thing is that even with the lyrics in front of you, you know how you listen to something and you might not quite get what the words are but you get your own impression? With this, the lyrics were there but you still got your own impression of what the song was about. And that was really important."

The track's now celebrated crescendo – Page's goosebumps-inducing guitar solo – was attempted at Headley Grange, but after three hours of trying and failing to get it just so, Page finally gave up. Instead he saved it for a follow-up session at Island Records' Basing Street Studios in London.

Not using headphones, preferring to play the backing track back through speakers, Page stood leaning against a speaker as he played, a cigarette stuck between the strings by the tuning peg. "I winged that guitar solo, really," he admitted.

He may have winged it, but it worked spectacularly. "The *Stairway To Heaven* solo is the greatest ever," says Charlie Starr of Atlanta-based southern rockers Blackberry smoke. "That solo is put together almost like a piece of classical music. It has all of these twists and turns with it. *Stairway* is a very singable solo, which is very important to a songwriter. You shouldn't just play mindlessly in a solo, you should also think about the melody. If you can look out and see people singing your solos then that is very powerful. I became familiar with this solo when I first started to learn to play the electric guitar. It was a piece of music that was so impressive on first listen. It was inspiring and I wanted to play it correctly. Me and all of my friends couldn't play Van Halen's *Eruption* so we had to figure out how to play the *Stairway To Heaven* solo instead."

The very first time Zeppelin played *Stairway* live – at Belfast Ulster Hall on March 5, 1971 – it received a muted reception. They were all bored to tears, waiting to hear something they knew," John Paul Jones remembered. Obviously, what no one knew was how incredibly popular *Stairway To Heaven* would become, alongside such comparable cornerstones as The Beatles' *A Day In The Life* – whose three-act beginning, middle and arresting finale structure it draws on – and Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which clearly apes the epic grandiosity of Zeppelin's slow build to a guitar-blazing conclusion.

As its reputation swiftly grew, it became the cornerstone of Zeppelin's set. It was a classic rock staple long before the concept of 'classic rock', though it has transcended that status to become shorthand for music at its most ambitious. Not everyone is a fan –Robert Plant himself has expressed antipathy towards *Stairway* on countless occasions, viewing his lyrics as a mix of youthful naïveté and hippie-ish pomposity, even donated $10,000 to one radio station never to play the song again. But he's in the minority. To most other people, *Stairway To Heaven* stands as the Mount Everest of rock.

YEAR RELEASED
1971

PRODUCER
Jimmy Page

1 *Queen*
Bohemian Rhapsody

Really, could the Number One spot ever have gone to anything else? *Bohemian Rhapsody* is more than just a masterpiece of songwriting – it's a work of sheer bravado that only someone with the bulletproof musical confidence of Freddie Mercury could pull off, critics be damned.

"I think fundamentally Freddie had that great freedom," Brian May told *Classic Rock* in 2013. "Deep down, he knew he was right and he didn't care if people slagged him off. He knew he was having fun, he was searching for a dream that was not only his dream, but in some sense fulfilled our audience's dream. He was an instinctive showman, and he was fearless. Really fearless."

That fearlessness is what propelled Mercury to write *Bohemian Rhapsody*. It was essentially three wildly different pieces of music glued together: the opening piano section, which had its roots in a pre-Queen number known as *The Cowboy Song* that Mercury had sketched out in the late 60s; the guitar-heavy grand finale; and, sandwiched in between them, that celebrated operatic section.



Nothing like the latter had ever been attempted before in rock music, and Freddie Mercury was the only one who knew what it would sound like. Producer Roy Thomas Baker recalls the singer playing him the opening section for the first time. "Then he stopped and said, 'This is where the opera section comes in!' Then we went out to eat dinner," said Baker. "It was all in Freddie's mind," added Brian May.

It took a huge amount of effort to get the sounds in Mercury's head onto tape. "Working with Queen, you can't put it in normal terms," said Baker. "They can't work like any normal group. They utilise each other's talents to the fullest. The middle operatic section in *Bohemian Rhapsody*, for example, took about six to seven days to record in total."

As they worked, the section grew and grew. "Freddie kept coming in with more 'Galileos' and we kept on adding to the opera section, and it just got bigger and bigger," recalled Baker. The tapes were overdubbed so many times they were virtually transparent by the end of the sessions.

Several days later, the whole thing was done. When someone at the band's label, EMI, expressed doubt regarding airplay of this 'mock opera', Freddie retorted: "Of course they'll play it, my dear. It's going to be fucking huge."

He was right, of course. It seems perverse now that anyone could ever have doubted the song's world-conquering potential, but back in the mid-1970s, Queen were still mere mortals. Though Mercury loudly professed his belief that *A Night At The Opera* was the band's best album to date, proudly asserting they'd used it to "go out, not restrict ourselves with any barriers and just do what we want to do," there was still a level of nervousness within the Queen camp about its lead single.

