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# History Of Rock Music

Written By Piero Scaruff

## 1 Preface

There is not one single history of rock music. There are several.

There is the history of the hits. Most books on rock music are histories of the hits. The charts decide, i.e. the masses decide. Marx would have loved it, except there is a catch: the masses tend to buy what is publicized by the media, which is what corporations pay money to publicize. Marketing decides the charts. Invest a few million dollars on me and even I, regardless of my musical talent, will break into the charts, i.e. will become part of "that" history of rock music. Most books on the subject are, in fact, books about the music industry. Very often, the profile of a musician is simply a list of her/his successes in the Billboard charts ("that album broke into the charts", "that album hit #5", "that album sold one million copies"). In other words, books on rock music tend to treat musicians like corporations or start-ups, judging them by their revenues, profits and marketing strategy.

Then there are national versions of the history of rock music. Italians have been more exposed to British music than American music. The Eagles and Creedence Clearwater Revival are hardly known, whereas the Moody Blues and David Bowie are almost household names. The history of rock music viewed from Italy is sharply different from the history of rock music viewed from, say, Boston.

Finally, there are the individual histories of rock music. Each person grew up with a different set of idols, and tends to center the history of rock music around those idols, whether Led Zeppelin or Doobie Brothers.

My history of rock music is not a history of the charts (which I consider an aberration), it is not a national version (I grew up in two continents and have traveled to some 70 countries), and it is not an individual version (I grew up with classical music, literature and science, not with rock music).

I simply listened to a lot of rock music, and drew my conclusions. Very often, I was unaware of how many records an artist sold (I learned it later, when thousands of fans sent me nasty complaints). Very often, I am unaware of what was popular in Italy or Boston.

Also, I feel no particular sympathy for any rock musician. My "idols" are Ernst, Shostakovic, Pessoa, Coltrane... not rock musicians.

This is the most subjective history of rock music that one could possibly write. But also the most impartial and independent, fair and balanced.

It ends up being mostly a history of "alternative" rock music. While this is a gross approximation, it has become customary to separate "mainstream" music and "alternative" music. If you do what I did (listen to the music without letting marketing and sales influence you), it is very unlikely that you will end up selecting the musicians who topped the charts, and very likely that you will be impressed by countless obscure recordings that were twenty years ahead of their time even though nobody heard them.

Fans of mainstream music will claim that it all boils down to personal taste. I beg to disagree. There is an absolute factor that bestows a form of primacy on alternative music. Tell anyone (alternative or mainstream musician) that s/he is playing mainstream music and s/he will get upset. Tell anyone (alternative or mainstream musician) that s/he is playing alternative music and s/he will be flattered. Fans may buy according to the media and to marketing campaigns, but they, too, implicitly recognize the primacy of alternative music. If you tell a Beatles fan that the Beatles were mainstream, you risk your life. The evidence is just overwhelming: even the most mainstream

musicians tacitly agree that alternative music is more important, and even the masses that buy mainstream music tacitly agree that alternative music is more important.

In a sense, rediscovering alternative rock and giving it its dues is also a way to restore the reputation of rock music among the more sophisticated audiences. Too many rock critics blindly follow the instructions from the major record companies and hail whichever "next big thing" happens to get a larger marketing budget. Rock critics who cannot break free from this commercial slavery have done a huge disservice to rock music. Anyone who is into Beethoven's symphonies or Wagner's operas and is told that the Beatles' three-minute catchy tunes are the masterpieces of rock music will simply smile and politely nod, but never listen to rock music again, and will thus never learn that rock music has also produced 20-minute avantgarde suites and hour-long electronic poems that are far more complex and futuristic than most of contemporary classical music. If the Beatles are at the top of the pyramid, who in heaven wants to listen to the rest of the pyramid? But if the Beatles, Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, etc. are at the "bottom" of the pyramid (and in my opinion they are closer to the bottom than to the top), then it makes a lot of sense for anyone into serious music to investigate the rest of the pyramid.

From this "alternative" point of view (one that puts creativity before sales) there were three watershed years in the history of rock music: 1955, when Chuck Berry "invented" rock'n'roll as we know it; 1966, when Bob Dylan, Frank Zappa, the Doors, the Velvet Underground and others caused a massive revolution in a slumbering music scene; 1976, when the "new wave" and punk-rock caused a similar revolution in a similarly slumbering scene. Each of these golden ages was followed by an era of "re-alignment" in which creativity was replaced by sell-out, as the record industry (and commercial bands) capitalized on the innovations of the previous years.

One could also add 1987-88, the years when Pixies, Fugazi, etc invented indie-pop, and 1996, the year of post-rock, although they are not as clearly marked as the previous ones.

Traditionally, books on the history of rock music begin by defining rock music as the meeting of country music and rhythm'n'blues, which is roughly correct (I believe that the rhythm'n'blues component was much stronger than the country component but, of course, it all depends on whether you consider Chuck Berry or Elvis Presley as the founding father of rock'n'roll). However, this definition is out of touch with today's rock music. Today, rock music is a genre that employs sampling techniques, electronic instruments, digital/computer technology, cacophony, and ethnic sources (beyond African-American and Anglo-Irish). The roots of today's rock music lie in the technical and stylistic innovations brought about in the first half of the 20th century. Rock music is also part of a stream of "popular music", whose beginnings can be dated even further back, to the end of the 19th century. In fact, it would be more accurate to define today's rock music as the meeting of avantgarde music and popular music. Therefore, my "alternative" history of rock music begins much earlier than most books on the origins of rock'n'roll.

For further reading, my website "[www.scaruffi.com](http://www.scaruffi.com)" has thousands of pages on the musicians mentioned in this book. It also contains a draft of the chapters on the 1990s.

Piero Scaruffi

Note: the number in parentheses after the name of a band or musician is a way to rate their/her/his career. It is a three digit number that summarizes how many albums I have rated 9,8 and 7. So, for example, Captain Beefheart is a 214, the highest rating in the book, whereas Frank Zappa is a 167. When the number is only two digits, it means there is no album worth 9/10, and when it is only one digit, there is no album worth 8/10. In ratings the albums, I was totally indifferent to whether the album had sold ten million copies or only two copies (neither piece of information says much about the quality of the music). There are many many more fans of famous stars than of obscure musicians, so I imagine that my ratings for famous albums will shock many more readers than my ratings for obscure albums. That, too, does not say much about the quality of the music.

### **Main Bibliography**

P.S.: My main regret is that I did not end the "Eighties" in 1988. That is the year when a new paradigm shift

emerged. It was just too convenient for me to use 1990 as the watershed year. But it is not. If I ever revise this book, I will move all bands born after 1988 into the "Nineties".

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## **2 The Beginnings(1951-1965)**

### **2.1 Background: The 20th Century**

Rock'n'roll is usually defined as a merger of rhythm'n'blues and country music. While this is roughly correct, many more factors came into play in the first half of the 20th century that enabled the birth of rock'n'roll and its future developments.

One could start with 1892, when popular music becomes big business and music publishers started renting offices around 28th Street in New York City, next to the vaudeville theaters of 27th Street, an area that would be renamed "Tin Pan Alley". Sheet music was the primary "product" of popular music and the industry was dominated by music publishing houses. In 1912 the American Society for Composers (ASCAP) was founded to protect songwriters. That same year, the first blues was published (Hart Wand's *Dallas Blues*).

Other events that would shape the rest of the century occurred in the first two decades. In 1914 Jerome Kern invented the "musical" by integrating music, drama and ballet and setting it into the present. While that would generate an industry of its own, the real revolution for white popular music took place without almost anyone noticing. In 1910 John Lomax published "Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads", and in 1916 Cecil Sharp published a collection of folk music from the Appalachian mountains, two events that sparked interest for the white musical heritage, although the world had to wait until 1922 before someone, Texan fiddler Eck Robertson, would cut the first record of "old-time music". The following year, John Carson recorded two "hillbilly" songs, an event that is often considered the official founding of "country" music. In 1924 Riley Puckett introduced the "yodeling" style of singing (originally from the Swiss and Austrian Alps) into country music, the style adopted in 1927 by the first star of country music, Jimmie Rodgers, who wed it to the Hawaiian slide guitar and, de facto, invented the white equivalent of the blues. In 1925 Carl Sprague became the first musician to record cowboy songs (the first "singing cowboy" of country music). And, finally, in 1925, Nashville's first radio station (WSM) began broadcasting a program that would eventually change name to "Grand Ole Opry". Country music was steaming

ahead.

Black music also came into its own. The first jazz record was cut in New York in 1917. Mamie Smith's *Crazy Blues* (1920) was the first blues to become a nation-wide hit. And Bessie Smith would follow suit with her first blues record in 1933. None of them was a real blues musician (itinerant, street performer from the South). But in 1926 Blind Lemon Jefferson became the first real bluesman to enter a major recording studio.

By 1921, 106 million records were sold yearly in the USA, mostly published on "Tin Pan Alley", but control of the market was already shifting towards the record companies.

It is not a coincidence that, at about this time, new record companies were created that would last for a century. In 1924 the Music Corporation of America (MCA) was founded in Chicago as a talent agency, and the German record company Deutsche Grammophon (DG) opened the Polydor company to distribute records abroad. In 1926 General Electric started the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). In 1928 the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) of 47 affiliate stations was created. In 1929 Decca was founded in Britain as a classical music company, and RCA purchased the glorious Victor Talking Machines. In 1931 EMI, formed by the merger of Gramophone and the British subsidiary of Columbia, opened the largest recording studio in the world at Abbey Road in London.

Record companies also realized that the support was not adequate to a mass market. In 1926 Vitaphone introduced 16-inch acetate-coated shellac discs playing at 33 1/3 RPM (a size and speed calculated to be the equivalent of a reel of film), but they were hardly noticed.

The effect of all this turmoil was felt also in the much more conservative, traditional field of "pop" music. In 1925 the Mills Brothers invented the "barbershop harmonies", which would become the reference standard for all future vocal groups, and in 1926 Bing Crosby cut his first record and invented the "crooning" style of singing (thanks to a new kind of microphone), a style that would become the sound of the white American middle-class. Maybe it wasn't "popular" music, but in 1927 the German classical composer Kurt Weill began a collaboration with the playwright Bertold Brecht, incorporating jazz, folk and pop elements in his soundtracks (probably the first time that the three genres had been merged).

The term "rock'n'roll" might be as old as any of these historical events. Trixie Smith cut *My Man Rocks Me With One Steady Roll* (1922) four years before Chuck Berry was born. In 1934 John Lomax and his son Alan begin recording black music of the southern states, and discovered the gospel genre of "rocking and reeling" that had been around for years, if not decades.

While most of these events were unknown (and are still unknown) to even the most scrupulous music historians, their effects were rapidly visible. The innovators of classical music were not as lucky: they did not have a recording industry that was interested in selling their ideas. But their ideas would come back after many decades to haunt the grand-grand-children of the roaring 1910s and 1920s. For example, in 1906 Thaddeus Cahill built the first electronic instrument. In 1907 Ferruccio Busoni published "Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetic der Tonkunst", predicting the use of dissonant and electric sound in musical composition. In 1911 Arnold Schoenberg published the book "Theory of Harmony", in which he preached the 12-tone system of composition (the first form of "serialism"). In 1913 the Italian "futurist" Luigi Russolo published "L'Arte dei Rumori", in which he proclaimed noise to be the sound of the 20th century, and especially noise produced by machines, such as his own "Intonarumori". In 1916 Henry Cowell composed quartets using combinations of rhythms and overtones that are impossible to play by humans. In 1920 Eric Satie composed music not to be listened to ("musique d'ameublement", furniture music), the first form of "ambient music". In 1928 Maurice Martenot invented a new electronic instrument, the Ondes-Martenot. In 1927 the Russian composer Leon Termen performed the first concerto with his "theremin". In 1930 Leon Termen invented the first rhythm machine, the "Rhythmicon". In 1931 Edgar Varese premiered a piece for percussions, *Ionisation*. All of these people were considered little more (or less) than eccentric characters, and widely ignored by the musical establishment. Instead, they were correctly predicting the

future. Without their ideas, today there would be no ambient, electronic, industrial or disco music.

Unfortunately, just when these rapid-fire set of events was picking up speed, the "Great Depression" destroyed the record industry. The record industry had hardly been affected by World War I, but suffered a devastating blow during the "Great Depression". As people stopped spending, record sales collapsed.

Needless to say, suddenly there was no interest anymore in new ideas. Nonetheless, it would be unfair to say that the 1930s did not witness important events for the future of popular music. For example, the "boogie" pianist Meade Lux Lewis cut *Honky-tonk Train* in 1929, a premonition of the boom of "boogie woogie" that would take place in Chicago and Kansas City after Pete Johnson's and Joe Turner's first records. Gene Autry's *Silver Hairde Daddy Of Mine* (1931) popularized the "honky-tonk" style of country music, and Bill Monroe's *Kentucky Waltz* (1933) popularized the "bluegrass" style. In 1932 Thomas Dorsey's *Precious Lord* coined gospel music in Chicago. In the same year, Milton Brown and Bob Wills cut the first records of "western swing". Last but not least, Woody Guthrie wrote the *Dust Bowl Ballads* (1935) and became the first major singer-songwriter.

Two instruments debuted that would become the staple of rock bands: Adolph Rickenbacker invented (1931) the electric guitar and Laurens Hammond invented (1933) the Hammond organ. Also important for the future of rock media, in 1930 the first "fanzines" debuted: these were science fiction pulp magazines ("Comet" and "Time Traveller") that allowed sci-fi fans to communicate. They created an "underground" community.

While it is true that the market for records had collapsed (in 1933 only six million records were sold in the USA), recovery was on the way. In 1935 the radio program "Hit Parade" was launched, in 1936 Roy Acuff became the first star of Nashville, and in 1937 records by the "big bands" rejuvenated the scene. In 1939 the "Grand Ole Pry" moves to Nashville's "Ryman Auditorium" and was broadcasted by the national networks. In 1940 Disney's "Fantasia" introduced stereo sound. Interestingly, in 1939 the Panoram visual jukebox was invented, a device that played short films of records, i.e. the first music videos, an idea that would be shelved for about 40 years.

Black music, in particular, was on the rise in every sense of the word. A symbolic date is 1938, when bluesman Robert Johnson cut his first record. In 1939 Leo Mintz opened a record store in Cleveland, the "Record Rendezvous", that specialized in black music and was serving a white audience: black music found an audience beyond the ghetto. In those years a new style was born, that came to be called "jump blues" after Louis Jordan scored a hit with *Choo Choo Ch'Boogie* (1942). That was, de facto, the birth of rhythm'n'blues. Few people noticed it, but Carl Hogan played a powerful guitar riff on Jordan's *Ain't That Just Like a Woman* that, ten years later, would make Chuck Berry famous. Los Angeles bluesman T-Bone Walker absorbed jazz chords into the blues guitar, starting with *I Got A Break Baby* (1942) and culminating with *Strolling With Bones* (1950). White bluesman Johnny Otis assembled a combo for *Harlem Nocturne* (1945), that was basically a shrunk-down version of the big-bands of swing, and that would remain the epitome of all future rhythm'n'blues combos.

Another important strain of popular music had to do with folk music, which Guthrie had already associated with social awareness. In 1940 Pete Seeger went further: he formed the Almanac Singers to sing protest songs with communist overtones.

Surprisingly, World War II fostered an economic boom and, indirectly, helped the music industry develop in different directions. It was during the war that Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* (1942) becomes the best-selling song of all times (and would remain so for 50 years) It was during the war that the first "disc jockeys" followed the American troops abroad. It was during the war, in 1941, that a radio station in Arkansas (KFFA) hired Sonny Boy Williamson to advertise groceries, the first case of mass exposure by blues singers. It was during the war that labels such as Savoy (1942) and King (1943) were formed to promote black music. It was during the war that Capitol was founded in Hollywood, the first major music company not to be based in New York (1942), and Mercury was founded in Chicago (1945). It was during the war that the "barbershop quartets" evolved from the slow, melancholy style of the Ink Spots to the casual, innovative style of Ravens, Orioles, Clovers. At the end of

the war, the American nation was electrified. War was over, the USA had won, peace reigned, and wealth was spreading. The new mood helped popular music too.

The 1940s witnessed progress both in the technique and in the style. As electric instruments spread, they affected the way musicians played. Around 1945 Les Paul invented "echo delay", "multi-tracking" and many other studio techniques that would be rediscovered years later by producers all over the world. In 1946 Muddy Waters cut the first records of Chicago's electric blues. And it was in 1947 that Billboard writer Jerry Wexler coined the term "rhythm'n'blues" for this new genre of blues. More labels were born to promote black music, such as Modern (1945), Specialty (1946) and Imperial (1946), all of them in Los Angeles. Atlantic was founded in New York to promote black music at the border between jazz, rhythm'n'blues and pop (1947). A label, in particular, was founded in Chicago's South Side by two Polish-born Jews to promote rhythm'n'blues: Aristocrat, better known as Chess (1947). Black music was "rocking" harder and harder, as Roy Brown stated in his hit *Good Rockin' Tonight in Texas* (1947), and Detroit rhythm'n'blues saxophonist Wild Bill Moore claimed in *We're Gonna Rock We're Gonna Roll* (1948) and in the follow-up, *I Want To Rock And Roll* (1949).

At the same time, after the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) film company opened a recording business to sell their movie soundtracks (1946), the mainstream popular music was controlled by six "majors: Columbia, RCA Victor, Decca, Capitol, MGM, Mercury. A gap was being created between these six majors, that sold white music for white people, and the small independent labels that were sprouting up around the country. The first confrontation had taken place in 1941, when radio stations refused to accept the higher royalties requested by the ASCAP, that controlled most of the New York artists, and started BMI (Broadcast Music Inc), which mainly represented independent country and blues artists from the rest of the nation. Tin Pan Alley and the ASCAP were marketing adult white families, not black families and not young people. But the independent radio stations had more success among young white people, a market that was virtually unexplored.

1948 (when Pete Seeger formed the Weavers) saw the prodromes of the "folk revival", which would affect thousands of young singers and induce many of them to migrate to New York's Greenwich Village. Jazz and folk musicians shared the same clubs and lofts, and inevitably came to influence each other. The intellectuals of the Greenwich Village were listening to both. In 1948 Billboard introduced charts for "folk" and "race" records, the latter being a euphemism for "black people's records" (and renamed in 1949 "rhythm'n'blues"). In 1950 Elektra was founded in New York to promote both scenes, and Dutch electronics giant Philips entered the recording business.

1948 was also the year that Ed Sullivan started his variety show on national television (later renamed "Ed Sullivan Show"), a show that would hypnotize the youth of America. In the meantime (1949), Todd Storz of the KOWH radio station had the idea of a radio program devoted to the "Top 40" songs in the country.

In those years, two little-noticed technical events took place that would change the way music is distributed and consumed: Columbia introduced (1948) the 12-inch 33-1/3 RPM long-playing vinyl record, and the idea of the "album" was born, and RCA Victor introduced (1949) the 45 RPM vinyl record. In 1951 they will agree to split the record market: Victor selling 33 RPM long-playing records and Columbia selling 45 RPM records.

Another strain in popular music, "exotica", was created piecemeal starting from the late 1940s. First (1947) Korla Pandit (John Red), pretending to be an Indian guru and playing a Hammond organ, started a Hollywood-based tv program that, indirectly, publicized exotic sounds. Then (1948) Rodgers & Hammerstein's **Tale Of The South Pacific** became a Broadway hit. Finally (1950) Les Baxter's **Music Out of the Moon** incorporated exotic themes in instrumental easy-listening music.

The end of the decade and the beginning of the 1950s were also important for avantgarde classical music. Composers in both Europe and the USA experimented with techniques that, again, would not be fully understood until the end of the century. John Cage has already composed *Imaginary Landascape N.1* for magnetic tape in

1939. When (1946) the city of Darmstadt in Germany set up a school for avantgarde composers, the magnetic tape became one of their "instruments". In 1948 Pierre Schaeffer created a laboratory for "musique concrete" (music made of noises, not notes) in Paris and performed a concerto for noises. Joseph Schillinger published "A Mathematical Basis of the Arts" (1949), in which he proposed that popular music could be composed by combining snippets of existing popular music. Needless to say, few people realized that, fifty years later, that process (renamed "sampling") would become widespread. Karlheinz Stockhausen joined the school of music at Darmstadt in 1951, and began composing "elektronische musik". In the same year, the French national radio set up a studio to record electronic music in Paris, and the West Deutsche Radio created a similar studio in Cologne (the NWDR). Across the ocean, John Cage was composing music for radio frequencies (1951) and multi-media pieces that employed a computer (1952), while (1952) electronic engineers Harry Olsen and Hebert Belar create the first synthesizer at RCA's Princeton Laboratories, the "Mark I".

While the American middle-class was listening to the gracious, peaceful, pleasant music of pop crooners and harmony groups, a whole new world of sound was being created that would literally disintegrate that old world of ordered notes.

- 1946: Churchill delivers in the USA the "Iron Curtain" speech, virtually opening the "Cold War" against the Soviet Union
- 1946: the U.S. population is 133 million
- 1946: Percy Spencer invents the microwave oven
- 1946: George Marshall envisions a plan to promote the economic recovery of European democracies
- 1946: the French bomb Vietnam
- 1946: the first non-military computer, Eniac, is unveiled, built by John Mauchly and Presper Eckert
- 1946: France attacks the Viet Minh
- 1946: George Marshall envisions a plan to promote the economic recovery of European democracies
- 1947: Truman proclaims the "Truman doctrine" about containing the expansion of communism and defending democracies
- 1947: India and Pakistan become independent
- 1947: William Shockley invents the transistor at Bell Labs
- 1947: Edwin Land invents Polaroid, the first instant camera
- 1947: Pan Am introduces the first round-the-world flight
- 1948: The Soviet Union enacts a blockade of West Berlin
- 1948: Senator Joseph McCarthy launches a "witch hunt" against intellectuals suspected of being communist
- 1948: Mahatma Gandhi is assassinated by a Hindu extremist
- 1948: on the same day that Israel declares its independence, Arab countries attack it from all sides
- 1948: Invention of "xerography" (copying machines) by Chester Carlson
- 1948: Cable TV is deployed in rural areas
- 1948: the Declaration of Human Rights
- 1949: NATO is formed by western European countries and USA
- 1949: The communists win the Chinese civil war

- 1949: The Soviet Union detonates its first atomic bomb and the nuclear arm race begins
- 1949: the first foreign car, the Volkswagen Beetle, is sold in the USA, which is also the first "compact" ever sold in the USA
- 1950: United Nations troops led by the USA push back Chinese troops in Korea (33,000 Americans die)
- 1950: the first credit card (Diners) is introduced

## 2.2 Rock'n'Roll 1951-57

The list of serious pretenders to the title of first rock'n'roll song (not just a title referencing the act of "rocking") begins with *The Fat Man* (1949), cut by Fats Domino, a New Orleans performer, which certainly sounded like a new kind of boogie. The man who is commonly credited with inventing the term "rock'n'roll" is a white Cleveland disc-jockey, Alan Freed, who in 1951 decided to speculate on the success of Leo Mintz's store and started a radio program, "Moondog Rock'n'Roll Party", that broadcasted black music to an audience of white teenagers. That same year Ike Turner's *Rocket 88* (1951) was definitely rock'n' roll. And that same year Gunter Lee Carr cut the dance novelty *We're Gonna Rock*. Therefore, everybody was already "rocking". Alas, they were mostly black, i.e. distributed only locally.

The record industry was aware that a new music was being created by the blacks, and tried to exploit it with Bill Haley. His success proved that there was an audience for that music, and it was an audience desperate for anything that would play that music.

White people had the money, but black people were making the most exciting music. This created a niche for independent labels recording black artists for the white audience, but it could never become a mass market. The USA was still largely a racially-divided country. There was little chance that a black singer could become as popular as, say, Frank Sinatra. When Sam Phillips founded Sun Records in Memphis (Tennessee), he made the famous statement "If I could find a white man who sings with the Negro feel, I'd make a million dollars".

In 1952 a white singer, Bill Haley, formed the Comets, which can be considered the first rock'n'roll band. 1952 is also the year in which Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" tv program began airing from Philadelphia every weekday afternoon, and the year in which Alan Freed (now more famous as "Moondog") organized the first rock'n'roll concert, the "Moondog Coronation Ball". And the year in which the first rock'n'roll song to enter the Billboard charts was Bill Haley's *Crazy Man Crazy* in 1953. At the same time, Sam Phillips was recording the first Elvis Presley record in his Sun studio, using two recorders to produce the effect of "slapback" audio delay that would become the typical sound of rockabilly.

Rock'n'roll was certainly not the only thing to happen to the American music scene in those post-war years. The sentiment of euphoria was contagious. Hank Williams reached the top of the country charts in 1949, and turned country music into a serious art. Howling Wolf (out of Memphis) and Joe Turner (out of Kansas City) were popularizing the aggressive blues style of the "shouters". In 1952 Roscoe Gordon, a Memphis pianist, invented the "ska" beat with *No More Doggin'*. Charles Brown's *Hard Times* (1952) was the first hit by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller to enter the charts, and marked the beginning of a new era for pop music. The Orioles' *Crying in the Chapel* (1953) was the first black hit to top the white pop charts. The following year saw the boom of a new kind of black vocal harmony, doo-wop, inaugurated by the Penguins' *Earth Angel* (1954) and by the Platters' *Only You* (1955).

Technical innovations laid the ground for further stylistic innovations. In 1952 Les Paul invented the Gibson guitar, the first solid-body electric guitar, and the following year Leo Fender invented the Stratocaster guitar. In the

meantime, since 1951 the first juke-box machines that played 45 RPM records had begun to spread in every corner of the USA. In 1954 all the record companies switched from 78 RPMs to 45 RPMs: the 78 RPM was dead, and the 45 RPM came to symbolize a new era of prosperity and fun. That same year a Japanese electronic company, TTK (later Sony), introduced the last thing that was missing to turn popular music into a universal language: the world's first transistor radio.

Bill Haley's *Rock Around The Clock* (1954), written in 1953 by James Myers and Max Freedman (both white) for a boogie group, was the first rock song used in a movie soundtrack. Bill Haley was the most unlikely "teen idol" (he was almost 40), and that song sounded like a novelty number, not a revolutionary anthem, but that was the song that turned rock'n'roll into a nation-wide phenomenon. Two films of 1955, "Rebel Without A Cause" and "Blackboard Jungle", established a new role model for teenagers: the rebellious loner and sometimes juvenile delinquent (not exactly the role model that their parents would have liked for them).

Musically, the real event of 1955 was Chuck Berry's first recording session. His songs were the first ones to have the guitar as "the" lead instrument, and introduced the descending pentatonic double-stops (the essence of rock guitar). His music was the meeting point of the guitar technique of T Bone Walker, the vocal technique of the "shouters" and the rhythm of boogie-woogie. His songs also told a story that teenagers could relate to, that emphasized the generation gap, and hinted at taboo subjects such as adolescent love (*Sweet Little Sixteen*, 1958). The riffs of his three masterpieces, *Roll Over Beethoven* (1956), *Rock And Roll Music* (1957) and *Johnny B. Goode* (1958), electrified millions of white kids. Last, but not least, his songs were... "his": Berry was the first major composer of rock'n'roll (not just an interpreter). But Berry was black, and blacks did not get the same airplay as white musicians. He remained a cult item.

In the same city and in the same year, another black musician, Bo Diddley, invented the "hambone" rhythm (a syncopated boogie rhythm), that harked back to tribal Africa and gave songs such as *Bo Diddley* (1955) and *Who Do You Love* (1955) a suspenseful, sinister and hypnotic quality.

Rock'n'roll was certainly more closely related to rhythm'n'blues than to country music. Chicago rhythm'n'blues naturally morphed into rock'n'roll with black musicians such as Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley.

If Berry invented the kind of rock'n'roll that will rule for the following 50 years, others laid the foundations for several strains of rock'n'roll. Perhaps the most influential on future generations was the kind of rock'n'roll that arose from gospel music. In New Orleans a singer and pianist named Esquerita (Eskew Reeder) coined a wild style of playing and singing that was popularized by Little Richard (Penniman). They performed like animals, and added another level of provocation: clothes and facial make-up that were obscene. Esquerita and Little Richard invented decadence-rock. Little Richard's frenzied songs of the time would remain the most hysterical specimens of rock'n'roll until punk-rock: *Tutti Frutti* (1955), *Long Tall Sally* (1956), *Rip It Up* (1956), *Lucille* (1957), *Keep A Knocking* (1957), *Good Golly Miss Molly* (1958).

Sam Phillips' dream came true when he met Elvis Presley. Presley went on to become the first great swindle of rock'n'roll, and the prototype for the ones that will follow. 1956 is the year of *Heartbreak Hotel* and Presley-mania. Sam Phillips had found his man, and proceeded to market him.

Presley's success was certainly important in enabling hundreds of kids to play the music of the blacks. White rockers were finally tolerated, and even promoted by the majors. They (or, rather, Sam Phillips' production) defined "rockabilly", a style whose singer sang in a stuttering and hiccuping style, accompanied by a small combo of slapping bass and frantic guitars, while the whole was captured using two recorders to produce an effect of "slapback" audio delay. Rockabilly songs were simulated bursts of lust.

Among early white rockers, Jerry Lee Lewis was, by far, the most faithful to the wild style of black rockers. *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On* (1957) and *Great Balls Of Fire* (1957) coined a style of psychotic singing that will make the history of rock music (unlike Presley's, that will make the history of easy listening) and coined a style at the

piano that was as ferocious as Berry's guitar riffs.

Other notable white rockers were Carl Perkins, who wrote *Blue Suede Shoes* (1956) for Presley, Gene Vincent, Johnny Burnette and Sonny Burgess. Wanda Jackson was the "queen" of rockabilly, and one of the very first women to adopt a provocative, rebellious stance. The fact that their songs didn't climb the charts does not mean that they were any less talented than Presley. If nothing else, they wrote the songs they sang. There was also a brief "Latino rock" fad, with Ritchie Valens' *Come On Let's Go* (1958) and Chan Romero's *Hippy Hippy Shake* (1959), two of the most frantic rockabilly songs.

The limit of white rockers was their roots in country music. Their music was rarely as powerful and original as the music of black rockers. Black rockers who developed a unique style included Junior Parker, whose *Mystery Train* (1954) was the best wedding of country and blues, Joe Turner, whose *Shake Rattle And Roll* (1957) would remain one of the most frenetic songs of all times, Screamin Jay Hawkins, from Cleveland (Ohio), who introduced voodoo into rock'n'roll with *I Put A Spell On You* (1956) and whose macabre stage antics virtually invented gothic-rock. Otis Blackwell, a black songwriter from New York, is one of the unsung heroes of the genre: he wrote *Fever* (1955) for Little Willie John, *Don't Be Cruel* (1956) and *All Shook Up* (1957) for Elvis Presley, and *Great Balls Of Fire* (1957) and *Breathless* (1958) for Jerry Lee Lewis. Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, the Brill Building's powerhouse, wrote *Hound Dog* (1956) and *Jailhouse Rock* (1957) for Elvis Presley, and *Kansas City* (1959) for Wilbert Harrison.

Eddie Cochran was perhaps the greatest talent of the second generation, but he died at 22. *Summertime Blues* (1958) and *C'mon Everybody* (1958), on which he overdubbed all instruments and vocals, were moving away from rockabilly.

Buddy Holly was even more of an "enfant prodige": he also died at 22, but left behind an impressive corpus of songs. He radically altered the image of rock'n'roll: wearing glasses and a formal high-school outfit, he represented the exact opposite of the juvenile delinquent. His childish, naive optimism contrasted with the nasty, morbid world of the other rockers. His lyrics reached for the primal child in every teenager: they were made of onomatopoeic tongue-twisters and of "baby talk" (syllables, rather than words, silly repetitions, trifling rhymes). His vocal phrasing was a recital of exaggerated tones of voice, hiccupping from bass to falsetto, a nonsense lingo of guttural ejaculations and martial slogans. His music was catchy, but set to bizarre accompaniments (clapping, tom-toms, celeste), distilled from blues, tex-mex, folk, pop and country. *That'll Be The Day* (1957) and *Peggy Sue* (1957) were his rockabilly masterpieces, but *Words Of Love* (1958), *Everyday, It's So Easy* and *Well All Right* already belonged to another genre, a form of jangling, melodic music straddling the line between folk and rock.

Slowly but steadily, these rockers overthrew two entrenched praxes of the recording industry. First, the guitar took over the piano. Second, singers began to sing their own songs. Since the beginning of the recording industry, professional songwriters had been writing the hits for pop singers to sing (and nameless players to accompany). Black rockers, instead, were writing most of the songs that they were singing. Pop songwriters were mainly pianists: they would compose a song on the piano, and then score the orchestral arrangements. Black rockers were composing on the guitar, just like bluesmen had been doing ever since, and knew too little about other instruments to arrange their compositions for an orchestra (they also used much simpler chords). Thus rock'n'roll became essentially a guitar-based genre. Thus the natural unit of delivery for rock'n'roll was the small combo, instead of the orchestra. Thus rock'n'roll emphasized the rhythm, not the harmony.

The guitar soon became integral part of the character: while pop singers only dealt with microphones, rockers were expected to swing a guitar in front of them (even though the majority of white rockers did not know how to play it).

"What" these singers sang also changed. Pop songwriters had always focused on universal values and feelings: each story was rehearsing the eternal themes (love, for example) of western literature. Black rockers came from a

tradition that was more realist: the bluesmen sang about life in the plantation, in the jail, in the street, in the ghetto. Black rockers continued that tradition, except that they set their stories in a modern milieu that connected with the personal experiences of the white American youth.

Rock'n'roll was, in many ways, the by-product of changes that were taking place within the American society: mass education through a public school system (that put kids of the same community in daily contact with each other), the widespread diffusion of the radio, the juke-box and the 45 RPM record (that put kids from far-flung communities in daily contact), consumerism (that granted teenagers limited financial independence from their parents), increased racial integration (that allowed white kids to learn the more libertine customs of black people). The sexual revolution may have started before rock'n'roll, but certainly rock'n'roll became its soundtrack. The net effect of these developments was to favor a "clandestine" genre such as rock'n'roll was in the beginning. In 1955 the establishment applied the capitalistic rules of mass marketing to this new product, and sanctioned its existence. Rock'n'roll was, therefore, an almost inevitable synthesis of the American civilization of the 1950s.

The tone of rock'n'roll was certainly different from the traditional tone of popular music. The sentimental, the tragic and the comic tones of popular music became (respectively) erotic, violent and sarcastic. That "was" a teenager's view of the world.

Rock'n'roll was revolutionary at several levels. It originated from small, independent labels (rather than big corporations). It ridiculed the stars and the sounds (and, indirectly, the lifestyle) of the establishment. It bridged the gap between the white public and the black public. It invented the notion of a rebellious youth. These were all destabilizing facts.

Puritans were right when they claimed that rockers (by appropriating the convulsions of strippers, the sensuality of perverts, and the "savagery" of blacks) were inciting male teenagers to become criminals and female teenagers to become prostitutes. It was their way to vent a generation's feeling of independence.

Through rock'n'roll, young people began searching for an identity, a process that would continue for decades, parallel to the evolution of rock music.

There had already been signs of discontent and dissent within the white capitalistic society (the beatniks in literature, for example), but they had not affected the masses. The "revolutionary" power of rock'n'roll far exceeded any political or cultural movement that had preceded it. Music became the terminal stage of an anelastic process: from social alienation to musical alienation to musical revolution to social revolution. Music became more than entertainment. Music became more than a universal language. Music became more than a message board. Music became a revolutionary tool for the youth of the USA.

The popularity of rock'n'roll caused the record industry to boom and allowed independent labels to flourish. Between 1955 and 1959, the US market share of the four "majors" dropped from 78% to 44%, while the market share of independent record companies increased from 22% to 56%. The US market had increased from 213 million dollars to 603 million, and the market share of rock'n'roll increased from 15.7% to 42.7% in 1959. The excellent health of the recording industry was probably one reason why they kept experimenting with the format. In 1956 Elektra pioneered the "compilation" record, containing songs by different musicians, and in 1958 RCA introduced the first stereo long-playing records.

Musicians were allowed to make more and more bizarre records. In 1955 Pete Seeger released the first album of African music by a white musician, **Bantu Choral Folk Songs**, and in 1956 Martin Denny's **Exotica** created a new genre. Mexican composer Esquivel concocted super-kitschy lounge music, scoring odd melodies and counterpoints for exotic instruments and just about anything that had an unusual sound, from theremins to harpsichords. As a title of his best album goes, **Other Worlds Other Sounds** (RCA, 1958).

Rock'n'roll was only the tip of the iceberg. Music was changing at every level. The Chordettes and the Chantels were the first girl-groups. Also in 1955, Ray Charles invented "soul" music with *I Got A Woman*, a secular

adaptation of an old gospel.

The first Jamaican recording studio had opened in 1951 and recorded "mento" music, a fusion of European and African folk dance music: fusing the mento rhythm and Memphis' rhythm'n'blues, a new genre, "ska" began to spread in Jamaica.

While the youth of America danced at a faster rhythm and was being entertained by rebellious singers, classical music was experimenting with ever more unusual sounds. Otto Luening's *Fantasy In Space* (1954) and Vladimir Ussachevsky's *A Poem In Cycles And Bells* (1954) pioneered "tape music" at Columbia University. In 1955 the Hungarian composer Georg Ligeti, while studying at Cologne, coined "texture music" that had minimal movement (the precursor of minimalism and of ambient music). One of the most under-rated and eccentric geniuses of the 20th century, Moondog, who was a blind New York street performer, virtually invented every future genre of rock music between 1949 and 1956. Louis and Bebe Barron's soundtrack for the science-fiction film **Forbidden Planet** (1956) employed only electronic instruments. LaMonte Young composed his first music for sustained tones (static, minimalistic pieces with no development) in 1957. Two years later he would found the "Fluxus" movement of musicians and artists. Also in 1957, Max Mathews began composing computer music at Bell Laboratories. Edgar Varese premiered his **Poeme Electronique** (1958) in a special pavilion designed by architect Le Corbusier, where the music was reacting with the environment. In 1958 the Columbia-Princeton studio for avantgarde composers opened in New York, and was featuring an RCA Mark II, the "synthesizer", and the following year Raymond Scott invented the first sequencer, the "Wall of Sound". In 1959 John Cage performed "live electronic music". Morton Subotnick, Terry Riley, Pauline Oliveros and others founded the "Tape Music Center" near San Francisco in 1959. In 1959 Ornette Coleman invented "free jazz". The impact of these ideas would not be felt for decades, but would eventually catch up with the music for guitar, bass and drums invented by Chuck Berry.

It didn't last. Soon, the puritanical element that was so pivotal in the American society managed to kill the new genre. Actually, there were at least three forces working against rock'n'roll, despite its commercial success: a political force (the USA was coming out of Joseph McCarthy's "witch hunt" but unruly behavior was easily suspected of communism), a religious force (rock'n'roll, with its obvious references to sex, wasn't exactly the kind of music that church-goers desired for their children), and a racial force (rock'n'roll was clearly a black invention, in an age that was still obsessed with racial separation).

The impact of rock'n'roll could still be felt long after the last rocker retired or emigrated: the new pop idols promoted by Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" program (which was broadcast by 105 tv stations), were younger, and spoke to a younger audience. But the format went back to the melodic, romantic song of the vocal groups, and the guitar/bass/drums band was replaced by the string orchestra.

This was not true in Britain, where neither of those three forces was particularly strong, and where bluesmen and jazzmen were treated like living legends. Black music became very popular among white kids of the British middle-class at the same time that was being forgotten in the USA. In fact, two of the most influential phenomena of the 1950s originated from this passion for the Afro-American culture. London was the center of "trad" ("traditional jazz"), which spawned a generation of white musicians playing black music, notably Alexis Korner. Liverpool was the center of "skiffle", a sort of fast-paced, exuberant and melodic jug-music performed with traditional blues instruments such as washboard and kazoo, that had been imported by Lonnie Donegan's *Rock Island Line* (1955).

- 1951: China annexes Tibet
- 1951: first color TV transmissions
- 1951: the first commercial computer is built, the Univac
- 1952: First sex change operation (George Jorgenson)
- 1952: African-American activist Malcom X joins the "Nation of Islam",

becoming the head of the New York City mosque

- 1952: a military coup led by Gamal Abdel Nasser the republic of Egypt
- 1952: Britain explodes its first atomic bomb
- 1952: 73% of world cars are produced in the USA
- 1953: Francis Crick and James Watson discover the double helix of the DNA
- 1953: Hugh Hefner starts the magazine "Playboy"
- 1953: Korea is permanently partitioned across the DMV
- 1953: Stalin dies and is succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev
- 1954: first transistor radio
- 1954: Algerian civil war against France
- 1954: The Viet Minh and France sign a peace treaty dividing Vietnam into North and South
- 1954: a rebel force trained by the CIA invades Guatemala
- 1954: The US Senate denounces Joseph McCarthy's "witch hunt"
- 1955: the first McDonald's restaurant opens near Chicago
- 1955: the first conference on Artificial Intelligence is held at Dartmouth College
- 1955: Disneyland opens in Los Angeles
- 1955: Jack Gleason's sitcom "Honeymooners" airs on tv
- 1955: A black woman, Rosa Parks, is arrested on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to cede her seat to white folks, and Martin Luther King organizes a strike in her support
- 1955: The Soviet Union forms the Warsaw Pact to counterbalance NATO
- 1956: Israel wins a war against Egypt and invades the Sinai and the Gaza strip
- 1956: Khrushchev denounces Stalin's crimes in a secret speech to the Communist Party
- 1956: Soviet troops crush democratic movement in Hungary
- 1956: South Vietnam refuses the referendum on unification with North Vietnam and the Vietminh starts a guerrilla war
- 1956: the first Japanese car is sold in the USA
- 1956: Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" heralds the "beat generation"
- 1956: Robert Noyce and Jack Kilby invent the microchip
- 1956: the U.S. explodes the first hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll
- 1956: telephone line between Europe and the United States laid at the bottom of the Atlantic
- 1956: Fidel Castro and Che Guevara land in Cuba to fight the US-sponsored dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista
- 1957: Little Rock, Arkansas is the site of a racial confrontation after black kids are forbidden to enter a high school
- 1957: the Soviet Union launches the Sputnik, the first artificial satellite
- 1957: Albert Sabin develops the polio vaccine

- 1957: 4.5 million babies are born in the USA (the "baby boomers")
- 1957: India annexes Kashmir
- 1957: Italy, Germany, France and others found the European Community

## 2.3 Before the Flood 1957-1962

### *Pop restoration*

The years between 1957 and 1965 can be considered the "dark age" of rock'n'roll. Many thought that rock'n'roll had simply died, an ephemeral, short-lived fad like many others. The wild, lascivious, insolent rocker was quickly replaced by a generation of polite, well-dressed, romantic "teen-idols" that ruled the airwaves till 1965. Paul Anka's *Diana* (1957) and Pat Boone's *Love Letters In The Sand* (1957) were emblematic. At best, rock'n'roll was fused with country music to yield a more "traditional" (and white) form of music for young people, as was the case with Johnny Cash's *I Walk The Line* (1956), and the Everly Brothers' *Bye Bye Love* (1957) and *All I Have To Do Is Dream* (1958).

In 1958 Don Kirshner opened offices for songwriters and producers at the Brill Building of New York that would become the most powerful force in pop music. This event is symbolic of the return to the old order of the pop singer backed by an orchestra. But the songwriters employed by Kirshner (Gerry Goffin, Carole King, Barry Mann, Cynthia Weil, Neil Sedaka, Neil Diamond) and by his competitors (Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich, Bert Berns and Jerry Ragovoy, Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman) were of a caliber unseen before in popular music. The impact of rock'n'roll was evident even on these conservative, pop songwriters: the focus of their lyrics was the teenager. No question, though, that the success of these songwriting companies was a sign of the decline, demise and defeat of rock'n'roll (both the music and the culture).

However, like all "dark ages", the dark age of rock'n'roll hatched the embryos of the cultural revolution to come. In 1957 Link Wray's *Rumble* invented the "fuzz-tone" guitar sound. In 1958 Eddie Cochran (the most talented of latter-day rockers) overdubbed all instruments and vocals on *Summertime Blues* and *C'mon Everybody*. These were impressive and influential achievements. The industry, however, was not paying attention anymore, and neither were the masses.

The late 1950s were the years of the novelty tunes, of the "dance crazes", of the vocal groups, of instrumental rock, of exotica, of soul music. Each of these phenomena contributed something to the renaissance of rock music, although at the time they were perceived as burying Chuck Berry's invention for good and forever.

"Novelties" could be particularly ingenious: The Tokens' *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* (1961) employed operatic singing, Neapolitan choir, yodel and proto-electronics.

### *Dance crazes*

The most famous of the "dance crazes", the twist, was the closest thing to rock'n'roll to come out during the dark ages. The dance had no clear moves and it was clearly erotic. Invented by Hank Ballard with *The Twist* (1959), and popularized by Chubby Checker, it quickly faded after the Isley Brothers' *Twist And Shout* (1962).

Dance music was mutating into a genre of its own, thanks to a French invention. When the occupying German troops shut down Paris' dance halls (which were guilty of promoting Jewish and Black music), private clubs began playing dance records for their customers. "La Discotheque" opened in 1941 to play the jazz music that was banned in dance halls: since it could not hire jazz musicians, it was only playing records. At the end of the war, the phenomenon spread everywhere: after all, it was also cheaper to play a record than to hire a band, and dancers would rather listen to a set of different styles from different musicians than to a set played by the same band. In

1947 Paul Pacine opened the "Whiskey a Go-Go". During the 1950s, Paris lived its own "dolce vita" and the "discotheques" were its headquarters. The idea moved to the USA in the 1960s: the first New York disco was the "Peppermint Lounge", opened in 1961, and the first California disco was the "Whiskey-A-Go-Go", which opened in 1965 on Sunset Blvd in Hollywood. Live music would remain the main business for all these discos, but the seeds of a record-oriented club scene had been planted.

### **Instrumental rock**

Instrumental rock abandoned the sax-driven and organ-driven sound of rhythm'n'blues, best illustrated by Johnny (Paris) and the Hurricanes' *Red River Rock* (1959), and shifted the emphasis on the guitar. Duane Eddy was the champion of the guitar-driven instrumental, with *Cannonball* (1958), *Ramrod* (1958) and *Forty Miles Of Bad Road* (1959), and began a trend towards more and more atmospheric music, such as Santo & Johnny's *Sleep Walk* (1959), the Ventures' *Walk Don't Run* (1960) and (in Britain) the Shadows' *Apache* (1960). Even the drums were employed as lead instrument in instrumental rock, as was the case with Sandy Nelson's *Teen Beat* (1959) and Preston Epps's *Bongo Rock* (1959).

### **Exotica**

Exotic sounds were still percolating into the American psyche, but now the emphasis was shifting towards Latin America. In 1957 Harry Belafonte's *Banana Boat* launched "calypso", and in 1959 the Drifters' *There Goes My Baby* introduced Latin rhythm to pop music. In the meantime, a Jamaican singer named Theophilus Beckford cut the first "ska" record, *Easy Snapping* (1959), and the word "reggae" was coined (1960) to identify a "ragged" style of dance music, with its roots in New Orleans' rhythm'n'blues.

### **Doo wop**

While they were symptomatic of the ideological realignment, even vocal-harmony groups introduced new elements in their art. The Coasters, the clowns of doo-wop, relied on ironic counterpoint and on King Curtis' "yakety sax" for *Searchin'* (1957), *Yakety Yak* (1958), *Charlie Brown* (1959), all of them written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. The Drifters, besides *There Goes My Baby* (1959), offered the majestic arias of *This Magic Moment* (1960, written by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman) and *Save The Last Dance For Me* (1960, again by Pomus and Schuman), not to mention lead-singer Ben King's *Stand By Me* (1961), and the exotic melodies of *Up On The Roof* (1962, written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King), *On Broadway* (1963, by Leiber and Stoller), *Under The Boardwalk* (1964, by Arthur Resnick). The Five Royales, who had already topped the charts with *Baby Don't Do It* in 1953, were one of the most original of the vocal groups. They relied on Lowman Pauling's compositional skills (he penned both *Think* in 1957 and *Dedicated To The One I Love* in 1958, both highly influential) and on his inventive guitar style (he virtually invented guitar distortion and feedback on 1958's *The Slummer The Slum*): they bridged the gap between the black vocal groups and the first rock bands. The range of styles was actually far wider than the charts would suggest: the Monotones' *Book Of Love* (1958) was quite aggressive and the Marcells' *Blue Moon* (1961) was hilarious.

White singers, in turn, were not only "vehicles" for the Brill Building. There were white rhythm'n'blues singers, whose songs, such as Dion's *Runaround Sue* (1961), introduced new styles to rock singing, and there were serious purveyors of the "heartbreak", particularly Del Shannon, whose *Runaway* (1961) employed one of the early electronic sounds, and Roy Orbison, the world's specialist of orchestral melodramas, the terrifying voice of *Only The Lonely* (1960) and *Oh Pretty Woman* (1964).

Last but not least, those were also the years when soul emerged as a major genre in its own, although it will take a few more years for its artists to become household names. As rhythm'n'blues and gospel singers mutated into soul singers, they created whole new (sexy and provocative) ways of delivering a song. Sam Cooke's *You Send Me* (1957), Curtis Mayfield's *For Your Precious Love* (1958) and Jackie Wilson's *Lonely Teardrops* (1958), Ray Charles' *What'd I Say* (1959), were among the ballads that launched the new genre. Continuing the progression

begun by Ray Charles towards a more and more secular form of gospel, in 1959 Barry Gordy founded Tamla Motown in Detroit to release party-oriented soul records (which were really gospel music for young people to dance instead of praying). In 1961 Stax (founded three years earlier in Memphis) began producing soul records with a distinctive style that was bluesy and melodic. And, in the same year, Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff founded Philadelphia International to produce soul records with orchestral arrangements, yet another major addition to the canon of black music. Rhythm'n'blues was, in turn, contaminated by rock'n'roll in such hits as Maurice Williams' *Stay* (1960) and Gary Bonds' *Quarter To Three* (1961).

### *Prodromes of the flood*

At the turn of the decade, a number of events announced what was about to happen. In 1959 two California teenagers, Frank Zappa and Donald Van Vliet, cut a record together. In 1960 Larry Parnes, Britain's most famous impresario, arranged a show for the Silver Beetles in Liverpool, and the following year the magazine "Mersey Beat" was founded in Liverpool (and in the same year the Shirelles' *Will You Love Me Tomorrow* coined the kind of romantic multi-part vocal harmonies that would make the Beatles rich and famous). A British producer, Joe Meek, began using the recording studio like an instrument for his space opera **I Hear a New World** (1960). In 1961 Bob Dylan arrived at New York's Greenwich Village. In 1961 Dick Dale used the term "surfing" to describe his instrumental rock'n'roll. In 1961 the British bluesman Alexis Korner formed the Blues Incorporated, that would include a rotating cast of young musicians such as Charlie Watts, John Surman, John McLaughlin, Mick Jagger, Brian Jones, Keith Richard, Eric Burdon, Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker, and spawned the similar combos of Cyril Davies, Graham Bond, Long John Baldry, and John Mayall. In 1962 a Seattle guitarist, Jimi Hendrix, began working as a session-man. In 1962 Robert Wyatt and others formed the Wilde Flowers, the beginning of the dynasty of the Canterbury school. The Tornado's futuristic instrumental *Telstar* (1962), architected by Meek, became the first British record to top the USA charts. These were all premonitions.

### *Surf music*

Sure, in 1962, most pop hits were written and produced at the Brill Building, New York, the headquarters of pop music, and in 1963 almost 50% of American recordings were made in Nashville, the headquarters of country music. But, within a year, the Beach Boys' *Surfin'* (released in december 1961) made surf-music (and California) much more relevant, and the American producer Phil Spector (also based in Los Angeles) invented a style of production named "wall of sound", best exemplified by the Crystals' *He's A Rebel* (1962) and *Da Doo Ron Ron* (1963).

Surf music was an innocuous invention, but sometimes the most unlikely event turns out to be the spark that starts a revolution. Surf bands were playing rock'n'roll, and they were playing it with new subtlety and vigor. They bridged rock'n'roll with pop music, and came up with a genre that had both a strong rhythmic element and a strong melodic element. The Beach Boys (2) were still essentially a pop, vocal group, but played the kind of music that Chuck Berry had invented. Songs such as the Trashmen's feverish and demented *Surfin' Bird* (1963) were even more unconventional. Instrumental surf bands were even more futuristic, playing something that did not relate to pop music at all, as immortalized by the Surfaris' *Wipe Out* (1963, written by Merrell Fankhauser) and by the Chantays' *Pipeline* (1963). Last but not least, surf music put California on the map of rock music, a fact that would have momentous consequences.

- 1958: Texas Instruments builds the first integrated circuit
- 1958: Arthus Melin and Richard Knerr invent the frisbee
- 1958: the USA's gross national product is 50% of the world's national product
- 1958: RCA introduces the first stereo long-playing records
- 1958: Mao launches the "Great Leap Forward"
- 1959: Alaska becomes a state of the USA

- 1959: the first commercial Xerox machine is released
- 1959: Mattel introduces the doll "Barbie"
- 1959: The communists led by Fidel Castro win the civil war in Cuba
- 1960: Gregory Pincus invents the birth control pill
- 1960: Manhattan has 98 buildings which are taller than 100 meters
- 1960: Russ Solomon opens the first Tower Records in Sacramento (California), the first music megastore
- 1960: Martin Luther King delivers his speech "We shall overcome"
- 1960: first laser (Theodore Maiman)
- 1960: the oil developing countries (mainly Arabs) found the OPEC
- 1961: John Kennedy is inaugurated as president, the first catholic and the youngest ever, and promises a "New Frontier"
- 1961: Los Angeles' surface is 1,175 square kms and its population passes Philadelphia, becoming the third largest city in the country
- 1961: Soviet troops build a wall to isolate West Berlin and discourage people from fleeing Eastern Germany
- 1961: a Cuban rebel force trained by the CIA tries to invade Cuba, and Cuba's leader Fidel Castro becomes a communist
- 1961: Yuri Gagarin becomes the first astronaut
- 1961: first stereo radio broadcasting
- 1961: Amnesty International is founded in Britain
- 1962: Algeria is declared independent after the deaths of about 100,000 French and about 1,000,000 Algerians
- 1962: Christians in the south of Sudan begin a civil war
- 1962: Khrushchev and Kennedy risk a nuclear war over Cuba
- 1962: the USA intervenes in Vietnam to counter Soviet help to the Vietcong
- 1962: Tom Hayden and others found the "Student for Democratic Society" (SDS) leadue
- 1962: Michael Murphy founds the "Esalen Institute" at Big Sur to promote spiritual healing
- 1962: 30,000 troops have to escort a young black student, James Meredith, to the University of Mississippi
- 1962: Americans lift into orbit the first telecommunication satellite, the Telstar
- 1962: Helen Gurley Brown publishes "Sex and the single girl", defending a woman's right to have sex for pleasure

## 2.4 Trouble in Paradise 1961-1964

The most significant event of the American music scene at the turn of the decade was the folk revival. Launched in 1958 by the Kingstone Trio's *Tom Dooley*, and celebrated in 1959 at the first Newport Folk Festival, the folk revival introduced a sense that music was meant to be more than mere entertainment. Within a few years, its

boundaries had expanded dramatically. Joan Baez turned folk music into an austere form on **Joan Baez 2** (1961). Bob Gibson was one of the very early folk-singers who set to renovate the art of folk music. His best album, **At The Gate Of Horn** (Elektra, 1961), a live performance with Bob Camp, predates the intimate style of folk-rock by a few years. Folk music evolved rapidly into something more profound and more complex, as proven by Lee Hazlewood's concept albums, **Trouble Is A Lonesome Town** (1963) and **The N.S.V.I.P.'s** (1965), that consist of bleak stories about misfits and losers.

Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger had invented the symbiosis between folk-singers and the Left. Between April 1962 (when Bob Dylan's *Blowing In The Wind* was released) and 1965 (when almost everybody was singing protest songs) that invention became the ruling paradigm for folk-singers around the country. Folk-singers became the voice of both the civil-rights movement and the peace movement. A song was expected to be a miniature political rally, its title a political slogan, its lyrics a political speech. The epicenter of this phenomenon was the Greenwich Village in New York. The so called "Greenwich movement" helped the folk-singer mutate into the singer-songwriter: politically-aware folk-singers were writing their own lyrics and music, and were placing the emphasis on the story, not on the melody. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs, Buffy Saint-Marie, Barry McGuire "marched" and "sat in" along with thousands of students. True to their non-violent ideals, they did not advocate violent resistance. Their songs were rebellious in a melancholy and desolate way. The Greenwich Movement was also important because it gave young people a "voice", and that voice was a musical one. Music became the vehicle for young people to vent their (political) frustration. It was a different kind of music, and a different kind of frustration, but the similarity with rock'n'roll was obvious. It was just a matter of time before the personal (rock'n'roll) and the public (protest song) would find a common ground.

While the music of protest singers was not expected to be innovative, other folk musicians focused just on that: innovation. Davy Graham in Britain, John Fahey on the West Coast, and Sandy Bull (12) on the East Coast played and composed pieces that fused folk, blues, jazz and Indian raga, while Joseph Spence in the Bahamas invented an intricate, polyphonic and polyrhythmic guitar style. Bull's lengthy *Blend*, on his masterpiece **Fantasias For Guitar & Banjo** (1963), was light-years ahead of its time, as were the **Inventions For Guitar And Banjo** (1965), and later works such as *Electric Blend*, on **E Pluribus Unum** (1970), would confirm his status as one of the overlooked geniuses of the era.

While he would compose his best works several years later, it was around this time that John Fahey, following the intuition of Pete Seeger's **Goofing Off Suite** (1955), invented "American primitivism", a new way of exploiting the folk and country tradition, and one that was more fit for the classical auditorium than for a Nashville stage.

- 1963: president John Kennedy is assassinated
- 1963: Martin Luther King leads 200,000 blacks on a march to Washington and delivers the speech "I have a dream"
- 1963: a bomb blows up in a black church of Birmingham, Alabama
- 1963: Malcom X, considered too extremist, is expelled from the "Nation of Islam"
- 1964: Cable TV is deployed in U.S. cities
- 1964: Mario Savio founds the "Free Speech Movement" and leads student riots at the Berkeley campus
- 1964: Smoking is proved to be dangerous
- 1964: First commercial mainframe computer by IBM
- 1964: IBM introduces the first "operating system" for computers (the OS/360)
- 1964: The CIA fabricates the Gulf of Tonkin incident as a pretext for

direct US intervention in Vietnam

- 1964: China becomes the fifth nuclear power
- 1964: Khrushchev is replaced by Leonid Brezhnev at the head of the Soviet Union
- 1964: the Palestine Liberation Organization is created in Cairo with the mission to destroy the state of Israel

## 2.5 The Flood 1964-1965

The Beach Boys' idea of wedding the rhythm of rock'n'roll and the melodies of pop music was taken to its logical conclusion in Britain by the bands of the so called "Mersey-beat". The most famous of them, the Beatles (2), quickly became the second great swindle of rock'n'roll. In 1963 "Beatlemania" hit Britain, and in 1964 it spread through the USA. They became even more famous than Presley (Presley had a large but still mainly "cult" following, while the Beatles had a mass following) and sold records in quantities that had never been dreamed of before them.

Presley had proven that there was a market for rock'n'roll in the USA. Countless imitators proved that a similar market existed in Europe, but they had to twist and reshape the sound and the lyrics. Britain had a tradition of importing forgotten bluesmen from the USA, and became the center of the European recording industry. European rock'n'roll was less interested in innuendos, more interested in dancing, and obliged to merge with the strong pop tradition. European rock'n'roll, from Italy to England, was much more melodic than the original. In fact, none of the British, French and Italian rockers qualify as a "true" rocker": they were still pop singers. Johnny Kidd and the Pirates was the notable exception, particularly with *Shakin' All Over* (1960).

A clear difference between American rock'n'roll and British rock'n'roll was that American rock'n'roll had a rural (Mid-western) origin, whereas British rock'n'roll was urban and industrial from the very beginning. London, in particular, was experiencing a rebirth. Just like all other European capitals, the "swinging London" was awash in money and enthusiasm. But, unlike most European capitals, London (and all the other British industrial cities) had a vast reservoir of poor, alienated youth, the price to pay for being the most industrialized country in Europe.

A more crucial difference was one that truly changed the way rock'n'roll was perceived by the public: the British had a stronger concept of the "group" as opposed to the "individual". The rocker had been a typical American phenomenon: a musical transposition of the "loner", the misfit, the nomad that is frequently celebrated by American novels and films. Britain had a different musical tradition, that was grounded on the orchestra, and a jazz or blues or rock "band" was simply a small-scale orchestra. Also, Britain had a different social background: the "gang" prevailed over the "hero". The names of the first rock bands were aping (often in a mocking way) the name of the gangs that operated in their territory. American rock'n'roll had translated the sense of individual frustration into the cult of personality. British rock'n'roll translated the sense of collective frustration into the cult of the group. American culture, particularly in the Midwest where rock'n'roll was born, emphasized identity, but British culture, particularly in the industrial cities, emphasized the loss of identity in favor of membership in a group.

When the London bands pared down the "trad" orchestra to a guitar-driven combo, British rhythm'n'blues was born (namely Rolling Stones and Yardbirds). When the Liverpool bands replaced the instruments of skiffle with drums, bass and electric guitar, skiffle mutated into a new genre, that was renamed "Mersey-beat" (from Liverpool's river). Just like Presley's success spawned a generation of rockers, the success of the Beatles spawned a generation of rock bands. As the Beatles were easily accepted by the mainstream (they conformed with the conventions of the white, conservative "teen idol" era), rock bands that imitated them were also tolerated. True to their musical roots,

the Beach Boys and the Beatles continued to produce melodic music, and became more and more sophisticated in their arrangements. Brian Wilson, the genius behind the Beach Boys' *I Get Around* (1964), *Help Me Rhonda* (1965), *Barbara Ann* (1965), and *Good Vibrations* (1966), the first pop hit to employ electronic sounds, became the quintessential eccentric of melody, particularly on **Pet Sounds** (1966) and the "lost album", **Smile** (recorded in 1967, but never released). The Beatles, thanks to the creativity of their producer George Martin, simply popularized whatever new style was emerging from the underground. They began with effervescent party-tunes such as *Love Me Do* (1962), *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), *I Feel Fine* (1964) and *Help* (1965), but their melodic genius truly blossomed with the sophisticated slow ballads of *Yesterday* (1965), *Michelle* (1965), *We Can Work It Out* (1965) and *Eleanor Rigby* (1966), while *Penny Lane* (1967) topped everything else in terms of harmony. Their best albums, **Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band** (1967) and **Abbey Road** (1969), were tours de force of pop arrangement.

Less famous but far more arduous were the vocal harmonies of the Hollies, whose creativity also peaked at the same time with *Bus Stop* (1966) and *Carrie-Anne* (1967), and the baroque album **For Certain Because** (1966).

The success of Mersey-beat and of the girl-groups altered the panorama of pop music, forcing even the most conservative teen-idols to adopt a more lively style. Dusty Springfield's *You Don't Have To Say You Love Me* (1963) and Petula Clark's *Downtown* (1964) are truly "youthful".

Britain was not only the Beatles. In fact, the Beatles were mis-representing the British scene. The three great British bands of 1964 were rather the Kinks (1), the Animals and, of course, the Rolling Stones (14). Each of them defined a new style, that, decades later, still stands on its own.

The Rolling Stones were probably the most impressive set of talents to come together in Britain before the Soft Machine. Steeped in the blues, they redefined the rock performer, the rock concert and the rock song. They turned on the degree of vulgarity and provocation to levels that made Chuck Berry look silly. Rock music would never be the same again after the Rolling Stones sang *The Last Time* (1965) and *Satisfaction* (1965), which redefined the meaning of "anthemic" in music (lascivious, bluesy, dirty, limping). And **Aftermath** (1966) went already beyond that model with the lengthy *Going Home*, the dulcimer-tinged ballad *Lady Jane* and the majestic crescendo of *Out Of Time*. *Paint It Black* (1966), *Ruby Tuesday* (1967) and *She's A Rainbow* (1967) introduced eastern elements and baroque arrangements (and Nicky Hopkins on piano), while **Between The Buttons** (1967) added a salvo of stylistic raids and the psychedelic vignette of *All Sold Out*. The sound hardened with *Jumping Jack Flash* (1968) and *Street Fighting Man* (1968), the whole band charging like rabid dogs, while **Beggar's Banquet** (1968) revisited their blues roots in a slower, almost ecstatic tone. *Sympathy For The Devil* (1968), which wed demonic tribalism and epic piano (Nicky Hopkins), and *Gimme Shelter* (1969), which abstracted the Stones' jamming style to an oneiric texture of barely hinted sounds, were post-modern meditations on their own sound. The sound of *Honky Tonk Women* (1969) and *Brown Sugar* (1971) was the classic of the classics, exuberant and irreverent, visceral and incendiary, the ultimate bacchanal on Earth, while **Sticky Fingers** (1971) sounded like a pensive analysis of their blues roots and of their demonic mission. **Exile On Main Street** (1972) was the satori of this self-referential phase. These songs, zooming in on a milieu of neurotics, psychopaths, prostitutes, punks and junkies, and arranged (mainly by Brian Jones) with harpsichord, marimba, violin, dulcimer, trumpet, xylophone and flute, revolutionized each of the classical instruments of rock music: the drums incorporated the lascivious tom-tom of tribal folk, the martial pace of military bands and the sophisticated swing of jazz; the guitar amplified the raw and ringing style of Chuck Berry; the bass invented a depraved sound, the singing turned the sensual crooning of soul music in an animal howl, half sleazy lust and half call to arms; and the arrangements of keyboards, flutes and exotic instruments completely misinterpreted the intentions of the cultures from which they were borrowed. The revolution carried out by the Rolling Stones was thorough and radical. Indirectly, the Rolling Stones invented the fundamental axis of rock'n'roll: the sexy singer, sexual object and shaman, and the charismatic guitarist. For at

least forty years that would remain the only constant in rock music (and one of the external features that set it apart from jazz, folk, classical music). The Stones represented a generational trauma.

The Kinks were purveyors of the melodic miniature, but with a much stronger emphasis on the riff than the Beatles ever dreamed of. Their style was sophisticated and full of wit, a fact which turned each song into a realistic vignette of middle-class life. *A Well Respected Man* (1966), *Sunny Afternoon* (1966), *Dead End Street* (1966), *Waterloo Sunset* (1967) and *Autumn Almanac* (1967) were still recycling Chuck Berry's trick, but with the mastery of a bard. They were by far the band most rooted in the British tradition, with a keen awareness of history and British values. In fact, the young Ray Davies sang about himself and his generation, and the adult Ray Davies would sing about the British nation, his goal consistently Homeric in creating myth out of public history and social memory. They also invented the most famous riff of all times, *You Really Got Me* (1964), thereby single-handedly invented garage-rock, hard-rock and heavy-metal. *Till The End Of The Day* (1965) introduced Indian music into rock'n'roll. They are also among the inventors of the concept album, thanks to their masterpiece **Village Green Preservation Society** (1968), and among the most prolific writers of rock operas ever.

The Animals were probably the most creative among the British bands that reinterpreted the blues tradition for the young punks of the 1960s. They turned rhythm'n'blues into the epic call to arms for masses of frustrated teenagers. In their hands, the blues became an anthemic sound of rebellion. Very few bands captured the spirit of the time as the Animals did.

These bands were not only producing original and exciting music. They were also advancing the process of identification of the fan with the star. The rocker was still a "hero", somewhat detached from the masses (sometimes a black singing about white kids, sometimes an adult singing about teenage life), while the singer of these new bands was a kid like everyone else, singing, basically, about his own life.

The genre of the generational anthem peaked with the Who (13). Few bands embodied the rebellious spirit of the young urban misfits like the Who, the most celebrated of the "mod" bands ("mods" were the urban thugs, organized in gangs). *I Can't Explain* (1965) and *My Generation* (1965) "were" pure rage and desperation. Those geysers of youthful energy also revealed the talent of the greatest songwriter of that generation, Pete Townshend. While the Who continued to wave the flag of the generational uprising with *Magic Bus* (1968) and *We Won't Get Fooled Again* (1971), Townshend proceeded to refine his compositional skills with ever more complex suites, such as *A Quick One* (1966) and *Rael* (1967), and eventually coined a whole new format with his influential rock operas, **Tommy** (1969) and **Quadrophenia** (1973). Throughout their career, the Who consistently reflected the mood of their generation. Their entire repertory can be viewed as the long and epic autobiography written by an entire generation. On the way to erect the myth of their generation, they also invented a music anchored to colossal guitar riffs, pounding drums and operatic vocals, which ten years later will be renamed "heavy-metal". While the Rolling Stones, the Animals and the Kinks were rooted in the past (whether rhythm'n'blues or music hall), the Who invented a style that was the future of rock and roll.

It was only fitting that these bands emphasized the anthemic element of rock music. Their songs often sounded like a miniature anthem: a "generational" anthem. Other early purveyors of this genre were the Them, with the feverish *Gloria* (1965), and the Troggs, with a demonic version of Chip Taylor's *Wild Thing* (1966), two of the songs that became the epitome of garage-rock.

While they never became particularly famous, the Yardbirds (1) were innovators of momentous importance. First and foremost, the Yardbirds are the band that established the supremacy of the guitar, granting dignity to the rock solo and pioneering the use of dissonant techniques such as feedback and fuzztone. They invented the "rave-up," the fast, wild, reckless blues spasm that would serve as the foundation of rock music for the rest of the decade. **Roger The Engineer** (Epic, 1966) was a tour de force of guitar and rhythm experimentation. Garage-rock, hard-rock, progressive-rock and acid-rock all owe their existence to the Yardbirds. It is not a coincidence that their

three successive guitarists would start three of the most influential British bands of all times: Jeff Beck Group, Cream, Led Zeppelin.

The contagion spread to the USA, where rock bands sprang up in every garage. The Kinks and the Who were the main influence on countless garage bands that had nowhere to perform at, and no crowd to perform for. Truth is, those bands already existed. What did not exist before the British Invasion was the mass market to support those bands. "Garage-rock" was born the night of 1963 when the Kingsmen staged the first *Louie Louie* marathon (playing the song over and over again for one hour). The Kingsmen shared the leadership of the Pacific North-west school with the Sonics, whose dynamite rock'n'roll peaked in 1964 (*The Witch*, *Psycho* and *Strychnine*), the Wailers, and Paul Revere and the Raiders, who became famous in 1966 with two Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil hits (*Kicks* and *Hungry*). The Standells, formed in Los Angeles in 1961, became famous with Ed Cobb's *Dirty Water* (1966). These bands were born in the early 1960s, before their British counterparts even began recording. Their sound was raw and raunchy. Their attitude was vicious and insolent. They were the proto-punks. But certainly 1965 was the year that these "garage bands" became popular, that every kid wanted to be in a band. That was the year when Dick Clark's "Where the Action Is" began airing from a different location every week. Each city developed its own scene, although few of the most virulent bands made it nationally. Chicago's alternative heroes were the McCoys, who unleashed the power chords of *Hang On Sloopy* (1965), the Shadows Of The Knight and the Amboy Dukes (1).

In New York, the Strangeloves concocted the tribal *I Want Candy* (1965).

The southern states were not immune to the revolution. The Gentrys' *Keep On Dancing* (1965), from Memphis, was one of the feverish anthems of the year; while out of Texas came Kenny and the Kasuals' *Journey To Tyme* (1965), one of the first instances of guitar fuzztone, the Sir Douglas Quintet's *She's About A Mover* (1965), and Sam the Sham & The Pharaos' *Wooly Bully* (1965).

California produced several of the amateurish, provocative alter-hits of 1966: Count Five's *Psychotic Reaction* (1966) Syndicate of Sound's *Little Girl* (1966), Music Machine's *Point of No Return* (1966) and *Talk Talk* (1967). Ironically, it was a band of Mexican musicians, ? (Question Mark) And The Mysterians, who, with *96 Tears* (1966), popularized the trademark sound of this age: the tinny organ (usually, a Farfisa organ) that provided both a drone in the background and rousing riffs for the chorus.

