

SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES
1974
SIXTIES

TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES • 1974

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1991 WARNER SPECIAL PRODUCTS

- 1 Can't Get Enough
- 2 Show and Tell
- 3 Come and Get Your Love
- 4 I Shot the Sheriff
- 5 Help Me
- 6 I Can Help
- 7 Sha-La-La (Make Me Happy)
- 8 Rock the Boat
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TIME LIFE MUSIC COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO

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In the wake of the '60s boom, rock began moving from clubs, ballrooms and theaters into arenas and outdoor stadiums. At the same time, it was growing louder and harder, as if that were the only sound that could fill these venues. The emergence of Bad Company illustrates how powerful the impact of rock had become.

Though not the first "supergroup" (that term was coined around 1968 to describe various Al Kooper projects as well as the group Blind Faith), this English quartet was arguably the first group put together with the arena in mind.

Lead singer Paul Rodgers came from Free, as did drummer Simon Kirke. Guitarist Mick Ralphs was the central player in Mott the Hoople, and bassist Boz Burrell was a King Crimson alumnus. They took their name from a 1972 Jeff Bridges film, and their debut

album, cut in 10 days in Ronnie Lane's mobile studio, was a crunching simplification of Led Zeppelin's British blues-rock style. Not coincidentally, it was released on Led Zep's Swan Song label, and Bad Company was managed by Zep's head honcho, Peter Grant. **Can't**

Get Enough helped make them the most successful new band of 1974.

They were hardly alone, however.

Grand Funk Railroad, one of the first bands popular enough to fill the stadiums, continued to penetrate the charts with remakes of proven oldies. In fact, their version of

The Loco-Motion was the second

song of the rock era to become No. 1 twice; Little Eva, the babysitter of the song's writers, Gerry Goffin and Carole King, had taken it all the way to the top in 1962. (The other two-time chart topper, *Go Away Little Girl*, by Steve



Lawrence in 1962 and Donny Osmond in 1971, was also written by Goffin and King.) During this period, Grand Funk used *The Loco-Motion* as its concert encore number, projecting film footage of a train collision behind them as they played the song.

Arena-rock took other forms, too. Elton John, for example, was no hard rocker, but his audience had grown to the point where he could fill huge venues anyway. Some of his triumphs were unlikely. The follow-up single to *Good-bye Yellow Brick Road's* title tune was supposed to be the Marilyn Monroe tribute *Candle in the Wind*, but a black Detroit DJ began playing **Bennie and the Jets** from the album. MCA then released the song stateside as the new single with *Candle in the Wind* as the B side; it became John's first soul hit as well as going No. 1. **The Bitch Is Back**, by John's standards, rocked harder and was perhaps even written with the arena in mind.

Eric Clapton's **I Shot the Sheriff** and the *461 Ocean Boulevard* album were the product of his return to the studio for the first time in nearly four years, follow-

ing a heroin addiction he conquered with the help of a new process called electro-acupuncture. The album was cut at Criteria Studios in Miami (its title is the address of the house where Clapton lived during the sessions). Studio guitarist George Terry suggested that Clapton cut Bob Marley's *I Shot the Sheriff*, a plausible move given that Miami and London (where Clapton was from) were two of the pop markets where reggae had some impact. According to Marley, the enigmatic lyrics meant "I shot wickedness." He wanted to use the word "police" instead of sheriff but feared government reprisal. "But it's still the same idea—justice!" he said. (He also revealed that it was the sheriff who shot the deputy because the latter was "a good guy.") Though Marley still had problems getting air play for his own music (even in Jamaica), Clapton's single helped popularize reggae worldwide.

The Allman Brothers, heretofore the Southern standard-bearers for arena-rock, were in the process of breaking up, though the world-weary **Midnight Rider**, from Gregg Allman's solo album, was a laid-back update of their sound.

