

# WEIRD, WILD & WACKY



TIME  
LIFE  
RELEASE

*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

# WEIRD, WILD & WACKY

- 1 **The Flying Saucer (Parts 1 and 2)**  
Buchanan and Goodman
- 2 **Heartbreak Hotel** Stan Freberg
- 3 **Transfusion** Nervous Norvus
- 4 **Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots** The Cheers
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*The*  
**ROCK'N'ROLL**  
ERA

**WEIRD, WILD & WACKY**

COMPACT  
**disc**  
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-37  
OPCD-2574

TIME  
**LIFE**  
MUSIC

- 1 The Flying Saucer (Parts 1 and 2) 2 Heartbreak Hotel 3 Transfusion  
4 Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots 5 Beep Beep 6 Rubber  
Biscuit 7 Witch Doctor 8 The Purple People Eater 9 Short Shorts  
10 Nee Nee Na Na Na Nu Nu 11 The Return of Jerry Lee  
12 Ahab, the Arab 13 Mr. Custer 14 The Blob 15 Monster  
Mash 16 Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polkadot Bikini  
17 Long Tall Texan 18 Haunted House 19 Leader  
of the Laundromat 20 They're Coming to  
Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!  
21 Paralyzed

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*The Legendary Standfast Cowboy,  
madman extraordinaire*



## WEIRD, WILD & WACKY

Loopy rimes, gaudy grooves, silly songs, dumb ditties, loopy-bone fantasies, kooky classics—the music business calls them “novelties,” and they’ve been around longer than recorded music itself. Rock ‘n’ roll has had more than its share, but during the formative years of 1954 and 1955 the genre seems absent from the pages of rock history. Yet many early rock ‘n’ roll hits were very novel to the ears of American pop music lovers, even if the tunes were not, strictly speaking, novelty recordings. *Sh-Boom, Kiz It Mo* and *Tam Tam!* had half the music industry claiming rock ‘n’ roll to be a passing fad while the other half was trying to duplicate the new sound.

The Chivers’ **Black Denim Trousers and Motorcycle Boots** and **Transfusion** by Nervous Norvus (Jimmy Drake) stood out as wacky wonders, but even back in 1955 their instrumentation and arrangements were considered somewhat odd hat. Their mocking, macabre lyrics had something to do with their commercial success and have a lot to do with the reverence they are afforded today. On the other hand, the Clips’ **Kobber Blacall** was perceived as nothing more than a typical doo-wop effort until the song’s satiric genius was realized by the Blues Brothers in 1978.

If musical self-satire was no secret to instant rock ‘n’ roll success in the ‘50s, satires of other records were practically anathema. Stan Freberg’s brilliant **Heartbreak Hotel** and *Sh-Boom* barely made the charts, and his other irreverent “covers.” *The Great Pretender* and *Rock around Stephen Foster* didn’t chart at all.

Halfway through 1956, Bill Buchanan and Dickie Goodman’s **The Flying Saucer (Parts 1 and 2)** went where no record had ever gone before and explored galaxies of possibilities in goofiness. Distasteful as updates of Orson Welles’ 1938 radio broadcast of H. G. Wells’ *The War of the Worlds*, the recording invented a new subgenre, the “canal” or “break-in” record. It also established that

aliens from other solar systems visit earth to listen to rock ‘n’ roll and have voices just like ours, except that theirs are speeded up.

At first, major publishers took a dim view of Buchanan and Goodman’s deconstructing licensed recordings of their songs into recognizable animal noises and retooling them without permission. But *The Flying Saucer* created renewed interest in these songs, prompting *Billboard* to note, “Several publishers are [now] proud to see being included on the disk.” The publishers came to terms with the new “canal” record, clearing the way for further examples such as Buchanan and Goodman’s *Tri! and George and Louis’ The Return of Jerry Lee*.

In 1958, television’s horror/fantasy movie revival had a strong impact on rock ‘n’ roll silliness. New York horror movie host John Zacharia hit everybody’s top 10 with *Dinner with Dr. Oz*. **Witch Doctor**, David Seville utilized the speeded-up voice technique, stretching the rock ‘n’ roll definition of alien. Shelly Winters’ **The Purple People Eater** extended the cosmic myth to its logical conclusion with a space pilgrim who has all the latest records and wants to be a star despite his threatening appellation. *The Big Bopper* followed the established Hollywood strategy and completed the cycle with **Purple People Eater Meets Witch Doctor** on the flip side of *Charity Lane*.

**See See Na Na Na Na Na Na**, with its gibberish lyrical refrain by the obviously pseudonymous Dicky Doo and the Don’ts, could have been the work of the Purple People Eater or any other intergalactic rickler. Terrestrial Ron Buchanan and Hal David composed a silly ditty, **The Blob**, to promote the unintentionally funny musical movie of the same name starring Steve McQueen. In 1959 Johnny Fuller cut a minor R & B record, **Halloween House**, and Jumpin’ Gene Simmons turned it into a Halloween hit five years later.