The Monks (1) were formed by American soldiers stationed in Germany. They played primitive and furious rock and roll, somewhere between the Kinks' *You Really Got Me* and the punk-rock of ten years later. **Black Monk Time** (Polydor, 1966) is one of the most formidable albums of the era.

The Missing Links were Australia's premier garage-punks.

- 1965: Gordon Moore predicts that the processing power of computers will double every 18 months
- 1965: Fidel Castro allows one million Cubans over five years to leave Cuba and settle in the USA
- 1965: DEC introduces the first mini-computer, the PDP-8, that uses integrated circuits
- 1965: 34 people die in racial riots in the Los Angeles ghetto of Watts
- 1965: African-American leader Malcolm X is assassinated at a rally by members of the "Nation of Islam"
- 1965: the SDS organizes the first pacifist march on Washington

## 2.6 Paradise Reborn 1963-1965

Across the ocean, the alternative to the British bands, that rediscovered and reshaped rhythm'n'blues, was the successor to rhythm'n'blues: soul music. The relationship between soul music and the British rebels was explicit: a soul record, Marvin Gaye's *Can I Get A Witness* (1963), became the anthem of the "mods". Wilson Pickett created an evil, ferocious kind of soul music with *In The Midnight Hour* (1964). Otis Redding's *I've Been Lovin' You Too Long* (1965) was soul music in which the instrumental backing had de facto replaced the gospel choir, and his *Respect* (1965) was a nod to the civil-rights movement.

The "Memphis sound" was very much the invention of instrumental bands that went almost unnoticed despite the fact that they provided the "music" for those stars. Outstanding among them were the MG's, comprising keyboardist Booker T Jones, drummer Al Jackson and legendary guitarist Steve Cropper (who had been in the MG's predecessors, the Mar-Keys, and would co-write Wilson Pickett's *In The Midnight Hour*, Sam & Dave's *Soul Man*, Eddie Floyd's *Knock On Wood*, Otis Redding's *The Dock of the Bay*).

Just like the trivial pop of the Beatles sold a lot more records than the bold rock'n'roll of the Who or the Rolling Stones, the kind of soul music that revolutionized the charts in the early 1960s was the catchy, mellow one. An enfant prodige, Stevie Wonder, ruled the scene throughout the 1960s, although his hits, from *Contract Of Love* (1962) to *Uptight* (1966), from *A Place In The Sun* (1966) to *Yester-me Yester-day* (1969), were old-fashioned pop ballads written by professional songwriters such as Ron Miller and Bryan Wells. His literate alter-ego was Smokey Robinson, a consummate poet and arrangers, who wrote *My Girl* (1965) and *Since I've Lost My Baby* (1965) for the Temptations and *Track Of My Tears* (1965) for the Miracles. But the audience perceived soul music as party music, as epitomized by the ultimate party song of the era, *Dancing In The Street* (1964), written by Marvin Gaye for the Vandellas.

Brian Holland, Lamond Dozier and Eddie Holland were the greatest tunesmiths of the era. In a few years, they produced an impressive number of melodic masterpieces: *Can I Get A Witness* (1963) for Marvin Gaye, *Where Did Our Love Go* (1964), *Stop In The Name Of Love* (1965), *I Hear A Symphony* (1965), *My World Is Empty Without You* (1965) e *You Can't Hurry Love* (1965) for the Supremes, *Baby I Need Your Loving* (1964), *I Can't Help Myself* (1965), *Same Old Song* (1965), *Reach Out I'll Be There* (1966) for the Four Tops. The H-D-H trio probably remains the greatest pop phenomenon of all times. These songs were a simplified form of soul music, but these were the kind of black music that white radio stations had no problem broadcasting. They were meant to dance at private parties, they complied with the conventions of the romantic ballad, they were sung by polite young people, and they implied no more than the usual stories of falling in love and heartbreak. There were none of the controversial elements of the Afro-American culture that had alarmed white American parents when their children were listening to rhythm'n'blues.

Another Phil Spector production, the Righteous Brothers' *You've Lost That Loving Feeling* (1965), launched "blue-eyed soul", the version of soul music for white singers.

James Brown had clarified the relation between sexual lust and religious fervor with *Please Please Please* (1956). It took several years for the rest of soul music to catch up with his intuition, but eventually his monotonous and anti-virtuoso style created a new kind of music. With *Papa's Got A Brand New Bag* (1965) and *Cold Sweat* (1967) Brown coined a percussive style of soul, the predecessor of "funk". The deadly combination of psychotic falsetto, metallic guitar strumming, fractured bass lines, noisy horn section and pulsing polyrhythm was dance-music to the square. His visceral shrieks amid guttural lascivious wails (and lyrics full of sexual innuendos) invented a new vocal form. *Sex Machine* (1970), with Bootsy Collins on bass, was one of the songs that invented funk-music (and its piano figure virtually invented house-music).

## 2.7 The Counterculture 1965-66

### *The Greenwich Movement*

The British bands changed the way rock'n'roll was played. At the same time, the American folk-singers were changing the way rock'n'roll was "consumed". The fusion of music and politics that occurred in the early 1960s had lasting effects on the very nature and purpose of rock music. Rock music became a primary vehicle for expressing dissent within the Establishment, and therefore one of the most relevant aspects of the "counterculture". Even when the political element was not predominant, rock music came to adopt a stance that was "countercultural" in nature. Rock'n'roll had been discriminated against. Protest folk-singers had been discriminated against. There was a tradition that made rock music an "underground" phenomenon by nature.

The youth of America was still searching for an identity, the process that had begun with rock'n'roll. Underground music provided several ways to achieve that goal. Fans of underground music repudiated the passive kind of listening that was typical of pop music (humming the melodies that are played often on the radio, hailing the star that is publicized by the media) and adopted a more independent and critical judgement of music. They actually went the other way, preferring what was not famous, not publicized, not easy. They developed an alternative system of communication, "alternative" to the system of the mass media, alternative in the sense that it dealt with and promoted those phenomena that were ignored by the mass media. Being a minority became something to be proud of, not something to be ashamed of. They, discriminated against by the adult society, sympathized with all discriminated groups (blacks, foreigners) and considered them their peers. All of these attitudes had political overtones, which in some cases became explicit, and thus bridged alternative music and left-wing politics.

The revolution began with the folk-singers, who soon came to be identified as singer-songwriters. It all started with Bob Dylan, who would remain the leading persona of rock music throughout the decade.

Bob Dylan (1941) was a lot more than a singer of protest songs. While that's how he started, he soon revealed a lyrical and musical talent that were far more developed than in any other folk-singer of his or any previous generation.

Bob Dylan was the single most influential musician of the 1960s. He started the fire. He turned music into a form of mass communication. He galvanized a generation through folk songs that became anthems. Then he embraced rock music and re-defined it as a genre of metaphysical, free-form compositions. Then he turned his back to rock music and delved into country-rock. The entire world of rock music followed his every step. When Dylan went electric, everybody went electric. When Dylan went country, everybody did. His legacy is monumental. *Blowing In The Wind* (1962) created the epitome of the finger-pointing protest song. *A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall* (1962) coined a new kind of folk ballad, which was prophetic, visionary and apocalyptic, in the vein of poets such as William Blake. *Mr Tambourine Man* (1965) opened the season of psychedelic music. The album **Highway 61 Revisited** (1965), after his conversion to electric instruments, contained *Like A Rolling Stone*, a somber six-minute portrait of a friend (a personal epic, not a generational one) and *Desolation Row*, a Dante-esque parade of tragicomic humanity, a metaphysical labyrinth of hidden meaning and universal mythology. **Blonde On Blonde** (1966), the first double-LP album ever, remains one of rock's all-time masterpieces: two lengthy, rambling, free-form, organ-driven elegies, *Visions Of Johanna* and *Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands*, and a bunch of arcanelly haunting melodies (*I Want You*, *Absolutely Sweet Marie*, *One Of Us Must Know*) completely changed the landscape of rock music. **Basement Tapes** (1967) and **John Wesley Harding** (1967) closed that creative season. After sinking into the depths of country-rock, Dylan would resurrect a decade later with a new sound, the elegant fusion of folk-rock, tex-mex and gospel-soul expounded on **Desire** (1976) and **Street Legal** (1978); a feat repeated a decade later with another synthesis of styles, the one embraced on **Empire Burlesque** (1985) and **Oh Mercy** (1989). One decade later, Dylan would still be surprising the rock audience, this time with **Time Out Of Mind** (1997), perhaps in the

attempt to prove that he is as immortal as humanly possible.

The transition from the folk-singer to the electric singer-songwriter created all sorts of artistic opportunities. Jesse Colin Young (1) made one of the most innovative albums of folk music, **The Soul Of A City Boy** (1964), backed by jazz musicians. Fred Neil (1) was one of the most original artists of his era, and very few precedents can be found for his art. While Dylan descended from Guthrie, Neil descended from nobody. The music on **Blecker And McDougal** (1965) is blues-tinged psychedelia ante-litteram. Tim Hardin wrote *Reason To Believe* (1965), *If I Were A Carpenter* (1967) and *Hang On To A Dream*, in a vein tinged with blues and jazz.

Neil Diamond, a veteran of the Brill Building, grafted elements of soul (*Solitary Man*, 1967), gospel (*Thank The Lord*, 1967), country (*Girl You'll Be A Woman Soon*, 1967), and even reggae (*Red Red Wine*, 1967), onto the format of the folk-rock ballad. In his best songs, such as *Cherry Cherry* (1966) and *I'm A Believer* (1967), catchy refrains coexist with exciting guitar riffs and rousing arrangements. A romantic at heart, Diamond composed some of the most romantic melodies of all times, best epitomized by *Song Sung Blue* (1972).

Paul Simon (2) was the poet who best captured the psyche of his generation. While Dylan was the spokesman of the peace marches and the campus sit-ins, Simon & Garfunkel represented the average, shy, introverted kid, lonely in his bedroom, distressed by post-puberal sensitivity. Simon did not write angry protest songs, but tender, fragile, ethereal, melancholy odes, notably *Sounds Of Silence* (1965), *I Am A Rock* (1966), *Mrs Robinson* (1968), *Bridge Over The Troubled Water* (1969), *The Boxer* (1969). He employed the simplest and most recognizable of vehicles: vocal harmonies and the folk ballad. He fused them in an austere structure that had the magnificent translucence of the madrigal and the motet. On his own, Paul Simon (after breaking up with Art Garfunkel) shifted the emphasis on ethnic music, achieving a sublime fusion of western and African traditions on **There Goes Rhymin' Simon** (1973), **Heart And Bones** (1983), and **Graceland** (1986).

The Scottish minstrel Philip Leitch, better known as Donovan (2), represented the quintessence of the hippy ideals. The sweet, mellow, bucolic ballads of **Fairy Tale** (1965) evoked a world of peace and love, of communes in the woods. His experiments with eastern music and jazz, mainly on **Sunshine Superman** (1966), predated acid-rock and progressive-rock. Donovan was Dylan's alter-ego: Dylan was the crude realist, Donovan was the daydreamer; Dylan belonged to a historical period, Donovan lived in a transcendent eden; Dylan was the crusader vowed to epic missions, Donovan was the hermit overwhelmed by nature; Dylan was the visionary prophet, Donovan was a humble friar. He would continue blending hippy elegies, Franciscan canticles, acid trips and Tibetan mantras (best in *Hurdy Gurdy Man*, 1968).

Politically speaking, Dylan's counterpart on the West Coast was Country Joe McDonald (2), a legendary agit-prop performer during the heydays (1964) of Berkeley's student riots. Leading what was fundamentally an electric jug-band, he soon discovered San Francisco's hippies and LSD and managed to wed his political stance to acid-rock's visionary format on **Electric Music For Mind And Body** (1967) and **I Feel Like I'm Fixin To Die** (1967).

### **Progressive folk**

John Fahey (114) is the man who introduced the stream of consciousness into folk music, and turned folk music into classical music, and then made it cross the boundaries of western and eastern music. The spiritual father of the "american primitive guitar", Fahey turned the guitar solo into a metaphysical exercise. **Great San Bernardino Party** (1966) and **Requia** (1967) introduced his surreal world of tragic and solemn visions; images penned by the guitar, rather than by the voice. His "western raga", as defined by his three instrumental masterpieces, *A Raga Called Pat Part 3 & 4*, on **Voice Of The Turtle** (1968), *The Voice Of The Turtle*, on **America** (1971), and the title-track from **Fare Forward Voyagers** (1973) weave a slow, hypnotic flow of tinkling sounds, a majestic tide of free-form melodic fragments. These lengthy meditations work at two levels: first they evoke wide landscapes and imposing nature, and then they resurrect the ghosts of all the people who roamed them. The dreams of the

explorers, the anxiety of the adventurers, the hopes of the pioneers are joined together, but Fahey shuns the epic mode and prefers a form of domestic impressionism, which is tender and warm. His art is about the collective myths of mankind. His musical pilgrimage represents the odyssey of all the "Ulysseses" who traveled (walked, rode, sailed) towards the unknown.

The mysterious Daniel Robinson, better known as Robbie Basho (23), took up John Fahey's solo-guitar music, wed it to eastern mysticism (way before new-age music was invented), mixed in elements of middle-eastern, Indian, Latin and Japanese music (way before world-music was invented), and added experimentation derived from jazz improvisation (way before fusion was invented). **Seal Of The Blue Lotus** (1965), **The Grail And the Lotus** (1966) and **Falconer's Arm** (1967) are simply unique. **Venus In Cancer** (1970) and **Song Of The Stallion** (1971) are more than unique.

### **Folk-rock**

In the meantime (back to the mainstream), the wedding of folk and rock led to the brief fad of "folk-rock". Folk-rock was not much of an artistic movement: it was the invention of two producers (Tom Wilson, the one who "electrified" Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel, and Terry Melcher, the one who "electrified" the Byrds). Folk-rock was a way to interpret the spirit (without reproducing the sound) of the Mersey-beat bands in an American context. The Beau Brummels in San Francisco and the Byrds (3) in Los Angeles pioneered the "jingle-jangle" sound, a frantic accompaniment of electric guitars to a catchy folk melody (which was often sung in the multi-part harmony style of the Beach Boys).

As the band that co-developed (and popularized) folk-rock, acid-rock, raga-rock and country-rock, the Byrds were responsible more than anyone else for creating an American sound (and, more specifically, a California sound) in the 1960s. Historically, they bridged the era of surf music (and Mersey-beat) with the era of acid-rock. In reality, there were three groups called Byrds: the folk-rock group, best represented by *I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better* (1965) although best remembered for the Dylan covers; the psychedelic group, and the country-rock group. Their version of psychedelic-rock, as announced by **Fifth Dimension** (1966), one of the earliest psychedelic albums, and perfected by **Younger Than Yesterday** (1967), was more complex and erudite than the average, borrowing elements from free-jazz and Indian music (*Eight Miles High* invented raga-rock). The Byrds also equated the "acid" trip with space exploration, thereby coining a form of "space ballad". When David Crosby left and Gram Parsons joined, the sound took a turn towards old-time music and Nashville. **Notorious Byrd Brothers** (1968) was still an eccentric hodgepodge of acid-rock, raga-rock, pop and country, but **Sweetheart Of The Rodeo** (1968) is one of the two albums credited with inventing country-rock. These three groups had in common two things: the name and Roger McGuinn's guitar.

Other California bands to emerge during the golden age of folk-rock were Mamas & Papas, who employed sophisticated vocal harmonies to pen *California Dreaming* (1966) and *I Saw Her Again Last Night* (1966), and the Turtles, who delivered the more traditional refrains of *Happy Together* (1966) and *Eleonore* (1968). These songs were celebrations of a new culture, the youth culture. The New York bands of folk-rock were less obviously melodic. Loving Spoonful, in fact, were a jug-band, and their *Do You Believe In Magic* (1965) and *Summer In The City* (1966) placed more emphasis on the arrangements.

Tim Buckley (122) synthesized a new genre of music by fusing folk, blues, jazz, psychedelic rock and chamber music. Very few rock musicians ever achieved the monstrous intensity and lyrical tenderness of his work. Buckley's songs were journeys through the psyche of the singer. Buckley was therefore more interested in mirroring the emotions of the soul than in emphasizing a melody. A Buckley song is a stream of consciousness. Buckley changed the very idea of what a folk or rock song is supposed to be. Tim Buckley also boasted one of the most original voices ever, a combination of African melisma, Tibetan droning, jazz scat and acid-rock wailing, a combination that set a new standard for any future vocalist. He turned the voice into an instrument of the orchestra,

not just a vehicle for words. If **Goodbye And Hello** (Elektra, 1967) was simply a poor man's version of Dylan's **Blonde on Blonde**, the six lengthy compositions of **Happy Sad** (1968), performed by a combo that was the folk-rock equivalent of the Modern Jazz Quartet, coined an ethereal folk-jazz style that had no precedents (except, possibly, Fred Neil). After the more conventional **Blue Afternoon** (1969), Buckley pushed his intuitions to the logical conclusion on **Lorca** (1970), one of rock's all-time masterpieces. Here the music leaves this world, and enters an oneiric and metaphysical landscape. Buckley sings as if in a coma. Melodies appear and disappear in an atmosphere of lugubrious suspense. **Starsailor** (1970) is perhaps his most formally perfect album.

Another Los Angeles band, the Buffalo Springfield (1), with their angular and almost neurotic guitar-based instrumental parts, heralded a new era for folk-rock. Neil Young's compositions propelled their second album, **Buffalo Springfield Again** (1967), into territories that were still unexplored.

#### *Acid folk*

Other musicians used folk-rock to feed the counterculture. The Fugs (3) were the quintessential satirical/political group of the Sixties, the foremost parodists of the Establishment and defenders of the counterculture. Their obscene, agit-prop vignettes updated a tradition that dated from Chuck Berry's early hits and predated Frank Zappa's operettas. Their use and abuse of cacophony and collage was way ahead of their time. In 1966, the year they recorded *Virgin Forest* on their second album, nobody else was even thinking of using the studio to create what was pure sonic folly. They would later transform into a surprisingly musical outfit, finding enough inspiration to sustain at least **It Crawled Into My Hands** (1968) and **Tenderness Junction** (1968).

Their fellow conspirators the Holy Modal Rounders (11) would come into their own during the psychedelic season, coining a unique, drunk form of acid-folk on their two masterworks, **Indian War Whoop** (1967) and **Moray Eels Eat** (1969).

The only band that could compete with that tribe were the Godz (1), whose masterpiece is the spastic, cacophonous **Contact High** (1966).

An even more unconventional stance was adopted by the Nihilist Spasm Band (1), formed in 1965 in Ontario (Canada), which used to perform blues-jazz numbers on home-made instruments (kazoo, gut-bucket bass, found percussions, slide clarinet, etc). **No Record** (1968) is their classic album, displaying influences that range from New Orleans' spasm bands to Albert Ayler and Sun Ra.

#### *The Los Angeles freaks*

The supreme genius of counterculture was the Los Angeles composer, arranger, freak and jester Frank Zappa (1939). Zappa was more than a brilliant and prolific composer. He was a new kind of composer, one who knew no stylistic barrier: he bridged rock and pop and rhythm'n'blues and jazz and classical music. And one who knew no rules of harmony: he would play anything that made sense to him, not to a certain tradition. Zappa co-invented the concept album (he even released a double album when most rock musicians were barely beginning to make LPs), the rock opera, progressive-rock. He was the first rock musician to consciously use the studio as an instrument. He did not just use the band or the orchestra as ensembles of instruments. In a post-modern vein, Zappa composed music using snippets of music inspired to pre-existing music: his unit of composition was not a "sound" but was an organized sound, that the listener could relate to an established genre. And he made no distinction between tv commercials, doo-wop, music-hall, classical ballets, jazz improvisation or dissonant music. A living musical encyclopedia, Zappa managed to excel in all of these genres. He could have been a giant in either of them. For better and for worse, his musical persona includes an odd aspect: a passion for satirical lyrics. He always seemed more comfortable wearing the clothes of the clown than rewriting the history of music. He always seemed to think of satire as his first and main art, and music as a sort of soundtrack to it. His satirical tone ranged from the childish joke to bitter sarcasm, and he tended to excel at the latter end of the spectrum. His favorite victim was hypocrisy, regardless of how it appears in society. His natural targets were televangelists, corporations, politicians, but also

ordinary people, whether "dancing fools", "catholic girls" or "jewish princesses". He showed no mercy for the human species, and relentlessly exposed its vices and perversion. He made fun of virtually every race, people, profession, hobby, habit, job, ideology, religion, etc. on this planet. Most of his repertory is "political", but without actually being militant. Zappa was not a protester or an activist. He was merely a man who used his brain. It turned out that, in one of nature's most bizarre accidents, Zappa the satirical genius shared the same brain with Zappa the musical genius. Zappa debuted with three masterpieces that were eclectic cut-ups of popular styles turned upside down: the concept album **Freak Out** (1966), the rock operetta **Absolutely Free** (1967) and the experimental collage of **We're Only In It For The Money** (1967). Zappa turned orchestral with **Lumpy Gravy** (1968) and then fine-tuned that idea with the *King Kong* variations on **Uncle Meat** (1969) and with the title-track of Jean-Luc Ponty's **King Kong** (1970). Zappa proved to be equally at ease playing melodic themes with a jazz band, on **Hot Rats** (1969) and especially on **Burnt Weeny Sandwich** (1970), and deconstructing spastic free-jazz on the dadaistic masterpiece **Weasels Ripped My Flesh** (1970). His self-indulgence knew no limit, but at least **Waka/Jawaka** (1972), **Grand Wazoo** (1973) and **Orchestral Favourites** (1979) found a magical balance between his pop, jazz and classical propensities. His lighter vein, perhaps best summarized on **Roxy And Elsewhere** (1974), always coexisted with his classical ambitions, as demonstrated on the Kent Nagano-conducted **Zappa** (1983) and on the Pierre Boulez-conducted **Perfect Stranger** (1984), and with his fluent jazz idiom, as immortalized on **Jazz From Hell** (1986).

Possibly the greatest rock musician of all times, and certainly one of the most original and influential geniuses of the 20th century, Don Van Vliet, also known as Captain Beefheart (214), completely erased all musical dogmas and simply reinvented music on his own terms. Formally, his style blends Delta blues, free-jazz, cacophonous avantgarde and rock and roll, but what is unique about Van Vliet's music is the oblique, skewed, manic, unpredictable and demented structure of his compositions. The desert (where he grew up) could be a better key to understand his art than any of the influences that one can hear on his albums. Along the way, Van Vliet also created one of the most original styles of singing ever, one that, again, revolutionized centuries of vocal music. The gruff, abrasive, werewolf-grade, warbling of Van Vliet beat the bluesmen at their own game: it did more than express a state of mind, it redefined what a state of mind is. Van Vliet's singing is a force of nature. Van Vliet, who had already cut a record with Frank Zappa in 1959, formed the Magic Band in 1964. **Safe As Milk** (1967) presented their dadaistic take on the blues, but **Mirror Man** (1971), recorded in 1967, is a better (albeit rawer) testament of the band in its prime, jamming aimlessly around a few trivial blues chords. After **Strictly Personal** (1968), a more "acid" album that was ruined by the producer, Van Vliet composed what is arguably rock music's main contribution to the history of music, **Trout Mask Replica** (1969). This masterpiece, that straddles the border between blues, jazz, rock and classical music, is a post-Cage-an study on tonality. He was also one of the wildest eccentrics of his time, and his music may simply be a one-to-one reflection of what was going on inside his blessedly deranged mind. Unfortunately, Captain Beefheart and the music industry did not get along too well. Later, he managed to record at least two brilliant albums, **Shiny Beast** (1978) and **Ice Cream For Crow** (1982), but eventually disappeared from the music scenes and turned to painting. The distance between Captain Beefheart and the rest of rock music is the same distance that there was between Beethoven and the symphonists of his time.

- 1966: Cassius Clay is jailed for refusing to serve in Vietnam
- 1966: Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Angela Davis and other African-American activists found the "Black Panther Party" at Oakland, California
- 1966: Mao launches the "Cultural Revolution"

## 2.8 Appendix: Best albums of the 1960s

9/10

- Captain Beefheart: Safe As Milk (Buddah, 1967)
  - Captain Beefheart: Trout Mask Replica (Straight, 1969)
  - Doors (Elektra, 1967)
  - Bob Dylan: Blonde On Blonde (CBS, 1966)
  - MC5: Kick Out The Jams (Elektra, 1969)
  - Van Morrison: Astral Weeks (WB, 1968)
  - Red Crayola: Parable Of Arable Land (IA, 1967)
  - Velvet Underground & Nico (Verve, 1967)
  - Velvet Underground: White Light White Heat (Verve, 1967)
  - Frank Zappa: Uncle Meat (Bizarre, 1969)
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8.5/10

- Leonard Cohen: Songs Of Leonard Cohen (CBS, 1968)
  - Jefferson Airplane: Volunteers (RCA, 1969)
  - King Crimson: In The Court Of The Crimson King (Island, 1969)
  - Pink Floyd: The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn (Columbia, 1967)
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8/10

- Band: II (Capitol, 1969)
- Tim Buckley: Happy Sad (Elektra, 1968)
- Sandy Bull: Fantasia For Guitar & Banjo (Vanguard, 1963)
- Colosseum: Valentyne Suite (Vertigo, 1969)
- Holger Czukay: Canaxis 5 (Music Factory, 1969)
- Deviants: Ptooff (Decca, 1967)
- Doors: Strange Days (Elektra, 1967)
- Bob Dylan: Highway 61 Revisited (CBS, 1965)
- Family: Music In A Doll's House (Reprise, 1968)
- Grateful Dead: Live Dead (Warner, 1969)
- Grateful Dead: Anthem Of The Sun (WB, 1968)
- Jimi Hendrix: Are You Experienced? (Track, 1967)
- Jimi Hendrix: Electric Ladyland (Track, 1968)
- Holy Modal Rounders: Indian War Whoop (ESP, 1967)
- Jefferson Airplane: After Bathing At Baxter's (RCA, 1967)
- Kaleidoscope: Beacon From Mars (Epic, 1968)
- Love: Da Capo (Elektra, 1967)
- Nico: Marble Index (Elektra, 1968)
- Pearls Before Swine: Balaklava (ESP, 1968)
- David Peel: Have A Marijuana (Elektra, 1969)
- Pink Floyd: A Saucerful Of Secrets (Columbia, 1968)
- Stooges: self-titled (Elektra, 1969)
- United States Of America: self-titled (CBS, 1968)

- Who: Tommy (Track, 1969)
  - Neil Young: Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere (Reprise, 1969)
  - Frank Zappa: Freak Out (Verve, 1966)
  - Frank Zappa: Absolutely Free (Verve, 1967)
  - Frank Zappa: We're Only In It For The Money (Verve, 1967)
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7.5/10

- Amon Duul: **Phallus Dei** (1969)
  - Kevin Ayers: Joy Of A Toy (Harvest, 1969)
  - Robbie Basho: The Grail And the Lotus (Takoma, 1966)
  - Robbie Basho: Falconer's Arm (Takoma, 1967),
  - Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band: Gorilla (Liberty, 1967)
  - Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band: Doughnut In Granny's Greenhouse (Liberty, 1968)
  - Tim Buckley: Goodbye And Hello (Elektra, 1967)
  - Tim Buckley: Blue Afternoon (Straight, 1969)
  - Eric Burdon: Twain Shall Meet (MGM, 1968)
  - Creedence Clearwater Revival: Green River (Fantasy, 1969)
  - Deviants: Disposable (Transatlantic, 1968)
  - Nick Drake: Five Leaves Left (Island, 1969)
  - Family: Family Entertainment (Reprise, 1969)
  - Incredible String Band: Hangman's Beautiful Daughter (Elektra, 1968)
  - Led Zeppelin: I (Atlantic, 1969)
  - Laura Nyro: Eli And The 13th Confession (CBS, 1968)
  - Pink Floyd: Ummagumma (Harvest, 1969)
  - Rolling Stones: Between The Buttons (Decca, 1967)
  - Silver Apples: self-titled (Kapp, 1968)
  - Spirit: The Family That Plays Together (Ode, 1969)
  - Third Ear Band: Alchemy (Harvest, 1969)
  - 13th Floor Elevators: The Psychedelic Sounds Of (IA, 1966)
  - Traffic: Mr Fantasy (UA, 1967)
  - Townes Van Zandt: Our Mother The Mountain (Tomato, 1969)
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7/10

- Allman Brothers Band: self-titled (1969)
- Amboy Dukes: Journey To The Center Of The Mind (Mainstream, 1968)
- David Axelrod: Song of Innocence (Capitol, 1968)
- David Axelrod: Songs of Experience (Capitol, 1969)
- Band: Music From Big Pink (Capitol, 1968)
- Robbie Basho: Seal Of The Blue Lotus (Takoma, 1965)
- Beach Boys: Pet Sounds (Capitol, 1966)
- Beach Boys: Smile (1966-67)
- Beatles: Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (Parlophone, 1967)
- Beatles: Abbey Road (Parlophone, 1969)
- Beaver & Krause: Ragnarok Electronic Funk (Limelight, 1969)

- Jeff Beck: Truth (Columbia, 1968)
- Blind Faith: self-titled (Polydor, 1969)
- Bloomfield, Kooper, Stills: Supersession (CBS, 1968)
- Blue Cheer: Vincebus Eruptum (Philips, 1968)
- Blues Magoos: Psychedelic Lollipop (Mercury, 1966)
- Blues Project: Projections (Verve, 1967)
- Blues Project: Planned Obsolescence (Verve, 1968)
- Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band: Tadpoles (Liberty, 1969)
- Edgar Broughton: Wasa Wasa (Harvest, 1969)
- Jack Bruce: Songs For A Tailor (Polydor, 1969)
- Buffalo Springfield: Again (Atco, 1967)
- Sandy Bull: Inventions For Guitar And Banjo (Vanguard, 1965)
- Eric Burdon: Love Is (MGM, 1968)
- Paul Butterfield: East West (Elektra, 1966)
- Joe Byrd: American Metaphysical Circus (CBS, 1969)
- Byrds: Mr Tambourine Man (CBS, 1965)
- Byrds: Younger Than Yesterday (1967),
- Byrds: Notorious Byrd Brothers (Columbia, 1968)
- Can: Monster Movie (Spoon, 1969)
- Captain Beefheart: Strictly Personal (Buddah, 1968)
- Caravan: If I Could Do It All Over Again (1969)
- Chicago Transit Authority: self-titled (CBS, 1969)
- Leonard Cohen: Songs From A Room (CBS, 1969)
- Alice Cooper: Pretties For You (Straight, 1969)
- Country Joe: Electric Music For The Mind And Body (Vanguard, 1967)
- Country Joe: I Feel Like I'm Fixin To Die (Vanguard, 1967)
- Cream: Disraeli Gears (Reaction, 1967)
- Cream: Wheels Of Fire (Polydor, 1968)
- Creedence Clearwater Revival: Bayou Country (Fantasy, 1968)
- Creedence Clearwater Revival: Willy And The Poor Boys (Fantasy, 1969)
- Cromagnon: Orgasm (ESP, 1968)
- Deviants: Deviants (Transatlantic, 1969)
- Devil's Anvil: Hard Rock From the Middle East (1967 - Collectables, 2001)
- Donovan: Fairy Tale (Pye, 1965)
- Donovan: Sunshine Superman (Pye, 1966)
- Doors: Waiting For The Sun (Elektra, 1968)
- Dr John: Gris Gris (Atco, 1968)
- Bob Dylan: Basement Tapes (CBS, 1967/1975)
- Bob Dylan: John Wesley Harding (CBS, 1967)
- Earth Opera: Great American Eagle Tragedy (Elektra, 1969)
- Electric Prunes: Mass In F Minor (Reprise, 1968)
- John Fahey: The Voice Of The Turtle (Takoma, 1968)
- John Fahey: Great San Bernardino Party (Takoma, 1966)
- John Fahey: Requiva (Takoma, 1967)

- Fifty Foot Hose: Cauldron (Limelight, 1968)
- Flock: self-titled (CBS, 1969)
- Flying Burrito Bros: Gilded Palace Of Sin (A&M, 1969)
- Kim Fowley: Outrageous (Imperial, 1968)
- Frost: Rock And Roll Music (Vanguard, 1969)
- Fugs: self-titled (ESP, 1966)
- Fugs: It Crawled Into My Hand, Honest (Reprise, 1968)
- Fugs: Tenderness Junction (Reprise, 1968)
- Mort Garson: Zodiac Cosmic Sounds (Elektra, 1967)
- Mort Garson: The Wozard of Iz (A&M, 1969)
- Ron Geesin: A Raise Of Eyebrows (Transatlantic, 1967)
- Godz: Contact High With The Godz (ESP, 1966)
- Grateful Dead: Aoxomoxoa (WB, 1969)
- Hapshash & The Coloured Coat: Featuring The Human Host And The Heavy Metal Kids (Minit, 1967)
- Holy Modal Rounders: Moray Eels Eat (Elektra, 1969)
- HP Lovecraft: II (Philips, 1968)
- Incredible String Band: 5,000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion (Elektra, 1967)
- International Harvester: Sov Gott Rose-Marie (Love, 1968)
- International Submarine Band: Safe At Home (LHI, 1968)
- Iron Butterfly: In A Gadda Da Vida (Atco, 1968)
- It's A Beautiful Day (CBS, 1969)
- Jefferson Airplane: Surrealistic Pillow (RCA, 1967)
- Jefferson Airplane: Crown Of Creation (RCA, 1968)
- Jethro Tull: Stand Up (Chrysalis, 1969)
- Kaleidoscope: Side Trips (Epic, 1967)
- Kinks: Village Green Preservation Society (Pye, 1968)
- L'Infonie: Volume 3 (1969)
- Les Maledictus Sound: self-titled (1968)
- Love: Forever Changes (Elektra, 1967)
- Lothar & The Hand People: Presenting (Capitol, 1968)
- Lothar & The Hand People: Space Hymn (Capitol, 1969)
- Angus MacLise: The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda (1968)
- Mad River: self-titled (Capitol, 1968)
- Mad River: Paradise Bar And Grill (Capitol, 1969)
- John Mayall: Hard Road (Decca, 1967)
- Meters: self-titled (Josie, 1969)
- Steve Miller: Children Of The Future (Capitol, 1968)
- Steve Miller: Sailor (Capitol, 1968)
- Joni Mitchell: Clouds (Reprise, 1969)
- Moby Grape: Grape Jam (CBS, 1968)
- Monks: Black Monk Time (Polydor, 1966)
- Moody Blues: In Search Of The Lost Chord (1968)
- Fred Neil: Fred Neil (Capitol, 1967)
- Mickey Newbury: It Looks Like Rain (1969)

- Nihilist Spasm Band: No Record (Allied Record Corporation, 1968)
- Laura Nyro: More Than A New Discovery (Verve, 1966)
- Laura Nyro: New York Tendaberry (1969)
- VanDyke Parks: Song Cycle (WB, 1968)
- Pearls Before Swine: One Nation Underground (ESP, 1967)
- Pentangle: self-titled (Reprise, 1968)
- Quicksilver: Happy Trails (Capitol, 1969)
- Red Krayola: God Bless the Red Krayola & All Who Sail With It (IA, 1968)
- Rolling Stones: Aftermath (Decca, 1966)
- Rolling Stones: Beggar's Banquet (Decca, 1968)
- Santana: self-titled (Columbia, 1969)
- Seatrain: self-titled (A&M, 1969)
- Seeds: self-titled (GNP, 1966)
- Seeds: A Web Of Sound (GNP, 1966)
- Shaggs: Philosophy Of The World (Third World, 1969)
- Silver Apples: Contact (Kapp, 1969)
- Soft Machine: 2 (Probe, 1969)
- Alexander "Skip" Spence: Oar (1969)
- Spirit: self-titled (Ode, 1968)
- T. Rex: Unicorn (Regal Zonophone, 1969)
- Taj Mahal: De Ole Folks At Home (1969)
- Tomorrow: self-titled (Parlophone, 1968)
- Ultimate Spinach: Behold And See (MGM, 1968)
- Scott Walker: Scott 4 (Philips, 1969)
- West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band: Part One (Reprise, 1966)
- Who: My Generation (Brunswick, 1965)
- Yardbirds: Roger The Engineer (Epic, 1966)
- Jesse Colin Young: The Soul Of A City Boy (Capitol, 1964)
- Frank Zappa: Lumpy Gravy (1968)
- Frank Zappa: Hot Rats (Bizarre, 1969)

## 2.9 The greatest of the 1960s

1. Velvet Underground
2. Frank Zappa
3. Captain Beefheart
4. Pink Floyd
5. Doors
6. Bob Dylan
7. Jefferson Airplane
8. Tim Buckley
9. Red Crayola
10. Jimi Hendrix
11. Soft Machine

12. King Crimson
13. Rolling Stones
14. Grateful Dead
15. Who
16. Stooges
17. Van Morrison
18. MC5
19. Led Zeppelin
20. Amon Duul
21. Colosseum
22. Fugs
23. Holy Modal Rounders
24. Sandy Bull
25. Leonard Cohen
26. Band
27. Janis Joplin
28. Creedence Clearwater Revival
29. Van Dyke Parks

### **3 The Golden Age 1967-70**

#### **3.1 Psychedelia 1965-68**

##### *San Francisco and the hippies*

In 1965 San Francisco, whose scene had largely languished in the years of surf music and of the Greenwich Movement, suddenly became one of the most ebullient cities in the nation. The poets of the "Beat generation" moved here. The "Diggers" turned the Haight Ashbury district into a "living theater". Mario Savio founded the "Free Speech Movement" at the University of California at Berkeley, where sit-ins and marches were supported by the likes of Country Joe McDonald. There was excitement in the air. In the summer of 1965 a San Francisco band, the Charlatans, and their hippy fans took over the "Red Dog Saloon" in Virginia City (Nevada), and started the idea of playing a new kind of music for a new kind of audience. The Warlocks (later renamed Grateful Dead) got hired by Ken Kesey to play at his "acid tests" (LSD parties), where the band began performing lengthy instrumental jams, loosely based on country, blues and jazz. In October of that year, the Family Dog Production organized the first hippy party at the "Long Shoreman's Hall". Following the success of that "festival", avenues for San Francisco's new bands sprang up all around. 1966 was the "summer of love". They embodied the pacifist ideals that had been promoted by Bob Dylan, but with a far less political stance. Theirs was a philosophy of life ("peace and love" and drugs) that was in many ways the direct consequence of what Dylan had preached, but was also much closer to Buddhist philosophy. Hippies gathered not to march, but to celebrate, not to protest but to rejoice. The spiritual experience was preeminent over the political experience. This represented a dramatic change from the times of rock'n'roll, when the music was a (ultimately violent) act of rebellion.

Rock festivals were invented with the "Human Be-in" held in January 1967 at the Golden Gate Park (the "Gathering of the Tribes"). The hippy phenomenon was interesting because it became a mass movement that

spread rapidly around the States (and the world) but it never had a leader. It was a messianic movement without a messiah.

The music of the hippies was an evolution of folk-rock, renamed "acid-rock" because the original idea was that of providing a soundtrack to the LSD parties, a soundtrack that would reflect as closely as possible the effects of an LSP "trip". This music was, in many ways, the rock equivalent of abstract painting (Jackson Pollock), free-jazz (Ornette Coleman) and beat poetry (Allen Ginsberg). These phenomena had in common a loose structure in which form "was" the content and an attitude of disregard for century-old aesthetic values. In music this meant that improvisation was as important, and even more important, than composition. Acid-rock's main invention was the "jam", which, of course, had already been practiced by jazz and blues musicians. Acid-rock musicians jammed in a slightly different context: they placed more emphasis on the melody, less emphasis on the virtuoso performance. The most visible difference (besides the race of the musicians) was the lead role of the electric guitar. A more subtle difference was that the passionate, aching spirit of the blues was replaced by a transcendental, zen-like spirit. The archetype for acid-rock was actually recorded in Chicago, by the white bluesman Paul Butterfield (1): *East-West* (1966), a lengthy piece that fused Afro-American and Indian improvisation. From the instrumental point of view, acid-rock was still very much a descendant of rhythm'n'blues, but from the vocal point of view it was very much a descendant of folk and country music. The melodies and the harmonies were mostly inspired by the white tradition. 1966 was the year of the jam: *Virgin Forest* by the Fugs, *Paul Butterfield's East-West*, *Up In Her Room* by the Seeds, *Going Home* by the Rolling Stones, *Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands* by Bob Dylan, etc. In the following years rock musicians would record increasingly more complex and lengthier pieces.

Jefferson Airplane (25) were one of the greatest rock bands of all times. They not only embodied the spirit and the sound of the hippy era more than anyone else but also counted on a formidable group of talents, that redefined singing (Grace Slick), harmonizing (Paul Kantner, Marty Balin), bass playing (Jack Casady), guitar counterpoint (Jorma Kaukonen) and drumming (Spencer Dryden) in rock music. Their early singles, *Somebody To Love* and *White Rabbit*, helped establish psychedelic-rock as a musical genre. The music of Jefferson Airplane were largely self-referential, and their career feels like a documentary of their generation. **Surrealistic Pillow** (1967) was a manifesto of the hippy generation. **After Bathing At Baxter's** (1967), one of the greatest artistic achievements of the psychedelic era, was the album that broke loose with the conventions of the song format and the pop arrangement. **Volunteers** (1969), their supreme masterpiece, fused the backward trend towards a return to the roots (both musical and moral) and the forward trend towards hard-line politics. **Blows Against The Empire** (1970) was a nostalgic look back to the ideals of the communes and a utopistic tribute to the space age. **Sunfighter** (1971) is an adult and solemn return to the song format and to nature. Their "marketing appeal" was precisely that they represented (and practiced) a new lifestyle. Unfortunately, few of their albums rank among rock's masterpieces because they were fundamentally limited by a song-oriented format that they rarely challenged (unlike, say, the Grateful Dead). Jefferson Airplane were partially accepted by the Establishment because they were still living in the world of pop music, because the folk and blues roots were still visible, because the melody was still the center of mass.

Others were reacting against all of the above. The Grateful Dead (23), considered by many as "the" greatest rock band of all times, were a monument of San Francisco's hippy civilization, and, in general, a monument of the psychedelic civilization of the 1960s. Their greatest invention was the lengthy, free-form, group jam, the rock equivalent of jazz improvisation. Unlike jazz, in which the jam channelled the angst of the Afro-american people, Grateful Dead's jam was the soundtrack for LSD "trips". But soon it came to represent an entire ideology of evasion from the Establishment, of artistic freedom, of alternative lifestyle. Contrary to their image of junkies and misfits, the Grateful Dead were one of the most erudite groups of all times, aware of the atonal compositions of the European avantgarde as well of the modal improvisation of free-jazz as well as the rhythms of other cultures. They

managed to transform guitar feedback and odd meters into the rock equivalent of chamber instruments. The infinite ascending and descending scales of Jerry Garcia are among the most titanic enterprises ever attempted by rock music. The Grateful Dead never sold many records. Their preferred format was the live concert, not the record. They literally redefined what "popular music" is: the live concert shunned the laws of capitalism, removing the business plan from entertainment. Their recorded masterpieces, **Anthem Of The Sun** (1968), **Aoxomoxoa** (1969) and **Live Dead** (1969), are mere approximations of their art. **Anthem Of The Sun** was refined in studio using all sorts of effects and techniques. The band looked at Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage and Morton Subotnick (not Chuck Berry) for inspiration. The Dead's blues and country roots were horribly disfigured by hallucinogenic fits, thus disintegrating song structure and development. Each piece became an orgy of amoebic sound. Drums beat obsessive tempos to reproduce the pulsations of an LSD trip; electronics painted nightmarish and ecstatic soundscapes; keyboards moaned gloomy and mysterious, like ghosts imprisoned in catacombs; guitars pierced minds and released their dreams into the sky; voices floated serene over the maelstrom. Arrangements overflowed with tidbits of harpsichord, trumpet, celeste, etc. But overall the feeling was one of angst, enhanced by the jungle of dissonances and percussions. The lengthier improvisations sounded like chamber music for drunken junkies. (Credit producer Dave Hassinger for overdubbing different performances and creating a "multi-dimensional" feeling, an extreme version of Spector's "wall of sound"). Rhythm and melody had become pure accessories. **Aoxomoxoa** repaired part of the damage, by moving back towards the traditional song format. **Live Dead** reached for their true dimension with tracks such as *Feedback*, one lengthy monolithic "trip" by Garcia's guitar, and *Dark Star*, the Dead's terminal jam and the swan song of acid-rock. At the same time, though, their free-form jams were born out of a philosophy that was still profoundly American. They were born at the border between the individualistic and libertarian culture of the Frontier and the communal and spiritual culture of the quakers. Despite being ostracized by the Establishment, the Grateful Dead expressed, better than any other musician of that age, the quintessence of the American nation, and perhaps that was precisely the reason that their music resonated so well with the soul of the American youth. It is not a coincidence that the Grateful Dead, along with the Byrds and Bob Dylan, led the movement towards country-rock, via **Workingman's Dead** (1970) and Jerry Garcia's solo album **Garcia** (1972). The band spent their adult years trying to transform the subcultural idiom of the hippies into a universal language that could reach out to every corner of the planet (not only the hippy communes). They succeeded with a form of intellectual muzak which interpreted the lysergic trip as a cathartic escape from daily reality and liberation from urban neuroses: *Weather Report Suite* (1975), *Blues For Allah* (1975), *Shakedown Street* (1978), *Althea* (1979). In practice, their art was a psychological research on the relationship between the altered states of the mind (psychedelic hallucinations) and the altered states of the psyche (industrial neuroses).

The early San Francisco bands had to cope with a record industry that completely misunderstood them. The big companies were dying to exploit the hippy phenomenon, but they balked at the odd music that these hippies were playing. Producers were paid specifically to destroy the original sound and to "normalize" the jams (in other words, to "Beatles-ize" acid-rock).

While previous music scenes around the world had revolved around a specific style (such as Mersey-beat or rhythm'n'blues or surf music), the San Francisco Bay became the place where anything was allowed. In fact, pretty much the only thing that was not allowed was to replicate someone else's sound. Originality was mandatory, talent was optional.

Kaleidoscope (11) were among the most adventurous with the fusion of country, jazz, cajun, middle-eastern, Indian, flamenco, gypsy and South American music propounded on **Side Trips** (1967) and **A Beacon From Mars** (1968), the latter including *Taxim* (possibly raga-rock's all-time masterpiece).

Mike Bloomfield's Electric Flag debuted with **Trip** (Edsel, 1967), a bizarre mixture of electronics, noise,

psychedelia, country, ragtime and blues.

Moby Grape (2) embodied the casual and magical spirit of the acid jams on **Grape Jam** (1968), featuring Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper (both Dylan cohorts), and on Alexander Spence's solo album **Oar** (1969).

Quicksilver (1), one of the greatest jam bands of the acid-rock scene, bridged San Francisco's acid-rock, the garage sound of the Northwest and Chicago's rhythm and blues, particularly on **Happy Trails** (1969), whose lengthier tracks are bold pan-stylistic cavalcades that take blues as the starting point but aim for the inner self.

Mad River (2) were also influenced by the blues on **Mad River** (1968) and **Paradise Bar And Grill** (1968).

Blue Cheer (1), on the other hand, played blues-rock with a vengeance: **Vincebus Eruptum** (1968) introduced a terrifying sound (deafening guitar and bass amplification), that predated stoner-rock by 25 years.

Steppenwolf unleashed two of the hardest-hitting anthems of this loud and fast acid-rock: *Born To Be Wild* (1968), which contains the expression "heavy metal" that would come to identify a new genre, and *Magic Carpet Ride* (1968).

At the other end of the spectrum, Fifty Foot Hose (1), one of the most experimental bands of the 1960s, and one of the first to employ electronics and to bridge rock music and the avantgarde, recorded **Cauldron** (1968), challenging the placid atmosphere of acid-rock with the cacophonous and chaotic sound of their apocalyptic "freak-out" jams (*Fantasy*).

By the time these bands reached the recording studios, the golden age of acid-rock had already ended thanks to two highly-publicized events in the summer of 1967: the Monterey festival (that legitimized the format) and the Beatles' **Sgt Pepper** (that legitimized the sound). During that summer the "alternative" became "mainstream". The anti-commercial spirit of acid-rock became a contradiction in terms. The following year, the hippy bands embraced country-rock and returned to the traditional song format.

There was also a sociopolitical reason for the sudden demise of the hippy movement. Hippies had never truly represented the intellectual class. They had represented the average young man from the middle class, who was afraid of being drafted for the Vietnam war and dreamed of a world without nuclear weapons. Left-wing intellectuals had different priorities, and subscribed to the notion that some degree of urban guerrilla was necessary in order to change the Establishment. The hippies were only one of the facets of the counter-culture. In 1968 the tide turned, and violent protests became more popular than peaceful ones. The peace movement was hijacked by revolutionaries of a different caliber, and its soundtrack (acid-rock) became anachronistic.

### ***New York and the new Boheme***

Even during its heydays, San Francisco was not all of psychedelic-rock. Bands such as the Velvet Underground (211) (NY) had little or nothing in common with the San Francisco bands. They represented the culture of "heroin" (which was a more sinister, neurotic, nihilistic culture) rather than the culture of LSD (which was bucolic, dreamy, utopistic). The Velvet Underground scavenged the narrow alleys of the bad parts of town, and scavenged the subconscious of the urban kid, for emotional scraps that were a barbaric by-product of the original spirit of rock'n'roll. Their goal was only marginally the sonic reproduction of the psychedelic experience. Their true goal was to provide a documentary of the decadent, disaffected, cynical mood that was spreading among the intelligentsia. These were not hippies, these were elitist musicians who were aware of the avantgarde movements: they began playing (in 1965) as part of Andy Warhol's multimedia show "The Exploding Plastic Inevitable". They originated the "pessimistic" strand of psychedelic music (as opposed to San Francisco's optimistic strand). The Velvet Underground probably remain the most influential band in the entire history of rock music. Above all else, they originated a spirit of making music (independent, nihilistic, subversive) that ten years later will be labeled "punk". Rock music as it is today was born the day the Velvet Underground entered a recording studio. **The Velvet Underground And Nico** (1967), recorded in the spring of 1966, includes an impressive number of masterpieces (mostly penned by Lou Reed and John Cale, and sung by Nico): the cold, spectral, autumnal odes of *Femme*

*Fatale*, *All Tomorrow's Parties* and *Black Angel's Death Song*, the percussive boogie of *Waiting For My Man*, the orgasmic chaos of *Heroin*, the dissonant tribal music of *European Son*, the Indian raga imbued with decadent spleen of *Venus In Furs*. They are immersed in the dark, oppressive atmosphere of German expressionism and French existentialism, but they also exhaled an epic libido: each song was a sexual fetish, and a cathartic sadomaso release. It was difficult to find a precedent for the Velvet Underground's music, because these barbarians were educated to the classical lieder and to LaMonte Young's minimalism, while they borrowed very little from rock'n'roll and pop music. Although less impressive, **White Light White Heat** (1967) contains *Sister Ray*, which probably remains the ultimate, definitive masterpiece of rock music, an epic piece that rivals Beethoven's symphonies and John Coltrane's metaphysical improvisations. The **Live** (1974) album contains a few more uncontrolled jams in the style of *Sister Ray*, while the mellow ballads of **Velvet Underground** (1969), and *Sweet Jane* (1970), founded a decadent pop-song that would be influential on glam-rock. By hailing drug addiction and deviant sex, the Velvet Underground revealed a whole new category of hedonistic rituals. Their albums evoked a Dante-esque vision in which the border between hell and paradise was blurred. Those songs were also unique in the way they fused funeral elegy and triumphal anthem: they were terrible and seductive at the same time. Semiotically speaking, those songs constituted "signs" by means of which reality was encoded in sounds: the metropolis was reduced to an endlessly pulsing noise, daily life was reduced to an unconscious delirium, and everything, both public and private, was clouded in pure, Freudian libido. The Velvet Underground's hyper-realism was deformed by a mind constantly in the grip of drugs and perverted fantasies. At the same time, their music was a visionary chaos from whose fog the mirage of a better world could rise. Their music was always majestic, even when sinking into the depths of abjection.

The rest of the New York contingent pales in comparison with the Velvet Underground. The **Blues Magoos** (1) released one of the earliest psychedelic albums, **Psychedelic Lollipop** (1966); and **Mystic Tide** released some of the earliest psychedelic anthems, notably *Frustration* (1966) and *Psychedelic Journey* (1966).

Psychedelic-rock would soon become as formulaic as any other genre. Few bands ventured outside the dogma, and those who did died in obscurity. For example, **Devils' Anvil** (1) played a unique middle-eastern acid-rock, immortalized on **Hard Rock From the Middle East** (1967).

Tom Rapp's **Pearls Before Swine** (11) were perhaps the greatest band venturing into psychedelic-folk during the 1960s. Their two masterpieces, **One Nation Underground** (1967) and especially **Balaklava** (1968) are mosaics of atmospheric songs that defy classification, evoking the hallucinated state of Dali's surrealism, lushly arranged, and influenced by both classical and jazz music. Each album is performed by a veritable "chamber ensemble": organ, harmonium, piano, harp, vibraphone, English horn, clarinet, celeste, banjo, sitar, flute...

Also typical of New York's artistic milieu were **Cromagnon** (1), who released one of the most radical, futuristic and frightening albums of the era, **Orgasm** (1968).

Bizarre and eclectic arrangements featured prominently on **United States Of America** (1968), the one and only album released by Joseph Byrd's **United States Of America** (11), a hodgepodge of sonic experiments that can be hardly called "songs". One of the most significant albums of that era, it is also one of the first albums on which a whole range of keyboards (not just piano or organ) paint most of the soundscape. There are hints of cut-up techniques, atmospheric jazz ballads and futuristic lounge-music: ideas that would be resumed three decades later. Byrd's surrealistic music-hall was the opposite of the Fugs' political theater. A better definition for this kind of music is the title of Byrd's solo album, **American Metaphysical Circus** (1969).

### **Los Angeles and acid-pop**

Psychedelic-rock in Los Angeles clearly descended from the Byrds, but it rapidly split into several camps: the poppy, stereotyped novelty number, best represented by **Strawberry Alarm Clock's Incense And Peppermint** (1967); the wild, raw, bluesy rave-up, influenced by the Rolling Stones, whose archetype were the **Seeds** (2),

violent, lascivious punks who cut the unpleasant albums **Seeds** (1966) and **A Web Of Sound** (1966); the lengthy, intoxicating guitar-driven improvisation, whose heroes were Iron Butterfly (1), the band that released an album titled **Heavy** (1967) before the term "heavy-metal" was coined, and concocted an exciting, feverish blues-psychedelic jam, the title-track from **In A Gadda Da Vida** (1968). The fragile and dreamy music of **Part One** (1966), the debut album by the West Coast Pop Art Band (1), was probably the closest thing to San Francisco's acid-rock that Los Angeles produced.

Love (11) were representative of three different stages in psychedelic-rock: its roots in folk-rock, still evident on the naive **Love** (1966); its full-blown creative maturity, after digesting blues, jazz and raga, as on their masterpiece **Da Capo** (1967); its baroque apex, when, influenced (like everybody else) by the Beach Boys' **Pet Sounds**, the band adopted the lush pop arrangements of **Forever Changes** (december 1967).

Of all creative bands in the history of rock music, the Doors (113) may have been the most creative. Their first album, **The Doors** (1967), contains only masterpieces (*Light My Fire*, *Break On Through*, *Crystal Ship*, *Soul Kitchen*, *End Of The Night*, and the most suspenseful song in the history of popular music, *The End*) and remains virtually unmatched. Jim Morrison may well be the single most important rock frontman. He is the one who defined the rock vocalist as an artist, not just a singer. Whether it was him, Bobbie Krieger or Ray Manzarek or all of them, their songs have a unique quality that has never been repeated. They are metaphysical while being psychological and while being physical (erotic and violent). They are the closest thing rock music has produced to William Shakespeare. Partly Freudian psychodrama and partly shamanic/messianic invocation, Doors songs were always more than "songs". The fact that they borrowed elements from blues, Bach and ragas was less relevant than the fact that they represented suicidal self-inflicted agonies. They continuously referenced death: sex, drugs and death made up the Doors' triune reality. Each one was ecstasy and annihilation. The supernatural quality of their hymns was not gothic, but rather imbued with the fatalism of the French symbolists. Death was the ultimate aspect of that trinity, as Morrison found out in 1971. The Doors made at least three more albums that display their talent, **Strange Days** (1967), **Waiting For The Sun** (1968) and **L.A. Woman** (1971), but never managed to repeat the feat of their first album.

Technically speaking, Spirit (3) were even more talented than the Doors. They recorded some of the most adventurous albums of the psychedelic era, frequently employing elements of jazz and classical music and pre-dating progressive-rock. **Spirit** (1968) and **The Family That Plays Together** (1969) toyed with an erudite fusion of blues, jazz, raga and rock, while **Twelve Dreams Of Dr Sardonicus** (1971) marked a move towards overwrought (and electronic) arrangements.

Psychedelic-rock was a bonanza for Los Angeles producers, because it gave them the excuse to indulge in all sorts of bizarre arrangements. Producer Ed Cobb contributed to psychedelic-rock via an artificial band, San Jose's the Chocolate Watchband, who are credited with his **The Inner Mystique** (1967). David Axelrod penned the **Mass In F Minor** (1968) by the Electric Prunes (1), the first "rock mass".

### ***Texas and the freak-out***

The psychedelic school in Texas, on the other hand, was one of the most authentic and uncompromising. The Thirteenth Floor Elevators (1) were among the earliest psychedelic bands: **The Psychedelic Sound Of** (1966) came out in the spring of 1966. Like the Seeds in Los Angeles, their ferocious sound harked back to the Rolling Stones.

Red Crayola (103) were one of the greatest psychedelic bands of the 1960s and probably of all times. They played extremely wild and cacophonous music that was decades ahead of its time. They predated Germany's expressionistic rock (Faust) and the American new wave (Pere Ubu). Their "freak outs" were closer to John Coltrane's free-jazz and to Jackson Pollock's abstract paintings than to rock'n'roll. Their leader, Mayo Thompson, was a composer who ranks among the greatest musicians of his time (classical, jazz, rock). His revolutionary

compositional style had few stable coordinates. His pieces float not because they are ethereal but because melody and rhythm are left "loose". They are organisms that rely on supporting skeletons that are falling apart as they move. Thompson placed his art firmly in the iconoclastic tradition that Frank Zappa had just founded, and simply increased the amount and the speed of noise. **Parable Of Arable Land** (1967) is one of the milestones of rock music, a carousel of savage harmonic inventions/sabotages. **God Bless** (1968) was even closer (in spirit if not in sound) to the likes of Edgar Varese and John Cage. It is not a coincidence that Thompson was rediscovered by the new wave ten years later: his **Soldier Talk** (1979) could have well been the album of the Pere Ubu (the band he eventually joined).

#### *The spreading of the disease*

Another martyr of psychedelia, Jimi Hendrix (21), was one of the greatest icons of the 1960s. His death in 1970 still stands as one of the crucial events in the history of rock music, one of the dates that divide two eras. His work may be less important than his image, as too many of his albums were below average. Hendrix was, after all, one of the most exploited artists of all times (many more albums were released after his death than during his lifetime). Hendrix made only two amazing albums: the first and the third, **Are You Experienced** (1967) and **Electric Ladyland** (1968). His greatest achievement was to coin a new guitar style, a style that amounted to a declaration of war against western harmony. Born at the crossroad between Chicago's blues, Memphis soul and Charlie Christian's jazz improvisation, Hendrix's style was an excruciating torture of tonal music. His astral glissandos bridged the historical suffering of African slaves and the existential angst of European philosophers. A black man, Hendrix always used the blues as the basis for his improvisation, but then used the whole human body to play and distort the sound of the guitar. The guitar became a sacrificial totem for an entire generation. Tracks such as *1983* borrowed from free-jazz and avantgarde music to achieve a form of "sound painting". On the album **Band Of Gypsies** (1970) Hendrix was indulging in endless acrobatics. Hendrix's guitar opened new doors to experimental music. His lesson would be applied not only to guitar but also to keyboards and to whatever instrument would lead a rock song. His legacy as a guitarist is comparable to Beethoven's legacy as a symphonist.

Baroque arrangements (flute, clarinet, harpsichord) enhanced the compositions of the Chicago band H.P. Lovecraft (1), whose most accomplished album was **II** (1968).

Another Chicago band, the Amboy Dukes (2), laid the foundations for both heavy-metal and progressive-rock with the complex and energetic compositions of **Journey To The Center Of The Mind** (1968) and **Marriage Of The Rocks** (1970).

Ultimate Spinach (1) were the most significant psychedelic band from Boston. They specialized in sophisticated suites such as *Ballad Of The Hip Death Goddess*, from **Ultimate Spinach** (1968) and *Genesis Of Beauty*, from **Behold And See** (1968). They, too, predated progressive-rock.

Last but not least, the open French ensemble of Les Maledictus Sound (1) released one of the most psychedelic albums ever, **Les Maledictus Sound** (1968). Another Canadian band, L'Infonie (1), inspired by the cacophonous chaos of Captain Beefheart and Red Crayola, but also by Pierre Henry's musique concrete, by Sun Ra's cosmic jazz and Frank Zappa's dadaistic sketches, and obsessed with the digit "3", released **Volume 3** (1969), performed by 33 musicians, **Volume 33** (1971), and **Volume 333** (1972).

#### *Britain and the light show*

British psychedelia was a very minor and very late phenomenon, with one notable exception: Pink Floyd. In the summer of 1966, Joel and Tony Brown, who had worked for LSD guru Timothy Leary in the USA, exported to London the "light show", which became immediately a major sensation. At the same time, upon returning from a journey to the USA, disc-jockey John Ravenscroft (better known as John "Peel") began broadcasting psychedelic music during his radio show "Perfumed Garden". In december 1966, the UFO Club was inaugurated to foster the new phenomenon. In april 1967, dozens of bands played at the "14 Hours Technicolour Dream", which was de

facto the first rock festival. In August 1967, the whole of Europe joined in at St Tropez. The following year a hippy festival was held at the Isle of Wight, and more (larger and larger ones) would follow.

Creation were the first psychedelic band to cause a sensation, but it was Pink Floyd (24) that soon became the reference point.

Pink Floyd devised a compromise between the free-form tonal jam, the noisy, cacophonous freak out, and the eccentric, melodic ditty. This amalgam and balance is inspired and nourished by Syd Barrett's gentle madness on their first two albums, which remain their masterpieces: **The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn** (1967), that includes the pulsating, visionary trips of *Astronomy Domine* and *Interstellar Overdrive* (the bridge between space-rock and cosmic music); and **A Saucerful Of Secrets** (1968), that contains the stately crescendo and wordless anthem of *A Saucerful Of Secrets* and the subliminal raga of *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun*. The ambitious **Ummagumma** (1969), a failed attempt at establishing their credentials as avantgarde composers, and the eponymous suite from **Atom Heart Mother** (1970), a failed attempt at merging rock band and symphonic orchestra, marked the end of the epic phase (Barrett had already departed). For better and for worse, Pink Floyd understood the limits and the implications of the genre, and kept reinventing themselves, slowly transforming psychedelic-rock (a music originally born for the hippies that had been banned by the Establishment) into a muzak for relaxation and meditation (aimed at the yuppies who are totally integrated in the Establishment). The other half of **Atom Heart Mother** (1970) already hinted at the band's preference for the languid, mellow, hypnotic ballad, albeit sabotaged by an orgy of sound effects. *Echoes*, the suite that takes up half of **Meddle** (1971), sterilized and anesthetized the space-rock of *Interstellar Overdrive*, and emphasized not the sound effects but meticulous studio production. The Pink Floyd did not hesitate to alter the letter and the spirit of psychedelic music. The delirious and cacophonous sound of their beginnings slowly mutated into a smooth and lush sound. Rather than just endorsing the stereotypes of easy-listening, the Pink Floyd invented a whole new kind of easy-listening with **Dark Side Of The Moon** (1973) and **Wish You Were Here** (1975). A tactical move soon became a strategic move. In the end, the Pink Floyd reshaped psychedelic music into a universal language, a language that fit the punk as well as the manager, just like, at about the same time, jazz-rock was "selling" the anguish of the Afro-American people to the white conformists. Roger Waters' existential pessimism and historical angst became the pillars of the band's latter-day melodramas, such as **The Wall** (1979). These monoliths of electronic and acoustic sounds, coupled with psychoanalytical lyrics, indulge in a funereal pomp that approaches the forms of the requiem and the oratorio.

Nobody could compete with the Pink Floyd, in terms of both artistic achievement and influence. However, Tomorrow (1), featuring drummer John "Twink" Alder, recorded one of the most eccentric albums of that season, **Tomorrow** (1968), and Hapshash & The Coloured Coat (1) did even better with **Featuring The Human Host And The Heavy Metal Kids** (1967).

The Incredible String Band (2) was Scotland's premier hippy commune. Their album **5,000 Spirits or the Layers of the Onion** (1967) introduced medieval and middle-eastern music into folk-rock. Their masterpiece, **Hangman's Beautiful Daughter** (1968), is a hyper-creative stew of hypnotic exorcisms, magical and pagan rituals, Indian music, Donovan-esque lullabies, baroque music, all drenched in exotic instrumentation and psychedelic chanting. Following their example, an impressive number of British bands released an impressive number of inferior albums that relied on the fusion between psychedelia and folk.

Great Britain never had a counterculture movement in the early 1960s, a counterpart to Country Joe and the Fugs. It didn't have much of a pacifist movement, a Bob Dylan or a Free Speech Movement that could compare with the originals. There were no student riots in 1964, there was no need to create an alternative political world to fight the Establishment. Instead, it was the psychedelic movement that led to the development of an underground infrastructure (magazines, clubs, radio stations). In Britain, Psychedelic music played the role that the Greenwich Movement had played in the USA.

Once that infrastructure was in place, the political wing of the movement was allowed to emerge.

The leading agit-prop band was the Deviants (13), which were born as the British version of the Fugs, but soon developed an even more iconoclastic and unpredictable sound via **Ptooff** (1967), their masterpiece, **Disposable** (1968), **Deviants** (1969) and Mick Farren's solo album **Mona The Carnivorous Circus** (1970).

Also following a cue from the Fugs, Edgar Broughton (1) clearly represented the fusion of psychedelic and political elements on **Wasa Wasa** (1969).

However, one of the greatest of the European psychedelic bands was not British. Parson Sound, whose compositions would surface only 32 years later on **Parson Sound** (2001), Their main influences were minimalist composer Terry Riley, who at the time was inventing a musical aesthetic founded on repetition, and pop-art guru Andy Warhol, who, at the time, was experimenting with the droning music of the Velvet Underground. Renamed International Harvester (1), they later released **Sov Gott Rose-Marie** (Love, 1968), a wild fusion of psychedelia, minimalism, raga, folk, jazz and sounds of nature.

The Outsiders in Holland were also notable, thanks to their **CQ** (1968).

The classical avantgarde was, indirectly, helping the creative freedom of this era. The marriage between rock and classical music was fostered by rock composers such as Frank Zappa, but also by classical composers such as Pierre Henry, whose *Rock Electronique* (1963) employed electronic riff and rhythm, and whose rock mass, **Messe Pour Le Temp Present** (1967), that mixed symphonic, rock and electronic instruments. In 1964 Charles Dodge and James Randall started "computer music". In 1965 Terry Riley and Steve Reich were performing music based on repetition of simple patterns ("minimalism"), an idea that shared with psychedelic-rock the hypnotic and mystical qualities.

- 1967: the first hand-held calculators debut
- 1967: the first "Super Bowl" final of "football" (American rugby) is held
- 1967: racial riots kill 26 people in Newark and 43 in Detroit
- 1967: Cuban liberation hero Che Guevara is killed by American agents in Bolivia
- 1967: pacifists march on the Pentagon to protest the Vietnam war
- 1967: the CIA supports a coup in Greece that installs a dictatorship of colonels
- 1967: Israel wins a third war against the Arabs, and occupies the lands of the Palestinians (Gaza Strip and West Bank)
- 1967: Rudi Dutschke leads student riots in West Berlin

## 3.2 The age of the revivals 1966-69

### *Blues revival*

When John Mayall (3) released the album **Bluesbreakers** (1966), featuring the former Yardbirds guitarist Eric Clapton, he defined, once and for all, a genre of rhythm'n'blues played by white European musicians, the epitome of "blues-rock", which soon became one of the strongest undercurrents of British rock music. It also laid the foundations for progressive-rock: **Hard Road** (Decca, 1967), featuring new guitarist Peter Green, the lush jazz arrangements of the *Bare Wires Suite* (1968), the sophisticated lounge-music of the concept-album **Blues From Laurel Canyon** (1969) and of his masterpiece, **Turning Point** (1970), featuring guitarist Jon Mark and saxophonist Johnny Almond, the prelude to an ambitious **Jazz-Blues Fusion** (1972). Fleetwod Mac, Colosseum

and Mark-Almond (formed by those cohorts) would be the logical consequences of Mayall's continuing experiment with the blues.

In the USA, the equivalent of John Mayall was Al Kooper, the keyboardist who had invented the sound of Bob Dylan's *Like A Rolling Stone* and **Blonde On Blonde**, i.e. of rock music as we know it. He formed Blues Project (1), a band whose lead instruments were flute and organ and who concocted an atmospheric blend of blues, folk, pop and jazz on **Projections** (1967). Al Kooper, Mike Bloomfield (1), who had played on Paul Butterfield's and Bob Dylan's masterpieces, and former Buffalo Springfield guitarist Stephen Stills joined together to form the first "super-group" and recorded the **Supersession** (1968), an album that marked the meeting of acid-rock, folk-rock and blues revival. Continuing to parallel Mayall's career, Kooper later gave the pop-jazz movement one of its most successful bands, the Blood Sweat & Tears.

Mayall and Kooper inspired countless groups on both sides of the Atlantic. Case in point, three seasoned British blues musicians (Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker) formed Cream, the first "power-trio". More than anyone else, it was the Cream (2) who changed the face of British rock. They took the fusion of blues and rock to places where it has never been. They employed a level of group improvisation that was worthy of jazz. They indulged in guitar distortions and lengthy solos that were shocking for an audience raised on the Beatles. Even the soul-jazz melodies of *Sunshine Of Your Love* (1967) and *White Room* (1968), while not revolutionary, pointed towards a more sophisticated kind of "pop" than the childish refrains of Mersey-beat.

Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac were one of the most creative and competent British bands of the blues revival. *Black Magic Woman* (1968), *Albatross* (1968), *Man Of The World* (1969) and *The Green Mahalishi* (1970) became well-respected standards.

Alvin Lee's Ten Years After offered a frenzied, loud, violent version of that blues-jazz fusion. The epileptic *Going Home* (1968), the hypnotic *Hear Me Calling* (1969) and the lugubrious *No Title* (1969) show the British progression from the Cream to hard-rock.

San Francisco itself attracted and harbored a sizeable blues community, which was influenced by the city's acid-rock: Janis Joplin (1), the most visceral vocalist of her time, whose wild antics were immortalized on **Cheap Thrills** (1968) but whose best album is probably the posthumous **Pearl** (1970); Steve Miller (2), who penned the hallucinations of **Children Of the Future** (1968) and **Sailor** (1968) before turning to commercial music; and Carlos Santana (2), whose major career ranged from **Santana** (1969), the album that found a common ground between Latin rhythm, blues guitar and psychedelic jamming, to, after his conversion to Buddhism and jazz, **Lotus** (1974), inspired by Miles Davis and John McLaughlin.

At about the same time two Los Angeles musicians began playing the blues in unconventional formats that mainly tried to capture the authentic spirit of the past: Taj Mahal (3) produced albums that delve into the whole tradition of Afro-American music, such as **De Ole Folks At Home** (1969), possibly his masterpiece, **Real Thing** (1971) and **Recycling The Blues** (1972); and Ry Cooder (2) would become famous with his thematic reconstructions of eras and styles (tex-mex, swing, rock'n'roll, etc), notably **Paradise And Lunch** (1974) and **Paris Texas** (1985).