"With *Bohemian Rhapsody*, we just thought it was a very strong song and so we released it," Mercury told journalist Harry Doherty upon its release in 1975. "But there were so many arguments about it. Somebody suggested cutting it down because the media reckons we have to have a three-minute single, but we want to put across Queen as songs. There is no point in cutting it. If you want to cut down *Bohemian Rhapsody*, it just won't work."

He was right again. While *Bohemian Rhapsody* wasn't strictly where Queen found their feet, it was the moment the public finally caught up with them. Having ignored those warnings from onlookers, including friend and DJ Kenny Everett, Queen soon found themselves vindicated. Everett played it 14 times on his radio show that very same weekend. An American DJ followed suit and suddenly the record company felt compelled to release a song they thought was commercial suicide. It was the Christmas No.1 in 1975, staying at the top of the UK charts for a record-breaking nine weeks.

Today, *Bohemian Rhapsody* is more than just Queen's signature song: it's become as big as the band that created it. The song reached No.1 again in the wake of Mercury's death in 1991, and featured in an iconic scene in the hit movie *Wayne's World* the following year. When the band decided to make a big screen biopic in 2018, there was only one song they cold name it after.

More than 40 years on, its daring fusion of heavy metal, show-tune balladry and light opera remains the high watermark in Queen's career, and a tribute to the band's collective imagination and desire to push everything as far as as they could. It broke the mould in 1975, and no-one has even dared to try and compete with it since.

"People ask me if I get tired of playing it, and I say 'never,'" said Brian May. "I find the same listening to it. It's a fabulous bit of music. I don't take that much of a credit for it, because it's Freddie's brainchild. We all worked on it damn hard, and we all performed on it very well, and we all put in some ideas, but really you're talking about something that happened in Freddie's fevered brain at a certain point in time."

YEAR RELEASED
1975

PRODUCER
QUEEN, ROY THOMAS BAKER



Queen: *Bohemian Rhapsody* came from 'Freddie's fevered brain'.

GETTY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

Caught In A Landslide

It's November 1975 and **Queen** are about to release the album of their career, *A Night At The Opera*. But meantime there's the small matter of this six minute 'operatic thing' they want to release as the lead single – what radio station is gonna play that? *Classic Rock* goes behind the scenes with Queen as they prepare to go stratospheric.

Words: **Harry Doherty**



Mercury rising: Freddie gives it large onstage.

It could have been any other damp, cold Friday afternoon in the November of any other year. But this one was a bit special… 1975 was heading for Christmas and I was in the middle of a music mag office in sole, exclusive possession of the album, the song, from the band that would rule the world of rock for the next 30 years. Full of anticipation, I put the test pressing on the office turntable and something called *Bohemian Rhapsody* soared out. Well, it soared for me: it dive-bombed for others in the office. One colleague, Allan Jones, was horrified: "What is this?!" He guessed at 10cc. When I told him that it was Queen, his jaw dropped and hit the floor. He hated it! I loved it, and went on to review Queen's A Night At The Opera for Melody Maker.

I said things like 'easily their best work to date', some words about 'intricate musicianship' and 'displaying the variety of their talent', commented that it would be remembered as an album of 'May classics' (was it?), and hooked unashamedly on to *Bohemian Rhapsody*. 'The album,' I wrote, 'picks up the best of the concepts of *Queen II* and combines it with the studio expertise of *Sheer Heart Attack*. That combination, plus the growing maturity of the band, has given Queen a complete identity. Indeed, I don't think I'd be too far out if I said that Queen could well set a future direction in British rock'n'roll. They're hard rock, but just commercial enough to capture a massive, wide-ranging audience.'

I think I was on the button with that one…

Thirty years later, friends have come and gone – goodbye, Fred – but Queen, in one shape or other, are still very much with us. Downloaded off the net, on stage every night in the West End and Vegas, and on the road with Paul Rodgers. When Queen played at Hyde Park this past September, few remembered they had played there once before in September 1976 – a huge gig in front of over 150,000 people and one of the great free Hyde Park events. The Queen we know now are a part of the fibre of our rock community.

Back in the mid-1970s, however, Queen were mere mortals – not that they thought so. When you were was in the presence of Freddie Mercury, you knew it… and you believed it. With *Sheer Heart Attack* on the verge of release, I'd interviewed His Majesty in the office of his press officer, Tony Brainsby. Nothing could have prepared me for the experience… but I soon learned. *Sheer Heart Attack* is as close to hard rock-cum-pop perfection as you can get; but even then, the album in the bag, treading on the doorstep of humungous success, Freddie is not happy. And he's not happy that they had to record this album in bits and pieces; a situation generated when Brian May, suffering from hepatitis, took to bed and recovery while the other three recorded the tracks.