As the '50s rocked on, records were being directed at an increasingly younger audience. **Beep Beep** by the Playmates (formerly the Nitwits) celebrated a childish view of automobile travel. On **Short Shorts** the Royal Teens simulated the musical style of unsupervised children singing on a playground. Group member Bob Gaudio went on to greater fame with the Four Seasons.

Some established rock 'n' roll comedic conventions continued to pay off during the '60s. Brian Hyland, with his shaggy-dog burlesque, **Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polkadot Bikini**, opened the decade by wringing some humorous mileage from "little girl" harmony before girl groups took the style mainstream. Bobby "Boris" Pickett's Karloffian **Monster Mash** became rock 'n' roll's ultimate tribute to the horror movie. Conceived as a vehicle for exploiting a dance craze, the Mashed Potato, it proved to be as timeless as the films to which it referred. The record even became a top-10 hit for the second time in 1973.

The Ran-Dells extended the tradition of close encounters of the silly kind with **Marian Hop** in 1963, but a few years later, songs such as the Byrds' **Mr. Spaceman** and **C.T.A. 102** reflected a shift in public sentiment to a more meaningful attitude toward this phenomenon. Ray Stevens' **Ahab**, the **Arab** mirthfully milked the expansion of rock 'n' roll culture around the world just before the Beatles made global rock a reality. And finally, Dickie Goodman charted occasionally with cut-in records well into the '70s.

In the early '60s, satires of rock 'n' roll itself started to succeed. The Marceis' doo-wopification of the 1934 Rodgers and Hart standard **Blue Moon**, with Fred Johnson's tongue-in-cheek bumping bass, topped the charts in 1961. The Edsels' obscure **Rama Lama Ding Dong**, which had implicitly kidded doo-wop in 1958, was resurrected in 1961—and the song became a much bigger hit than the car from which the group took its name. Barry Mann's **Who Put the Bomb (In the Bomb, Bomb, Bomb)** and Johnny Cymbal's **Mr. Bass Man** scored heavily while explicitly, albeit rev-





entially, goofing on the doo-wop style.

Song parodies also found success in the '60s. Sheb Wooley had a second career as Ben Colder, lampooning country crossover hits. Jimmy Dean's *Big Bad John* inspired at least five send-ups, including Phil McLean's *Small Sod Sam*. Ron Dante, billed as the Detergents, cracked the Top 20 with **Leader of the Laundromat**, a spoof of the Shangri-Las' gruesome *Leader of the Pack*. Dante was later the voices of the Archies and the Cuff Links.

Self-deprecation, a comedy trend in the '60s, was the basis for a number of kooky classics. Larry Verne's **Mr. Custer** and Merry Kellum's **Long Tall Texan** (originally recorded by Jerry Woodard on Century Limited) shot down two western heroes while shooting up the charts. **They're Coming to Take Me Away, Ha-Haaa!** by Napoleon XIV (Jerry Samuels) so outraged mental health organizations that some tried to have the record taken off the radio.

Once rock music embraced peace, love and dope, it seemed to lose its sense of humor. Subjects once treated lightly were often presented in a deadly serious or even confrontational manner. Consider the progression from *Kookie, Kookie (Lend Me Your Comb)* by Edd Byrnes in 1959 to *Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl* by the Barbarians in 1965. Still, a few loony tunes cropped up in the later '60s, including *That Acapulco Gold* by the Rainy Daze and the Fraternity of Man's *Don't Bogart Me*, which was featured in the movie *Easy Rider*. Television's *Laugh-In* promoted Tiny Tim with his retro *Tip-Toe thru the Tulips with Me* as well as the Legendary Stardust Cowboy (Norman Odum) with his unclassifiable **Paralyzed**.

