



TIME  
LIFE  
MUSIC

# SOUND OF THE SEVENTIES • 1977

- 1 **Got to Give It Up (Part 1)**  
Marvin Gaye
- 2 **Dancing Queen** Abba
- 3 **Dreams** Fleetwood Mac
- 4 **Cold as Ice** Foreigner
- 5 **Blinded by the Light** Manfred  
Mann's Earth Band
- 6 **Fly Like an Eagle** Steve Miller
- 7 **Southern Nights** Glen Campbell
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COMPACT  
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Fleetwood Mac originated in 1967 as a spin-off of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. Fronted by hotshot guitarists Peter Green and Jeremy Spencer, the band built its reputation on the American ballroom circuit of the late '60s. By the turn of the decade, Fleetwood Mac was evolving toward guitar-oriented rock; as personnel came and went during the early '70s, the band endured lean years. In 1975, the line-up finally stabilized around original members John McVie on bass and Mick Fleetwood on drums. McVie's wife, Christine Perfect (who'd joined in 1970), played keyboards, wrote songs and sang. Lindsey Buckingham (vocalist, songwriter and guitarist) and Stevie Nicks (vocalist and songwriter) were lovers who'd been working together since the beginning of the '70s when Fleetwood met them at a recording studio in 1975 and invited them to join the band.



The couple was instrumental in changing the sound of the 1975 album, *Fleetwood Mac*, into a haunting brand of Anglo-American pop-rock with much more passion, energy and backbone than was normally associated with that genre. Through 1976, the album climbed to No. 1 on the American charts while yielding three hit singles. By 1977, however, trouble was brewing. While the group was recording *Rumours*, the McVies were separating. Buckingham and Nicks were breaking up and the Fleetwoods were initiating divorce proceedings (they later remarried). All the tensions, frustrations and anguish came out in *Rumours*, particularly on **Dreams**, which would prove to be the band's only chart-topping single. *Rumours* went on to sell 15 million copies, unprecedented at that time, and topped American charts for 31 weeks before winning a Grammy for album of

the year.

Although *Saturday Night Fever*, the movie starring John Travolta, was not released until 1978, its sound track, featuring the Bee Gees, was out in time for Christmas 1977. The Bee Gees had been struggling in the studio outside Paris when they received two phone calls in succession from their manager, Robert Stigwood. He told them to abandon their recording efforts because he wanted to release a live album in 1977, and then he instructed them to come up with songs for the new film he was producing. They responded with **How Deep Is Your Love** before they even knew what the film was about.

The Bee Gees intended the song to be sung by Yvonne Elliman, another Stigwood client who'd enjoyed recent success singing the role of Mary Magdalene in the rock opera *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. But when Stigwood came to Paris from New York and heard the demo, he told the Gibb brothers to keep the song for themselves because it was perfect for the movie. The song was the first single taken from the sound track, and it stayed in the top 10 for 17 straight weeks, the longest such streak for any

single since *Billboard* conceived the Hot 100 in its August 3, 1958, edition.

Stigwood also remembered hearing the Bee Gees sing something that went "Saturday night, Saturday night" years earlier in Bermuda. He told them to create an eight-minute version that began with a disco beat, went into a slow, romantic section and concluded with frenzied dance music. The group opted instead for the same tempo throughout, one that built dramatically, and changed the name of the song to **Stayin' Alive** because there were already too many songs with "Saturday night" in the title. After considerable argument with Stigwood, the group prevailed on both issues.

Marvin Gaye's disco smash came about when, on a British tour, he failed to produce enough acceptable material for a live double album. Stymied after recording three sides of the album, Gaye entered the studio with producer Art Stewart to concoct a long dance track along the lines of his current favorite record, Johnnie Taylor's *Disco Lady*. Gaye's "Dancing Lady" (the title was later changed to **Got to Give It Up**) fea-

tured strange flourishes such as the singer tapping on a half-filled grapefruit juice bottle and studio guests chatting away in the background, which Stewart retained when he pieced together the track and stretched it to nearly 12 minutes. Gaye was ambivalent when Stewart presented him with the finished product on Christmas Day 1976. But it had such a loose, party atmosphere as an album track that the recording was soon edited to single length and proved to be Gaye's last chart record for Motown.

Daryl Hall and John Oates stayed on a roll with their "blue-eyed" soul. **Rich Girl** was released after the first single from *Bigger Than Both of Us* fizzled. Hall wrote this hit about the fast-foods heir who had once been the boyfriend of his current lover, Sara Allen. But he changed the gender after concluding that he couldn't get away with saying "you're a rich boy" in a pop song. On a more grisly note, the tune was cited as an inspiration by David Berkowitz, New York City's infamous "Son of Sam" serial killer.

Linda Ronstadt continued to parlay oldies into a career with her remake of Buddy Holly's **It's So Easy**. James Taylor,

who shared Ronstadt's producer, Peter Asher, followed her cue and revived his own sagging fortunes by recording **Handy Man**, a No. 2 hit in 1960 for Jimmy Jones (who penned it with veteran writer Otis Blackwell). Taylor and guitarist Danny Kortchmar were fooling around with the song during breaks while Taylor was recording his first album for Columbia. Asher, no doubt thinking of the Ronstadt formula and wanting a surefire hit for the new label, talked Taylor into finishing the tune and including it on the new album in lieu of one of the artist's more somber originals.

Manfred Mann got his own seesawing career back into shape by taking Bruce Springsteen's **Blinded by the Light** to the top of the charts with the Earth Band. (Springsteen's version had failed as a single when it was pulled from his *Greetings from Asbury Park* debut album in 1973.) Springsteen returned the compliment by frequently performing Mann's 1966 oldie *Pretty Flamingo* in concert.

Arena-rock was represented by Peter Frampton's **I'm in You** (his biggest single ever) and by **Feels Like the First Time** and **Cold as Ice** from the eponymous

debut album of Foreigner, an Anglo-American group in the spirit of Free and Bad Company. Southern rock persevered via the Atlanta Rhythm Section's **So In to You**. The group had grown out of the Classics IV and a studio band assembled for Roy Orbison; their boogie style was in contrast to the laid-back country styling of the Marshall Tucker Band as on **Heard It in a Love Song**.

In the year of Fleetwood Mac, it's important to remember Abba, a Swedish bubblegum group composed of two married couples. Their manager gave them their moniker, an acronym of their four first names (Agnetha, Bjorn, Benny and Annifrid), although they hated the name because it was so close to that of a brand of pickled herring. Abba won the Eurovision Song Contest in 1974, and for most of the rest of the decade they were the premier pop act in the world. Abba made so much money they started taking their fees in oil wells so they wouldn't have to pay such high taxes in semi-Socialist Sweden. Although their string of U.S. hits was nothing to sneeze at, Abba's simple melodies, soft harmonies and agreeable orchestrations

were never as popular here as in Europe. **Dancing Queen** proved to be their sole No. 1 hit in America.

—John Morthland

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## DISCOGRAPHY

*\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position*

- 1. Got to Give It Up (Part 1)** Marvin Gaye • *Music and lyrics by Marvin Gaye. Jobete Music Co., Inc. ASCAP. Tamla 54280. © 1977 Motown Record Company, L.P. Courtesy of Motown Record Company, L.P. No. 1\**
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