



TIME
LIFE
MUSIC

SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES • 1979: TAKE TWO

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- 3 **One Way or Another** Blondie
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Bonnie Pointer
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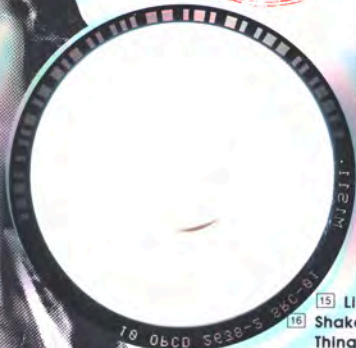
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- 16 Shake Your Groove Thing
- 17 Y.M.C.A.
- 18 Is She Really Going Out with Him?
- 19 Heaven Must Have Sent You
- 20 Lotta Love

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Though at first glance an unlikely pop star, Rickie Lee Jones was the kind of misfit who proved quite comfortable on a stage. **Chuck E.'s In Love**, unfortunately, turned out to be her only major hit, but it was one of the most memorable records of an increasingly conformist period in rock history.

Jones left Olympia, Washington, for Los Angeles in 1973, and quickly fell in with the hipster crowd hanging around the infamous Tropicana Motel in Hollywood. Tom Waits became her constant companion, and Jones herself was writing the kind of beat-narrative songs that had already won Waits a cult following. Sitting in with another friend one night at the Troubadour, she met Chuck E. Weiss, who was working in the kitchen. Weiss was soon running with Waits and Jones. On a trip to Denver, he found himself a new

girlfriend and called Waits to break the good news. When Waits got off the phone, he turned to Jones and sardonically pronounced, "Chuck E.'s in love." Jones turned the sentence into the song that became the cornerstone of her popular album.

By 1979, rock's post-punk era was in full swing, with the majors snapping up bands that had been inspired by punk but weren't too raw or antisocial for mass consumption. The

Knack were one of these industry-sanctioned groups. They made their name on the L.A. club circuit with a brand of music that was dubbed

"power pop," that is, bright, melodic material played in the tradition of the Beatles. The attraction for the record industry was that power-pop bands could capitalize on the punk mystique without actually being punks—and they came



cheap. The Knack's debut album, for example, was produced by Mike Chapman in eleven days for \$18,000. The backlash against such groups by punk purists, however, was tremendous; the Knack were quickly dismissed as a "skinny tie" band and became the object of a "Knuke the Knack" campaign. *My Sharona* nevertheless became a good-sized hit, but after following up with the clever **Good Girls Don't**, the Knack's career was pretty much over. Blondie had better punk credentials and better pop instincts. The group's *Parallel Lines* LP was also produced by Chapman. That breakthrough album yielded the disco-flavored *Heart of Glass*, which went all the way to No. 1, as well as the follow-up **One Way or Another**.

The Cars and Joe Jackson were identified with "new wave," a catchall label describing any new band that favored concise tunes and didn't require lavish production. Jackson was an affable British piano plunker who sounded like a safe version of Elvis Costello or Graham Parker. His best gig had been at the Playboy Club in Portsmouth, England, when **Is She Really Going Out with**

Him? launched his pop career. The Cars were a Boston quintet whose creative center, Ric Ocasek and Ben Orr, had first worked together a decade earlier in the acoustic folk trio Milkwood. Now they were plying a brittle electronic sound, owing a debt to Roxy Music, that won them *Rolling Stone's* New Band of the Year award for 1978. Their debut album had yielded two hit singles, while **Let's Go**, from the follow-up LP, kept their hot streak alive in 1979.

The Cars managed to make new wave compatible with arena-rock, which also continued to thrive on its own terms. But Peter Frampton, whose 1976 live album, *Frampton Comes Alive!*, had helped define the genre by racking up sales of 15 million, was on the way out. Frampton's career was not helped by his appearance in the 1978 throw-away film *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Just before the movie was released, Frampton nearly died in a car wreck in the Bahamas, and later that year his longtime girlfriend left him. So it was hardly surprising that in 1979 he was singing **I Can't Stand It No More** (which turned out to be his last top-40 hit). The

Doobie Brothers' **Minute by Minute** was the title song off of the album that made them one of the top arena-rock draws in the world, but it was overshadowed on the charts by *What a Fool Believes*. Foreigner, as its name implies, was an Anglo-American group formed in 1976 by ex-Spooky Tooth guitarist Mick Jones. Foreigner belonged to the Bad Company arena-rock mold, and both **Dirty White Boy** and **Head Games** were squarely in that tradition.

Disco, while no longer the dominant force in the pop marketplace, was nevertheless hanging in there, as Leroy Bell and Casey James showed. They became a writing team when their Philadelphia-based band, Special Blend, broke up. Leroy's uncle, Thom Bell, of the Gamble and Huff empire, hired them for his Mighty Three Music publishing company. Bell and James eventually won a record deal and cut **Livin' It Up (Friday Night)**. Peaches and Herb used disco as a comeback vehicle—or at least Herb Fœmster did, since several different women over the years sang the part of Peaches. Fœmster had joined the Washington, D.C., police de-

partment in 1970 after his duo's late-'60s string of hits dried up. His first stab at a Peaches and Herb comeback, under the guidance of disco whiz Van McCoy (a fellow Washingtonian), did not meet with much success, but **Shake Your Groove Thing**, with Freddie Perren producing, was another story.