—Dr. Oldie

*Nervous Norvas  
gets a transfusion.*

*Jumpin' Gene Simmons and the Purple People Eater  
dancing to a wocky beat*





## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. The Flying Saucer (Parts 1 and 2)** Buchanan and Goodman • Music and lyrics by Fred Herz and Joel Rosen. *Bluesrock Publ./Jerry Leiber Music/Wake Slinger Music* (Adm. by Harold Square). ASCAP. *Lantern 101* (1956). Courtesy of Rhino Records, Inc. No. 7\*
- 2. Heartbreak Hotel** Stan Freberg • Music and lyrics by Moe Boust Azim, Jimmy Dandrea and Dixie Presley. *The Publishing Co., Inc.* BMI. *Capitol 3480* (1956). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 7\*
- 3. Transfusion** Nervous Norvas • Music and lyrics by Jimmy Drake. *Paul Bonest Music*. BMI. *Dot* (1470) (1956). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 12\*
- 4. Black Doin' Trousers and Motorcycle Boots** The Cheers • Music and lyrics by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. *Quinton Music, Inc./Unichappell Music/Freddy Bluestock Music Company*. BMI. *Capitol 3219* (1955). Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 1\*
- 5. Beep Beep** The Playmates • Music and lyrics by Donald Claps and Carl Cochran. *Longhorn Music Corp.* BMI.  *Roulette 4113* (1958). Licensed Courtesy Butterfly Entertainment Corp. w/b/w Rhino Records, Inc. No. 4\*
- 6. Kahler Biscuit** The Chips • Music and lyrics by Charles Johnson, Samuel Smith, Paul Felton, Nor Epps and Sherbro Lounis. *Longhorn Music Corp.* BMI.  *Issue 883* (1956). Licensed Courtesy Butterfly Entertainment Corp. w/b/w Rhino Records, Inc. *Dot* not chart
- 7. Witch Doctor** David Seville • Music and lyrics by Rita Rogatsosian. *Minarch Music*. ASCAP. *Liberty 55132* (1958). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 1\*
- 8. The Purple People Eater** Sheb Wooley • Music and lyrics by Sheb Wooley. *Orbitol Music Co* BMI. *MCN 2167* (1956). Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\*
- 9. Short Shorts** The Royal Teens • Music and lyrics by Tom Austin, Bob Gaudin, Bill DeLong and Bill Chadwick. *Adam K. Levy and Father Entertainment, Inc./New Sensuous Music*. BMI. *ABC Paramount 3962* (1958). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 3\*
- 10. New, New, Na, Na, Na, No, No, No** Dicky Dee and the Doo-It's • Music and lyrics by Eddie Y. Deane and Al Dondrik. *Geneva/No-Do Music*. ASCAP. *Savon 4006* (1958). Courtesy of Gene Genevieve (w Original Sound Entertainment). No. 6\*
- 11. The Errors of Jerry Lee** George and Lusia • Music and lyrics by Jack Clement and Pittman. *Hi Lo Music, Inc.* BMI. *Sav 301* (1958). Courtesy of Sav Entertainment Corp. *Dot* not chart
- 12. Ahah, the Arab** Ray Stevens • Music and lyrics by Ray Stevens. *Lovely Music Co., Inc.* BMI. *Mercury 7266* (1962). Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 2\*
- 13. Mr. Cooter** Larry Verne • Music and lyrics by Fred Darius, Al DeLory and Joseph Van Winkle. *Platten Music Inc.* (Adm. by All Nations Music). ASCAP. *Eto 3024* (1965). Courtesy of Dimension Entertainment, Inc. No. 1\*
- 14. The Whiz** The Five Belbs • Music and lyrics by Hal David and Bert Sheinberg. *Famous Music/PolyGram Music*. ASCAP. *Columbia 41250* (1958). Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS Records, Inc. No. 32\*
- 15. Houser Mash** Bobby "Boris" Pickett • Music and lyrics by Bobby Pickett and Leonard Caplan. *Acoustic Music/Gen 2*. *Platten Music*. BMI. *Genpa 41167* (1962). Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1\*
- 16. Itay Bitay** Trevis Weasle **Yooland Bilind** Israel Hysait • Music and lyrics by Paul Vance and Lee Pockros, George Pines and Sam Music Co. ASCAP. *Leader 815* (1966). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 1\*
- 17. Long Tall Texan** Harry Belafon • Music and lyrics by Harry Strobelick. *Copper Music Co.* ASCAP. *M O C 653* (1963). Courtesy of Hi Records. No. 5\*
- 18. Haunted House** Junior' Gene Simmons • Music and lyrics by Robert Goldins. *4TV Music/Venue B/Fiz Publishing Co.* BMI. *Hi 2076* (1964). Courtesy of Hi Records. No. 17\*
- 19. Leader of the Landrover!** The Detrogays • Music and lyrics by Paul Vance and Lee Pockros. *MCA Music, Inc./Quinn Music*. *Cutgers 280* Music. Int. ASCAP. *Roulette 2591* (1964). Licensed Courtesy Butterfly Entertainment Corp. w/b/w Rhino Records, Inc. No. 19\*
- 20. They're Coming to Take Me Away, Ho-Ho!** Haystack XIV • Music and lyrics by Jerry Gonzalez. *XIV Music* (Adm. by Fred Music). *SEAC*. *Warner 5031* (1964). Courtesy of Joplin Productions, Inc., under license from Rhino Records, Inc. No. 3\*
- 21. Paralyzed** The Legendary Stardust Cowboy • Music and lyrics by Norman Odum. *Flores Myth Music/Litlib Music, Inc.* BMI. *Mercury 7262* (1965). Courtesy of Nervous Odum. *Dot* not chart

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- ㉑ **Paralyzed** The Legendary Stardust Cowboy



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