

Bubblegum, Garage and Pop Nuggets



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San Francisco's Mojo Men included a female lead vocalist, Jan Ashton.



While searching for a hit, California's Peanut Butter Conspiracy sounded the death knell of psychedelic rock.

From 1965 through 1969, the pop music made in America was a glorious mess. There was no telling what might blast forth from the AM radio. Outside of R & B, country and adult schlock, most American pop that charted was created in teenagers' garages or producers' studios. Hindsight has given us labels for most of this stuff—psychedelia, garage-punk, bubblegum—but at the time, the music was surprising, and even today it holds a sense of mystery.

Garage music developed between 1959 and 1962, heyday of instrumental bands. From the Pacific Northwest came the first significant garage record: *Louie Louie* by the Kingsmen. It was punk incarnate, a brawl with bodies and cymbals crashing, and it inspired untold numbers of teenage bands all across America.

In the Midwest, the Woolies from East Lansing, Michigan, got their start in the summer of 1966 at a competition at the Michigan State Fair. The group won a trip to L.A. and met Lou Adler, the West Coast's archetypal '60s producer (Johnny Rivers, the Mamas and the Papas). The Woolies cut a version of Bo Diddley's **Who Do You Love** with lead singer Stormy Rice. But Adler's label, Dunhill, promoted the B side, and the record died, having barely entered the Top 100.

In the South, the sound and the fury of garage music was crudely present in songs by the Swingin' Medallions, the Gentrys, the Hombres and the Uniques, all of whom saw some chart action. Perhaps the most primitive of Southern garage groups was the Gants, named after a popular brand of preppy sport shirts, who began as a fraternity band at Mississippi State University. Like the Woolies, the Gants were drawn to Bo Diddley material, and for their first single they recorded a tough version of **Road Runner**. Some radio listeners probably believed the record, released in 1965 at the height of the British Invasion, was another Eng-

lish group covering an American R & B song.

Sounding British was the ploy of many garage bands in the mid-'60s who hoped that the public would regard them as the next Beatles. No Beatles sound-alikes had as much success as the Knickerbockers from Bergenfield, New Jersey. They first hit in early 1966 with *Lies*, which went Top 20 perhaps because it sounded *exactly* like the Beatles. By the time the band released its sequel, **One Track Mind**, the public had wised up and the record narrowly escaped the Top 40. Nevertheless, the Knickerbockers began a trend: in supermarkets all over America cut-rate record companies sold phony Beatle albums by groups with names like the Buggs and the Merseyboys.

In 1966, while garage music was hitting the national charts, bands were already being influenced by the psychedelic vision. Many punk groups were walking the fine line between the fuzz tone and the strobe light, among them the Nightcrawlers from Daytona Beach, Florida. In September 1965, a local label released the group's **The Little Black Egg**, a strange tale about an egg found in a tree. The song was minimalism at its finest, as catchy and as mysterious as *Louie Louie*, and it became one of the first regional records to enter the Florida charts as well as a staple for aspiring area garage bands. The Kapp label released it nationally in 1966 and the following year put out a collection of the band's singles with a psychedelic black egg on the cover. But it was already too late—the band had ceased to exist.

Psychedelic music was conceived as a reaction to the teenage fad of garage music and the British Invasion, and it reached a zenith of seriousness with bands such as the Grateful Dead. But the genre had a studio-pop side as well. Based in San Francisco, the *Mojo Men* were one of the few groups who surfaced before the city's psychedelic

cloud mushroomed and weren't pushed aside once it had vanished. The quartet recorded a few early singles for Sly (Stewart) Stone's Autumn label. The all-male group added a female vocalist, Jan Ashton, from the Vejtables, another San Francisco group on Autumn. Her gorgeous singing on the Mojo Men's premiere single for a major label, **Slt Down, I Think I Love You**, helped to place the record in the Top 40. The fact that the song was a Stephen Stills composition from the then-popular Buffalo Springfield's debut album didn't hurt either.

Named after a famous World War I airplane, Sopwith Camel hailed from San Francisco but had nothing in common with the heavy acid-rock bands of that scene. The quintet's producer, Erik Jacobsen, had created seven consecutive top-10 hits, including **Rain on the Roof**, for the Lovin' Spoonful, the kings of good-timey rock 'n' roll. The Camel's only hit, **Hello Hello**, had a quaint sound with lead vocalist Peter Kraemer singing in the lilting manner of the Spoonful's John Sebastian. "So relaxed they could make the Spoonful sound uptight," was one critical comment. The same could have been said about the Critters, a soft-pop New Jersey quintet who had a modest hit in 1966 with Sebastian's *Younger Girl* from the Spoonful's 1965 debut LP. The Critters' follow-up, **Mr. Dieingly Sad**, was also done in a modified Spoonful style and entered the Top 20.

Also in pursuit of that happy sound was the Sunshine Company, a California candy-floss group that began as a boy-girl duo. Their first single, *Happy*, established them in the vein of Spanky and Our Gang and the Mamas and the Papas. (Clairol even used the sunny song in commercials for its hair products.) The group's follow-up, **Back on the Street Again**, was more good day-sunshine fluff and their only hit.

