



◆ ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK ◆

◆ TONY ORLANDO ◆

◆ PAUL ANKA ◆ SYLVIA

◆ ROBBY VINTON ◆

AM GOLD
MELLOW HITS
OF THE '70s
AM GOLD

◆ OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN ◆

◆ MICHAEL JACKSON ◆

◆ SAMMY DAVIS JR. ◆

◆ BERRY BOONE ◆

MELLOW HITS OF THE '70s



- 1 TIE A YELLOW RIBBON
ROUND THE OLE OAK TREE
Dawn featuring Tony Orlando
- 2 SPIDERS AND SNAKES *Jim Stafford*
- 3 (YOU'RE) HAVING MY BABY
Paul Anka
- 4 AFTERNOON DELIGHT
Starland Vocal Band
- 5 MUSIC BOX DANCER *Frank Mills*
- 6 SOMETIMES WHEN WE TOUCH
Dan Hill
- 7 AFTER THE LOVIN'
Engelbert Humperdinck
- 8 MUSKRAT LOVE *Captain and Tennille*
- 9 LOVIN' YOU *Minnie Riperton*
- 10 THE CANDY MAN *Sammy Davis Jr.*

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MELLOW HITS OF THE '70s

AM GO

- 1 Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree
- 2 Spiders and Snakes
- 3 (You're) Having My Baby
- 4 Afternoon Delight
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- 6 Sometimes When We Touch
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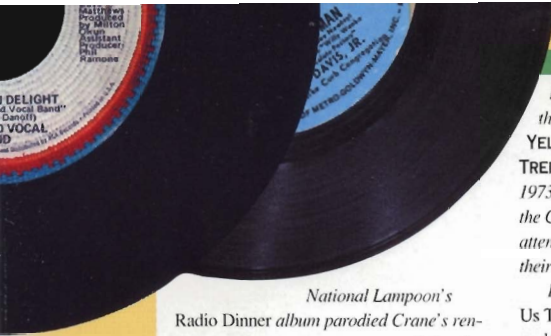
They beckon like messages from a lost world, those sweet and tender and hopelessly naive pop songs from the '70s. Two decades later, these clock-radio classics sounded as dated as anything from the long-ago glory days of Tin Pan Alley, a period whose artists (including Cole Porter) probably share more with those of the end-of-the-century Age of Irony. And yet this time-capsule quality is part of what gives the songs their peculiar charm. Nowadays, these smiley-face tunes, with their relentless heart-on-the-sleeve sincerity, are mostly regarded with a superior smirk, even as they are championed by a new generation of retro lounge-music enthusiasts.

One of the most beloved and most reviled songs of the era, Morris Albert's **FEELINGS**, epitomizes the sentimentality that ruled the pop charts during the tumultuous decade of social upheaval and Vietnam and Watergate. Born Morris Albert Kaiserman in Brazil, Albert adapted his own composition, a bolero with Portuguese lyrics, into English. It became a No. 1 record throughout Latin America before its 1975 release in the U.S., where it spent eight months in the Hot 100. After a follow-up single bombed, Albert vanished

back into obscurity, but *Feelings* has remained a lounge standard and karaoke favorite all over the world. It made headlines in 1999 when an Indonesian army leader sang it at a formal dinner to describe his stance on the crisis in East Timor (punk band the Offspring had also just covered it on their album *Americana*)—and it continues to appear on “most-hated” songs lists everywhere. **DESIDERATA** became a target for satire not long after it hit the airwaves in 1971. Originally a prose poem written in 1906 by Indiana lawyer Max Ehrmann, by the '60s it was being mistakenly celebrated by hippies as anonymous ancient wisdom. San Francisco TV talk-show host Les Crane, husband of Gilligan's Island actress Tina Louise, read the message on a street poster and made a spoken-word recording that entered the top 10 and earned him a Grammy. The next year,

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National Lampoon's Radio Dinner album parodied Crane's rendition as Deteriorata ("You are a fluke of the universe"), with backup vocals by a then unknown Melissa Manchester.

*Many '70s singers took the opposite route, turning hit records into shots at their own TV shows. After a string of '60s hits, veteran crooner Bobby Vinton shopped around a tune he'd written with some Polish verses. The labels weren't interested—until ABC head Jay Lasker heard it and told Vinton it would sell a million copies. **MY MELODY OF LOVE** reached No. 3 in 1974 and rejuvenated Mr. Lonely's career, leading to a three-year run of his syndicated series, *The Bobby Vinton Show*. It remains a cherished anthem for Polish Americans. After a long dry spell, Tony Orlando and Dawn were ready to call it quits when Orlando was given a song based on the true story of an ex-con returning home by*

*bus on U.S. 17 in Georgia. He initially thought it was too corny, but **TIE A YELLOW RIBBON ROUND THE OLE OAK TREE** tied as second-biggest No. 1 record of 1973. The trio's performance of the song at the Grammy awards ceremony caught the attention of a CBS executive, leading to their own two-season variety show.*

*It was the smash No. 1 **Love Will Keep Us Together** that helped earn the Captain and Tennille their ABC series. Soon after the show first aired in September 1976, the duo entered the top five yet again with a cover of Texas recluse Willis Alan Ramsey's **MUSKRAT LOVE**, complete with synthesized muskrat squeals. Novelty songs were the forte of Jim Stafford, known for drawled swamp romps like *My Girl Bill* and *Your Bulldog Drinks Champagne*. His best-selling effort, **SPIDERS AND SNAKES**, co-written with fellow native Floridian David Bellamy of Bellamy Brothers fame, reached No. 3 and brightened the charts for 23 weeks in 1974. Stafford later had his own variety show and was co-host of *Those Amazing Animals* in the early '80s. But the decade's most memorable critter ditty came from renowned animal lover Michael Jackson. Don Black, who penned the lyrics to *Born Free*, had written the*