The Village People were put together around lead vocalist Victor Willis by French producer Jacques Morali. His idea was to have each of the six members pose as a popular gay stereotype of the '70s, since the disco movement had grown out of the gay dance clubs. One dressed as a cowboy, another as an Indian, the others as cop, biker, soldier and construction worker. The group's hits exploited gay themes with tongue in cheek. **Y.M.C.A.**, which celebrated a popular gay cruising spot, was by far the most ingenious.

Smokey Robinson undoubtedly had another kind of cruising in mind when he wrote **Cruisin'**, which was merely an album cut until a Chicago DJ began playing it so much that Motown released it as a single. *Cruisin'* became Smokey's first million-seller as a solo artist. Bonnie

Pointer left the Pointer Sisters for a solo career with Motown just as the group itself was changing labels. Her **Heaven Must Have Sent You** was a revival of Motown's 1966 hit by the Elgins, but after one more single (also a Motown oddie), she ran into legal disputes with the label.

Earth, Wind and Fire's **After the Love Has Gone** was the group's second single on leader Maurice White's new American Recording Company label, and subsequently won a Grammy. Raydio was the vehicle for guitarist-singer Ray Parker, who had once played behind Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. The group went gold with its 1978 debut, and **You Can't Change That**, from its second LP, *Rock On*, followed suit. Parker soon opted for a solo career. Hot Chocolate, a band of Jamaicans living in London, launched its career in 1969 on Apple, the Beatles' label, with a reggae interpretation of John Lennon's *Give Peace a Chance*. After four top-40 hits in the '70s, the group was without an American label when **Every 1's a Winner** hit in late 1978, paving the way for a deal with Infinity. This proved their last

American hit.

Former backup singer Nicolette Larson knew **Lotta Love** well by the time she recorded it because she had sung harmonies on Neil Young's original. The Babys, one of the first video acts, formed in 1976 around bassist-singer John Waite, and had shopped a \$10,000 video to record companies rather than a demo tape to obtain a record contract. With **Every Time I Think of You**, Waite was replaced by Ricky Phillips on bass and became the undisputed frontman, pre-saging his own solo career in the '80s.

—John Morthland

DISCOGRAPHY

**Indicates highest Billboard chart position*

1. **Let's Go** The Cars • Music and lyrics by Ric Ocasek. Lido Music Inc. BMI. Elektra 46063. © 1979 Elektra/Asylum Records. Produced under license from Elektra Entertainment. No. 14*
2. **Dirty White Boy** Foreigner • Music and lyrics by Michael Jones and Lou Gramm. Somerset Songs Publ. ASCAP. Atlantic 3618. © 1979 Atlantic Recording Corp. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 12*

3. One Way or Another Blondie • Music and lyrics by Deborah Harry and Nigel Harrison. Chrysalis Music/Monster Island Music. ASCAP. Chrysalis 2336. © 1979 Chrysalis Records Inc. Courtesy of Chrysalis Records, Inc. No. 24*

4. Chuck E.'s in Love Rickie Lee Jones • Music and lyrics by Rickie Lee Jones. Easy Money Music. ASCAP. Warner Bros. 8825. © 1979 Warner Bros. Records Inc. Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 4*

5. Cruisin' Smokey Robinson • Music and lyrics by William "Smokey" Robinson. Bertam Music Co. ASCAP. Tamla 54306. © 1979 Motown Record Company, L.P. Courtesy of Motown Record Company, L.P. No. 4*

6. Minute by Minute The Doobie Brothers • Music and lyrics by Michael McDonald and Lester Abrams. Snug Music. ASCAP. Warner Bros. 8828. © 1983 Warner Bros. Records Inc. Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 14*

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8. After the Love Has Gone Earth, Wind and Fire • Music and lyrics by David Foster. Jay Graydon and Bill Champlin. Bobbette Music. ASCAP/Foster Frees Music/Garden Rake Music/Irving Music, Inc./Ninth Music. BMI. ARC 11033. © 1979 Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. Produced under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. No. 2*

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13. Every 1's a Winner Hot Chocolate • Music and lyrics by Errol Brown. Finchley Music Corp. ASCAP. Infinity 50002. © 1979 EMI Records Ltd. Courtesy of EMI Records, Ltd., a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 6*

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15. Livin' It Up (Friday Night) Bell and James •
Music and lyrics by Leroy Bell and Casey James.
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Records, Inc. Courtesy of A&M Records, Inc. No.
15*

16. Shake Your Groove Thing Peaches and Herb •
Music and lyrics by Dino Fekaris and Freddy Perren.
Perran-Vibes Music, Inc. ASCAP. PolyGram 14514. ©
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17. Y.M.C.A. The Village People • *Music and lyrics*
by Jacques Morali, Henri Belolo and Victor Willis.
Can't Stop Music. BMI. Casablanca 945. © 1978
PolyGram Records, Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Spe-
cial Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc.
No. 2*

18. Is She Really Going Out with Him? Joe Jack-
son • *Music and lyrics by Joe Jackson.* Albion Mu-
sic/Almo Music Corp. ASCAP. A&M 2132. © 1979
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19. Heaven Must Have Sent You Bonnie Pointer •
Music and lyrics by Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier
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