

1969

The Beat Goes On



Classic
ROCK

TIME
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1. **She Came In through the Bathroom Window** Joe Cocker
2. **Games People Play** Joe South
3. **Take a Letter Maria** R.B. Greaves
4. **Grazing in the Grass**
The Friends of Distinction
5. **Polk Salad Annie** Tony Joe White
6. **My Whole World Ended (The Moment You Left Me)** David Ruffin
7. **I Want to Take You Higher**
Sly and the Family Stone
8. **Spinning Wheel** Blood, Sweat and Tears
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Tommy James and the Shondells
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Marvin Gaye
20. **Jam Up Jelly Tight** Tommy Roe
21. **Can I Change My Mind** Tyrone Davis
22. **Oh Happy Day**
The Edwin Hawkins Singers

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Classic **ROCK**

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TIME
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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

2CLR-12
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1. She Came In through the Bathroom window
2. Games People Play
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Nineteen sixty-nine was the year rock embraced eclectic sounds. All kinds of music started influencing the pop marketplace—from reggae, gospel and blues to folk, Broadway and jazz. Even elaborate productions such as the rock musical *Hair* and the Who's "rock opera" *Tommy* emerged at this time. At the other end of the spectrum, a new genre known as bubblegum was invented. This simplistic music, created in the studio chiefly by anonymous musicians, helped to define pop as contrivance. As critic Charlie Gillett wrote in *The Sound of the City*, bubblegum was "music planned entirely as a product, not as anybody's art." This concept sustained the record industry in the years ahead.

Atlanta singer Tommy Roe recorded his ultimate bubblegum

*Swamp-rocker
Tony Joe White*

Sly (right) and the Family Stone

statement with **Jam Up Jelly Tight** in 1969. Roe had been making nursery rhyme-style songs since he topped the charts in 1962 with *Sheila*. Joe South, also from Atlanta, was less concerned with artifice than art. South worked as a studio guitarist on countless sessions in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and Nashville; he played on most of Aretha Franklin's recordings, as well as on Bob Dylan's album *Blonde on Blonde*. His success as a writer came when he supplied Atlanta singer Billie Joe Royal with *Down in the Boondocks* and *Hush* (covered by Deep Purple). South had his own studio in Atlanta, and was one of the first performers to play virtually all vocal and instrumental parts himself. The title of his biggest hit, **Games People Play**, was taken from a pop psychology book by Eric Berne.

Another white Southerner with soul was Tony Joe White. A Texan steeped in the R&B tradition, White emerged as a creative storyteller who pumped new blood into the Nashville music industry. His **Polk Salad Annie**, produced by Billy Swan, became an odd top-10 hit. A humorous tale of a young woman from the Louisiana swamps, it was undoubtedly popular because of its novelty appeal, with lines like "gator got your granny ... chomp, chomp." Swan's production, combining rock and soul techniques, defined "funky," and foreshadowed a style the Rolling Stones would use on *Honky Tonk Women* and *Brown Sugar*. Although White continued to make excellent recordings, his next hit arrived indirectly when Brook Benton

covered his song *Rainy Night in Georgia*.

White soul of a sort could also be heard from the remnants of the Blues Project, a New York cult band whose home was the Cafe Au Go Go in Greenwich Village. In 1967, when Cream and the Jimi Hendrix Experience were introducing free-form experimentation to rock fans, the Blues Project was similarly stretching the ears of folk audiences. After the group's demise, leader Al Kooper put together a nine-piece band called Blood, Sweat and Tears, with the idea of fusing rock and jazz. Kooper left after BS&T's first album, and was replaced by David Clayton-Thomas, one of Canada's most respected blues singers, who belted out **Spinning Wheel**. By 1969, many rock groups, including the Electric Flag and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, were also hustling the blues with brass.