May had returned with the condition after the band's debut tour in America with Mott The Hoople. So when they started recording *Sheer Heart Attack*, it was without their guitarist. He came in afterwards on his own to add guitar. Though the ailing Brian had delivered his parts to a superlative album like a true guitar hero, Freddie was adamant that Brian had brought this upon himself. "Well, darling," he said, "we covered for him. He owed it to us."

A year later, November 1975, I'm in the presence of greatness again as Queen are close to finishing what would be recognised as the album of their lives, *A Night At The Opera*. We're in the offices of Rocket Records, because the band have by this time appointed John Reid, Elton John's chargé d'affaires, as their business manager; Reid had been appointed after an earlier disastrous management contract with a company called Trident, who also owned the studios where Queen recorded most of their early albums, including *A Night At The Opera*. It obviously went seriously sour, as described in the opening track of *A Night At The Opera*, *Death On Two Legs*, with barbed lyrics such as: 'Screw my brain 'til it hurts/You've taken all my money – and you want more' and 'You're a sewer-rat decaying in a cesspool of pride' – possibly the ultimate put-down. Reid would be a stop-gap until Queen established their own business empire.

For now, though, there's me, Freddie, John Deacon and Roger Taylor, but no Brian May. The man is exhausted after his efforts recording his parts on *A Night At The Opera* – they do say that hepatitis lingers on. Taylor is nestled in one corner. A real rock'n'roll animal during these years, he's restless. "I'm pissed off listening to the bloody album," he mutters. Four months in the making, the nights with this *…Opera* have taken their toll.

In another corner of the office, Freddie is on the phone to some American hack telling him, darling: "The album is absolutely wonderful, you really must hear it." But he, like Taylor, has had his fill of *A Night At The Opera* just now. Which is ironic because we're on our way to the first public playback of said masterpiece…

"I'll never forget this album, dear," Freddie tells me. "Never. But we've got to have this playback just to let friends hear what we've been up to. The problem, as I see it, is that they'll never understand it with one listen." He can't wait to get it over with. "Later on we'll go out, get pissed and put the damned album on hold for a while."

I'm with you Freddie, I think, but I still can't wait to hear what you're so pissed off about…

They're fidgety. John Deacon is all fingers drumming on desk and picking out faults on the tour programme. The band are going out on a worldwide tour in a week or so. No pressure…

Meanwhile, Freddie is still spreading the good word to the States about the album, and Taylor and Deacon are debating how *Bohemian Rhapsody*, six minutes long and not exactly yer typical single, will go down. They're amused, but couldn't care less. As we arrive at the North London Roundhouse studio for the playback we're greeted by a placard proclaiming: 'Welcome to A Night At The Opera'.

"We're not nervous," Taylor offers, "we're just nervous wrecks. I just want to get out on the road again." The realisation that he has just four days to achieve that particular ambition weighs heavily upon him.

The playback goes extraordinarily well. Everyone realises that they are experiencing something monumental. The record company is pleased, the party is ecstatic, the champagne is flowing – time for Freddie and I to depart. But not before we listen to the final historic rendition of *The National Anthem* on harmony guitars by Brian May, the glorious closure of *A Night At The Opera*. We listen in thrall. Freddie can't believe it. "STAND UP YOU BASTARDS!" he shouts, and whether it is in salute to Queen or *The* Queen I am still not sure. But we all did his biding as if by royal command.

Then the Mercury Man and myself are in a car and heading to the White Elephant on the River for a tête-à-tête and review of the past couple of months of his life over dinner. "Thank goodness that's over," Freddie sighs. "Some of those people really BOO-OORE me."

On his own, Freddie's kaleidoscopic personality vibrates. If you are in his company, the feeling you get is that you are the sole purpose for his being; he is so completely entertaining and engrossing. At a top-notch restaurant, he demands the service of someone royal before finally we get down to discussing *A Night At The Opera*.

"It's really taken the longest to do out of our four albums so far," he says. "We didn't really cater for it. We just set upon it and we were going to do so many things. It's taken us about four months and now we've gone over the deadline with the tour approaching. It's more important to get the album the way we want it, especially after we've spent so long on it.

"The last bits – piecing it together – are more important than the rest of it. It's easily our most important album yet, to be honest. In a way the best judge we had was tonight because we

GETTY



"Where's my other washing up glove gone?" Freddie and John Deacon onstage in 1974.

GETTY X3

listened to it back for the first time. We just haven't had the time to do that. I know that we've got the strongest set of songs ever. It is going to be our best album, it really is.

