

TIME
LIFE
MUSIC



SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES • THE LATE '70s

1. **Last Dance** Donna Summer
2. **In the Navy** Village People
3. **More than a Feeling** Boston
4. **Magnet and Steel** Walter Egan
5. **Sad Eyes** Robert John
6. **Happy Days** Pratt and McClain
7. **Video Killed the Radio Star**
The Buggles
8. **Sharing the Night Together**
Dr. Hook
9. **I Go Crazy** Paul Davis
10. **I Want You** Marvin Gaye
11. **Lovin' You** Minnie Riperton
12. **Making Our Dreams Come True**
Cyndi Grecco
13. **Gold** John Stewart
14. **Dreaming** Blondie
15. **We Just Disagree** Dave Mason
16. **You Don't Have to Be a Star
(To Be in My Show)**
Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr.
17. **Kiss and Say Goodbye**
The Manhattans
18. **Lonely Boy** Andrew Gold
19. **Ebony Eyes** Bob Welch
20. **Right Time of the Night**
Jennifer Warnes
21. **Undercover Angel** Alan O'Day
22. **Bluer than Blue** Michael Johnson

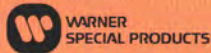
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COMPACT
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The late '70s was a schizophrenic time for pop music. Punk had torn the industry apart as intended, but it had not achieved commercial viability and extensive radio play, and no one sound emerged to seize center stage.

The sense of upheaval extended to Marvin Gaye both musically and personally. His most recent top-40 hit, *Distant Lover*, had only reached No. 28, and he was in the process of separating from his wife, Anna Gordy, 17 years his senior, at the same time he was becoming involved with Janis Hunter, 16 years his junior. Gaye had not gone near a recording studio, and Motown boss Berry Gordy (Anna's brother) did not know what to do with him—until Gordy heard songwriter-producer Leon Ware's *I Want You*. Gordy knew a quintessential Marvin Gaye song when he heard one, and since Ware had never been a chart-



buster as an artist, Gordy was able to entice the writer to give the song up to Gaye by offering to let him produce it. Gaye made this title song, and the album built around it, a plea to Janis, and actually proposed to her on record.

I Want You not only echoed his earlier single *Let's Get It On* and the album of the same name, but also foreshadowed his sensational 1982 hit, *Sexual Healing*. Gaye was back, communicating in the language he spoke best.

However, Marvin had not been alone in his uncertainty. With no single category dominating, all kinds of music were hitting equally well. Among R&B artists, for instance, Minnie Riperton and the Manhattans hit with romantic soul, Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr. scored with a Motown-sounding duet, and Donna Summer continued her reign as disco's queen.

Minnie Riperton had entered the music business as a receptionist at Chess

Records, and as a member of the Chicago label's girl group the Gems. When that group broke up in 1966, Riperton sang solo as Andrea Davis, and in the soft soul group Rotary Connection (her amazing five-octave range proved valuable to the group, which did breezy versions of psychedelic hits). Rotary Connection recorded six albums before falling apart in 1970, and Riperton cut another solo album before retiring to Florida. But soon Stevie Wonder coaxed her into singing in his back-up group, Wonderlove, in 1973, and he produced her solo album from which the otherworldly **Lovin' You** became a No. 1 single. Tragically, Riperton died of cancer four years later at age 31.

The Manhattans came together in Jersey City after co-leaders Sonny Blvins and Richard Taylor got out of the Air Force. The doo-wop group was first known as the Dulcets, but renamed themselves the Manhattans—after the cocktail, not the borough—to evoke a snazzier image. Though always respected locally, they did not hit nationally until producer Bobby Martin, a Philly protégé of producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, stepped in; the love tri-

angle lament **Kiss and Say Goodbye** climaxed their career.

Married singers Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr. quit the pop-soul 5th Dimension in 1975; McCoo credited her EST training with giving her the strength she needed to leave while Davis noted that he left simply because he wanted to sing lead for a change. They planned separate solo careers, and McCoo was well into recording an album with producer Don Davis when her husband came on to help with the Motown ringer **You Don't Have to Be a Star (To Be in My Show)**. After that hit No. 1, they were strictly a duet. Donna Summer was the most intriguing solo star of the disco movement; **Last Dance** highlighted the sound track to the movie *Thank God It's Friday*.