Psychedelia ended almost as quickly as it began. British bands such as Pink Floyd and Cream were providing competition in the acid-rock arena. What's more, the San Fran-

cisco scene had become overexposed—Monterey Pop was a household word and Scott McKenzie preached floral salvation. The death knell of this visionary style was probably sounded by the Peanut Butter Conspiracy, a California band with a commercial blend of blues, rock and raga. The title of the band's first album was the slogan they used to sell their image: *The Peanut Butter Conspiracy Is Spreading*. Their pop single, **It's a Happening Thing**, let the world know that they knew where it was at; unfortunately, the song barely entered the charts. Following in their footsteps were numerous acid-rock casualties with silly names—the Leathercoated Minds, the Mesmerizing Eye, Lothar and the Hand People. Finally, on October 6, 1967, a



hippie effigy was buried on Haight Street in San Francisco.

As the '60s waned, the mainstream that the psychedelic style had originally rebelled against—studio artifice and bubblegum pop—not only adopted the acid approach but became the dominant sound. In early 1966, a Long Island pair of studio magicians, Jerry Kasenetz and Jeff Katz, released their first Super K production. When the team joined Neil Bogart's Buddah label late in 1967, true

Unlike most bubblegum groups, Cincinnati's Lemon Pipers were not just studio musicians but a real band.

The Sunshine Company sang candy-floss fluff and shaped a happy-go-lucky sound.

bubblegum music was born. The highlights of Kasenetz-Katz's production work were practically all chart hits.

The 1910 Fruitgum Company's **Indian Giver**, a top-10 record in 1969, was actually made by session musicians



and featured the lead singing of writer-producer Joey Levine. Two years earlier, Levine had constructed a group called the Third Rail with songwriters Artie Resnick and his wife, Kris, which hit with **Run, Run, Run**, a socially significant exercise in pop psychedelia. Levine and Resnick also wrote and produced the Super K monster **Shake** by the Shadows of Knight, formerly a garage band from Chicago who'd made the top 10 in 1966 with a cover of Van Morrison's *Gloria*. The last great Kasenetz-Katz classic (again written and produced by Levine) was undoubtedly Crazy Elephant's **Gimme Gimme Good Lovin'**, which hit in 1969 just before bubblegum's transformation into the cartoon aesthetics of the Archies.

From East Lansing, Michigan, the Woolies got their big break at the Michigan State Fair.

There was even psychedelic-bubblegum rock. Originally known as Ivan and the Sabres, Cincinnati's Lemon Pipers hit No. 1 in 1968 on Kasenetz-Katz's Buddah label with *Green Tambourine*. Unlike the Super K collective of studio musicians, however, the Lemon Pipers were a real band. But their appeal was largely as a novelty—as practitioners of a new hybrid genre—and their follow-up, **Rice Is Nice**, did not reach the Top 40. Their last known single, *Jelly Jungle (Of Orange Marmalade)*—perhaps because of the song's title and its gelatinous imagery—did even worse.