A passionate and hoarse vocalist in the vein of the black shouters, Bob Seger (2) wed that tradition with his blue-collar (Detroit) roots. Starting with the anthemic *Heavy Music* (1966) and *Ramblin' Gamblin' Man* (1967), Seger embraced the emotional attack of Wilson Pickett and James Brown, and sprinkled it with touches of soul, southern boogie, hard-rock and folk-rock. Focusing on the ordinary life of the everyman, he later proceeded to pen the pensive atmospheres of albums such as **Beautiful Loser** (1975) and **Night Moves** (1977).

### **Folk revival**

The other side of the coin was the British folk revival. Folk-rock came to Britain much later than to the USA, but it absorbed the many facets of psychedelic-rock, blues and jazz. Pentangle (2), formed by two veteran guitarists of the folk scene, Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, went beyond merely recycling traditional material. The lengthy

suites *Pentangling* (1968), *Jack Orion* (1970) and *Reflections* (1971) contain more than a passing nod to jazz and classical music.

Fairport Convention (1) included much heralded musicians, but only guitarist Richard Thompson would stand the test of time. They mostly played covers and traditionals. Their album **Liege And Lief** (1970), and its "grand folk suites" *Matty Groves* and *Tam Lin*, are typical of the pros (rock rhythm, virtuoso playing) and cons (sterile material) of the folk-revival movement. *Sloth*, from **Full House** (1970), and the folk-opera **Babbacomb Lee** (1972) were probably more significant achievements (precisely because they were less aligned with the folk revival).

Pentangle and Fairport Convention became the leading groups of British folk-rock. Dozens followed in their footsteps, but the movement mostly failed to produce real value. Shirley Collins, a pivotal figure since the beginning of the English folk revival movement, released the concept album **Anthems In Eden** (1969), arranged in an almost orchestral fashion, but using ancient instruments.

The most erudite contribution to reforming folk-rock came from former Them vocalist Van Morrison (115), who quickly established himself as the most significant musician of his generation. The lengthy, complex, hypnotic, dreamy jams of **Astral Weeks** (1968) coined an abstract, free-form song format that blended soul, jazz, folk and psychedelia and was performed with the austere intensity of chamber music. The psychedelic and jazz elements came to the foreground on **Moondance** (1970), which boasted lush, baroque arrangements. **Veedon Fleece** (1974) applied the same treatment to a pastoral, nostalgic and elegiac mood. Morrison's vocal style continued to develop towards a unique form of warbling that bridged Celtic bards and soul singers. On albums such as **Into The Music** (1979), **A Common One** (1980), **A Beautiful Vision** (1982) and **Inarticulate Speech Of The Heart** (1983) Morrison employed disparate musical elements to mold compositions that are profoundly personal and even philosophical, that are both arduous meditations and elaborate constructions, that are, ultimately, more similar to classical "suites" than to pop songs. His stately odes displayed an increasing affectation, often sounding like pretentious sermons, but born out of a painful convergence of spiritual self-flagellation, tortured confession, shamanic trance, James Joyce's stream of consciousness, John Donne's metaphysical poetry and William Blake's visionary symbolism.

### *Neo-classical revival*

During this era of "revival", British musicians mixed rock'n'roll even with classical music. Moody Blues (1) were the prototype for much of Britain's "symphonic-rock", "techno-rock" and so forth. The mellotron, simulating the stately sound of the symphonic orchestra, and, in general a reliance on keyboards and flute rather than on guitar, and on four-part vocal harmonies rather than on rhythm'n'blues shouting, made *Nights In White Satin* (1967) the vanguard of rock inspired by classical music. Pomp and pretentiousness, but also meticulous productions that consciously employed studio overdubbing as an addition to the band, permeate the concept album **In Search Of The Lost Chord** (1968), a tribute to hippy mysticism and psychedelia, and the melodic fantasia **On The Threshold Of A Dream** (1969).

Procol Harum invented a sound based on two organs (the equivalent of coupling a church organ and a gospel organ) but used it only to dress up stately, elegant and classical-sounding arias such as *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* (1967), *Homburg* (1967), *Conquistador* (1967) and *Salty Dog* (1969). The five-movement suite *In Held Twas In I* (1968) showed their limits, not their strengths.

Nice introduced the idea of keyboard-driven arrangements of classical and jazz music. Rather than writing new songs, and sticking to the pop format, the Nice relied on standards of the classical and jazz repertory, but deformed them through psychedelic-style jamming. They placed emphasis on virtuoso performances (particularly by keyboardist Keith Emerson) and on lengthy solos. It was the same idea of the Jimi Hendrix Experience and of Cream, except that the lead-instrument was the organ.

### *The revival of all revivals*

The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band (3) was one of the greatest groups in the history of British rock, despite the fact that they were essentially a cross between the music-hall of the 1950s and the theatre of the absurd. Their songs were parodies of musical styles of the past, with lyrics that mocked various aspects of British life, but the eclectic collage of their repertory was, as a whole, much more than a mere parody. Albums such as **Gorilla** (1967) and **Doughnut In Granny's Greenhouse** (1968) drew from every genre that came to hand, but in particular from everything that was "kitsch", running the gamut from operetta to doo-wop, from TV commercials to marching bands, from Broadway showtunes to big-band swing, from folk ballads to patriotic choruses; and employing a stunning variety of instruments and vocal registers. Their endeavor was, in fact, very similar to the post-modernist sabotage carried out in California by Frank Zappa. Miraculously, such a unorthodox cauldron of musical ingredients coalesced in songs that were concise and catchy. **Tadpoles** (1969) tried to sell to the masses that hidden pop appeal. The baroque clockwork mechanisms of **Keynsham** (1969) and **Let's Make Up And Be Friendly** (1972) were primed to detonate a random sequence of irresistible melodies and sound effects. **Men Opening Umbrellas Ahead** (1974), the first solo album by Bonzo Band leader Vivian Stanshall (1), was no less anarchic. They were the greatest nonsensical artists since Dada, the musical equivalent of Monty Python and, perhaps, the best arrangers of their age. *Slush* (1972) is their testament: someone laughing in heaven, surrounded by angelic violins and organ.

### *American re-alignment*

In the USA the reaction to Dylan's political rock and to San Francisco's acid-rock was even stronger. The "realignment" involved just about every band, and marked a sudden change in sound and format. Rock music returned to the well-structured, short, melodic song, and rediscovered the tradition, both white (country) and black (blues).

In 1968 the "cosmic cowboy" Gram Parsons invented "country-rock", first with **Safe At Home**, by the International Submarine Band (1), and then with **Sweetheart Of The Rodeo** (1968), by the Byrds, two albums that interpreted Nashville material and that employed country instruments along with rock instruments and with a hippy attitude. Parsons continued the project with a new band, the Flying Burrito Brothers (1), that debuted with **Gilded Palace Of Sin** (1969).

Parsons' country-rock spawned countless imitators, notably Seatrain (2), the new name of Al Kooper's old band, Blues Project, whose albums **Planned Obsolescence** (1968) and **Seatrain** (1969) were far more accomplished than the average (thanks to violinist Richard Greene and guitarist Peter Rowan).

The Band (11), Dylan's backing band, invented "roots-rock" by fusing folk, gospel, country, and rock on the magnificent albums **Music From Big Pink** (1968) and **The Band** (1969). The well-crafted songs of these albums captured a private/domestic and rustic dimension that sounded like a paradox in the era of (urban) folk-rock and (public, communal) hippies. The Band recovered the humblest American styles: the Appalachian folk-singers, the gospel preachers of the southern denominations, the bluesmen, etc. At the same time, they soaked those styles in an austere composure, worthy of chamber music, and in a stately atmosphere, worthy of religious music. The interplay among drummer Levon Helm, bassist Rickie Danko, pianist Richard Manuel, keyboardist Garth Hudson and guitarist Robbie Robertson was unique in its balance of domestic and epic tones.

What the Band did for gospel, Creedence Clearwater Revival (4) did for Louisiana's swamp-blues. They wed the rhythms of the "swamps" with the melodies of folk-rock, the fervor of religious music, the rebellious fever of rock'n'roll, and the existential angst of Bob Dylan. Their best albums, **Bayou Country** (1968), **Green River** (1969), **Willy And The Poorboys** (1969), and **Cosmo's Factory** (1970), which is possibly their masterpiece, achieved a classic form of roots-rock that was full of sinister premonitions, evoking voodoo gothic but projecting it into their age and times. Somehow this unlikely blend coalesced into simple, catchy songs that embodied the quintessence of American music: *Proud Mary* (1968), *Bad Moon Rising* (1969), *Down On The Corner* (1969), *Run*

*Thru The Jungle* (1970), *Looking Out My Backdoor* (1970), *Who'll Stop The Rain* (1970), *Have You Ever Seen The Rain* (1971).

The Flamin' Groovies (1), who self-produced their debut EP, **Sneakers** (1968), years before indie-rock was born, released an album of virulent rock'n'roll and catchy refrains, **Flamingo** (1970), that would be influential on subsequent generations (the progenitor of power-pop).

Another "super-group" led the move towards a softer sound: Crosby Stills Nash & Young (1), formed by two former Buffalo Springfield members, a former Byrds and a former Hollies, popularized intricate vocal harmonies, languid counterpoints and mellow rhythms. **Deja Vu** (1970) sounds like the laid-back, atmospheric and slightly psychedelic version of what the three had done with their previous bands. They virtually invented a new genre: the sunny, melancholy, thoughtful country/blues/soul that would be called "West Coast sound".

The Shaggs, three sisters from New Hampshire who played two guitars and drums, and who recorded one of the most "incompetent" records in the history of music, **Philosophy Of The World** (1969). Their "do-it-yourself" style and the sincere, intimate tone of their songs predated "lo-fi" pop of the 1990s.

Ironically, just when rock music was beginning to "withdraw", to give up to the pressure of the Establishment, to give up its revolutionary ethos, it also staged its definitive triumph. 1969 was the year of Woodstock in the USA (300,000 people attended the three-day festival) and of the Isle of Wight (150,000 people attended the largest festival ever in Europe). The world's music market was worth two billion dollars: yet again, rock music had caused a boom in the recording industry. Yet again, a music born to rebel against the Establishment had helped the Establishment post record earnings.

### ***Soul explorations***

At about the same time, Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* (1967) and *Ain't No Mountain High Enough* (1967, written by Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson) and Norman Whitfield's *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* (1968) brought soul music to a sophisticated white audience. It wasn't anymore just party music, it was music with a dynamic and arrangements. Aretha Franklin's passionate interpretations, particularly *A Natural Woman* (1967, written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King) and *Chain of Fools* (1967, written by Don Covay), bridged the world of soul and pop, the way the Beatles had bridged the world of rock and pop. At the same time, under the influence of James Brown's abominable songs, the dance element of soul music was being brought out by the likes of Dyke And The Blazers, whose *Funky Broadway* (1967) gave a genre its name, and Sly and The Family Stone, whose *Dance To The Music* (1967) became the manifesto of that genre (and whose bassist Larry Graham invented the "funk" bass lines).

### ***New Orleans gumbo***

An unlikely contributor to the hippy civilization was the eclectic jazz and rhythm'n/blues pianist Dr John (3), heir to the glorious New Orleans tradition, who concocted **Gris Gris** (1968), an exuberant carnival of creole folklore that runs the gamut from orgiastic jams to swamp/voodoo blues, from African tribal rhythms to Mardi Gras-style fanfares. Dr John would later endorse the relaxed soul-funk-rock of the realignment, for example on **In the Right Place** (1973), and eventually land a career as a distinguished jazz musician, notably with the solo piano collection **Plays Mac Rebennack** (1981).

One of the most competent rhythm sections in the history of modern music was the Meters (2), which in many ways stand as the natural link between New Orleans' rhythm'n/blues and funk music. Formed by veteran keyboardist Art Neville, they virtually redefined the sound of black music on **The Meters** (1969). The Meters also recorded **Wild Tchoupitoulas** (1976), a collaboration with the tribe of black "Indians" that supervised the Mardi Gras carnival. Later on, Art and family members formed the Neville Brothers (1), whose albums concocted the ultimate New Orleans gumbo (reggae, jazz, rap, soul, voodoo chants and African polyrhythms), particularly on **Yellow Moon** (1989).

- 1968: Soviet troops crush democratic movement in Czechoslovakia
- 1968: Student riots in France escalate into a national uprising, soon followed by similar protests in Germany and Italy
- 1968: the British withdraw from the Gulf and the United Arab Emirates are created
- 1968: civil rights leader Martin Luther King is assassinated
- 1968: Tommie Smith protests the American anthem at the Olympic games
- 1968: The Vietcong and North Vietnam (the "Tet Offensive") begin a joint attack against the USA
- 1968: American soldiers massacre more than 500 civilians at My Lai, Vietnam
- 1968: 520,000 US troops are in Vietnam

### 3.3 Solo careers 1967-69

#### *Los Angeles eccentrics 1968-69*

A number of the Los Angeles eccentrics set a new standard for melodic music, in particular for baroque, gothic and psychedelic arrangements. They expanded on the mid-1960s studio experiments of Brian Wilson (Beach Boys), George Martin (Beatles) and others.

The pioneering work of jazz and rock producer David Axelrod (3), integrating funk breakbeats, orchestral arrangements and psychedelic melodies, foreshadowed dance music of the late 1990s. He had already composed, arranged and produced the Electric Prunes' **Mass In F Minor** (1968) when he released his first solo albums, **Song of Innocence** (1968) and **Songs of Experience** (1969), both based on William Blake poems. Arranged for bass, drums and strings, their dark, depressed ambience predated trip-hop. **Earth Rot** (1970) was one of the first environmentalist albums (a suite in eight movements). A trilogy of albums each containing six long ballads each, **Seriously Deep** (1975), **Strange Ladies** (1977) and **Marchin'** (1980), rank among the best funk-jazz works of the day, highlighted by ghostly grooves and instrumental sophistication, while his "neo-classical" ambitions led to an ambitious **Requiem: The Holocaust** (1993) in four movements. Axelrod's breakbeats would be re-discovered and sampled by the leading disc-jockeys of the 1990s.

VanDyke Parks (2) was instrumental in transforming light-hearted pop music into a form of austere chamber music. An orchestral arranger for psychedelic-rock, Parks debuted as a solo artist with **Song Cycle** (1968), whose impressionistic vignettes of ordinary life employed a cornucopia of sonic trivia and musical quotations, and sounded more like an apocalyptic fresco of the American civilization than a pop album. Parks also led the vanguard of nostalgia-rock with **Discover America** (1972), a satirical tribute to calypso. Parks' concept albums resemble Frank Zappa's collage-operettas. He applied the cinematographic technique of "montage" to the format of kitsch music.

Jack Nitzsche, a veteran songwriter and arranger (instrumental in creating Phil Spector's "wall of sound"), gave one intriguing album of orchestral pop: **St Giles Cripplegate** (1972).

David Ackles (1) an eclectic and depressed talent, could write a song about the most unpleasant subject and sing it in a tormented and macabre tone, as demonstrated on his early, unassuming albums, **The Road To Cairo** (1968) and **Subway To The Country** (1970). A quantum leap forward and an awe-inspiring fresco of American life, **American Gothic** (1972) managed to bridge Kurt Weill's decadent orchestrations and Woody Guthrie's passionate

story-telling.

Kim Fowley (1), who had already been producer and composer of a number of novelty hits between 1960 and 1964, and had invented the Runaways, vented his passion for decadent, sado-maso and Faustian themes on **Outrageous** (1968), one of the albums that predate glam-rock and punk-rock.

Larry Fischer (1), a Frank Zappa protege`, was an insane street performer, immortalized on **An Evening With Wild Man Fischer** (1970), whose "songs" offered a mixture of autobiography, social commentary, free associations, sermons, nursery rhymes, and parody, mostly improvised and mostly unaccompanied.

A former member of the Kingston Trio and songwriter for the Monkees (*Daydream Believer*), John Stewart assembled at least one notable solo album, the moving **California Bloodlines** (1969).

Norman Greenbaum unleashed one of the greatest grooves in the history of music, *Spirit In The Sky* (1969).

#### **Post-Greenwich 1967-71**

One of the most erudite and sensitive songwriters of all times, Laura Nyro (3) devoted her career to intimate, introverted, self-analyzing songs. Her intense, intricate phrasing was the sonic equivalent of a psychoanalytic session, testing the deep, deep recesses of her psyche. Nyro embodied both the city's musical melting-pot (folk, gospel, soul, blues, jazz, musical, classical) and the city's neuroses and alienation. Nyro's music was essentially tragic, and quintessentially urban. She was famous for being shy and reserved, and for mostly wearing black. She was only 17 when she recorded her debut album, **More Than a New Discovery** (1966). Her masterpiece, **Eli And The Thirteenth Confession** (1968), was a song cycle about a girl's transition from teenage to adulthood, relying on impeccable gospel-soul constructions. **New York Tendaberry** (1969) was less intense but more musical. Of all the vestals to parade on the stage of pop music, Nyro remains the most awe-inspiring.

Arlo Guthrie was briefly popular for the colloquial rant *Alice's Restaurant* (1967), that mixed Woody Allen comedy and Jack Kerouac chronicle, and for the quintessential "easy-rider" anthem *Motorcycle Song* (1968).

A veteran of the Greenwich Movement, Eric Andersen (3), is one of the men who can claim to have invented the modern singer-songwriter. In an era when most folksingers were either writing chronicles of daily life a` la Woody Guthrie or singing anti-Establishment anthems a` la Bob Dylan, Andersen displayed a fluent romantic vein. His art triumphed with **Blue River** (1972), that ranks among the masterpieces of the era. **Stages**, originally recorded in 1973 but only published eight years later, is equally stunning, as is the later **Ghosts Upon The Road** (1988).

David Peel (10) was one of the most militant and underground folk-singers in the age of the student riots. He was a modern minstrel of the white lumpenproletariat, who terrorized the Lower East Side with live performances at street corners, accompanied by random street musicians. This political bum was obviously mimicking street preachers, except that his religion was the marijuana, his Bible was rock'n'roll, and his mission was to expose the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie. His semi-improvised albums (or, better, public "happenings") followed in the footsteps of the Fugs' grotesque agit-prop cabaret and of Frank Zappa's satirical operettas. Peel's hysterical, sarcastic and insolent tone, and his spartan/spastic combo of guitar, harmonica and tambourine (which mainly contributed rhythm), and the naive enthusiasm of everybody involved (responsible for some of the most hair-raising backing vocals in the history of music), created a new kind of folk music. His masterpiece, **Have A Marijuana** (1969), a demented sabotage of protest songs, hillbilly, blues and square dances, was an epic insult to common-sense. Ahead of his time, Peel played folk music with the emphasis of punk-rock and the arrangements of lo-fi pop. And he played it with divine negligence.

The Velvet Underground's original drummer, Angus MacLise (1), released one of the most surreal albums of the late 1960s, **The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda** (1968), a mixture of raga, acid-rock and minimalism.

Bob Neuwirth (1), a staple of the Greenwich Movement of the 1960s, wrote songs for Janis Joplin (*Mercedes Benz*) and many others, but didn't release a single album during the best years of his life. He fulfilled his potential with the solemn, philosophical, mournful ballads of **Back to the Front** (1988).

German chanteuse Nico (113), who sang with the Velvet Underground in New York before returning to Europe, invented a style of singing that has little to do with rock music, a style that belongs to no particular place and no particular time, a style that may as well be medieval or romantic, Indian or Middle-eastern, a style that is mainly "enunciation", a style that sounds by turns like Greek chorus, Shakespearian monologue, Schubert-ian lied, Gregorian psalm, Elizabethan song, exotic chant. Her lugubrious litanies (which invented gothic rock more by accident than by design) sway between the lament of a buried alive and the stately invocation of a priestess. The staging of these funereal cries quotes from Goethe's metaphysical allegory "Faust", from Wedekind's expressionist drama "Lulu", from Brecht's epic theatre, from French noir cinema, from Dali's surreal paintings. She straddled the line between aristocratic and prostitute with the elegance of a ghost.

Her first masterpiece, **Marble Index** (1968), introduced gothic, archaic, exotic and neo-classical elements into rock music, but it could not be farther from being sensationalistic: Nico sang about a childhood trauma, in the grip of lacerating loneliness, monotonous, slow, too weak to soar, too weak to add emotional or melodic value to her godless liturgy. She sang, perhaps, about the childhood trauma of an entire (cursed, doomed) race. John Cale's arrangements (no percussions, emphasis on keyboards), whose delicate impressionism transformed each song into a chamber sonata, and Nico's androgynous look increased the shock.

Her second masterpiece, and one of the greatest albums of all times, **Desert Shore** (1971), went even further, evoking the desolation of an icy and empty universe, as if after a colossal catastrophe. Stronger doses of urban neurosis further depressed her voice, but also lifted the shamanic/prophetic tone to another dimension. The sense of ancient became more than a smell of death: a smell of the otherworld. The anemic, moribund, suspenseful atmospheres penned by her church-like harmonium and Cale's viola belonged to a catacomb. By now, it was more than fatalism: it was eternal angst. It was fear, both bleak and majestic, leading to a mental paralysis that was both childish and cosmic. Each song was an enigma, and the singer a sphinx. But she was also an explorer, albeit an explorer of the inner world. Nico's cadaveric, petrified voice wandered through the labyrinth of a wasted mind, scouring inner landscapes made of nightmares, visions and nameless shadows for the ultimate meaning. Or, better, Nico lived on another planet, and was the Homer who sang about the apocalypse of planet Earth, as viewed from up above.

Her rosary concluded with **The End** (1974), **Drama Of Exile** (1981) and **Camera Obscura** (1985) that tried to modernize her sound (the ultimate oxymoron).

#### ***Canada 1968-69***

Besides being a professional poet, Leonard Cohen (12) also created a body of musical work that proves him one of music's supreme poets. The fact that his lyrics are among the most accomplished in musical history is actually a mere footnote. What makes him such a great musician is the gentle and shy atmosphere that emanates from his folk ballads. Cohen watches life go by "like a bird on a wire", but turns the stories he sees into metaphysical visions of a Dante-esque world and into profound meditations on the human condition. His existential philosophy found in his colloquial style a vastly more effective medium than the convoluted prose of many of his century's philosophers. The **Songs Of Leonard Cohen** (1968) were drenched in infinite tenderness, barely whispered and discreetly arranged. Cohen's unique style triumphed in the fragile lullabies of *Winter Lady* (flute, harpsichord) and *Sisters Of Mercy* (rattles, accordion, xylophone), that sound like good-night songs for children. Turning from social tragedies to individual tragedies, Cohen merged the tone of the medieval minstrel (Donovan) and the tone of the visionary preacher (Dylan). **Songs From A Room** (1969) and **Songs Of Love And Hate** (1971) increased the dramatic emphasis, but fundamentally continued to swim upstream, against the prevailing attitudes, carving a niche for a kind of subdued, lo-fi, intimate, personal dirge. Thanks to that invention, Cohen can be considered one of the most influential singer-songwriters of all times.

The country-music element was stronger in the catchy and sorrowful ballads of Gordon Lightfoot (1), whose epic

*Canadian Railroad Trilogy* (1968) was followed by simpler tunes such as *Minstrel Of the Dawn* (1970), *If You Could Read My Mind* (1970) and *Sundown* (1973), and would evolve in the solemn *Summer Side Of Life* (1971) and *Carefree Highway* (1973).

Joni Mitchell (25) was not only the voice of the female revolution, but also one of the most innovative musicians of the era. Despite her hippy roots, she developed an aristocratic, austere, "adult" way of singing (often complemented by neo-classical piano playing), and used it to vivisect her own anxiety, while chronicling the psychological insecurity of her generation and of her sex. This ambitious program eventually wed her confessional style with fusion jazz and other non-rock idioms. Most of her art is autobiographical, dedicated to her own maturation and evolution, obsessed with the mission of finding a universal, historical meaning for her personal history. If **Clouds** (1969) and **Ladies Of The Canyon** (1970) were still folk-rock albums imbued with "West-Coast sound", **Blue** (1971) marked a monumental step forward: it injected the stream of consciousness into the folk ballad, and her voice became a finely-tuned instrument, capable of both colloquial and operatic deliveries. This introspective diary relied on piano-based compositions that were intense, convoluted and slightly neurotic. Another paranoid self-analysis, another formidable act of her autobiographical drama, **For The Roses** (1972) closed that era of experimentation. **Court And Spark** (1974) was a much lighter and softer work, although it showed her prowess at absorbing elements of soul and jazz. Self-indulgence triumphed again on **Hejira** (1976), her second masterpiece, and another stunning musical application of the stream of consciousness. Her subsequent ventures into jazz and electronic arrangements were presumptuous and unfocused, with the notable exception of **Night Ride Home** (1991).

Perhaps no other artist in the history of rock music has produced so many distinguished works in so many different styles and over so many years as Neil Young (29). The spectral landscape of *Last Trip To Tulsa*, off his debut album, **Neil Young** (1968), introduced a minstrel lost in an unexplored moral universe. **Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere** (1969) elaborated on that theme and achieved a formidable synthesis of "voices" in stately, extended, psychedelic, hard-folk ballads such as *Cowgirl In The Sand* and *Down By The River*. The mellow and melodic folk-rock and country-rock of **After The Gold Rush** (1970) and **Harvest** (1972) lent musical credibility to the apocalyptic angst of **Tonight's The Night** (1975), recorded in 1973, and **On The Beach** (1974). The former, perhaps his masterpiece, was the ultimate testament of the post-hippy depression, an elegiac concept that sounded like a mass for the dead. The electrifying lyricism of **Zuma** (1975) and *Like A Hurricane* (1977), the anthemic hysteria of **Rust Never Sleeps** (1979), the social fresco of collapsing values **Freedom** (1989) and the obscure meditation of **Sleeps With Angels** (1994) continued his life-long moral crusade.

Neil Young constitutes with Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen the great triad of "moral" voices of American popular music. As is the case with the other two, Young's art is, first and foremost, a fusion of music and words that identifies with his era's zeitgeist. Unlike the others, though, Young is unique in targeting the inner chaos of the individual that followed the outer chaos of society. While Dylan "transfers" his era's events into a metaphysical universe, and Springsteen relates the epic sense of ordinary life, Young carries out a more complex psychological operation that, basically, bridges the idealism of the hippy communes and the neuroses of the urban population. His voice, his lyrics, his melodies and his guitar style compose a message of suffering and redemption that, at its best, transcends in hallucination, mystical vision, philosophical enlightenment, while still grounded in a context that is fundamentally a hell on earth.

The various aspects of Young's career (the bucolic folk-singer, the liberal militant, the post-hippie moralist, the apocalyptic guru, the universal pessimist, the melancholy loner, the alienated rocker) are merely stages of a long calvary, which is both individual and collective.

Young did to the lyrical song what Dylan did to the protest song: just like Dylan wed the emphasis of Whitman's poetry and the optimism of Kennedy's era with the themes of public life, Young wed Emerson's humanism and the

pessimism of the post-Kennedy era with the themes of private life.

On top of this, Young invented the distorted, cacophonous, nightmarish style of guitar playing that would influence the grunge generation.

Young is also unique in his schizophrenia, which runs at several levels. First and foremost, one has to deal with the live/studio dichotomy of his career. Charged with the sonic equivalent of a nuclear reaction, the "live" Young albums seem to come from a different artist, a musical terrorist, a true punk. Within the studio album, one has to deal with another dichotomy: the pretty, linear, smooth country-inspired ballad, and the ugly, noisy, acid-inspired jam. These two modes rarely coexist: they alternate, they compete for control of Young's career (and mind?), each studio album being dominated by either of the two.

As a matter of fact, his alter-ego may well be a more creative musician than Young is, as **Dead Man** (1996), a movie soundtrack which is a rare specimen of ambient psychedelic music, and **Arc** (1991), a collage of "found" segments from his live performances, further clarified his status as a crafter of sound as opposed to mere songwriter.

#### ***Texas 1967-69***

Townes Van Zandt (3) was a poet of intimate, gentle, tormented, emotional ballads. His mostly acoustic art borrowed elements from country, blues and tex-mex, and initiated the great Texas singer-songwriter school of the 1970s. **Our Mother the Mountain** (1969), his masterpiece, a parade of desolate vignettes that recast universal themes as private stories, **The Late Great Townes Van Zandt** (1972), his best-seller, and **Flyin' Shoes** (1978) were uniquely dramatic, poignant and focused.

Mickey Newbury (1) was also part of the legion of Texas singer-songwriters that greatly expanded the format of country music, notably with his **It Looks Like Rain** (1969).

#### ***Britain 1967-69***

A number of British singer-songwriters introduced new forms and praxes that would be influential on future generations.

One of the most eccentric characters of this generation was the Scottish composer Ivor Cutler (1), whose **Ludo** (Parlophone, 1967), a collection of 17 brief pieces for harmonium, bass and percussion, and **Dandruff** (Virgin, 1974), a collection of 45 pieces for harmonium, do not quite fit in any category.

In 1967 Scott Walker (2), who had been a pop star à la Beatles (radio-friendly refrains for mass consumption, a marketing campaign focused on his cute looks), began crafting solo albums that wed easy-listening to philosophical meditations in lugubrious settings. **Scott 4** (1969), in particular, created a new form of ballad, predating David Bowie, Julian Cope and trip-hop. His achievements continued with **Climate of Hunter** (1984), his bleakest album, and **Tilt** (1995), his most experimental work.

Before he died in 1974, Nick Drake (12) managed to record only three albums, but that meagre repertory is enough to rank him among the most influential singer-songwriters of all times. He turned the tables on rock and folk music, projecting emotions outside in instead of inside out. If rock music had emphasized the emotional aspect of music in ever more creative ways, Drake did the opposite: his music seems to cancel out the emotional factor, his voice sounds neutral, anemic and indifferent, the arrangements are spectral and almost "silent". Silence is, indeed, the ultimate referent of Drake's "minimalism". Drake had little to say, and he said it using minimal means. Surprisingly (and this was Drake's great discovery), his almost voiceless whisper conveyed stronger emotions than most magniloquent music. Drake's lost, tenuous, taciturn manner scoured the terminal states of melancholy, angst and despair for a reason to live this life. There was something terrifying in those frail notes: Drake's music was the equivalent of a suicide letter. Drake fumbled blindfolded on the edge of the abyss, and his songs were the thoughts that accompanied him while waiting for the fall. The lyrical, elegiac and naive **Five Leaves Left** (1969) was already representative of the drama that developed via **Bryter Layter** (1970), mildly revitalized by soul and

rhythm'n'blues spices, and that reached its climax with **Pink Moon** (1972), Drake's masterpiece and one of the most depressing albums of all times.

Roy Harper (2), the "sophisticated beggar", specialized in sprawling, delirious, epic-length pieces, first tested in *McGoohan's Blues* (1969), and particularly on **Flat Baroque And Beserk** (1970), that codified his mixture of Donovan's tenderness, Syd Barrett's lunacy and David Peel's sarcasm, while maintaining an intensely nostalgic view of England. The four lengthy suites of **Stormcock** (1971), possibly his masterpiece, featuring string arrangements, soared towards Tim Buckley's cosmic landscapes. Notable among his later logorrheas were *The Game* (1975), perhaps the most musical and certainly the hardest rocking, and *One Of Those Days In England* (1977).

Scottish guitarist and vocalist John Martyn (13) was one of the most original advocates of a folk-rock-jazz fusion. As a vocalist, his free-form delivery could compete with Tim Buckley's. As a guitarist, his technique borrowed (in a creative way) from jazz and Indian music. His first naive attempt at fusing folk and jazz, on **The Tumbler** (1968), perhaps influenced by Donovan's albums of the previous year, and the appropriation of jazz orchestration within the format of the folk-rock song, first attempted on **Stormbringer** (1970) and **The Road To Ruin** (1970) and perhaps influenced by Van Morrison's contemporary album, opened the road to the first mature formulation of his art, **Bless The Weather** (1971). Vocal acrobatics, guitar overtones and jazz arrangements merged with sublime elegance on **Solid Air** (1973), his first masterpiece. **Inside Out** (1973), his second and supreme masterpiece, delved into eastern mysticism and further expanded song structures to approach the free-form jam. After **Sunday's Child** (1975), Martyn displayed his enormous talent only occasionally: *Small Hours* (1977), *John Wayne* (1986), *Cooltide* (1992). Mostly, he now gravitated towards Phil Collins' disco-soul and electronic new-age music.

Greek-born Cat Stevens (3) coined a sound that was unusual in being, at the same time, pensive, ethnic, melodic and rhythmic. The philosophical ruminations, psychological studies and bittersweet parables of **Tea For The Tillerman** (1970) led to the elegiac and introverted ballads of **Teaser And The Firecat** (1971), that could be tenderly impressionistic as well as vividly epic. Mediterranean and Slavic influences emerged more clearly in the forceful, noisy melodramas of **Catch Bull At Four** (1972) and in the suite *Foreigner* (1973).

A few veterans of the early British Invasion managed to reinvent themselves in the age of progressive-rock.

Rod Stewart (2) was the raucous, hoarse, smoky blues singer who turned heads in Jeff Beck's band before he joined the Faces. While the Faces struggled, Stewart took their ideas of soul-rock fusion and launched a solo career in a more commercial vein with **Gasoline Alley** (1970) and **Every Picture Tells A Story** (1971), collections of ballads that borrowed from folk, country, blues and soul. Stewart would later convert to glam-rock and to disco-music and to whatever fad happened to rule the charts.

With his solo albums recorded in California, **Winds Of Change** (1967) and particularly **The Twain Shall Meet** (1968), Eric Burdon (2) continued his Homeric task of singing the feats of his generation, except that the focus became the hippy civilization of San Francisco. He adapted the anthemic form coined with the Animals to the loose, extended structures of acid-rock, and later successfully merged that lysergic inspiration with his passion for rhythm'n'blues on **Love Is** (1969) and at least one of the collaborations with the band War, **The Black Man's Burdon** (1970).

Former Cream bassist Jack Bruce (1) displayed his songwriting skills on **Songs For A Tailor** (1969), an original attempt at creating a folk-rock song as austere as classical music and as atmospheric as jazz, and the prelude to his jazz career.

### 3.4 Electronics and rock 1968-70

The single event that would eventually revolutionize rock music down to the deepest fiber of its nature was the

advent of electronic instruments. In 1966 the American inventor Robert Moog began selling his "synthesizer", a new kind of instrument, the first instrument that could play more than one "voice" and even imitate the voices of all the other instruments. The avantgarde was quick to seize on the idea. Morton Subotnick, for example, published a free improvisation on synthesizer, *Silver Apples of the Moon* (1967), that was simply the classical equivalent of acid-rock.

Until then, electronic music had been a luxury that very few popular musicians could afford. Most synthesizers were owned by classical music centers or by large recording studios.

Despite the practical difficulties, a few visionary composers introduced electronic arrangements in popular music, following the success of the Beach Boys' *Good Vibrations* (1966).

Canadian composer Mort Garson (3) recorded **Zodiac Cosmic Sounds** (1967), a suite accompanied by Paul Beaver on electronic keyboards, **The Wozard of Iz** (1969), an electronic parody of the children's classic (featuring Bernie Krause on "environmental sounds"), **Lucifer** (United Artists, 1971), an exoteric opera/mass, his wildest hodgepodge of electronic sounds, and **Music for Sensuous Lovers** (1971), which features the Moog synthesizer and orgasmic moans by a porno star.

Ron Geesin (1), an eclectic British sound researcher who had already experimented with the collage on **A Raise Of Eyebrows** (1967), wed psychedelia and Dadaism on **The Body** (1970) and particularly **Electrosound** (1972), which expanded cosmic music and predated industrial music.

The man who is credited with turning "electronic music" into commercial music is Walter Carlos, whose **Switched On Bach** (1968) was the first electronic album to climb the charts, although his best one was **Sonic Seasonings** (1972), that predates ambient music by a few years.

In 1968 several rock bands also experimented with the new medium to enhance their creative chaos, notably the psychedelic bands United States Of America in New York and Fifty Foot Hose in San Francisco.

Lothar & The Hand People (2) were perhaps the first rock band to use electronic instruments for more than mere background filling on their albums **Presenting** (1968) and **Space Hymn** (1969).

Legendary cult-band Silver Apples (2) were an experimental duo of electronic keyboards and vocals that predated new wave and synth-pop by almost a decade. The music on **Silver Apples** (1968) and **Contact** (1969) wed psychedelia and rock'n'roll while packing urban neurosis and existential angst.

The first musician to improvise live on a synthesizer was probably Annette Peacock, performing with Paul Bley's jazz combo.

Two veterans of electronic instruments formed another influential duo, simply named Beaver & Krause (3), whose **Ragnarok Electronic Funk** (1969) was another important milestone in the adoption of electronic instruments. On **In A Wild Sanctuary** (1970) they attempted a raga-classical-folk-psychedelic fusion, and on **Gandharva** (1971), recorded in San Francisco's cathedral with help from Gerry Mulligan and Bud Schank, they further expanded towards jazz.

In 1970 Robert Moog unveiled the Minimoog, the first portable synthesizer. That event made electronic music available to a much broader group of musicians. While still expensive, this toy could be moved from one stage to the other, and be therefore integrated into the rock ensemble.

David Borden (1) formed in 1969 the electronic trio that would record **Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company** (1973), armed with the mini-Moog synthesizer and inspired by Terry Riley's minimalism and jazz improvisation.

In Norway, Bo Hansson released **Sagan Om Ringen** (1970), a collection of twelve impressionistic vignettes that mixed folk, classical, jazz and pop and that predate synth-pop and new-age music.

Finally, the Tonto's Expanding Head Band (1) recorded **Zero Time** (1971), the first collection of original pop melodies entirely played on synthesizers.

By that time, German bands had begun to shift the center of mass towards the electronic keyboards and would soon proceed to reinvent rock music.

### 3.5 Progressive-rock 1968-72

The "emigration" of rock music from the USA to Britain was not only beneficial but even pivotal for the development and propagation of the new genre.

First of all, rock music was digested by the British "fashion" industry, which transformed it into a well-publicized, iconic commodity, thus generating cash-cow phenomena such as the Beatles. In Britain rock music became "trendy" when in the USA it was still, mainly, an underground, cult (and occasionally taboo) phenomenon, boycotted by both the major record companies and the (puritan) middle-class audience. The British media made rock music fashionable. If rock music had remained the music of Dylan, Fugs, Zappa and Velvet Underground, it would have remained a cultural phenomenon with a huge impact, capable of producing artistic masterpieces and generating intellectual debates, but, most likely, it would have never captured the imagination of the masses the way it did during the late 1960s. In the USA, rock music had been perceived as a revolutionary event, very much related to a generation gap (between the "great" generation and the "hippy" generation) and to an ideological gap (between the Establishment and the underground). In Britain, rock music, while not reneging on those premises, morphed them so that they became popular icons, comparable to the miniskirt and the long hair, icons that could appeal not only to juvenile "delinquents" but also to the bourgeois masses. In other words, rock music in the USA was antagonistic, hostile, conflictual, whereas, in Britain, rock music made peace with society at large. Thus it became a commodity, destined to become, like cinema, one of the arts that exerted the strongest influence on the costume at the turn of the century.

The "British Invasion" also brought an artistic benefit to rock music. Since the beginning, British musicians were less "literal" in their interpretation of the rock'n'roll canon (less rooted in country and blues). Later on, British musicians began to graft onto the spirit of rock'n'roll the artistic, political and philosophical issues of European culture (just like it happened with cinema). Zappa and the Fugs had merely meant to lampoon the American way of life; the Velvet Underground and the Jefferson Airplane had merely meant to hail hallucinogenic substances; and Bob Dylan had merely meant to fight the political and social injustice; but British musicians did not have to deal with those issues and transfigured them into universal messages that related to the daily life of people all over the (western) world. For American musicians, rock was the medium, not the message. For British musicians, rock became the message.

The most notable of this processes of "de-contextualization" of rock music was the process that led to progressive-rock, whose goal was not to comment on the youth culture, but simply to offer technical innovation. Progressive-rock was obviously an evolution of the eccentricities of psychedelic-rock, but was no longer related to a social practice. The artist got decoupled from the audience, and the traditional role of the western artist (as distinct from its audience) was reintroduced. Rock music had been the diary of the American youth. In Britain, it became the equivalent of an essay.

Similarly, folksingers began focusing on introverted themes, closer to the themes of modern poetry and philosophy. Musical satire was redirected towards the psychological nature of dadaism, surrealism and expressionism. And so forth.

Rock music flowed back to the USA as a completely mutated species. The original "grass-roots" phenomenon, raised in thousands of garages by illiterate kids, graduated to an intellectual discipline practiced by university alumni who belonged to artistic schools and movements. In other words, "high" art.

Last but not least, British rock internationalized rock'n'roll, a fundamentally American phenomenon. The British

musicians de-Americanized it so that it could transcend the American society (unlike, for example, country music, that would remain closely related to the USA).

Technically speaking, one could claim that progressive-rock began in 1967 with Cream and Nice, i.e. with the groups that reacted to the simple, melodic, three-minute pop of the Beatles. But a more stringent definition, one that considers ambition and pretentiousness, would push the birth date to the Pretty Things' **S.F. Sorrow** (1968) and the Who's **Tommy** (1969), respectively the first and the most famous rock operas. The prodromes of progressive-rock were also visible on the Zombies' **Odyssey & Oracle** (1968), and the Small Faces' **Ogden's Nut Gone Flake** (1968), which were concept albums released by members of the old guard.

### *The founding fathers*

The bands that nurtured prog-rock through its early stages were Traffic, Jeff Beck, Family, Jethro Tull, Genesis; while King Crimson, Yes and Van Der Graaf Generator represent the genre at its apex.

Enfant prodige Steve Winwood, who had already penned (vocals, organ and composition) Spencer Davis Group's *Gimme Some Loving* (1966), a feverish gospel hymn, formed Traffic (2), which debuted with a quintessential psychedelic album, **Mr Fantasy** (1967), but soon became the leading force of the fusion style that merged folk, blues, soul and jazz. If their jams were never too exciting (reminiscent of lounge-music although in a clever way), they defined a kind of timbric counterpoint that basically changed the whole point of "jamming" (impressionistic instead of emotional) and turned it into the rock equivalent of chamber music. *Dear Mr. Fantasy* (1967) and *Glad* (1970) were their most successful "frescoes", but Winwood's collaboration with Eric Clapton, **Blind Faith** (1969), credited to Blind Faith (1), was perhaps better Traffic than Traffic ever were.

Possibly the most influential guitarist in the entire history of rock music, Jeff Beck (2) was the man who (as a member of the yardbirds) divulged the science of distortion and feedback. The group that he formed with pianist Nicky Hopkins, bassist Ron Wood and vocalist Rod Stewart recorded **Truth** (1968), which virtually invented hard-rock one year before the Led Zeppelin. However, his masterpiece is probably the instrumental jazz-fusion tour de force of **Blow By Blow** (1975).

Jethro Tull (2) revisited the blues and folk traditions focusing on the voice and the flute of Ian Anderson, who was inspired by medieval minstrels and by jazz great Roland Kirk. **Stand Up** (1969) is the album that defined their classy, eclectic, jazzy folk-rock. **Aqualung** (1971), on the other hand, indulged in hard-rock riffs and ponderous rhythms, reinventing the band in the age of Led Zeppelin.

Family (14) probably produced the best amalgam of blues-rock, psychedelic-rock and progressive-rock, thus bridging three fundamental eras of British music. Boasting the hoarse shout of Roger Chapman, one of the greatest rock vocalists of all times, and a sophisticated guitar-saxophone-violin dynamics, the Family borrowed from rhythm'n'blues, the music-hall, classical music and San Francisco's acid-rock to arrange their masterpiece, **Music In A Doll's House** (1968). The conflation of dissonances, raga steps, soul horns, Hendrix-ian glissandos and orchestral flourishes created a merry-go-round of tuneful experiments. The songs on **Family Entertainment** (1969) were more cohesive and rocked "harder". The mood, that had been surreal and pastoral, turned tense and anguished. Their sound reached the baroque ecstasy of **Fearless** (1971), featuring new bassist/violinist John Wetton, **Bandstand** (1972) and **It's Only A Movie** (1973), albums that, while solidly grounded into rock'n'roll and rhythm'n'blues, and respectful of the song format, hardly relate to the rest of progressive-rock at all.

Genesis (3) updated a classic genre of easy-listening, the sophisticated ballad, to the brainy arrangements and twisted dynamics of progressive-rock. The most theatrical of the prog-rock bands, Genesis matched their musical melodramas with a choreography centered on vocalist and mime Peter Gabriel. **Trespass** (1970) and **Nursery Crime** (1971) were the albums that codified their art: intellectual folk music that harked back to the repertory of fairy tales and myths, but dilated into non-linear narratives and arranged with the timbric grace of chamber music. Their reference point was the symphonic poem, which in fact is the target of the colossal and pedantic suites that

followed, *Supper Is Ready* (1972) and *Firth Of Fifth* (1973). Genesis then turned towards melody with the monumental rock opera **The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway** (1974), which stands as the summa (for better and for worse) of their career. Drummer Phil Collins would eventually turn the band into a machine of dance-pop muzak hits. By then, Gabriel would have already launched his solo career.

The release of **In The Court Of The Crimson King** (1969), the debut album by King Crimson (15), heralded the golden age of progressive-rock. The magniloquent, symphonic sound of Ian McDonald's mellotron enrolled them in the neo-classical movement of Nice, Moody Blues and Procol Harum, but the psychedelic overtones, the medieval visions, the gothic atmosphere and the romantic pathos of the title-track and *Epitaph* set them clearly apart. What guitarist Robert Fripp and bassist Greg Lake penned were majestic ballads, not transcriptions of classical music. *Moonchild* was an abstract, futuristic poem in which the melody was less important than the soundscape, and the violent, syncopated, distorted jam of *21st Century Schizoid Man* invented a new way to put neurosis into music. **In The Wake Of Poseydon** (1970) further explored the same ideas, increasing the degree of melodrama and the amount of sound effects, and *Formentera Lady* (1971) was the definitive tour de force of the band. King Crimson had turned rock'n'roll upside down, repudiating the savage form while retaining the emotional content. When Yes drummer Bill Bruford and Family bassist John Wetton joined Fripp for a new, jazzier edition of the band, the sound veered towards harsh, strident, convoluted compositions such as *Lark's Tongues In Aspic* (1973) and brainy, cryptic, virtuoso albums such as **Red** (1974). King Crimson's third edition, featuring guitarist Adrian Belew and bassist Tony Levin, adopted an even more intellectual stance in compositions such as *Sheltering Sky* (1981). Robert Fripp (4) never stopped recording stimulating music. Two collaborations with Brian Eno, notably **No Pussyfooting** (1973), several solo albums, notably **Exposure** (1979), the manifesto of his "frippertronics", two collaborations with Police's guitarist Andy Summers, notably **I Advance Masked** (1982), a collaboration with David Sylvian, **The First Day** (1993), were just the tip of the iceberg.

Van Der Graaf Generator (12) were in many ways the most original of the early prog-rock bands. Their sound (already unique because driven by saxophone and keyboards, not guitars) cannot be easily related to the archetypes of folk, blues, rock or jazz, despite the fact that it contains elements of all. The emphasis of their lengthy compositions was on pathos and melodrama, just like King Crimson, but also on fear and vulnerability. The degree of angst was further increased by Peter Hammill's pessimistic, claustrophobic lyrics and by his agonizing vocals. The psychological tortures of **The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other** (1970), the touching and liturgic poems of **H To He Who Am The Only One** (1970), and the bleak, terrible, delirious visions of **Pawn Hearts** (1971) combined existentialist emptiness and gothic nightmare.

Yes (12), possibly the most accomplished musicians of the progressive-rock generation, were also the ultimate in magniloquence and exhibitionism. Their sound was born out of the fusion of pop, rock, folk, jazz and classical music. They borrowed ideas from the Nice, from renaissance and baroque music, from Crosby Stills & Nash's vocal harmonies, from post-Davis funk-jazz, from psychedelic jamming, and from old-fashioned melodies. If the fusion was not unique, the glacial composure certainly was: Yes albums sounded more like scientific experiments than party music. **The Yes Album** (1971) introduced their schizophrenia: *Yours Is No Disgrace* and *Starship Trooper* went for strenuous instrumental bravura, while *I've Seen All Good People* revolved around a catchy refrain. The virtuoso performers (particularly drummer Bill Bruford and keyboardist Rick Wakeman) achieved a sublime degree of balance on **Fragile** (1971), whose *Roundabout*, *South Side Of The Sky* and *Heart Of The Sunrise* flowed like clockwork mechanisms. The apex of Yes' apparent contradiction (a style that was both frigid and romantic) was reached on **Close To The Edge** (1972), whose *Close To The Edge* and *And I And You* were lengthy, complex and densely chromatic fantasias, and the very definition of "art-rock". On the other hand, the four monumental suites of **Tales From Topographic Oceans** (1973) proved that extended compositions do require more than mere virtuosity.

Two line-ups that worked for John Mayall spawned two of the most creative bands of early prog-rock. Colosseum (10) recorded **Valentyne Suite** (1969), whose title-track was a side-long phantasmagoria of jazz, blues, classical and hard-rock sounds, brightly chromatic and luxuriant, one of the masterpieces of British progressive-rock. Mark Almond (2) specialized in suites of a different kind, mellow and laid-back, centered on simple folk-jazz tunes, skirting lounge-music and easy-listening muzak, such as *The City* (1971) and *Sausalito Bay Suite* (1972).

### ***Gothic, ethnic and folk variations***

A number of progressive bands introduced Eastern music into their psychedelic and progressive sounds. For example, East Of Eden.

However, no band achieved the degree of ethnic fusion that the Third Ear Band (102) achieved on **Alchemy** (1969), one of the albums that invented "world-music". An acoustic chamber ensemble of (essentially) tablas, oboe, viola and cello performed Indian, medieval, native American, gypsy, middle-eastern, minimalist, jazz, classical and folk music, all within the same song. The four suites on their second album, **Third Ear Band** (1970), pushed the idea even further: the ethnic sources are not recognizable anymore, and the music flows like a stream of consciousness, a spiritual experience, a daydream. De-contextualized, the "third ear" music is closer to Buddhism meditation than to western composition. The band was equally successful on **Macbeth** (1972), that added electric and electronic sounds to their ethnic stew.

Around 1970, following the success of Black Sabbath, a number of bands introduced gothic themes and atmospheres into innovative structures: **High Tide II** (1970) by High Tide (1), a classic of gothic-rock, a collection of violin-driven macabre dances that bridge acid-rock and hard-rock; **Sacrifice** (1970) by Black Widow (1), which wed Colosseum's jazz-classical suite with, again, gothic overtones; **Atomic Rooster** (1970) by Atomic Rooster; **Ceremony** (1970) by Spooky Tooth (1), a rock mass arranged by avantgarde composer Pierre Henry, a bold concept that wed the aesthetics of art-rock with the vibrations of hard-rock.

The "progressive" spirit affected the folk revival as well. After all, Pentangle had already combined jazz and folk, and the Incredible String Band had already combined folk and acid-rock. Other bands proceeded to concoct similar folk-based fusions. While no band matched the importance of those pioneers, a few albums stand out: **Fantasia Lindum** (1971) by Amazing Blondel, inspired by medieval ballads and renaissance madrigals; **Dando Shaft** (1971) by Dando Shaft, which offered perhaps the most competent folk-jazz fusion; **St Radigunds** (1971) by Spirogyra, also inspired by folk and jazz; **First Utterance** (1971) by the premier psychedelic-folk band, Comus (1); and, best of all, **Grave New World** (1972) by the Strawbs (1), a psychedelic mass that blends western liturgy and Indian raga.

### ***The second generation***

Progressive bands multiplied in Britain during the early 1970s, but their albums tend to recycle the same ideas over and over again, and frequently with unwarranted pomp. A few gems, though, can be found: **Quatermass** (1970) by Quatermass (1); **Galactic Zoo Dossier** (1971) by Kingdom Come, an odd mixture of electronic keyboards, rhythm and blues and Arthur Brown's stage antics; **Back Door** (1972) by Back Door (1), one of the best in the instrumental jazz-rock genre; **Phantasmagoria** (1972) by Curved Air (1), whose baroque suites were graced by violin (Darryl Way), synthesizer (Francis Monkman) and sensual female vocals; **Argus** (1972) by Wishbone Ash (1), whose energetic jams were propelled by a twin guitar attack.

Jade Warrior (5) began as second-rate King Crimson copycats, distinguishing themselves only with the mystical and ethnic emphasis of **Last Autumn's Dream** (1972), but subsequently they developed a sound that was not narrative but pictorial in nature, while adopting electronic keyboards and focusing on jazz-rock as their main inspiration. **Waves** (1975) and **Kites** (1976), continuous suites that employ many instruments and many styles, took prog-rock to its formal zenith. **Way Of The Sun** (1978) was already a new genre: hyper-arranged new-age music. The band later converted to cosmic music with the bleak sonic imagery of *Images Of Dune* (1984) and the

three celestial 1985 suites collected on **At Peace**.

Perhaps the boldest (or, at least, brainiest) fusion of jazz, rock and classical music was attempted by Gentle Giant (2), particularly on **Three Friends** (1972) and **In A Glass House** (1973).

Emerson Lake & Palmer (1), formed by former Nice keyboardist Keith Emerson, former King Crimson bassist Greg Lake and former Atomic Rooster drummer Carl Palmer a few months after the success of Crosby Stills & Nash, pushed progressive-rock towards technical excesses that, basically, obliterated whatever merit their jazz-classical fusion had. This art of obfuscating art worked best on the futuristic/mythological concept album **Tarkus** (1971), although their technological peak was perhaps *Karn Evil 9* (1973). Their music, ever more pretentious and magniloquent, was founded on a fundamental misunderstanding of what "virtuoso" means.

The first three albums recorded by Roxy Music (12) revolutionized progressive-rock and prepared the way to the new wave and to synth-pop. The styles of Pink Floyd (surreal soundscape), Soft Machine (jazz-rock), Traffic (chromatic jamming), Cream (virtuosity), Led Zeppelin (loudness and frenzy), King Crimson (emphasis and pathos) and the avantgarde (minimalism and cacophony) merged in the inventive bacchanals of their debut album, **Roxy Music** (1972), which includes the futuristic anthem *Virginia Plain* and several avant-rock pieces fueled by Brian Eno's electronics. Bryan Ferry's emphatic crooning soared unrestrained on **For Your Pleasure** (1973), that contains the hypnotic synth-dance *Bogus Man*; and attained a kitschy quality on **Stranded** (1973), whose ballads *Mother Of Pearl* and *A Song For Europe* wed the themes of European decadentism and existentialism with luxuriant arrangements and slick production. *Love Is The Drug* (1975) and subsequent albums would merely sell that idea in the discos.

### **Continental Europe**

The contagion of progressive-rock spread throughout continental Europe: progressive-rock clearly appealed more to the "intellectual" audience of Europe than rock'n'roll ever did. Sweden's premier progressive-rock group was Samla Mamma Manna (1), which debuted with **Samla Mamma Manna** (1971).

Holland's most famous psychedelic and prog-rock band was Focus (1), whose **Moving Waves** (1972) contains the fast-paced novelty number *Hocus Pocus* and the colossal jam *Eruption*, their equivalent of the Colosseum's *Valentyne Suite*. But perhaps the most intriguing compositions came from Finch (1), whose **Beyond Expression** (1976) contains the lengthy suites *A Passion Condensed* and *Beyond the Bizarre*. But the most exciting song to emerge from Holland's booming scene was Shocking Blue's *Venus* (1969), a sexy, party rave-up that harked back to Creedence Clearwater Revival's feverish rhythms.

Italy hatched one of the most prolific schools of progressive-rock. Notable albums include: Premiata Forneria Marconi's **Storia di un Minuto** (1972), Banco Del Mutuo Soccorso's **Banco del Mutuo Soccorso** (1972), Balletto Di Bronzo's **Ys** (1972) Franco Battiato's **Pollution** (1973), Area's **Arbeit Macht Frei** (1973), Picchio Dal Pozzo's **Picchio Dal Pozzo** (1976).

### **France**

French bands entered the fray in earnest a little later, but would surpass all other national schools. Magma (12) debuted their sci-fi concept on the ambitious and naive **Magma** (1970), borrowing ideas from free-jazz and Gong, and perfected it on their first masterpiece, **Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandoh** (1973), an eclectic and idiosyncratic rock opera that spans an amazing range of styles, from Verdi to Frank Zappa. **Kohntarkosz** (1974) was their most musical work, largely inspired by Mahavishnu Orchestra's jazz-rock; and **Udu Wudu** (1976) was a more electronic affair.

Vangelis (13) led Aphrodite's Child, a group of Greek musicians residing in France, whose posthumous **666** (1970) is a unique collection of magical incantations, satanic invocations and psychedelic jamming. Vangelis pursued a career of stately, melodramatic (and increasingly electronic) instrumental suites, whose archetypes were **L'Apocalypse Des Animaux** (1973) and **Heaven And Hell** (1975). Specializing in orchestral apotheosis, Vangelis

would be celebrated for his movie soundtracks. One of the pioneers and stars of new-age music, he would return to more ambitious pieces with **Invisible Connections** (1985) and **The Mask** (1985).

#### USA

In the USA, tremendous impetus to progressive-rock came from Miles Davis' **Bitches Brew** (1969), an album that combined soul rhythms and electronically-amplified rock instruments. Frank Zappa's **Uncle Meat** (1969) was rock's most competent (and irreverent) answer to Miles Davis. Chicago (3) attempted an explosive fusion of jazz horns and rock'n'roll guitar on **Chicago Transit Authority** (1969), **Chicago II** (1970) and **Chicago III** (1971), each of them a double album, characterized by wild and sometimes brutal creativity.

Insect Trust (1) attempted a super-fusion of jazz, blues, country and acid-rock somewhere between Blues Project's sophisticated ballads and Captain Beefheart's demented jams on **Insect Trust** (1968), and veered towards free-jazz on their second album, **Hoboken Saturday Night** (1970).

Gil Scott-Heron, a poet and novelist who turned musician and predated rap music with his spoken-word pieces, championed a Miles Davis-inspired fusion of jazz, funk and rock (on top of his Phil Ochs-inspired agit-prop lyrics) on, for example, **Pieces Of A Man** (1971) and *The Bottle* (1973).

Two bands led by violinists were notable: Flock (1), whose *Truth* (1969) was one of the most accomplished jams of the time, led by Jerry Goodman (who later joined the Mahavishnu Orchestra); and It's A Beautiful Day (1), whose **It's A Beautiful Day** (1969) sprayed acid-rock with exotic perfumes.

Joy Of Cooking (1), one of the first bands led by female musicians (singer-songwriters Terry Garthwaite and Toni Brown) and one of the earliest to deal with feminist issues within popular music, released three delightful albums, **Joy Of Cooking** (1971), **Closer to the Ground** (1971) and **Castles** (1972), that experimented with elastic song structures over a laid-back, folk-jazz-blues fusion infrastructure.

In 1970 Jimi Hendrix died and Syd Barrett retired. An era had ended. But their seeds were sprouting.

### 3.6 Canterbury 1968-73

The Canterbury school of British progressive-rock (one of the most significant movements in the history of rock music) was born in 1962 when Hugh Hopper, Robert Wyatt, Kevin Ayers, Richard Sinclair and others formed the Wilde Flowers. Wyatt, Ayers, Hopper and their new friends Daevid Allen and Mike Ratledge formed the Soft Machine, whereas Sinclair and the others went on to form Caravan.

Soft Machine (103), one of the greatest rock bands of all times, debuted with albums such as **2** (1969) that were inspired to psychedelic-rock with a touch of Dadaistic (i.e., nonsensical) aesthetic; but, after losing Allen and Ayers, they veered towards a personal interpretation of Miles Davis' jazz-rock on **3** (1970), their masterpiece and one of the essential jazz, rock and classical albums of the 1970s. Minimalistic keyboards à la Terry Riley and jazz horns highlight three of the four jams (particularly, Hopper's *Facelift*). The other one, *Moon In June*, is Wyatt's first monumental achievement, blending a delicate melody, a melancholy atmosphere and deep humanity. *The Moon In June* will remain in the essential canon of music well after rock music has disappeared. A vastly revised line-up, heavily influenced by Ian Carr's and Keith Tippett's jazz ensembles, that placed greater emphasis on the horn section (e.g., Elton Dean), continued the experiment in a colder, brainy, austere manner (e.g., the four-movement suite *Virtually* (1971), on their fourth album, and the futuristic *1983* (1972), on their sixth album).

The other co-founders of the Canterbury school, Caravan (3), impersonated a simpler, lighter, mellower and catchier kind of jazz-rock than Soft Machine's. Their specialty were melodic fantasias that basically enhanced folk-like lullabies with jazzy rhythms and intricate instrumental counterpoint: *Can't Be Long Now*, on **If I Could Do It All Over Again** (1969), *Nine Feet Underground* (their masterpiece), that takes up half of **In The Land Of Grey And Pink** (1971), *Nothing At All* and *The Love In Your Eye*, off **Waterloo Lily** (1972).

Ian Carr's Nucleus (2), one of the most skilled combos in the world, were protagonists of Britain's jazz-rock scene for several years. The dreamy, romantic *Song For The Bearded Lady*, off **We'll Talk About It Later** (1970), the "orchestral" and electronic sound of *Torso*, which takes up half of **Solar Plexus** (1971), the elegant, baroque synthesis of their most flawless album, **Belladonna** (1972), relied on horn and keyboards arrangements, as well as on rhythms that were both slippery and solid.

Keith Tippett (2), who had assembled a formidable group of talents, delivered works such as **Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening** (1971) and the colossal **Septober Energy** (1971), performed by the 50-piece orchestra Centipede, that were more properly jazz.

Dave Stewart and Steve Hillage started another dynasty within the Canterbury school when they formed Egg (3), yet another overlooked band that played musical nonsense. The *Symphony No.2*, on **Egg** (1970), the classical-jazz-rock phantasmagoria *Long Piece No.3* (their *Valentyne Suite*), on **The Polite Force** (1971), and the last, brainier jams on **The Civil Surface** (1974), such as *Germ Patrol* and *Enneagram*, packed enough ideas for two generations of musicians to explore.

Several of Canterbury's masterpieces were recorded in the early 1970s by former members of Soft Machine. Daevid Allen (12) was only vaguely related to the school's main stylistic directions: Allen was, first and foremost, a hippie/freak who wed Frank Zappa's paradoxical aesthetics and San Francisco's communal ethos. His Gong, featuring guitarist Steve Hillage, saxophonist Didier Malherbe and keyboardist Tim Blake, concocted a "cosmic" version of acid-rock. Their masterpieces, which include at least **Camembert Electrique** (1971), the superb **Flying Teapot** (1973) and **Angel's Egg** (1973), are demented collages of nursery-rhyme melodies, circus horns, jazz rhythms, galactic keyboards, sensual/celestial wails, sardonic mantras, mock-heroic electronics, caricatural anthems. The whole exudes a sense of stately cacophony. This is psychedelia that is hallucinated but not catalectic. **Flying Teapot** (1973), in particular, still ranks as one of rock music's wildest flights of imagination.

Kevin Ayers (12) became a lunatic singer-songwriter projecting the persona of an exotic, decadent dandy. **Joy Of A Toy** (1969), a collection of enchanting ditties, defined his nonchalant cross-breeding of music-hall, folk lullabies, world-music and even children's music. The existential melancholy that already surfaced on that work permeates his most eccentric album, **Shooting At The Moon** (1970), featuring avantgarde composer and keyboardist David Bedford, teenage guitarist Mike Oldfield even jazz saxophonist Lol Coxhill. Here Ayers finds an unlikely balance of harmonic nonsense and catchy refrains, while drenching his fairy tales into surrealism and expressionism. The 18-minute four-part suite *The Confessions of Doctor Dream* (1974) was his most ambitious and nightmarish work. Robert Wyatt (113) expanded on the intuitions of his *The Moon In June* on his first solo album, **End Of An Ear** (1970). He invented a whole new language, with nods to both the tradition (pop, soul, folk, jazz) and the avantgarde (minimalism, electronics), both personal and public. The same fusion of private and public themes, but with an emphasis on his public (and communist) persona, characterize the two Matching Mole albums, **Matching Mole** (1972) and **Little Red Record** (1972), which are rare examples of agit-prop music that is actually touching. His private persona erupted on **Rock Bottom** (1974), one of rock music's supreme masterpieces, a veritable transfiguration of both rock and jazz. Its pieces straddle the unlikely border between an intense religious hymn and a childish nursery rhyme. Along that imaginary line, Wyatt carved a deep trench of emotional outpouring, where happiness, sorrow, faith and resignation found a metaphysical unity. The astounding originality of that masterpiece, and its well-crafted flow of consciousness, were never matched by Wyatt's later releases. The last significant work of his career was **Animals Film** (1982). Wyatt has produced some of the most moving music of all times and at least one of the century's masterpieces.

**1984** (1973) by Hugh Hopper (1) and Elton Dean's Elton Dean (1971) also rank among the most original and erudite works of British progressive-rock. Overall, Soft Machine alumni constitute a significant chunk of the prog-rock canon in Britain.

The Canterbury school continued to produce bands, talents and masterpieces throughout the mid 1970s. Richard Sinclair and Dave Stewart joined forces and formed Hatfield & The North (1), whose first album, **Hatfield And The North** (1974), was a competent appendix to Caravan. Then Dave Stewart and Alan Gowen formed a more keyboard-oriented band, the National Health (2), who were not shy to toy with dissonance, electronics and Frank Zappa's orchestral jazz-rock on the four lengthy jams of **National Health** (1978) and on their masterpiece **Of Queues And Cures** (1978).

When enfant prodige Mike Oldfield (11) cut **Tubular Bells** (1973), an album-long suite of instrumental music, all played by himself gluing together the parts of dozens of instruments, he redefined what prog-rock was. In fact, "progressive-rock" became an obsolete term to refer to a music that crossed all stylistic borders. Oldfield's subsequent ventures into the suite, starting with **Hergest Ridge** (1974), never repeated the miracle of his first work, despite the fact that **Ommadawn** (1975) and **Incantations** (1978) were built on more and more ambitious foundations (and Oldfield would eventually downplay that format in favor of the pop song, particularly with 1982's *Moonlight Shadow*).

However, the second Canterbury generation was best represented by Henry Cow (22), founders of the "Rock In Opposition" political and musical movement. Featuring virtuosi such as guitarist Fred Frith, bassist John Greaves, percussionist Chris Cutler, keyboardist Tim Hodgkinson, and, later, oboe player Lindsay Cooper, they increased the intelligence quotient of progressive-rock. **Leg End** (1973), inspired by Soft Machine's jazz-rock and Frank Zappa's orchestral suites but also by free-jazz and by the dissonant avantgarde (*Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King*), was merely the appetizer for **Unrest** (1974) and its brainy, convoluted, arduous but also extravagant, whimsical and surreal jams/suites. The Henry Cow had found a magical balance between composition and improvisation. Further progress was displayed on **Desperate Straights** (1974), the first fruit of merging with multinational group Slapp Happy (1), featuring British keyboardist Anthony Moore, German vocalist Dagmar Krause and American guitarist Peter Blegvad, whose **Acnalbasac Noom** (1973) had been an intriguing experiment of expressionistic cabaret and rock music. Their second, and better, joint album, **In Praise Of Learning** (1975), was their artistic testament: the clownish fusion of the early years had mutated into an austere and erudite form of art. That idea was further explored by Frith, Cutler and Krause as the Art Bears (2) on the abstract lieder of **Hopes And Fears** (1978) and **Winter Songs** (1979).

Other notable works by Canterbury veterans include **L** (1976) by Steve Hillage (2), who would later bridge hippy culture and rave culture on **System 7** (1991), and Tim Blake's **New Jerusalem** (1978).

The Henry Cow alumni were the most prolific, especially after the new wave (1976) rediscovered them. Lindsay Cooper (1)'s **Gold Diggers** (1983), Cassiber (1)'s **Man Or Monkey** (1983), featuring Chris Cutler, News from Babel (1)'s **Work Resumed On The Tower** (1984), featuring Cutler, Cooper, and Krause, Fred Frith (2)'s **Gravity** (1980) and **Speechless** (1981). During the 1980s Frith and Cutler would deal mainly with new jazz and avantgarde.

### 3.7 Kosmische Musik 1969-72

Fundamentally, British rock recycled American rock for a different kind of audience: the Beatles recycled it for a pop-oriented audience, progressive-rock (in all its neo-classical and jazz variations) recycled it for an intellectual audience. German rock, instead, invented a different kind of rock music. In fact, many German bands were not playing "rock" music at all. There is no question that the great era of German avant-rock was inspired by psychedelic music, but the German interpretation of psychedelic music had little to do with reproducing the effects of drugs: German musicians saw a relationship between psychedelic experiments and the German electronic avantgarde (such as Karlheinz Stockhausen), a relationship that, in retrospect, was already obvious in American

psychedelia, but that no one had articulated before.

In 1968 three young musicians, Conrad Schnitzler, Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Klaus Schulze, founded the "Zodiak Free Arts Lab" in Berlin. This became the first venue for popular electronic music in Europe. That can be considered the moment when German musicians figured out that strategic relationship between psychedelic music and avantgarde music. The following year, Can debuted, playing rock music inspired by the classical avantgarde and by modern jazz. In 1970 Kluster (Cluster) began recording keyboards-based instrumental music that was inspired by the industrial society, with an emphasis on static drones (the prodromes of both industrial and ambient music). 1971 is the year when Tangerine Dream invented "kosmische musik", using synthesizers and sequencers instead of guitars and drums. The "trip" of acid-rock had turned into a "journey" into the cosmos. At the same time, Faust began recording songs that were, de facto, studio collages of rock music, electronic sounds and "concrete" noise.

1972 is the year that German musicians went spiritual: Popol Vuh released **In Den Gaerten Pharaos**, recorded inside a cathedral, and fusing electronic music and Eastern music (thus predating new-age music); and Deuter released **Aum**, a fusion of Eastern and Western religious music, of acoustic instruments and natural sounds. It was also the year that kosmische musik found its definitive format: the long, electronic suite. Tangerine Dream's **Zeit**, a double album that contained four side-long suites, and Klaus Schulze's **Irrlicht**, a cosmic symphony played with electronic instruments, were the archetype that would be copied for the next 30 years.

The last of the great German inventions also occurred in 1972: a band named Neu! began playing obsessively rhythmic music.

The full impact of these profound, multiple and interbreeding innovations would be felt only decades later, but it would change the whole meaning of the word "music". No other movement or school or current in the history of rock music, apart from the early rockers, influenced so many musicians for so many decades.

### ***The early masters***

Amon Duul II and Can are representative of the two main cultural backgrounds of German bands: the hippy communes and the avantgarde.

Amon Duul 0 were a free-jazz trio, formed in 1966 in Munich by guitarist and violinist Chris Karrer and by drummer Christian Burchard. Amon Duul (with no zero) were instead the musical expression of a commune that included both artists and political activists, and in particular Karrer. This early version of Amon Duul was perhaps the most politicized group of Germany's 1968 (the year of the student riots). A 48-hour session, improvised towards the end of the year, yielded enough material for three albums of tribal and chaotic jams, inspired to the concept of amateurish music proclaimed by leader Ulrich Leopold. Only the first one, **Psychedelic Underground** (1969), was authorized by the band. Towards the end of 1968, Karrer decided to leave the commune and start a rock band, which was named Amon Duul II (21). They were perhaps the most "teutonic" among the early German masters. Their sound was "gothic" in the most authentic (least sensational) sense of the word. Their cultural roots, not their self-indulgence, led them to gothic atmospheres. The title-track off their debut album, **Phallus Dei** (1969), is a long, wild, chaotic bacchanal that blends rock'n'roll, electronics, dissonances, psychedelic chanting, blues jamming, African percussions. They soon abandoned the most blasphemous and provocative stances, and their sound more clearly revealed the influence of Californian acid-rock. Their musical language kept evolving, soon incorporating more struments and switching from improvisation to composition. The three multi-part suites that make up the bulk of **Tanz Der Lemminge** (1971), and particularly *The Marilyn Monroe-Memorial-Church*, are neither as dark nor as apocalyptic, although they maintain a degree of angst and perversion. **Yeti** (1970), another masterpiece notable for its Wagner-ian intensity and monumental undertaking, found a balance between noise and harmony, hard and soft rock, the gothic and the pastoral. Amon Duul II had mastered the fusion between rock'n'roll, avantgarde and world-music, using such fusion to pen long and dynamic post-psychedelic musical journeys that

reinvented the form of the classical fantasia in the age of post-modernism.

