

70s dance party

Dance
Party

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SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES • '70s DANCE PARTY 1979

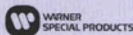
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- 2 Fire
- 3 We Are Family
- 4 You're Only Lonely
- 5 I Want You to Want Me
- 6 Too Much Heaven
- 7 Don't Bring Me Down
- 8 Ring My Bell
- 9 Reunited



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In the early '70s, disco music was primarily aimed at urban gays, blacks and Hispanics, especially on the East Coast. Midway through the decade, disco had gone commercial and national, and white artists were beginning to toy with the form. By 1979, in the wake of *Saturday Night Fever*, a film largely about disco music and dancing, disco had become mainstream and a backlash was beginning that included the public burnings of disco records. Due to the role of their music in that popular movie, the Bee Gees were the white group most associated with disco. But the 1979 hits of Rod Stewart, an established rocker, and Blondie, punkers gone pop, were perhaps more emblematic of the music's across-the-board prominence.

For his longtime fans, **Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?** was the last nail in Rod Stewart's artistic coffin; his "sellout" to disco was taken as proof that there was little the

man wouldn't do for a hit. And his fans weren't the only ones upset. Brazilian songwriter Jorge Ben sued, claiming that the song borrowed too freely from *Taj Mahal*, his tribute to the young American blues recreationist. Stewart, meanwhile, performed the tune on *A Gift of Song—Music for UNICEF*, a benefit television special for needy children, and donated royalties from the single to the United Nations group. The concert had been conceived and built around the Bee Gees by British impresario David Frost. They performed **Too Much Heaven** and donated all royalties from its release as well.

Blondie, fronted by Deborah Harry, a longtime downtown Manhattan scenemaker who exploited her physical similarities to Marilyn Monroe with overtly sexual appeals to her audience, emerged from CBGB, the Bowery dive that spawned the U.S. punk movement. One of the few



seminal punk groups with chart aspirations, Blondie had been performing **Heart of Glass** for some time before incorporating a disco beat into their original girl-group sound for their *Parallel Lines* album. Harry wrote the lyrics as a retort to the girl-group hits in which the singer gives her life over to boys and love, and is left empty-handed. Guitarist Chris Stein, Harry's boyfriend and song-writing partner, always considered the song a novelty item and had been reluctant to record it, even as album filler.

The year also produced some disco anthems. Gloria Gaynor's **I Will Survive** became the theme song at Studio 54, the glitzy, exclusionary Manhattan club that symbolized the music's excesses and celebrity fixations. The song also marked a comeback for Gaynor, who had been known as the "Queen of Disco" in the early '70s. She recorded *I Will Survive* for her album *Love Tracks* while recovering from spinal surgery following an onstage fall. Initially, this was the B side of *Substitute*, but disco DJs flipped the single to create a new hit,

Sister Sledge was a group of four sisters from Philadelphia who had been around for most of the decade with scant results. Produced by the hot team of Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards of Chic, **We Are Family** became the Pittsburgh Pirates' theme song as that team came from behind to take the World Series from the Baltimore Orioles that fall. It also became the anthem of gay activists marching on Washington, D.C.

The Pointer Sisters were yet another family group. Launched in the early '70s as a scat-swing trio, they expanded into a quartet and had pared back to three members doing pop R&B by the time producer Richard Perry signed them up to his new Planet label and fixed them up with Bruce Springsteen's **Fire**.

Producer Frederick Knight (a soul singer for the Stax label who hit with *I've Been Lonely for So Long* in 1972) wrote **Ring My Bell** for 11-year-old Stacy Lattisaw, who was expected to sign with his production company. He wrote it for her with the telephone in mind, but when Lattisaw went with a major label instead,

he sexed up the idea for Anita Ward, a former gospel singer who agreed reluctantly to sing it. Knight sang backup on this version, which was one of the first records to use synthesized drums, a practice that would become more widespread as disco music became more pervasive.

As the follow-up to *Shake Your Groove Thing*, the ballad **Reunited** sealed the comeback of '60s soul duet Peaches and Herb. Actually, Linda Greene was the third Peaches enlisted by Herb Fame, who himself had spent most of the decade outside the music business working as a cop in Washington, D.C.

One of the year's biggest successes was also one of its shortest-lived and inspired a backlash of its own. The Knack was known as a "skinny-tie band" and was heavily promoted as the new Beatles, both for their look and sound. Punks reviled the power-pop group for allegedly taming the angry sound of punk rock to make it acceptable to radio and record labels, and their derision fueled a "Knuke the Knack" movement,

The Knack cut their album (produced by Mike Chapman, who also worked with Blondie) in 11 days for just \$18,000, and **My Sharona**, with lyrics by lead singer Doug Fieger about his new girlfriend, was a runaway hit.

With **What a Fool Believes**, singer-songwriter Michael McDonald, who had joined the band in 1975, completed his transformation of the Doobie Brothers into a slick blue-eyed soul band. McDonald began writing the song on a flight from New York to Los Angeles when he imagined a pair of former lovers meeting in a restaurant—one of them remembering the affair as the highlight of his life, the other seeing it as a meaningless fling. But McDonald couldn't flesh out the idea until he hooked up, at the suggestion of Doobies bassist Tiran Porter, with singer-songwriter Kenny Loggins. Loggins provided the bridge one afternoon at McDonald's beach house, and the two finished the



song over the phone later in the week.