"If I thought there was something wrong with it, I would say so, but there are certain things on this album which we've wanted to do for a long time. I'm really pleased about the operatic thing" – ahem, we're talking about *Bohemian Rhapsody* now – "I really wanted to be outrageous with the vocals because we're always getting compared to other people, which is very stupid. If you really listen to the operatic bit, there are no comparisons, which is what we want. But we don't set out to be outrageous – it's in us. There are so many things that we want to do but we can't do everything at the same time. It's impossible. At the moment, I'm happy that we've made an album which, let's face it, is too much to take for some people. But it was what we wanted to do."

Mercury considers the impact Queen made with *Sheer Heart Attack*. It posited them where they wanted to be – in a sphere of influence. *Queen II* had set the cards on the table; *Sheer Heart Attack* had stated "here's what we can do"; *A Night At The Opera* took it to the limit.

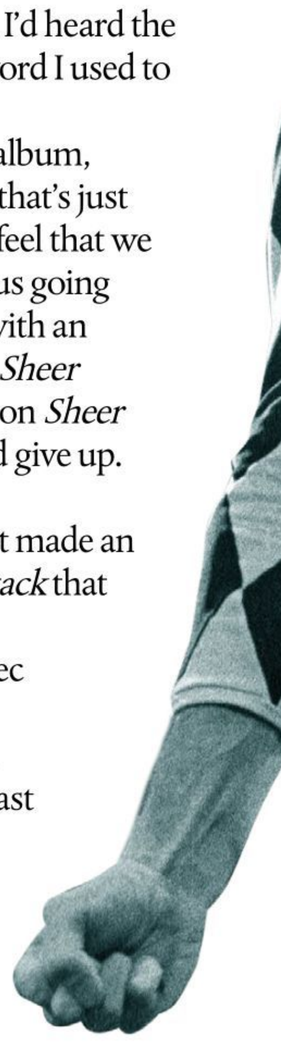
Freddie uses his fork as an exclamation mark, stabbing his food as he speaks. "With *Sheer Heart Attack*, we thought, we can do certain things and establish ourselves!" Stab! "Like vocally, we can outdo any band!" Stab! "With this album, we just thought that we would go out, not restrict ourselves with any barriers, and just do what we want to do!" Stab!

He considered *Bohemian* Rhapsody specifically. "I had this operatic 'thing', and I thought why don't we doo-oo-oo it." His affectation on the 'do' really emphasises his determination to achieve something radically different. By then, I'd heard the track a few times. 'Overboard' was a word I used to him to describe the work.

"We went a bit overboard on every album, actually," he responded gleefully. "But that's just the way Queen is. In certain areas, we feel that we want to go overboard. It's what keeps us going really, darling. If we were to come up with an album where people said: 'It's just like *Sheer Heart Attack* but there were a few bits on *Sheer Heart Attack* that are better…' Well, I'd give up. Wouldn't you?"

I pathetically nod 'yes', as if I had just made an album the measure of *Sheer Heart Attack* that very evening…

As we tucked into a main course avec bubbly, Freddie, though, was sure that Queen were firmly set on a right royal journey. "What really helped was the last tour. We've done a really successful worldwide tour which we've never done before. All that experience was accumulating and when we



"We went overboard on every album. But that's just the way Queen is."

Freddie Mercury

came to do this album, there were certain things which we had done in the past which we can do much better now.

"Our playing ability was better. Backing tracks on this album are far superior. We start off with backing tracks and we really felt they were really closely knit, and we seemed to feel each other's needs, which is very important for backing tracks.

"I think Queen has really got its own identity now. I don't care what journalists say – we got our identity after *Queen II*. With that album, we had our own thing. America saw that it was good, and so did Japan. Since then, we're the biggest group in Japan. I don't mind saying that. We are! We outdo anybody. And that's because we've taken it on our own musical terms.

"So since Queen II we've had our own identity and, of course, if we do something that's harmonised, we'll be The Beach Boys and if we do something that's heavy, we'll be Led Zeppelin, or whatever. But the thing is that we have an identity of our own because we combine all those things which mean Queen. That's what people don't seem to realise.

"A lot of people have slammed *Bohemian Rhapsody* but if you listen to that single, who can you compare it to? Tell me one group that's done an operatic single? I can't think of one! But we didn't do n operatic single because we thought we'd be the only group to do it. It just happened!



Queen: multicolour, multisexual, personal entourage out of shot.



Freddie Mercury: "I had this operatic 'thing' and I thought, 'Why don't we do it?'

"The title of the album came at the very end of recording. We thought: 'Oh God, what are we going to call this album?'" Typically, the two most humorous members of the band reverted to The Marx Brothers, but this was certainly an album made by a group firmly placing collective heads in the noose.