More than any other band, Can transformed progressive-rock into a science. By bridging classical music, jazz music and rock music of their times, Can (23) accomplished the first organic study on rhythm and texture in rock music. Their hypnotic and glacial instrumental jams straddled the line between free-jazz, acid-rock and chamber music. While pursuing an erudite divertissement of Cage's aleatory music and Schoenberg's atonal music, while experimenting with the potentialities of electronically-manipulated instruments, while favoring subdued, fragmented, loose structures and sinister, menacing atmospheres, Can became masters of a new electro-acoustic form of music. Within the German school of the 1970s, Can were the ascetics. After **Monster Movie** (1969), a largely improvised and exuberant kaleidoscope of Pink Floyd-inspired and Velvet Underground-inspired psychedelic music, Can entered the labyrinthine fray of avantgarde music with their monumental **Tago Mago** (1971), a work blinded by Eastern mysticism and immersed in a jungle of collage techniques and sound effects (the demonic dissonant concerto of *Halleluwa*, the oniric caprice of *Aumgn*). After the bleak **Ege Bamyasi** (1972), that predates the languid, dejected tones of post-rock and trip-hop, Can dealt another blow to the rules of harmony with **Future Days** (1973), their most psychological work. Instrumental scores such as *Bel Air* are dense, amorphous, amoebic lattices of sounds, the musical equivalent of Monet frescoes, that metabolize jazz, funk, rock, Indian music and dissonance.

**Canaxis 5** (1969), the first solo album released by Can's Holger Czukay (11), added another milestone to their career: the marriage of electronics and ethnic music, i.e. the birth of electronic world-music. Czukay would explore this theme two decades later, when pop-star David Sylvian lent a hand to the lengthy suites of **Plight And Premonition** (1988) and **Flux And Mutability** (1989), particularly *Plight*.

#### *The cosmic couriers*

Tangerine Dream (15), formed in Berlino by guitarist Edgar Froese, percussionist Klaus Schulze and keyboardist Conrad Schnitzler, were among the earliest conscious explorers of a new musical universe opened by electronic instruments. Tangerine Dream's music was born as a psychedelic journey in the heavens, and, aided by the new electronic keyboards, transformed into a contemplative survey of the universe. By borrowing from impressionistic painting, from ecclesiastic music, from the minimalist avantgarde, and from Eastern transcendental philosophy, Tangerine Dream invented "kosmische musik", one of the most influential genres of all times. Froese, percussionist Christopher Franke, a flutist and two keyboardists recorded the three improvised jams of **Alpha Centauri** (1971) that defined the genre, and the band pared down to a trio (Froese, Franke and keyboardist Peter Baumann) for **Zeit** (1972), their masterpiece and one of the most important albums of the time, a four-movement symphony which adopted a more electronic format and a looser concept of rhythm. With **Atem** (1973), perhaps their most formally accomplished album, they turned to a less intimidating vision of the cosmos, one that led to the lighter, baroque and melodic approach of **Phaedra** (1974), **Rubycon** (1975) and **Ricochet** (1976), and to the new-age sound of the 1980s, when Froese and Franke were joined first by Johannes Schmoelling (1980) and then by Paul Haslinger (1986).

Unlike the acid-rock it descended from, Tangerine Dream's "kosmische musik" was minor-key and devoid of climax. It simply floated, disregarding the traditional song format. Tangerine Dream introduced a new concept of "time" in rock music, whereby a group of notes can float forever, with no story development. Tangerine Dream removed the vocals from rock music, thereby showing how inessential they had become: instrumental music stopped being an eccentric novelty. The orchestral and choral textures created by the mellotron and the electronic pulses created by the sequencer opened new horizons to the whole art of "coloring" an atmosphere. They wed the trance-like approach of avantgarde music (Riley, Ligeti, Part) to a new culture of "color", that dignified even the most stubborn repetition of simple patterns. Tangerine Dream used the chromatic properties of electronic instruments to charge each sound with all sorts of fantastic and metaphysical meaning. Their journeys were both in

the universe and in the mind, in time and in space. Those journeys, above all, were always chromatically resplendent, occasionally flamboyant, always vivid. Unlike so much acid-rock and free-jazz jamming that indulged in depressed tones and grey scales, Tangerine Dream painted music with the very essence of beauty. Unlike jazz and rock improvisers who decomposed music to a brainy soliloquy, Tangerine Dream elevated it to a stately condition. By renouncing the narrative element, Tangerine Dream turned music into a subgenre of painting. Their compositions are frescoes rather than symphonies.

It was also a new way to tell "fairy tales". Tangerine Dream invented folk music for the new millennium. Each of their "cosmic" pieces retells the story of Ulysses turned cosmic courier. Tangerine Dream's music is the perfect soundtrack for the mythology of the space age. They also pioneered the attitude of cybernauts, who explore an artificial space.

They were contemporaries with the moon landing. The world was caught in a collective dream of the infinite. Tangerine Dream gave that dream a sound. It wasn't merely the philosophical fear of what our mind cannot comprehend: it was instead a visionary approach to the fascinating mysteries that lie beyond what our mind can comprehend.

It was also a mystic experience. The imposing crescendos, the majestic notes hanging from the immense arches of cathedrals, evoked a sense of eternity. The religious, spiritual component came to be naturally linked to the exploration of the outer space, the way it had been for centuries linked to the exploration of the inner space.

Few groups in history have had such a revolutionary impact on the music of their time. For thirty years (from ambient to disco, from techno to new age music) popular music would simply apply their numerous intuitions in different contexts.

Despite having flooded the market with a lot of awful recordings, Klaus Schulze (126) was one of the most significant, influential and original composers of the 1970s. During his first decade alone, Schulze pioneered a number of genres that would become popular during the following thirty years, from disco-music to ambient music. But, mainly, Schulze penned the first aesthetic of popular electronic music, an aesthetic that inherited from Indian raga the sense of tempo, from jazz the sense of spontaneity, and from late romantic symphonists the sense of magniloquence. In many ways, **Irrlicht** (1972) created both the archetype and the reference standard for "kosmische musik". Schulze's recipe included Bach-ian organ ouvertures, Tibetan-style droning, "Wagner-ian" polyphonic architectures, Pink Floyd-ian cosmic psychedelia, Gregorian liturgy, John Coltrane's metaphysical explorations, and perhaps even Michelangelo's "Sistine Chapel", and many other ingredients. The synthesis achieved by that electronic symphony was momentous and ground-breaking. Schulze sculpted/painted an ambience that sounded like a live recording of galactic life, but, rather than indulging in rendering cosmic events, he focused on the pathos that the unknown and the infinite elicit into the human soul. The symphony alternates moments of catalectic suspense, of apocalyptic chaos and of moving melody. Schulze sequenced them so as to maximize awe and angst. Like Tangerine Dream's **Zeit**, Schulze's **Cyborg** (1973) was a double album containing four side-long electronic suites, and, like many other German musicians, Schulze was introducing more rhythm into his visions. However, this new monolith maintained the "symphonic" quality of the previous one (enhanced by a huge chamber orchestra). While the lengthy, slowly-unraveling suite remained his favorite medium, *Totem*, on **Picture Music** (1973), and the inferior *Voices Of Syn*, on **Blackdance** (1974), continued the progression towards a more "accessible" format. The best results were to be found on **Timewind** (1975), which contains two of his most violent (or, better, "Wagner-ian") sonatas: *Bayreuth Return* and *Wahnfried 1883*. The explosive *Floating*, on **Moondawn** (1976), combined the usual battery of sequencers with manic percussions. Rhythm disappeared from **Mirage** (1977), one of the earliest albums of ambient music. Another stunning masterpiece, **X** (1978), summarized all his experiments. The four monumental suites paid homage to teutonic culture like no one had done since Wagner. Having reached his baroque and romantic zenith, Schulze began wasting his talent in trivial new-age

music. **Audentity** (1983) and **Dresden Performance** (1990) would be his last meaningful works.

Each and every other member of Tangerine Dream launched a solo career, but no one was as successful as Schulze.

**Romance '76** (1976), by Peter Baumann (1) and **Aqua** (1974), by Edgar Froese (1), were probably the best of the solo works of the others, while Chris Franke (1) would not release a significant work till **Babylon 5** (1995).

### *The soundtrack of industrial neurosis*

Cluster, Kraftwerk, Neu and Faust had little or no interest in psychedelia, and even less interest in the universe. They were (morbidly) fascinated by the human psyche in the 20th century.

Originally, Hans-Joachim Roedelius, Dieter Moebius and and Conrad Schnitzler formed Cluster (4), or, better, Ensemble Kluster, to play wildly dissonant and heavily electronic psychedelic music, collected on **Klopffzeichen** (1970) and **Zwei Osterei** (1971). Renamed Cluster (with producer Conrad Plank replacing Schnitzler), which is also the title of **Cluster** (1971), the trio began to indulge in velvety drones, distorted reverbs, cyclic repetitions and tonal poetry, thus aiming for a form of contemplation instead of Kluster's abstract painting. The musical continuum of **Cluster II** (1972) drew inspiration from Tangerine Dream's psychedelic/cosmic meditations, but without the emphasis on the "visual", sensational, chromatic, symphonic aspects that Schulze had gone on to develop in his solo career. Cluster's electronica was subtle and psychological, rather than emphatic and psychedelic. Sound effects were employed to create unnerving feelings, not the trancey ecstasy of the cosmic poems. Their focus was on the background cosmic radiation rather than on the explosion of a supernova. **Zuckerzeit** (1974), featuring Neu's Michael Rother, and **Musik Von Harmonia** (1974), credited to Harmonia (1) but featuring the same trio as the previous one, veered towards lighter atmospheres and artificial rhythms. Continuing the transition, Cluster converted to Eno's ambient music with **Sowieso** (1976) and, after two collaborations with the British master, scored their best ambient work, **Grosses Wasser** (1979).

Kraftwerk (4) influenced two separate (and often conflicting) groups of musicians: the hyper-abstract noise-makers and the hyper-hedonistic dance-pop crowd. Both industrial music and disco-music descend from Kraftwerk. They were not the first band to focus on the sound of the industrial society (Kluster did so a couple of years earlier) and they were not the first band to make music with electronic keyboards, but they were probably the first musicians to fuse those innovations with pop melody (for better and for worse). When they pursued that fusion, they de facto replaced conventional drumming with electronic rhythms, or, better, the essence of Afro-American civilization with the essence of European civilization. Each suite on **Kraftwerk** (1970) and **Kraftwerk 2** (1971), which introduced the drum-machine (replacing Klaus Dinger) and probably remains their futuristic masterpiece (*Kling Klang*), was a harrowing, awe-inspiring fresco, worthy of abstract painting, of Morton Subotnick's electronic dadaism, of surrealist poetry, but with the emphasis on the "man machine". **Ralf & Florian** (1973) refined the relationship between rhythm and melody, and **Autobahn** (1974) finally abandoned any intellectual pretense and laid the foundations for disco-pop. But now their operation of "black exploitation" was not all that different from what Presley and the Beatles had done: 1. take black music, 2. remove the provocative elements, 3. enhance it with modern technology, 4. and turn it into easy-listening music for the white masses.

Searching for a middle point between post-nuclear psychedelia and psycho-ambient "musique concrete", Faust (112) coined one of the most powerful, dramatic and eccentric languages in modern music. Known for the spartan editions of their records and for the ascetic modesty of their members, Faust were, in a sense, the first "lo-fi" group. Technically, the ensemble's music pushed to the extreme an aesthetic of darkness, ugliness, fear, chaos, irrational, that stemmed from expressionism, surrealism, theater of the absurd, Brecht/Weill's cabaret, myth of the "supermensch", Wagner-ain melodrama, "musique concrete", all fused in a formal system that was as much metaphysical as grotesque. Influenced by Frank Zappa's collages, these teutonic vampires injected angst, like burning lava, into a sound that was deliberately fastidious, repulsive, incoherent. Demented, demonic, paranoid, acid and violent, their compositions constitute a puzzle of sonic boutades and hermetic puns. Their opus was a

black mass that deteriorated into "happening". However, behind the surface, Faust's music hid a moving vision of the human condition, one of the most lyrical in the entire history of the century. The visions of hell on their debut album, **Faust** (1971), particularly *Miss Fortune* (with the age-defining lyrics "Are we supposed to be or not to be?"), represent one of the noblest testaments to modern alienation. That album was the soundtrack to something both horrible and tender that had just happened to humankind. **So Far** (1972) was a more conventional set of songs, and **Tapes** (1973) was a collage of small fragments. Faust's second masterpiece, **IV** (1973), or, better, its tour de force *Krautrock*, is a bleak, menacing, agonizing whirlwind of galactic magma that consume thermonuclear energy. If the Indian mystics wanted to become one with Brahman, Faust the atheists tried to become one with the Big Bang.

Formed by guitarist Michael Rother and percussionist Klaus Dinger, both veterans of Kraftwerk, **Neu!** (102) **Neu!** (1972) pushed to the limit the technique of iterative patterns and the impressionistic approach that were popular among contemporary cosmic musicians. Pieces such as *Negativland* are essentially continuums of rhythmic impulses propelled by Dinger's legendary "motorik beat" and by obsessive repetition of ferocious percussive patterns (occasionally bordering on jack-hammer noise). It was tribal drumming applied to the devastating neurosis of the post-industrial era. *Fur Immer*, on their second album, **2** (1973), offered the last glimpse into their personal and public hell. **Neu! 75** (1975) was a much quieter and softer affair, downplaying the rhythmic element and incorporating a stronger melodic element. After the split, each musician continued Neu's mission. Both first solo album by Michael Rother, **Flammende Herzen** (1976), and *Dusseldorf*, on the first album **LA Dusseldorf** (1976) by Dinger's LA Dusseldorf (1) resumed the nightmare. Neu's anti-romantic futurism and anguished hyper-realism of Wagner-ian intensity would be highly influential.

### *Spiritual music*

Deuter and Popol Vuh turned hippy mysticism into a new musical genre.

Georg Deuter (15) was a pioneer of world-music, and one of the earliest "hippy" musicians to blend western avantgarde and eastern spirituality. The marriage between modern, ancient and eastern cultures is embedded in the core elements of his music: respectively, electronic keyboards, flute melodies, and exotic percussions. Deuter presented his credentials in the four-movement suite *Babylon*, off his debut album **D** (1971), that quotes Karlheinz Stockhausen, Tangerine Dream, raga-rock and acid-rock. **Aum** (1972) was the first Indo-western mass: Hinduist liturgy is transfigured from the viewpoint of the classical avantgarde, while natural sounds and lush percussive textures enhance the ceremonial quality. Deuter continued his mission with a series of devotional albums inspired by his sojourn in India. The suites released on **Haleakala Mystery** (1978) and **Ecstasy** (1979) blend Tibetan mantras, "om"-like vocals, electronic drones, sounds of nature and discrete melodies to recreate the intimate ecstasy of the spiritual experience. **Silence Is The Answer** (1981), his masterpiece, summarizes his musical achievements on a monumental scale, although Deuter would later join the ranks of less profound new-age music with **Nirvana Road** (1984).

One of the most significant groups of all times, Florian Fricke's Popol Vuh (114) absorbed Eastern spirituality within the format of western music. Fricke's work has been a constant exploration of the same theme: how to express the most personal, profound, austere spirituality by the means of western classical music, western sacred music and profane rock music. It was a marriage of East and West, and a marriage of past and present, made on Earth. In fact, it was made in Germany, and it bears the stigmata of German history. Almost inevitably, Fricke ended up denying the fundamental tenet of German music of his age: electronics. The humble, peaceful tones of acoustic instruments served his purpose better than the majestic complexity of synthesizers and sequencers. Despite the fact that Popol Vuh's debut album, **Affenstunde** (1971), was an all-electronic album (in fact, it was one of the first rock albums to employ the Moog synthesizer), the ethnic percussions, the natural sounds and the pastoral tone turned it into their first essay in abstract soundpainting, focusing on the ambience rather than on the

pathos. Popol Vuh further detached themselves from the clichés of "kosmische musik" with **In Den Gaerten Pharaos** (1972), one of the most significant albums of the decade. Partially recorded inside a cathedral, its two suites evoke a quiet, intense spiritual experience, aiming for a communion with the forces of the universe, with infinite and with eternity. The sound is mostly inert and timeless: there is no melodic center, no rhythmic underpinning, no narrative development. Electronic instruments had never been employed in such a humble format, to travel "inside" rather than "outside". The transition from electronic to acoustic instruments, and from grandeur to humility, was completed with **Hosianna Mantra** (1973), one of the most significant works in the entire history of rock music. This Eastern-western meditation-mass for chamber ensemble, centered around the angelic wails of Korean soprano Djong Yun, carried out a sublime integration of Buddhist and Christian meditative/contemplative practices. This album also completed Popol Vuh's repudiation of rhythm: if Tangerine Dream had removed rhythm (i.e., Time) from its cosmic soundpainting, then Popol Vuh removed rhythm (i.e., Time) from its spiritual soundpainting. Building on that intuition, **Seligpreisung** (1973) began a mystic trilogy devoted to holy books, **Einsjaeger & Siebenjaeger** (1974) and **Das Hohelieds Salomons** (1975) being the other two parts. **Letzte Tage Letzte Naechte** (1976) marked an equally successful conversion to more conventional psychedelic-rock. Eberhard Schoener (2), a classical violinist and conductor, who has staged several collaborations between rock musicians and symphony orchestras, endorsed Deuter's and Popol Vuh's spiritual stance on **Meditation** (1973) and his best electronic poems, *Sky Music* and *Mountain Music*.

#### ***German prog-rock***

Compared with so many giants who revolutionized the history of music, German progressive and psychedelic bands were hardly relevant. Nonetheless, many of those bands rank with the best British bands of the time.

Ash Ra Tempel (1), formed by guitarist Manuel Gottsching (and initially featuring Klaus Schulze on keyboards), practiced a more earthly form of cosmic psychedelia on **Schwingungen** (1972) and on their masterpiece, *Freak'n'Roll*, off the album **Join Inn** (1973), the ultimate synthesis of hippy culture and German expressionism, of Grateful Dead and teutonic sensibility. Manuel Gottsching (2) formed the **Cosmic Jokers** (1974) with Schulze and then started a solo career with the ambitious **Inventions For Electric Guitar** (1975), which would be followed by more and more spiritual works for the new-age generation.

Guru Guru offered a surreal mixture of psychedelia, humour, improvisation and collage technique on their 20-minute juggernaut *Der LSD Marsch* (1970).

**Malesch** (1972), the debut album by Agitation Free (1), enhanced the recipe of acid-rock with frantic exotic dances (reminiscent of middle-eastern dervishes) and with avantgarde touches due to Michael Hoenig's synthesizer.

The electronic suites of **Rot** (1973) by Conrad Schnitzler (1), a founding member of both Cluster and Tangerine Dream, are closer to Morton Subotnick's avantgarde electronica than to cosmic music.

Gruppe Between (1), featuring keyboardist Peter Michael Hamel, contaminated "kosmische musik" with free-jazz, world-music, minimalism, and even the symphonic orchestra on **Dharana** (1974).

More derivative progressive-rock was played by bands such as: Xhol, whose **Electrip** (1969) parallels Frank Zappa's developments in jazz-rock; Embryo (1), whose **Opal** (1970) was influenced by John Coltrane's mystic free-jazz; Organisation (later evolved into Kraftwerk), whose **Tone Float** (1970) was one of the earliest examples of acid-jazz-raga fusion; Dzyan (1), whose **Time Machine** (1973) contains four complex jams that offered an unusual hybrid of acid-rock, progressive-rock, world-music and Canterbury-ian jazz-rock; Passport, whose **Looking Thru** (1974) acknowledges the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Soft Machine; Eloy (1), whose symphonic arrangements and Pink Floyd-ian vocals would bloom on **Ocean** (1977).

#### ***Meet the avantgarde***

Former Gruppe Between keyboardist Peter Michael Hamel (23) coined an instrumental, keyboard-based sound that

is reminiscent of both Bach and Terry Riley with **Aura** (1972) and **Colours Of Time** (1980), the latter being his most imaginative work, whose magniloquence and austerity also permeate **Nada** (1980) and **Bardo** (1981) as well. **Transition** (1983), perhaps his most experimental work, ran the gamut from Bach to tribal music, from Tibetan trance to Riley's dervishes, and led to ever more ambitious works: the sonata **Organum** (1986) and two pieces for string orchestra dedicated to the concept of Time, *Arrow Of Time* and *Cycle Of Time* (1988).

The exotic element was central to the music of Stephan Micus (23), as was the entire cultural world of the Far East. **Implosions** (1977) is more than an erudite version of Popol Vuh's **Hosianna Mantra**. In pieces such as *As I Crossed A Bridge Of Dreams*, a gentle psalm for sitar, guitar and voice, Micus sets zen philosophy to hypnotic quasi-ambient music. That form of languid Eastern-western chamber music for small orchestra of ethnic instruments was further explored on **Koan** (1981) and **Wings Over Water** (1982), and articulated in more and more virtuoso combinations. **Ocean** (1986), Micus' definitive symphony of timbres, led to the more abstract soundscapes of **Twilight Fields** (1987), which is static music for droning instruments and found objects, and **Music Of Stones** (1989), which collects, literally, improvisations for resonating stones.

After disbanding Agitation Free, Michael Hoenig (10) set a new standard for cosmic music with **Departure From The Northern Wasteland** (1978), a melodic fantasy that blends Tangerine Dream, and Terry Riley, and even predates ambient house.

- 1969: the Unix operating system is born
- 1969: the USA uses chemical weapons in Vietnam
- 1969: Charles Manson, leader of a satanic cult, and his followers kills seven people in a Bel Air mansion
- 1969: The USA begins a secret bombing campaign of Cambodia
- 1969: the first "automatic teller machines"
- 1969: the computer network ArpaNET is born in the U.S. (it will be renamed Internet in 1985)
- 1969: American astronaut Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to set foot on the Moon
- 1969: US president Richard Nixon approves carpet bombing and land invasion of Cambodia
- 1969: 300,000 young people attend the Woodstock festival of rock music
- 1969: A huge crowd marches on Washington to demand an end to the Vietnam war
- 1969: Sylvia Rivera founds the gay liberation movement out of New York
- 1969: colonel Muhammar Qaddafi becomes dictator of Libya
- 1969: Fascists and anarchists terrorize Italy with bombs
- 1969: the IRA begins a campaign of terrorism in Northern Ireland
- 1969: Willy Brandt forms a social-democratic government in West Germany and inaugurates "ostpolitik" (opening to the East)
- 1969: Yassir Arafat becomes leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization

### 3.8 Hard-rock 1969-73

Hard-rock signaled, in many ways, the end of the creative 1960s. In and around the cities of the counterculture, hard-rock became a way to affirm a less "confrontational", militant stance. Musically, hard-rock was the terminal point of an evolution of blues that had seen white, middle-class musicians reinvent the music of black, enslaved musicians as entertainment for the western youth. Hard-rock was still based on blues, like rock'n'roll had always been, but it was a faster, louder and stronger kind of music, that buried the suffering of the black people under thousands of decibels.

One can find the prodromes of hard-rock in bands such as Cream (England), Blue Cheer (California) and Guess Who (Canada), that already emphasized amplification and centered the song around the guitar riff. And they were certainly a major influence on the British bands that "invented" hard-rock.

However, Led Zeppelin (2), formed by ex-Yardbirds guitarist Jimmy Page and Alexis Korner's protege` Robert Plant, were, first and foremost, children of the blues. Except that the jams of **Led Zeppelin I** (1969) introduced a hysterical approach to black music that even blacks had never dreamed of (culminating in the epileptic zenith of *Communication Breakdown*). Led Zeppelin's sound was an extension of electric blues that relied on three factors: a faster, almost frenzied, pace; a loud and scorching howl that almost parodied the black "shouters" and had psychotic overtones; and forceful guitar playing of great imagination with mystic overtones. The melodrama of songs such as *Whole Lotta Love* (1969) was continuously ruptured by guitar riffs and delirious vocals. Cream had played blues-rock as brain music: Led Zeppelin played blues-rock as body music. From *Immigrant Song* (1970) to *In The Evening* (1979), Led Zeppelin were mainly an idea of rock'n'roll for a new kind of audience. The secondary elements that had been percolating the early albums emerged vigorously on **Led Zeppelin IV** (1971): *When The Levee Breaks* was their most original (almost psychedelic) song inspired by the folk tradition, and *Stairway To Heaven* was the culmination of their "soft" alter-ego.

Led Zeppelin became a handbook case of how a product finds a market without any need for marketing. The hippy generation had created a demand for free-form radio (as opposed to hit-oriented radio) and for arena-size concerts. Their music was completely different from the music that those radios and those arenas had been playing, but turned out to be the perfect music to maximize the commercial benefit of free-form radio and arena-size concerts.

Led Zeppelin's success had a powerful impact on the recording industry: it defined the long-playing album as rock's medium of choice. Led Zeppelin never had a major "hit" on the Billboard charts, but ruled the airwaves and the arenas. The recording industry followed the hint and began marketing albums rather than singles.

#### **Detroit**

Another source of hard vibrations was Detroit. Detroit hosted the headquarters of some of the most extremist elements of the counterculture, but, more to the point, was the most industrial city of the USA. Just like the folksingers had been the natural voice of the intellectuals of the Greenwich Village, and surf-music had been the natural voice of California fun, Mersey-beat had been the natural voice of the "swinging London" and acid-rock had been the natural voice of San Francisco's hippies, a ferocious, noisy kind of rock'n'roll became the natural voice of Detroit's blue-collar workers and of their children. The humble Frost (1) gave the city its manifesto with **Rock And Roll Music** (1969).

MC5 (11), led by White Panther's leader John Sinclair and guitarist Wayne Kramer, represented the revolutionary wing of the student riots and used rock and roll as a powerful agit-prop device. Their sound embodied the rage and the sarcasm of the extremists, their lyrics defied all moral standards. Their live shows were wild, collective orgasms in which the band unleashed a monster and chaotic fury on the audience. **Kick Out The Jams** (1969) remains one of the most orgiastic, terrifying and visceral albums ever released, a grotesque bacchanal of atrocious, primitive musical skills, a formidable assault on reality, the rock'n'roll equivalent of a nuclear explosion, sounding

as if free-jazz and acid-rock had been savagely mauled inside a particle accelerator. The fact that its follow-up, **Back In The USA** (1970), was so inferior is proof that the masterpiece was due to the spirit of an entire era and not to a particular group of musicians.

While no less savage, the Stooges (12) came up with a more musical proposition. **Stooges** (1969) borrowed ideas from Chuck Berry, Rolling Stones, Velvet Underground and Doors (hard riffs, obscene antics, libidinous vocals, distorted guitars) and pushed them to the limit. *We Will Fall* was the Doors' *The End* plus the Velvet Underground's *Venus In Furs*. 1969, *No Fun* and *I Wanna Be Your Dog* were Chuck Berry's *Sweet Little Sixteen* plus the Rolling Stones' *Satisfaction* plus the Velvet Underground's *Waiting For My Man*. The sex appeal of Mick Jagger, the erotic guitar of Jimi Hendrix, the shamanic perdition of Jim Morrison, the degenerate rituals of Lou Reed, found in the Stooges a new vehicle for a new generation, that was no longer idealistic but merely frustrated. The Stooges embraced the image of the degenerate punk, and took it to a new level of realism, leaving behind the mythic overtones of the hippy era, and returning it to its original dimensions of defiance and vulgarity. Thus the Stooges achieved a historical synthesis of both musical styles and sociological meanings. **Fun House** (1970), whose *TV Eye* virtually invented voodoobilly, and whose *1970* virtually invented punk-rock, continued the saga, whereas **Raw Power** (1973) veered towards the kind of respectable glam-rock which would soon become Iggy Pop's new career. Every bit of Stooges music was militant, although they never referred to politics. And every bit of it was pornographic: each note, each chord, each riff was a sexual innuendo. That mixture of abrasive guitars, raw vocals and solid rhythms was a sonic kamasutra.

MC5 and the Stooges had created a new kind of rock'n'roll, one founded on extreme violence.

### ***From blues to hard-rock***

In Britain, the "apolitical" form of hard-rock generated the same kind of hysterical reaction that Mersey-beat and progressive-rock had generated: dozens of bands adopted the new style with little or no variation between one and the other. Among the least predictable were: Free, featuring vocalist Paul Rodgers, and notable for the visceral blues-rock of *All Right Now* (1970) and *Fire And Water* (1970); Status Quo, whose background was into psychedelic and progressive rock; Thin Lizzy, another dual guitar line-up a` la Wishbone Ash; UFO, who pioneered pop-metal, Uriah Heep, purveyors of gothic and medieval atmospheres; Slade, who wed an image of working-class holligans with catchy anthems, and the two bands born on the ashes of the Small Faces: Humble Pie, featuring Peter Frampton, and Faces (1), featuring vocalist Rod Stewart and guitarist Ron Wood (both veterans of the Jeff Beck Group), whose **A Nod Is As Good As A Wink To A Blind Horse** (1971) ranks among the most lively examples of white soul-rock.

Deep Purple (1), who began as late epigones of progressive-rock and neo-classical rock, faring best with the *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* (1970) and the psychological melodrama *Child In Time* (1970), joined the ranks of hard-rock with the supersonic boogie attacks of **Machine Head** (1972). Despite (or precisely because of) the highly simplified guitar technique of Ritchie Blackmore, the barbaric excesses of their lengthy performances became the stereotype of hard-rock.

Black Sabbath (2), a highly influential band, further deteriorated the degree of skills required for playing hard-rock, but their distorted and booming riffs, their monster grooves, their martial rhythms, their monotonous singing and their horror themes, that evoked the vision of a futuristic medieval universe, laid the foundations for black metal and doom-metal. Melody and any instrumental prowess were negligible components of their most typical works, **Paranoid** (1971) and **Master Of Reality** (1971). They were not the inventors of gothic music, but they were the first to turn it into a genre. Theirs was the ultimate attack on rockers, hippies, singer-songwriters and anyone who valued content over form.

Queen (1) were the jokers of the hard-rock movement. They borrowed ideas from progressive-rock, from the music-hall (*Killer Queen*, 1974) and from gospel (*Somebody to Love*, 1976); applied fantastic production

techniques on **A Night At The Opera** (1975), worthy of a Frank Zappa operetta; and would become the quintessence of "bombastic" rock with their 1977 anthems (*We Are The Champions, We Will Rock You*).

Bad Company, formed by Free's vocalist Paul Rodgers, borrowed from southern boogie and added a lascivious tone, for example on **Bad Company** (1974).

In America very few bands endorsed the violent sound of Detroit's bands. For the most part, American hard-rock was the American counterpart of British hard-rock. And the blues component was, generally speaking, stronger. The leaders were: Mountain (2), the American equivalent of Cream, that wed blues, hard-rock and psychedelic-rock with the epic *Nantucket Sleighride* (1971) and on the baroque collection **Flowers Of Evil** (1971); James Gang (1), James Walsh's power-trio, whose **Rides Again** (1970) betrays the influence of progressive-rock; Grand Funk Railroad (1), vulgar and illiterate but masters of the "groove", and even militant on **E Pluribus Funk** (1971); Montrose (1), whose derivative classic is **Montrose** (1973); Bachman-Turner Overdrive (1), led by former Guess Who guitarist, influenced by the Who and southern boogie on albums such as **Not Fragile** (1974); Heart (1), who attempted a fusion of folk-rock and hard-rock before selling out with **Heart** (1985).

The sound of the revolution got therefore tamed very quickly, and hard-rock became mere entertainment for the masses.

### ***Southern waltz***

The southern states of the USA developed their own brand of "hard" vibrations, rooted in the boogie and honky-tonk traditions of the saloons. "Southern rock", launched nationwide by ZZ Top and Allman Brothers in 1970, became almost a genre in its own.

There was also a link with the psychedelic school of the 1960s, particularly visible on **Take Me To The Mountain** (1970) by Shiva's Headband, Mariani's **Perpetuum Mobile** (1970), and Josefus' **Dead Man** (1970).

The Allman Brothers (3) were the first major band since the Grateful Dead for whom the (improvised) live performance was more relevant than the (composed) studio album. Not surprisingly, they became the only band capable of competing with the Grateful Dead in terms of crowds. Their debut album, **The Allman Brothers Band** (1969), introduced a form of loose, guitar-intensive blues-rock ballad, a southern version of the Band's roots-rock, but it was the live albums, **Live At Fillmore East** (1971) and **Eat A Peach** (1972), that transformed those ballads into epic sonic excursions.

The ultimate, definitive purveyors of southern boogie were ZZ Top (2), whose best album, **Tres Hombres** (1973), was a veritable encyclopedia of southern styles, highlighted by Billy Gibbons' guitar. Later into their career, ZZ Top veered towards heavy-metal (i.e., the sound invented by their descendants) and adopted devastating electronic rhythms, for example on **Eliminator** (1983), thereby delivering the same old brutal concept to the punk generation.

Solid rhythms and searing guitars were also the main weapons in the arsenal of the Atlanta Rhythm Section, the Marshall Tucker Band Wet Willie, and many others. They mixed hard-rock, boogie, country, soul and gospel, although each band had its own recipe and used different percentages for each ingredient.

The most original album of this era came from the obscure Hampton Grease Band (10), **Music To Eat** (1971), an unlikely but effervescent blend of Pink Floyd's **Ummagumma**, Captain Beefheart's **Trout Mask Replica** and the Allman Brothers' **Eat A Peach**.

There were no protagonists (no solos and no virtuosos) in the group sound of Lynyrd Skynyrd (2), the leaders of the second generation. Their objectives were down to earth: granitic riffs and earth-shaking rhythms to sing the macho (and self-destructing) lifestyle of the reactionary southern male. **Second Helping** (1974), which contains their anthem *Sweet Home Alabama*, was their best show of force, but their dreadful philosophy peaked with **Street Survivors** (1977), released after two members of the band had died in an accident.

Following Lynyrd Skynyrd, bands such as Black Oak Arkansas and Outlaws (whose 1975's jam *Green Grass And*

*High Tides* may well be the most exciting of the genre) increased the doses of guitar riffs and heavy rhythms.

### 3.9 The Avantgarde

#### *Minimalism 1961-70*

As far as rock music was concerned, the most relevant of the avantgarde schools of the 1970s was minimalism.

La Monte Young, a pupil of John Cage and one of the founders of the Fluxus movement, was the real "inventor" of minimalism. The term originally referred to his "dream house", a New York loft in which Young and his Theater Of Eternal Music (comprising violinist Tony Conrad, viola player John Cale, trumpet player Jon Hassell, keyboardist Terry Riley and others) developed a music made of semi-stationary waves, of slowly evolving amorphous sound. Music became a living organism. Colossal pieces such as *The Tortoise His Dreams And Journeys* (1964) and *A Well Tuned Piano* (1964) offered little or no respite for western harmony, and created a bold bridge between John Cage's "alea", Buddhist meditation and psychedelia.

One of his disciples, Terry Riley, popularized Young's minimalistic vision with *In C* (1965), a composition that centered on the repetition of simple patterns, and explored the raga-psychedelic connection with the sublime suite *A Rainbow In Curved Air* (1968). The spiritual fervor of the *Persian Surgery Dervishes* (1974) marked the end of an era, as minimalism was accepted by both the classical and the rock establishment. Riley would turn to more conventional formats, but still retain the titanic urge of his hippy years, particularly on the monumental quartets *Cadenza On The Night Plain* (1985) and *Salome Dances For Peace* (1989).

The master of minimalist repetition (or, better, "slow motion music") was Steve Reich, who gradually came to employ chamber ensembles and small orchestras for his masterpieces *Drumming* (1971), *Music For 18 Musicians* (1976), *Music For Large Ensemble* (1978) and *Desert Music* (1984). His vocabulary, too, expanded over the years, as he was accepted by the classical establishment.

Philip Glass began from similar premises but shunned Reich's austere science and always remained closer to popular music than to classical music. He moved away from the arduous repetitive patterns of *Music In Twelve Parts* (1974), rediscovered melody and approached the format of the opera from a different perspective with *Einstein On The Beach* (1976). Movie soundtracks, operas and collaborations with pop/rock musicians became his preferred media.

#### *Live electronic music 1963-70*

Morton Subotnick's chaotic tornadoes, such as *Silver Apples Of The Moon* (1967), *The Wild Bull* (1967) and *Touch* (1968), no matter how naive, took Edgar Varese's "electronic poem" to another dimension.

Tod Dockstader's *Apocalypse* (1966) and *Quatermass* (1966) were visionary works, if not technical masterpieces.

Frederick Rzewsky's *Spacecraft* (1967), performed by the ensemble formed in Rome with expatriates Alvin Curran and Richard Teitelbaum, *Musica Elettronica Viva*, Gordon Mumma's dense and apocalyptic sonic masses of *Megaton* (1963) and *Dresden Interleaf* (1965), Roger Reynolds' *Ping* (1969), were emblematic of the way electronics was being used to produce maximum emotional impact.

Alvin Lucier, instead, returned to LaMonte Young's stationary waves but from a more austere, mathematical, scientific point of view in works such as *Music For Solo Performer* (1965) and *Music On A Long Thin Wire* (1977).

A rarely-recorded pioneer of minimalism, Phill Niblock, tried, fundamentally, to create music without rhythm or melody, by slow accumulation of microtones. Niblock's droning soundscapes originated from the superimposition and juxtaposition of sustained sounds which were, in turn, obtained from reprocessing acoustic instruments. Niblock deliberately chose to limit the number of his recordings, believing that his real composition was the live performances and his real instrument was the tape. One can play a tape anywhere, but, like any instrument, the

way it is played (back) depends on the player. Ideally, Niblock's tape should be played back by Niblock himself in an environment of his choice. When they finally appeared on compact disc, pieces such as *Early Winter* (1993) and *Pan Fried 70* (2003) proved his stature.

Laura Spiegel's *Expanding Universe* (1975) and David Rosenboom's *Zones Of Influence* (1985) were among the works that used computers to compose music.

## 4 The Seventies(1970-1975)

### 4.1 Psychedelic madness 1970-74

The boom of psychedelic music, and the de-conditioning brought about by the hippy generation, fostered the advent of a generation of musical originals.

One of the most luminous and idiosyncratic minds in the history of rock music, and one of its most durable myths, Syd Barrett (11) was the eccentric and idealistic soul of early Pink Floyd. After leaving the band, he recorded two masterpieces of psychedelic folk music, **Madcap Laughs** (1970) and the even better **Barrett** (1970). Barrett's ballads are inspired by (and sung in the tone of) fairy tales and nursery rhymes, but betray paranoia and loneliness. His voice is nonchalant to the extent that it is pointless to fight the agony. His mind broadcasts visions of another world, and it almost sounds like Alice In Wonderland reporting from the underworld, but this is Alice after realizing that she can't go back anymore, Alice paralyzed by fear and anguish. Musically, Barrett, blessed with the gift of spontaneity, has a simple way to organize a broad palette, that runs the gamut from spiritual (*Baby Lemonade*) to ragtime (*Gigolo Aunt*) from blues (*Rats*) to circus music and the music-hall. His most perfect melody, *Love Song*, and the definitive anthem of his naive melancholy madness, *Waving My Arms In The Air* soar over the Dali-esque landscape. Because they defined, once and for all, the relationship between the "eccentric" and the "private" in music (in a manner similar to surrealism and psychoanalysis), those two albums would exert an unparalleled influence on subsequent generations of singer-songwriters. Barrett, whose mental health was rapidly deteriorating, would never record again.

Another psychedelic oddball, John "Twink" Alder (1), ex-Tomorrow and ex-Pretty Things, assembled another formidable repertory of nonsense, **Think Pink** (1970). Twink and remnants of the Deviants formed the Pink Fairies (2), who recorded two of hard-rock's most original albums: **Never Never Land** (1971), with *Uncle Harry's Last Freak-out*, and **Kings Of Oblivion** (1974).

The third solitary iconoclast of British psychedelia was Fleetwood Mac's guitarist Peter Green (10), who released the all-instrumental **The End Of The Game** (1970) before retiring for almost a decade. Borrowing the format of the jam session from jazz music, but the atmosphere from Ernst's surrealistic paintings, horror soundtracks and voodoo rituals, Green indulged in sheer sound-painting. The hallucinated ramble of the guitar weaves colorful textures for mantra-like psalms. It is visceral, primordial music that echoes the eruption of volcanos, ocean tides and the life-cycle of equatorial forest. Green's expansion of consciousness is one of both folly and ecstasy, one that would be better defined as epic terror.

Hawkwind (2) invented "space-rock", a hybrid of hard-rock and acid-rock that united the sonic power of the former and the free improvisation of the latter (and Robert Calvert's sci-fi visions). **In Search Of Space** (1971) and **Doremi Fasol Latido** (1972), summarized on their **Space Ritual** (1973), refined the idea, but theirs was a cult phenomenon that focused mostly on live performance (somewhat similar to what had happened in the USA with the Grateful Dead) while boasting the frenzied, noisy attitude of the MC5. Hawkwind's gargantuan sound also

represents a natural (no matter how demented) liaison between hippy culture and punk culture.

In the USA there were at least three cases of similar madness. Buffalo Springfield's bassist Bruce Palmer (1) released **The Cycle Is Complete** (1971), perhaps the single most stoned work of the era, before disappearing for good from the music scenes.

David Crosby (10), the former Byrds who can claim to be inventor of acid-rock, raga-rock and space-rock, released only one solo album before falling victim to his drugs addiction, but that album, **If I Could Only Remember My Name** (1971), that absorbed his experience with the Jefferson Airplane and with Crosby Stills Nash & Young, remains one of the most touching documents of the post-hippy era. Several historical figures of San Francisco's acid-rock scene attended the sessions, including most of the Jefferson Airplane and of the Grateful Dead. The melancholy, dreamy, ecstatic psalms of this album are embedded into loose, shimmering, impressionist structures. Crosby travels to another universe, whispers, wails, babbles, agonizes, radiates "om"s, chats with mirages and ghosts, sinks into a mystic-psychedelic trance.

Merrell Fankhauser (2), raised in Los Angeles to surf music (he wrote the Surfaris' *Wipe Out*), formed Mu along with Captain Beefheart's guitarist Jeff Cotton. Their first album, **Mu** (1971), was a unique example of mystic/exotic/acid rock. Relocating to Hawaii, Fankhauser churned out one bizarre album after the other, eventually attaining musical nirvana with **Message To The Universe** (One Big Guitar, 1986), a metaphysical rock opera.

Ya Ho Wha 13 (1) were formed in 1969 by a middle-aged hippie called Tom Baker who believed himself a god and went by the nickname of Father Yod. On albums such as their masterpiece **Penetration** (1974) they delivered extreme psychedelic sound, that employed tribal drums and distorted guitars in a childish manner.

In Florida, Terry Brooks' Strange (1) recorded albums of dissonant, free-form psychedelia, such as **Raw Power** (1976).

### ***Japanese space-rock 1970-73***

Psychedelic-rock had been imported into Japan by countless cover bands and by original bands such as the Jacks, whose **Vacant World** (1968) was an early classic. Japanese space-rock was born with Hadaka no Rallizes (also known as Les Rallizes Denudes), who drew inspiration from the Velvet Underground's Exploding Plastic Inevitable light and sound shows and from Blue Cheer's heavily amplified sound. Despite the fact that no one would hear it for two decades, Japan remained an invaluable source of space-rock bands.

The Taj Mahal Travellers (11), led by avantgarde composer and violinist Takehisa Kosugi, played lengthy improvised jams for small ensemble (violin, harmonica, bass, tuba, trumpet, synthesizer, mandolin, percussions) that can be summarized in three principles: a Far-Eastern approach to music as a living organism, an intense electronic processing of instruments and voices, a semi-mathematical overlapping of frequencies. Basically: LaMonte Young on acid. Collected on **July 15 1972** and **August 1974**, their music ranged from cosmic hisses to nightmarish distortions, from pow-wow bacchanals to Tibetan-style chanting and droning.

Lost Aaraaff's **Lost Aaraaff** (1971) was devoted to three improvised jams. Their young guitarist, Keiji Haino (3) penned the eastern mass **Ama No Gawa - Milky Way** (1973). Then, inspired by free-jazz master Takayanagi Masayuki, Haino formed Fushitsusha (2) to play improvised psychedelic jams. Starting with **Live I** (1989), 100 minutes of noise that ranked among the masterpieces of the psychedelic jam of all times, a bacchanal that vomited debris of Blue Cheer, MC5, Iron Butterfly, free-jazz, Grateful Dead and Jimi Hendrix, this prolific trio (originally a quartet) released monumental and dissolute works that seemed to know no limits. **Fushitsusha** (1991) and **Hisou - Pathetique** (1994) were among the follow-ups, but later releases such as **The Wisdom Prepared** (1998) and **I Saw It** (2000) were equally torrential. In the meantime, Haino was also busy with Nijjumu and Vajra. His solo albums included the galactic suites **Affection** (1992) and **Execration** (1993), and his boldest experiment, **I Said This Is The Son Of Nihilism** (1995). As the influences of LaMonte Young and Brian Eno increased, Haino arrived

at **Abandon All Words At A Stroke So That Prayer Can Come Spilling Out** (2001), which contains a hypnotic piece for hurdy-gurdy and treated voice, and an industrial collage of metallic noises, distortions and ghostly vocals. The music of Maru Sankaku Shikaku, active between 1970 and 1973, was an ethnic, mystical experience, that embraced the hippy spirit of Taj Mahal Travelers and Third Ear Band.

In Canada, Simply Saucer (that only released a single) played a mixture of free jazz, Pink Floyd, Stooges and the Velvet Underground. **Cyborgs Revisited** collects the unreleased material of 1974-75.

- 1970: the first Kinko's opens near the University of California at Santa Barbara
- 1970: optical fiber is invented
- 1970: there are more immigrants from Latin America (39%) than Europe (18%)
- 1970: Palestinian terrorists bomb airplanes and other facilities in Europe

## 4.2 Re-alignment 1970-74

The re-alignment of rock music to the old values simply helped sustain the creative boom of the 1960s. A continuing revolution would have destabilized the (music) world. A "wise" restoration of traditional forms (such as blues, folk and country), instead, helped spread the new product and thus turn rock music into one of consumerism's most successful phenomena. The album, born as an "intellectual" alternative to the 45 RPM, simply became a more lucrative business for the recording companies, that could charge a much higher price for a little higher investment. The 1970s were, in many ways, another "dark age" for rock music, but this time the Establishment did not try to obliterate it: it absorbed it. Rock music became "mainstream" music. In 1971 the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Andrew Lloyd Webber opened on Broadway, using arrangements, rhythms and melodies inspired by alternative rock. A concert for Bangla Desh, attended by the stars of the counterculture such as Bob Dylan, became the most successful benefit event since the war, and began a tradition of rock stars acting like prominent political personalities. The popularity of rock music had no rivals. In 1973, the Watkins Glen festival (Allman Brothers, Grateful Dead, Band) was attended by a crowd of 500,000 people. Television stations were devoting more airtime to rock music than any other genre, adding new programs such as "The Midnight Special" (anchored by Wolfman Jack and Helen Reddy). Rock's defeat became rock's triumph.

### **Country-rock 1970-72**

Gran Parsons' great invention, country-rock, was briefly one of America's biggest fads.

Two acts played the role of liaison with San Francisco's acid-rock, Commander Cody (1), whose deranged bar-band was immortalized on **Lost In The Ozone** (1971), and the New Riders Of The Purple Sage (1), who evolved from the oniric style of **New Riders Of The Purple Sage** (1971) to the mock-heroic style of **The Adventures of Panama Red** (1973).

Steve Stills of the Buffalo Springfield and Chris Hillman of the Flying Burrito Bros formed a new band to record **Manassas** (1972), a veritable encyclopedia of American music.

However, the leadership soon moved east, towards Nashville. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band was one of the first country outfits to embrace rock and pop, for example on **Uncle Charlie And His Dog Teddy** (1970), although they became famous with the live Nashville celebration of **Will The Circle Be Unbroken** (1972).

As the last vestiges of the hippy civilization were submerged by mandolins and banjos, the bands that originated from the Byrds and from the Buffalo Springfield became repetitive and predictable. The dynasty was continued by

mediocre country-rockers such as Poco and Loggins & Messina, until the Eagles (2), a super-group of sort, featuring songwriters Don Henley and Glenn Frey, originally inspired by Crosby Stills & Nash, gave country-rock a more personal and universal meaning, from the melancholy western vignettes of **Desperado** (1972) to the robust hard-rock of **Hotel California** (1976).

The effect on the conservative (sometimes fascist) Nashville culture was beneficial, though. A number of country singers began to behave like hippies. In 1976 the album **Wanted: The Outlaws**, featuring Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser and Jessi Colter, gave them a name. It also became the first country album to be certified platinum. Willie Nelson went on to become a national institution, as did another "outlaw", Kris Kristofferson.

### ***Celtic revival 1971-74***

One of the great themes of the folk revival was the rediscovery and revitalization of the celtic tradition. Alan Stivell (2) started the commercial phenomenon with **Renaissance De L'Harpe Celtique** (1971) and **Chemins De Terre/ From Celtic Roots** (1973), and achieved his masterpiece with **Tir Na Nog/ Symphonie Celtique** (1980). The Chieftains had begun in the early 1960s, but fame was bestowed on them by less authentic (and more creative) albums such as **Chieftains 4** (1973) and **Bonaparte's Retreat** (1977). Clannad introduced electronics and world-music into celtic music, starting with **Clannad 2** (1974) and arriving at the lushly arranged and dreamy folk-pop music of **Fuaim** (1982), which sparked the solo career of the group's youngest member, Enya.

### ***Soul 1970-1972***

At the turn of the decade, black artists such as Marvin Gaye (1), Isaac Hayes (1), Curtis Mayfield and Stevie Wonder (3) began producing artsy soul records that clearly violated the spirit of the genre. It was a way to "westernize" the most authentic African music. However, they coupled the sophisticated (and frequently orchestral) arrangements with erudite and sociopolitically-aware lyrics that rescued their songs from pop cliches.

Smokey Robinson's *The Tears Of A Clown* (1970), which fused vaudeville, classical music and soul music, is representative of the level of craftsmanship achieved by this generation of black artists. Marvin Gaye's album **What's Going On** (1971), possibly the best black pop album of all times, crowned that era. The skills in composition, scoring and studio production led to lengthy orchestral pop-dance-soul tracks, such as Isaac Hayes' **Hot Buttered Soul** (1969) and *Shaft* (1971), Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly* (1972), and Stevie Wonder's concept albums **Music Of My Mind** (1972), the first collection written, produced and played (mostly) by himself, and recorded when he was only 22 but already a star, **Talking Book** (1972), one of the most adventurous pop albums of the time in the use of electronic instruments, **Innervisions** (1973), a social fresco of symphonic proportions, and the monumental and ambitious **Songs In The Key Of Life** (1976). Clearly, these were the prodromes of the music that would be called "disco-music", as Barry White's *Love's Theme* (1973) proved.

### ***Reggae 1967-1973***

An independent label, Island, had been distributing Jamaican records in the UK throughout the 1960s, but reggae became popular in the UK only when Prince Buster's *Al Capone* (1967) and Desmond Dekker's *The Israelites* (1969) started a brief "dance craze". Jamaican music was very much a ghetto phenomenon, associated with gang-style violence, but Jimmy Cliff's *Wonderful World* (1969) wed reggae with the "peace and love" philosophy of the hippies, an association that would not die. In the USA, Neil Diamond's *Red Red Wine* (1967) was the first reggae hit by a pop musician. Shortly afterwards, Johnny Nash's *Hold Me Tight* (1968) launched reggae in the charts. The Maytals' *Do The Reggae* (1968) was the record that gave the music its name.

A social phenomenon was changing the music more than any technical innovation: the poor people of the Jamaican ghettos, who could not afford to hire a band for their parties, employed "sound systems". The "selectors", the Jamaican disc-jockeys who operated those sound systems, became the real entertainers. The selector would spin the records and would "toast" over them. The art of toasting, that usually consisted in rhyming vocal patterns and soon evolved in social commentary, became as important as the music that was being played.

Around that time, the Jamaican disc-jockey Ruddy Redwood began recording instrumental versions of reggae hits. Two years later, King Tubby invented "dub", using the recording console like an instrument.

In 1973 reggae became a staple of western radio stations thanks to the film **The Harder They Come**.

Reggae was mainly popularized in the West by Bob Marley, first as the co-leader of the Wailers (1), with Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer, the band that promoted the image of the urban guerrilla with *Rude Boy* (1966), debuted with **Soul Rebels** (1970) and cut the first concept record of reggae music, **Best Of The Wailers** (1970); and later as the political and religious (rasta) guru of the movement, a stance that would transform him into a star, particularly after his conversion to pop-soul melody with laid-back ballads such as *I Shot The Sheriff* (1973) and *No Woman No Cry* (1974).

On the other hand, Burning Spear's **Marcus Garvey** (1976) could be the highest artistic achievements by reggae musicians.

More and more studio engineers were re-mixing B-sides of reggae 45 RPM singles, dropping out the vocals and emphasizing the instrumental texture of the song. The purpose was to allow disc-jockeys to toast over the record. Engineers became more and more skilled at refining the instrumental textures, especially when they began to employ sophisticated studio devices, and then "dub" became a separate genre from reggae. The first dub singles appeared in 1971, but the man generally credited with "inventing" the genre is Osbourne Ruddock, alias King Tubby, who opened his studio in 1972 and released one of the earliest dub albums, **Blackboard Jungle Dub** (1973), a collaboration with Lee Perry. Lee Perry's **Double Seven** (1974), the first reggae album that overdubbed synthesizers, **Revolution Dub** (1975) and **Super Ape** (1976), one of the genre's masterpieces, and Augustus Pablo's **East of the River Nile** (1977) pretty much set the reference standard for generations to come.

### **Roots-rock 1971-73**

Hot Tuna (1), formed by remnants of Jefferson Airplane (Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady), dispensed an unorthodox form of roots-rock, a bluesier and lighter version of the Band, on effervescent albums such as **Burgers** (1972).

Ranking among the most original and humorous innovators of roots-rock, Little Feat (3) revisited blues, gospel, country, boogie, soul, funk, rhythm'n'blues and rock'n'roll on albums such as **Sailin' Shoes** (1972), **Dixie Chicken** (1973) and **Feats Don't Fail Me Now** (1974), and sabotaged them with bizarre instrumental parts.

The operation carried out by the Doobie Brothers (1) was similar in spirit to the Creedence Clearwater Revival, because they, too, composed a soundtrack for the American blues-collar class without copying any of the pre-existing genres but rather coining a modern language (that the average American could immediately identify with) out of those archaic languages. They inherited the vocal harmonies of their Californian forebears, but then proceeded to drench them into an eclectic stew of soul, country, gospel, boogie, funk and jazz. But, ultimately, the secret of *Listen To The Music* (1972), *China Groove* (1973), *Black Water* (1974) and *Take Me In Your Arms* (1975) was an easy-going laid-back attitude.

### **Progressive bluegrass 1971-75**

The "progressive bluegrass" movement (a brainchild of John Fahey) that blossomed during the first half of the 1970s represented an artistic alternative to country-rock. While country-rock was focusing on the conventions of the country ballad, a number of country-related musicians explored more adventurous formats.

John Fahey's "primitivism" infected a naive soul such as Leo Kottke (3), a virtuoso guitarist whose **6 & 12 String Guitar** (1972), **Greenhouse** (1972) and **My Feet Are Smiling** (1973) contain breath-taking instrumental excursions into the childish imagination of an ordinary simpleton. His domestic and rural storytelling (with or without words) indulge in the speed and intricacy of ragtime and bluegrass but also the pity and tenderness of folk music.

Among fiercely independent, eccentric and isolated contributors to the canon of progressive folk music, two

characters stand out. John Hartford (2) penned the southern vignettes of **Aereo-plain** (1971) and **Mark Twang** (1976), which are both caricatural and emmpathic. Norman Blake (1) assembled an ensemble of masterful players to perform chamber music for bluegrass string band on **The Fields Of November** (1974).

The best disciple of Holy Modal Rounders' acid-folk was Michael Hurley (2), a bizarre folk-singer who masterminded two demented masterpieces such as **Have Moicy** (1975) and **Long Journey** (1976), both disfigured by his quavering growl and haphazard guitar picking, and his cohort Jeffrey Frederick (1), whose **Spiders In The Moonlight** (1977) is no less heretical.

In 1976 David Grisman (3) coined "jazzgrass", a fusion of jazz and bluegrass. Grisman had experimented with jazz and country on Earth Opera's **The Great American Eagle Tragedy** (1969), mostly arranged by Peter Rowan, and on the historical session of **Muleskinner** (1974), featuring both Rowan and Greene of Seatrain. **The David Grisman Quintet** (1977), featuring guitarist Tony Rice, was the album that Stephane Grappelli in person played on **Hot Dawg** (1979) and Grisman perfected his line-up on **Quintet '80** (1980): Darol Anger on violin, Mike Marshall on mandolin, Mark O'Connor on guitar, and Bob Wasserman on stand-up bass. Each of these musicians would continue Grisman's mission. Mark O'Connor's **Markology** (1979) and Tony Rice's **Acoustics** (1979) were the first albums to implement the master's vision. The others would follow in the 1980s.

In the tradition of John Fahey's avantgarde folk music, Eugene Chadbourne (2) was a free improviser whose roots were in rural white music but whose technique borrowed from jazz and extreme rock guitarists such as Jimi Hendrix and Jerry Garcia. Chadbourne added to the mix a surreal sense of humour and an appreciation of the American avantgarde (Edgar Varese, Frank Zappa). Chadbourne was also unique for having been an avantgarde composer in the classical tradition, a jazz improviser, a folk musician and the member of a rock band (Shockabilly). Unfortunately, the prolific Chadbourne has produced too many mediocre albums, but at least **Solo Acoustic Guitar** (1975) and **Collected Symphonies** (1985) rise above the average.

#### *Nostalgia 1972-76*

Nostalgia is a recursive phenomenon in popular music. Every so many years, the clock is set back a few years, and the sounds that were just beginning to be forgotten are brought back, dressed in flashy new clothes.

The blues revival continued with Roy Buchanan's stylized blues, particularly on his debut album, **Roy Buchanan** (1972), and Bonnie Raitt (1), an immensely talented bottleneck guitarist and raspy, husky contralto, arguably the greatest blues-woman since Janis Joplin. who matured with **Give It Up** (1972). However, more original artists took the blues to places where it had never been.

Ry Cooder had pioneered the musical reconstruction of past eras. Others exploited that idea in several guises.

NRBQ (New Rhythm And Blues Quartet) rode the nostalgia movement without sacrificing a very personal, irreverent, eccentric approach to the pop, blues, jazz, and country traditions, best demonstrated on **Scraps** (1972).

Manhattan Transfer, an American institution of four-part close harmony since they scored with **Coming Out** (1976), transformed from novelty act of the nostalgia movement to chamber performers with **Extensions** (1979).

The eccentric and eclectic Leon Redbone, armed with his baritone croon and yodel and his nostalgic orchestrations (heavy on the strings and horns), devoted his career to injecting new life into the blues, jazz, vaudeville, ragtime and folk traditions of the roaring 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, starting with **On The Track** (1976).

The Roches (1) were a trio of female folksingers who made a career of simple tunes enhanced with old-fashioned vocal harmonies (in the tradition of barbershop quartets and doo-wop) on albums such as **Roches** (1979).

The impeccable compositions of the McGarrigle Sisters (2), notably the ones on **Kate And Anna McGarrigle** (1976) and **Dancer With Bruised Knees** (1977), marked a return to the folk roots that had been forgotten during the post-hippy years.

In 1973 George Lucas' film **American Graffiti** launched the nostalgic revival nation-wide, but this time the target was the music of the white middle-class of the 1950s and 1960s.

### ***Power-pop 1972-73***

Abba were the reigning champions of pop during the 1970s. They began with effervescent vocal harmonies coupled with catchy upbeat refrains, notably *Waterloo* (1974) and *Fernando* (1976), but then proved to excel also in the discos, with *Dancing Queen* (1977), *Gimme Gimme Gimme* (1979) and the formidable *Lay All Your Love On Me* (1981), and finally ventured into the romantic melodrama with *Knowing Me Knowing You* (1977) and *Winner Takes It All* (1980). *Supertrouper* (1981) returned them to their naive-pop glory, and, after Abba disbanded, their leaders and songwriters managed to top all of this with a superb exotic pastiche, Murray Head's *One Night In Bangkok* (1985).

Throughout the ages of hard-rock, progressive-rock, punk-rock and the new wave, Alex Chilton was the prophet of power-pop, of unadulterated melody, of four-part vocal harmonies, of jingle-jangle guitars, of hard-rock riffs, and of crystal-clear production. He had already pocketed a hit with the Box Tops, *The Letter* (1967), when he joined the Big Star (2). Their **Radio City** (1974) is the quintessential power-pop album, on which the Beatles' vocal harmonies, the Byrds' jingle-jangle and the Who's power riffs become terms of the same equation. **Third**, recorded in 1974 but released only four years later, was harder and bleaker. Chilton's retro` ideology eventually came to permeate the new wave and exerted a huge influence on Brit-pop of the 1990s.

The Raspeberries, who debuted in 1972, were also highly derivative of the Beatles and the Beach Boys.

- 1971: during riots at the Attica prison, 33 convicts and 10 guards are killed
- 1971: Federico Faggin and others at Intel invent the micro-processor
- 1971: the video-cassette recorder (VCR) is introduced
- 1971: journalist Gloria Steinem founds the first feminist magazine, "Ms Magazine"
- 1971: the first Hard Rock Cafe` opens in London

## **4.3 Singer-songwriters 1970-74**

### ***The New York archetype 1970-72***

For mysterious reasons, James Taylor (1), of all people, became the prototype for the erudite and creative singer-songwriter of the 1970s. Despite occasional (and half-hearted) nods to jazz and rhythm'n'blues, Taylor did not introduce significant innovations, and even his best album, **Sweet Baby James** (1970), hardly compares with the masterpieces of the era.

Ditto for veteran songwriter Carole King (1), whose solo album **Tapestry** (1971) was hailed as a revolution when, in fact, was still a collection of melodic pop songs.

Even more over-rated was Carly Simon, whose **No Secrets** (1972) propelled her to the top of the musical and the feminist movement.

Don McLean contributed to the renewal with the nine-minute saga *American Pie* (1971).

Chicago had its own school, best represented by John Prine (1), an odd hybrid, sincerely polemic in the tradition of Phil Ochs while sincerely honky-tonk in the tradition of Hank Williams. His debut album, **John Prine** (1971), was a powerful indictment of social ills via vignettes of blue-collar life.

The American heartland, though, would always remain under the influence of country music. John Denver, who sang stately, epic odes to domestic, rural, nostalgic America (*Take Me Home Country Roads*, 1971), was the best of the musicians who tried to harmonize country, rock and pop.

### ***L.A. Renewal 1970-72***

However, the innovations that would impact future generations took place west, not east.

Randy Newman (4) revealed his prodigious talent on **Twelve Songs** (1970), a cycle of vignettes about life in the city, that boasted catchy melodies as well as eclectic arrangements. Both his existential pessimism and his orchestral skills peaked on another concept album, **Sail Away** (1972), while **Good Old Boys** (1974) displayed a dexterity at cross-breeding musical genres that was matched only by Tom Waits. Newman was a master of the short story, but the reason of his success lied in his uncanny fusion of popular styles, from Broadway show-tunes to Tin Pan Alley pop ballads to swing big-bands to rhythm'n'blues to tropical music to Salvation Army fanfares. His moral testament might well be the rock opera **Faust** (1995) that provides a corrosive commentary on the relationship between humans and their God.

Harry Nilsson ventured on a similar (but far less adventurous) route with the sardonic drunkard of **Nilsson Schmilsson** (1971).

Shawn Phillips (2) was a bold follower of Tim Buckley and Van Morrison, and one of the most daring vocalists of the era. The lengthy, free-form compositions of **Contribution** (1970), **Second Contribution** (1970) and **Collaboration** (1971) mixed folk, rock, psychedelia, jazz, classical and Indian music. The latter two (his best) also featured orchestral arrangements by Paul Buckmaster that enhanced the impressionistic power of Phillips' music.

Few musicians have been so influential and so unknown as J.J. Cale (1). His "laid-back" style became the standard of reference for most mainstream music, but JJ Cale was never mainstream himself. The ultimate independent, Cale was never much part of the music scene. His albums, beginning with the quintessential **Naturally** (december 1971), feature a subtle and subdued production, that leaves the voice and the guitar in the middle of the mix. The result is dreamy and hypnotic, and would be imitated by countless musicians.

Veterans of the folk-rock scene were instrumental in creating the sound that would become the quintessential American sound.

Former Byrds singer Gene Clark (1) vented his need for simplicity in the delicate lullabies of **White Light** (1971). The "cosmic cowboy" Gram Parsons (2), after his stints with the Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers, composed enough ballads for two albums, **G.P.** (1972) and especially **Grievous Angel** (1973), that consolidated the legend of a "poet maudit" who lived fast and died young (in 1973).

Emmylou Harris (1), the angelic soprano who accompanied Gram Parsons' urban nightmares, belonged to a new batch of country-pop singers (Linda Ronstadt, Maria Muldaur, Kim Carnes) who bridged the world of Nashville and the world of rock music. Harris was typical of the way these female singers were appropriating the rock repertory, although her best work would come much later in her career, notably **Red Dirt Girl** (2000).

In his solo career, former Byrds guitarist Roger McGuinn (1) transformed the guitar-based sound of his old band into a semiotic discipline (his 12-string Rickenbaker being a primary "icon"), into a baroque art of crystal-clear sound, stately melody and tamed rock'n'roll rhythm. **Roger McGuinn** (1973) and especially **Cardiff Rose** (1976) defined the classic sound of the post-hippy synthesis.

Jackson Browne (4) was far more significant than James Taylor in modernizing the trade. The atmosphere of his first album, **Jackson Browne** (1972), harks back to sacred hymns not to country-rock ballads, and the arrangements sounded like chamber music for piano, violin and guitar. The religious feeling increased on **For Everyman** (1973), that introduced his long, tormented meditations on life. Browne reached his bleak and cryptic zenith on **Late For The Sky** (1974), whose profound sermons have definitely left behind the style of folk-rock. His symbolic and universal parables were beginning to resemble philosophical essays. His major season ended with **Pretender** (1976), that marked the transition towards a more lively sound, but also proved his skills at crafting a new post-hippy ethos out of personal pain, bitterness and nostalgia.

One of the greatest and most distinctive musical geniuses of the 20th century, Tom Waits (26) was apparently a "barbarian" but in reality an erudite post-modern artist. As far as the juxtaposition of primitive and intellectual art

goes, he was a worthy disciple of Captain Beefheart. Never as in their cases was McLuhan wrong: the medium is definitely not the message. His albums are galleries (or full-fledged operas) of misfits, eccentrics and losers. Below the surface, they are also parables of fall and redemption set in the age of urban decay. In a sense, his opus is a compendium of urban cacophony.

His first major artistic achievement was the trilogy of **Small Change** (1976), **Foreign Affairs** (1977) and **Blue Valentine** (1978). The bittersweet vignettes of these albums formed the musical equivalent of Balzac's "comédie humaine" transposed to the lowlives of urban America. Waits wed a very personal idiom, made up of free associations in the style of beat poetry, with an eclectic idea of what a "song" is, one that draws from diverse traditions of white and black popular music (swing, blues, gospel, lounge-music, vaudeville, Broadway show-tunes, bebop, religious hymns, marching bands, operetta, western soundtracks). What kept the whole together is Waits' voice, which was also the most unlikely element of cohesion, being the musical equivalent of the stench of a skunk. But his voice was more than a mere vehicle to sing his lyrics. His voice quickly became the "sound" of his music. Waits boasted one of the most flexible, expressive and, yes, touching voices in the history of popular music. Especially when coupled with the "pretty" arrangements of established genres, that voice became the perfect tool to depict the inner, anarchic "ugliness" of the individual within the organized "beauty" of society. The unitary and coherent qualities of his songs emanated out of a psychic landscape that was lugubrious and arcane, and in which the singer played the archetypal role of the visionary misfit.

The process of identification by the pop star with the masses of nomads, derelicts, bums and tramps reached a new stage with **Swordfishtrombones** (1983) and **Rain Dogs** (1985), his two masterpieces. Here Waits turned to theatre, thus enhancing the narrative content, while at the same time the acquisition of ever more refined arrangement techniques transformed his degenerate bacchanal into baroque elegance. Waits left the dark alleys of the junkies and climbed on the Broadway stages. The urban hobo became an elitist composer. In one of the most surprising mutations in the history of genetics, the most barbaric of songwriters turned out to be the most neo-traditional of composers.

Waits' syncretic art continued to flourish on **Franks Wild Years** (1987) and **Bone Machine** (1992), bordering on stylistic self-indulgence. **Alice** (2002), one of his most idyllic and ethereal works, was an absolute oddity in his repertoire of oddities.

Waits did not belong to any of the schools and movements of his age. Waits was unique in his being a misfit at heart, not a trendy one.

#### ***Eccentrics 1970-1976***

No question that Todd Rundgren (4) is one of the most innovative pop and rock musicians of all times. If too many of his projects lacked artistic inspiration to match his ambition, the ones that did work remain milestones. To start with, Rundgren played all instruments by himself on **Something/Anything** (1972), the first case of "do it yourself" production. On this monumental endeavour he mixed all sorts of genres, from soul to pop, from hard-rock to country-rock, from funk to gospel, from rhythm'n'blues to folk-rock. The identity crisis becomes his identity on the equally superficial **A Wizard/True Star** (1973). However, this album emphasized the pop-soul melodic element, and the propensity for the format of the baroquely-produced collage/suite. **Todd** (1974) completed the assimilation of electronics and of hard-rock, while setting his chameleon-like musical persona on the stage of an imaginary music-hall. His next step was to invent a sort of futuristic heavy-metal music with the lengthy suites of **Utopia** (1974), a mixture of progressive-rock, techno-rock and shimmering studio sound. Rundgren was obsessed by a sort of titanic challenge that led him to continuously restart his career (he also produced the first video-disc and the first interactive album), but also condemned him to frequent failures. A living musical encyclopedia, Rundgren has few rivals when it comes to being "eclectic".

One of the most creative women in the history of music, and one of the first female composers of popular music, a

pioneer of rap, live electronic music and synth-pop, Annette Peacock (7) married jazz bassist Gary Peacock at 19 (in 1960) and was therefore exposed to the bohemian milieu of Greenwich Village's free-jazz lofts. The quintessential hippy, she was introduced to LSD by Timothy Leary in person, collaborated with surrealist painter Salvador Dali, and frequently shocked the establishment with her unconventional and uncompromising attitude. When she left Peacock for another jazz musician, Paul Bley (they married in 1966), she was given a chance to compose, sing and play (one of the first Moog synthesizers). Her compositions constitute the bulk of the albums that the Bley combo recorded in 1966-68 and the bulk of Annette and Paul Bley's "Synthesizer Show" albums (four of them recorded between 1970 and 1971), notably **Dual Unity** (1971) and **Improvisie** (1971). Peacock's first solo album, **I'm The One** (1972), a collection of jazz-blues ballads that were transfigured by dark and intimate premonitions, introduced her tormented stream of consciousness and her virtuoso vocal performance. She reached her artistic peak with the sensual and ethereal ballads of **Sky-skating** (1982), composed between 1972 and 1978, and the introverted lieder of **I Have No Feelings** (1986). Using her vocals in the convoluted, acrobatic fashion of progressive-rock, with minimal, sparse, discordant accompaniment (entirely played by herself) and disorienting dynamic, Peacock carved austere, stately forms that overflowed with pain and angst. The brainy blues/raps of **Abstract-Contact** (1988), propelled by dance rhythms, shifted the center of mass towards a more conventional format, but the slow, melancholy, skeletal love ballads of **An Acrobat's Heart** (2000) reaffirmed her commitment to self-flagellation.

Loudon Wainwright (1), misanthropic hobo and farcical comedian, fused wit and social commentary in a corrosive folk-rock style on **Album III** (1972).

Jimmy Buffett (1), a hybrid of singer-songwriter, comedian, romantic individualist, eccentric and drunkard, who shines in the nostalgic and ironic vignettes of **A White Sport Coat & A Pink Crustacean** (1973).