French producer-songwriter Jacques Morali formed the campy, homosexual Village People in New York at the height of the disco craze. Their songs were filled with double entendres, making them loads of fun and a mainstream success, and the U.S. Navy was even planning to pick up **In the Navy** as a recruiting jingle when the brass determined the song did not fit its

needs, Dr. Hook was similarly a fun band, discovered (as Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show) in New Jersey by producer Ron Haffkine, who was scouting groups to cut some tunes by cartoonist and writer Shel Silverstein for the movie *Who Is Harry Kellerman and Why Is He Saying Those Terrible Things About Me?* The pairing led to a close association with Silverstein, which peaked with 1973's notorious *The Cover of "Rolling Stone."* That was followed by bankruptcy proceedings and a regrouping, which cleared the way for a longer hit-making streak that included **Sharing the Night Together.**

Singer-songwriters continued to thrive. John Stewart, who entered the music business as a member of the Kingston Trio from 1961 to 1967, wrote the Monkees hit *Daydream Believer* and settled into life as a country eccentric. His **Gold** hit No. 5 in 1979. Paul Davis grew up in Nashville, so folksy country-rock was a natural for him. **I Go Crazy** had the distinction of spending 40 weeks on the charts, unprecedented for a single that did not reach No. 1. Andrew Gold was the arranger and guitarist in Linda Ronstadt's band when she was at

her commercial zenith. **Lonely Boy** was the first of Gold's two top-40 hits. He was able to promote it by opening shows for Ronstadt, but continued to play in her band every night as well.

Under the name Jennifer Warren, Jennifer Warnes climbed the folk ranks as a regular on television's *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in 1967, and then in the West Coast cast of *Hair*. **Right Time of the Night** was her first top-40 single. Alan O'Day, a Warner Brothers songwriter, became the first act signed to the publishing company's Pacific label. **Undercover Angel** was inspired in part by Patti Dahlstrom's *He Done Me Wrong but He Did Me Right*. O'Day cut the instrumental tracks with producer Tom Dowd and the vocals with producers Steve Barri and Michael Omartian, then sped up and slowed down the tape by hand to create the distorted, echoing effect. Omartian and Barri also produced Pratt and McClain's **Happy Days**, which had a brief shelf life as a single, but was nevertheless imprinted on the brains of a generation when it replaced Bill Haley and the Comets' *Rock around the Clock* as the theme song to the nostal-

gic television show that shared its title. Robert John first charted in 1958 as Bobby Pedrick; he did not return until 1979 with **Sad Eyes**.

Dave Mason, formerly of Traffic, may have been recognized most for writing *Only You Know and I Know*, though Delaney and Bonnie and Friends had the bigger hit with that FM favorite. **We Just Disagree** was Mason's biggest solo hit. Walter Egan had fronted the New York surf band the Mailbooz, played in L.A. with the Wheels and written a couple of tunes recorded by the late Gram Parsons before going solo. Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham of Fleetwood Mac co-produced his 1977 debut, and Buckingham stayed on to produce the follow-up, which yielded **Magnet and Steel**. Bob Welch was a member of Fleetwood Mac from 1971 to 1974; his later solo album featured **Ebony Eyes**.

Blondie, masterminded by vocalist Deborah Harry and guitarist Chris Stein, was the most pop-oriented of New York's New Wave bands, thanks to their fondness for the early '60s and to original material such as **Dreaming**. Boston's roots were actually in the basement studio of Polaroid product designer Tom Scholz,

who earned a master's degree in mechanical engineering from MIT. He created most of the tracks that became Boston's debut album, then hired band members and revised a few cuts once he got a record deal. With its harmonies and double-guitar leads, the album became the most successful debut in history, selling six and a half million copies thanks to the state-of-the-art metal single **More than a Feeling**. The group never duplicated that success, despite a handful of additional hits. The Buggles, vocalist Trevor Horn and keyboardist Geoffrey Downes (both of whom went on to play in Yes) had only one hit, but proved perhaps the most prescient act of the era. **Video Killed the Radio Star** accurately predicted the rise of that new medium in making or breaking artists. After the premiere of MTV, the all-music video television network, which pointedly featured the Buggles' video as its first broadcast, singles ceased to have the influence over the music industry that they had enjoyed through the late 1970s.

—John Morthland

DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

1. Lost Dance Donna Summer • Music and lyrics by Paul Jabara. Management Three Music c/o Cheryl Lane Music Publishing/Olga Music. BMI. Casablanca 926 (1978). © 1978 PolyGram Records, Inc. Under license from PolyGram Special Markets, a division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. No. 3*

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