In Los Angeles, Canned Heat, whose primal appeal was based on the need to boogie, transformed prewar Delta rhythms into pop songs with a driving fury that hadn't been heard since the great British band John Mayall's Blues Breakers. Canned Heat's two main writers, Alan Wilson and Bob Hite, were avid record collectors who shaped their knowledge of the blues into a rock idiom. **Going Up the Country** was a feat of authenticity that blues-oriented groups such as Led Zeppelin could rarely bring off. Another L.A. group, Spirit, included a former Canned Heat member. Spirit's songs combined rock, country, jazz and classical elements, and, since some of them (*Mechanical World*, *Fresh Garbage*) were played frequently on FM

radio, the band was deemed hip and experimental. But Spirit's commercial breakthrough came with a straightforward rocker, **I Got a Line on You**. Unblemished by improvisational tendencies, it stood as a last gasp of the psychedelic era.

Harry Nilsson, an eccentric who also hailed from Los Angeles, was the Beatles' favorite singer-songwriter, thanks to his collage of Beatles songs titled *You Can't Do That*. Nilsson wrote material for many artists (the Monkees, the Ronettes and the Yardbirds among them), yet hit his stride when he began creating intricate overdubbed harmonies for his own albums. Ironically, Nilsson's first chart success wasn't with one of his own songs but with a cover of Fred Neil's **Everybody's Talkin'**, used recurrently in the popular film *Midnight Cowboy*.

Early in 1969, in Oakland, California, a disc jockey gave heavy air play to a cut from an album privately pressed by the Northern California State Youth Choir. The song, **Oh Happy Day**, was released as a single under the choir's new name, the Edwin Hawkins Singers. It stormed both the American and British charts. Dozens of cover versions by various gospel choirs were released to cash in on the song. With the exception of the Staple Singers, the Edwin Hawkins Singers became the most influential gospel group in '60s pop. (A large choir would not have such an impact again until 1985, when the New Jersey Mass Choir backed up Foreigner on *I Want to Know What Love Is*.)

While gospel sneaked onto the charts as a fluke, its secular side climbed smoothly and consistently to the top 10. Tyrone Davis, who started out singing raw blues in the South Side clubs of Chicago, was best

known for languid ballads done in the warm style of Bobby "Blue" Bland. On **Can I Change My Mind**, Davis's groove is satin and never seems to strain for effect. R.B. Greaves also possessed the soothing soulful touch. A black American Indian born in British Guyana and raised on a Seminole reservation in California, Greaves traveled through England in 1963 under the name of Sonny Childe. Six years later, he hit with **Take a Letter Maria**, an unusual folk-tinged recording on which he sounds a bit like Sam Cooke, who was, in fact, his uncle.

By the end of the '60s, artists with their roots firmly planted in both R&B and soul had captured the attention of both the AM and FM audiences. Nowhere was this fact more evident than in the work of the Temptations

Blood, Sweat and Tears

Desmond Dekker




and Sly and the Family Stone. Sly Stone's *Hot Fun in the Summertime* was the summer record of 1969, but his *I Want to Take You Higher* remains the one-chord song that best captures the exuberance and release of the late '60s. With all the jive of Sly towering over his regal family, producer Norman Whitfield transformed the Temptations into children of the Family Stone. Whitfield sought a contemporary style, and on records like *Cloud Nine* and *Ball of Confusion*, that meant socially aware lyrics aiming for profundity.

Often, as with *Run Away Child, Running Wild*, Whitfield's productions were like made-for-radio minidramas.

Throughout the '60s, Jamaican pop rarely made the charts in America. The records that did—Millie Small's *My Boy Lollipop*, Prince

Joe South (right); Steppenwolf, with lead singer-in-wolf's-clothing John Kay (inset)





Buster's *Ten Commandments*, Johnny Nash's *Hold Me Tight*—were considered novelties. But Desmond Dekker was another story. He began his career in 1963, and by 1966 had achieved international fame in ska and rock steady (both reggae precursors).

When *Israelites* finally exposed America to reggae, Dekker had already scored 40 No. 1 hits in Jamaica. *Israelites* possessed all the essential ingredients—a loping beat, a jagged bass line, biblical references, a nod to American cinema and the clean production of Leslie Kong, the Sam Phillips of reggae. Dekker never had another American hit, but he paved the way for the influential film *The Harder They Come* and the reggae madness of the '70s. More important, like Canned Heat, the Edwin Hawkins Singers, Tommy Roe and other stars from 1969, he stretched the boundaries of American pop and redefined what it could include.