The solemn meditations of Bruce Cockburn (1), at least from **Sunwheel Dance** (1972) to his zenith, **In the Falling Dark** (1976), were typical of the era's concerns with the meaning of life (in this case interpreted through a Christian metaphysics).

#### ***Britain 1970-72***

The former Cream to enjoy popular success was Eric Clapton, despite the fact that his music was always highly derivative of other musicians (particularly J.J. Cale).

Pete Townshend was never as effective as he had been with the Who, despite focusing on his favorite format, the concept album and the rock opera with **Who Came First** (1972), **White City** (1985), **Iron Man** (1989), **Psychoderelict** (1993).

Vashti Bunyan's **Just Another Diamond Day** (1970), a collection of psalms drenched in eastern mysticism in the idyllic tone of early Donovan.

Van Der Graaf Generator's vocalist Peter Hammill (1) expanded on that band's tense progressive-rock with his solo work. The nightmarish psychodramas of albums such as **Chameleon in the Shadow of the Night** (1973) and especially **Nadir's Big Chance** (1975) conduct morbid explorations of the subconscious.

The founder of Slapp Happy, singer-songwriter Anthony Moore (2) proved his worth as an avantgarde composer with **Pieces From The Cloudland Ballroom** (1971), on which he overdubbed and looped three vocalists, a percussionist and himself over three extended compositions, but on **Out** (1976), unreleased for two decades, the songs were already taking on the surreal quality that would lead to **Flying Doesn't Help** (1979), an album in the vein of Syd Barrett's psychedelic-folk.

Far from being merely Fairport Convention's guitarist, Richard Thompson (13) revealed a philosophical persona via a set of pensive, pessimistic and occasionally macabre ballads that sound more like religious psalms than folk-rock songs. He delivered them with a mixture of neo-classical composure and eccentric nonsense on **Henry The Human Fly** (1972) and especially **I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight** (1974). Then he absorbed

sufism and proceeded to chisel out the stately, funereal elegies of **Pour Down Like Silver** (1975), and thus achieved the transcendental bleakness of his masterpiece, **Shoot Out The Lights** (1982), in which expressionist fear and existential suspense are sustained by erudite lyrics. Thompson would still sink into utter desolation, on the shiver-inducing **Hand Of Kindness** (1983), but mostly would maintain an emotional balance that translated into the mature elegance of **Amnesia** (1988) and **Rumor And Sigh** (1991)

Hawkwind's lyricist, Robert Calvert (2), composed two surreal concept albums, **Captain Lockheed and the Starfighters** (1974) and **Lucky Leif and the Longships** (1975), both arranged by Brian Eno.

John Cale (4), the Velvet Underground's psychedelic viola, was at heart a European intellectual, and his solo career showed how he had synthesized existentialism, expressionism and decadentism, although it failed to capitalize on his in-depth knowledge of the European and American avantgarde. **The Academy In Peril** (1972) set his poems to scores for solo instrument, chamber ensemble or symphonic orchestra, but the neo-classical ambition obscured his downcast vision of the state and nature of humankind that came to the forefront on the humbler **Fear** (1974). This, his most poignant collection, secretes a uniform sense of tragedy out of a varied palette of moods and sounds: stately, hypnotic, distorted, macabre, surreal, atonal... He blended Syd Barrett, Jim Morrison (Doors), Neil Young, Brian Eno and Kevin Ayers, but also added a unique element of detachment. The stark, gloomy psychodramas of **Music For A New Society** (1982) confirmed his status as a black messiah of urban alienation. But Cale often indulged in pointless albums of pop ballads that overall detract from his merits. His adult and autumnal music was better served by the collaborations: **Songs For 'Drella** (1990), with Lou Reed, **Wrong Way Up** (1990), with Brian Eno, and especially **Last Day On Earth** (1995), with Bob Newirth. Even the concept of forging a new kind of romantic ballad from the marriage of rock music and classical music worked much better on the Nico albums that Cale arranged rather than on his own albums.

Kevin Coyne (10) proved his talent on only one album, but it was a massive achievement: **Marjory Razorblade** (1973), a survey of ordinary life undertaken by an awful narrating voice, halfway between Captain Beefheart's drunken moaning and Syd Barrett's ecstatic candor, and accompanied by archaic and spartan instrumental manners that hark back to the bluesmen of the Delta and to pub folk songs.

On the commercial front, Paul McCartney remained true to the Beatles' cult of unadulterated melody. The media loved John Lennon for his public stands and his marriage with Yoko Ono, but his music was the quintessence of incompetent pretentiousness (when it wasn't reduced to trivial nursery rhymes). George Harrison was, surprisingly, the most creative of the three Beatles songwriters: **Wonderwall** (1968) and **Electronic Sounds** (1969) were pure avantgarde, and the triple-album **All Things Must Pass** (1970) was an ambitious hodgepodge of Donovan-esque raga-psychedelic folk-rock.

One of the greatest melodic tunesmiths of the 1970s, Elton John coined a style of piano-based pop ballad that bridged gospel hymns and renaissance motets. The album-oriented approach of **Tumbleweed Connection** (1970) was soon abandoned for the catchy, romantic hits of his "glam" phase: *Tiny Dancer* (1971), *Rocket Man* (1972), *Daniel* (1973), *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* (1973), *Don't Go Breaking My Heart* (1976), etc.

#### **Realism 1973-74**

If James Taylor, Carole King and Carly Simon did little to emancipate the artist, they certainly did a lot to bring her/him closer to the audience. The identification of the star with the public was fostered by a new generation of singer-songwriters who were much more aware of the issues and the mood of their era.

Bruce Springsteen (103) is the epitome of "epic". After Dylan and before the Ramones, he was one of the few musicians capable of transforming the mood of an entire generation into a "sound". If the rules to judge the significance of an artist are that a) he be indifferent to fads and trends; b) that his lyrics dig deep into his era and resonate with the souls of millions of people; c) that each record be, de facto, a concept album; d) that each song send shivers down the spine even without a catchy melody; then Springsteen is one of the greatest of all times.

Musically, Springsteen coined the model of the singer-songwriter of the 1980s, bridging the gap between the bluesman of the 1930s, the black shouter of the 1940s, the rocker of the 1950s, the folk-singer of the 1960s, the punk of the 1970s.

In many ways, Springsteen was the true heir to Woody Guthrie (Bob Dylan was never a populist). He sang about the dreams and the fears of ordinary white Americans. But he was also the heir to the blues, in an era in which the black nation was abandoning it for dance music.

Over the years, Springsteen grew up to become the eloquent spokesman of middle-class and blue-collar America. His declamations combine populist demagoguery, patriotic passion and prophetic vision in a way that is quintessentially American. The alienated enthusiasm of his early days mutated first into a nostalgic glorification of the past and eventually into resigned grief. Dreams turned into memories, and exuberance turned into frustration. As the promised land faded away, Springsteen led the exodus from the international utopias to the virtues of ordinary people.

Springsteen conveyed all of this in energetic and intense performances that changed the whole meaning of the word "concert". His concert is a collective sacrificial ceremony that pours naked life into artistic form. Whether shouting or whispering, Springsteen "was" the voice of millions of American for which the American dream never materialized. His songs are the national anthems of that submerged nation. The stylistic fusion of **The Wild The Innocent And The E Street Shuffle** (1973), recalled both Van Morrison and Taj Mahal, while **Born To Run** (1975) introduced his torrential "wall of sound". **The River** (1980) summed everything up: pathos, epos and eros. Populist lyrics, granitic group sound, tender confessions, catchy refrains, hard-rock riffs, massive boogie grooves, rock'n'roll spasms, acoustic ballads: Springsteen and his band were the ultimate manufacturers of good vibrations. Sorrow and pessimism prevailed on subsequent albums (on which Springsteen frequently preferred the acoustic format), with the notable exception of **Born In The USA** (1984), another super-charged set of anthemic songs.

Springsteen towers over his generation, but he was not alone.

Elliott Murphy (1) penned **Aquashow** (1973) that mixed Dylan's **Blonde On Blonde** with the decadent themes of glam-rock.

Jim Croce wrote some of most majestic melodies of the era (*I Got A Name*, 1973, *Time In A Bottle*).

Billy Joel exhausted his artistic ambitions with the desolate fresco of *Piano Man* (1973) and later devoted his career to more commercial fare that borrowed from rock'n'roll (*It's Still Rock And Roll To Me*), Broadway show-tunes (*New York State Of Mind*), Tamla's party-music (*Tell Her All About It*, *Uptown Girl*), vocal harmony groups of the 1950s (*The Longest Time*), and old-fashioned pop ballads (*This Is The Time*).

### **Italy**

Italy had a prolific school of singer-songwriters, including existential soul-pop balladeer Lucio Battisti, epic bard Fabrizio DeAndre`, who crafted the Dantesque concept **Tutti Morimmo A Stento** (1968), sociopolitical chronicler Francesco Guccini, who portrayed his generation's mood on **Radici** (1972), and Alan Sorrenti, whose free-form psychedelic concept **Aria** (1972), in the vein of Tim Buckley, was perhaps the most accomplished and innovative album of the Italian "cantautori".

- 1972: USA president Richard Nixon visits China
- 1972: Nolan Bushnell invents the first videogame (Pong)
- 1972: Richard Nixon orders carpet bombing of civilian areas in North Vietnam during the Christmas holidays
- 1972: strategic parity between USA and Soviet Union
- 1972: the Dow Jones index reaches 1000
- 1972: a novel by David Gerrold coins the term "computer virus"
- 1972: Ray Tomlinson invents e-mail

- 1972: the Global Positioning System (GPS) is invented by the US military, using a constellation of 24 satellites for navigation and positioning purposes

## 4.4 Decadence 1969-76

As usual, the "dark age" of the early 1970s, mainly characterized by a general re-alignment to the diktat of mainstream pop music, was breeding the symptoms of a new musical revolution. In 1971 Johnny Thunders formed the New York Dolls, a band of transvestites, and John Cale (of the Velvet Underground's fame) recorded Jonathan Richman's Modern Lovers, while Alice Cooper went on stage with his "horror shock" show. In London, Malcom McLaren opened a boutique in London that became a center for the non-conformist youth. The following year, 1972, was the year of David Bowie's glam-rock, but, more importantly, Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell formed the Neon Boys, while Big Star coined power-pop. Finally, unbeknownst to the masses, in august 1974 a new band debuted at the CBGB's: the Ramones. The future was brewing, no matter how flat and bland the present looked.

### *Decadence-rock 1969-75*

Rock'n'roll had always had an element of decadence, amorality and obscenity. In the 1950s it caused its collapse and quasi-extinction. In the 1960s it fell victim to the general political and moral re-alignment to old-fashioned values. But it never completely disappeared. Jim Morrison, Lou Reed and Kim Fowley kept the outrageous alive in rock'n'roll, as did the Rolling Stones in Britain. In fact, between 1968, when the Cockettes, a hippie-decadent musical theater troupe of drag queens, debuted in San Francisco, and 1974, when the Rocky Horror Picture Show was released, that aspect of rock music became a mass product. Britain called it "glam-rock", and began its genealogy with Marc Bolan's T.Rex (2). With albums such as **Unicorn** (1969), Marc Bolan played the role of trait d'union between Donovan and David Bowie, between the hippy culture and the glam culture. His fairy-tale lyrics and his tribal boogies belonged to a different age, but T.Rex's *Ride A White Swan* (1970) is the song that opened the golden age of glam-rock, and **Electric Warrior** (1971) was the album that wed this genre to hard-rock, a crucial intuition.

However, it was David Bowie (2) who brought glam-rock to its commercial (if not artistic) peak. While his musical skills are dubious at best, there is no question that Bowie performed a Copernican revolution, turning marketing into the essence of his art. All great phenomena (and swindles) of popular music, from Elvis Presley to the Beatles, had been, first and foremost, marketing phenomena, but Bowie transformed that marketing phenomenon into an art on its own.

Bowie was, in many ways, the heir, no matter how perverted, of Andy Warhol's pop art and of the underground culture of the 1960s. He adopted some of the most blasphemous issues and turned them upside down to make them precisely what they had been designed to fight: a commodity. Bowie embodied the quintessence of artificial art, raising futurity to paradigm and focusing on exhibition rather than on content. Bowie made irrelevant the relevant and relevant the irrelevant. Each element of his art is the emblem of a true artistic movement; however, the ensemble of those emblems constitutes no more than a puzzle, no matter how intriguing, of symbols, a roll of incoherent images projected against the wall at twice the speed, a dictionary of terms rather than a poem, and, in the best of hypotheses, a documentary of the cultural fads of his era.

After years of apprenticeship, that had only yielded one hit, *Space Oddity* (1968), futuristically arranged by Paul Buckmaster, Bowie was reborn as the sophisticated ultra-pathetic dandy of **Rise & Fall of Ziggy Stardust** (1972), whose main musical features were Mick Ronson's orchestral arrangements and Rick Wakeman's keyboards. What caused sensation was the show, not the music.

Then Bowie began his nomadic artistic life, an endless series of transformations: hard-rock, soul, disco-music and so forth. Following the naive foray into avantgarde of **Station to Station** (1976), Brian Eno helped him design the "Berlin trilogy", for which Bowie adopted an electronic and expressionistic stance, in sync with the "new wave" of those years: **Low** (1977), **Heroes** (1977), which is the best of the three, and **Lodger** (1979), which is vastly inferior. The songs on these albums were becoming increasingly abstract. They still relied on atmosphere rather than on content, but the atmosphere was apocalyptic rather than sensationalistic.

Meanwhile, In the U.S.A. Alice Cooper was the prophet of bad taste. Alice Cooper (2) became the first star of horror-shock rock, relying on the most truculent and ridiculous show of the era. But Cooper had been a disciple of Frank Zappa's satirical operettas, mainly on **Pretties For You** (1969), and later became, first and foremost, a terrific craftman of "teenage anthems" in the tradition of Chuck Berry. Epically defiant, *Under My Wheels* (1971) and *School's Out* (1972) represent the authentic, subversive spirit of rock'n'roll, while albums such as **Love It To Death** (1971) continued to recycle and borrow themes from the vaudeville, Broadway showtunes, horror movies, and the Grand Guignol.

The Sparks (1) set up a futuristic music-hall that borrowed from pop, soul, hard-rock and progressive-rock. But it was hardly outrageous at all: albums such as **Kimono My House** (1974) were pure entertainment.

The true decadents, rediscovered by David Bowie, were Lou Reed (ex Velvet Underground) and Iggy Pop (ex Stooges). Iggy Pop's **The Idiot** (1977) converted the monster to harsh electronic landscapes, the same metamorphosis carried out by Bowie's **Low**.

Lou Reed (16) became one of the most significant voices of the 1970s and 1980s. From the very beginning, the decadence of urban life was the central theme of his work. His approach wed the Velvet Underground's psychedelic depression with new expressionistic overtones, that become explicit on his first major artistic success, **Berlin** (1973). His early albums were devoted to a bleak analysis of the corrosive power of vice. Reed sang with almost no emotion, and his albums had the feeling of reportages. Reed's monotonous voice and light boogie rhythm virtually created a new kind of singer-songwriter, one who can be simultaneously a detached observer and an involved protagonist. **Metal Machine Music** (1975) represented an odd parenthesis, but one that, in retrospect, announced industrial music and noise music. A double album of pure cacophony, it stands as the most unremitting sonic experience of the first 20 years of rock music. Inevitably, he was adopted as a sort of guru by the punk generation, and his **Street Hassle** (1978) reflects that meeting of two generations. **Blue Mask** (1982) and **Legendary Hearts** (1983) signaled adulthood, as Reed switched his focus from the basements of the junkies to the neighborhoods of the middle class. A humbler, gentler Reed began to sing about domestic and suburban issues. The ultimate extroverted became an introverted, anti-heroic and populist chronicler of the middle age. **New York** (1989) was, in fact, his masterpiece. In a sense, that album ended the pilgrimage that Reed had begun in Berlin. It ended his moral odyssey in his own city. It closed the circle. And, musically, it did so by quoting the roots of American popular music, from folk to jazz to gospel to blues to country. The mournful tone of these albums found an application within the private sphere with two albums that are, de facto, requiems: one for Andy Warhol, **Songs For 'Drella** (1990), a collaboration with John Cale, and one for his friends who died of AIDS, **Magic And Loss** (1992). They compose the modern equivalent of a Medieval fresco of the years of the plague.

In many ways, glam-rock and decadence in general were instrumental in bringing about the punk revolution.

In England Mott The Hoople (1) predated punk-rock with **Mott** (1973), and Bill Nelson's Be Bop Deluxe predated new wave by fusing Hendrix's guitar neurosis and Eno's electronic paranoia, particularly on **Futurama** (1975).

In the USA, Johnny Thunders and his cohorts of tranvestites, the New York Dolls (10), played furious and catchy rock'n'roll on their debut album, **New York Dolls** (1973). Their trash aesthetic descended from the Rolling Stones and the Velvet Underground, but their frantic pace descended from the rockers of the 1950s and from the surf bands of the early 1960s, while their anthemic melodies came from the Who and the Animals. But what made them

dangerous was the fire power (all instruments were played like automatic weapons) and the attitude (not exactly consistent with the prevailing mood of re-alignment). Thunders went on to form the Heartbreakers (1), who were, basically, an updated version of the New York Dolls for the punk generation. The songs on **L.A.M.F.** (1977) were slogans, and the album as a whole was a personal diary.

The Dictators (1) were the clearest link with the Ramones. Their album **Go Girl Crazy** (1975) was a blasphemous totem of junk culture. The band recycled rock'n'roll, surf music, folk-rock and Mersey-beat, but they played it in fast and loud manner of hard-rock, and added a demented, spastic attitude that transformed Frank Zappa's or the Fugs' satirical rock into a terrorist attack.

Jonathan Richman's Modern Lovers (1) played hypnotic rock'n'roll, a splendid recreation of the Velvet Underground sound which, released a few years later on **Modern Lovers** (1976), would introduce the punk generation to urban neurosis.

In Canada, Edgar Breau's Simply Saucer (1) **Cyborgs Revisited** (1974) bridged Syd Barrett, the Velvet Underground and MC5.

In Los Angeles, Kim Fowley invented the Runaways in 1975. They were quintessential Los Angeles teenage girls (including Joan Jett and Lita Ford) and musically incompetent. Fowley turned them into a glam sensation, trained them to play hard-rock and provided them with bubblegum-pop refrains. **Queens Of Noise** (1977) remains their quintessential outrage.

### **Heavy metal 1972-76**

In 1968, Steppenwolf's *Born To Be Wild* had coined the expression "heavy metal". Heavy-metal soon became the American term referring to hard-rock.

More than anyone else, it was Blue Oyster Cult (3) that defined the new genre. By assimilating an encyclopedic repertory of sonic graffiti (rock'n'roll, swing, Mersey-beat, blues-rock, psychedelia, hard-rock, southern boogie, honky-tonk) and mixing it with the sound of Who, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, this emanation of a decadent New York milieu (personified by their inventor, producer and composer Sandy Pearlman), became the flag-bearer of a new apolitical hard-rocking sound. References to satanic cults and to gothic/sci-fi B-movies on **Blue Oyster Cult** (1972) and **Tyranny and Mutation** (1973) were carefully wrapped in a lattice of crude riffs and maniac rhythms. An increasingly theatrical and magniloquent approach, and a corresponding simplification of song structures, began with **Secret Treaties** (1974), **Agents of Fortune** (1976).

Aerosmith (3) well represented the link between heavy-metal and the wild and depraved brand of rhythm'n'blues promoted by urban punks such as the Rolling Stones and the Stooges. Aerosmith's true spirit on **Toys In The Attic** (1975) and **Rocks** (1976) was actually quite different from the loud and truculent cliché created by British hard-rock and pursued by B.O.C. Even ten years later, when they rejuvenated themselves on **Pump** (1989), Aerosmith were more interested in drama, narrative and atmosphere than in "heavy" postures.

Kiss (1) were the exact opposite. They did indulge in all the stereotypes of the genre, emphasizing monster grooves, loud guitars, satanic voices and sexist lyrics. **Kiss** (1974) took Alice Cooper's glam-rock and made it even less credible, emphasizing every possible aspect of their macabre and obscene antics. Their "songs" were brutal and monochord, relying on the repetition of very simple ideas. The refrains were as trivial as bubblegum music, but truculent beyond Black Sabbath.

The Australian band AC/DC (2) was one of the greatest heavy-metal bands of all times, and one of the most authentic acts of rock and roll. They embodied the wild, rebellious essence of rock music like few other bands before punk-rock. They were the opposite of the intellectual singer-songwriter or the brainy progressive-rock or the decadent glam-rock of the 1970s: they were not the brain and not the heart but the guts of rock'n'roll. Hoarse and feverish vocals, and dirty, bluesy guitar licks (a combination already tested by Free in Britain) propelled *It's A Long Way* (1975), *Problem Child* (1976), *Whole Lotta Rosie* (1977), *You Shook Me* (1980) and the entire **Back In**

**Black** (1980), their best album, and even a later anthem such as *Heat Seeker* (1988).

Journey (1), formed by three California veterans, played competent but uninspired pop-metal with progressive-rock overtones. Neil Schon's shimmering guitar riffs propelled the energetic and feverish instrumental jams of **Journey** (1975).

But Boston (1) were the archetype of pop-metal, and their album **Boston** (1976) would remain one of the all-time best-sellers.

Rush (2) re-invented the power-trio, which so far had been modeled on Cream. Albums such as the sci-fi concept **2112** (1976) offered a synthesis of Yes, Black Sabbath, King Crimson and Led Zeppelin. The use of synthesizers and the conversion to a more conventional format led to the pop-metal of **Permanent waves** (1980).

These bands largely defined the horizons of heavy-metal for the 1970s, until the new wave refounded the whole genre and gave it the impulse to become truly a mass phenomenon.

## 4.5 Sound 1973-78

### *Borderline 1974-78*

In the second half of the 1970s, Brian Eno, Larry Fast, Mickey Hart, Stomu Yamashta and many other musicians blurred the lines between rock and avantgarde.

Brian Eno (35), ex-keyboardist for Roxy Music, changed the course of rock music at least three times. The experiment of fusing pop and electronics on **Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy** (1974) changed the very notion of what a "pop song" is. Eno took cheap melodies (the kind that are used at the music-hall, on tv commercials, by nursery rhymes) and added a strong rhythmic base and counterpoint of synthesizer. The result was similar to the novelty numbers and the "bubblegum" music of the early 1960s, but it had the charisma of sheer post-modernist genius. Eno had invented meta-pop music: avantgarde music that employs elements of pop music. He continued the experiment on **Another Green World** (1975), but then changed its perspective on **Before And After Science** (1977). Here Eno's catchy ditties acquired a sinister quality. The album felt more like a surreal fresco, the vision of humankind turned into robots. The melodies could be renaissance madrigals, and the rhythm could be used by disco-music, but the whole did not sound like renaissance music or dance music at all: it sounded like the end of civilization. A learned practitioner of musique concrete, Cage's aleatory music, LaMonte Young's minimalism, Karlheinz Stockhausen's electronic music, Eno had an ambitious program of "music for non-musicians" that was the equivalent of Schoenberg's "Theory of Harmony". If Schoenberg had argued in favor of a new way of composing (serialism), Eno basically proposed to abolish composition altogether, focusing instead on "sound". Eno had begun to implement his program on **Discreet Music** (1975), which was hardly music, and it was hardly "his" music: the composer only set it in motion. What the listener heard was not what the composer wrote. The impressionistic vignettes of **Music For Films** (1978) bridged the gap between theory (his "discreet" music) and practice (his futuristic pop music). Eno's "discreet" music evolved via two collaborations with the German group Cluster (in 1977 and 1978). **Music For Airports** (1978) presented the result: "ambient music", a music made of static drones and languid notes, a music that hardly changes at all, that hardly betrays any feeling at all, music that is meant "not" to be listened to, the avantgarde equivalent of supermarket muzak. This was his third revolution. And it would become one of the most abused genres of the 1990s. **On Land** (1982) and **Thursday Afternoon** (1985) offered a psychological version of ambient music. On the way to becoming one of the most influential composers of the century, Eno had also become one of the most influential producers in rock music. In particular, he sculpted the techno-ethnic-funk that reinvented Talking Heads' career in 1979-80. Most likely, it will take a few more decades before the music scene absorbs all of Eno's intuitions.

Larry Fast (3), aka Synergy, specialized in massive synthesizer-based arrangements, as preached on his **Electronic**

**Realizations For Rock Orchestra** (1975). Perhaps inspired by Mahler's late romantic symphonies and by Gershwin's jazzy orchestrations, Fast frescoed the futuristic soundscapes of **Cords** (1978) and **Metropolitan Suite** (1985), emphasizing frantic movement and dense noise.

The music on **Patrick Moraz** (1976), by former Yes keyboardist Patrick Moraz, was similar in scope, although less ambitious.

The exotic jazz-rock of Japanese monster-percussionist Stomu Yamashta (1) achieved its most accomplished fusion on **Go** (1976), the super-group formed with keyboardist Klaus Schulze, percussionist Michael Shrieve and guitarist Al Di Meola.

Legendary Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart (2) reinvented himself as one of the most brilliant ideologues and mentors of world-music with albums that are dazzling displays of percussions-based music. The album by the Diga Rhythm Band, **Diga** (1976), was one of the first mature fusions of jazz and Indian music, one of the milestones of world-music. After **Yamantaka** (1982), a collaboration with Henry Wolff and Nancy Hennings on Tibetan bells, and **Dafos** (1983), another excursion into jazz, Hart would find a new audience (the new-age audience) with **At The Edge** (1990), that incorporates natural sounds, the orchestral **Mystery Box** (1996) and the more conventional **Supralingua** (1998).

Former Slapp Happy and Henry Cow guitarist Peter Blegvad (2) recorded the jazz nonsense lieder of **Kew Rone** (1976) and the deviant pop muzak of **King Strut** (1990).

### **Techno-rock 1973-76**

Jeff Lynne's Electric Light Orchestra (2) virtually invented "high-tech pop", the idea of arranging catchy refrains with walls of keyboards, lush orchestral arrangements, neo-classical pomp and seductive lyrics. The four lengthy orchestral suites of **II** (1973) acted as the laboratory to distill the songs of **Eldorado** (1975), their melodic zenith. That album, and the more trivial **Face the Music** (1975) and **A New World Record** (1976), led to the tour de force of **Out of the Blue** (1977) the same way the Beatles' **Sgt Pepper** led to the **White Album**.

Supertramp (1) were even more original in blending Yes' pomp-rock, Led Zeppelin's hard-rock, Beach Boys' vocal harmonies, EL&P's neo-classical rock, disco-music and catchy pop refrains. thanks to double-keyboard and horns attack, **Breakfast In America** (1979) ranks among the most original pop albums of the 1970s.

Alan Parsons Project (2), led by a keyboardist who had worked as a sound engineer on the Beatles' **Abbey Road** and the Pink Floyd's **Dark Side Of the Moon**, specialized in lushly-arranged, quasi-symphonic, concept albums such as **Tales of Mystery and Imagination** (1976) and **I Robot** (1977), although success would come with the more electronic and more easy-listening sound of **Pyramid** (1978) and later works.

In the USA, keyboard-driven pop yielded some of the greatest hits of the era. Kansas (1) approached Yes' pomp-rock from a more intimate and melodic angle thanks to a neo-classical line-up heavy on violin and keyboards, particularly on **Kansas** (1974). However, after the elegant *Magnum Opus Suite* (1976), they became stars of the soft-pop ballad. *Suite Madame Blue* (1975), turned Styx (1) into the quintessential "pomp-rock" band, a style they refined on **The Grand Illusion** (1977), their commercial break-through.

New Zealand's Split Enz (1), formed by vocalist and keyboardist Tim Finn, released an eccentric hybrid of glam-rock and techno-pop, **Mental Notes** (1975), before guitarist and vocalist Neil Finn joined the band and turned it into the pop machine of *Bold As Brass* (1977), *I See Red* (1978), *I Got You* (1979), *History Never Repeats* (1981) and *Dirty Creature* (1982).

### **The value of production 1973-78**

Both progressive-rock and pop-jazz of the 1970s had emphasized the "sound" over melody, rhythm and harmony. The "sound" was mostly due to the interplay of timbres and to the producer's work. From Phil Spector's hits to the Beach Boys' **Pet Sounds** to the Beatles' **Sgt Pepper** to Pink Floyd's **Dark Side of the Moon**, the ultimate value of a piece of music had consistently been shifting from the genuine ingredients of rock'n'roll towards the deception of

the recording studio and of arrangement. Significant advances (and lower costs) in the recording technique led to a generation of musicians whose main goal was to compose "sound" rather than songs.

Despite the erudite lyrics, Steely Dan (2), formed by pianist Donald Fagen and bassist Walter Becker, invented the stereotype for the elastic, sleek, undemanding pop-jazz-soul fusion that would become the lounge-music of the uninvolved yuppie generation. **Countdown To Ecstasy** (1973) and **Pretzel Logic** (1974) are perhaps the best examples of that "clean" sound, which was mainly a miracle of production, and of the elegant, technically impeccable performance.

Hall & Oates became masters of the genre that was born out of blue-eyed soul when studio high-tech allowed to pen mellow, languid, romantic ballads set in lush arrangements, dance beats and spacey keyboards. Their hits trace that evolution, from *Sara Smile* (1975) and *Rich Girl* (1976) to *Kiss On My List* (1981) and *Maneater* (1982). Despite the awful muzak produced as Hall & Oates, Daryl Hall's solo albums, **Sacred Songs** (1980), recorded in 1976, **Three Hearts In The Happy Ending Machine** (1986) and **Soul Alone** (1993) were art-rock experiments.

Relocated to San Francisco, and re-shaped by guitarist Lindsey Buckingham and vocalist Stevie Nicks, Fleetwood Mac (2) became a sophisticated vocal and percussive group, heir to folk-rock and to Brian Wilson's baroque arrangements, aware of the new wave and of Pink Floyd's artificial studio sound, and, from this unlikely fusion, they managed to concoct two of the all-time best-sellers and production masterpieces: **Rumours** (1977) and **Tusk** (1979).

Toto (1) were emblematic of the value of production in keyboard-driven melodic rock. **Toto IV** (1982) was perhaps their most accomplished "production".

Jim Steinman (13) has one main claim to fame: he has coined a production style that makes Phil Spector's "wall of sound" seem shy. Steinman's productions are the quintessential of magniloquent, tragic, titanic, desperate. His singers bleed his lyrics. His keyboards are the thunders of the apocalypse. His melodies are religious psalms. Meat Loaf's **Bat Out of Hell** (1977), that Steinman wrote and produced, began as a joke (a hysterical and emphatic exaggeration of rock'n'roll cliches), but actually reinvented the spirit of rock'n'roll, as did his solo **Bad For Good** (1981). Steinman was moving towards pure melodrama: Bonnie Tyler's *Total Eclipse For The Heart* (1983) and **Tanz der Vampire** (1988) proved what he could do. His extravagant orchestrations and his ideology of sonic overkill triumphed on **Original Sin** (1989), credited to Pandora's Box, the masterpiece of his symphonic sound, and one of rock's masterpieces of all times. Steinman composed a metaphysical concept that mimicks Broadway musicals and that alternates Zappa-esque parody and street pathos. This was brutal, colossal music of manic crescendos, of punishing rhythms of delirious choirs.

One of the most original bands of the 1970s, Simon Jeffes' Penguin Caf  Orchestra (13) played ethnic music with the elegance of a chamber ensemble and the decadent languor of the caf -concerto. In the age of punk-rock, the nostalgic and aristocratic combo of cello, violin, ukulele and guitar that recorded **Music From The Penguin Caf ** (1976) was a grotesque oxymoron. The vignettes, harking back to the styles of baroque and renaissance music, explored the Caribbean islands, Africa and the Mediterranean. The repetitive patterns favored by minimalist composers added a surreal quality to each of these sketches. These postcards from exotic lands left the impression of imaginary memories, that, together, formed a collective imaginary memory of some enchanted eden, a shelter from the hectic tensions of the industrial society. The Orchestra carried out a revival, but it was reconstructing an era, not just a sound, and an era that never existed, an era that was an eternal state of the subconscious. **Penguin Caf ** (1981), **Broadcasting From Home** (1984) and **Signs Of Life** (1987) increased the number of old-fashioned instruments (viola, bass, accordion, piano, harmonium, organ, pianola, penny whistle, trombone and so forth) and flirted more often with the avantgarde, while retaining that stylized and austere composure.

### **Prog-rock 1974-80**

The "Canterbury" sound was still alive and well in Britain, although mutating into a new form of easy-listening

and jazz-rock.

Camel (1) evoked the styles of Colosseum, Yes and King Crimson on **The Snow Goose** (1975) and **Rain Dances** (1977), whose romantic spirit was emphasized by meticulous arrangements relying on electronic keyboards.

Brand X (2), formed by Genesis drummer Phil Collins, played smooth, classy, laid-back, soulful and all-instrumental jazz-rock on **Unorthodox Behaviour** (1976) and **Moroccan Roll** (1977).

**Feels Good To Me** (1977) by Bill Bruford (1) was emblematic of how close British progressive-rock had moved to jazz music.

The French-speaking countries remained throughout the late 1970s and 1980s an unending source of prog-rock ensembles.

Richard Pinhas' Heldon (4) practiced a rock'n'roll for guitar and synthesizer that had few or no antecedents. While still naive, **Electronique Guerilla** (1974) was their manifesto. **It's Always Rock And Roll** (1975), that contains *Cocaine Blues*, and **Agneta Nilsson** (1976), that contains *Perspective*, were their mature statements, cauldrons of hard-rock, free-jazz and sheer noise where Nice, King Crimson, Morton Subotnick, Silver Apples, Jimi Hendrix and Hawkwind shared the same orbit. The lengthy and sensational jams of their last albums, such as *Interface* (1978), *Stand By* (1979) and *Bolero* (1979), refined the concept to manic levels.

French keyboardist Cyrille Verdeaux (2) assembled a few key members of Gong (Steve Hillage, Tim Blake, Didier Malherbe) to record the **Clearlight Symphony** (1975), released under the moniker Clearlight, a lush electronic and symphonic work. The fourth Clearlight album, **Visions** (1978), featured a small orchestra comprising rock, Indian and jazz musicians. This work displayed the influence of Eastern music that would become prominent on Verdeaux's solo releases, peaking with the seven-album **Kundalini Opera** of the 1980s.

What Walter Carlos had done for electronic pop music, Jean-Michel Jarre (3) did for electronic dance music. **Oxygene** (1976) and **Equinoxe** (1978) merely overlapped and contrasted a catchy melody, a steady beat and a synthesizer, while the electronic poems of **Le Chant Magnétique** (1981) explored melodic electronica at a more abstract level. Live performance of his hits involved colossal multimedia shows that eventually became more relevant than his music.

Univers Zero (14), from Belgium, began in the wake of King Crimson and Frank Zappa with **1313** (1978), but **Heresie** (1979) veered towards gothic atmospheres and discordant, industrial textures. Focusing on orchestration and production rather than on melody and harmony, **Ceux Du Dehors** (1982) and **Uzed** (1984) arrived at a smooth, stately, stylish and occasionally titanic flow of ideas. Capable of quoting and mixing stereotypes from atonal music as well as jazz-rock, minimalism as well as Eastern music, classical fantasias as well as requiems, the multiple tours de force of **Heatwave** (1986) rank among prog-rock's greatest achievements. Cinematic and suspenseful, elegant and dramatic, Daniel Denis' compositions for strings, woodwinds and keyboards coined a new kind of chamber music and jazz fusion.

Art Zoyd (3) were even more classical. While they never completely disposed of their original influence (Magma's and Henry Cow's jazz-rock), their broad orchestral palette painted a luxuriant, symphonic sound performed with the austere posture of the classical avantgarde. **Generations Sans Futur** (1980), **Symphonie Pour Le Jour Ou Bruleront Les Cites** (1981), which transposed Stravinsky's style into rock music, and **Phase IV** (1982) displayed a remarkable "ear" for dense and dramatic textures, which would surface again on the soundtrack *Metropolis* (2002).

Belgium's Aqsaq Maboul (1) were perhaps the most eclectic followers of Henry Cow. A Dadaistic sense of humour made **Un Peu De L'Amour Des Bandits** (1980) a delightful jazz-rock spoof.

The semi-classical music of **Geographies** (1986) set Hector Zazou (1) apart from everyone else.

Shub-Niggurath were disciples of Art Zoyd and Univers Zero.

**Supergroups 1975-80**

In Britain, the season of art-rock peaked with the supergroups of the late 1970s.

10cc (1), formed by veteran songwriter Graham Gouldman (who wrote several Yardbirds and Hollies hits) and veteran multi-instrumentalists Lol Creme and Kevin Godley, served mocking kitsch arranged with demented gusto and cartoonish wit, occasionally reminiscent of the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, best represented by the high-tech tour de force **The Original Soundtrack** (1975), whose glittering sound was the result of a veritable studio collage. Former 10cc's Godley & Creme (1) launched a separate career with the triple-album rock opera **Consequences** (1976), that used a new technique to produce symphonic, choral and natural sounds, the first in a series of pretentiously bizarre albums.

Foreigner (1), formed by former Spooky Tooth's guitarist Mick Jones and by former King Crimson's keyboardist Ian McDonald, played a poppier, slickly-arranged version of Bad Company's boogie-rock on albums such as **Double Vision** (1978).

UK (1) consisted of keyboardist and former Roxy Music violinist Eddie Jobson , former Nucleus guitarist Allan Holdsworth, former King Crimson bassist John Wetton and former Yes drummer Bill Bruford. **UK** (1978) featured the suite *In The Dead Of The Night*. Wetton joined a new supergroup, Asia (1), that featured former EL&P drummer Carl Palmer, former Yes guitarist Steve Howe and former Buggles keyboardist Geoff Downes, but **Asia** (1982) offered a mixture of heavy and soft rock. While technically impeccable, the songs of these supergroups displayed little emotion and sounded a little dated, as far as progressive-rock went.

Sky (1), formed by classical guitarist John Williams and featuring former Curved Air keyboardist Francis Monkman, played pretentious progressive-rock for the masses, although lengthy suites such as *Where Opposites Meet* (1979) and *FIFO* (1980), both written by Monkman, harked back to the early days of the genre.

- 1973: the USA, defeated, leaves Vietnam after killing close to 2 million civilians and 1 million soldiers, and losing 58,000 men
- 1973: the CIA helps the Chilean army, led by general Augusto Pinochet, overthrow the socialist government of Salvador Allende (30,000 dissidents are imprisoned and tortured, and 2,000 "disappear")
- 1973: Martin Cooper at Motorola invents the first portable, wireless (cellular) telephone
- 1973: abortion is legalized in the USA
- 1973: Arab countries impose an oil embargo against the West and oil prices skyrocket, thus precipitating a world depression
- 1973: Britain joins the European Union
- 1973: the World Trade Center is inaugurated in New York, the world's tallest skyscraper

## 4.6 The auteurs 1975-82

### *Female creativity 1975-79*

Joni Mitchell had opened the floodgates, and the early 1970s had brought a number of female intellectuals to the forefront. The second half of the 1970s witnessed the definitive emancipation of women in rock music.

Terry Garthwaite (1), one of the first feminists of rock music, continued Joy Of Cooking's folk-jazz-blues fusion on **Terry** (1975) and subsequent albums.

Joan Armatrading (1), born in the Caribbeans but residing in Britain, fused folk, rhythm'n'blues, gospel and reggae on **Joan Armatrading** (1976), while retaining the austere and introspective manner of Joni Mitchell.

Significant artistic growth took place as well among country singer-songwriters. The most impressive talent was probably Nanci Griffith (1), who, on early albums such as **There's a Light Beyond These Woods** (1978) and especially **Poet in My Window** (1982) betrayed a tender, romantic soul while setting her stories of personal loss and failure in an oppressive universe, worthy of Kafka's novels.

By far the most gifted and magnetic female singer-songwriter since Joni Mitchell was Rickie Lee Jones (13), a protege` of Tom Waits whose husky and sensual voice penned one of the boldest attempts at the degraded moral landscape of urban America: her debut album, **Rickie Lee Jones** (1979). Fluctuating between sobriety and intoxication (both physical and spiritual), Jones managed to be both visionary and romantic while singing about the alienated and neurotic life in the city. Meanwhile, the backing band tinged her ballads with nocturnal rhythm'n'blues and jazz, coining an intellectual variant of late-hours lounge-music. Singer and band acted "classy" while being deliberately sloppy. Intricate psychodramas and surreal suspense also rule on **Pirates** (1981), while **Flying Cowboys** (1989) is the best of her lighter collections. New heights were reached with **Traffic from Paradise** (1993), her most abstract, psychedelic, unfocused and cryptic work.

#### ***Texas 1975-80***

Townes Van Zandt had unwittingly started a school of singer-songwriters in Texas. For a while, that school was one of the most prolific and intriguing of the planet. They were inevitably closer to the "roots" (country, blues, folk, tex-mex, etc) and to the format of the ballad, but injected into that tradition a stronger sense of the human condition.

One of the towering figures of the Texas school, Guy Clark (1), was also one of the least prolific. **Old Number One** (1975) introduced a laconic and romantic country balladeer who injected archaic feelings into his strong narrative scaffolding.

Other Texan honky-tonking singer-songwriters were: Butch Hancock (1), who perhaps displayed the strongest Woody Guthrie influence on the bleak acoustic ballads of **West Texas Waltzes & Dust-Blown Tractor Tunes** (1978); Joe Ely (1), whose **Honky Tonk Masquerade** (1978) coined a blue-collar rock that is a visceral version of Gram Parsons' country-rock; Terry Allen (1), whose **Lubbock** (1979) was a stylistic tour de force encompassing blues, tex-mex, honky-tonk and rock'n'roll; Rodney Crowell (2), specializing in harrowing stories and lugubrious meditations, particularly on **Ain't Living Long Like This** (1978) and **Keys to the Highway** (1989); and T-Bone Burnett (1), whose **Truth Decay** (1980) was a gem of bluesy roots-rock.

#### ***Populism 1976-82***

A melancholy vein, one of defeat and hopelessness, dominates the songs of the post-Vietnam years.

A cynical chronicler of urban paroxysm and social grotesques, Warren Zevon (11) injected the rowdy posture of the Frontier's desperado into the stereotype of the intellectual singer-songwriter. **Warren Zevon** (1976) downplayed the elegiac and emphasized the epic, which, after all, is the authentic spirit of folk music. His casual and irreverent tone and his violent sound (country-rock and blues-rock detonated by southern boogie and garnished with operatic or soul melodies) had more in common with punk-rock than with the Los Angeles masters. His cinematic ballads sang about the subconscious of the wild American hero, harking back to Sam Peckinpah's cinema and even further back to the hard-boiled thriller. Alas, that exuberant inspiration died out after **Excitable Boy** (1978).

Rick Danko (1) recorded the best album the Band never did after their first two: **Rick Danko** (1977).

Steve Forbert, whose sparse acoustic **Alive on Arrival** (1978) was largely an autobiographical concept, and Willie Nile, whose debut album, **Willie Nile** (1980) contained mostly Byrds imitations and heralded the folk-rock revival of the 1980s, were typical of the search for the "new Dylan", that continued unhindered throughout the 1970s.

John Hiatt (3) improved over the eclectic style of Leon Russell (country, soul, gospel, rock and blues) by adding reggae and rhythm'n'blues to **Slug Line** (1979). **Stolen Moments** (1990) turned that hybrid into a highly personal

and touching act. **Walk On** (1995) opened new stylistic avenues, at the border between jazz, pop and blues. An authentic "blue-collar hero" of the Midwest, John "Coughar" Mellencamp (1) coupled the charisma of James Dean (the rebel with no cause) and the populist mythology of rural America with a forceful rhythm'n/blues sound and a rowdy shout. If Bob Seger and Bruce Springsteen could be his closest reference models, Mellencamp had a knack for the anthemic tone that set him apart, as evidenced in *Hurts So good* (1982) and *Authority Song* (1983). At the same time, he connected with the desolate lives of the heartland, as he proved majestically with **Scarecrow** (1985), the album featuring *Rain On The Scarecrow* and *R.O.C.K. In The USA*, and with *Paper In Fire* (1987). Former Eagles singer-songwriter Don Henley (1) perfected an art of mournful Dylan-esque sermons until he delivered one of the most gripping social frescoes of the 1980s, **The End Of Innocence** (1989). On his own, former Steely Dan pianist Donald Fagen (1) released far more creative and original albums, proving that he was much more than a cocktail-lounge entertainer. **Nightfly** (1982), a Pete Townshend-like recollection of his roots, and **Kamakiriad** (1993).

Huey Lewis bridged the old-fashioned bar-band and modern blue-collar rock on hits such as *Working For A Living* (1982), *I Want A New Drug* (1983) and *Power Of Love* (1985), each packed with a hurricane of quasi-jazz saxophones, blues harmonica, boogie guitars and gospel organs.

On the commercial front, Bryan Adams split his career between heartfelt torch ballads (*Straight From The Heart*, 1983) and lush, riff-driven rockers (*Run To You*, 1984).

Robbie Robertson (2) began his solo career at 44 but struck a chord: **Robbie Robertson** (1987) presented him as the heroic spokesman of the collective subconscious, and **Storyville** (1991) is a concept album that reads like a tribute to New Orleans at the turn of the century. Each album is a dense textural pastiche that is worth it for its sheer sonic appeal.

### ***Bridging the gap 1977***

With the sinister odes of 1977 solo album, former Genesis' vocalist Peter Gabriel (13) metamorphosed into a tormented and angst-ridden poet of the post-industrial neuroses, capable of delivering harrowing visions of the psychological holocaust in tightly crafted musical formats. The electronic ballads of **III** (1980), that explore urban fear and despair, the eerie soundscape of **Birdy** (1985), the sinister futurism of **So** (1986) fueled his cosmic melancholy at different levels. The high-tech fusion of electronics, funk rhythms, rock instruments and ethnic sources that he had perfected over the course of those albums imploded on **Passion** (1989), a sonic mural of psycho-ambient music that reneged on his own technical innovations and withdrew to an archaic world and to the spartan format of chamber music, ideally bridging past and future, first world and third world, the personal and the public.

Marianne Faithful (1), one of the British teen idols of the mid-1960s, had to wait until the late 1970s to achieve artistic independence with **Broken English** (1979), an album that smells of expressionistic cabaret, a collection of gloomy lieder sung in a desperate voice (reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich).

Another British sensation, Kate Bush (2), was certainly an influential and intelligent figure, but was also a typical compromise of the 1970s, only half-heartedly experimental, continuously flirting with the pop charts. She helped redefine the singer-songwriter in the era of the new wave, but then the new wave had already made that figure obsolete. Her main contributions were in the vocal department: a four-octave range that mauled folk, opera and world-music, often in a shrill register halfway between a childish scream and a soprano passage. Her arrangements were not revolutionary at all, borrowing from Joni Mitchell as well as Peter Gabriel, although they introduced electronics into a new rock format and crafted claustrophobic atmospheres. **Kick Inside** (1978), a terrifying personal diary, and **The Dreaming** (1982), the ultimate testament of her eccentric, lush, futuristic sound, represent the two poles of her work.

- 1974: a military coup introduces democracy in Portugal

- 1974: Belgian cyclist Eddy Merckx wins his fifth Tour and his fifth Giro
- 1974: India detonates an underground nuclear weapon
- 1974: president Richard Nixon is forced to resign after the Watergate scandal
- 1974: the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" is released
- 1974: the first personal computer is introduced (Altair 8800)
- 1974: the Sears Towers open in Chicago, the world's tallest skyscraper

## 4.7 Disco-music 1975-80

### *Funk 1974-78*

The foundations of funk music had been laid in the second half of the 1960s by James Brown, the MG's, Sly & The Family Stone, the Meters, etc. The syncopated polyrhythm, the groovey bass line, the metallic guitar timbre, the falsetto wail were all introduced in the 1960s. However, funk music had to wait until the age of re-alignment before it became a genre on its own. Kool And The Gang, Earth Wind And Fire, the Ohio Players and K.C. And The Sunshine Band took it to the top of the charts, while starting a dance mania that had not been seen since the twist of the early 1960s. Discos were founded just to play funk music.

By far the most creative artist (and cult figure) of early funk music was George Clinton, whose bands, Parliament (3) and Funkadelic (2), featuring James Brown's bassist Bootsy Collins, adopted the ethos of the counterculture, the satirical attitude of the freaks, and a sound that mixed jazz, soul, Jimi Hendrix, psychedelic-rock, porno, horror and science fiction. Their eccentric vaudeville had no rivals: Funkadelic's **Funkadelic** (1970), **Maggot Brain** (1971) and the gargantuan **One Nation Under A Groove** (1978), as well as Parliament's **Clones of Dr Funkenstein** (1976), **Mothership Connection** (1976) and the superb **Funkentelechy Vs The Placebo Syndrome** (1977), made Clinton the Frank Zappa of funk music.

Another Zappa-esque visionary, August Darnell (2), formed the comic and exotic **Dr Buzzard's Original Savannah Band** (1976) and penned the trilogy credited to Kid Creole And The Coconuts, whose best installment was the tropical musical and satirical odyssey **Fresh Fruit In Foreign Places** (1981). Both ventures envisioned a chaotic collage-like multi-ethnic format that was equally at ease with swing, cha-cha, soul, salsa, calypso, reggae, rock.

### *Disco-music 1974-78*

Funk music opened the doors to the disco subculture. There was a reaction, particularly among New York's gays, to rock music's domination of the airwaves. People still wanted to dance, but the counterculture had demonized dance music. Funk music served an audience that was tired of guitar solos and boogie rhythms. Black people used to organize dance parties. Persecuted by the public opinion and by puritan sects, gays had created social islands within the metropolis. Their night clubs were as segregated as the black churches in the 1950s. Gays took the same idea of the black dance parties and used the same music for their parties, that were staged in those private clubs, soon to be known as "discos". Discos became so successful that they transformed rapidly from marginalized, discriminated and underground phenomenon to a chic craze for the yuppies. Far from being agents of the Establishment, gays adopted several trademarks of the hippy culture (free-form dancing, psychedelic lights, colorful costumes, hallucinogens). New York's gay community rediscovered a new facet of human psychology, that had been well known to ancient cultures: depersonalization due to collective ecstasy enabled and fostered freedom of expression. The cathartic and regenerative function of disco-music accounted for the lightning speed

with which it spread around the world.

While funk music was booming, three events added impetus to the discos. Orchestral soul reached a new apex in 1974 with Barry White's scores and sexy postures. That same year, Kraftwerk's *Autobahn* became the first hit single entirely played on electronic instruments and boasting an electronic rhythm. Finally, in 1975 Robert Moog introduced the Polymoog, the first commercial polyphonic synthesizer, which greatly reduced the cost of producing electronic music.

The first articles on "disco music" appeared in 1972, and the invention can be credited to a Cameroon-born and Paris-based musician, Manu Dibango, who in that year recorded *Soul Makossa* (1972), an exciting mixture of funk-jazz saxophone lines and hypnotic African beats. A little later, veteran soul producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff wrote *Love Is The Message* (1973) for MFSB, the blueprint for the early disco hits.

However, Italian-born German keyboardist and producer Giorgio Moroder (1), who had been manufacturing dance singles since the late 1960s, is the man who can be credited with wedding Kraftwerk's robotic music (a very European and elitist artifact) with soul/funk music (a very American and grass-roots genre). Moroder understood the power of electronic keyboards both for "singing" the melody and for "beating" the rhythm. His first experiment was American soul diva Donna Summer: her *Love To Love You Baby* (1975) co-invented disco-music and launched the idea of the extended "disco mix", while *I Feel Love* (1976) basically marked the birth of synth-pop. Moroder's production masterworks were his own solo albums, notably **From Here To Eternity** (1977).

Van McCoy's *The Hustle* (1975) set the standard in Manhattan, centering the harmony around the hypnotic beat of the rhythm section. The fad of the 12" singles began when Walter Gibbons released an 11-minute version of Double Exposure's *Ten Percent* (1976). Black and gay disc-jockeys resurrected old, obscure rhythm'n'blues songs, added a pulsing beat and extended their duration (a technique imported from Jamaica) in order to make people dance for as long as possible. Disco-music became a producer's music, and a studio-oriented music, propelled by artificial instruments, the exact opposite of rock music, which emphasized the live experience and was played with electric instruments. The difference was more than just technical: rock music was a macho, straight, aggressive happening, whereas disco-music was a sensual, effeminate, languid affair.

Chic (Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers) promoted the most abused stereotype: minimalist funk embellished with strings and female singers. Their best formulation of the dogma was *Le Freak* (1978).

The female aspect was much more relevant in disco-music than it had ever been in rock music. Several of the early disco singles were sung by women, establishing a primacy that would endure through the years.

The female gay iconography owed a lot to Jamaican model Grace Jones, whose glacial, androgynous, futuristic, panther-like looks and monotonous vocals redefined the concept of elegance for the disco masses. *I Need A Man* (1977) was the hit that created the cult. She represented the terminal point of a disease that had spread from the Lulu of the expressionists to Marlene Dietrich to decadence-rock.

The prototypical "disco divas" were Gloria Gaynor, who had pioneered the extended mix with **Never Can Say Goodbye** (1974), and whose *I Will Survive* (1979) remains one of the era's quintessential anthems, and Thelma Houston, whose greatest hit was *Don't Leave Me This Way* (1977).

At the end of 1976 Blondie bridged the gap between disco-music and punk-rock, the two genres that were advancing dramatically on western civilization. In 1977 the film "Saturday Night Fever", by promoting disco-music beyond gays and blacks, launched the disco fever around the world. Millions of kids stopped dreaming of becoming guitarists and started dreaming of becoming acrobatic dancers. Those who were not punks, were disco addicts.

At the same time that disco-music was becoming a mass-market phenomenon, a few clubs kept setting the standard for innovation. In 1977 the disco "Warehouse" opened in Chicago and Frankie Knuckles became its resident disc-jockey, and in 1978 the disco "Paradise Garage" for black gays opened in New York and its founder

Larry Levan became the first superstar disc-jockey.

The sound of disco-music began to change after Dave Smith (of Sequential Circuits) introduced the "Prophet-5", the world's first microprocessor-based musical instrument, thus ushering in the age of digital synthesizers, which replaced the voltage-controlled (analog) synthesizers. And in 1978 Roland introduced the MC-4 sequencer, the first sequencer for the masses.

As white (and often European) producers began to compose suites inspired by classical music and easy-listening music, employing batteries of drum-machines, string sections and horn solos, disco-music became less and less "black" and more and more "white".

The golden era of disco music basically ended in 1979, the year of the anthems, notably the Village People's *YMCA* (1979) and Sister Sledge's *We Are Family* (1979), written by Chic's Edwards and Rodgers, which both celebrated the disco community from the inside. Just like the self-celebrations of the hippy civilization announced the commercialization of psychedelic-rock, the self-celebrations of gay civilization announced the "commodification" of disco-music.

This was evident, for example, in the gospel-infected singles crafted by producer Richard Perry for the Pointer Sisters, that would become increasingly upbeat, all the way to their 1984 best-sellers (*Jump, I'm So Excited* and *Neutron Dance*).

### ***The kings of pop 1975-79***

Before becoming the most successful bluffs of all times, Michael Jackson (1) had been one of the Jackson Five, a group that had fused the harmonizing of black vocal groups, the melodic enthusiasm of Tamla's party soul and the syncopated rhythm of funk music. Michael, who became independent in 1979 under the tutelage of rhythm'n'blues and jazz veteran producer Quincy Jones, went on to release the greatest album of all times (if sales define greatness), **Thriller** (1981). This trivial collage of pop-soul cliches and dance beats, stylishly and masterly orchestrated by Jones employing state-of-the-art technology, was complemented by the deliberate construction of a surreal persona, a sort of fairy-tale figure, half child and half man, tenderly insecure and slightly hysterical, sex-neutral, race-neutral and age-neutral, readily identified by his mask, his costumes and his moves.

Multi-instrumentalist Prince (4) was Jackson's intellectual counterpart. This licentious androgynous, specializing in quasi-porno ballads, not only wrote his songs but even played all or most of the instruments. His favorite format was the concept album, not the hit single. His fusion of pop, soul and rock was driven by sheer libido. Prince basically transformed the moaning and screaming of copulation into a style of singing, a neurotic, delirious falsetto that continuously referenced sexual pleasure. If the fundamental elements remained the same throughout the decade, the emphasis shifted from the purely self-celebratory **1999** (1982) to the epic **Purple Rain** (1984) to the self-indulgently baroque **Around The World** (1985) to the semiotic, post-modern clockwork of **Sign Of The Times** (1987). Each album was both an erotic and a stylistic tour de force. His career as a whole was both a lascivious act and a pop encyclopedia.

Prince's songwriting skills, also displayed in the Bangles' *Manic Monday* (1986) and Sinead O'Connor's *Nothing Compares* (1990), belonged to a white tradition that harks back to the Brill Building and runs through Brian Wilson and Todd Rundgren.

- 1975: Christian and Muslim sects start a civil war in Lebanon
- 1975: Iraqi troops massacre thousands of Kurdish civilians and rebels after collecting them in "dar al-fana" ("houses of annihilation")
- 1975: MacDonald's opens the first drive-through restaurant in Arizona
- 1975: the Baader-Meinhof terrorizes Germany
- 1976: the sitcom "Charlie's Angels" has three women as protagonists
- 1976: the supersonic airplane Concorde begins service between Paris

and New York

## 4.8 The avantgarde 1976-80

### *Minimalism 1975-80*

Minimalism had changed the classical western view of music. A composition could evolve like an organism, rather than being designed to stretch over a predetermined narrative or emotional path. The listener, in turn, was required to listen more carefully, to enter into a sort of union with the piece of music, which was, of course, an idea derived from eastern music. Minimalism had introduced improvisation and meditation into western music.

These intuitions were further developed in the 1970s by composers from different backgrounds. Accordionist Pauline Oliveros, the most significant purveyor of "deep listening" music, explored the psychological effects of sound in works such as *Horse Sings From Cloud* (1975), *Rattlesnake Mountain* (1982), *Wanderer* (1985), *The Roots Of The Moment* (1988) and *Deep Listening* (1988).

Harold Budd crafted sugary, velvety, tinkling cartilages such as *Bismillahi Prahmani Brahim* (1978), *Children On The Hill* (1981), *Abandoned Cities* (1984), *Dark Star* (1984), *Gypsy Violin* (1987), that emphasized the hypnotic quality of droning and repetition.

British rocker Brian Eno provided a meeting point of two cultures on **Discreet Music** (1975) and **Music For Airports** (1978).

In the 1980s, the minimalist dogma was bent to more pragmatic (melodic) needs by Belgian composer Wim Mertens, whose *Close Cover* (1983), *Whisper Me* (1985), *Lir* (1985) and *Educes Me* (1986) attempted to reinvent chamber music and lieder, and by British composer Michael Nyman, whose elegant pulsing scores, such as *Water Dances* (1985) and *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* (1987), were reminiscent of renaissance music.

John Adams fused minimalist pulse and romantic rhetoric in *Harmonium* (1981), *Grand Pianola Music* (1982), *Harmonielehre* (1985); while Daniel Lentz injected stereotypes of the past into the minimalist skeleton, for example in *Point Conception* (1984) and *Missa Umbrarum* (1985).

Glenn Branca's massive guitar ensembles, for example in *Ascention* (1981) and *Symphony 3* (1983), used repetition, but were better described by the word "maximalism" than minimalism.

### *The voice*

The intellectual curiosity that led to rediscover other musical cultures and alternative compositional techniques also led to explore the human voice as an emotional medium and musical instrument.

Meredith Monk coined a vocabulary of vocal sounds that she used to create theatrical performances. *The Key* (1970), *Education Of The Grandchild* (1973), *Tablet* (1977), *Turtle Dreams* (1983), *Atlas* (1991) focus on acrobatic and schizophrenic mutations that run the gamut from child to witch. They populate the music of characters, moods and states of mind.

Joan La Barbara, a collaborator of John Cage and other composers, stunned the world of music with the hallucinated vocal performances of *Vocal Extensions* (1976), *Klee Alex* (1979), *Berliner Traume* (1983) , *Twelvesong* (1984).

Laurie Anderson bridged those experiments on the human voice with the pop sensibility, the dance rhythms and the creative spirit of the new wave, particularly in her multimedia opera *United States I-IV* (1982).

Diamanda Galas was the most extreme vocalist of the time. The atrocious free-form hysteria of *Tragouthia* (1981), *Wild Women* (1982), *Litanies of Satan* (1982), *Deliver Me* (1986), *Free Among The Dead* (1986) and *Cris D'Aveugle* (1989) invented a new form of lieder for voice and electronics, one that references ancient Greek choirs, medieval "dances macabres", the French "poets maudits", expressionist theater and, ultimately, sheer terror.

## 4.9 The Best Rock Albums of the 1970's

9/10

- Tim Buckley: Lorca (1970)
  - John Fahey: Fare Forward Voyagers (1973)
  - Faust: Faust (1971)
  - Neu: Neu! (1972)
  - Nico: Desert Shore (1971)
  - Pere Ubu: Modern Dance (1978)
  - Pop Group: Y (1979)
  - Popol Vuh: Hosianna Mantra (1973)
  - Residents: Not Available (1978)
  - Klaus Schulze: Irrlicht (1972)
  - Soft Machine: 3 (1970)
  - Suicide: Suicide (1977)
  - Third Ear Band: Third Ear Band (1970)
  - Robert Wyatt: Rock Bottom (1974)
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- Syd Barrett: Barrett (1970)
  - Tim Buckley: Starsailor (1970)
  - Chrome: Half Machine Lip Moves (1979)
  - Gong: Flying Teapot - Radio Gnome Invisible (1973)
  - Jon Hassell: Vernal Equinox (1977)
  - Van Morrison: Moondance (1970)
  - Popol Vuh: In Den Gaerten Pharaos (1972)
  - Klaus Schulze: Cyborg (1973)
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- Amon Duul: Yeti (1970)
- Amon Duul: Tanz Der Lemminge (1971)
- Aphrodite's Child: 666 (1970)
- Kevin Ayers: Shooting At The Moon (1970)
- Robbie Basho: Venus In Cancer (1970)
- Robbie Basho: Song Of The Stallion (1971)
- Can: Tago Mago (1971)
- Can: Future Days (1973)
- Captain Beefheart: Mirror Man (1971)
- Clash: Clash (1977)
- Contortions: Buy Contortions (1979)
- Kevin Coyne: Marjory Razorblade (1973)
- David Crosby: If I Could Only Remember My Name (1971)
- Nick Drake: Pink Moon (1972)
- Brian Eno: Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy (1974)

- Brian Eno: Before And After Science (1977)
- Brian Eno: Music For Airports (1978)
- John Fahey: America (1971)
- Faust: IV (1973)
- Germs: GI (1979)
- Peter Green: The End Of The Game (1970)
- Hampton Grease Band: Music To Eat (1971)
- Henry Cow: Unrest (1974)
- Henry Cow: In Praise Of Learning (1975)
- Michael Hoenig: Departure From The Northern Wasteland (1978)
- Rickie Lee Jones: Rickie Lee Jones (1979)
- Magma: Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandoh (1973)
- John Martyn: Inside Out (1973)
- Stephan Micus: Implosions (1977)
- Joni Mitchell: Blue (1971)
- Joni Mitchell: Hejira (1976)
- New York Dolls: New York Dolls (1973)
- Mike Oldfield: Tubular Bells (1973)
- Penguin Caf?Orchestra: Music From The Penguin Cafe (1976)
- Pere Ubu: New Picnic Time (1979)
- Jean-Luc Ponty: King Kong (1970)
- Public Image Ltd: Second Edition (1979)
- Ramones: Rocket To Russia (1977)
- Residents: Meet The Residents (1974)
- Residents: Eskimo (1979)
- Rolling Stones: Exile On Main Street (1972)
- Roxy Music: Roxy Music (1972)
- Klaus Schulze: X (1978)
- Patti Smith: Radio Ethiopia (1976)
- Taj Mahal Travellers: July 15 1972 (1972)
- Talking Heads: 77 (1977)
- Tangerine Dream: Zeit (1972)
- Television: Marquee Moon (1977)
- This Heat: This Heat (1979)
- Throbbing Gristle: Second Annual Report (1977)
- Van Der Graaf Generator: Pawn Hearts (1971)
- Velvet Underground: Live (1974)
- Wire: 154 (1979)
- Robert Wyatt: End Of An Ear (1970)
- Yes: Close To The Edge (1972)
- Neil Young: Tonight's The Night (1975)
- Frank Zappa: Weasels Ripped My Flesh (1970)
- Frank Zappa: Burnt Weeny Sandwich (1970)
- Warren Zevon: Warren Zevon (1976)

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- Allman Brothers Band: Live At Fillmore East (1971)
- Allman Brothers Band: Eat A Peach (1972)
- Art Bears: Hopes And Fears (1978)
- Syd Barrett: Madcap Laughs (1970)
- David Bowie: Heroes (1977)
- Jackson Browne: Late For The Sky (1974)
- John Cale: Fear (1974)
- Cluster: Cluster II (1972)
- Creedence Clearwater Revival: Cosmo's Factory (1970)
- Family: Fearless (1971)
- Mick Farren: Mona The Carnivorous Circus (1970)
- Robert Fripp: Exposure (1979)
- Roy Harper: Stormcock (1971)
- Hawkwind: Doremi Fasol Latido (1972)
- Heartbreakers: L.A.M.F. (1977)
- Michael Hurley: Have Moicy (1975)
- Jade Warrior: Waves (1975)
- Jean-Michel Jarre: Equinoxe (1978)
- Joy Division: Unknown Pleasures (1979)
- King Crimson: Red (1974)
- Leo Kottke: 6 & 12 String Guitar (1972)
- Kraftwerk: 2 (1971)
- LA Dusseldorf: LA Dusseldorf (1976)
- John Martyn: Solid Air (1973)
- Matching Mole: Matching Mole (1972)
- Joni Mitchell: For The Roses (1972)
- Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company: Portable Masterpiece Company (1973)
- Muffins: Manna/Mirage (1978)
- Neu: Neu! 2 (1973)
- Randy Newman: Twelve Songs (1970)
- Randy Newman: Good Old Boys (1974)
- Parliament: Funkentelechy Vs The Placebo Syndrome (1977)
- Gram Parsons: Grievous Angel (1973)
- Tom Petty: Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers (1976)
- Tom Petty: Damn The Torpedoes (1979)
- Red Crayola: Soldier Talk (1979)
- Todd Rundgren: Something/Anything (1972)
- Todd Rundgren: Todd (1974)
- Eberhard Schoener: Meditation (1973)
- Klaus Schulze: Timewind (1975)
- Bruce Springsteen: The Wild The Innocent And The E Street Shuffle (1973)
- Stiff Little Fingers: Inflammable Material (1979)
- Talking Heads: More Songs About Buildings And Food (1978)

- Talking Heads: Fear Of Music (1979)
  - Tangerine Dream: Alpha Centauri (1971)
  - Tangerine Dream: Atem (1973)
  - Richard Thompson: I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight (1974)
  - Richard Thompson: Pour Down Like Silver (1975)
  - Ultravox: Ultravox (1977)
  - Van Der Graaf Generator: H To He Who Am The Only One (1970)
  - Vangelis: L'Apocalypse Des Animaux (1973)
  - Vangelis: Heaven And Hell (1975)
  - XTC: White Music (1978)
  - Yes: Fragile (1971)
  - Frank Zappa: Grand Wazoo (1973)
  - Warren Zevon: Excitable Boy (1978)
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- William Ackerman: It Takes A Year (1977)
- David Ackles: American Gothic (1972)
- Aerosmith: Toys In The Attic (1975)
- Aerosmith: Rocks (1976)
- Agitation Free: Malesch (1972)
- Terry Allen: Lubbock (1979)
- Amboy Dukes: Marriage Of The Rocks (1970)
- Eric Andersen: Blue River (1972)
- Eric Andersen: Stages (1973)
- Joan Armatrading: Joan Armatrading (1976)
- Art Bears: Winter Songs (1979)
- Ash Ra Tempel: Schwingungen (1972)
- David Axelrod: Earth Rot (1970)
- Kevin Ayers: The Confessions Of Dr. Dream (1974)
- Bachman-Turner Overdrive: Not Fragile (1974)
- Back Door: Back Door (1972)
- Peter Baumann: Romance '76 (1976)
- Beaver & Krause: In A Wild Sanctuary (1970)
- Beaver & Krause: Gandharva (1971)
- Jeff Beck: Blow By Blow (1975)
- B52: B-52's (1979)
- Big Star: Radio City (1974)
- Big Star: Third (1978)
- Norman Blake: The Fields Of November (1974)
- Black Sabbath: Paranoid (1971)
- Black Sabbath: Master Of Reality (1971)
- Black Widow: Sacrifice (1970)
- Peter Blegvad: Kew Rone (1976)
- Blue Oyster Cult: Blue Oyster Cult (1972)

- Blue Oyster Cult: Tyranny and Mutation (1973)
- Blue Oyster Cult: Agents of Fortune (1976)
- Boston: Boston (1976)
- David Bowie: Low (1977)
- Brand X: Unorthodox Behaviour (1976)
- Brand X: Moroccan Roll (1977)
- Jackson Browne: Jackson Browne (1972)
- Jackson Browne: For Everyman (1973)
- Jackson Browne: Pretender (1976)
- Bill Bruford: Feels Good To Me (1977)
- Jimmy Buffett: A White Sport Coat & A Pink Crustacean (1973)
- Sandy Bull: E Pluribus Unum (1970)
- Kate Bush: Kick Inside (1978)
- Cabaret Voltaire: Mix-up (1978)
- J.J. Cale: Naturally (1971)
- John Cale: The Academy In Peril (1972)
- Robert Calvert: Captain Lockheed and the Starfighters (1974)
- Robert Calvert: Lucky Leif and the Longships (1975)
- Camel: Rain Dances(1977)
- Can: Ege Bamyasi (1972)
- Captain Beefheart: Lick My Decals Off (1970)
- Captain Beefheart: Shiny Beast (1978)
- Caravan: In The Land Of Grey And Pink (1971)
- Caravan: Waterloo Lily (1972)
- Centipede: Septober Energy (1971)
- Eugene Chadbourne: Solo Acoustic Guitar (1975)
- James Chance: Off White (1979)
- Chicago: Chicago II (1970)
- Chicago: Chicago III (1971)
- Chrome: Alien Soundtrack (1977)
- Gene Clark: White Light (1971)
- Guy Clark: Old Number One (1975)
- Clash: London Calling (1979)
- Clearlight: Clearlight Symphony (1975)
- Clearlight: Visions (1978)
- Cluster: Cluster (1971)
- Cluster: Zuckerzei (1974)
- Cluster: Grosses Wasser (1979)
- Bruce Cockburn: In the Falling Dark (1976)
- Leonard Cohen: Songs Of Love And Hate (1971)
- Commander Cody: Lost In The Ozone (1971)
- Comus: First Utterance (1971)
- Ry Cooder: Paradise And Lunch (1974)
- Alice Cooper: Love It To Death (1971)

- Cosmic Jokers: Cosmic Jokers (1974)
- Elvis Costello: This Year's Model (1978)
- Elvis Costello: Armed Forces (1979)
- Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young: Dejavu (1970)
- Rodney Crowell: Ain't Living Long Like This (1978)
- Cure: Three Imaginary Boys (1979)
- Curved Air: Phantasmagoria (1972)
- Ivor Cutler: Dandruff (1974)
- Rick Danko: Rick Danko (1977)
- August Darnell: Dr Buzzard's Original Savannah Band (1976)
- Dead Boys: Young Loud And Snotty (1977)
- Deep Purple: Machine Head (1972)
- Georg Deuter: D (1971)
- Georg Deuter: Aum (1972)
- Georg Deuter: Haleakala Mystery (1978)
- Georg Deuter: Ecstasy (1979)
- Devo: Are We Not Men (1978)
- Dickies: Dawn (1979)
- Dictators: Go Girl Crazy (1975)
- Diga Rhythm Band: Diga (1976)
- Dixie Dregs: What If (1978)
- Doobie Brothers: Toulouse Street (1972)
- Doors: Absolutely Live (1970)
- Doors: L.A. Woman (1971)
- Nick Drake: Bryter Layter (1970)
- Dr John: In The Right Place (1973)
- Bob Dylan: Desire (1976)
- Bob Dylan: Street Legal (1978)
- Dzyan: Time Machine (1973)
- Eagles: Desperado (1972)
- Eagles: Hotel California (1976)
- Egg: Egg (1970)
- Egg: The Polite Force (1971)
- Egg: The Civil Surface (1974)
- Electric Light Orchestra: II (1973)
- Electric Light Orchestra: Eldorado (1975)
- Eloy: Ocean (1977)
- Joe Ely: Honky Tonk Masquerade (1978)
- Embryo: Opal (1970)
- Emerson Lake & Palmer: Tarkus (1971)
- Brian Eno: Another Green World (1975)
- Brian Eno: Discreet Music (1975)
- Brian Eno: Music For Films (1978)
- Faces: A Nod Is As Good As A Wink To A Blind Horse (1971)

