



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

# SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES • 1976

- 1 **Rock'n Me** Steve Miller Band
- 2 **Takin' It to the Streets**  
The Doobie Brothers
- 3 **Fooled Around and Fell in Love**  
Elvin Bishop
- 4 **Sara Smile** Daryl Hall and  
John Oates
- 5 **Say You Love Me** Fleetwood Mac
- 6 **Play That Funky Music** Wild Cherry
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The Bee Gees
- 8 **Show Me the Way** Peter Frampton
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Elton John and Kiki Dee
- 10 **Tonight's the Night (Gonna Be  
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The Spinners

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COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO

- 15 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover
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By 1975 disco was crossing from the R & B to the pop charts, but 1976 was the year it truly arrived. Many white artists began performing this heretofore black music, and a number of novelty hits were spawned by acts that quickly disappeared again. The grand entrance of disco was illustrated by the emergence of Donna Summer, who proved to be one of the genre's enduring stars.

Born LaDonna Gaines in Boston in 1948, she joined the Munich, Germany, cast of *Hair* in 1968 and went on to perform in the Vienna Volksopera's productions of *Porgy and Bess* and *Showboat*. By 1973, she was back in Munich, performing in *Godspell* and singing backup vocals at Musicland Studio, where she met owner and producer Pete Bellotte and his partner, Giorgio Moroder.



Both men were keeping a keen eye on America's disco movement, which by 1975 was no longer the secret of urban blacks and gays. That year they had Summer record **Love to Love You**

**Baby**, a heavy-breathing track inspired by the recent European success of *Je T'Aime . . . Moi Non Plus* by Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg. This record of frenzied whispers and orgasmic pants had been greeted with mirth and scorn when released five years earlier.

Using new techniques spawned by the disco DJs, Moroder mixed a 17-minute version of Summer's sighing, groaning and gasping R & B tune for nonstop dancing. He leased it to Neil Bogart of Casablanca Records in America, where a few similar sexy tracks were underground disco hits. The single wound up hitting No. 2 in the States, and it set the

image for both disco and Donna Summer, who ultimately proved to be a more complex artist than the recording suggested.

Meanwhile, Wild Cherry typified the white novelty aspects of disco with **Play That Funky Music**. Leader Bob Parissi, who took the group's name off a box of cough drops while he was in the hospital, had already seen one incarnation of his band dissolve; he was getting frustrated with audiences on the Cleveland-to-Pittsburgh disco circuit that the rockers were playing. Discussing the problem backstage one night, drummer Ron Beitle repeated a cry they often heard from the audience: "Play that funky music." Only in jest, he added the phrase "white boy." Parissi dashed off the song on a napkin at the disco where his band was playing, and it was later recorded as the B side to a cover version of the Commodores' / *Feel Sanctified*. But the white-boy disco track got all the radio action, providing Wild Cherry with the third platinum single (one million units sold) ever as well as their only Top 40 hit.

The Bee Gees were in the midst of a

more enduring disco string of singles. In 1975, the *Main Course* album, produced by Arif Mardin, had yielded the Brothers Gibb their first No. 1 single in four years. When they went back into the studio, however, the politics of the record company prevented them from again using Mardin (who was signed exclusively to Atlantic). Unable to recapture the charmed Mardin sound using producer Richard Perry, the group went behind the board themselves, with assistance from engineers Karl Richardson and Albhy Galuten, who handled the all-important orchestrations. This team clicked on *Children of the World*, with **You Should Be Dancing** becoming the Bee Gees' third No. 1 single and setting the stage for their contributions to *Saturday Night Fever* a year later.

English guitarist Peter Frampton was the year's biggest one-man phenomenon. A veteran of a teeny-bopper band, the Herd, and the arena-rocking Humble Pie, Frampton toured nonstop as a solo act, and in 1976 his work paid off. The double-album *Frampton Comes Alive*, recorded live at Winterland in San Francisco, sold an unprecedented

ten million copies, six million in America alone. **Show Me the Way** featured one of Frampton's calling cards, the "voice-box," which channeled guitar sounds through a mouthpiece to form words.