—Robert Hull



DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Everybody Loves a Clown** Gary Lewis and the Playboys • Music and lyrics by Gary Lewis, Thomas Leslie and Leon Russell. Warner-Tamerlane Publ. Corp. BMI. Liberty 55818 (1965). Courtesy of EMI, a division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 4*
- 2. Hello Hello** Sopwith Camel • Music and lyrics by Terry McNeil and Peter Kraemer. Great Honesty Music. BMI. Kama Sutra 217 (1966). Courtesy of Buddah Records, a division of Essex Entertainment, Inc. No. 26*
- 3. Sit Down, I Think I Love You** The Mojo Men • Music and lyrics by Stephen Stills. Screen Gems-EMI Music, Inc. BMI. Reprise 0539 (1967). Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 36*
- 4. Rain on the Roof** The Lovin' Spoonful • Music and lyrics by John Sebastian. Alley Music Corp./Trio Music Co., Inc. BMI. Kama Sutra 216 (1966). Courtesy of Buddah Records, a division of Essex Entertainment, Inc. No. 10*
- 5. Silence Is Golden** The Tremeloes • Music and lyrics by Bob Gaudio and Bob Crewe. Gaudima Music Inc. ASCAP/Saturday Music Inc. BMI. Epic 10184 (1967). Issued under license from Castle Communications PLC. No. 11*
- 6. Mr. Dielagly Sad** The Critters • Music and lyrics by Don Ciccone. Screen Gems-EMI Music, Inc./Tender Tunes, Inc. BMI. Kapp 769 (1966). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 17*
- 7. Road Runner** The Gants • Music and lyrics by Elias McDaniel. Arc Music Corp. BMI. Liberty 55829 (1965). Courtesy of EMI, a division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 46*
- 8. One Track Mind** The Knickerbockers • Music and lyrics by Linda Colley and Keith Colley. Acuff-Rose Music, Inc. BMI. Challenge 59326 (1966). Courtesy of Masters International Inc. No. 46*
- 9. Shake** The Shadows of Knight • Music and lyrics by Joe Levine and Kris Resnick. Peanut Butter Publ., Inc. BMI. Team 520 (1968). Courtesy of Buddah Records, a division of Essex Entertainment, Inc. No. 46*
- 10. Run, Run, Run** The Third Rail • Arranged and conducted by Al Gorgoni. Music and lyrics by Arthur Resnick, Kris Resnick and Joe Levine. Alley Music Corp./Trio Music Co., Inc. BMI. Epic 10191 (1967). Courtesy of CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a division of CBS Records, Inc. No. 53*
- 11. The Little Black Egg** The Nightcrawlers • Music and lyrics by Chuck Conlon. Allison Music Co. ASCAP. Kapp 709 (1967). Courtesy of Sylvan A. Wells. No. 85*
- 12. Gimme Gimme Good Lovin'** Crazy Elephant • Music and lyrics by Joey Levine and Ritchie Cordell. Peanut Butter Publ., Inc. BMI. Bell 763 (1969). Courtesy of Aristo Records, Inc. No. 12*
- 13. Indian Giver** 1910 Fruitgum Company • Music and lyrics by Robert Bloom, Bo Gentry and Ritchie Cordell. Super Bubble Music Corp. BMI. Buddah 91 (1969). Courtesy of Buddah Records, a division of Essex Entertainment, Inc. No. 5*
- 14. Say I Am (What I Am)** Tommy James and the Shondells • Music and lyrics by Barbara Tomso and George Tomso. Dundee Music/Longitude Music Co. BMI. Roulette 4695 (1966). Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 27*
- 15. Sunshine Girl** The Parade • Music and lyrics by Jerry Riopelle. Smokey Roberts and Murray MacLeod. Good Sam Music/Inevitable Music. BMI. A&M 841 (1967). Courtesy of A&M Records, Inc. No. 20*
- 16. I Live for the Sun** The Sunrays • Music and lyrics by Rick Henn. Irving Music, Inc. BMI. Tower 148 (1965). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 51*
- 17. Rice Is Nice** The Lemon Pipers • Music and lyrics by Paul Leka and Shelley Pinz. Kama Sutra Music, Inc. BMI. Buddah 31 (1968). Courtesy of Buddah Records, a division of Essex Entertainment, Inc. No. 46*
- 18. Who Do You Love** The Woolies • Music and lyrics by Elias McDaniel. Arc Music Corp. BMI. Dunhill 4052 (1967). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 95*
- 19. Back on the Street Again** The Sunshine Company • Music and lyrics by Stephen Gillette. Cherry Lane Music Publ. ASCAP. Imperial 66260 (1967). Courtesy of EMI, a division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 36*
- 20. Live** The Merry-Go-Round • Music and lyrics by Emmitt Rhodes. La Brea Music/Thirty Four Music Co. ASCAP. A&M 834 (1967). Courtesy of A&M Records, Inc. No. 63*
- 21. It's a Happening Thing** The Peanut Butter Conspiracy • Music and lyrics by Alan Brackett. Acuff-Rose Music, Inc. BMI. Columbia 43985 (1967). Courtesy of CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a division of CBS Records, Inc. No. 93*
- 22. Smile a Little Smile for Me** The Flying Machine • Music and lyrics by Tony Macauley and Geoffrey Stephens. Aaron Schroeder Music. Publ. Ltd. PRS/Unichappell Music-Six Continents. BMI. Congress 6000 (1969). Issued under license from Castle Communications PLC. No. 5*

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- 1 **Everybody Loves a Clown**
Gary Lewis and the Playboys
- 2 **Hello Hello** Sopwith Camel
- 3 **Sit Down, I Think I Love You**
The Mojo Men
- 4 **Rain on the Roof** The Lovin' Spoonful
- 5 **Silence Is Golden** The Tremeloes
- 6 **Mr. Dieingly Sad** The Critters
- 7 **Road Runner** The Gants
- 8 **One Track Mind** The Knickerbockers
- 9 **Shake** The Shadows of Knight
- 10 **Run, Run, Run** The Third Rail
- 11 **The Little Black Egg** The Nightcrawlers
- 12 **Gimme Gimme Good Lovin'**
Crazy Elephant
- 13 **Indian Giver** 1910 Fruitgum Company
- 14 **Say I Am (What I Am)**
Tommy James and the Shondells
- 15 **Sunshine Girl** The Parade
- 16 **I Live for the Sun** The Sunrays
- 17 **Rice Is Nice** The Lemon Pipers
- 18 **Who Do You Love** The Woolies
- 19 **Back on the Street Again**
The Sunshine Company
- 20 **Live** The Merry-Go-Round
- 21 **It's a Happening Thing**
The Peanut Butter Conspiracy
- 22 **Smile a Little Smile for Me**
The Flying Machine



NOTES INSIDE

Chairman: Paul R. Stewart
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Vice President: Fernando Pargas
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Associate Producer: Robert Hull
Art Studio: Nina Bridges
Chief Financial Officer: Eric R. Eaton
Production Manager: Karen Hill

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