- Fairport Convention: Full House (1970)
- Marianne Faithful: Broken English (1979)
- Fall: Live At Witch Trials (1979)
- Family: Bandstand (1972)
- Family: It's Only A Movie (1973)
- Faust: So Far (1972)
- Faust: Tapes (1973)
- Finch: Beyond Expression (1976)
- Larry Fischer: An Evening With Wild Man Fischer (1970)
- Flamin Groovies: Flamingo (1970)
- Fleetwood Mac: Rumours (1977)
- Fleetwood Mac: Tusk (1979)
- Focus: Moving Waves (1972)
- Foreigner: Double Vision (1978)
- Jeffrey Frederick: Spiders In The Moonlight (1977)
- Robert Fripp: No Pussyfooting (1973)
- Edgar Froese: Aqua (1974)
- Funkadelic: Maggot Brain (1971)
- Funkadelic: One Nation Under A Groove (1978)
- Gang Of Four: Entertainment (1979)
- Jerry Garcia: Garcia (1972)
- Mort Garson: Lucifer (1971)
- Terry Garthwaite: Terry (1975)
- Marvin Gaye: What's Going On (1971)
- Generation X: Generation X (1978)
- Genesis: Trespass (1970)
- Genesis: Nursery Crime (1971)
- Genesis: The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (1974)
- Gentle Giant: Three Friends (1972)
- Gentle Giant: In A Glass House (1973)
- Go: Go (1976)
- Godley & Creme: Consequences (1976)
- Gong: Camembert Electrique (1971)
- Gong: Angel's Egg (1973)
- Manuel Gottsching: Inventions For Electric Guitar (1975)
- Grand Funk Railroad: E Pluribus Funk (1971)
- Grateful Dead: Workingman's Dead (1970)
- David Grisman: Muleskinner (1974)
- David Grisman: The David Grisman Quintet (1977)
- Gruppe Between: Dharana (1974)
- Keiji Haino: **Ama No Gawa - Milky Way** (1973)
- Peter Michael Hamel: Aura (1972)
- Peter Hammill: Nadir's Big Chance (1975)
- Butch Hancock: West Texas Waltzes & Dust-Blown Tractor Tunes (1978)

- Happy The Man: Happy The Man (1977)
- Harmonia: Musik Von Harmonia (1974)
- Roy Harper: Flat Baroque And Beserk (1970)
- John Hartford: Aereo-plain (1971)
- John Hartford: Mark Twang (1976)
- Jon Hassell: Earthquake Island (1978)
- Hatfield And The North: Hatfield And The North (1974)
- Hawkwind: In Search Of Space (1971)
- Heldon: Electronique Guerilla (1974)
- Heldon: It's Always Rock And Roll (1975)
- Heldon: Agneta Nilsson (1976)
- Heldon: Stand By (1979)
- Richard "Hell": Blank Generation (1977)
- Jimi Hendrix: Band Of Gypsys (1970)
- Henry Cow: Leg End (1973)
- Henry Cow: Desperate Straights (1974)
- John Hiatt: Slug Line (1979)
- High Tide: High Tide II (1970)
- Steve Hillage: L (1976)
- Hugh Hopper: 1984 (1973)
- Michael Hurley: Long Journey (1976)
- Hot Tuna: Burgers (1972)
- Joe Jackson: Look Sharp (1979)
- Jade Warrior: Last Autumn's Dream (1972)
- Jade Warrior: Kites (1976)
- Jade Warrior: Way Of The Sun (1978)
- James Gang: Rides Again (1970)
- Jean-Michel Jarre: Oxygene (1976)
- Jefferson Starship: Blows Against The Empire (1970)
- Jethro Tull: Aqualung (1971)
- J. Geils Band: Monkey Island (1977)
- Janis Joplin: Pearl (1970)
- Journey: Journey (1975)
- Joy Of Cooking: Joy Of Cooking (1971)
- Judas Priest: Sad Wings Of Destiny (1976)
- Kansas: Kansas (1974)
- Paul Kantner & Grace Slick: Sunfighter (1971)
- Paul Kantner & Grace Slick: Baron Von Tollbooth (1973)
- Carole King: Tapestry (1971)
- King Crimson: In The Wake Of Poseydon (1970)
- King Crimson: Islands (1971)
- King Crimson: Lark's Tongues In Aspic (1973)
- Kiss: Kiss (1974)
- Leo Kottke: Greenhouse (1972)

- Leo Kottke: My Feet Are Smiling (1973)
- Kraftwerk: Kraftwerk (1970)
- Kraftwerk: Ralf & Florian (1973)
- Kraftwerk: Autobahn (1974)
- Led Zeppelin: Led Zeppelin IV (1971)
- Gordon Lightfoot: If You Could Read My Mind (1970)
- Little Feat: Sailin' Shoes (1972)
- Little Feat: Dixie Chicken (1973)
- Little Feat: Feats Don't Fail Me Now (1974)
- Richard Lloyd: Alchemy (1979)
- Roy Loney: Out After Dark (1979)
- Nick Lowe: Jesus Of Cool (1978)
- Lynyrd Skynyrd: Second Helping (1974)
- Lynyrd Skynyrd: Street Survivors (1977)
- Magma: Magma (1970)
- Magma: Kohntarkosz (1974)
- Mark Almond: Mark Almond (1971)
- Mark Almond: Mark Almond 2 (1972)
- John Martyn: Bless The Weather (1971)
- John Martyn: Sunday's Child (1975)
- Matching Mole: Little Red Record (1972)
- John Mayall: Turning Point (1970)
- MC5: Back In The USA (1970)
- McGarrigle Sisters: Kate And Anna McGarrigle (1976)
- McGarrigle Sisters: Dancer With Bruised Knees (1977)
- Roger McGuinn: Cardiff Rose (1976)
- Meat Loaf: Bat Out of Hell (1977)
- Mekons: Quality Of Mercy Is Not Strnen (1979)
- Meters: Wild Tchoupitoulas (1976)
- Joni Mitchell: Ladies Of The Canyon (1970)
- Joni Mitchell: Court And Spark (1974)
- Modern Lovers: Modern Lovers (1976)
- Montrose: Montrose (1973)
- Anthony Moore: Pieces From The Cloudland Ballroom (1971)
- Anthony Moore: Flying Doesn't Help (1979)
- Giorgio Moroder: From Here To Eternity (1977)
- Van Morrison: Veedon Fleece (1974)
- Van Morrison: Into The Music (1979)
- Mott The Hoople: Mott (1973)
- Mountain: Nantucket Sleighride (1971)
- Mountain: Flowers Of Evil (1971)
- Mu: Mu (1971)
- Elliott Murphy: Aquashow (1973)
- National Health: National Health (1978)

- National Health: Of Queues And Cures (1978)
- Neu: Neu! 75 (1975)
- Randy Newman: Sail Away (1972)
- New Riders Of The Purple Sage: New Riders Of The Purple Sage (1971)
- Nico: The End (1974)
- Nucleus: We'll Talk About It Later (1970)
- Nucleus: Belladonna (1972)
- Mike Oldfield: Hergest Ridge (1974)
- Bruce Palmer: The Cycle Is Complete (1971)
- Graham Parker: Squeezing Out Sparks (1979)
- Van Dyke Parks: Discover America (1972)
- Parliament: Clones of Dr Funkenstein (1976)
- Parliament: Mothership Connection (1976)
- Alan Parsons Project: Tales of Mystery and Imagination (1976)
- Alan Parsons Project: I Robot (1977)
- Gram Parsons: G.P. (1972)
- Annette Peacock: Dual Unity (1971)
- Annette Peacock: Improvisie (1971)
- Annette Peacock: I'm The One (1972)
- Pentangle: Cruel Sister (1970)
- Pere Ubu: Dub Housing (1978)
- Tom Petty: You're Gonna Get It (1978)
- Shawn Phillips: Contribution (1970)
- Shawn Phillips: Second Contribution (1970)
- Pink Fairies: Never Never Land (1971)
- Pink Fairies: Kings Of Oblivion (1974)
- Pink Floyd: Atom Heart Mother (1970)
- Pink Floyd: Wish You Were Here (1975)
- Popol Vuh: Affenstunde (1971)
- Popol Vuh: Einsjaeger & Siebenjaeger (1974)
- Popol Vuh: Das Hohelieds Salomons (1975)
- Popol Vuh: Letzte Tage Letzte Naechte (1976)
- John Prine: John Prine (1971)
- Public Image Ltd: First Issue (1978)
- Quatermass: Quatermass (1970)
- Queen: A Night At The Opera (1975)
- Radio Birdman: Radios Appear (1977)
- Raincoats: Raincoats (1979)
- Bonnie Raitt: Give It Up (1972)
- Ramones: Ramones (1976)
- Real Kids: Real Kids (1978)
- Lou Reed: Berlin (1973)
- Lou Reed: Metal Machine Music (1975)
- Lou Reed: Street Hassle (1978)

- Residents: Fingerprice (1976)
- Jonathan Richman: Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers (1977)
- Roches: Roches (1979)
- Rolling Stones: Sticky Fingers (1971)
- Roxy Music: For Your Pleasure (1973)
- Roxy Music: Stranded (1973)
- Todd Rundgren: A Wizard/True Star (1973)
- Rush: 2112 (1976)
- Saints: I'm Stranded (1976)
- Saints: Eternally Yours (1978)
- Samla Mamma Manna: Samla Mamma Manna (1971)
- Santana: Lotus (1974)
- Conrad Schnitzler: Rot (1973)
- Klaus Schulze: Picture Music (1973)
- Klaus Schulze: Blackdance (1974)
- Bob Seger: Beautiful Loser (1975)
- Bob Seger: Night Moves (1977)
- Sex Pistols: Never Mind The Bollocks (1977)
- Shoes: Black Vinyl Shoes (1977)
- Shoes: Present Tense (1979)
- Simon & Garfunkel: Bridge Over The Troubled Water (1970)
- Siouxsie Sioux & The Banshees: The Scream (1978)
- Slapp Happy: Acnalbasac Noom (1973)
- Patti Smith: Horses (1975)
- Patti Smith: Easter (1978)
- Soft Machine: 4 (1971)
- Soft Machine: 6 (1972)
- Sparks: Kimono My House (1974)
- Spirit: Twelve Dreams Of Dr Sardonicus (1971)
- Split Enz: Mental Notes (1975)
- Spooky Tooth: Ceremony (1970)
- Bruce Springsteen: Born To Run (1975)
- Steely Dan: Countdown To Ecstasy (1973)
- Steely Dan: Pretzel Logic (1974)
- Cat Stevens: Tea For The Tillerman (1970)
- Cat Stevens: Teaser And The Firecat (1971)
- Cat Stevens: Catch Bull At Four (1972)
- Rod Stewart: Gasoline Alley (1970)
- Rod Stewart: Every Picture Tells A Story (1971)
- Alan Stivell: Renaissance De L'Harpe Celtique (1971)
- Stooges: Fun House (1970)
- Stooges: Raw Power (1973)
- Strange: Raw Power (1976)
- Strawbs: Grave New World (1972)

- Styx: The Grand Illusion (1977)
- Supertramp: Breakfast In America (1979)
- Swell Maps: A Trip To Marineville (1979)
- Synergy: Electronic Realizations For Rock Orchestra (1975)
- Synergy: Cords (1978)
- Taj Mahal: Real Thing (1971)
- Taj Mahal: Recycling The Blues (1972)
- Taj Mahal Travellers: August 1974 (1974)
- Tangerine Dream: : Phaedra (1974)
- Tangerine Dream: Rubycon (1975)
- Tangerine Dream: Ricochet (1976)
- James Taylor: Sweet Baby James (1970)
- Television: Adventure (1978)
- 10cc: The Original Soundtrack (1975)
- Third Ear Band: Macbeth (1972)
- Throbbing Gristle: D.O.A. (1978)
- Throbbing Gristle: 20 Jazz Funk Greats (1979)
- Keith Tippett: Dedicated To You But You Weren't Listening (1971)
- Tonto's Expanding Head Band: Zero Time (1971)
- Traffic: John Barleycorn Must Die (1970)
- T.Rex: Electric Warrior (1971)
- John Twink: Think Pink (1970)
- UK: UK (1978)
- Ultravox: Ha Ha Ha (1977)
- Univers Zero: 1313 (1978)
- Univers Zero: Heresie (1979)
- Utopia: Utopia (1974)
- Van Der Graaf Generator: The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other (1970)
- Van Halen: Van Halen (1978)
- Vibrators: Pure Mania (1976)
- Wailers: Soul Rebels (1970)
- Loudon Wainwright: Album III (1972)
- Tom Waits: Small Change (1976)
- Tom Waits: Foreign Affairs (1977)
- Tom Waits: Blue Valentine (1978)
- Who: Who's Next (1971)
- Who: Quadrophenia (1973)
- Paul Winter: Common Ground (1978)
- Wire: Pink Flag (1977)
- Wire: Chairs Missing (1978)
- Wishbone Ash: Argus (1972)
- Stevie Wonder: Talking Book (1972)
- Stevie Wonder: Innervisions (1973)
- Stevie Wonder: Songs In The Key Of Life (1976)

- X-Ray Spex: Germfree Adolescents (1978)
- Ya Ho Wha 13: Penetration (1974)
- Yellow Magic Orchestra: Solid State Survivor (1979)
- Yes: The Yes Album (1971)
- Neil Young: After The Gold Rush (1970)
- Neil Young: Harvest (1972)
- Neil Young: On The Beach (1974)
- Neil Young: Zuma (1975)
- Neil Young: Rust Never Sleeps (1979)
- Townes Van Zandt: The Late Great Townes Van Zandt (1972)
- Townes Van Zandt: Flyin' Shoes (1978)
- Frank Zappa: Waka/Jawaka (1972)
- Frank Zappa: Roxy And Elsewhere (1974)
- Frank Zappa: Orchestral Favourites (1979)
- Zoogz Rift: Idiots On The Miniature Golf Course (1979)
- ZZ Top: Tres Hombres (1973)

## 4.10 The greatest bands of the 1970s

1. Pere Ubu
2. John Fahey
3. Klaus Schulze
4. Robert Wyatt
5. Popol Vuh
6. Faust
7. Neil Young
8. Nico
9. Gong
10. Kraftwerk
11. Neu
12. Suicide
13. Residents
14. Pop Group
15. Can
16. Chrome
17. Syd Barrett
18. Patti Smith
19. Joni Mitchell
20. Third Ear Band
21. Kevin Ayers
22. Television
23. Talking Heads
24. Ramones
25. Clash

26. Henry Cow

## 5 The New Wave 1976-1989

### 5.1 The New Wave

#### *New York's new Boheme*

1976 was a watershed year: the music industry was revitalized by the emergence of "independent" labels and the music scene was revitalized by the emergence of new genres. The two phenomena fed into each other and spiraled out of control. In a matter of months, a veritable revolution changed the way music was produced, played and heard. The old rock stars were forgotten and new rock stars began setting new trends. As far as white popular music goes, it was a sort of Renaissance after a few years of bourgeoisie icons (think: Bowie), conservative sounds (country-rock, southern boogie) and exploitation of minorities (funk, reggae).

During the 1970s alternative rock had survived in niches that were highly intellectual, namely German rock and progressive-rock (particularly the Canterbury school). They were all but invisible to the masses.

1976 was the year when most of those barriers (between "low" and "high" rock, between "intellectual" and "populist", between "conservative" and "progressive", between "star" and "anti-star") became not only obsolete but meaningless. Something similar had happened in 1966, when rock music as we know it was born through the revolutionary records of Bob Dylan, Frank Zappa, Pink Floyd, Doors, Velvet Underground, etc. But in 1976 rock music had a powerful ally: the record industry itself, that an army of amateurish entrepreneurs rescued from the virtual monopoly of the "major" labels.

The creative explosion was indeed very similar to the exuberance of the mid Sixties. However, the mood was completely different. The Sixties were, ultimately, an optimistic age. The young generation thought it could change (and own) the world. In 1976, only the most utopian of teenagers could fathom an ideal world in which peace and honesty triumph. America had washed itself of the Vietnam war and the Watergate scandal, but those wounds were still open. People, and especially young people, were skeptic of authorities, of society, of the world. Clearly, only money mattered. Clearly, there was a powerful force acting on the American society and forcing everybody to behave in a uniform way (the "American way of life"). Clearly, most actors in society and politics were corrupt. It was not a dictatorship: it was worse than a dictatorship, because there was no dictator to fight against. Young generations felt powerless, and not only because they "were" powerless but also because they came to realize that there was no other way.

The oil crisis was still hurting. In the Sixties, Americans had lived relatively sheltered from international events, their wealth guaranteed by the sheer isolation of the North American continent. Oil shrank the world: suddenly a war in a distant country had a direct effect on the oil pump round the corner, and on the American economy as a whole. Certainties about the present and the future were shattered.

In the meantime, decade after decade an enemy from the inside had been growing unchecked: urban violence. In 1976 America had already become the most dangerous country in the West, with a murder rate that was tens of times higher than Europe's or Japan's. In the Sixties the main threat to urban peace had been the civil riots. In the Seventies all sorts of misfits (and mostly white) became the protagonists of a hidden civil war.

The "collective consciousness" was frustrated to the point that it was difficult to have any dream, let alone a dream of "peace and love". Idealism was dying. Materialism was rampant. The Sixties had been the age of the eccentric, of the bizarre, of the unusual. The Sixties had been the age of social commitment and political participation. The

early Seventies had been a time of "restoration", of return to normal life, of mediocrity, uniformity and sociopolitical indifference. The counterculture had been defeated by the Establishment. The revolution had been lost.

No wonder the teenagers of the Seventies grew up in a far less exciting environment. Their only prospect was to follow a predetermined path to a degree and a career. Their grandfathers had fought Hitler. Their fathers were the ubiquitous "baby boomers". They, the generation of the Seventies, were nothing.

This set of circumstances created an existential mood that was mostly unconscious and subdued but was widespread among teenagers around America. This "teenage depression" was a form of boredom breeding violence and nihilism.

The rock musicians of 1976 were venting that feeling of boredom. Their raw and unpleasant sound was related to the garage bands of the early Sixties (they did share the frustration, after all, if not the rebellion).

New York was the capital of this "new wave" of musicians. Clubs such as the CBGB's and the Max's Kansas City were their meccas. Radio stations picked up the trend. Magazines such as Creem and Trouser Press began spreading the gospel.

They came to be called "punks" even if many of them were college kids. As it grew and snowballed around the country and eventually around the world, the punk phenomenon of the Seventies mirrored the hippie phenomenon of the Sixties, but the "punks" were almost the opposite of the "hippies". Even the costumes and the haircuts were completely different. The "punk" was a street animal, not a pacifist. Their language was vulgar, not sweet. They were constantly in search of extreme excitement, not of lysergic ecstasy or transcendental meditation. Last but not least, they were not social: there were no marches, no movement, no sit-ins. A punk's way of life "was" his form of protest. They were closer in spirit to the English "mods", to the motto "live fast die young". Their idols were Lou Reed, Jim Morrison, Iggy Stouge, Johnny Thunders: the "maudits" of rock music.

Manhattan became the stage for a generation of musicians who lived like the "beatniks" and the "bohemians" of the Fifties: The "prophets" of the punk generation were Richard "Hell" Myers, Patti Smith, Television. They played rock and roll with a twist, both in the lyrics and in the music, they put their heart in it and they tried to reach out to their generation. They were not stars: they were everykids.

The most authentic reincarnation of the spirit of Bob Dylan, Lou Reed and Jim Morrison, poetess and rocker Patti Smith (12) was first out of the blocks. The songs of **Horses** (1975) were little more than free-form accompaniments of Smith's poems, but **Radio Ethiopia** (1976), her masterpiece, and **Easter** (1978) added epileptic rock'n'roll numbers and introduced a wild, visceral, feverish manner of screaming her lyrics, halfway between a medieval witch and a gospel preacher. That hysterical and emphatic register soared over a boogie bacchanal in crescendo while broadcasting epic confessions of frustration and alienation that rediscovered Chuck Berry's old trick of transforming the issues of a generation into the stuff of mythology.

Richard "Hell" Myers (1) can be considered the prophet of the new wave. He transformed New York's decadent rock from a lifestyle into an ideology and a philosophy. He didn't give it a sound (the Ramones would) but he gave it an ethos: the punk ethos. Myers formed the Neon Boys in 1971, featuring Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd on guitars, but their morbid and unfriendly music never escaped the underground (unlike his friend Johnny Thunders' band, the New York Dolls). The Voidoids, which he formed with titanic guitarist Richard Quine, did. Their sarcastic and desperate *Blank Generation* (1976) played the role of the manifesto for the newborn punk generation. Quine's abrasive, dissonant riffs, and Hell's visceral, neurotic whine defined a new sound. His songs, that mixed free-association babbling and Dylan-esque visionary lyrics, charged the world with explosive doses of ferocious nihilism and existential angst.

Richard Hell was also instrumental in starting Television (12). Tom Verlaine's and Richard Lloyd's band that originated from the Neon Boys. The music on **Marquee Moon** (1977), Television's debut album, defined the

aesthetic of the new wave: acid, macabre and mystical overtones poisoned the melody, while group jamming that recalled John Coltrane's free-jazz expanded the song format. The agonizing rituals of *Marquee Moon* and *Torn Curtain* bridged the existential and the metaphysical the same way it was done by the Velvet Underground and the Doors. Verlaine and Lloyd reinvented the role of the electric guitar in rock music, the way the sitar was played in Indian ragas, the way John Cale played the viola in the Velvet Underground, the way Ray Manzarek played the organ in the Doors and the way Neil Young played... the guitar. The funereal litanies of **Adventure** (1978), and, 14 years after the fact, the even more disturbed sound of **Television** (1992), remained the fundamental coordinates of New York's new wave.

Richard Lloyd (1) continued to preach Television's transcendental power-rock on **Alchemy** (1979), **Field Of Fire** (1985) and **The Cover Doesn't Matter** (2001).

Tom Verlaine (4) went on to become one of the most profound bards of the "blank generation", the antidote to the commercial sell-out of the new wave that was rapidly defusing the movement. His albums, particularly **Dreamtime** (1981), **Words From The Front** (1982), **Flashlight** (1987) and the baroque **Warm and Cool** (1992), were essays of controlled improvisation, each song sculpted from irregular rhythms, discordant riffs and fragmented melodies. They were concertos for tremolos and vibratos, that ventured into spectral, hallucinated, oneiric atmospheres with almost religious intensity.

These prophets opened the floodgate. Soon, the everykid felt free to express herself or himself, and the level of eccentricity skyrocketed. Maudit poets, teenage punks, obsessed prophets and decadent transvestites made up a bizarre bestiary of histrionic performers.

But the band that was going to have the greatest impact worldwide was the most unlikely one: the Ramones (12), who simply played inept rock'n'roll at supersonic speed. Their frenzy was not exactly intellectual, and certainly had no artistic ambition, but was exactly what legions of frustrated kids had been waiting for. Inspired by New York Dolls and Dictators, **Ramones** (1976), a rapid-fire collection of brief songs that were intentionally demented and clownish, invented the most significant genre of the last quarter century of the 20th century. *Blitzkrieg Bop* stands as the anthem that woke up a slumbering generation. **Rocket To Russia** (1977), their masterpiece, was the ultimate item of "junk art": a ridiculous catalog of rockabilly, surf music, Mersey-beat and bubblegum music, but charged with the violence of the slums. *Teenage Lobotomy* and *Rockaway Beach* were as irresistible as devoid of instrumental or vocal skills. A few more classics followed, although *Do You Remember Rock And Roll Radio* (1980) and *Bop Til You Drop* (1987) flirted with heavy-metal and missed the exuberant recklessness of their early days. Their lifestyle was rude and barbaric, their philosophy was a simple "I Don't Care" and their slogan was "gabba-gabba-hey": this was the revolution that changed the face of western civilization. Perhaps the title of their album, **The End Of The Century** (1980), was appropriate.

### **No wave**

Within a couple of years the phenomenon reached its artistic zenith; which was also its emotional nadir. Music had become even less "entertaining" and musicians had become even less "entertainers". Brian Eno compiled an anthology titled **No New York** (1978), that stands as a documentary of that "negative" generation. Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, DNA and Mars were playing schizophrenic, paranoid, claustrophobic music. It had the fury and the conciseness of punk-rock, but it was played with sub-human skills and a demented frenzy. The songs were two minutes of ugly outbursts of atonal guitars, psychotic howling and spastic drumming. This "no wave" was the ultimate reaction against the conventions of song-oriented music. Its theme was loneliness and destitution. These were kids who were screaming to be heard. This was the generation that was dying of lack of attention and of affection. They grabbed a microphone and screamed. The silence of the "I" in the noise of the metropolis; or the noise of the "I" in the silence of the metropolis.

Teenage Jesus And The Jerks were the poster children of the no wave. Their songs were barely one-minute long,

but packed beastly instincts. Lydia Lunch was given only a few seconds to scream them, and didn't even try to do a professional job. Guitars were strummed and drums were beaten with a casual, annoyed, detached contempt. Their music was the left-over of whatever musical inspiration had bled out during a suicide attempt. Despite the obvious nihilism embedded in their manners, their anti-musical primitivism was a vehicle to express teenage angst. It was different from Chuch Berry's or Bob Dylan's vehicles for the simple fact that teenage angst had mutated into something a lot uglier. Their declared "bad taste" expressed a desperate sense of loneliness and indifference. Lydia Lunch (13) went on to elaborate on that intuition. While apparently reacting to the whole idea of elitist art, Lunch affirmed the role of an "auteur" who was even more creative, original and personal than the singer-songwriter or progressive musicians whose goals were creativity, originality, etc.

**Queen Of Siam** (1980), her first solo albums, featuring Billy Ver Planck's orchestra on a set of inept pop parodies, displayed her capricious attitude and her contempt for "high art" (and she impersonated a childish chanteuse that was obviously at odds with morality). It was post-modernism turned upside down.

A series of bands and albums followed, notably **13.13** (1982). Lunch became known for songs that were fits of alienation, neurosis, claustrophobia, paranoia. Lunch's nightmares were the nightmares of a street girl who grew up too quickly and was terrified by life. Her decadent antics were set aside in the lengthy psychodrama *The Agony Is The Ecstasy* (1982), possibly her masterpiece, a cosmic and Freudian suite, a still life of the wasteland, that, musically speaking, harked back to acid-rock. That unholy liturgy led to the dejected litanies of **In Limbo** (1984), another slow, languid, apathetic, hallucinated torture and self-flagellation by a sinner who relished her stay in a Dante-esque hell.

Later in her career, Lunch focused on the spoken word, drawn to music mainly via collaborations and for theatrical purposes: *Stinkfist* (1983), *Drumming* (1984) and *Meltdown Oratorio* (1987), with her partner Clint "Foetus" Ruin, *The Drowning Of Lucy Hamilton*, with ex-Mars' Lucy Hamilton, **Naked In Garden Hills** (1989), with Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon, **Shotgun Wedding** (1991), with ex-Birthday Party's Rowland Howard, etc. Her vulgar, sordid, degenerate and lascivious vocals had a unique, "negative" appeal on that generation of composers.

Mars, who released only one EP in 1980, played the ultimate "wall of noise". Their songs were the musical equivalent of nerve gas, of nuclear radiation, of volcanic lava colliding with ocean waves. It wasn't just improvised distortion: it was anarchic cacophony. The vocalist vomited undecipherable phonemes while the instruments were horribly being skinned and banded. It was the soundtrack of the apocalypse, a documentary of the extreme convulsions of a dying race. But their brief, disconnected spasms were painful meditations on post-industrial civilization.

Arto Lindsay's atonal guitar and Ikue Mori's tribal drumming gave DNA the quality of utter nausea. Their dadaistic maelstroms were reminiscent of the worst nightmares concocted by Captain Beefheart and Frank Zappa.

With these musicians, the regression from Woodstock's "public" music towards the "private" sphere reached the dimension of the narrow, dark rooms where abandoned teenagers performed terrible rituals of moral self-flagellation. The "no wave" was a catalog of the depressions and frustrations of the modern individual, a terrifying fresco of pathetic monsters. The "no wave" showed the subconscious of the new wave.

Not included in Brian Eno's compilation were several other bands that mined New York's basements and lofts. Among them, Jeff Lohn's Theoretical Girls, that released only a single and featured the young Glenn Branca.

- 1977: Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak develop the Apple II
- 1977: the Atari introduces the first video game console
- 1977: the soundtrack of "Saturday Night Fever" inaugurates the age of disco-music
- 1977: the Voyager is launched to reach other galaxies

## 5.2 Punk-rock

### *London's burning*

The effervescence of New York's underground scene was contagious and spread to England with a 1976 tour of the Ramones that was artfully manipulated to start a fad. In America it was a combination of subterranean record industry and of teenage angst. In Britain it was a combination of fashion and of unemployment. Music in London has been a component of fashion since the times of the Swinging London (read: Rolling Stones). Punk-rock was first and foremost a fad that took over the Kingdom by storm. However, the social component was even stronger than in US: it was not only a generic malaise, it was a specific catastrophe. The iron rule of Margaret Thatcher had salvaged Britain from sliding into the Third World, but had caused devastation in the social fabric of the industrial cities, where unemployment and poverty were unprecedented and racial tensions were brooding.

Add the pre-existing "hooligan" phenomenon and a passion for drinking and fighting and "punk" came to mean something much more serious than the Ramones ever intended: it basically ignited an explosive mixture of social and economic tensions.

The difference between UK and USA was both quality and quantity: the USA had many more teenagers that were truly frustrated and identified with the new wave and punk-rock, whereas the UK had fewer punks that were truly punks but those who were... were extremely violent. In the USA the masses ignored the phenomenon: it was definitely not cool to be a punk. In the UK the masses loved the phenomenon: it soon became cool to dress like a punk. Therefore, in a few months London alone had many more punk bands than the entire USA. In a few months both the underground and the mainstream press were afloat in reportages about the punk scene, mirroring closely what had happened in the "swinging London" and in Liverpool with the Merseybeat.

The real punks had enough loathing for society in their lungs to scream above the fad. They were cynical, ferocious, anarchic, brutal, amoral and illiterate. They were often described as the new "barbarians", mainly because they were. Their live performances were the musical equivalent of throwing up in a toilet. They hated everybody and everything. It wasn't anger, it wasn't depression: it was sheer loathing. They wanted the fight and they never missed a chance to get in trouble.

Their music was the ultimate in simplicity: just scream a refrain as loud and possible and as fast as possible. Arrangements became an embarrassing trait of the bourgeois society. Cute melodies were off-limits. Maniacal attitudes were welcome. Songs shrank and shrank: basically, the title was most of the song. It was the ultimate in "generational anthem": the song was a motto, a slogan and little else.

Malcom McLaren is the manager who virtually invented punk-rock in Britain. He invented both the sound, when he launched the Sex Pistols (the Ramones on heroin and valium), and the look (Richard Hell transposed in the London slums), thanks to his London boutique.

Rock'n'roll had always had a fascination with the juvenile delinquent, but the Sex Pistols (1) certainly brought it to a whole new dimension. They seemed to exist only to wreak havoc, generate scandal and elicit outrage. Johnny "Rotten" Lydon screamed like a hostile, rabid beast, while his cohorts unleashed a primal, feral fury. They were not as gifted as the Rolling Stones, but they were their equivalent in the new "swinging London" of the 1970s. *Anarchy In The UK* (1976) and *God Save The Queen* had clear political overtones, although their album, **Never Mind The Bollocks** (1977), was more genuinely "anthemic" in the tradition of Rolling Stones, Who and Animals. They lasted only one year, but it was enough to feed a punk frenzy throughout the kingdom.

After the Sex Pistols, came the Clash (12), by far the most intellectual and among the first punk bands to take aim at social issues. They "were" the epitome of "anthemic". *White Riot*, *Complete Control*, *Clash City Rockers* and *London's Burning* channeled the rage of the lumpenproletariat into simple, melodic, riff-driven and noisy rave-ups. **Clash** (1977), one of the greatest punk-rock albums of all times, was a vehement call to arms. Unlike the Ramones,

the Clash were aware of the sociopolitical status of their country. Unlike the Ramones, the Clash could relate private angst and public life. Joe Strummer and Mick Jones were also capable musicians, and they proved it on **London Calling** (1979), a milestone recording that was the exact opposite of what punk-rock was meant to be: far from being illiterate and nihilistic, the sermons on this album were a musical encyclopedia (drawing from country, rock, rhythm'n'blues, boogie, funk, ska, calypso, etc) and relied heavily on melody. **Sandinista** (1980) forsook the "punk" and kept only the "rock" of the equation. A sprawling artistic and political statement, it summarized 25 years of music, from Chuck berry to Bob Dylan to George Clinton to Bob Marley. It was also one of the earliest wide-scale appropriations of third-world music by western musicians. Completing the 180-degree U-turn, **Combat Rock** (1982) sold that sound to the discos. The band had coined a distinctive sound, equally appealing to the rockers and to the dancers, that Mick Jones would continue to explore on his Big Audio Dynamite (B.A.D.) project.

The Damned had actually been the first punks out of the blocks. Their **Damned Damned Damned** (1977) was the quintessence of British punk-rock, even though with **Black Album** (1980) they converted to melodic hard-rock.

Billy Idol's Generation X (1), were also unique in that they did pay attention to melody: their songs were actually hummable and **Generation X** (1978) was actually musical. The Buzzcocks were even more melodic (beating the Ramones at their own game) and virtually invented punk-pop with *Orgasm Addict* (1977) and *Boredom* (1977), as did the vastly under-rated Vibrators (1), whose **Pure Mania** (1976) was one of the real classics of British punk-rock.

The vast majority of British punk bands, including Sham 69, merely copied the Sex Pistols.

### *Australia*

While the focus was on London, there were other important scenes. The Australian scene was closely related to the British scene, but the results were different, as Radio Birdman and the Saints (two of the greatest punk bands of all times) opted for the raw and wild style of Stooges and MC5 rather than the Sex Pistol's primal assault. Radio Birdman (1) unleashed a rock'n'roll orgy on **Radios Appear** (1977) while **Living Eyes** (1978) adopted a more atmospheric approach. The Saints (2) debuted with the only album that can compete with the Ramones' demented style, **I'm Stranded** (1976), but then veered towards a hysterical form of rhythm'n'blues with **Eternally Yours** (1978).

### *Art-punk*

Wire, Fall and Swell Maps were the artsy bands of early punk-rock. Wire (12) evolved rapidly from the demented and decadent punk-rock of **Pink Flag** (1977) to the surreal atmosphere of **Chairs Missing** (1978), which betrayed Brian Eno's influence and incorporated the synthesizer. That anathema instrument, the very nemesis of punk-rock, became prominent on **154** (1979), an exercise in bleak soundscapes, drenched in psychedelic nightmares and industrial alienation. **A-Z** (1980), the first solo album by Wire's keyboardist Colin Newman (10), expanded on those ideas with an apocalyptic cycle of menacing dirges, and achieved a demented intensity that was the musical equivalent of expressionism.

Mark Smith's Fall (2) were punks, but the emphasis of albums such as **Live At Witch Trials** (1979) and **Hex Induction Hour** (1982) was on noise and anarchy, not on violence and sarcasm. They mostly saved their energy for brutal raids on harmony, of the kind pioneered by Captain Beefheart and Pere Ubu. Even the much more accessible sound of **This Nation's Saving Grace** (1985) and **Frenz Experiment** (1988), when Smith compromised with traditional formulas, still contained substantial doses of mental insanity.

One of the most inventive bands of the British new wave, despite lasting only a few months, the Swell Maps (1) bridged the worlds of punk-rock, acid-rock, avantgarde music and pop music. Led by brothers Nikki Sudden and Paul "Epic Soundtracks" Godley, the band applied psychedelic chaos and catchy refrains to a magma of free-jazz improvisation, demented dissonances, killer riffs, found objects, Stooze-ian distortions, industrial bacchanals. A

**Trip To Marineville** (1979) was a monument to anarchic nonsense.

John Langford's Mekons (2) were also employing skewed rhythms and intoxicated harmonies, but they were an old-fashioned pub-band of incorrigible drunkards, disguised as punk-rockers. The shamelessly incompetent rock'n'roll of **Quality Of Mercy Is Not Strnen** (1979) turned them into icons of the independent/alternative scene, but they found their true mission with a populist, sarcastic country-rock, for example on **Fear And Whiskey** (1985).

The Slits were the first female punk band, a predecessor of the riot-grrrrls, and **Slits** (1980) was one of the first feminist albums since Joy Of Cooking.

Birthday Party (2), which also came from Australia, were absolutely unique in their dissonant, awkward and deranged approach to punk-rock. **Prayers On Fire** (1981) and **Junkyard** (1982) offered grotesquely dislocated blues and fake jazz, while vocalist Nick Cave tested human hearing with absurd vocal performances worthy of Captain Beefheart.

### ***Funk-punk fission***

Britain was coming out of a decade of progressive experiments. Punk-rock was largely born as a reaction against the excessive cerebral/militant approach of those experiments, but displayed from the early days the influence of the very school it was reacting against (one of punk's many inherent contradictions). Quite a few punk musicians toyed with jazz and funk. They rediscovered the "savage" essence of jazz, which is, after all, African music, and the vibrant feeling of funk's syncopated rhythm. Jazz and funk were, in other words, closer to the punk spirit than any punk would ever want to admit. The founders of jazz and funk had been "punks" themselves, although in a wildly different world (one in which the "punk" would be hanged from a tree or banned from society, not one in which the punk became a celebrity).

The landscape of bands that focused on jazz and funk was far less homogeneous but far more creative than the landscape of straightforward punk-rock.

The band that legitimized this hyper-fusion of genres was the Pop Group (110) and rarely has a name been more misleading. The Pop Group was the quintessential experimental (and agit-prop) combo, integrating elements of jazz, funk, rock, dub and classical music. Their music was revolutionary in word and in spirit. **Y** (1979), one of the most intense, touching and vibrant albums in the history of rock music, was the outcome of the Pop Group's quest for a catastrophic balance between primitivism and futurism: the new wave's futuristic ambitions got transformed into a regression to prehistoric barbarism. At the same time, the band's furious stylistic fusion led to a nuclear magma of violent funk syncopation, monster dub lines, savage African rhythms (Bruce Smith), dissonant saxophone (Gareth Sager), and visceral shouts and cries (Mark Stewart). The lyrics celebrated the unlikely wedding of punk nihilism and militant slogans. Both the method and the medium were permeated by an anarchic and subversive spirit. In fact, Stewart's declamation was closer to Brecht's theater than to "singing". Another dose of lava-like anger was poured into the funk-rock foundations by the anthemic rants of **For How Much Longer Do We Tolerate Mass Murder** (1980). Both albums sounded like assortments of mental disorders. A sound so revolutionary (in both senses of the word) had not been heard since the heydays of the Canterbury school.

When the Pop Group broke up, saxophonist Gareth Sager and drummer Bruce Smith joined keyboardist Mark Springer and Don Cherry's daughter, Neneh, to form Rip Rig & Panic (12) who offered a lighter version of the Pop Group's afro-funk-soul-jazz-punk hyper-fusion. Reaching back to the 1940s and 1950s, they delivered a spectacular revision of big-band swing and rhythm'n'blues on **God** (1981), in a frenzy of dancing and plagiarism. The equally feverish **I Am Cold** (1982) and **Attitude** (1983) mitigated the volcanic exuberance of the group with increased jazz and ethnic elements.

Mark Stewart associated with Tackhead and continued the original program of dynamiting the song structure, albeit in a hip-hop framework.

Other groups that experimented with funk and jazz were the Gang Of Four (1), whose **Entertainment** (1979) was as deranged a work as Pop Group's debut album, and their offshoot Shriekback; A Certain Ratio (1), one of the most sophisticated, a hybrid of Joy Division and Talking Heads, even though their best material may be on the 1980 singles rather than on the pretentious album **To Each** (1981); Ludus, Glaxo Babies, Shock Headed Peters, Slab, Stump.

The last salvo in this tradition was the eclectic and atmospheric **Bird Wood Cage** (1988), by Wolfgang Press (1). They had in common an odd balance of primitivism and futurism: their music was, at the same time, reaching back to African tribal music and arching forward to envision the soundtrack for the post-industrial world, a harrowing fresco of human society after the nuclear apocalypse.

#### ***Punk never dies***

The second wave of British punk bands, that came out when the originals had already disbanded or changed style, simply increased the original level of violence: GBH (1), whose explosive **City Baby Attacked By Rats** (1982) sounds like the British version of the Dead Kennedys, UK Subs, Neurotics (1), whose **Beggars Can Be Choosers** (1983) still embodied the spirit of 1977, Nihilistics, New Model Army (1), whose **Vengence** (1984) was one of the best political albums of the age, and, in Ireland, the great Stiff Little Fingers (1), whose furious, anthemic, loud and fast **Inflammable Material** (1979) may have been the most influential of them all on future generations.

#### ***Anarchists***

A significant branch of punk-rock was devoted to anarchism. They were agit-prop bands that sang about revolution and terrorism, the ideal children of MC5. The moral leaders of the movement, Crass (1), frequently didactic and rarely musical but sincerely and tragically gripping on **Stations Of The Crass** (1980), and Discharge (1), whose **Hear Nothing See Nothing Say Nothing** (1982) erupts with a blind destructive fury that predates grindcore, produced some of the most radical sounds of the time.

The most creative extremists were probably two bands that debuted around 1981: Rudimentari Peni (2), who released **Death Church** (1983) and **Cacophony** (1987), a 30-song musical aberration that sounds like a concerted effort by Captain Beefheart, Sonic Youth and Clash; and the Subhumans (1), whose **The Day The Country Died** (1983) served one of the scariest batch of angry rants.

The whole thing lasted a few years. The first wave was dead after a few months, but punk-rock kept producing ever new bands that took over and prolonged the agony of a genre that was not meant to last. It lasted longer than any other genre in the history of rock music.

- 1978: A polish cardinal, Karol Joseph Wojtyla, is elected Pope John Paul II
- 1978: Deng Xiaoping seizes power in China and launches pseudo-capitalistic economic reforms
- 1978: First test tube baby (Louise Joy Brown)
- 1978: Louis Farrakhan seizes power of the "Nation of Islam", reasserting the principles of African-American nationalism
- 1978: religious guru Jim Jones and his believers commit a mass suicide at Jamestown, Guyana (917 dead)
- 1978: the Red Brigades terrorize Italy

## **5.3 USA: The Blank Generation**

*Akron 1976-80*

The "blank generation" came out of a moral vacuum. While punks roamed the suburban landscape, blue-collar workers were feeling the pinch of an economic revolution: human society had left the industrial age and entered the post-industrial age, the age in which services (such as software) prevail over manufacturing.

Computers now rule the world, from Wall Street to Boeing. The assembly line took away a bit of the personality of the worker, but that was nothing: the new service-based economy takes away the worker completely, physically. In the post-industrial society the individual is even less of a "person". The individual is merely a cog in a huge organism of interconnected parts that works at the beat of a gigantic network of computers. This highly sophisticated economy treats the individual as a number, as a statistic. The goal is no longer to create a robot that behaves like a human being, but to create a human being that behaves like a robot: robots are efficient and lead to manageable and profitable businesses, whereas humans are inefficient and difficult to manage.

This work condition merely reinforces the uniformity of the "American way of life". There is little one can change without ending up a bum. Society is no longer the association of individuals: the individual is a member of society, meaning that society determines what the individual does and thinks. Inevitably, this reduces the scale of the individual life. The individual "matters" less. The process that began when human beings moved from the rural society to the urban society continues with a further level of shrinking of personal identity.

At the same time, the very concept of human race is changing. Progress in medicine allows weak humans to survive beyond their biological limits. Organ transplants point to a future in which humans will be assembled out in a hospital. Progress in genetics shed light on how to engineer life. Human life is ever less magic, and ever more mathematic.

It is not surprising that films and cartoons project the vision of a human race that is becoming increasingly weak, ugly, illiterate and barbaric, and more and more similar to the machines that used to serve us.

This vision changes the emotional landscape. In the Sixties that landscape was sculpted mainly by the fear of the nuclear holocaust. That fear is now replaced by the vision of a radical mutation in the nature of the human being. We will not be exterminated: we will become monsters.

The "blank generation" agonizes within that vision. There is an alienated metropolis where faceless beings study, work and die. There is a future of machines and of moral apocalypse. There is a present of neuroses and fears.

The soundtrack for that generation is depressed, disconnected, unpleasant, even noisy.

The music that emerges from the "new wave" is one of the most philosophical forms of rock and roll since its inception. It has a depth that is almost the very opposite of punk-rock, although punk-rock is, after all, a complementary phenomenon.

It may not be a coincidence that Ohio, one of the most industrial states, ended up leading the charge. The school started in Akron by bands such as the Mirrors, the Electric Eels, and the Pagans became the most influential outside of New York.

Pere Ubu (124), one of the greatest (and most creative) bands of all times, featuring David Thomas, one of the greatest (and most eccentric) vocalists of all times, **Modern Dance** (1978), one of the most important recordings in the history of rock music, was, first and foremost, the fresco of a civilisation on the verge of collapse. It was also the soundtrack of a nervous breakdown, both individual and collective. Pere Ubu released deafening bacchanals of cryptic slogans, agonizing vocals, discordant strumming, electronic distortions and primordial pulsations. The "modern dance" was the grotesque dance of bodies possessed by the spasms of industrial alienation and post-industrial lethargy. The visceral rhythmic charge of ancestral tribal music was transposed to the ambience and to the cadence of the factory. Songs were orchestrated with free-form interludes, "concrete" and electronic clumps of sound, and sudden flarings of noise, aiming to evoke the cyclic motion, the steaming gusts and the menacing rumbling of the machines, as well as the inorganic bawling of the mob of workers and the apathetic decay of their minds. Thomas' demented vibrato and somnambulant weeping, that seemed to mock the emphatic style of

agit-prop, increased the feeling of madness. His fervent babbling (running the gamut from Frank Sinatra-style crooning to Marvin Gaye's falsetto to Howling Wolf's roar to Captain Beefheart's delirium) painted the portrait of a tormented psyche. Meanwhile, Allen Ravenstine reinvented the role of keyboards in rock music, bringing about a revolution comparable to the one begun by Brian Eno a few years earlier. His anti-sensationalist style relied on atmosphere rather than technique, and favored "dirty", unorthodox sounds over melody. The most structured songs founded a new type of absurd lied. The least structured songs bordered on chamber music for broken cookware, discordant synth lines and psychedelic overdose. This is folk music for the industrial age, an extreme synthesis of the Velvet Underground, Pink Floyd and local heroes the Stooges.

A gothic tone began to emerge on **Dub Housing** (1978), but was soon drenched in hallucinations on two stately masterpieces, **New Picnic Time** (1979) and **Art Of Walking** (1980), which benefited from the addition of Red Crayola's Mayo Thompson. The group's pataphysical dementia and sonic jungle became even less rational, while Thomas' inarticulate whines and garbled visions became even less focused. The brutal and orgiastic rock'n'roll of yore was tempered by an ethereal and even serene contemplation of life. Anaemic and rarefied compositions simply floated, without reaching closure. Pere Ubu explored a soundscape that was closer to abstract painting than to rock'n'roll.

This process of implosion led to the fragile music of **The Song Of The Bailing Man** (1983), with Anton Fier on drums. **Tenement Of The Year** (1988), with John Kirkpatrick on accordion and Chris Cutler (ex-Henry Cow) on drums, sounded like an appendix to David Thomas' solo albums, which had made the group largely irrelevant. Instead, the group was reborn as a more commercial unit on **Cloudland** (1989), ready to sell the "modern dance" as background music.

Devo (1), whose **Are We Not Men** (1978) proclaimed the advent of "de-volution" (the opposite process of Darwin's evolution) while rehashing psychedelic-rock and garage-rock, Human Switchboard, Styrenes (1), whose *Drano In Your Veins* (1975) had been one of the earliest independent singles of the new wave and whose posthumous **Girl Crazy** (1982) is worthy of Pere Ubu, Tin Huey, will be the most influential in the early years of the new wave. The Waitresses (1) continued that tradition into the 1980s with one of the school's masterpieces, **Wasn't Tomorrow Wonderful** (1982), that applied the same rules of idiosyncrasy and creativity to vaudeville-pop. Tin Huey's multi-instrumentalist Ralph Carney formed the Swollen Monkeys (1), who released the equally bizarre **After Birth Of The Cool** (1981).

These groups incorporated the frenzy of punk-rock, especially the Dead Boys (1) on **Young Loud And Snotty** (1977), but the atmosphere mattered more than the sheer violence. Their violence was, in fact, more internal than external, indirect rather than direct, psychological rather than physical. They depicted a wasteland populated with psychotic characters. Their songs were Freudian nightmares.

### **California 1974-81**

Something similar was happening in California, and specifically in the San Francisco Bay Area which is the home of the Silicon Valley. An ideal line joined Ohio's industrial landscape and California's computer-driven economy. The Silicon Valley was the quintessence of everything that was happening to the collective subconscious of the "blank generation".

On top of it, California had been one of the cradles of experimental rock since the heyday of Frank Zappa. During the 1970s, freaks turned into punks and hippies switched from LSD to heroin, but the creativity kept flowing. Interactions with other forms of art were at a peak. Avantgarde clubs of all kinds spread all around San Francisco. California's new wave was more experimental, but the underlying theme remained the somewhat hallucinated and neurotic representation of a catastrophic present/future, of a horrible mutation of the human race.

Their music was even less related to punk-rock and to New York's intellectuals. California's new wave exhibited an amateurish tone that was unique. The "visual" aspect often prevailed. The Residents, Chrome and Tuxedomoon

formed the San Francisco triad that created the third pole of the new wave, along with New York and Akron. Perhaps the quintessential independent musicians of the 1970s, the Residents (124) performed in android costumes and never revealed their faces or identities. They debuted in 1972, during the dark age that followed the demise of the hippie movement and the collapse of acid-rock. They composed their most innovative works between 1974 and 1976, when the new wave wasn't even born yet, but their isolation from the music scene remained absolute until the new wave allowed them to emerge as new prophets of a way to make, perform and conceive music. "Obscure" and cryptic, their pieces were part of a multimedia show whose antics transposed the music-hall into the new wave and whose sound emphasized a collage-style approach to composition. **Meet The Residents** (1974) gave "devolution" a sound. Inspired by Dada, surrealism and Frank Zappa, the Residents assembled fragments and debris of junk culture (commercials, orchestral easy-listening, cartoon soundtracks, pop muzak, exotica, marching-band fanfares) and proceeded to sculpt a sonic montage that was deliberately amateurish but also provided a chilling documentary of the western civilization, albeit disguised as a grotesque parody of its consumerism. Where Zappa was actually a virtuoso of composition and direction, a heroic implementer of sloppy ideas, the Residents were sloppy implementers of heroic ideas. Glacial, distorted, monotonous voices soared over instruments that merged chamber and atonal pretenses with puerile rhythms and clumsy melodies. **Not Available** (1978), conceived too in 1974 but released several years later, one of the milestone recordings of the era, was their most sophisticated work of art. Its suites virtually coined a new form of avantgarde music out of symphonic primitivism and cacophonous world-music. Despite the gargantuan display of sounds, they offered a bleak and terrifying vision of humankind. That vision was expressed in a more programmatic format with the futuristic ballet *Six Things To A Cycle* (1976), and reached its poetic apex with **Eskimo** (1979), which was basically an experiment of "musique concrete" set in the Arctic but also a touching tribute to ancestral humanity, to its epic struggle in hostile environments. This time the Residents looked to expressionism, and to theatre, for crafting a work that was less chaotic than their early collages as well as more "ambient" in Brian Eno's vein. **Mark Of The Mole** (1981), the first installment of a three-part sci-fi fantasy, and the fairy tales of **Census Taker** (1985) and **God In Three Persons** (1988), continued their ventures into a musical realm that no other band dared approach.

Chrome (11) were the ultimate space-rock band, drenched both in hippy culture and in new wave culture, with an additional touch of art-rock. Helios Creed's superhuman guitar explorations and Keyboardist Tom "Damon Edge" Weisse's sci-fi visions bridged Grateful Dead and Todd Rundgren on the rock opera **Alien Soundtrack** (1977), which stand as swan songs of San Francisco's acid-rock as well as manifestos of the new wave, while **Half Machine Lip Moves** (1979) twisted psychedelia towards the sonic massacres of Stooges and MC5, while acknowledging Neu's percussive nightmares and Throbbing Gristle's industrial implosions. Each piece became a terrifying shock wave, a stormy, tribal and hyper-distorted slab of moral apocalypse.

Tuxedomoon (11), formed by multi-instrumentalists Steve Brown, Blaine Reininger and Peter "Principle" Dachert, were the most erudite of the group. They were also natural descendants of progressive-rock, as demonstrated on **Half Mute** (1980), that scored pieces for keyboards, saxophone and violin besides the rock trio. The languid, seductive and stately demeanor of those avantgarde chamber lieder absorbed the spirit of both decadentism and surrealism. Their eclectic inspiration turned **Suite En Sous-sol** (1982) into a stylistic tour de force, running the gamut from chamber music (for unusual combinations of instruments) to disco-pop to world-music to raga-rock to psychedelic-rock to renaissance music etc. Later, on works such as **Holy Wars** (1985), settled on a form of neo-classical fusion/dance music that harked back to Canterbury's surreal, depressed and elegant jazz-rock.

An even more radical approach, that seemed to wed Jimi Hendrix and Morton Subotnick, was attempted by the likes of Factrix (2), whose **Scheintot** (1981) and **California Babylon** (1982) built massive walls of distortion and set in motion wildly dissonant and chaotic porno-macabre-psychedelic nightmares, Nervous Gender (1), whose album **Music from Hell** (1982) relied on excruciating synthesizer dissonances and uncontrolled cacophony, and

MX-80 Sound (1), whose **Out Of The Tunnel** (1980) contained abrasive torments delivered with the fury of heavy-metal.

Monte Cazazza and, in Los Angeles, Non (Boyd Rice), who conducted the noisiest experiments of the era, influenced and were influenced by Throbbing Gristle's industrial music.

Zoogz Rift (5) was one of the most original figures of the time, although hard to classify. The quintessential "idiot savant", a natural heir to Captain Beefheart and Salvador Dalí, Robert Pawlikowski displayed his eclectic albeit demented musical talent on **Idiots On The Miniature Golf Course** (1979) and **Amputees In Limbo** (1982). His aesthetic of indiscriminate chaos and parody shone on the instrumental jams of **Ipecac** (1984) and **Water** (1987), that borrow ideas from Frank Zappa and Tom Waits and raid oldies as well as world-music. Unabated wit helped rise **Nonentity** (1988) to the occasion of a blasphemous re-visitation of the American civilization.

Barnes & Barnes (1) were even less serious, and their albums, particularly **Voobaha** (1980), were demented parodies of genres and lifestyles in a Frank Zappa-esque vein.

San Francisco became the stage for all sorts of musical experiments. Naut Humon's Rhythm And Noise (2) played noise and electronic music that fused Karlheinz Stockhausen's manipulations of found sounds, Morton Subotnick's electronic fantasies, Throbbing Gristle's industrial music and Foetus' infernal symphonies. The most intense moments on **Contents Under Notice** (1984) and **Chasms Accord** (1985) recall Klaus Schulze's cosmic music applied to a black hole, while slabs of expressionistic violence collide with factory cadences and electronic dissonances.

Slava Ranko (1) released only one album, **Arctic Hysteria** (1981), that quotes John Cage, Brian Eno, minimalism, Indian music

Norman Salant's post-modernist jams on **Saxophone Demonstrations** (1981) spanned minimalism, jazz, disco and ambient music.

The Clubfoot Orchestra (1) specialized in instrumental scores that trapped the warm soul of folk music into the icy structures of chamber music, as on **Wild Beasts** (1986).

Like the Lounge Lizards on the other coast, the Longshoremen (1) concocted jazz scores that were musical oxymorons, but more demented and primitive, particularly on **Grr Huh Yeah** (1985).

The Ophelias (1) engaged in a kind of surreal, futuristic music-hall that recalled both the United States Of America and Tuxedomoon, best on **Ophelias** (1987).

A few avantgarde groups engaged in chaotic collages that harked back to abstract, dadaistic art. Colorado-based Mnemonists (3), later renamed Biota, assembled wild assortments of sonic events on albums such as **Some Attributes** (1980), **Biota** (1982) and **Rackabones** (1985) that ran the gamut from classical music to sheer noise, while Negativland (1) opted for a satirical urban documentary on **Negativland** (1980) and **Points** (1981).

#### **Manhattan 1977-**

The same spirit of the "blank generation" took hold of Manhattan when Suicide (101) began spinning their tales of unbearable neurosis. The archetypal duo of keyboards (Martin Rev) and vocals (Alan Vega), they reinvented the line-up of the rock band, with the electronic keyboards replacing rhythm section and lead instrument. **Suicide** (1977), one of the milestones of the new wave, grafted the infinite modulations of minimalism onto a feverish rockabilly beat, thus coining "psychobilly". Vega's moribund vocals chased ghosts through an urban angst that was a close relative of the Velvet Underground's. Suicide sang about the individual and collective apocalypse, depicting lonely aching souls in a gothic landscape overflowing with fear, paranoia and claustrophobia. The pauses, the reverbs, the monotonous tones, the icy electronics were all functional to bleak visions of the future. **Alan Vega Martin Rev** (1980) used the same elements to concoct cybernetic ballads for the discos. The electronic shaman Alan Vega (2) continued the futuristic and decadent program of Suicide on albums such as **Alan Vega** (1980) and **Collision Drive** (1982) that offer cadaveric angst at infernal pace. Singing in his wavering voice, reminiscent of a

Lou Reed devoid of any emotion, over a robotic rockabilly cadence, Vega staged a formidable assault on the rocker's stereotype.

The Feelies (12) were among the bands that focused on translating the emotional tension of the "blank generation" into a new song format. Formed in New Jersey by Glenn Mercer and Bill Million, they were a quiet and shy outfit, that rarely behaved like a rock band, thus predating the snobby attitude of college-pop. **Crazy Rhythms** (1980), featuring Anton Fier on drums, was a unique album, imbued with a controlled frenzy that employed psychedelic guitars, trance-like vocals, repetition of patterns and hypnotic beats. The resulting sound was hermetic, almost extraterrestrial, despite being rock music all right. Songs shared an ascetic and a geometric quality that recalled zen meditation rather than punk-rock. The mood was halfway between ecstatic transcendence and detached decadence. Even the laid-back folk-rock and country-rock of **Good Earth** (1986), now featuring Stan Demeski on drums, had an hallucinated feeling, as if the band was performing traditional Earth music on the Moon. The eclectic **Only Life** (1988) failed to clarify their true substance: it merely increased the sophistication of the game.

### *Etc 1977-80*

Human Sexual Response (later Concussion Ensemble) in Boston, Gizmos in Indiana, Reds in Pennsylvania, Debris in Oklahoma and Oho in Pennsylvania are among the overlooked legends of the time.

- 1979: Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain's prime minister and begins a program of privatization
- 1979: the shah Reza Pahlevi is overthrown by the Islamic Revolution and Iran becomes a theocratic republic led by the ayatollah Khomeini with a strong anti-American posture
- 1979: Saddam Hussein seizes power in Iraq and begins a ruthless dictatorship
- 1979: Soviet troops invade Afghanistan and establish a communist government
- 1979: the Global Positioning System (GPS) is operational
- 1979: the Green Party is founded in Germany with an environmentalist platform
- 1979: the Sandinistas seize power in Nicaragua overthrowing the US-sponsored dictatorship
- 1979: The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan
- 1979: the Soviet Union invades Afghanistan and the US organizes an Islamic resistance led by Osama Bin Laden

## 5.4 USA: American Graffiti

### *New York*

**American Graffiti** is the title of George Lucas' film that in 1973 launched a phenomenon in the USA: a revival of the Fifties and the Sixties. There was something innocent and magic in those decades that went lost in the Vietnam War and the oil crisis of the Seventies. The rediscovery of those decades is also a rediscovery of the roots of rock and roll. After the fall of alternative rock, Seventies music had become largely corporate-driven. Genres that had been created as rebellion to the Establishment were rapidly becoming mainstream. The music of the Fifties and the early Sixties sounded more authentic.

Broadway and Hollywood focused on the Billboard charts, on the one-hit wonders that went lost after the deluge

of 1966-67. Thousands of kids playing in their garages and basements focused on the bands that were playing in garages and basements in the Sixties. The second half of the Seventies saw a revival of the whole spectrum: rockabilly, surf music, folk-rock, psychedelia, even horror soundtracks. It was as if an archeological frenzy was shaking the musical fabric of the nation. It was like the youth of the Seventies was out to decipher the graffitis of previous "teen" civilizations of America.

First and foremost, punks discovered the evil soul that had been hidden for two decades inside rockabilly. Rockabilly's epileptic rhythm fit well with punk's outrageous looks. Furthermore, punks pushed the envelop of that rhythm, wed it to the tones of horror soundtracks and turned it into something bleak and gloomy and deranged. Bent to the mood of the times, it became more than a genre: it became a perverted hypnotic ritual whose hiccups and reverbs had an overtly sexual and macabre meaning. New York was, again, the epicenter. Suicide invented "psychobilly". The Cramps (11) invented "voodoobilly" with **Songs The Lord Taught Us** (1980), a collection of macabre, manic, ebullient rockabilly numbers that emphasized the beastly instincts: a tribal and feverish rhythm, a tone of voice that bordered on shamanic and zombie-like, a catacomb echo dampening the sound. Disguised as mere B-series parody, Cramps' voodoobilly offered another poignant fresco of urban alienation and another effective fresco of junk culture. Turning to morbid and porno themes with **A Date With Elvis** (1986), **Stay Sick** (1990) and **Look Mom No Head** (1992), the Cramps devoted themselves to recreating the subculture of horror movies and high-school fantasies over and over again, elevating the most degenerate themes to the status of archetypes and semiotic signs.

The Fleshtones (12) went beyond genre-bending: they turned rockabilly, garage-rock, surf music and horror soundtracks upside down in what was basically an exercise in post-modernist art. Led by keyboardist Peter Zarella, they injected punk effervescence and irreverence into structures that were meant for pure party time. Their anthemic *American Beat* (1979) could be the most representative song of the "Sixties revival". **Roman Gods** (1981), an album that stands as a tribute to the subconscious of an era, coupled the verve of punk-rock with martial and solemn tones in both instrumental tracks and catchy tunes. The music on albums such as **Hexbreaker** (1983), which played down the rebel attitude in favor of Phil Spector's "wall of sound", and **Fleshtones Vs Reality** (1987) managed to be both visceral and epigonic, to project both frustration and nostalgia.

Another post-modernist attack to the tradition was carried out by the Raybeats (2), formed by former members of the Contortions and possibly the least conventional of all revival bands. The brilliant musicians gave new meaning to the classic sounds of rockabilly guitar, Farfisa organ and "yakety" saxophone. The instrumental tracks on **Guitar Beat** (1981) were lattices of atonal, tribal and discordant sounds that simulated conventional Sixties songs. An erudite appendix to that skewed program was **Escape** (1981), recorded by Raybeats guitarist Jody Harris and Richard Hell's guitarist Richard Quine and set to disco rhythms.

Of course, the charts featured much more conventional bands, notably the Stray Cats (1), whose funny and nostalgic restoration of post-war atmospheres (doo-wop, rockabilly, honky-tonk, dance-hall orchestras, swing big-bands) fueled a "rockabilly craze" that brought two minutes of fame to sincere worshipers of the genre like the Panther Burns and the Zantees.

By far the wildest rock'n'roll animal of the era was Von Lmo (11). Alas, he was also one of the least friendly to the record industry. **Future Language** (1981) and the posthumous **Cosmic Interception** (which collects material from the early 1980s) feature ferocious space-rock jams that borrow the energy of Hawkwind, the loudness of Blue Cheer, the fury of MC5 and the free format of Albert Ayler, propelling anthemic melodies and distorted heavy-metal guitar.

### **Garage-rock**

However, the emphasis shifted rapidly towards garage-rock, the wild and raw sound of amateurish rock'n'roll: in Washington the Slickee Boys (1), whose **Cybernetic Dreams Of Pi** (1983) was a precursor of the psychedelic

retro` sound, in New Jersey the Dramarama, in Ohio the Romantics and, indirectly, the Pretenders (1), whose **Learning To Crawl** (1984) announced the strong post-feminist persona of Chrissie Hynde and displayed a forceful guitar-rock tinged with ska and blues. The Wipers in Oregon, led by Greg Sage, revitalized garage-rock of the Pacific Northwest with anthems such as *Youth Of America* (1981).

Boston, whose scene had been revitalized by the Modern Lovers, boasted one of the most prolific and creative schools, particularly the Real Kids (1), whose **Real Kids** (1978) was mainly influenced by early Rolling Stones, and the DMZ, who later became the Lyres.

### ***Power-pop***

In the process, rock music rediscovered melody and it didn't take long before power-pop, the ultimate "feel good" genre, was rampant again.

Chicago can be credited with rejuvenating the genre, first with the loud, melodic rock of Cheap Trick and then with the sophisticated retro` sound of the Shoes and with generic "revivalists" like the Service. The Shoes (2) tower over the rest of the pack, thanks to albums such as **Black Vinyl Shoes** (1977) and **Present Tense** (1979) that are musical encyclopedias of Mersey-beat choruses, surf harmonies, jingle-jangle guitars, enhanced with the occasional hard-rock riff.

Boston, again, had the most successful and influential bands, the Cars, plus diligent bar-bands such as Neighborhoods.

The slick and sparkling sound of Ric Ocasek's Cars (1) stood almost at the opposite end of the new wave's ethos: catchy melodies (that were almost lullabies and nursery rhymes compared with punk-rock), electronic arrangements (often bordering on baroque), frigid and slightly neurotic vocals, and loud, insistent, staccato keyboards created a version of early Roxy Music for the new wave, and slowly approached the highly synthetic sound of **Heartbeat City** (1984).

Another antithesis of the new wave was Jonathan Richman (1), who had contributed to start the fire with the Modern Lovers but veered towards the opposite end of the spectrum with **Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers** (1977). While not precisely "pop", Richman was in many ways the ultimate remnant of the Sixties: a childish bard of his virulent generation who sang in a spartan folk style about ordinary events, a timid albeit witty observer of teenage life, a cross between Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry.

In Kansas the Embarrassment (1) were as good and as overlooked as the Shoes. **Death Travels West** (1983) is their humble classic.

The Moberlys brought the California-style revival to Seattle.

### ***California 1976-***

In California, Dave Alvin's Blasters (2) led the way to a more personal re-interpretation of the Fifties, but, de facto, also launched a new form of populist, grass-roots music. **Blasters** (1981) and **Non Fiction** (1983) were more than mere homages to the naive lifestyle of the past: they were sincere rootsy vignettes that captured the American soul the same way the Band had done it a decade earlier.

Inevitably the specter of Gram Parsons reappeared: Rank And File, featuring former punks Alejandro Escovedo (ex-Nuns), Chip Kinman and Tony Kinman (ex-Dils), recorded the manifesto of "cow-punk", **Sundown** (1982), or country-rock for the punk generation.

Power-pop found fertile soil in California, the state that was most distant (physically and psychologically) from New York's disturbed new wave. By the end of the Seventies, Los Angeles had become the capital of power-pop.

Tom Petty, Jules Shear and, in Berkeley, Greg Kihn were the "theoreticians" of power-pop, skilled songwriters that used melody and a repertory of cliches to paint their generation's mood.

The classy retro` sound of Tom Petty (4) linked the Sixties revival with a populist stance and, therefore, with the mood of ordinary, adult Americans. The songs on **Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers** (1976) and **You're Gonna**

**Get It** (1978) mimic faithfully the Byrds, the Who and the Rolling Stones. Each of them could have been on an original album of those Sixties heroes. Petty's nasal, Dylan-ian whine gave the revival movement its spokesman. The crystal-clear production emphasized the impeccable skills of the band, in contrast with the sloppiness of much punk-rock of the era. Petty reached his melodic and atmospheric apex on **Damn The Torpedoes** (1979), whose songs are powerful mini-dramas, and then ventured into the collective subconscious of America on albums such as **Southern Accents** (1985) and **Full Moon Forever** (1989) that reflected the mood of quiet despair of the working-class and vented heart-felt pessimism. Petty joined Springsteen and Mellencamp as a chronicler of inner struggles and defeats, and as an emblem of redemption.

Among the purveyors of power-pop who thrived in Los Angeles at the turn of the decade were Peter Case's Plimsouls (1), whose **Plimsouls** (1981) was an inspired revisitiation of folk-rock and Mersey-beat, Paul Collins' Beat, possibly the best power-pop band of its time, the 20/20, another power-pop outfit, the Last, a modern-day Farfisa band, and the Redd Kross (1), whose **Neurotica** (1987) offered furious rock'n'roll and catchy melodies. The Go-Go's (1) revived the tradition of the girl-groups, specializing in teenage anthems with a punk-rock exuberance, particularly on **Beauty And The Beast** (1981), and the Bangles took that spirit into the charts.

The sound of these bands was often modeled after the Flamin' Groovies, whose saga was continued by the Phantom Movers formed by their former songwriter, Roy Loney (1), whose best album was **Out After Dark** (1979).

#### ***Blues during the new wave***

George Thorogood in Delaware and the Fabulous Thunderbirds in Texas continued to play the blues for the punk generation. The J. Geils Band (2) in Boston offered an ironic take on rhythm'n'blues on the effervescent albums **Monkey Island** (1977) and **Freeze Frame** (1981).

Quite unique were the Dixie Dregs (1), led by virtuoso guitarist Steve Morse, who played a mixture of jazz-rock and southern-boogie that bridged the Allman Brothers and the Mahavishnu Orchestra, the Doobie Brothers and the Weather Report, particularly on **What If** (1978).

## **5.5 UK: British Graffiti**

### ***Pub-rock 1976-79***

America had the garages, the basements, the small suburban clubs. Britain had the pubs. Britain's renaissance originated from the musicians who had been playing rhythm and blues and rockabilly in the pubs. The story was not all too different from what happened in the Sixties, when blues clubs kept alive the flame that the "teen idols" and Merseybeat almost killed. In the Seventies something similar happened again. While the charts were ruled by decadent stars like David Bowie and countless mainstream pop singers, the clubs were staging rhythm and blues amateurs who were playing far more exciting music. Punk-rock changed the face of the industry and, indirectly, helped these musicians get out of the pubs.

From the punk civilization there emerged a new kind of singer-songwriter, solidly anchored to the roots of rock'n'roll and aware of social issues.

Dave Edmunds, Nick Lowe, Graham Parker, Joe Jackson, Elvis Costello, and Tom Robinson, not to mention the demented Ian Dury and the even more demented Wreckless Eric, were the bards who launched a more sincere and vibrant approach to rock and roll. The bizarre acts of Renaldo And The Loaf and of Snakefinger found contract and fame in California, but belong to this generation.

Each of these minds worked on a different frequency, though. Nick Lowe (1) was the theoretician of power-pop and American roots-rock, as evidenced already on **Jesus Of Cool** (1978), while Graham Parker (1) was fundamentally a disciple of Bruce Springsteen, Van Morrison and Neil Young, as revealed by **Squeezing Out**

**Sparks** (1979). Despite being announced as a "gangster" at the time of his fibrillating debut, **Look Sharp** (1979), Joe Jackson (2) was the most eclectic and erudite of them all, and he proved it by taking on calypso, gospel, soul, jazz and, last but not least, classical, in a series of works that include symphonic works and that peaked with the lieder of **Heaven And Hell** (1998).