The Allman Brothers' banner was picked up by Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Jacksonville, Florida, rockers whose first major exposure came when they opened gigs on the Who's Quadrophenia tour. **Sweet Home Alabama** was Skynyrd frontman Ronnie Van Zant's confused and soul-stirring response to Neil Young's chastising *Southern Man*. The irony is that the two men admired each other immensely; Van Zant was often spotted wearing Neil Young T-shirts, and Young wrote several tunes intended for Skynyrd (none were ever recorded). Wet Willie's **Keep On Smilin'**, which proved to be that band's only hit, went back to the bars in representing the soul-oriented branch of Southern rock.

There were still a number of novelties, none bigger than Billy Swan's fluid, rockabilly-based groove **I Can Help**. When he was 16, Swan wrote a poem for English class called *Lover Please* that became a Clyde McPhatter hit in 1962. Swan made his way to Memphis and then Nashville, where he played guitar in the first edition of Kinky Friedman's Texas Jewboys and in Kris Kristofferson's band. (He also inherited Kristofferson's job as

custodian at the CBS studios on Music Row.) He composed *I Can Help* more or less on the spot after Kristofferson and Rita Coolidge gave him an organ as a wedding present, recording the tune in two takes (without overdubs).

Brownsville Station's **Smokin' in the Boys' Room** was writer-guitarist Cub Koda's tribute to his childhood practice of sneaking cigarettes on Friday nights at the Clinton Theater in Detroit. **Rikki Don't Lose That Number** made explicit the cerebral Steely Dan's debt to classic jazz. British teen heartthrob David Essex made his debut with **Rock On**, which exploited the nostalgia themes of his plays and his two movies, 1973's *That'll Be the Day* (with Ringo Starr and Keith Moon) and 1975's *Stardust* (with Ringo Starr and Dave Edmunds). The infectious **Come and Get Your Love** was the sole top-10 hit for Redbone, a band made up of American Indians (their name is a Cajun epithet for half-breed), who sometimes wore traditional native American garb onstage. The lascivious **Midnight at the Oasis** proved to be Maria Muldaur's only top-10 record; previously, she had been virtually unknown outside

folk circles. And **Help Me** caught the reigning queen of folk, Joni Mitchell, switching to electric instruments to create a more sophisticated pop sound.

The year's biggest novelty in black music was Carl Douglas's **Kung Fu Fighting**. Douglas was born in Jamaica but educated in the U.S. and England. Indian-born producer Biddu hired him to sing a Larry Weiss tune for release as a British single because the pair had worked together a couple of years earlier on the sound track to Richard Roundtree's film *Embassy*. Stuck for a B side, they cut *Kung Fu Fighting*, which Douglas, long a judo fan, had written for the newest martial arts fad and its icon, Bruce Lee. It was the B side that broke through in British dance clubs and then hopped across the Atlantic to America.

During the summer, the Spinners opened a five-week theater tour, including some Las Vegas dates, for Dionne Warwick. That gave producer Thom Bell the idea of teaming them up for **Then Came You**, which gave each act its first No. 1 pop record ever.

In October 1974, Al Green, then at the peak of his popularity, was taking a

shower in his Memphis home when ex-girlfriend Mary Woodson burst in, threw hot grits on him and then shot herself to death. Green suffered second-degree burns. When he was ordained pastor of the Full Gospel Tabernacle Church in 1976, this event was cited as the turning point in his life. Although Green always maintained that his spiritual transformation was already well under way by then, **Sha-La-La (Make Me Happy)**, released only a week after the tragedy, did turn out to be one of the last purely secular singles of his tumultuous career.

—John Morthland

DISCOGRAPHY

**Indicates highest Billboard chart position*

- 1. Can't Get Enough** Bad Company • Music and lyrics by Mick Ralphs. Badco Music, Inc. ASCAP. Swan Song 70015. © 1974 Swan Song Inc. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 5*
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The Author: John Morthland has been an associate editor for *Rolling Stone* and *Creem*. He has freelanced for virtually every rock magazine published during the last 20 years.

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