"We've always done that," Freddie agreed. "We've always put our necks on the line. We did it with *Queen II*. On that album we did so many outrageous things that people started to say 'self-indulgent', 'crap', 'too many vocals'… but that is Queen. After that, they seemed to realise what Queen was all about."

And just to tighten the noose, let's stick out a six-minute mini-opera that possibly stands no chance of getting radio play… "We look upon our product as songs," Freddie considers gently. "We don't worry about singles or albums. All we do is pick the cream of the crop. Then we look upon it as a whole to make sure the whole album works.

"With *Bohemian Rhapsody*, we just thought it was a very strong song and so we released it. But there were so many arguments about it. Somebody suggested cutting it down because the media reckons we have to have a three minute single, but we want to put across Queen as songs. There is no point in cutting it. If you want to cut down *Bohemian Rhapsody*, it just won't work.

"We just wanted to release it to say that this is what Queen are about at this stage. This is the single and you're going to have an album after that."

And this, asserts Fred, is the uniqueness of Queen. Their USP (Unique Selling Point) is simply: take it or leave it. Like it or loathe it.

"We're just very different. We do things now in a style that is very different to anybody else. But we haven't acquired that just to be different, it just happened. We go through so many traumas, and we're so meticulous. There are literally scores of songs that have been rejected for this album – some of them nice ones. If people don't like the songs we're doing at the moment, we couldn't give a fuck. We're probably the fussiest band in the world, to be honest. We take so much care with what we do because we feel so much about what we put across.

"And if we do an amazing album we make sure that album is packaged right, because we've put so much loving into it. It's what we do, darling."

The interview finished, Freddie invites his multicolour, multisexual, effervescent, personal entourage to join us – here's the flamboyant DJ Kenny Everett pushing to the front to embrace and congratulate his buddy on a job well done. Everett was the first Freddie turned to when he realised that *Bohemian Rhapsody* might not make it to the nation's airwaves. Six minutes, he told Freddie, you have no chance. And then proceeded to play it something like 10 times on his radio show that weekend. *Bo-Rhap* was on its way to immortality…

The next day, after exposing their masterwork to the fickle elements of the media, the band got together again to listen through to *A Night At The Opera* one more time before sending it to the pressing factory. And that's when they decided to remix it…

A few weeks later, and I'm sitting backstage at Hammersmith Odeon talking with Brian May, just as Queen are preparing for a soundcheck for a series of gigs in west London. Sitting there, considering the immensity of what is happening around his band, May is calmness itself.

"We're a bigger band now and we can afford to plough more into the presentation. We've always lived beyond our means anyway! Dynamics are things we consider worthwhile in a show, just so that we can make it a complete evening out for the fans. The glamour will never take away from the music. We're much too conscious of the music to let that happen.

"The music is first in everything and if we add a particular effect or particular lights, it's to get across a certain mood at a certain time to emphasise the music.

"You see, you have to understand it's romantic music we're playing – in the old sense of the word. It's music to tear your emotions apart. There's a kind of personality we share with our audience. We're like that. We're sort of schizophrenic. We like to be serious about some things and not as serious about others."

Ah, and here we have Queen on tour. Here we have in *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *A Night At The Opera*, a quintessential 'studio record'; we have the Queen that proudly proclaim on album sleeves 'no synthesisers'; the Queen lording it on the road; the Queen that has to reproduce this on stage. How do you square that circle, Brian?

May considered this. "We play differently on stage from on record. On stage, it's good to have a two-way conversation with the audience rather than oneway. Let me explain this. It's no good just getting out there and playing if you're not getting across to the people. We treat recording as a separate thing altogether from the stage act. We don't have any thought of holding back something on record if we couldn't do it on stage. There are very complicated things on the record but, hopefully, not complicated for complication's sake.