If Frampton was the guitar hero of the new generation of arena-rock fans, Elton John was the pop songsmith. Like Frampton, he was always more popular stateside. **Don't Go Breaking My Heart**, his duet with Kiki Dee, was his first British No. 1, although he'd had five No. 1 hits in America. The record also marked his first appearance on his own label, Rocket. He and his regular partner, Bernie Taupin, wrote the song under the names Ann Orson and Carte Blanche. As for Dee, she had previously been signed to Motown. Although she made little noise there, she did become friendly with British Motown executive John Reid, who went on to manage Elton John, which is how the pairing came to be. But when it was time for the *real* glory—an appearance on *The Muppet Show*—she had to take a back seat to Miss Piggy, who sang the duet with Elton.

Another great duo of the '70s was

Daryl Hall and John Oates. The inspiration for **Sara Smile** was Hall's girlfriend, Sara Sandy Allen, a former airline stewardess who was also the subject of Oates' *Las Vegas Turnaround*. Oates first met her, by chance, in Manhattan and took her back to the East 82nd Street apartment he shared with his singing partner. Hall, who was in the process of breaking up with his wife, fell for Sara instantly, and they were soon living together. Hall didn't like the vocals on this track, but when the first two singles from *Daryl Hall and John Oates* failed to hit, he bowed to the better judgment of a Cleveland DJ who'd been playing *Sara Smile* as an album cut. Released as a single, the tune became Hall and Oates' first Top 40 record.

Paul Simon's **50 Ways to Leave Your Lover** was, he insisted, "just a fluke thing I slipped into by accident," but the single and the album it came from, *Still Crazy after All These Years*, seemed to dwell on the recent breakup of Simon's marriage. Linda Ronstadt scored with her second remake of a Buddy Holly song; this time it was **That'll Be the**

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**Day**, which the '50s rocker had written based on a line spoken by John Wayne in John Ford's classic western film *The Searchers*.

Among the year's oddities were former Raspberries leader Eric Carmen's solo debut, **All by Myself**, based on a Rachmaninoff melody; East Coast bar band Orleans' **Still the One**, which promptly became the ABC-TV network's theme; and good-time journeyman Elvin Bishop's **Fooled Around and Fell in Love**, with lead vocals by future Jefferson Starship singer Mickey Thomas. Bishop's swaying, soul-style dance ballad made as much sense in the year of the Hustle as a jug of moonshine at a champagne soiree, but as the swan song for Southern rock it couldn't have been more appropriate.

After a period of critical drubbings and vituperative coverage of his jet-set romance with Swedish actress Britt Eklund, Rod Stewart came back strong in 1976 with *A Night on the Town*, which yielded three popular singles, including **Tonight's the Night (Gonna Be Alright)**. Although banned in Britain because it concerned the seduction of a virgin, it

was the biggest American single of the year, topping the charts for eight weeks. Since the Faces, the group Stewart had sung with for six years while pursuing a solo career on the side, also broke up in 1976, the recording proved to be a crucial turning point. But within two years, even Rod Stewart would be cutting disco singles.

—John Morthland

## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

**1. Rock'n Me** Steve Miller Band • Music and lyrics by Steve Miller, Sailor Music, ASCAP, Capitol 4323. © 1976 Capitol Records, Inc. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 1\*

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**4. Sara Smile** Daryl Hall and John Oates • Music and lyrics by Daryl Hall and John Oates. Unichappell Music Inc. BMI, RCA 10530. © 1975 RCA Records. Courtesy of RCA Records, A label of BMG Music, Inc. No. 4\*

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**7. You Should Be Dancing** The Bee Gees • Music and lyrics by Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb and Maurice

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