—Robert Hull

Eccentric singer-songwriter Harry Nilsson parodies the Beatles '65 album cover with a broly built for four.

DISCOGRAPHY

* Indicates highest Billboard chart position

1. She Came In through the Bathroom Window

Joe Cocker • Music and lyrics by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. A&M 1147. Courtesy of A&M Records, Inc. No. 30*

2. Games People Play Joe South • Music and lyrics by Joe South. Capitol 2248. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets. No. 12*

3. Take a Letter Maria R.B. Greaves • Music and lyrics by R.B. Greaves. Atco 6714. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 2*

4. Grazing in the Grass The Friends of Distinction • Music and lyrics by Harry Elston, Philemon Hou and Hugh Masekela. RCA 0107. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 3*

5. Polk Salad Annie Tony Joe White • Music and lyrics by Tony Joe White. Monument 1104. Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 8*

6. My Whole World Ended (The Moment You Left Me) David Ruffin • Music and lyrics by Johnny Bristol, Harvey Fuqua, Pam Sawyer and Jimmy Roach. Motown 1140. Courtesy of Motown Record Corporation. No. 9*

7. I Want to Take You Higher Sly and the Family Stone • Music and lyrics by Sylvester Stewart. Epic 10450. Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS, Inc. No. 60*

8. Spinning Wheel Blood, Sweat and Tears • Music and lyrics by David Clayton-Thomas. Columbia 44871. Produced under license from CBS Special Products. No. 2*

9. Sweet Cherry Wine Tommy James and the Shondells • Music and lyrics by Tommy James and Richie Grasso. Roulette 7039. Produced under license from Roulette Records, a Division of ABZ Music Corp. No. 7*

10. Time Is Tight Booker T. and the MG's • Music and lyrics by Booker T. Jones, Al Jackson Jr., Steve Cropper and Donald V. Dunn. Stax 0028. Courtesy of Fantasy Records. No. 6*

11. Everybody's Talkin' Harry Nilsson • Music and lyrics by Fred Neil. RCA 0161. Courtesy of RCA Records, a label of BMG Music. No. 6*

12. In the Year 2525 (Exordium & Terminus) Zager and Evans • Music and lyrics by Rick Evans. RCA 0174. Courtesy of RCA Records, a label of BMG Music. No. 1*

13. Run Away Child, Running Wild The Temptations • Music and lyrics by Barrett Strong and Norman Whitfield. Gordy 7084. Courtesy of Motown Record Corporation. No. 6*

14. I Got a Line on You Spirit • Music and lyrics by Randy California. © 1973 CBS Records Inc. Ode 115. Produced under license from CBS Special Products. No. 25*

15. Going Up the Country Canned Heat • Music and lyrics by Alan Wilson. Liberty 56077. Courtesy of EMI, a division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from Capitol Special Markets. No. 11*

16. Backfield in Motion Mel and Tim • Music and lyrics by Herbert T. McPherson and Melvin Harden. Bamboo 107. Courtesy of Dominion Entertainment, Inc. No. 10*

17. Israelites Desmond Dekker and the Aces • Music and lyrics by Desmond Dacres and Leslie Kong. Uni 55129. Courtesy of Janus Records, Inc. No. 9*

18. Rock Me Steppenwolf • Music and lyrics by John Kay. Dunhill 4182. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 10*

19. Too Busy Thinking about My Baby Marvin Gaye • Music and lyrics by Norman Whitfield, Janie Bradford and Barrett Strong. Tama 54181. Courtesy of Motown Record Corporation. No. 4*

20. Jam Up Jelly Tight Tommy Roe • Music and lyrics by Tommy Roe and Freddy Weller. ABC 11247. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 8*

21. Can I Change My Mind Tyrone Davis • Music and lyrics by Barry Despenza and Carl Wolfolek. Dakar 602. Courtesy of Brunswick Records, under license from CBS Special Products. No. 5*

22. Oh Happy Day The Edwin Hawkins Singers • Music and lyrics by Edwin R. Hawkins. © 1984 Buddah Records. Pavilion 20001. Courtesy of Buddah Records, Inc. No. 4*

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