The most celebrated (and possibly over-rated) musician to emerge from this generation was Elvis Costello (2). The quintessential "angry young man" of the new wave, in 1977 Costello matched a Buddy Holly-ian "look and feel" with a slightly neurotic delivery and a vast spectrum of styles (the anthemic *Less Than Zero*, romantic ballad *Alison*, eccentric reggae *Watching The Detectives*). The early singles (add the erotic twist of *Chelsea* and the angry rant of *Radio Radio* in 1978) led to the competent and varied pub-rock of **This Year's Model** (1978) and to the Sixties camouflage of **Armed Forces** (1979). These albums were typical of Costello's ambiguity: subtly attacking the Establishment while openly endorsing its soundtrack. It wasn't a caricature, it was a full-hearted endorsement of Tin Pan Alley's aesthetic (or lack thereof), lounge soul, easy-listening orchestras, etc. Slowly but steadily, Costello's retro` ideology moved to the back and his passion for sophisticated arrangements came to the forefront, to the point of arranging an entire collection of songs with a string quartet.

While pessimism and disillusion prevailed in the lyrics of these working-class heroes, they set the foundations for the rebirth of optimism.

Success favored the Dire Straits, a band that rediscovered J.J. Cale's laid-back style, Duan Eddy's twang and Bob Dylan's nasal delivery, in soulful hits such as *Sultans Of Swing* (1978), *Tunnel Of Love* (1979), *Twisting By The Pool* (1983), *Money For Nothing* (1985).

Britain's Sixties revival was particularly sympathetic towards the "mods", the real rebels of the Sixties. Groups such as Eddie And The Hot Rods and Paul Weller's Jam, whose **In The City** (1977) harked back to the Who and the Kinks, devoted their career to recreating that musical universe. The Television Personalities' **And Don't The Kids Just Love It** (1980) evoked the mods and Carnaby Street,

The Soft Boys (10) went beyond mere recreation of an era: they created a new era of their own. When the talents of visionary vocalist Robyn Hitchcock and of down-to-earth guitarist Kimberley Rew met, the unique psychedelic sound of **Underwater Moonlight** (1980) was born. The lullabies smelled of Syd Barrett and of early Pink Floyd, and the rave-ups smelled of the Kinks and of the Who, but the combination of anthemic rock'n'roll and acid atmospheres was largely new. The Soft Boys laid the foundations for the psychedelic revival of the 1980s.

There was also a brief recrudescence of glam-rock, that peaked with Adam Ant's bubblegum hits.

Power-pop thrived in Ireland via Bob Geldolf's Boomtown Rats and one of the Buzzcock's most diligent disciples, the Undertones (that later originated the That Petrol Emotion).

The revival of the Sixties included a fixation for female singers and girl-groups. The leading girl-group of the era was Bananarama, whose dance beats and bubblegum melodies conquered the charts.

### **Ska and reggae 1977-79**

Another British peculiarity was the favor accorded to ska and reggae, thanks to the large Jamaican community in Britain. Ska had been a brief fad in 1967 and then had faded into oblivion. A combination of racial issues, punk-rock, Sixties revival and agit-prop militancy resurrected it in 1977. The hit makers were the Specials (who later originated the Fun Boy Three), the (English) Beat (the forefathers of the Fine Young Cannibals), and the Madness. For a couple of years ska was one of the most commercially successful genres in the British charts.

Reggae had a powerful godfather in producer Adrian Sherwood and his many ensembles: the New Age Steppers, the Dub Syndicate, African Headcharge, Tackhead, etc. His influence stretched from the Clash to the Pop Group, the two most significant artists to endorse reggae, from the Police to the UB40, the two most famous pop acts to exploit the reggae rhythm for their melodic hits.

The Police (1), a sort of super-trio formed by veteran Canterbury-school guitarist Andy Summers, former Curved

Air drummer Stewart Copeland and vocalist/bassist Sting (Gordon Sumner), debuted with a punk-reggae cocktail, best served in *Roxanne* (1978) and *Message In A Bottle* (1979), but soon emphasized the melodic element, which peaked with the impeccable refrains of **Zenyatta Mondatta** (1980): *Walking On The Moon*, *Don't Stand So Close To Me* and *Dedododo Dedadada*. The progression towards pop and soul melody led to the old-fashioned romanticism of *Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic* (1981) and *Every Breath You Take* (1983), and a mellow sound that bordered on lounge-music (Sting's future career).

#### **Modernism 1976-80**

Ultravox (3) fused punk spirit, Kraftwerk's robotic pop, Roxy Music's existential minstrelsy, dance rhythms, glam-rock's magniloquent arias and King Crimson's romantic rock on their first two albums, **Ultravox** (1977) and **Ha Ha Ha** (1977), kaleidoscopic song-cycles (ranging from virulent boogie numbers to languid pop ballads) that wed the decadent elegance of Billy Currie's violin and keyboards with the tear-jerking crooning of John Foxx (Dennis Leigh). When Foxx departed, Billy Currie and new vocalist/guitarist Midge Ure embraced a chic and baroque program of electronic pop: **Vienna** (1980) is one of the albums that marked the birth of synth-pop .

There were other bands trying to bridge the gap between new wave and punk-rock, notably Alternative TV.

No other musicians perfected the art of the pop song as much as XTC (3). The hysterical post-industrial neurosis of **White Music** (1978) slowly mutated into the melodic kaleidoscope of **Drums And Wires** (1979), while Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding revealed to be old-fashioned tunesmiths, heirs to the legacy of Gilbert & Sullivan's operettas, Lennon & McCartney's Mersey-beat and the Bonzo Band's merry carnival (*Life Begins At The Hop*, *Making Plans For Nigel*). Each album further expanded the scope of the band. **Black Sea** (1980) recalled the tender caricatures of **Village Green**-era Kinks (*Generals And Majors*, *Towers Of London*), and **English Settlement** (1982) turned the satire into a stately tribute to the sounds of an entire civilization, from the music-hall to the "swinging" London, from exotica to dance-music (*Fly On The Wall*, *Senses Working Overtime*). The duo's quest for the perfect melody and arrangement peaked with **Skylarking** (1986), a realization of the kind of chamber-pop that Brian Wilson had envisioned, but a mechanical one, a cold, cynical clockwork, an assembly line that produces melodies on industrial scale.

Magazine, formed by an ex-Buzzcocks and featuring bassist Barry Adamson, and Monochrome Set, disciples of Canterbury's light-jazz, which had been among the first British bands to challenge the punk dogma, opened the way for Squeeze and their mellow pop-soul ballads such as *Up The Junction* (1979), *Pulling Mussels* (1980) and *Tempted* (1981).

Japan were seduced to the elegant, sensual and decadent dance-pop of the Giorgio Moroder-produced *Life In Tokyo* (1979), and then, by merging Roxy Music's atmospheric ballads, David Bowie's languid pathos and Peter Gabriel's ethno-funk, they concocted the seductive blend of **Gentlemen Take Polaroids** (1980), highly dependent on the "recitation" of vocalist David "Sylvian" Batt and on the electronic arrangements of keyboardist Richard Barbieri, before fully embracing, on **Tin Drum** (1981), the ethnic fusion that would become the trademark of Sylvian's solo career.

The Simple Minds, originally explored the realms of prog-rock, pomp-rock, glam-rock and synth-pop, at the border between Roxy Music and the Velvet Underground, via the lengthy and lush *Pleasantly Disturbed* (1979), *This Fear Of Gods* (1980) and *In Trance As Mission* (1981), but eventually climbed the charts with the simple refrains of *Promised You A Miracle* (1982), *Waterfront* (1984) and *Don't You Forget About Me* (1985, not written by them).

Commercially speaking, the 1980s were dominated by the Irish band U2 (2), the most sensational phenomenon to hit the British isles since the Beatles. Bono Vox (Paul Hewson) and guitarist The Edge (Dave Evans) The most successful band of their era, U2 emerged from the milieu of pub-rock and punk-rock, downplaying the fundamentalist tone of the punk revolution while at the same time emphasizing its populist tone. Starting with **Boy**

(1980), they bridged the vehemence of punk-rock with the mass appeal of pop and disco-music. Their music was visceral but not violent. Paul "Bono Vox" Hewson's intense crooning, Dave "The Edge" Evans' martial the rhythm section's tribal or bluesy tempos managed to blend the melancholy of folk music, the grief of black music, the fervor of gospel music, and the magniloquence of operatic arias. More importantly, anthems such as *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (1983) and *Pride* (1984) fused historical pessimism and teenage frustration. A more pensive style surfaced later in their career, leading to more restrained collections such as *Joshua Tree* (1987), followed by conversions to dance music, industrial music, electronic music and so forth, in a desperate attempt to remain current. They spent their career as far from the cutting edge as possible.

U2 achieved a perfect symbiosis with the gloomily utopian mood of their generation, which, in return, hailed them as heroes. The phenomenon was more social than musical, the music being often reduced to recycling that "mood" over Bono's ever more pathetic blabbering and over The Edge's ever more solemn chords. Nonetheless, it marked a milestone in the evolution of the pop song, because, around the immortal themes of martyrdom and salvation, U2 erected a moral epic of universal appeal. If their Biblical-like apotheoses bordered on kitsch, their bitter ballads and sinister rhythms did keep alive the sorrow idealized by generations of protest folksingers and street bluesmen.

## 5.6 USA: Dance music for punks

Disco-music was flourishing at the same time that punk-rock was spreading like wild-fire around the world. It was inevitable that the two cultures merged. And it was a merger of two alien civilizations, as one stood for values that were almost the negation of the other.

New York was, again, the natural place to meet. Blondie defined a fusion of disco hedonism and punk aesthetics that would be influential throughout the following decade, despite the fact that *In The Flesh* (1976), *Heart Of Glass* (1978), *Dreaming* (1979), *Atomic* (1979) and *Call Me* (1980) were simply slick disco-music sung in a decadent tone.

Madonna was to become the ultimate disco/punk hybrid. Technically, she redefined the rhythm'n'blues ballad for the age of electronic polyrhythmic beats. Sociologically, she legitimized an almost nymphomaniac look, a sort of cult of her sexual personality, a cult that stood as the female equivalent of Mick Jagger's and Jim Morrison's hedonism rather than the sensual innuendo of the disco-queens, promoting promiscuity like no other female entertainer had ever done. Culturally, she understood the value of multi-media communication in the age of video-clips. Lyrically, she continuously refined a morbid autobiography. After creating a dramatic persona who is independent, cynical and detached, and expanding it to encompass an entire historical context, she analyzed the nuances that turned an ordinary life into a mythological life. For at least four years songs such as *Everybody* (1982), *Lucky Star* (1983), *Borderline* (1984), *Material Girl* (1984), *Crazy For You* (1984), *Into The Groove* (1986), *Papa Don't Preach* (1986), *Open Your Heart* (1986) played at all four levels, one level helping the other three increase their poignancy. Her best music probably came later into her career: *Isla Bonita* (1987), perhaps her melodic masterpiece, *Vogue* (1990), *Ray Of Light* (1998), propelled by the most torrential beat of her career.

Notably, it was women who took the punk attitude to the discos. The vulgar heroines of punk were as eccentric and nihilistic as their male counterparts, but the contrast with the traditional female musician was much stronger.

While acts such as Pat Benatar and Cyndi Lauper simply indulged in provocative looks (largely invented by Toni Basil), an entire generation of girls began to reinvent the feminine self. The Sixties had introduced the mini-skirt and sexual liberation. The punk revolution introduced something that was almost a contradiction in terms: women who acted vulgar and looked ugly and did so on purpose. It was not the emancipation of women, it was the negation of female values, the terminal point of a process that had been the underlying, undeclared theme of so many social changes of the century. What changed was the very definition of "sexy".

A more sophisticated fusion of punk spirit and dance music came with bands that assimilated the rhythm of funk music into the format of the new wave song: the Talking Heads (13) led the pack. **77** (1977) revealed an odd combination of cerebral attitudes, naive melodies and surreal fables. The oblique strategy that David Byrne employed in setting to music his psychotic rigmaroles was matched by a rhythm section capable of dance and tribal beats. Each of the album's vignettes was catchy, propulsive and subtly jagged. **More Songs About Buildings And Food** (1978), the album that inaugurated Byrne's collaboration with Brian Eno, emphasized the rhythmic element, which acquired totemic proportions on **Fear Of Music** (1979), a collection of orgiastic disco-music with ethnic overtones and electronic arrangements. Byrne's touch is still evident in the dark, disturbing feeling that underlies the songs. Far from merely "selling out", Byrne and Eno were devising musical structures that artfully blurred geometry and chaos. Eno's program of "westernizing" the music of the Third World through a calculated fusion of futurism and primitivism permeates **Remain In Light** (1980), which contains even less of Byrne's intellectual postures. Without Eno, the Talking Heads would return to a simpler style of catchy tunes. David Byrne's solo career (1) was less successful: while his collaboration with Brian Eno, **My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts** (1981), a product of Byrne's fascination with funk, and rhythm in general, and of the duo's skills in sound manipulation, was immensely influential, the rest of Byrne's ventures in ethnic pop have been far from adventurous or revolutionary.

ESG, a combo led by three singer-percussionist sisters, Liquid Liquid, Defunkt, Bush Tetras (1), whose **Rituals** (1981) was perhaps the bleakest album of this school, and particularly the Contortions used funk to create an unlikely mixture of kitsch and neurosis that epitomized "entertainment" in the dark ages of punk.

Saxophonist and vocalist James Chance (12) surfaced as a "no wave" musician in 1978, the leader of the Contortions. Their disjointed, awkward tempos, dissonant guitar (Jody Harris), gargantuan saxophone, and repellent, visceral crooning lent **Buy Contortions** (1979) a quality of sonic sabotage. James Chance's abominable ultra-fusion was an ideal meeting point for Albert Ayler, Captain Beefheart and James Brown. The savage impetus and the neurotic off-kilter instrumental passages signified a generational nervous breakdown. **Off White** (1979), credited to James White, was, instead, a relatively streamlined postmodern essay that turned the previous album's bacchanals into exercises of deconstruction. **Sax Maniac** (1982), performed by an old-fashioned dance combo (trombone, sax, trumpet, female choir), summarized Chance's stylistic jungle and "contorted" persona.

Washington's Stickmen (1) came close to formulate the same deadly potion, particularly on **This Is The Master Brew** (1982).

Peter Gordon's Love Of Life Orchestra (1) conducted the boldest experiment on dance music, starting with *Extended Niceties* (1979), possibly the absolute masterpiece of disco-music. Gordon layered keyboards and horns on synthetic beats and produced instrumental kitsch that was basically a montage of cliches (reggae, ska, surf, twist, funk, ...) By applying the techniques of avantgarde music to popular and dance music, by vivisectioning the nature of "easy listening", Gordon indirectly provided an hallucinated social fresco. The semiotic quality of his meta-musical program is evident on **Geneve** (1980), whose pieces are mini-symphonies for stereotypes of commercial music. Related to Andy Warhol's pop art and post-modernism at large, Gordon's mission adopts as the medium the decadent elegance of ludic customs, and sets the goal of eroding the collective imaginary of entertainment.

As usual, the disease spread west, via the Suburbs (1) in Minnesota, whose **Credit In Heaven** (1981) served the most eclectic disco-pop of the era, and Was Not Was (1) in Michigan, heirs to George Clinton's sardonic/histrionic parodies and Frank Zappa's demented nonsense, whose **Was Not Was** (1981) and subsequent albums were marvels of arrangement, stylish sonic puzzles that offered an effervescent re-interpretation of black dance music in a high-tech white (and hard-rock) context.

In Canada, Martha & The Muffins bridged B52's, the Canterbury sound and pop-jazz on **Metro Music** (1979).

And eventually it reached California, with trivial synth-pop ballads such as Berlin's *No More Words* (1984), but here it met the experimental laboratories of the underground. Romeo Void and Voice Farm (1), whose **World We Live In** (1982) was a soundtrack for cybernetic alienation, cheered up the punk crowds of San Francisco's night clubs while Stan Ridgway's Wall Of Voodoo (1), who concocted the apocalyptic visions of **Call Of The West** (1982), such as *Mexican Radio*, and Oingo Boingo (heavily influenced by the British ska renaissance) roamed Los Angeles' avant-discos.

## 5.7 UK: Dark Punk

### *Gothic 1978-82*

British punk-rock was flanked from the beginning by a "gothic" movement. The violence and the frenzy of the Sex Pistols were channeled by these "dark punks" into atmospheres and tones that were meant to evoke horror scenes and exoteric rituals. The Stranglers and Siouxsie Sioux (1) were among the bands that started the fire. It wasn't much of a fire, and even Siouxsie's most innovative album, **The Scream** (1978), was mainly a catalog of embarrassing clichés.

Far more abrasive was the sound of X-Ray Spex (1) on their only album, **Germfree Adolescents** (1978), thanks to the barbaric screams of vocalist Poly Styrene (Marion Elliot) and to the dissonant saxophone of Lora Logic (Susan Whitby).

The more interesting acts of "dark punk" were the ones that sculpted a similarly gloomy and bleak sound but shunned the cartoonish, horror-movie overtones. Notably, the Cure (3) introduced existential anguish (the kind found in Camus' and Sartre's books) into rock'n'roll. **Three Imaginary Boys** (1979) actually features a deadly cocktail of cynical hyper-realism, macabre expressionism and morbid paranoia. **Pornography** (1982) capitalized on those premises with a philosophical journey to the center of a fragile, romantic soul (vocalist and guitarist Robert Smith). After the pop conversion of the sprawling but inferior **Kiss Me Kiss Me Kiss Me** (1987), the Cure reached their zenith of pathos on **Disintegration** (1989), that balances Smith's pedantic preaching with heavily arranged pieces that sound like symphonic poems.

The two albums cut by Joy Division (2), **Unknown Pleasures** (1979) and **Closer** (1980), before vocalist Ian Curtis committed suicide and the band evolved into New Order, coined a new kind of gothic, decadent, futuristic and psychedelic rock, and offered an unlikely mixture of Doors, Kraftwerk and Black Sabbath. Eerie melodies, funereal tempos, electronic arrangements and otherworldly dissonances interpreted the industrial wasteland as a personal nightmare. Their career ended with *Love Will Tear Us Apart* (1980), which was the beginning of a new genre: synth-pop.

Despite its artistic limitations, the genre found a broad audience. Cavernous sound, icy voice, loud drums, martial pace, distorted guitars became as ubiquitous as the rants of the punk-rockers. Existential boredom and suicidal tendencies moved to the forefront, displacing rebellion as the main attraction of punk-rock. The same morbid sensibility inspired bands as different as the Passions, Theatre of Hate (who later evolved into Spear Of Destiny), and the Comsat Angels.

Thankfully, other musicians went beyond the "darkness" and coined new musical languages that were no less depressed but far more creative. They twisted the elements of rock music to manufacture a sense of loss and desolation.

The macabre, magniloquent psychodramas of Bauhaus (1), from *Bela Lugosi's Dead* (1979) to *Lagartija Nick* (1982) via the morbid sound effects of **In The Flat Field** (1980) and especially via the electronic dance pop of **Mask** (1981), painted the most suffocating atmospheres.

Killing Joke (2) were less mental and more physical than Bauhaus: the dissonant, tribal, apocalyptic spasms of

their early singles, such as *Requiem* (1979) and *Wardance* (1979), and of their first album, **Killing Joke** (1980), were as powerful as Pere Ubu's "modern dance". Like the rest of the gothic contingent, during the 1980s Killing Joke wasted their talent setting their visions to a dance beat, but Martin Atkins eventually revitalized the band with the thundering and barbaric sound of **Extremities, Dirt & Various Repressed Emotions** (1990).

The Psychedelic Furs (1) set the gothic element at the border between Roxy Music's decadent spleen, the Velvet Underground's acid threnodies and Van Der Graaf Generator's futuristic melodrama. The result, particularly on **Talk Talk Talk** (1981), was sophisticated as well as haunting.

All of this was easily topped by the most eccentric of all "dark" bands, the Virgin Prunes (2), that came from Ireland with a completely different approach to "gothic", an approach that mixed archaic rituals with avantgarde music. Their grotesque Grand Guignol encompassed both the demonic rituals of **Heresie** (1982) and the progressive-rock of **If I Die I Die** (1982).

The idea peaked with the abstract, conceptual, dub-drenched sound of Public Image Ltd (21), the band formed by Johnny "Rotten" Lydon after the Sex Pistols split up, and featuring bassist Jah Wobble and guitarist Keith Levene. **First Issue** (1978) announced a new form of music: ponderous rhythm, distorted guitar, demented screams. **Second Edition** (1979) is the album that turned punk-rock into chamber music. By slowing down the tempo in a vein similar to dilated acid-rock, and sprinkling Lydon's psychotic monologues with deformed echoes of Jamaican, Middle Eastern and African music, the combo injected a disturbing sense of loneliness and fear into their extended, loosely-structured pieces. That praxis reached claustrophobic intensity on **Flowers Of Romance** (1981), an album featuring Martin Atkins on drums but lacking Wobble on bass. Lydon's muezzin-like invocations played a "call and response" game with an expanded ethnic instrumentation that felt equally at home with funk syncopation and found noise. The album's funereal lieder roamed Freudian and exoteric labyrinths. Lydon, bard of the psychic depression, set his nihilistic lyrics to a harrowing maelstrom of estranged sounds.

As dance clubs around the country adopted the depressed mood and the freakish look, a more danceable sound was concocted by the new generation of gothic punk-rockers.

The Sisters Of Mercy (1) were probably the greatest and the most influential of this generation. Their lugubrious, demonic voodoobilly, inspired by Suicide and Cramps but propelled by panzer machines, had no equals. Coupled with that instrumental frenzy, Andrew Eldritch's Morrison-ian vocals created a tension that was both stately and devastating. The culmination of their career and the culmination of gothic rock was *Temple Of Love* (1983), their most visionary and propulsive ceremony. **Floodland** (1987) added a futuristic and claustrophobic sound, courtesy of Jim Steinman.

Other horror bands included: Alien Sex Fiend (1), whose album **Who's Been Sleeping In My Brain** (1983) was more demented than macabre rockabilly, the catastrophic Fields Of The Nephilim, the romantic Gene Loves Jezebel, the savage Sex Gang Children .

#### ***Gothic 1984-86***

Ian Astbury's Cult and Wayne Hussey's Mission wed the sinister overtones of dark-punk with Led Zeppelin's old-fashioned hard-rock. The former were derivative of AC/DC, Cream, Free, Led Zeppelin, Doors and Rolling Stones, although the symbiosis worked wonders in *Spiritwalker* (1984), *She Sells Sanctuary* (1985) and *Love Removal Machine* (1987), and eventually became stars of heavy-metal.

In The Nursery (2), i.e. twins Klive and Nigel Humberstone, were unique in that they interpreted gothic in the tradition of classical music and electronic music. The duo mixed Klaus Schulze's cosmic music and Constance Demby's new-age music and progressed, over a number of formative works, notably the EPs **Temper** (1985) and **Trinity** (1987) and the single *Compulsion* (1987), plus two albums, towards a synthesis of old-fashioned musical idioms, such as teutonic romanticism and central European decadence. Their favorite form, perfected and streamlined on their third album, **Koda** (1988), used a synthetic orchestra to emulate Wagner's magniloquence

over a martial tempo à la Holst's **Mars**. The music, clearly more inspired by the classical than the rock tradition, had a melancholy, visionary and sometimes nostalgic quality. Their symphonic staccatos, that indulged in horns and strings, were embellished with collages of samples. Further simplifying their compositions, In The Nursery produced more accessible works such as **L'Esprit** (1990), and eventually became a case of pompous synth-pop.

**Theomania** (1988) by the Cassandra Complex offered vehement psychobilly halfway between Suicide and the Velvet Underground.

While mostly a British genre, dark-punk eventually spread to continental Europe too (for example, La Muerte in Belgium and Brighter Death Now in Sweden).

The terror expressed by these bands was the other side of the cynical rage of the punk-rockers. They were two different perspectives on the same vision of life, on the same nervous breakdown. Except that "dark punk" focused on loneliness, apathy, claustrophobia, paranoia, and, ultimately, on the need for a cathartic apocalypse.

## 5.8 UK: Industrial Music

### *Sheffield 1977-80*

The term "industrial music" was first used by Monte Cazazza, an avantgarde composer based in San Francisco, but the meaning of "industrial music" was defined in Sheffield, England. Performance artists had employed abrasive, lugubrious soundtracks for their shows since the 1960s. As the technology improved, those soundtracks became more and more extreme. The marriage of avantgarde art and avantgarde music that dated from the days of Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground was revived by the new wave, especially in California, and eventually landed in Europe. Sheffield became the emblem of the industrial society.

Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire, the inventors of "industrial music", were familiar with the noise of a factory and decided to use that noise as a metaphor for the human condition at the end of the 20th century. They began composing lengthy suites of electronic noise that were inspired by the creaking, the hissing and the thuds of machines, by the metronomes, by the clockwork mechanisms of a factory.

However, the core theme of the music played by Throbbing Gristle (15) was not science-fiction: it was pornography and horror. Chris Carter, Peter Christopherson, Neil Megson (Genesis P-Orridge) and Christine Carol Newby (Cosey Fanni Tutti) were more interested in exploring disturbing states of the mind than painting the future of humankind. Their focus was on the traumas of ordinary souls, souls lost to the machinery of the industrial society. Their manifesto and masterpiece, **Second Annual Report** (1977), was subtitled "music from the death factory". Its pieces used cacophonous electronics, terrified screams, atonal guitars and found sounds, to create a ritual of therapeutic shock and cathartic liberation. They employed free-jazz improvisation and winked at the avantgarde techniques of "musique concrete" and Karlheinz Stockhausen. The sound of the metropolis that came alive in their suites was the sound of the lives sacrificed to the machines, not the sound of the machines that used those lives. Their performances coupled this "noise" with multimedia shows that were no less provocative. Throbbing Gristle never stopped producing this kind of Freudian mayhems, as documented by the studio album **Heathen Earth** (1980), by the live **Mission Of Dead Souls** (1981) and by the soundtrack for **In The Shadow Of The Sun** (1984), all of which are structured around lengthy streams of consciousness and abstract sound-painting, but, at the same time, the band changed course with **D.O.A.** (1978), a collection of electronic vignettes inspired by Brian Eno's **Before And After Science** and Ron Geesin's **Electrosound** that, for the most part, focused on the mechanical landscape of factories, warehouses and assembly lines. The new protagonists were the machines: their cold steady rhythms, their screeching metallic noises, their symphony of inarticulate patterns. **20 Jazz Funk Greats** (1979) added synthetic dance beats and simple melodies, thus opening the floodgates to disco-oriented industrial music, the progenitor of synth-pop.

The parable of Cabaret Voltaire (2) epitomized the entire industrial school: an abnormal number of releases (mostly pretentious and trivial), and a quick conversion to dance music. Initially, Richard Kirk, Stephen Mallinder and Chris Watson were inspired by early (pre-disco) Kraftwerk and early (pre-funk) Pink Floyd. Their early recordings, such as the album **Mix-up** (1978) and the EP **Three Mantras** (1980), boasted collage-like pieces of abrasive, distorted sounds and mechanical rhythms. Unlike Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire introduced an "eastern" element of trance. But they quickly rediscovered the song format with **Red Mecca** (1981) and then began propelling it with hyper-cinetic funk rhythms on the double EP **2x45** (1982). The albums that followed were stylish electronic dance music that had nothing in common with industrial music.

The multimedia shows created by Adi Newton's Clock DVA (3) differed from the other Sheffield horror-shock experiences because they focused on jams that bridged jazz-rock and acid-rock, as documented on **White Souls In Black Suits** (1980). The better structured and danceable ballads of **Thirst** (1981) introduced a visionary artist, capable of both epic and apocalyptic feats. The sound of Clock DVA continued to evolve with **Advantage** (1983), this time towards "noir" atmospheres and Roxy Music-like decadence. Newton's arrangements became baroque on subsequent albums, starting with **Buried Dreams** (1989), which showed a disproportionate attention to form rather than content.

The spirit of industrial music was related to punk-rock (if nothing else for being so radical) but the means employed were quite different, as industrial combos shunned the traditional rock trio of guitar, drums and bass in favor of electronic instruments. The spirit was rebellious and outrageous, just like punk-rock, but the sound was hardly rock at all.

The spirit of industrial music was certainly in sync with the American "new wave". Pere Ubu's "modern dance" and Devo's de-evolution rock had just addressed the same theme: individual alienation in the industrial society. It is a theme that had been explored before by rock musicians as varied as Frank Zappa, Brian Eno, Kraftwerk and Neu. While the childish, barbaric, anarchic structure of industrial compositions seemed akin to what futurism and dadaism had preached at the beginning of the century, the sinister and melancholy tone of those compositions set them apart from anything else that writers and artists had conceived before. Only science fiction had explored the emotional realm of runaway technology, of robots that take over the world, of psychological holocausts. Industrial music viewed technology as a nightmare. It was as "negative" as punk-rock.

Furthermore, the shocking nature of those soundtracks led the perpetrators to indulge in porno and horror overtones that added to the general sense of apocalypse.

When both the leadings bands, Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret, abandoned the harsh, gruesome overtones of their early recordings and embraced dance beats and synthetic melodies, the rest of the industrial scene followed suit. "Industrial" came to be an ambiguous term, referring both to the radical sound paintings of early Throbbing Gristle and to the danceable melodic vignettes of subsequent recordings.

### ***Diversification 1979-85***

Industrial music benefited, like punk-rock, from the boom of the independent record industry. The "indies" allowed a generation of obscure avantgarde musicians (mostly amateurs) to start a band and cut records. The "indie" phenomenon is also responsible for the over-indulgence of these musicians, who began releasing lengthy albums of mediocre music with no regard for the artistic value. For the first time in history, the "do it yourself" spirit was applied to electronic music. It was the electronic equivalent of garage-rock: the spirit meant more than the skills.

On the other hand, the sheer number of record labels allowed a plethora of sub-genres. The term "industrial" merely identified a community of avantgarde musicians. The individual members often had little in common.

Some were architecting electronic symphonies of musique concrete (Nurse With Wound, Zoviet France); some were experimenting with rhythm and texture (This Heat, 23 Skidoo, Hula); some were adopting an esoteric stance (Current 93, Hafler Trio, Psychic Tv, Coil); some were weaving static sheets of drones (Dome, i.e. former Wire

members Bruce Gilbert and Graham Lewis); some were merely painting walls of white noise (Martin Bowes' Attrition, Nigel Ayers' Nocturnal Emissions, Metabolist, British Electric Foundation, i.e. former Human League members Ian Marsh and Martyn Ware, Cranioclast, Whitehouse, Konstruktivists); some were unleashing wild torrents of percussive sounds (Test Dept, David Jackman's Organum); some were re-interpreting Brian Eno's ambient music and ethnic trance (Lustmord, Andrew Hulme's O Yuki Conjugate); some were experimenting with sound manipulation (Bryan Jones' Muslimgauze, who made more than 100 albums of tape-manipulated ethnic voices and instruments); and some were simply pursuing synth-pop (Chris & Cosey of Throbbing Gristle).

Steven Stapleton's project, Nurse With Wound (3), harked back to the satirical and iconoclastic experiments of Dadaism and Futurism. His early, formative works (frequently shared with David Tibet of Current 93), such as **Homotopy To Marie** (1982) and **Sylvie And Babs** (1985), were similar in spirit to the Fugs' *Virgin Forest*, to Frank Zappa's breakneck operettas and to the Residents' multiform suites. His art of the collage turned decidedly cacophonous with works such as the EPs **Gyllenskold** (1984) and **Brained By Falling Masonry** (1984), but achieved a sort of "classicism" on the album **Spiral Insana** (1986). Later works would veer towards a type of ambient music akin to the static, buzzing pieces of minimalist composers such as LaMonte Young and Alvin Lucier.

The early collages (1982) by Zoviet France (3) were even more savage than Nurse With Wound's, evoking a cross between "musique concrete" and tribal music. The monumental double-albums **Mohnomische** (1983) and **Eostre** (1984) reduced the impact of their "wall of noise", but retained the two key elements that set Zoviet France apart: a trance-oriented approach and "lo-fi" electronics. The tetralogy of "Charm, Ceremony, Chance, Prophecy" ("CCCP"), begun with **Misfits, Loony Tunes And Squalid Criminals** (1986), marked a move towards a less hostile and more atmospheric sound, which culminated with the eastern-sounding trance/dance of **Shadow Thief Of The Sun** (1991).

This Heat (11), a keyboards-bass-guitar trio, coined a unique style that borrowed from progressive-rock, jazz-rock, electronic music, industrial music and, last but not least, German avant-rock of Can, Neu and Faust. Tape loops, overdubs, sound effects and noise abound on their first album and masterpiece, **This Heat** (1979). The austere and erudite approach to composition, and an impressive repertory of musical tricks, amounted to little less than a manual of new harmony. Abandoning the difficult rhythms and returning to the song format, **Deceit** (1981) popularized the idea in the era of synth-pop.

23 Skidoo (2), mainly Fritz Haaman's project, extended Cabaret Voltaire's research program first with the tribal polyrhythms of the EP **Seven Songs** (1982), that also contained an early fusion of jazz, dub and ambient elements (predating "illbient" by a decade), then with the cosmic-messianic suite of **The Culling Is Coming** (1983), that employed Tibetan percussions and electronic noise, and finally with the dub-funk percussive monster **Urban Gamelan** (1984).

David Tibet's project, Current 93 (2), that often employed Nurse With Wound's Steve Stapleton, Coil's John Balance and/or 23 Skidoo's Fritz Haaman, centered on lugubrious ceremonies. **Nature Unveiled** (1984), the quintessence of Tibet's black masses, fusing mantra and Gregorian invocations, "unveiled" an ode to eternal suffering, a terrifying fresco of the Universal Judgement. His experiments on the human voice peaked with **Dogs Blood Rising** (1985), another aural puzzle aimed at creating sinister atmospheres. Tibet's new course was announced by **Imperium** (1987), a suite of sepulchral elegies imbued of themes from medieval Christianity, set to the usual sound of hell, and embellished with instruments of the Renaissance. This bard of apocalyptic folk-rock ballads set out to bridge esoteric music of the 1980s and hippy communes of the 1960s, particularly with the psychedelic piece *Hitler As Kalki*, from **Thunder Perfect Mind** (1992). David Tibet's pagan acoustic folk (reminiscent of the Incredible String Band), hardly related to his beginnings, would become a genre of its own.

Hafner Trio (1), aka Andrew McKenzie, devoted himself to pretentious and highly experimental music that toyed

with electronic clusters, tape loops, found sounds, etc. At times, he achieved an impressive synthesis of the languages of concrete, industrial, cosmic and ambient music, perhaps best experienced on the six-movement "mass" **Inoutof** (1988).

John Balance and Throbbing Gristle's Peter Christopherson were the brains behind Coil (1), yet another pretentious esoteric project that experimented with alternative sources of sound, best on **Horse Rotorvator** (1986).

Psychic TV, the new project by ex-Throbbing Gristle founding member Genesis P-Orridge (Neil Megson), found a way to bridge the old world of industrial music and the new world of "acid house".

Test Dept (1) played a hostile barrage of "found" percussions (particularly metallic objects), halfway between Neu and Einsturzende Neubaten. The pretext was used on **Beating A Retreat** (1984) for broader excursions in sound, and lent itself to large-scale live performances.

Lustmord (1), i.e. veteran industrial composer Brian Williams, adopted the languages of cosmic and ambient music on albums such as **Heresy** (1990).

Several of these projects shared a common destiny. They began with highly individual styles that borrowed from the avantgarde. Due to the limitations of their techniques and tools, those styles sounded like an electronic update of the free-form suites that were popular among acid-rock practitioners of the 1960s. Finally, by the late 1980s, almost all of them had converted to dance music. Towards the end of the decade, "industrial" had become mainly the name of a dance.

#### ***Australia 1980-82***

Australia and Australian expats contributed in a significant manner to the genre. Bands such as SPK and Severed Heads were as qualified and as pretentious as their British counterparts.

On the other hand, James Thirlwell (114), better known as Foetus and also known as Clint Ruin, Steroid Maximus and Wiseblood, became a protagonist of both the London (1978) and the New York (1983) counterculture, and, ultimately, one of the most significant musicians of the decade, wedding the punk aesthetics to classical-music ambitions.

Bard of the most reckless nihilism, quintessential prophet of "trash" as a form of art, Foetus promoted a repulsive hyper-punk persona that served well to frame his musical journey. Morbidly attracted to the most repulsive manifestations of human nature, both physical ones (vomit, excrements, sperm) and psychological ones (torture, sadism, homicide), Foetus ripped apart in a paroxysm of destruction any residual moral value. His oeuvre is an odyssey of aberrations, a catalog of hells. Foetus was an idealist of self-destruction, and global destruction was his utopia.

**Hole** (1984) was a chaotic carousel of garage-rock, swing, hip-hop, Captain Beefheart-ian blues, world-music, industrial rhythms, doo-wop harmonies, found noises, electronic effects, heavy-metal riffs and symphonic staccatos. **Nail** (1985), perhaps his masterpiece, was even more powerful, and in an "evil" way. Every single sound is exaggerated, overdone, dramatized. This album's songs are poems carved with a jack-hammer into the marble of a gravestone. A touch of retro` attitude (not too different from Frank Zappa's ventures into orchestral and jazz music) is drowned into magniloquent, sinister, gloomy, tragic, terrifying industrial "symphonies". But, ultimately, this was also a heartbreaking cry of grief that soars in a landscape of desolation and depravation. **Thaw** (1988) refined the idea behind these pieces for savage electronics, frantic orchestra and thundering polyrhythms, the idea of sheer aural density and power, the idea of massive, relentless, infernal atmospheres, the idea of a Wagner-ian emotional intensity with a catastrophic (not heroic) emphasis. In a sense, Foetus became the first classical composer of the punk civilization.

**Quilombo** (1991) and **Gondwanaland** (1992), the first two Steroid Maximus albums, presented a less austere and less destructive musician. They were schizophrenically divided into avantgarde pieces and big-band swing parodies. **Quilombo** managed to be playful while flirting with serialism, minimalism and musique concrete. **Gash**

(1995), which features the super-group of guitarist Marc Ribot, drummer Vincent Signorelli (Unsane) and bassist Tod Ashley (Cop Shoot Cop), completed the metamorphosis presenting a gargantuan essay in the sampling and manipulation of musical genres.

Foetus' major compositions are sonic allegories, behind whose harmonic disorder, torrential dissonances and percussive violence one can guess unspeakable, brutal and obscene acts at both the levels of the individual psyche and the collective subconscious. Foetus' vision is one of extreme pessimism, of moral (if not physical) apocalypse: the individual is reduced to a demon-like pervert, and society is reduced to one of hell's circles. Coherently with this vision, his music is also apocalyptic, the kind of soundtrack one can expect to hear while being marched towards hell's gates after the universal judgement. The effect of Foetus' scores is often capable of evoking the end of the world.

#### ***Electronic Body Music 1980-84***

Belgium coined one of the most successful currents of industrial dance, "electronic body music", a by-product of latter-period Cabaret Voltaire, influenced by disco-music and science-fiction. **Geography** (1982), by Front 242 (1), was the milestone recording. Then came Klinik (and their offshoot Dive), Neon Judgement, Vomito Negro, etc. Commercially speaking, this industrial school was even more influential than the British school.

A similar style developed in Vancouver, Canada. On their early albums, such as **Bites** (1985), Skinny Puppy (1) delivered a cyber-punk mixture of melodies that were hardly melodic at all, tight cadences by a platoon of drum-machines and ghostly electronics, although they would reach a more cohesive sound on the concept **VIVisectVI** (1988) and on the Ministry-influenced **Rabies** (1989).

Front Line Assembly (1) were also followers of Cabaret Voltaire and prophets of the cyber-punk generation. Their most refined recording was the technological poem **State Of Mind** (1988). Bill Leeb (whose real name is Wilhelm Schroeder) conducted at the same time a number of parallel projects: Cyberaktif, Noise Unit (Front Line Assembly's evil alter-ego), the progressive-house experiment Intermix, the ambient/new-age Delerium, Will and Synaesthesia.

The "electronic body music" of these bands from Belgium and Canada laid the foundations for the alternative dance-music of the 1990s.

#### ***German experimental music 1981-84***

In Germany, a number of projects were purveyors of noise and anarchy well beyond the proclaims of industrial music, bridging punk aesthetics and expressionism: Der Plan, whose **Geri Reig** (1979) was one of the earliest experimental albums of their generation; Die Krupps, who debuted with the wild cacophony of **Stahlwerksymphony** (1981) before converting to metal-industrial dance music; P16D4, who toyed with musique concrete and electronic improvisation on **Nichts Niemand Nirgends Nie** (1985); Die Haut, whose **Schnelles Leben** (1982) was one of the most radical works of the national school; HNAS, whose **Im Schatten Der Mohre** (1987) was noise at the border between industrial, psychedelic and progressive rock.

Einsturzende Neubauten (13) were the main voice of this generation, bridging the gap between 1970s progressive-rock, Throbbing Gristle's industrial music, Swell Maps' punk-rock and something (very atonal, very chaotic, very non-musical, both austere and subversive) that had no name yet. Singer and guitarist Blixa Bargeld (Christian Emmerich) and percussionists Mufti F.M. Einheit (Frank Strauss) and N.U. Unruh (Andrew Chudy) created a living theatre of self-destruction. Their live shows were pagan rituals that sacrificed instruments and people to their totemic angst. The claustrophobic atmosphere of **Kollaps** (1981) relied on a sinister assortment of harsh sounds (found objects, industrial cadences, psychotic vocals, distorted guitars) but it nonetheless achieved lyrical pathos. **Zeichnungen das Patienten OT** (1983), their masterpiece, was an expressionistic collage set in a spiritual wasteland. Their cacophonous horror was sincere and internal. That was a point of no return. Only the psychodrama **Fuinf auf der nach oben offenen Richterskala** (1987) approached that manic suicidal intensity

again. Their art, made of silence as much as of sound, made of "gestures" as much as of "harmony", was more closely related to Beckett's theatre than to Berry's rock'n'roll. As their technique became "manner", the ensemble relied on a combination of highly emotional elements to disorient (not shock) the audience: the three-movement "concrete" suite *Fiat Lux*, off **Haus der Luege** (1989), and the suite *Headcleaner*, off **Tabula Rasa** (1993), carried out less chaotic journeys through their earthly (and very German) hell.

Deutsche Amerikanische Freundschaft, with **Gold Und Liebe** (1981), Palais Schaumburg, with **Palais Schaumburg** (1981), and Xmal Deutschland, with **Fetisch** (1983), contributed to move synth-pop towards industrial dance-music.

The all-girl group Malaria (1) recorded **Emotion** (1982), borrowing from Art Bears' progressive-rock, Soft Machine's jazz-rock, and Talking Heads' art-funk.

Switzerland's Yello pursued a lighter version of Kraftwerk's sci-fi cabaret on **Solid Pleasure** (1980) and then focused on parodies of disco-music.

In France, Philippe Fichot's Die Form (1) developed a unique form of experimental noise with **Die Puppe** (1982), a concept album about death and eros.

In Italy, Maurizio Bianchi engaged in some of the most extreme experiments on sound in works such as **Symphony For A Genocide** (1981). In Spain, Esplendor Geometrico began with a rather derivative style but achieved with **Mekano-Turbo** (1988) the link between the harsh wall of noise of early "industrialists" and the electronic body music of their descendants.

Most, if not all, of these musicians would demonstrate their fundamental lack of talent by following the trends. First they would adopt disco beats and make danceable records. Then they would adopt the aesthetics of Brian Eno's ambient music and turn to long, quiet drones.

### USA

Industrial music spread from Britain back to the USA, where musicians such as Residents, Pere Ubu and Boyd Rice had laid the foundations for it. Strains of industrial music surfaced in Boston (John ZeWizz McSweeney's Sleep Chamber), Pennsylvania (Executive Slacks), Delaware (Batz Without Flesh), although they never amounted to a proper movement. A few acts based in New York bridged the gap with the ten-years old new-wave. David Lee Meyers' Arcane Device (1) bordered on electronic avantgarde on works such as **Engines Of Myth** (1988). Paul Lemos' Controlled Bleeding (1) began in a primitive/industrial vein with **Knees And Bones** (1985): visceral cacophony, walls of metallic percussions, devastating feedback, gothic litanies. The bleak and macabre atmosphere peak on **Headcrack** (1986), while the music became more accessible, leading eventually to the hypnotic electronica of **Between Tides** (1986) and the more conventional industrial/gothic dance of **Trudge** (1990). Lemos' side-project Skin Chamber **Wound** (1991) offered a nuclear fission of death-metal and industrial-music.

- 1980: "mujaheddin" and volunteers from the Arab world, led by Saudi scion Osama bin Laden, organize the resistance against the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan
- 1980: 118 people are killed in ETA terrorist attacks in Spain
- 1980: billionaire Ted Turner launches CNN, the first cable tv devoted to world news
- 1980: Fidel Castro allows 125,000 people to leave Cuba for the USA
- 1980: Iraq (Saddam Hussein) attacks Iran (Khomeini)
- 1980: Lech Walesa leads Polish workers in a strike
- 1980: racial riots kill 18 people in Miami
- 1980: Ronald Reagan is elected president

## 5.9 USA: Hardcore

### *New York's scum 1977-81*

Three New York bands (the New York Dolls, the Dictators and the Ramones) had started something that would spread around the world like wild fire and come back to the USA like a hurricane. 1976 was the year that punk-rock became a mass phenomenon in Britain. But in the USA punk-rock was hardly what the British thought it was. "Punks" were the new beatniks, the new hipsters, the new bohemians, not necessarily the heroin addicts with barbaric haircuts and leather clothes. Punks listened to Patti Smith, Television and Suicide.

It took a while for "punk-rock" (as in "violent, fast, loud") to conquer the USA the way it had conquered Britain. When it happened, this "hardcore" form of punk-rock became the national idiom for millions of kids, and would remain so for two decades.

While the New York scene was ruled by the intellectuals of the new wave, a number of less "serious" punks were roaming its clubs. The Misfits (10) were already a legend in 1977, but it took them five years to release an album, the breathtaking carnival of **Walk Among Us** (1982). Their grotesquely horrific atmospheres featured Glenn Danzig's shout (a hybrid of Van Morrison's *Gloria* and Jim Morrison's *Break On Thru*), but, mainly, exploited the Ramones' idea of concise catchy rapid-fire rock'n'roll.

Another shocking act of the time, the Plasmatics, captured the headlines for a few months, selling an image of obscene, vulgar, perverted, raw and barbaric animals. But they were selling the image, not the sound, which, in itself, was closer to heavy-metal. Indirectly, the Plasmatics began a tradition of "scum-rock" that followed on the footsteps of the decadent acts of the early 1970s. After them came GG Allin (by far the "worst") in Boston and the Meatmen in Washington. Amoral sex, not punk-rock, was the attraction that they were promoting.

### *Punk-metal 1983-85*

Merging punk-rock and heavy-metal was not a particularly original idea (the Ramones had done it in 1978), and it was certainly not too difficult (given that both relied on aggression). So it was bound to happen, and to get bigger and bigger.

Punk-metal crossover was pioneered by Los Angeles' Suicidal Tendencies (1), namely on their spectacular **Suicidal Tendencies** (1983), and by North Carolina's Corrosion Of Conformity (1), whose breakthrough recording was **Animosity** (1985). Both of them eventually became regular heavy-metal bands.

Agnostic Front (1) led New York's hardcore punks towards heavy-metal, particularly on the seminal **Cause For Alarm** (1986). Former Misfits singer Danzig had already experimented with this format on **Initium** (1984), the debut album by his new band Samhain (1). It was a historic meeting and it became one of the main themes on the East Coast.

Boston was one of the key centers for punk-metal crossover, beginning with the generation of Jerry's Kids, SS Decontrol.

Boston's main punk group was Mission Of Burma (10), who were not properly hardcore, but rather a mixture of punk-rock, pop, heavy-metal and progressive-rock. The elastic power-pop of the EP **Signals, Calls And Marches** (1981), driven by guitarist Roger Miller's loud signatures, led to the versatile and erudite crossover of the album **VS** (1982), one of the most influential albums of punk-rock. Martin Swope's tape manipulations and Peter Prescott's drumming were emblematic of the opposite forces that pulled their melodies apart.

Boston's Gang Green (1) led the skatepunk nation and eventually found their true voice on **You Got It** (1987).

### *Washington's art-punk 1980-85*

Punk-rock was born in New York, but New York was never the capital of punk-rock. The relationship between the two was always cold. New York was always warmer to the intellectuals.

Washington was the first city to advance its candidacy as capital of the hardcore nation. From the beginning,

Washington's line-up was impressive. The Bad Brains (11), a quartet of black rastafarians, created a mixture of reggae, punk-rock, funk and heavy-metal that was ten years ahead of their time. The early singles, such as *Pay To Cum* (1980), and the album **Rock For Light** (1982) displayed Paul "H.R." Hudson's bellicose shout (simultaneously reminiscent of Prince, Iggy Stooze, Mick Jagger, Robert Plant and Johnny Rotten) matched with Gary "Dr Know" Miller's repertory of Hendrix-ian riffs and glissandos. The songs were odes to street life that wed the contemplative tone of Jamaican spirituality and the the materialistic wrath of urban America. Under the influence of Clash and Police, **I Against I** (1986) used reggae in a more conventional way, but still achieved the charisma of a sincere, vibrant call to arms.

Scream's Still Screaming (1982) was a similar infusion of metal and reggae

Minor Threat (1) were propelled by Ian MacKaye's vehement vocals. The songs on their two EPs, **Minor Threat** (1981) and **In My Eyes** (1981), sounded like exploding granite, and, incidentally, defined "straight-edge" hardcore (hardcore that rebelled against the stereotypes of alcohol/drugs/vandalism). Their only album, **Out Of Step** (1983), was a poignant document of teenage pessimism.

No Trend (1) were the ultimate in punk devastation, much closer to the chaotic self-indulgence of the "no wave" than to the Ramones, particularly on their third and last album, **Tritonian Nash-Vegas Polyester Complex** (1986). In the mid-1980s Washington pioneered two of the most important evolutions of hardcore: "pop-core", with Government Issue, Dag Nasty and Jeff Dahl's numerous bands; and especially "emo-core" ("emotional" hardcore), which would become the most abused style of the following decade. Its inventors, Rites of Spring (1), lasted only a few months, but the melancholy, romantic odes of **Rites Of Spring** (1985), delivered by Guy Picciotto in an agonizing register, were for hardcore the equivalent of Jesus' stigmata.

An important school of brainy, unorthodox rock was initiated in Virginia by Honor Role.

### **San Francisco 1977-84**

San Francisco's punk scene was characterized by extreme frenzy and strong sociopolitical overtones.

Fast, loud, short anthems were the staple of the two bands that launched the phenomenon in 1977: the Avengers, with *We Are The One* (1977) and *The American In Me* (1978), and the Nuns, with *Decadent Jew* (1977) and *Suicide Child* (1978), both written by Alejandro Escovedo. Neither lasted long enough to complete an album, nor did Ricky Williams' Sleepers, whose EP **Seventh World** (1978) was equally influential.

The Dead Kennedys (11), the agit-prop vehicle for truculent, articulate vocalist and political agitator Jello Biafra (Eric Boucher), lasted long enough to deliver the supersonic punch of **Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables** (1980), a volcanic eruption of soaring riffs and anthemic refrains. The band's demented frenzy, paradoxical lyrics and music-hall parodies updated the satirical art of the Fugs with the tools of hardcore, and produced at least two all-time masterpieces: *California Ueber Alles* and *Holiday In Cambodia*. Despite the didactic excesses, **Plastic Surgery Disaster** (1982) was another social fresco by one of punk's maddest preachers.

D.R.I. (1), the fastest and loudest (Dirty Rotten Imbeciles), were even more influential, because their **Dirty Rotten** (1983) virtually invented "thrash metal" before Metallica.

Their followers included D.O.A., and M.D.C. (Millions of Dead Cops), bands that ejected some of the most extreme and provocative hardcore in the nation; as did, from Portland, the Poison Idea, at least on **Kings Of Punk** (1986).

Flipper (11), who evolved from legendary noise-makers Negative Trend, were the indisputed masters of San Francisco's experimental hardcore, forefathers to one of the most fertile scenes of the 1980s. The bleak anthems of **Generic** (1982) were built around Mersey-beat singalongs, Rolling Stones-ian boogies, Cramps-ian voodooillies, Stooges-ian garage-rock, P.I.L.-like hallucinations, Chrome-esque zombie dances, but then drenched into the musical equivalent of nuclear radiations (loud and frantic drums, overdosed feedbacks). **Gone Fishin'** (1984), in fact, wasn't even hardcore anymore: its pieces were more fit for a psychedelic freak-out.

The Toiling Midgets (1), which evolved from the Sleepers, were even less orthodox on the varied and dissonant **Sea Of Unrest** (1982).

Female rock lived one of its historical moments in San Francisco when Frightwig (1) were formed, one of the first all-female (and lesbian) punk bands. Taking inspiration from Joan Jett and her Runaways, they filled **Cat Faboo Farm** (1984) with theatrical anti-macho attitudes and with raw, bare, amateurish playing (centered around Mia Levin's guitar), thus pioneering the "riot-grrrrls" movement.

#### ***Beach punks 1979-82***

California punks developed their own identity, first in Los Angeles and then in San Francisco. The first heroes of the Los Angeles scene were the Germes (10), whose brief and tragic career would remain the symbol of the entire school. **GI** (1979) contained not songs, but miniatures of songs, not melodies but mere screams at breakneck speed. Their vocalist, Darby Crash, was a decadent visionary in the tradition of Rimbaud and Kerouac, but didn't have the time to prove it (he died of an overdose in 1980).

But it was X (12) that best epitomized the L.A. zeitgeist in the age of punk-rock. Instead of practicing the nihilism and perversion that punk-rockers often boasted, vocalists John Doe and Christine "Exene" Cervenka painted them as social ills, caused by alienation in the metropolis. The depressed litanies of **LA** (1980) were closer to Suicide's weltanschauung than to Sex Pistols' desperation. While not as metaphysical as the Doors, they too centered on the atmospheric portrait of the disease (dehumanization), rather than on the physical analysis of its symptoms. Unlike the Doors, who aimed for psychedelic trance, X vented anger and disgust. The album was, ultimately, a gallery of misfits, junkies, beatniks, perverts, vandals, etc. Decadent life was not the subject, it was the object of their hyper-realistic sermons. Not surprisingly, their punk-rock relied on guitarist Billy Zoom's stylistic nuances which contained strong elements of country, blues and rockabilly, genres that harked back to ordinary people and ordinary lives. **Wild Gift** (1981) and **Under The Big Black Sun** (1982) proved it: X were a roots-rock band, their vocal harmonies harked back to Jefferson Airplane, and their lyrics introduced populism of a new kind.

Black Flag and Circle Jerks opened the golden age of "beach punks". Black Flag (12) were the more gifted musicians. They crafted the second masterpiece of Los Angeles' punk-rock, **Damaged** (1981), a collection of brief, epileptic, devastating ruminations pierced by guitarist Greg Ginn's merciless bombardment and shaken by the anthemic/suicidal howls, shrieks and roars of exuberant vocalist Henry Rollins. As Ginn began to indulge in hard-rock sludge and free-form guitar improvisation, Rollins began to indulge in verbose ramblings and theatrical orations. For a while Black Flag's schizophrenia paid off, as albums such as **Slip It In** (1984) and **Loose Nut** (1985) alternated between heavy-metal and punk-jazz, allowing Ginn to show off tornadoes of feedbacks, drones, fuzz-tones, atonal screeches, glissandos, harmolodic phrases, etc. Eventually, though, Rollins and Ginn parted ways. As teenagers became familiar with its loud/fast/angry format, punk-rock lost some of its rebellious connotations and it simply became a way to speak up. This led to a warmer kind of punk-rock, that focused on the problems of ordinary middle-class teenagers. The Adolescents (1), with the anthemic and satirical **Adolescents** (1981), and the Descendents (1), with one of punk-rock's rare concept albums, **Milo Goes To College** (1982), before transforming into power-pop outfit All, were typical of this new, less confrontational and less tragic approach.

A lot of Los Angeles punk-rockers, in fact, had remained relatively close to the original (foolish) Ramones sound, especially the Dickies (1), whose **Dawn** (1979) was a farcical take on B-movies worthy of the music hall, but also the Angry Samoans and the Weirdos.

1981 was the year of the peak, thanks to the soundtrack of Penelope Spheeris' documentary **Decline Of Western Civilization**, and Fear (10) was the leading band of the second wave, and **Record** (1982) its manifesto.

Texas-born vocalist and guitarist Jerry Lee Pierce formed Gun Club (102) in Los Angeles, inspired by both the Cramps' "voodoobilly", Robert Johnson's Delta blues, Louisiana's swamp rhythms, Jim Morrison's dark and sensual dialectics, and California's hardcore scene. The breath-taking parade of **Fire Of Love** (1981) spun around

demonic rock'n'roll rave-ups, hypnotic and amphetaminic blues-rock shuffles, and bleak country-rock ballads. The musical vocabulary of blues, country and rock music was employed to feed the spasmodic fever that consumed Pierce's mind, a fever that originated from obscure forces and inner ghosts. While raiding stereotypes and canons, Pierce and his gang secreted a magical balance of suspense and despair. Gun Club were more than the expression of nihilist anger: their music embodied a metaphysical quest for the meaning of life. As he didn't find it, the singer screamed and the band roared, venturing deeper and deeper into Pierce's nervous breakdown (which was really the breakdown of an entire generation). **Miami** (1982) was a morbid affair that removed most of the violence and focused on the emotional tension. It was a rural album, whereas its predecessor had been an urban album (despite its rural roots). Rather than a call of the wild, it was a psychoanalysis of an alienated state of mind. The first album was an earthquake that created new seismic faults: the second album was an exploration of those seismic faults. The orgiastic and macabre overtones of the first album permeated the EP **Death Party** (1983), but **Las Vegas Story** (1984), influenced by second guitarist Kid Congo Powers (Brian Tristan), veered towards a more pensive and atmospheric tone, the same tone that surfaced over and over again in Pierce's solo albums, which basically kept repeating the mantra of a man who was not at peace with himself. Pierce may have found what he was looking for when he died in 1996.

In the meantime, hardcore had already become more reasonable, thanks to bands that sang melodies instead of just screaming like maniacs, bands such as Agent Orange (1), full of nostalgia for the sound of the Sixties (surf, Merseybeat) despite the quintessentially Eighties despair of **Living In Darkness** (1981), and Mike Ness' Social Distortion (1), whose versatile and populist **Mommy's Little Monster** (1983) bridged hardcore and roots-rock. Legal Weapon (10), probably the most talented, recorded **Death Of Innocence** (1982), a superb collection of vibrant, adrenaline-pumping power-pop layered on top of exuberant boogie and rock'n'roll rhythms, one of the era's most accomplished records.

Bad Religion (3), perhaps the most influential punk band of this generation, were late-bloomers: they became the bards of teenage frustration long after they had grown up, with the trilogy of **Suffer** (1988), **No Control** (1989) and the unusually pensive **Against The Grain** (1990), which are basically rock operas about the moral crisis of the 1980s. The first two installments featured the emphatic vocals of Greg Graffin debating the meaning of life inside catchy melodies, and a double-guitar attack led by Brett Gurewitz that rehashed rock'n'roll cliches from Led Zeppelin to the Clash.

Punk-rock became punk-pop with their followers: M.I.A., Leaving Trains, Rich Kids On LSD and Nevada's 7 Seconds.

### ***Jazz-core 1981-86***

The Minutemen (102), boasting one of hardcore's most competent and creative line-ups (Dennes Boon on guitar, George Hurley on drums and Mike Watt on bass), wove a spiderweb of soul, jazz, funk and rock'n'roll around their syncopated, fractured, disjointed tunes. Borrowing the pagan impetus from hardcore, the harsh quirkiness from the new wave and the cerebral, and the convoluted indulgence from progressive-rock, the Minutemen concocted the miniature hardcore shrapnels of **Punch Line** (1981) and **What Makes A Man Start Fires** (1982). The acrobatic primitivism of these albums became even more neurotic and atonal on **Double Nickels On The Dime** (1984), one of the most ambitious recordings of the decade, a veritable encyclopedia of musical styles revisited from the point of view of a spastic genius reminiscent of Captain Beefheart and the Pop Group. After Boon's untimely death in 1985, the survivors hired a new vocalist, renamed themselves FIREHOSE (1), released **Ragin' Full On** (1986) and pursued a more conscious program to refound the song format, except that R.E.M.-like folk-rock took over Minutemen's unpredictable structures.

Black Flag and the Minutemen must be credited with raising the standard for hardcore. Their works were often experimental and their instrumental skills were way above the average. Joe Baiza's Saccharine Trust (2) attempted

the boldest fusion of hardcore and jazz on **Paganicons** (1981) and **Surviving You** (1984), two albums that are rich in guitar inventions and group counterpoint, although still fully immersed into hardcore dementia. Joe Baiza's subsequent venture into punk-jazz, Universal Congress Of (1), adopted decisively Ornette Coleman's free-jazz. The lengthy, free-form, chaotic jam *Certain Way* (1987) raised the stakes and **Prosperous And Qualified** (1988) delivered the goods: an inventive and sumptuous group sound.

Elsewhere, NoMeansNo, two brothers from Vancouver (Canada), tried to fuse Sex Pistols and Frank Zappa, while focusing with manic determination on teenagers' psyche: albums such as **Mama** (1982) and **Wrong** (1989) were self-parodies both grotesque and introverted, while doling out fluent and sophisticated interplay.

### ***Gothic hardcore 1980-81***

Los Angeles' hardcore scene briefly experienced a gothic resurgence which paralleled British dark-punk. While it did not amount to much, bands such as Urinals, 45 Grave, Alex Gibson's Bpeople, T.S.O.L. (True Sounds Of Liberty), Kommunity Fk dusted off the graveyards visited a few years earlier by the likes of Joy Division and Siouxsie Sioux.

Few albums stood out. One of the earliest gothic bands, the Flesh Eaters (1), led by the literate and visionary Chris Dejardins (the "Divine Horseman"), recorded **A Minute To Pray A Second To Die** (1981), featuring the Blasters's Dave Alvin and X's John Doe, an album that sounds more like Poe-like poetry set to roots-rock than a punk album. Christian Death (1), the sinister creature of vocalist Rozz Williams, penned the arcane, atmospheric ballads of **Catastrophe Ballett** (1984), which would be influential on the future of gothic rock.

### ***Midwest 1980-86***

The hardcore nation extended to the Midwest as well, from Pennsylvania's Dead Milkmen to Kansas' Micronotz, and around the world from Canada's SNFU to Australia's Hard-ons. Ohio's Necros were one of the most visceral bands, playing ultra-violent socio-political anthems on **Conquest For Death** (1983).

Chicago's Effigies were one of the earliest punk bands to experiment with pop and heavy-metal (on their 1981 EP **Haunted Town**).

Overlooked at the time, Indiana's Zero Boys (1) played popcore ante-litteram on their only album, **Vicious Circle** (1982).

John Brannon's Negative Approach were the link between the Stooges and the Necros, although their career was limited to **Tie Down** (1983).

In Texas the Dicks (which would relocate to San Francisco and evolve into Sister Double Happiness) the Big Boys and the Poison 13 kept the scene alive, but the real attraction was Scratch Acid (1), one of the bands that set a new standard of ferocity for the late 1980s. David Yow's spastic, dilapidated vocabulary, basically reduced to screaming, agonizing and vomiting, duelled against syncopated psycho-funky rhythms (bassist Dave Sims and drummer Ray Washam) and repulsive guitar distortions. The primal angst that permeated **Scratch Acid** (1985) harked back to the skewed eloquence of Captain Beefheart, Pop Group and Birthday Party.

But clearly the scene of the Midwest was revolutionized by the appearance of Minnesota's pop-core giants: Husker Du and Replacements.

By making it simultaneously more personal, more challenging and more accessible, Husker Du (23) changed hardcore forever. Their two songwriters (guitarist Bob Mould and drummer Grant Hart) packed an unlikely combination into the narrow framework of their violent epileptic hardcore miniatures: loud guitar that was neither passive (as in most hardcore) nor obnoxious (as in most hard-rock) but rather emotional, and catchy melodies that came from the heart, despite all the noise. The mini-album **Metal Circus** (1983) upped the ante by focusing on introspection and releasing psychedelic perfumes, and the double album **Zen Arcade** (1984) took punks for a ride on a merry-go-round of fragile feelings and pensive moods. The cornucopia of poppy tunes dressed the galloping thrash foundation with both gentle and rude touches that ran the gamut from folk-rock to heavy-metal, while lulled

by Hendrix-ian glissandos as well as by raga-like scales. Punk desperation was still ubiquitous, but it was no longer expressed in the form of primal wrath. It had become a lyrical state of the soul in a pathological state of the mind. **New Day Rising** (1985) added sonic perfection to the idea. An epic "wall of sound" and a slower, solemn pace removed the last traces of brainy rebellion, while at the same time emphasizing the personalized experience. In a sense, Husker Du were tweaking hardcore to stand as folk music and speak up the affections that punks had been reluctant to admit, thus healing the denial of a generation raised on confrontation, the equivalent of what R.E.M. was doing in a more straightforward folk format. Matured as a man, a musician and a composer, Mould became unstoppable: **Flip Your Wig** (1985), that betrayed his debt to the Sixties, **Candy Apple Grey** (1986), their least traumatic reportage, and **Warehouse** (1987) overflow with charming and penetrating punk-pop vignettes.

The Replacements (22) were the populist, grass-roots alter-ego of Husker Du. Their early albums were influenced by the epic frenzy of the Sex Pistols and the New York Dolls. But on **Hootenanny** (1983) Paul Westerberg emerged as a confessional and visionary songwriter, and the band began to spin blues, country, rockabilly and boogie while retaining the anthemic spirit (and the raw sound) of punk-rock. **Let It Be** (1984) slowed down the pace and toned down the guitars, giving Paul Westerberg the front stage and a messianic role. His inner torture became the spiritual journey of an entire generation, a sort of passion/martyrdom that ordinary American kids identified with in an almost genetic way. It was his iconic mixture of pride, defeat, longing and will that propelled the band's power-ballads. **Tim** (1985) was at the same time a documentary of American teenage life and a parade of authentic, impeccable rock'n'roll. In its desolate cries, the mythology of the misfit and the loner reached another zenith of pathos. The versatile, eclectic, encyclopedic style of **Pleased To Meet Me** (1987) signaled that the Replacements had exhausted their historical role. They had exhausted their generation's sorrows.

Husker Du and Replacements created a background that fostered a fertile scene. Magnolias and Rifle Sport were other significant bands of the 1980s in Minneapolis.

### **Chicago 1983-85**

A new level of violence was reached in Chicago by the generation of the mid 1980s, by bands that went beyond hardcore in the way they mustered tension, fear and hatred. In a sense, Minnesota went towards melody and Chicago went the other way.

Naked Raygun (3) gave new meaning to the brutal, abrasive, excoriating sound of hardcore. That sound was vivid and expressive on **Throb Throb** (1985) because the band was capable of a broad range of moods, from grotesque to epic, despite the devastation caused by guitarist John Haggerty (who played the guitar like a chainsaw) and his rhythm section (that careened through the melodies like a machine-gun) and while Jeff Pezzati intoned his odes of teenage frustration. The "adult" tone of **Jettison** (1988) perfected the formula, coupling tight music with rational balance, and the professional-sounding **Understand** (1989) showed that they knew what they were doing and showed glimpses of what Haggerty would do with his next band, Pegboy.

Among the many musicians who tried to set the apocalypse to music, Steve Albini (31) has certainly been one of the most effective. Borrowing from Killing Joke's cadaveric dirges, from the Pop Group's syncopated spasms, from Suicide's psychotic rituals, from Red Krayola's demented psychedelia, Albini consistently approached rock music as a victim to be vivisected, mangled, corroded with muriatic acid and nailed to the cross. His first project, Big Black, debuted with two age-defining EPs, **Lungs** (1983) and **Bulldozer** (1984), that focused on the musical equivalent of repulsive violence. Rather than a collection of songs, **Atomizer** (1986) was a sequence of shockwaves of industrial music, hardcore, heavy-metal, and horribly deformed rock'n'roll. In a stunning chaos of polyrhythms and dissonances, Albini told his macabre stories of deranged minds. The overall effect was similar to the suspense of a murder thriller (of a serial-killer thriller). Big Black died after **Songs About Fucking** (1987), which seemed willing to compromise with a more reasonable kind of rap-funk-punk song. Rapeman, which featured Scratch Acid's rhythm section of Rey Washam and David Sims, added two new monsters to Albini's

discography: the EP **Budd** (1988) and the album **Two Nuns And A Pack Mule** (1989), another orgiastic, dissonant vision of his blackest part of the human soul. Shellac, with Rifle Sport's drummer Todd Trainer and Volcano Suns' bassist Bob Weston, was almost a reflection on Albini's own career, as if he were trying to make sense of his own journey through the land of the damned. Cold and cerebral, **At Action Park** (1994) was the ultimate contradiction: rational irrationality.

#### ***Europunks 1983-85***

While the attention was focused on London, real art was often being created elsewhere.

Dutch anarchists Ex (2) had begun in the militant vein of Crass but would continuously improve the quality of their cacophonous, incoherent bacchanals via increasingly challenging albums such as **Blueprints For A Blackout** (1983), **Joggers & Smoggers** (1989), **Instant** (1995), possibly their masterpiece, and **Starters Alternators** (1998).

Scotland's Dog Faced Hermans were the main disciples of Ex. Led by vocalist and trumpet player Marion Coutts and noise-guitarist Andy Moor, they indulged in the violent and atonal pieces of the mini-albums **Humans Fly** (1987) and **Every Day Timebomb** (1989), the antechambers to the agit-prop bacchanals of **Mental Blocks For All Ages** (1991).

Two of the most experimental punk bands of the 1980s were Italian: Raw Power (1), thanks to the fusion of hardcore and heavy-metal achieved on **Screams from the Gutter** (1985), and CCCP (2), whose **Affinità - Divergenze** (1985) and **Epica Etica Etnica Pathos** (1990) left behind the stereotypes of punk-rock and reached for a genre-defining convergence of hardcore, militant rock, industrial music and even chamber music while delivering a bleak vision of humankind.

## **5.10 USA: College-pop**

### ***Athens 1981-86***

Throughout the 1970s, the southern states of the USA had developed a style of rock music based on bass and guitar boogie figures. It was loud and raw. It was a close relative of Chicago's blues-rock and of British hard-rock. It was also a vehicle for conservative messages that were at odds with the traditional ideals of rock music. The "red necks" had coined their own dialect of rock music.

That was then. The new wave found a South that had greatly improved in all disciplines, from politics to art, and that had become as literate and tolerant as the North, if not as liberal as the West.

Punk-rock was never too popular in the South, though. Somehow music was still held to a moral standard that punk-rock definitely did not meet. On the other hand, the South's fast growing college population adopted the ethos and the aesthetics of the new wave and adapted it to melodic music. The result was an unusually intellectual brand of pop music, in sync with the revival of the Sixties but also in sync with the free spirits of the new wave. This "college pop" had its roots in the folk-rock style of the early 1960s and in the sprightly country-rock of the early 1970s, but it was contaminated by the fears and the neuroses of the age.

Geopolitics played a key role in redefining the map of rock music. Texas, which had led in the first part of the decade, was obscured by Georgia which will soon be obscured by North Carolina. What happened was a shift from the state of cowboys and oilmen to states with a strong aristocratic tradition. It was also a shift from the metropolis to the college towns (Athens, in Georgia, and Raleigh, in North Carolina). It was, finally, a shift from the mythology of the uneducated loser/loner to the mythology of the educated college kid.

When the spotlight moved to college town of Athens, in Georgia, something historical happened: a small town of the "province" competed for musical leadership with the established rock empires of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago and Detroit. It was a new epicenter for rock music. Here, the new wave spawned the

quirky dance-music with Sixties overtones of the B52's (1), basically a synthesis of the three leading phenomena of the time (new wave, disco-music and Sixties revival), superbly documented on **B-52's** (1979) by a surreal balance of two female singers reminiscent of the girl-groups, funky guitars and Farfisa-like electronic keyboards.