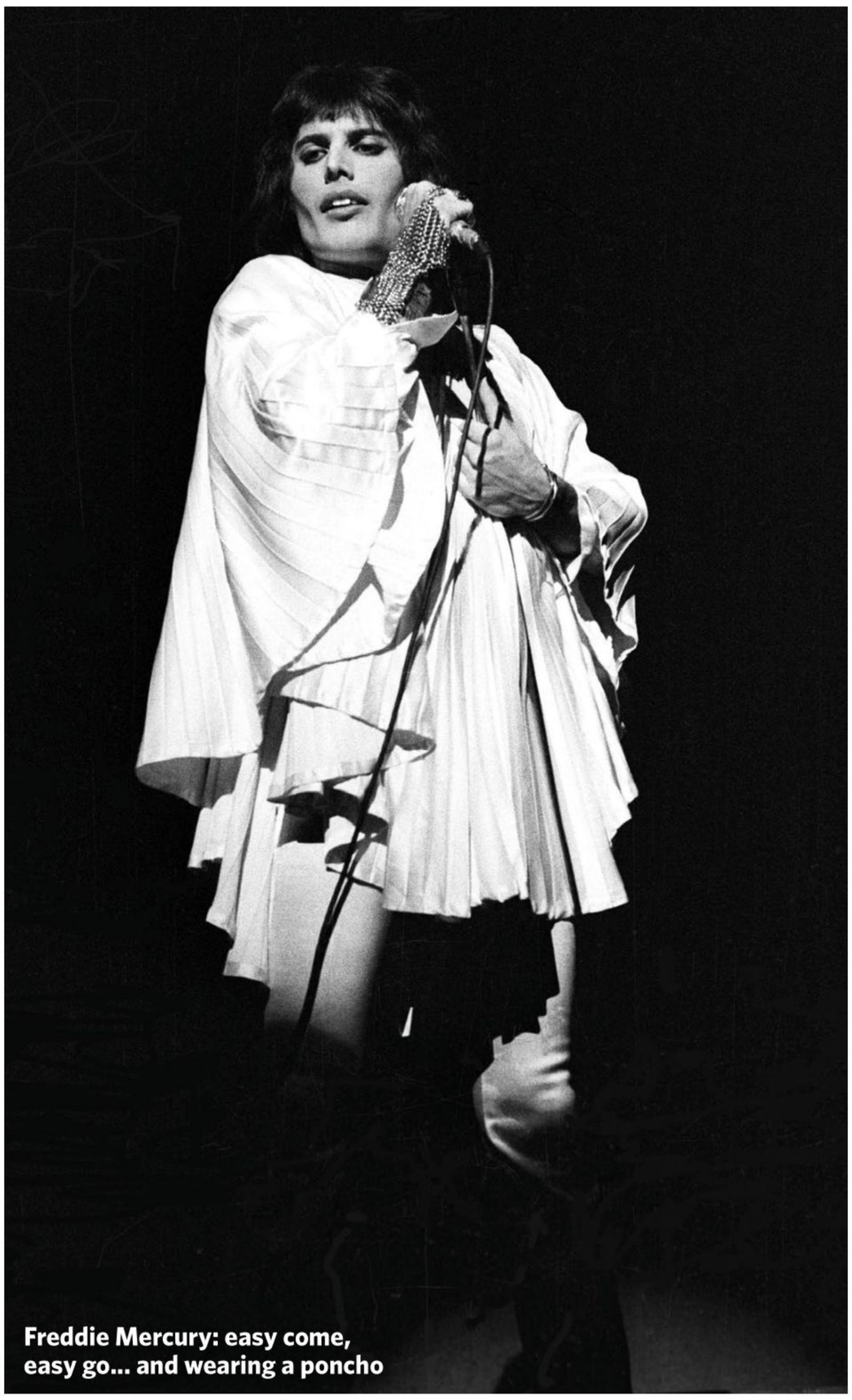
"There's a lot of texture on our albums. We started that with our second album." You see now that *Queen II* is a significant album in the growth of Queen. It is my favourite Queen album, by the way. Brian developed the theme. "That album has a lot of impact. If you listen to our albums more and more, you will get more and more out of them."

Still, as *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *A Night At The Opera* were being unleashed, May was ticking the box that said 'room for improvement'. "I'd like to see us, as a four-piece, work together more on songs. In the case of *A Night At The Opera*, it was impossible because we didn't have enough time, and we were in the situation where a couple of us were in one studio and the others in another, so you lose a bit of the group feeling in that way.

"It's good to be out on the road," he says. "It draws you together."

You get a sense that Brian thinks too much, and when he talks to you about *A Night At The Opera*, he's what you might call 'picky'…

"It's not that there is too much individualism," he says. "I can point toward things on this album which have suffered from us not having us all there at one time. and because there was too much responsibility on one person at one time very often. I can't say which tracks because it would spoil it for people. That's not to say I don't think it's a good album. I love it."



GETTY

Freddie Mercury: easy come, easy go… and wearing a poncho

We went on to talk about the Queen modus operandi; how the band got from college to collective. I point out that with four very strong personalities in the Queen ranks, it wouldn't be surprising that things might get a little bit hectic now and then.

"Generally," May answers, "the working relationship within the band is that we tend to leave each other alone musically, unless asked. That would be my interpretation. If someone has an idea, you assume that they want to be left alone to get on with it and put it across the best way.

"Sometimes, they'll come and talk about it, which I do a lot. Maybe I can't make a decision and I'll come to the others and say, 'How does this strike you?' and they'll suggest something and usually I'll agree.