J. D. Souther was an L.A. songwriter and a favorite of Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt. Earlier in the decade, Souther had worked with the Souther-Hillman-Furay Band, a country-rock supergroup put together by Tinseltown mogul David Geffen. They'd had one quick hit (*Fallin' in Love*) in 1974 and faded fast. **You're Only Lonely** was Souther's first and only solo hit.



America's Cheap Trick and England's Electric Light Orchestra represented different aspects of commercial rock. Cheap Trick, a suburban Illinois band with a goofy image and arena-rock longings, had been plugging away for several years with no luck outside of Japan, where they were superstars. In 1978, they cut a live album for release in Japan only, but it sold well enough as an import that *Cheap Trick at Budokan* was soon issued in America. The album yielded **I Want You to Want Me** and went platinum in the States, but it was triple platinum in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Britain's Electric Light Orchestra, a Move spin-off which modernized Beatlesque melodies and harmonies with strings and synthesizers, had always been more popular in America than in England since forming in 1971. The band had a steady string of hits starting in 1975, and in 1978 they launched an ambitious tour, opening shows by emerging from a laser-equipped spaceship. But they relied so heavily on taped backing tracks à la *American Bandstand* that critics accused them of lip syncing their lyrics. A chastened ELO took the year off, though lack of touring didn't keep **Don't Bring Me Down**, dedicated to the Skylab space program, from becoming their biggest American hit ever. Somehow, in the year of disco music, a sound that used taped backing tracks in place of live bands, the criticism leveled at ELO was ironic.

—John Morthland

DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

1. Good Times Chic • Music and lyrics by Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers. Chic Music, Inc. BMI. Atlantic 3584. © 1979 Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 1*

2. Fire The Pointer Sisters • Music and lyrics by Bruce Springsteen, Bruce Springsteen, ASCAP. Planet 45901. © 1978 BMG Music, the RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. No. 2*

3. We Are Family Sister Sledge • Music and lyrics by Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers. Chic Music, Inc. BMI. Cotillion 44251. © 1979 Cotillion Records. No. 2*

4. You're Only Lonely J. D. Souther • Music and lyrics by J. D. Souther. Ice Age Music. ASCAP. Columbia 11079. © 1979 CBS Records Inc. Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS Records, Inc. No. 7*

5. I Want You to Want Me Cheap Trick • Music and lyrics by Rick Nielsen. Adult Music. BMI. Epic 50680. © 1977 CBS Records Inc. Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS Records, Inc. No. 7*

6. Too Much Heaven The Bee Gees • Music and lyrics by Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb and Maurice Gibb. Bee Gee Music Publications, Inc./UNICEF (adm. by Unichappell Music). BMI. RSO 913. © 1978 RSO Records Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1*

7. Don't Bring Me Down Electric Light Orchestra • Music and lyrics by Jeff Lynne. Jet Music, Inc.

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8. Ring My Bell Anita Ward • Music and lyrics by Frederick Knight. Twa Knight Publishing Co. BMI. Juana 3422. © 1979 Juana Records. Under license from Rhino Records, Inc., by arrangement with Butterfly Entertainment Corp. No. 1*

9. Reunited Peaches and Herb • Music and lyrics by Dino Fekaris and Freddie Perren. Perren-Vibes Music, Inc./T. B. Harms Co. ASCAP/Polydor 14547. © 1978 PolyGram Records, Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1*

10. Bad Girls Donna Summer • Music and lyrics by Joseph Esposito, Edward Hokenson, Bruce Sudano and Donna Summer. Earborne Music/Rick's Music Inc. BMI/Sweet Summer Night Music. ASCAP/Casablanca 988. © 1979 Casablanca Records and FilmWorks, Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1*

11. Do Ya Think I'm Sexy? Rod Stewart • Music and lyrics by Rod Stewart and Carmine Appice. Nite Stalk Music/Warner Bros. Music/Rod Stewart Music. ASCAP/Warner 8724. © 1978 WEA Records BV. No. 1*

12. I Will Survive Gloria Gaynor • Music and lyrics by Dino Fekaris and Freddie Perren. Perren-Vibes Music, Inc./T. B. Harms Co. ASCAP/Polydor 14508. © 1978 PolyGram Records, Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1*

13. Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Bad Company • Music and lyrics by Paul Rodgers. Badco Music. ASCAP/Swan Song 70119. © 1975 Swan Song. No. 13*

14. Heart of Glass Blondie • Music and lyrics by Deborah Harry and Chris Stein. *Monster Island Music/Rare Blue Music. ASCAP/Chrysalis 2295.* © 1978 Chrysalis Records, Inc. Courtesy of Chrysalis Records, Inc. No. 1*

15. Tragedy The Bee Gees • Music and lyrics by Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb and Maurice Gibb. *Gibb Brothers Music. BMI. RSO 918.* © 1979 RSO Records Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 1*

16. My Sharona The Knack • Music and lyrics by Berton Averre and Doug Fieger. *Small Hill Music/Eighties Music. ASCAP/Capitol 4731.* © 1979 Capitol Records, Inc. Courtesy of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 1*

17. Promises Eric Clapton • Music and lyrics by Richard Feldman and Roger Linn. *Naswhal Music (adm. by Skyhill Publishing Co., Inc.). BMI. RSO 910.* © 1978 PolyGram Records, Inc. Courtesy of PolyGram Special Products, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 9*

18. What a Fool Believes The Doobie Brothers • Music and lyrics by Michael McDonald and Kenny Loggins. *Milk Money Music. ASCAP/Snug Music. BMI. Warner Bros. 8725.* © 1978 Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 1*

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