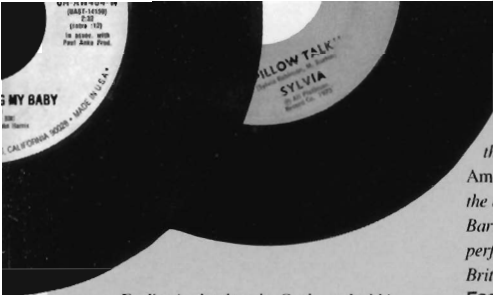
theme song to a movie about a sick boy who befriends a trained rat. It was Black's idea to enlist Jackson, and **BEN** gave the 14-year-old superstar his first solo No. 1 record.

Besides odes to creatures, there were plenty of other popular love songs in the '70s. Typically, these declarations of undying devotion went straight for the emotional jugular and never let go. Former Rotary Connection soul singer Minnie Riperton had given up the music biz to raise a family when Stevie Wonder talked her out of retirement. After a stint in his backup group, *Wonderlove*, she made a solo album in 1974. Produced by Wonder, it featured the No. 1 **LOVIN' YOU**, perhaps the most sensuous valentine ever to come moaning across the AM band. Pop craftsman Neil Sedaka reworked his No. 1 hit from 1962, **BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO**, into a slower, sadder version; it became his third comeback hit on Elton John's *Rocket* label, cracking the top 10 in '75. Australian-bred Olivia Newton-John had already scored her first American success with a cover of Bob Dylan's *If Not for You*. Her first chart topper was the more direct **I HONESTLY LOVE YOU**, co-written by Peter Allen, who had intended to record the song himself until Newton-John heard a demo and was smitten. The label didn't want to release it, but her intuition proved

correct: The single dominated the charts for 15 weeks in 1974.

The son of an interracial American couple who had fled racism and '50s-era political repression, singer-songwriter Dan Hill hailed from Toronto. The song McCarthy's *Day* addressed those personal issues on his '77 album, *Longer Fuse*, which also included **SOMETIMES WHEN WE TOUCH**, co-written by longtime hit-maker Barry Mann. It soared to No. 3, but Hill took more than a decade to return to the top 10 (in a duet with Vonda Shepard). Debby Boone had an easier time reaching the hit parade. The daughter of crooner Pat Boone, she began her career on her father's TV show, later joining her three sisters in the *Boones*. Her big break came by way of label owner Mike Curb, who found her a song at a film screening. Boone's version of **YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE**, the theme from the movie of the same name, spent an astounding 10 weeks atop the charts, earning the 21-year-old a Grammy and her first and only No. 1.





Earlier in the decade, Curb worked his magic with legendary entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. Curb produced an instrumental track of **THE CANDY MAN** from the musical film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, and he had Davis in mind for vocals. The former vaudevillian didn't like the tune, but recorded it anyway in his inimitable swinging style. Many hipper-than-thou FM rock stations refused to play it, but *The Candy Man* was an instant favorite of AM's easy-listening format throughout 1972, and gave Davis the biggest hit of his storied career. Fellow Vegas lounge lizard Engelbert Humperdinck hit the jackpot in '77 with his suave rendition of the big-band standard **AFTER THE LOVIN'**. The former Gerry Dorsey had enjoyed success since the late '60s, when he adopted the name of a 19th-century German composer, and was still reaching new audiences in the '90s: On an episode of the TV show *Chicago Hope*, he serenaded the doctors on

a Vegas junket, and his tongue-in-cheek take on Lesbian Seagull graces the sound track of the '96 teen flick *Beavis and Butthead Do America*. A clever songwriter and throwback to the old days, Rupert Holmes penned songs for Barbra Streisand and others while his own performing career stalled. After years, the British-born Holmes found the key to success with **ESCAPE (THE PINA COLADA SONG)**. Its catchy melody and surprise O. Henryesque ending gave him the last No. 1 of the decade.

Despite its propensity for escapism, pop music of the '70s reflected many of the changes that were galvanizing society. Paul Anka found himself in the crossfire of the sexual revolution. The former teen idol had gone down to Rick Hall's famed Muscle Shoals studio to try to revive his career, and the gambit worked. **(YOU'RE) HAVING MY BABY**, a duet with Odia Coates, shot to the top of the charts in 1974, Anka's first hit in five years. But the National Organization for Women wasn't pleased and gave Anka one of its annual "Keep Her in Her Place" awards. Anka explained that the song was inspired by his longtime wife's pregnancy, but to no avail, and he eventually relented by changing the lyrics to "having our baby" in subsequent concert appearances.

—Eddie Dean



DISCOGRAPHY

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- 15** **THEME FROM S.W.A.T.**
Rhythm Heritage • (Barry DeVorzon) ABC 12135 (1976).
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Michael Jackson • (Scharf-Black) Motown 1207 (1972).
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* Indicates highest Billboard chart position

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FRANK MILLS

THE PINA COLADA SONG

RUPERT HOLMES
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(THE PINA COLADA SONG)
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