"The relationship gets strained sometimes. I got very worried once that I was going out on a limb and that the rest of the band didn't really approve of what I was doing. It happened on a track on *A Night At The Opera – Good Company*. I spent days and days doing those trumpet and trombone things [all of which were played by May on the guitar] and trying to get into the character of those instruments. The others were doing other things and they'd pop in from time to time and say, 'Well, you haven't done much since we last saw you…'

"They probably wouldn't mean it in a dire way, but I would get very offended and very worried that I was doing something which their heart wasn't in but, in the end, it turned out well."

And Freddie. What was it about the Mercury-May chemistry, especially when May worked on Mercury songs? How did that work?

"Freddie and I worked together very well. Is it hard? No, quite the opposite. I find it natural. I think he's got a knack of using me to my best advantage. Usually he has everything sorted out until the last note, calls me over and tells me which way he wants it. There is never any friction.

"He's got a strong personality. I think we all have. We're all very stubborn, particularly in the studio, and sometimes it leads to bad feeling. Generally, however, if it comes down to a genuine musical argument, we tend to see eye to eye in the end. We all know where we're going; it's just a question of how we get there that is argued about."

We rattle on about Freddie for a while, laugh about him, his ways and his genius. May could talk on the subject for hours, he says. "Freddie is a born figurehead," he comments with deep affection. "He loves himself to be used as a figurehead. He knows exactly what's best for himself.

"Freddie knows exactly what he wants and how to get it. He's definitely the driving force behind the band getting where it is. He's flashy but he knows he's got the substance to back it up. He'll never be flash in an area where he's not confident. If there's something he knows he doesn't know much about, he'll steer completely away from it, or he'll conquer it. There's no halfway house. He won't give the impression that he knows what he's talking about when he doesn't. He'll always make sure that he knows what he is talking about and then let everybody know. Some people think that he's arrogant but in fact, he's only arrogant when he knows he can afford to be."

After all, who could challenge Freddie Mercury? The other members of Queen, if anything, pushed their singer to the front and encouraged him to impose his magnetic personality on to the media and public. Such was their confidence in their own musical ability and business nous that they were perfectly happy to let Freddie loose.

"It's good that Freddie has such a strong personality because he doesn't let it go to his head, which he could quite easily have done," says May. "It's very weird that that happened. We could see it happening from the beginning. He's our frontman and we consciously used it in that way. The press did, and still do, take it too far. A lot of the press are very dimly aware that the rest of the group exist.

"It would be a big mistake for anybody to disregard the role each member plays in Queen. It really does interlock well as a group and we couldn't do without any one of us at all. I think if anyone left it would disappear."

…Only to reappear occasionally, as if by a kind of magic.


LIGHT MY FIRE

THE BEACH BOYS
GOOD VIBRATIONS


THE BEATLES
HELTER SKELTER
GOT TO GET YOU INTO MY LIFE


Rainbow
Rising

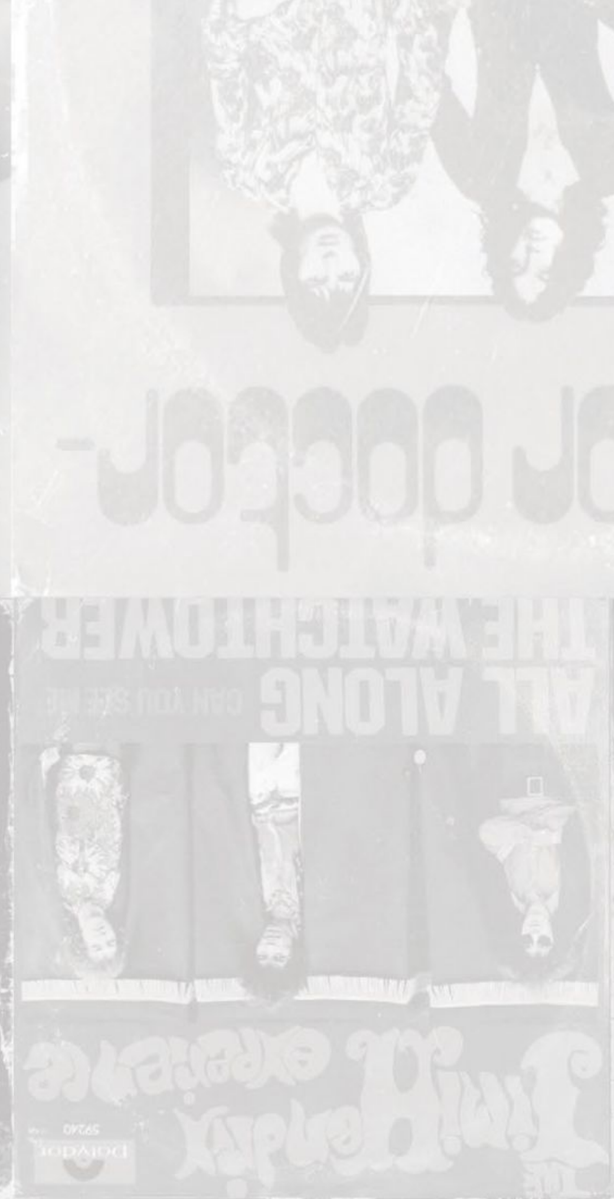


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vogue
KICK OUT THE JAMS
JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE
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UFO - doctor doctor -

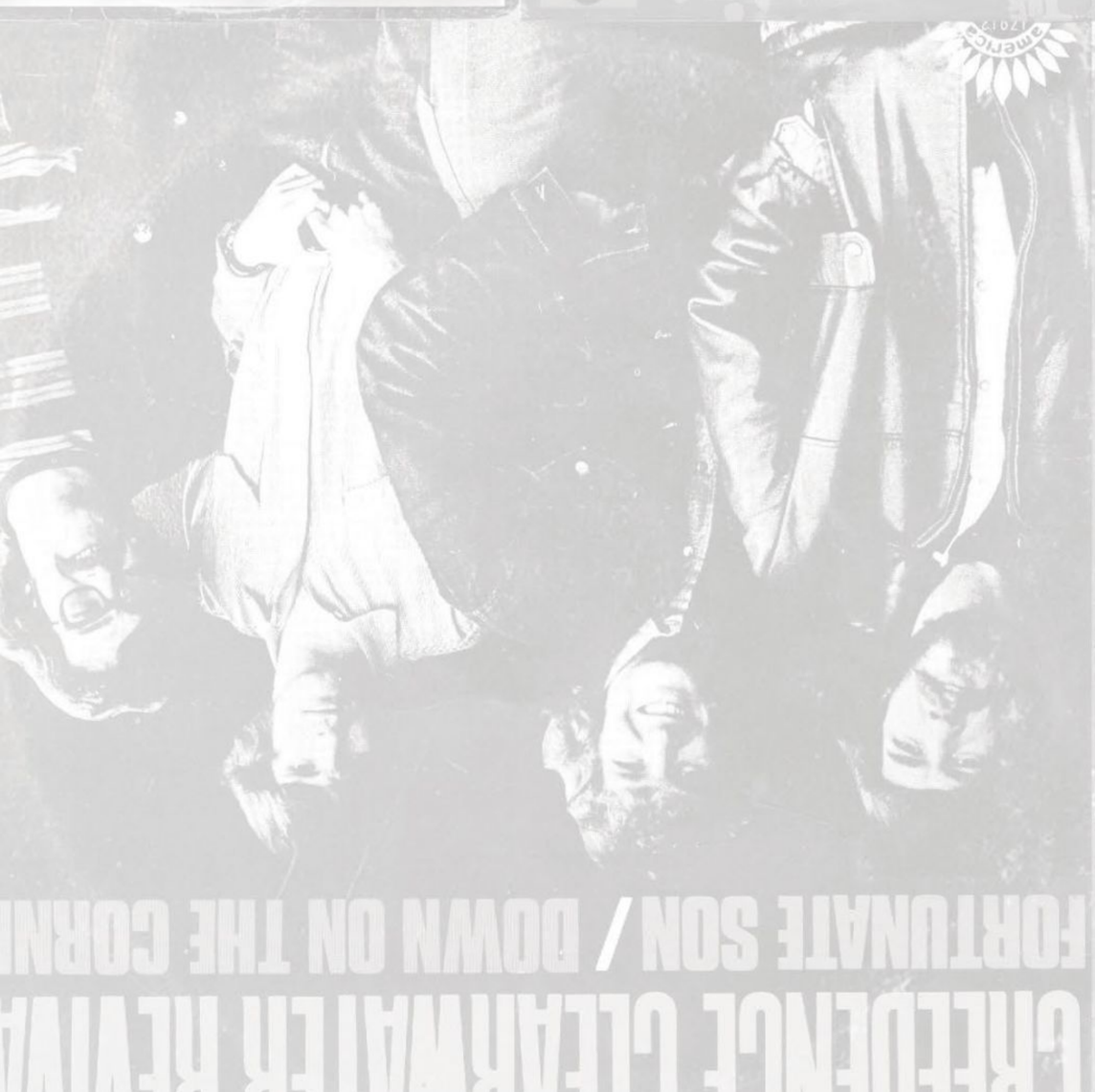
"smoke on the water"
deep purple


RUSH


ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER
Jimi Hendrix Experience

Free
All Right Now

KINKS
You really got me
ALL RIGHT


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FORTUNATE SON / DOWN ON THE CORNER

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