And the same town (in fact, the same circle of friends) spawned the neo folk-rock of the R.E.M. (13), one of the most successful bands of all times. Pete Buck's Byrds-like Rickenbacker arpeggios, Bill Berry's martial drums and Mike Mills' lilting bass emphasized Michael Stipe's cryptic lyrics, middle-eastern cantillation, gospel-like call-and-response, soaring psychedelic refrains and oracle-like postures. The anthemic but irrelevant *Radio Free Europe* (1981) introduced to the surreal atmosphere of **Murmur** (1983), an album that had the quality of a fairy-tale, but an angst-ridden one, while relying on old-fashioned folk-rock foundations. *Fall On Me* (1986) refined their vocal harmonies and rhythmic whirlwinds, while **Document** (1987) revealed their melodic talent with a cornucopia of catchy hooks: *The One I Love*, *Finest Worksong*, *This Is The End Of The World*, etc. **Green** (1988) was another incredible batch of pop songs (including *Stand* and *Orange Crush*), but hardly a cohesive unit: it had the feeling of a compilation of hits. **Out Of Time** (1991) and **Automatic For The People** (1992) were pensive, brooding, and occasionally pretentious works, employing arrangements that often obviated to the lack of inspiration. **Monster** (1994) was the notable exception, a slab of hard-rock that yielded at least two of their masterpieces, *What's The Frequency Kenneth* and *Crush With Eyeliner*.

B52's and R.E.M. were only the tip of the iceberg, though, soon followed by Pylon, Swimming Pool Q's, Love Tractor, each of them unusually unique and "diverse".

Don Seven, also known as Stephen Fievet and better known as LMNOP (1), predated "lo-fi pop" with his melodic tours de force, starting with the legendary **Elemen Opee Elpee** (1986). As messy and uneven as they were, **Camera-Sized Life** (1994) and **Pound** (1996) were monumental tributes to the guitar-driven pop of Brian Wilson and Alex Chilton, almost encyclopedias or user manuals for that genre.

#### **North Carolina 1981-84**

Another important school to come out of the South originated from the Sneakers, a Chapel Hill (North Carolina) band that released its first EP in 1976 and that comprised the young talents of Don Dixon, Mitch Easter and Chris Stamey. Dixon became an influential producer and songwriter. Easter formed Let's Active and also became an influential producer (e.g., for R.E.M.). Stamey joined Peter Holsapple and formed the DB's (1), one of the most talented bands of the psychedelic-pop revival. Their **Stand For Decibels** (1981) was a passionate survey of baroque pop through the ages (early Byrds, **Pet Sounds**, **Sgt Pepper**, Big Star).

Mixing power-pop and folk-rock, several bands from the South attempted to match R.E.M.'s success: Spongetones, Guadalcanal Diary, Connells. The best were probably Mississippi's Windbreakers (2), led by songwriters Tim Lee and Bobby Sutliff, who crafted **Terminal** (1984) and the equally engaging **Electric Landlady** (1991), collections of songs that relate to the ordinary world but don't really "experience" it, preferring an aerial view, as if the songwriters were observers from another planet, more intrigued by the technique (a plethora of folk, pop and roots-rock styles) than by the subject.

#### **Hoboken 1981-83**

Another college town, Hoboken, in New Jersey, spawned a similar school of literate pop. Pat DiNizio's Smithereens (2) were the merriest and exuberant, but also (in a subtle way) the most erudite purveyors of power-pop. **Especially For You** (1986) was a veritable encyclopedia of melodic music, quoting everybody from Tin Pan Alley to the Byrds' jangling folk-rock, from Mersey-beat to bubblegum novelties, from Bacharach's easy-listening to teen-idols of the Fifties. The tight and focused **Green Thoughts** (1988) yielded the catchy and memorable hooks of *Only A Memory*, *House We Used To Live In* and *World We Know*. The Smithereens had no problem repackaging their melodic style into fashionable pop-metal, namely with *A Girl Like You* (1989) and *Top Of The Pops* (1991).

Other pop bands of the area included Richard Barone's Bongos (1), whose early singles and EPs made up **Drums Along The Hudson** (1982), and the Cucumbers.

One of the most unassuming and probably the most endearing folk-rock combo of the era, the Tiny Lights (14), also hailed from Hoboken. **Prayer For The Halcyon Fear** (1985) capitalized on the talents of Donna Croughn (violin), John Hamilton (guitar) and Jane Scarpantoni (cello). The tenuous harmonies, studded with jazz and funk accents, and the gentle, celestial atmospheres, argued in favor of latter-day hippies, who frequently evoked Joseph Byrd's United States Of America. A stronger jazz, neoclassical and folk underpinning (accordion, saxophone, tabla, sitar, mandolin, violin, flute, mellotron, trombone, tuba) sustains the dreamy circus of **Hazel's Wreath** (1988). A six-unit line-up crafted the elegant vignettes of **Hot Chocolate Massage** (1990), which, given the combo's instrumental prowess, sound like mini-jams. Despite Scarpantoni's departure, **Stop The Sun** (1992) boasted baroque arrangements, but still retained that feeling of meticulous incubation of tender melodies. The ambitious **Milky Juicy** (1994), almost a summary of their career's experiments, was basically progressive-rock with a soul. Equally versed in free-form jams and riff-driven rave-ups, the new line-up used its versatility to increase the emotional depth of the music.

#### *The birth of lo-fi pop 1982-84*

The punk aesthetics (or, better, anti-aesthetics) applied to folk music had an unwanted side-effect: it encouraged ordinary kids to play ordinary songs without worrying too much about form.

Jad Fair's Half Japanese (2) were the most extreme case. They debuted with one of the most inept, clumsy, childish, lo-fi and indecipherable works of all times, the 50-song triple album **1/2 Gentlemen Not Beasts** (1980), that both Dada and Captain Beefheart would be proud of, and followed it up with the more cohesive **Loud** (1981), but still in the spirit of demented, atonal, vehement and highly fragmented rock'n'roll. The frenzy was "punk", but everything else was still nameless. Fair changed course with **Sing No Evil** (1985), an album that was infinitely more musical than the previous ones, played by 13 professional musicians and boasting real melodies, rhythms and arrangements. Unfortunately, in the process of becoming a real musician, Fair lost the charm of the early anarchic years, but remained one of the pioneers of "lo-fi" and "noise" pop.

Wisconsin's Violent Femmes (11) penned songs that sounded like pranks. The irriverent spasms of punk neurosis were overcome by the humorous effervescence of a jug band on **Violent Femmes** (1982). While not as bizarre as the Holy Modal Rounders, and not as mocking as Gordon Gano's vocals would imply (despite echoes of Jonathan Richman's juvenile dementia), their songs were unorthodox and their rhythms were the antithesis of "traditional" (Brian Ritchie on bass and Victor DeLorenzo on drums). The documentary vignettes of **Halloweed Ground** (1984) upped the ante, and **The Blind Leading The Naked** (1986) aimed at mainstream pop.

Beat Happening was the trio led by Calvin Johnson, a living institution of the Olympia scene. The minimal, handicapped folk music of **Beat Happening** (1985) and **Jamboree** (1988) encouraged hundreds of kids around the country to play primitive rock music, no matter how inept the musicians. Johnson launched more musical ventures. He recorded Halo Benders' **God Don't Make No Junk** (1994) with Pell Mell's keyboardist Steve Fisk and Built To Spill's guitarist Doug Martsch. And Dub Narcotic Sound System, inaugurated with the instrumental album **Echoes From The Scene Control Room** (1995), was Calvin Johnson's application of dub's creative process to rock music, although the results sounded more like the Contortions performing Memphis soul of the 1960s.

Ohio's Guided By Voices (1), was one of the most prolific projects in the country, and contributed to create the new stereotype of the "lo-fi" musician. The band, led by vocalist Robert Pollard and guitarist Tobin Sprout, began in 1986 to release an aberrant amount of albums that tended to sound all the same: second-hand psychedelic pop with minimal arrangements. The inspiration never changed, but the quality of the production peaked with **Propeller** (1992), **Vampire On Titus** (1993), featuring new guitarist Mitch Mitchell, and the best of them all, **Bee Thousand** (1994), before Sprout left Pollard and the routine became even more predictable. Pollard was backed by Cobra

Verde on **Mag Earwhig** (1997), possibly his best album after the departure of Sprout.

Sebadoh (1) was born as the home project of Dinosaur Jr's bassist Lou Barlow, who enjoyed sketching brief songs (sort of nursery rhymes) in a variety of minimal settings. The early material was collected on **The Freed Man** (1989), but a group sound did not emerge until Jason Loewenstein on guitar and Eric Gaffney on drums helped him record **III** (1991), a much more focused document of youth's alienation. As the role of Barlow's partners increased (and pushed Sebadoh's sound towards the pop mainstream), Barlow regressed to his claustrophobic roots with his alter egos Sentrido and Folk Implosion.

#### ***The golden age of college-pop 1982-87***

College-pop spread around the country. It meant more than punk-rock to millions of kids who were not into street gangs. It resonated with the psyche of millions of kids who needed comfort rather than instigation. All in all, it probably divided the American youth roughly in two camps: the street punks and the college kids.

The genre peaked in the second half of the decade with consummate popsters such as New York's They Might Be Giants (3), i.e. John Flansburgh and John Linnell, who retained the satirical, offbeat quality of the punk era. Actually, the wit of **They Might Be Giants** (1986) recalled the British operetta, the music-hall, the Bonzo Band, Frank Zappa, Todd Rundgren, and the bubblegum novelties of the Sixties. In fact, their early albums, particularly the effervescent and more professional **Lincoln** (1988), sounded like Andy Warhol-ian collages of pop clichés. Both albums feel like intricate mosaics. Both are the product of abstract reprocessing of icons of commercial muzak. Starting with **Flood** (1990), an epic survey of stylistic slapstick (surf, ska, country & western, tex-mex, reggae, swing, vaudeville, doo-wop, zydeco), the sophisticated arrangements would not add but detract from the effectiveness of their silly tunes.

Too Much Joy, also from New York, and Colorblind James Experience, from upstate New York, were similar in many ways, possibly more clownish and less encyclopedic.

Chicago's Green (12) were among the great unsung heroes of the 1980s. The quantity and quality of elements that concurred to make **Green** (1986) a phantasmagoric song cycle had few rivals: one could hear echoes of Buddy Holly, Ray Charles, Marvin Gaye, Kinks, Rolling Stones, Hollies, Tom Petty and many others while virtuoso vocalist Jeff Lescher spun his classic tales. **Elaine MacKenzie** (1987) toyed with musical foundations that transfigured decades of rock'n'roll and soul, and the mesmerizing variety of **White Soul** (1989) climbed new artistic heights. Both powerful and romantic, Lescher's songs stood out because they reached recesses of the heart that had been off-limits for his generation.

Don Fleming began his saga in Washington's Velvet Monkeys (1), who recorded an album of pop-rockabilly-surf-psychedelic Sixties revival, **Future** (1983). After moving to New York, and meeting Mark Kramer, he formed B.A.L.L. (2) and proceeded to mock acid-rock on **Period** (1987), a work highlighted by nonsensical jams. The power-trio unleashed hard-rock vehemence amid the usual dose of sound effects and skewed melodies on **Hardball** (1990), particularly in their self-glorifying instrumental jams. When he created Gumball (1), Fleming simply updated B.A.L.L.'s sound to grunge and noise-rock (and abandoned the clownish tones). Despite the elaborate arrangements, it sounded like a cross between the Who and Big Star, his most blatant stab at commercial success. Fleming reined in **Super Tasty** (1993), but began to lose control over his own grandeur on the monstrous **Revolution On Ice** (1994).

Nebraska's For Against played melancholy pop with almost gothic overtones.

Peter Himmelman's Sussman Lawrence in Minnesota redefined kitsch and AOR on **Pop City** (1984).

The songwriting team of singers and guitarists Devin Hill and Doug Robertson, Iowa's Dangtrippers, penned joyful tunes of everyday life on **Days Between Stations** (1989).

At the end of the decade, REM's influence was strong in the USA: Arizona's Gin Blossoms and Sidewinders, Hawaii's Dambuilders, Boston's Buffalo Tom, Minnesota's Trip Shakespeare (later Semisonic).

### ***Boston 1983-88***

Boston, ever the quintessential college town, boasted some of the most sensitive musicians, the ones who really spoke to the heart and soul of the college undergraduate.

Dumpruck, who had debuted with **D Is For** (1983) in a folk-pop vein à la R.E.M., crafted the melancholy ballads of **For The Country** (1987).

The Volcano Suns (1), formed by former Mission Of Burma drummer Peter Prescott, progressed from the whimsical, intricate, disorienting rock'n'roll of **Bright Orange Years** (1985) towards the baroque psychedelic-pop of the double album **Thing Of Beauty** (1989), whose sound was both dense and spaced-out.

Aimee Mann's Til' Tuesday devoted their career, and particularly the romantic concept **Everything's Different Now** (1988), to delicate and introverted elegies.

In a similar vein, upstate New York's 10,000 Maniacs (2) played atmospheric, intimate and intellectual soft-rock enhanced with vocalist Natalie Merchant's plaintive/sanguine colloquial tone. After venting their existential angst on **Secrets of the I Ching** (1983), they opted for Fairport Convention's more conventional folk-rock on **The Wishing Chair** (1985). The fragile and pensive **In My Tribe** (1987) was the first album to fully display Merchant's persona (not only her voice), although it led to the ecstatic easy-listening of **Blind Man's Zoo** (1989). **Our Time In Eden** (1992), their commercial breakthrough, balanced the profound and the ethereal elements of their art and set the stage for Merchant's solo career.

The confessional style of two Boston-area bands was perhaps the epitome of college-pop at the turn of the decade. The Throwing Muses (2), formed by Kristin Hersh and Tanya Donnelly, debuted with the dramatic and enigmatic post-folk post-punk style of **Throwing Muses** (1986), but later evolved into a sunnier pop outfit that eventually recorded the wiser, calmer **University** (1995).

The Blake Babies (2), formed at the prestigious Berklee School Of Music by teenager vocalist Juliana Hatfield and guitarist John Strohm, offered tenuous guitar-pop on **Earwig** (1989), and, more importantly, vignettes that vivisected the dramas of insecure kids of their age. Each song on **Sunburn** (1990) is, de facto, a metaphor for loneliness and nervousness. Their sound and their image were the antithesis of punk-rock.

A most creative and amusing form of pop was attempted by the Pianosaurus, who performed **Groovy Neighborhood** (1987) with toy instruments.

### ***West-Coast 1981-88***

Sacramento's Game Theory (1), led by Scott Miller, delivered another proto-classic of baroque-psychedelic power-pop à la DB's, **Lolita Nation** (1987), and Miller would continue making that same music (possibly more influenced by XTC's pastoral chamber-pop) with his next project, Loud Family.

San Francisco's Sneetches started a local school that would become prolific in the 1990s.

Los Angeles' Toad The Wet Sprocket (1) were perhaps the catchiest of the batch, particularly on their third album **Fear** (1991).

Seattle boasted some great lost pop bands. Jeff Kelly devoted his Green Pajamas to naive psychedelic-pop, while the Posies (1), led by songwriters Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow, added **Dear 23** (1990) to the repertory of baroque pop.

Scott McCaughey's bizarre melodic genius was the brain behind the Young Fresh Fellows (3). Their early albums, such as **The Fabulous Sounds Of The Pacific Northwest** (1984), were collections of demented rock'n'roll with irresistible hooks, halfway between the Kinks and XTC. **The Men Who Loved Music** (1987) was still very eclectic, but focused more coherently on black music, and the sound kept evolving, becoming more professional and cohesive on **Electric Bird Digest** (1991), until it achieved the elegant, surreal power-pop of **It's Low Beat Time** (1992). Scott McCaughey later formed Minus 5 (1), recruiting the the Posies' songwriter team of Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow, as well as R.E.M.'s Pete Buck on bass. On their debut, **Old Liquidator** (1994), they indulge

in effervescent strings plucking, angelic synthesizers, West Coast-ian multi-part vocal harmonies, lilting piano figures, epic organ swirls, atmospheric guitar twangs and joyful guitar jangles.

Jim Steinman (13) was the most extravagant, whimsical, unconventional composer and arranger of pop melodies of the 1980s, even though only one album was credited to his name. Both Meat Loaf, the melodramatic rocker of **Bat Out of Hell** (1977), and Pandora's Box, whose symphonic-choral song-cycle **Original Sin** (1989) was the ultimate in rock melodrama, were his creations. The brutal and romantic *Original Sin* (halfway between Phil Spector, a gospel mass and a Beethoven overture) and the heart-breaking ballad *It's All Coming Back To Me* show the range and breadth of Steinman's art. Pandora's Box album wed decadent rock of the 1970s and punk spirit of the 1980s. Steinman composed a metaphysical concept that mimicked Broadway musicals and that alternated Zappa-esque parody and street pathos. This was brutal, colossal music of manic crescendos, of punishing rhythms of delirious choirs. *Total Eclipse For The Heart* (1983), sung by Bonnie Tyler, and *Making Love Out Of Nothing At All* (1983), sung by Air Supply, were incursions into pure pop territory. Steinman's productions are the quintessential of magniloquent, tragic, titanic, desperate. His singers bleed his lyrics. His keyboards are the thunders of the apocalypse. His melodies are religious psalms. His own albums **Bad For Good** (1981) and **Tanz der Vampire** (1998) highlighted his demonic side. Steinman wed the rebellious spirit of rock'n'roll with Wagner's titanic sense of impotence, and thus reenacted the fundamental theme of the human condition that countless poets had explored over the centuries.

#### *Satire, 1988-89*

Lyrics often prevailed over music. In Pennsylvania, Mickey "Dean Ween" Melchiondo and Aaron "Gene Ween" Freeman created the saga of Ween (2), who represented the ultimate act of juvenile, caustic and lewd irreverence. **God Weed Satan - The Oneness** (1990) was their personal musica-hall, a gallery of comic/erotic vignettes that clung to musical nonsense and variety. The duo mastered the silly melodies of the They Might Be Giants and the bizarre arrangements of Mark Kramer, and proceeded to create a wildly eclectic opus. **Pod** (1992) was another continuously mutating beast, although subsequent albums tried to adopt a more unified format.

In Wisconsin, Jimmy and Dennis Flemion, the Frogs (1) played sloppy, demented acoustic folk in the vein of David Peel while poking fun at racial, sexual and religious dogmas, on **It's Only Right And Natural** (1989).

- 1981: American Airlines introduces a frequent flyer program
- 1981: Chicago disc-jockeys organize the first "raves", or clandestine all-night parties
- 1981: Egyptian president Sadat is assassinated by a radical Muslim organization and is succeeded by Hosni Mubarak
- 1981: first cases of AIDS are discovered
- 1981: Francois Mitterrand, a socialist, is elected president of France
- 1981: IBM introduces the PC ("Personal Computer"), that spreads world-wide
- 1981: John Gotti rules the Mafia
- 1981: Lady Diana Spencer marries Prince Charles, heir to the throne
- 1981: MTV debuts on cable tv with the Buggles' "Video Killed The Radio Star"
- 1981: Racial riots at Brixton, London
- 1981: Sister Angelica (Rita Rizzo) founds the Eternal World Television Network
- 1981: Techno music
- 1981: the compact disc (CD) is introduced

- 1981: the IBM PC is launched, running an operating system developed by Bill Gates' Microsoft
- 1981: the U.S. launches the first space shuttle
- 1981: the West Edmonton Mall opens in Alberta (Canada), the largest shopping mall in the world (including more than 800 stores, a hotel, an amusement park, a miniature-golf course, a church, a water park, a zoo and a lake)
- 1981: USA and Libya fighters engage in combat off the coast of Libya

## **5.11 UK & Australia: The New Wave of Pop and Synth-pop**

### ***Synth-pop 1979-84***

The melodic song was centerstage in popular music for the entire 20th century. Pop was certainly not born with rock music. Pop was born with the record industry at the beginning of the century. Rock'n'roll forced a new form onto the pop song, by limiting the format to guitar, drums, bass and the occasional horns or keyboards. Indirectly, the spartan format of "pop" in "rock" music emphasized the melody itself: the Beach Boys or the Hollies could not rely on the orchestral flourishes of Burt Bacharach.

Pop survived the new wave but underwent a radical transformation. On one hand the neurotic/futuristic arrangements that were almost mandated by the new wave ended up complicating what was supposed to be a simple "song". On the other hand, the punk aesthetics of down-to-earth conciseness pulled the song format in the opposite direction, towards a bare and slim melodic line.

The net result of this bi-directional pull was to make pop songs much more interesting, to say the least.

It all started with electronic instruments, with Brian Eno's melodic futurism and with Kraftwerk's robotic rhythms. Premonitions came with Ultravox, XTC, B52's, etc. But the first full-fledged application of those ideas was a divine novelty, *Video Killed The Radio Star* (1979), recorded by the duo of keyboardist Geoff Downes and vocalist Trevor Horn, the Buggles, who fused the silly melodies of the Sixties, the dance beat of disco-music and electronic arrangements. Then came Gary Numan, the first popstar of synth-pop thanks to the hits *Are Friends Electric* (1979) and *Cars* (1979).

In Japan, the Yellow Magic Orchestra (1), featuring Ryuichi Sakamoto, pioneered synth-pop with albums such as **Solid State Survivor** (1979).

Synth-pop was perhaps the single most significant event in melodic music since Mersey-beat. Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark (keyboardists Paul Humphreys and Andy McCluskey) were emblematic in the way their synth+vocals equation progressed from the catchy mini-symphonies *Electricity* (1979) and *Enola Gay* (1980) to the mainstream romantic ballads such as *If You Leave* (1986). Depeche Mode were gloomier and equally melodic, continuing to explore the combination of spleen and rhythm experimented by Roxy Music and Ultravox while keeping an eye on the discos with *Just Can't Get Enough* (1981), penned by Vince Clarke. Synth-heavy band Human League began with the industrial Kraftwerk-ian suite *Dignity Of Labour* (1979), but (after keyboardists Ian Marsh and Martyn Ware left) singer Philip Oakey turned it into a disco-soul unit with hits such as *Don't You Want Me* (1981).

When, in 1981, Soft Cell (vocalist Marc Almond and keyboardist David Ball) entered the pop charts (with the cover of a 1964 hit), synth-pop became a deluge. And the duo became the preferred format, replacing the entire orchestra and rhythm section with a simply keyboard (first member) while retaining the equivalent of the old crooner (second member). It was old pop music delivered with modern instruments. The Eurythmics (androgynous

chanteuse Annie Lennox, perhaps the best vocalist in this genre, and keyboardist Dave Stewart) found a miraculous balance of lyrical melodies and superb arrangements on their hits *Sweet Dreams* (1983) and *Here Comes The Rain* (1983). Former Depeche Mode keyboardist Vince Clarke teamed up with torrid vocalist Alison Moyet for Yazoo's aggressive hymns, but his impressive skills as an arranger shone more brightly on the duo formed with Andy Bell, Erasure, which released *Oh L'Amour* (1986) and *Victim of Love* (1987). The Pet Shop Boys introduced existential angst, urban neurosis and an almost Brecht-ian pathos into the catchy melodies of *West End Girls* (1984), *Opportunities* (1986), *It's A Sin* (1987). Chris Lowe's arrangements were simultaneously luxuriant and claustrophobic, while Neil Tennant's vocals were almost anthemic.

The Flying Lizards (1), formed by avantgarde composer David Cunningham, were among the few outfits who dared experiment on this very successful format. **Flying Lizards** (1980) delivered lo-fi psychedelic disco-music halfway between the Canterbury school of progressive-rock and Brian Eno's electronic impressionism.

After Curtis' death, the surviving members of Joy Division adopted synthesizers, sequencers and drum-machines, renamed themselves New Order (1), and began a new career with the lush disco productions of *Blue Monday* (1983), *Love Vigilantes* (1985) and *Bizarre Love Triangle* (1986). While **Power Corruption And Lies** (1983) tried to maintain the intellectual manners, subsequent albums focused on simpler melodies and rhythms, i.e. on more and more trivial disco-music.

### ***New romantics 1981-83***

Electronic arrangements were no less important for the new generation of teen idols. Duran Duran became the Beatles of the "new romantic" movement with their obnoxious ballads: *Planet Earth* (1981), *Hungry Like The Wolf* (1982), *Reflex* (1983), *The Wild Boys* (1984) and *A View To A Kill* (1985). As far as tv programming went, their only competition were Culture Club, with equally inept ballads such as *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me* (1982) and *Karma Chameleon* (1983). These new teen-idols, as well as Pulp (the quintessence of glam, retro` and kitsch), Thompson Twins, Tears For Fears, ABC, Heaven 17 (keyboardists Ian Marsh and Martyn Ware of Human League), basically recycled ideas from Peter Gabriel and Brian Eno for the MTV generation.

### ***The prodromes of Lo-fi Pop 1980-83***

In the meantime, other bands worked very hard on the atmospheric element and coined a subdued, melodic style that implied a major revision of the whole concept of "pop" music.

The Young Marble Giants (1), featuring vocalist Alison Statton and guitarist Stuart Moxham, released **Colossal Youth** (1980), a collection of fragile, tenuous, spartan but no less eclectic and inventive tunes, that was the epitome of the "lo-fi pop" to come.

Another proto-experiment of "lo-fi pop" was attempted by the Raincoats (2), one of the few feminist bands, who played progressive-rock without the pomp and the pretentiousness. The moral fairy tales of **Raincoats** (1979) used skewed melodies and odd time signatures with angelic nonchalance. **Odyshape** (1981) frequently betrayed the debt to the Canterbury school, while the ethno-funk single *Animal Rhapsody* (1983) and **Moving** (1984) revealed a competent and versatile band.

Lawrence Hayward's Felt (1) played hypnotic pop that was often derivative of Television and the Velvet Underground. The singles, such as *Something Sends Me To Sleep* (1981), *Penelope Tree* (1983), *Sunlight Bathed The Golden Glow* (1984) and *Primitive Painters* (1985), and the mini-album **Splendour Of Fear** (1984) created a dense and shimmering texture for the vocalist to face his Lou Reed-ian ghosts. Martin Duffy's keyboards embellished the lengthy enchanted madrigals of **Forever Breathes The Lonely Word** (1986), which almost sounded by a different band.

The Blue Aeroplanes were merely the vehicle for Gerald Langley's avantgarde rap/folk/poetry.

After initially wasting their talent with silly synth-pop ditties, Talk Talk (11) invented a new form of music, one in which a complex atmosphere is created out of slow, inorganic, inarticulate streams of simple sounds. The six

lengthy, free-form, brooding and cataleptic ruminations of **Spirit Of Eden** (1988) pioneered "slo-core". Each one is abstract soundpainting in which melodies implode into gentle litanies, spectral whispers, psychedelic chanting and droning blues laments, as if Van Morrison's **Astral Weeks** and Robert Wyatt's **Rock Bottom** were played at half speed. The extended instrumentation of **Laughing Stock** (1991) pushed the envelop of their technique, and landed Talk Talk into the realm of chamber music.

#### ***Pop revival 1981-84***

The renaissance of pop music had many faces, and soon even the most traditional genres were revived by new stars: Everything But The Girl (former bedroom folksingers Ben Watt and Tracey Thorn, the ultimate in yawn-inducing lounge music); Nigerian chanteuse Sade Adu (the elegant entertainer who pioneered the cold/sad atmosphere that would be called "trip-hop"); Scritti Politti (funk-jazz-soul ballads for the discos); Prefab Sprout (sophisticated easy-listening for brain-dead yuppies); Style Council (former Jam's singer Paul Weller, now impersonating the purely melodic soul singer); Simply Red (specialists of the romantic rhythm'n'blues ballad); Swing Out Sister (a sort of supergroup formed by former A Certain Ratio's keyboardist Andy Connell).

#### ***Scotland and Ireland 1979-86***

An inexhaustible source of pop bands was Scotland. Scotland had largely avoided punk-rock's devastation. It was, therefore, no surprise that Scottish pop tended to be the least inventive. Altered Images, Associates, Orange Juice, Josef K, led the avalanche circa 1980-81.

But, mostly, Scottish pop was predictable and emphatic (Big Country, Del Amitri, Texas). Aztec Camera, in a folkish/nostalgic vein, and particularly Blue Nile (1), whose **A Walk Across The Rooftops** (1983) mixed Van Morrison's pathos and Robert Wyatt's spleen, were the only positive attempts to reform the genre.

Well into the 1980s, Scotland produced a new generation of pop bands, under the banner of "anorak pop" (so called from the simple jacket preferred by simple kids): Pastels, Biff Bang Pow, Shop Assistants, Weather Prophets, and the best of them all, the Vaselines (1), the most qualified disciples of the Buzzcocks, despite having recorded only a few EPs and one album, **Dum Dum** (1988).

Then came "twee-pop" (so called for its obsessive quest for the sweet, romantic, naive refrain), a genre best exemplified by Talulah Gosh.

At the end of the decade, Scottish bands would still be refining the pop lingo (Soup Dragons, Fini Tribe, Cud, etc). Ireland had a fertile scene, although not very original and mostly derivative of U2 (the Hothouse Flowers, A House ). Microdisney were notable not so much for the fragile tunes of **Everybody's Fantastic** (1983) as for featuring guitarist Sean O'Hagan (who would form the High Llamas) and singer Cathal Coughlan (who would form Fatima Mansions).

#### ***England 1979-88***

The least creative and most predictable of folk-pop schools was actually the British one, which also happened to spawn the most successful bands. James, Alarm, McCarthy, Dentists, Housemartins (and later Beautiful South), Dream Academy, Red Lorry Yellow Lorry , were terribly predictable and old-fashioned. Their only value was that they offered guitar-pop in an era in which synthesizers and drum-machines ruled.

By far the most successful of the guitar-pop bands of the late 1980s were the Smiths (2), with a style that was in many ways the opposite of the fashionable music of their time: intimate and tender instead of emphatic and/or macho. Their gentle melodies were grafted onto Stephen Morrissey's ascetic and vulnerable muezzin-like crooning and Johnny "Marr" Maher's transcendental guitar arpeggios. The introverted and hyper-sensitive lyrics captured the imagination of a generation that was locked into dark rooms, not roaming the streets, a generation that identified with Morrissey's desolate world and lonely life. The elegiac trance and gloom of *Hand in Glove* (1983), *This Charming Man* (1983), *What Difference Does It Make* (1984), *William It Was Really Nothing* (1984), *How Soon Is Now* (1984), and of the entire **The Smiths** (1984) was demanding in emotional, not musical, terms.

Despite being a content-oriented act, the Smiths ended their career with the formal perfection of **The Queen Is Dead** (1986) and singles such as *Girlfriend In A Coma* (1987). The Smiths defined the term "post-punk" better than anyone else: they had absolutely nothing in common with the punk civilization. In fact, they were for punk-rock what the Beatles had been for rock'n'roll: the antidote.

On the other hand, the Wedding Present (2) were truly formidable popsters. Their career, framed by their two pop masterpieces **George Best** (1987) and **Watusi** (1994), is basically the story of David Gedge's growth as a songwriter. Different kinds of production lent *My Favourite Dress* (1987), *Brassneck* (1989), *Kennedy* (1989), *Dalliance* (1991) and *Corduroy* (1991) different kinds of "edge", but basically the Wedding Present's countless singles and albums constitute a uniform and coherent stream of consciousness.

But the most original pop bands of England were the ones that offered a more personal interpretation of the old genres. The Woodentops (1), for example, created an intriguing new style based on feverish tempos (a mixture of T. Rex, Suicide and Feelies). Their singles *Move Me* (1985), *Well Well Well* (1985), *Get It On* (1986), as well as their album **Giant** (1986), were more restless than exuberant.

The hooks of the Primitives (1) were simply irresistible. The breezy melodies of **Lovely** (1988), which collected singles from the previous years such as *Thru The Flowers* (1986) and *Stop Killing Me* (1987), echoed Phil Spector's girl-groups, Mersey-beat, Tamla soul, and the whole iconic system of the Sixties.

Expanding on the Smiths' mellow, introverted aesthetics, Bob Wratten's Field Mice coined "bedroom-pop", whose artistic manifesto could be *Sensitive* (1989).

On the other hand, by exaggerating the triviality of the idea, bands such as Pooh Sticks and Wonderstuff will end up coining the late-1980s equivalent of bubblegum music.

The folkish style of the Waterboys, the Proclaimers and the Oyster Band was interesting for a couple of months, but it smelled too strongly of Fairport Convention. Best of the bunch were Mike Scott's Waterboys (1), particularly on the eclectic and melodic **This Is The Sea** (1985), featuring keyboardist Karl Wallinger and saxophonist Anthony Thistlewaite. All About Eve's All About Eve (1988) was also rooted in folk music.

The Clash's crossover experiment was continued by Mick Jones' B.A.D., or Big Audio Dynamite (3), particularly on **This Is Big Audio Dynamite** (1985) and **Megatop Phoenix** (1989), that focused on a fusion of rock'n'roll, hip-hop and heavy metal within a Clash-like pan-ethnic context. **F-Punk** (1995) would be the crowning achievement of Jones' post-modernist stylistic con/fusion.

Throw That Beat were perhaps the most interesting of Germany's naive-pop bands.

### **International pop 1981-88**

The pop revival of the late 1970s and early 1980s was somewhat obscured by the grandiose renaissance of hardcore during the 1980s, but came back stronger towards the end of the decade.

Britain pretty much monopolized the pop scene in Europe, although Sweden managed to launch Roxette in the international charts with the elementary hooks of **Look Sharp** (1988).

Canadian bands included: Tragically Hip, Blue Rodeo, Pursuit Of Happiness and 13 Engines.

Iceland's Sugarcubes (1), fronted by Bjork Guðmundsdóttir, laid the foundations for the surreal dance-pop of the following decade with **Life's Too Good** (1988).

### **Australia and New Zealand 1978-1986**

While Britain was awash in pop hooks, Australia had the neo-romantic elegies of Robert Forster's and Grant McLennan's Go-Betweens (1), at their best on **Before Hollywood** (1983), and the suave pop micro-symphonies of the Church (2). The latter began by taking melancholy, pathos and angst from the book of glam-rock and mixing it with the "jangling" guitars and the melodic progressions from the book of folk-rock, on songs such as *Unguarded Moment* (1981) and *When You Were Mine* (1982), dominated by vocalist Steve Kilbey. The atmospheric, oneiric arrangements of **Heyday** (1985) reinvented their sound, emphasizing the semi-psychedelic counterpoint of

guitarists Peter Koppes and Marty Willson-Piper, for example on *Under The Milky Way* (1988). The more complex constructions of **Sometime Anywhere** (1994), which was de facto an album of the duo of Willson-Piper and Kilbey, led to the superb quasi-symphonic synthesis of **Magician Among The Spirits** (1996), a production reminiscent of both King Crimson and Pink Floyd, their most versatile and intricate effort.

The Hunters And Collectors (1) came up with the inventive stylistic blend of **The Fireman's Curse** (1983) and with the acrobatic arrangements of **The Jaws Of Life** (1984).

Australia's pop scene of the 1980s was varied to say the least. Midnight Oil played political hard-rock. Men At Work concocted the greatest single of the era, *Down Under* (1983). The Triffids were pedantic and funereal. Inxs coined one of the most successful styles, straddling the line between tribal funk, hard-rock and glam-rock with *Devil Inside* (1987), *Disappear* (1990) and *Suicide Blonde* (1990). The Cannanes sang about personal and domestic issues.

Even better, New Zealand was raising a generation of bands that had absolutely nothing in common with Britain's super-commercial null-artistic-content star-oriented wave. New Zealand's anti-heroes created a new genre for the 1990s: "lo-fi pop".

The Clean were formed by four musicians who would remain among the most influential of their generation: vocalist David Kilgour, drummer Hamish Kilgour, guitarist Peter Gutteridge and bassist Robert Scott. The output of their first incarnation comprised a handful of songs: the single *Tally Ho* (1981), two EPs, the magnificent **Boodle Boodle Boodle** (1981) and **Great Sounds Great** (1982), and the last, aggressive single, *Getting Older*. The quartet indulged in quirky punk-pop, as if the Buzzcocks were covering Syd Barrett and the Velvet Underground. The idea was simple, but all revolutions started with a simple idea. The Clean recorded their first album, **Vehicle** (1990), when lo-fi pop had become mainstream, and came close to match their early class only on **Unknown Country** (1997).

The repertory of the Tall Dwarfs (1), almost entirely recorded at vocalist Chris Knox's house, excels at skewed, drum-less melodies. The EPs, **Three Songs** (1981) and **Louis Likes His Daily Dip** (1982), the mini-album **Canned Music** (1983) and the EP **Slugbucket Hairybreath Monster** (1984) specialize in kaleidoscopic collages of ideas that rarely coalesce into a regular song but often "waste" enough cleverness worth an entire career. **Throw A Sickie** (1986), their first album, was still a madhouse of improbable pop music, but subsequent albums (when the Tall Dwarfs had finally become a regular band) adopted a more traditional format.

Clean's guitarist Peter Gutteridge helped vocalist Martin Phillips form the Chills (1), whose *Kaleidoscope World* (1982), *Rolling Moon* (1982), *Pink Frost* (1984) and the EP **Lost** (1985) sprinkled clichés of folk-rock, psychedelia, garage rhythm'n'blues and Mersey-beat over naive lullabies. Several years later, a new line-up assembled by Phillips recorded the best Chills album, **Submarine Bells** (1990), more overtly inspired by the Beach Boys and Big Star, the first step towards the conversion to the mainstream that was endorsed by **Soft Bomb** (1992).

Clean's bassist Robert Scott (now on guitar) formed the Bats (1), who followed the same pattern: a series of singles and EPs, and finally an album, **Daddy's Highway** (1988), that presented the band in a more conventional format. In this case, the format was folk-rock and soft-rock. The influence of R.E.M. got stronger on **Law Of Things** (1990), but even the late **Couchmaster** (1995) maintained their classic touch.

Closing the golden era of New Zealand's lo-fi pop, This Kind Of Punishment of the brothers Peter and Graeme Jefferies mixed folk-rock ballads and abstract pieces on **Beard Of Bees** (1984); the Jean Paul Sartre Experience played a unique mix of R.E.M.-style folk-rock and Velvet Underground-ian psychedelia on **Love Songs** (1987); Scorched Earth Policy, featuring drummer Peter Stapleton and guitarist Brian Crook, released two EPs of mind-bending acid-pop, **Dust To Dust** (1984) and **Going Through A Hole In Back Of Your Head** (1985); the Able Tasmans (1) concocted the magical chamber pop of **A Cuppa Tea And A Lie Down** (1987); and the Verlaines (1) delved into the melancholy and erudite kitsch of **Bird-Dog** (1987).

It was ironic, therefore, that New Zealand's biggest success came with Crowded House, formed by Split Enz's Neil Finn, who played Beatles-ian pop.

The towering personality in the second half of the decade was Peter Jefferies (12). The surreal all-instrumental pieces of **At Swim Two Birds** (1987) and the cryptic **The Last Great Challenge In A Dull World** (1991), which alternates between Satie-inspired piano vignettes and atmospheric, depressed ballads à la Julian Cope, documented the artist's tormented personality. After indulging in more undecipherable unhappiness on **Electricity** (1994) and **Elevator Madness** (1997), Jefferies crafted his masterpiece (returning to the purely instrumental format), **Substatic** (1998), five nightmarish compositions that mix Steve Reich's minimalism, Faust and Peter Green's **End Of The Game** with his downcast folly.

## **5.12 USA & Japan: Neo-progressive**

### *New York's progressive-rock 1981-85*

It was inevitable that the experimental thrust of the new wave would eventually bring back progressive-rock.

It is significant that members of the old Canterbury school residing in New York (notably Daevid Allen, Fred Frith, Chris Cutler) were drawn to the creative ferment of the new wave. A number of bands draw inspiration from British progressive-rock of the 1970s (with a stronger jazz accent), although originating from the "no wave" milieu.

John Lurie's Lounge Lizards (2) were a super-group that toyed with all-instrumental "fake jazz". The witty and amateurish approach of **Lounge Lizards** (1981), featuring John Lurie on sax, Arto Lindsay on guitar, Evan Lurie on keyboards, Steve Piccolo on bass and Anton Fier on drums, whose aim was both demented and nostalgic, soon mutated into a more serious endeavour into neurotic and mildly dissonant jazz, specializing in convoluted be-bop solos and alienated, nocturnal atmospheres. **Voice Of Chunk** (1989), featuring the impressive cast of John and Evan Lurie, Roy Nathanson on sax, Erik Sanko on bass, Curtis Fowlkes on trombone and Marc Ribot on guitar, was typical of their "adult" phase.

Over the course of three decades, Bill Laswell (8) has proven to be one of the most prolific, influential and innovative musicians of the end of the 20th century. His career spans at least three musical genres (rock, jazz, funk and dub) and countless ensembles. His first project, Material, with Fred Maher on drums and Michael Beinhorn on electronic keyboards, was a spin-off of Daevid Allen's band. Their **Memory Serves** (1981), featuring Fred Frith, Sonny Sharrock on guitar, Billy Bang on violin, George Lewis on trombone and Henry Threadgill on sax, documented Laswell's idea of austere funk and jazz fusion. Material focused on the "groove" with **One Down** (1982), Laswell and Maher also recorded as Massacre, but their **Killing Time** (1982) was a bit too cerebral. On the other hand, Laswell's first solo, **Baselines** (1983), achieved an effervescent sound that stood as a summary of 20 years of crossover experiments, from Frank Zappa's big bands to David Byrne's ethno-funk combos. The EP **Praxis** (1984) was an imaginative "lo-fi" work, with Laswell dueling a drum-machine. Laswell was one of the few rock musicians to be relevant in the history of jazz music, thanks to his collaborations with Herbie Hancock and to his tenure with Last Exit (Sonny Sharrock, Peter Brotzmann, Ronald Shannon Jackson). A new focus emerged with his second solo album, **Hear No Evil** (1988), featuring L Shankar on violin, Zakir Hussain on percussion and Nicky Skopelitis on guitar, a session that indulged in instrumental jams of exotic new-age music, aiming for a sinister trance, a catatonic stream of consciousness, a sort of revisitation of raga-rock. Material's **Seven Souls** (1989), featuring the usual wealth of guests, dressed up the band's "no disco" with a production derived from William Burroughs' "cut-up" technique. Yet another ensemble, Praxis, featuring two George Clinton collaborators (bassist Bootsy Collins and keyboardist Bernie Worrell) plus a mixmaster, a drummer and a guitarist (Buckethead), debuted with the EP **Transmutation** (1992), devised jams of futuristic space-funk (such as *After Shock*) that

merged Clinton and Hendrix, hip hop, speedmetal, jazz-rock, psychedelia and dub. Blind Idiot God, John Zorn, Napalm Death's Mick Harris and the Boredoms' Yamatsuka Eye helped out on Praxis' chaotic and frantic (but also mostly disappointing) **Sacrifist** (1994). Another all-star cast popped up on Material's **Hallucination Engine** (1994), but the occasion only proved that Laswell's multiform persona was running out of steam. A number of pretentious collaborations defined his passion for gothic and ethnic new-age jazz, but only Axiom Ambient's **Lost In The Translation** (1994), with Ginger Baker, Sonny Sharrock and Pharoah Sanders, was successful. Most of Laswell's energies were poured into ambient psychedelic dub, notably on Automaton's **Dub Terror Exhaust** (1994) and Divination's **Akasha** (1996), perhaps his best works of the 1990s. A third avenue, which peaked with Possession's **Off World One** (1996), had to do with ethnic music, and eventually led him to Indian devotional music. While none of them were flawless, subsequent albums became heterogeneous mosaics of hip hop, jazz, dub, raga, electronica, drum'n'bass, etc: **Dub Chamber** (2000), with a stellar combo comprising but, rock, jazz and Indian musicians; Tabla Beat Science's **Tala Matrix** (2001), a project with master percussionists Zakir Hussein, Trilok Gurtu and Karsha Kale; **Radioaxom** (2001); and so forth. Much more intriguing when he is "constructing" rather than "deconstructing" music, Laswell has crossed more boundaries than anyone else and has invented more genres than he can name them (or, alas, fully explore them).

Open ensembles such as Arto Lindsay's Ambitious Lovers and Anton Fier's Golden Palominos were more similar to avant-jazz ensembles, although the music they played was avant-pop and even avant-dance.

Anton Fier (the drummer for Pere Ubu, the Feelies, the Lounge Lizards) formed the supergroup Golden Palominos (3) to play a futuristic jazz-funk-ethnic-rock crossover with a revolving cast of jazz, rock and avantgarde musicians (Arto Lindsay, Fred Frith, David Moss, John Zorn, Michael Beinhorn, Bill Laswell, Nick Skopelitis, Richard Thompson, Henry Kaiser, Jody Harris, Carla Bley, and countless vocalists). **Golden Palominos** (1983) collated a number of calculated post-modernist jam sessions that turned the concept of counterpoint into the analogue of software programming. **Visions Of Excess** (1985) perfected the idea, abstracting the very notion of rock'n'roll hedonism and transposing it into a sort of robotic theatre (with Fier in the role of the puppeteer). As Fier's alcoholism worsened, Golden Palominos' albums became more accessible, ethereal and unfocused: **Blast Of Silence** (1986), **A Dead Horse** (1989), **Drunk With Passion** (1991). The method was rejuvenated on the song cycle of **This Is How It Feels** (1993), a set of seductive monologues whispered in the night, that composed an analytical study of melancholy and sexuality, exuding a sense of exotic tragedy (and featuring the super-cast of Bernie Worrell, Bootsy Collins, Laswell, Skopelitis, two female vocalists, tapes and computers). While less accomplished, **Pure** (1994) and **Dead Inside** (1996) were also pensive and ambitious works that refined his philosophy of life and art. A virtuoso of sleek and flawless productions, Fier was, first and foremost, an architect of sound, transcending all genres and all cliches.

The adult career of former DNA guitarist Arto Lindsay (14) focused on a convoluted form of Latin-funk-jazz fusion. Ambitious Lovers, the combo he formed with Swiss keyboardist Peter Scherer, penned works such as **Envy** (1984) and the formally impeccable **Greed** (1988) that merged Brazilian music, disco-music and avantgarde. This was the boldest experiment in dance music since Peter Gabriel and Talking Heads. The ballet music for **Pretty Ugly** (1990) marked the zenith of this phase, which soon evolved in a "pop" phase, with Lindsay crooning his Latin roots in the jungle of orchestral arrangements, as on **Lust** (1991). Lindsay ended up wedding the appeal of abrasive, intellectual noise and the appeal of sensual, languid Brazilian music on albums such as **Prize** (2000), which were post-rock's version of world-music.

That generation opened the floodgates to a wave of Canterbury-inspired progressive-rock combos that were as creative as utterly obscure: However, the most faithful to the masters on **Sudden Dusk** (1981); V-Effect, a sax/drums/bass trio that recorded the derivative but competent **Stop Those Songs** (1984); The Scene Is Now (2), whose **Burn All Your Records** (1985) offered twenty surreal vignettes à la United States Of America arranged for

orchestral, found and toy instruments and whose **Tonight We Ride** (1988) delivered one of the best imitations of Pere Ubu's dada-pop; Fish & Roses (1), that introduced drummer Rick Brown and bassist Sue Garner on the lively and lyrical EP **Fish & Roses** (1987) and the album **We Are Happy To Serve You** (1989); Nick Didkovsky's Dr Nerve (1), a vastly more demanding and erudite ensemble, whose **Out To Bomb Fresh Kings** (1986), bordered on free-jazz and the electronic avantgarde, and whose **Armed Observation** (1987) applied minimalism and Frank Zappa's big-band scores with mathematical precision.

Mofungo (2) applied the technique of free-jazz jams to the blues, country, reggae and ska songs of **Out Of Line** (1983). The cacophonous pop-funk of **Fredrick Douglass** (1985) and **Messenger Dogs Of The Gods** (1986) and the more accessible **End Of The World part 2** (1987) were summarized on the heterodox and idiosyncratic roots-rock of **Bugged** (1988).

The Ordinaires (2) were a chamber ensemble that mixed and integrated classical, folk, jazz, raga, minimalist, circus, heavy-metal, ska and marching-band cliches on **Ordinaires** (1985) and **One** (1989), two of the most eclectic albums of the era.

Chuck Vrtacek (3) pioneered do-it-yourself recording with the dadaistic collage of **Victory Through Grace** (1981) and excelled at instrumental prog-rock on **Monkey On A Hard Roll** (1984), recorded by a sax-guitar-drums trio. He matured with the philosophical, pensive, somber, melodic and electronic vignettes of **Learning To Be Silent** (1985), and with the eponymous suite of **When Heaven Comes To Town** (1988), that fused the early collage techniques and the new impressionistic sound. Vrtacek returned to prog-rock with a new project, Forever Einstein (1), a trio whose **Artificial Horizon** (1990) and especially **Opportunity Crosses the Bridge** (1992) relished instrumental music somewhere between King Crimson's convoluted jazz-rock, Frank Zappa's orchestral overtures and Gong's surreal music-hall.

#### ***Washington and Richmond's progressive-rock 1977-84***

Progressive-rock had been transplanted in Washington D.C. and in Virginia by the Grits (who never recorded anything) and Kit Watkins' Happy The Man (1), whose **Happy The Man** (1977) was perhaps the first significant album of American progressive-rock. Their heirs during the years of the new wave were the Muffins (2), the premiere progressive-rock band of their time, led by keyboardist and composer Dave Newhouse and based in the Washington area. **Manna/Mirage** (1978) was the second classic of American prog-rock, full of colorful, melodic suites that evoke Colosseum, Caravan and Soft Machine, not to mention *The Adventures Of Captain Boomerang*, worthy of Frank Zappa's nonsensical collages. The eclectic and eventful **185** (1982) could only hint at the marvelous live interplay of the band.

Saxophonist Danny Finney began his career with Idiot Savant (1), whose **Shakers In A Tantrum Landscape** (1980) contained improvised music for toy instruments and electronics, and then recorded the seminal **Wake Up You Must Remember** (1984) with the Orthotonics (1), one of the most surreal and unpredictable combos of the era. They eventually evolved into Rattlemouth, and continued to mine Zappa's clownesque anti-jazz and Henry Cow's brainy anti-rock.

Fred Frith's Rift and Steve Feigenbaum's Cuneiform were the labels that helped the genre resurrect.

Notably, the new generation of prog-rockers preferred the subdued sound of Canterbury rather than the symphonic, baroque art-rock of Yes and Genesis. Clearly one was closer to the punk aesthetics than the other.

#### ***Boston's progressive-rock 1977-86***

Another epicenter of progressive-rock was Boston, but here Canterbury and the 1970s were not a major influence. The main heroes were the Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic (11), who counted on the eclectic personalities of electronic keyboardist and composer Erik Lindgren, Mission Of Burma's ueber-guitarist Roger Miller (also on treated piano) and Mission Of Burma's tape manipulator Martin Swope. By fusing electronic avantgarde, classical music and jazz, the EP **Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic** (1983) and the full-length album **Magnetic Flip** (1984), with its

triple-keyboard barbaric (almost hardcore) attack, coined a "progressive" language (aware of Carla Bley as well as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Glenn Branca as well as Jimi Hendrix) that finally updated the one invented by King Crimson and Colosseum in 1969. After another impressive EP, **Beat Of The Mesozoic** (1985), the group disbanded, but Lindgren formed a new unit to record **Faultline** (1989), possibly his most classic and mature musical statement, a model of tight playing and sophisticated composition.

The solo work of Roger Miller (1) was equally ambitious: **No Man Is Hurting Me** (1986) collected eccentric disco-pop gags à la Brian Eno as well as post-modernist instrumental suites, while **The Big Industry** (1987) focused on industrial mini-symphonies and emphatic lieder for "maximum electric piano".

#### *Western progressive-rock 1982-86*

Arizona had Cartoon (1), whose **Music From Left Field** (1983) had few rivals for melodies and arrangements. Three members of Cartoon (keyboardist Scott Brazieal, drummer Gary Parra and horn-player Herbert Diamant) formed PFS (1) in San Francisco and recorded **Illustrative Problems** (1986), an equally ambitious and erudite album that integrates free-jazz, tape collages and classical music.

The Colorado-based ensemble Thinking Plague played instrumental music reminiscent of Henry Cow and Frank Zappa, notably on **Moonsongs** (1987).

In California, David Kerman's Suu's, who had recorded the sci-fi concept **Bel Marduk And Tiamat** (1984), and James Grigsby's Motor Totemist Guild, who had recorded the complex avantgarde jams of **Infra Dig** (1984), merged to form U Totem (1), and released the most accomplished album of this crowd, **U Totem** (1990).

Two Frank Zappa alumni, both virtuoso guitarist, Steve Vai and Adrian Belew (1), carried out extravagant experiments on pop and rock. Belew's **Lone Rhino** (1982), vaguely related to Robert Fripp's guitar experiments (not surprising, since Belew played with Fripp in King Crimson), boasted surrealistic vignettes that employed sound effects and microtones as well as disco beats.

Former Santana's drummer Michael Shrieve (2) built a unique repertory that focused on percussion. Energetic and creative albums such as **In Suspect Terrain** (1986), **Stiletto** (1989), featuring Mark Isham on trumpet and Andy Summers and David Torn on guitars, and **Big Picture** (1989), which is virtually a concerto for an orchestra of percussion instruments, relied on oneiric jazz-rock tours de force. **Octave Of The Holy Innocents** (1993), featuring Jonas Hellborg on bass and Buckethead on guitar, and **Fascination** (1995), featuring Bill Frisell and Wayne Horvitz, lent him a new life in avantgarde jazz.

Los Angeles nurtured Djam Karet (13) one of the most original and aggressive acts of the time. After a few self-produced cassettes, particularly **The Ritual Continues** (1987), the first test of how avantgarde, psychedelia, progressive-rock and heavy-metal could be combined in formidable instrumental pieces came with **Reflections From The Firepool** (1988). Among echoes of Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Yes and Hawkwind, Djam Karet developed a personal style that had no precedents. The electronic acid-rock of **Suspension & Displacement** (1991) and the brutal jazzcore of **Burning The Hard City** (1991) explored two sides of that sound. **The Devouring** (1997) fused them again, and presented a tight trio, both magniloquent and seismic, taking on articulate and symphonic pieces that were both emphatic and baroque, capable of laying acrobatic bridges between the most disparate genres.

#### *International progressive-rock 1983-87*

At about the same time, a very radical form of progressive-rock came out of Japan with After Dinner, possibly the best disciples of the Art Bears world-wide, and YBO2, probably the best disciples of King Crimson.

High Rise (2), featuring guitarist Munehiro Narita and bassist Asahito Nanjo, were a brutal, improvisational, punkish power-trio that recorded the relentless and extreme **High Rise II** (1986), and the ultimate space-rock album, the legendary **Live** (1994).

High Rise's more faithful disciples were probably White Heaven (1), whose **Out** (1986) was inspired by the same

demigods (Blue Cheer, Iron Butterfly, Jimi Hendrix) that inspired him.

After a number of EPs, Tatsuya Yoshida's Ruins (2) found their true voice in the versatile and cartoonish improvisations of **Stonehenge** (1990), somewhere between Magma's futuristic cabaret and John Zorn's thrash-jazz, while **Hyderomastgroningen** (1995) blended Red Crayola's dementia and Art Bears' pomp.

Likewise in Germany, Caspar Brötzmann Massaker (2) wed progressive-rock, jazz and psychedelic noise in a powerful and sophisticated kind of space-rock. The tentative **Tribe** (1987) merely introduced a revolutionary guitarists obsessed with Jimi Hendrix, but the four terrifying jams of **Der Abend der Schwarzen Folklore** (1992) roamed a moral "wasteland" that was beyond space-rock, and the apocalyptic **Koksofen** (1993) chronicled the end of the western civilization.

Britain, the homeland of progressive-rock, was notably poor in new talents. Derek "Fish" Dick's Marillion were the stars. **Script for a Jester's Tear** (1983) mixed soothing ballads and lengthy suites, but subsequent albums simply aimed for pop mainstream.

The psychedelic movement lent England its best progressive bands. The Ozric Tentacles (13), "the" progressive band of the 1990s (although it began releasing cassettes in the mid 1980s), took Gong's legacy (fusing jazz-rock, hard-rock and acid-rock into an energetic, slick, variegated sound) and copied Mike Oldfield's invention (collating melodic and stylistic events into elegant fantasies) to produce a synthesis that sounded both ambitious and natural. Unrelenting rhythms, gurgling synthesizers, stratospheric guitars and exotic atmospheres permeated **Pungent Effulgent** (1989), and the effect was both vibrant and hypnotic. The "band" was an open ensemble, anchored to the pillars of guitarist Ed Wynne, keyboardist Joie Hinton, drummer Merv Pepler, flutist John Egan, percussionist Paul Hankin. The quantity of ideas and experiments, each realized with slick magisterial precision, was overwhelming on **Erpland** (1990), an instrumental tour de force recorded by a ten-unit ensemble (including two electronic keyboards, a sampler, four percussionists, flute, bass and guitar) and displaying an almost baroque elegance. The Ozric Tentacles had mastered, at the same time, the melodic ingenuity of classical music, the fluidity of jazz-rock and the drive of hard-rock. The sound was so cohesive and shimmering to evoke Colosseum's total jams. **Strangeitude** (1991) blended as many sources but also added dance beats to its galloping symphonic poems and colorful festivals of sounds. Far from being improvised, its intricate collages were clockwork mechanisms. **Jurassic Shift** (1993) continued to move towards the taste of the time via increasing nods to ambient, cosmic, new-age and ethnic music.

The Magic Mushroom Band, influenced by Pink Floyd and Gong, began to emancipate themselves from their models with **Process Of Illumination** (1990) and ended up joining the rave scene. Mandragora's Head First (1991) fused world-music and cosmic music, sounding at times like Ash Ra Tempel and Tangerine Dream.

Quebec's progressive scene was much closer to France (and thus Britain) than the USA. One of its protagonists, saxophonist Jean Derome, was active during the 1980s in Conventum, Les Granules and Dangereux Zhoms before forming Evidence (1), which recorded the melodramatic, gothic and neoclassical **Heart's Grave** (1994). Derome's style was the quintessence of the fusion between classical, jazz, rock and avantgarde advocated by ensembles such as Art Zoyd and Univers Zero.

A frequent collaborator of Derome, guitarist Rene` Lussier (1), architected **Le Tresor De La Langue** (1989), featuring Derome, Fred Frith and Tom Cora, a more abstract work.

In Canada, Miriodor, led by pianist Pascal Globensky, played symphonic rock but, unlike the jazz/neoclassical groups (Art Zoyd, Univers Zero), worked on material that was inspired by circus, fair and vaudeville music, a method refined on **Miriodor** (1988) but perhaps best demonstrated on a later work, **Mekano** (2001).

### ***British sound painters, 1980-83***

The long and strange journey of bassist Jah Wobble (2) started with Public Image Ltd's dark dub symphonies. His solo career opened with the funk and jazz ballads of **Betrayal** (1980), set against an hallucinated (dub-tinged)

background. He, too, contributed to the emergence of "lo-fi pop" with **Bedroom Album** (1983), a humble collection of funereal and introspective dirges recorded in his bedroom. But the multiform experiments of the 1980s led to quite different, and formally impeccable, works in his middle age: the ethno-psychedelic jazz-rock of **Without Judgement** (1990), credited to the Invaders Of The Heart, the world-music set to dance beats of **Rising Above Bedlam** (1991), the baroque dub-jazz chamber music of **Heaven And Earth** (1996), the five-movement **Requiem** (1997), the East-West fusion of **Umbra Sumus** (1998), the mystical, Celtic, tribal psychedelic dub of Deep Space's **Deep Space** (1999) and **Beach Fervour Spare** (2000) featuring Can's Jaki Leibezeit on drums, the super-fusion of **Live in Concert** (2002) with Solaris (Wobble, Bill Laswell on bass, Harold Budd on keyboards, Graham Haynes on cornet, Jaki Leibezeit on drums), mostly occupied by the suite *The Mystery of Twilight*, etc. If only a couple of these (**Bedroom Album**, **Without Judgement**) were fully successful, Jah Wobble remained for two decades one of the most challenging musicians to emerge from the punk generation.

Vincent Reilly's project Durutti Column (1) rediscovered instrumental music. The impressionistic guitar music of **The Return** (1980) was inspired by Robert Fripp's "frippertronics", Brian Eno's ambient music and new-age music.

Former Be Bop Deluxe guitarist Bill Nelson (1) turned to impressionistic vignettes à la Brian Eno on albums such as **Sounding The Ritual Echo** (1981) and, best of all, **Chance Encounters** (1988). His lo-fi pop enhanced with avantgarde techniques and touches of ambient/cosmic music would be influential on the independent singer-songwriters of the 1980s.

Former Yellow Magic Orchestra keyboardist Ryuichi Sakamoto (3) attempted a fusion of western music and eastern sensibility on **Ongakuzukan** (1984), better known as **Illustrated Musical Encyclopedia**, which led to the funky-ethnic electronic muzak of **Neo Geo** (1987) and **Beauty** (1990), influenced by Peter Gabriel, Talking Heads and Brian Eno.

David Sylvian (3) may have been the most ambitious of the new-wave veterans. A clever and sensitive student of Ryuichi Sakamoto, Brian Eno, Robert Fripp, Peter Gabriel and, last but not least, Holger Czukay, Sylvian coined a form of "exotic ambient dance ballad" that bordered on the avantgarde and on progressive-rock. **Brilliant Trees** (1984), featuring trumpet players Jon Hassell, Mark Isham and Kenny Wheeler, besides Czukay and bassist Danny Thompson, wed romantic crooning and eastern spirituality in a new form of avantgarde ballad. Minimalist, ambient and psychedelic ingredients were mixed in a smooth and fluid substance that recalled both jazz-rock and new-age music. The suites *Words With The Shaman* (1985) and *Steel Cathedrals* (1985) were even more effective in harmonizing atmospheric timbres, hypnotic beats and aquatic keyboards, and in evoking tribal ceremonies deep into the jungle. The fusion of archaic folklore and futuristic technology, which had been a dominant theme since the early Jon Hassell records, was transported into a new dimension. The ambitious **Gone To Earth** (1986) offered lengthy, sleepy compositions of that ambient psychedelic funk-jazz-rock that occasionally suggested Van Morrison's **Astral Weeks** and Robert Wyatt's **Rock Bottom** (albeit without an appropriate cast of players). The humbler, acoustic-based **Secrets Of The Beehive** (1987), arranged by Sakamoto and featuring Mark Isham and David Torn, was a more lyrical and personal work. The static patterns of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* (1991) and the "symphonic poem" *Approaching Silence* (1994), devoured by metallic timbres that drive sudden bursts of electronic clusters, proved Sylvian's semi-classical aspirations.

Virginia Astley (1) was an austere and solitary artist who penned the melancholy chamber sonatas, mostly driven by piano and flute melodies, of **From Gardens Where We Feel Secure** (1983).

- 1982: Britain defends the Falkland Islands from an Argentinian invasion
- 1982: Robert Jarvik implants an artificial heart in a patient
- 1982: the compact disc is introduced

- 1982: the US government breaks up the largest company in the world, AT&T, worth \$60 billion, because it has become a monopoly
- 1983: Howard Rheingold founds the environmental magazine "Whole Earth Review" at Sausalito
- 1983: Los Angeles passes Chicago as the second largest city in the country
- 1983: the USA, under president Reagan, engages the Soviet Union in a nuclear-arms race

## 5.13 USA: Minimal-rock

### *Minimal rock 1980-83*

The new wave opened the doors to hundreds of musicians that were playing or wanted to play unusual music. Very often they mingled with performance artists, with film-makers, and even with avantgarde composers such as Philip Glass, Elliott Sharp, Glenn Branca and Laurie Anderson.

The "minimalist" composers were particularly close to the new wave. In 1980, Philip Glass inspired bands such as Polyrock (1), whose **Polyrock** (1980) was the genre-defying work, and Model Citizens.

Glen Branca, on the other hand, was the mentor of Barbara Ess' Y Pants, a female trio that recorded the surreal **Y Pants** (1982), halfway between the Penguin Cafe` Orchestra and Weill's cabaret, and of Sonic Youth (25), who would go on to become one of the most influential rock outfits of all times. Sonic Youth marked both the end of the "new wave" and the beginning of an era that was building on the new wave's innovations. In fact, the Sonic Youth were initially more experimental and ambitious than most of the new wave acts. What broke with the new wave was their aim to transcend the cultural stereotypes of their epoch and explore new musical forms while remaining faithful to the nihilistic and alienated ethos of the punk generation. Sonic Youth inherited a world from the punks and the new-wave intellectuals, but Sonic Youth did not inherit their music. Initially, as documented by the instrumental *The Good And The Bad*, on their debut EP **Sonic Youth** (1982), Sonic Youth's music sprung from the repetitive style of Glenn Branca's guitar symphonies, from creative jazz and from progressive-rock. Three quarters of the band would remain stable over the years: guitarists Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo and bassist Kim Gordon. Their milieu (the art galleries) harked back to the Velvet Underground, not to the CBGB's and the Max's Kansas City (where the new wave was born). The tracks on **Confusion Is Sex** (1983) were geometric, percussive, obsessive sonatas with abject vocals (reminiscent of the "no wave"); tortured and funereal ceremonies that emanated a sense of psychic unbalance in a totalitarian society; psychodramas that fused gothic, tribal and industrial sources. The guitar overtones became less bleak and almost transcendent on **Bad Moon Rising** (1985), featuring Bob Bert on drums. It is still an exhausting journey through urban hell that runs the gamut from spectral psychedelia to sheer horror (*Death Valley 99*). Contrary to appearances, Sonic Youth had never abandoned the song format. Their line-up, after all, was a classic rock quartet, and even their most experimental pieces were centered upon a core theme (and rarely extended beyond 4-5 minutes). **Evol** (1986), featuring new drummer Steve Shelley, began to bridge their intense paranoia and pop sensibility (*Expressway To Your Skull*). This program was completed by two albums that found a new "classic" equilibrium, **Sister** (1987) and **Daydream Nation** (1988). The latter marked the end of the road for their combination of glacial and detached vocals, dissonant guitars, chaotic counterpoint, tribal beats. The suspense of *Eric's Trip*, *Teenage Riot* and *Total Trash* was grounded in the semiotics of rock'n'roll, via sonic icons such as Bob Dylan and the Velvet Underground. Ensuing albums failed to improve over this model and failed to find the same magical balance of elements: **Goo** (1990), **Dirty** (1992),

perhaps the best of the "pop" phase, **Experimental Jet Set Trash And No Star** (1994), which sounded like a senile version of **Sister**, the self-indulgent **Washing Machine** (1995), perhaps their most cohesive work of the 1990s. Guitar terrorist Jim O'Rourke joined the band for **Invito Al Cielo** (1998). Both Ranaldo and Moore have performed and released avantgarde music, often in collaborations with jazz musicians. Sonic Youth's legacy rests with its stories of alienation, sex and death which framed moral issues (both at the personal and at the social level) from a cynical and egocentric perspective. They repudiated the epics of the 1960s for a subdued obituary of vices. The core theme of their music was existential confusion.

The mood was really what set these musicians apart from the musicians of previous decades. The mood was, in a word, depressed. Their music showed no enthusiasm, no excitement, no exuberance. Whatever they played, they played it because it helped them vent their anger, frustration, loneliness, etc. It was the ultimate consequence of a decade of "realignment", when the "yuppies" ("young urban professionals") took over the "hippies", when the "baby boomers" reneged on idealism in favor of realism.

The new generation had no ideals to fight for. Drugs had been a "flag" for the hippies, but they became merely drugs, merely a way to escape reality, for this generation. Another flag of the Sixties, free sex, was turning into the tragedy of the century, thanks to AIDS. It was as if this generation was being punished for the "sins" of their parents' generation.

No wonder that gloomy, bleak atmospheres rule in the songs of Robin Lee Crutchfield's Dark Day, A Certain General, Swans, Live Skull, UT. Live Skull (1) progressed towards the tense, lugubrious and jarring sound of **Dusted** (1987), featuring monochord vocalist (and future Come founder) Thalia Zedek. UT (1), a female power-trio, offered a convincing update of the "no-wave" aesthetics (amateurish, irreverent and desperate cacophony of insane vocals, discordant guitars and frantic rhythms) on **Conviction** (1986).

The Swans (43), one of the most significant bands of the 1980s, initially introduced themselves as New York's claustrophobic and paranoid alter-ego of Britain's gothic punk, but were largely the vehicle for Michael Gira's apocalyptic angst, **Filth** (1983), featuring two drums (Roli Mosimann and Jonathan Kane) and two basses, was the ideal soundtrack for mass suicides or nuclear holocausts. Gira's agonizing roars echoed against a wall of sound as brutal as hardcore, as depressed as Joy Division, as strident as industrial music, as distorted as psychedelic-rock, as loud as heavy-metal. The music on **Cop** (1984) was born at the intersection of a Kafka tale, a Freud treatise, a black hole, a medieval exorcism, the first wails of a robot and the last spasms of a serial killer on the electric chair. Existential boredom exuded not only from Gira's (criminal, obscene and blaspheme) lyrics but also from Roli Mosimann's drumming and Norman Westberg's guitar noise. Their gothic phase peaked with *Young God* (1985), a slow, austere, terrifying journey into Gira's sinister psyche. The sound of the Swans changed dramatically when keyboardist and vocalist Jane Jarboe joined them. The apocalypse began to clear up with **Greed** (1986) and was replaced by a new genesis on **Holy Money** (1986): Gira and Jarboe sculpted chamber/orchestral arrangements, martial tempos that evoked esoteric rituals, catacomb-like atmospheres and liturgic/medieval tones. The new phase peaked with the monumental **Children Of God** (1987), a set of stately, majestic lieder that rediscovered Gregorian chanting, church psalms and folk melodies. The setting ran the gamut from sparse, oneiric lattices of acoustic sounds to Wagnerian apotheoses, while the lyrics feigned the biblical vocabulary of sin and redemption. Although a little unfocused, **Burning World** (1989) further dilated the harmony, bringing in Nicky Skopelitis' guitar, Garo Yellin's cello, Bill Laswell's bass, Ravi Shankar's sitar and all sorts of percussions. The angelic and pastoral Jarboe had redeemed Gira the tormented devil. His Dante-esque descent into hell had ended up in purgatory, if not in heaven. **White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity** (1991) was even more medieval and exotic, its arrangements almost baroque, its melodies quite paradisiac, its tone mostly magniloquent and frequently ecstatic. After closing the trilogy of introspection, with the lesser **Love Of Life** (1992), Gira penned his most metaphysical work, **The Great Annihilator** (1995), virtually a book of allegoric sermons, as well as his most musically ambitious

compositions, the lengthy and complex **Soundtracks For The Blind** (1996), which, de facto, represented a separate (albeit brief) phase of the Swans, one in which Gira's emotions materialized as abstract soundscapes. His entire oeuvre was basically a paranoid quest for a new form of religious music. No wonder that so many of his masterpieces sounded like spectral requiems for his race and his time.

## **5.14 USA, Australia & UK: Psychedelic Revival**

### *Paisley Underground 1982-87*

The "American Graffiti" phenomenon of the early Seventies, and the subsequent appropriation of the Sixties by the new wave, caused a revival of many of the styles of that happy decade. By far the most pervasive and long-lived was the revival of psychedelia, that kept recurring throughout the Eighties and the Nineties.

Los Angeles had its own movement, the "Paisley Underground". Psychedelia became merely a pretext to concoct baroque, oneiric and hypnotic sounds, often with the help of keyboards and strings. Byrds-ian jangling guitars and naive melodies à la Hollies dominate **Emergency Third Rail Power Trip** (1983) by Rain Parade (1), with Matt Piucci on vocals and Dave Roback on guitar, as well as the EP **Baroque Hoedown** (1982) and the album **Sixteen Tambourines** (1983) by Mike Quercio's Three O'Clock (1).

Needless to say, the Paisley Underground was only the tip of the iceberg.

The Dream Syndicate (12), formed by guitarists Steve Wynn and Karl Precoda and bassist Kendra Smith, acted as the natural liaison between Television (and the new wave in general) and the new generation of psychedelic rockers. Their first album, **Days Of The Wine And Roses** (1982), conveyed, more than anything else, the synthesis of Bob Dylan and the Velvet Underground that had been the hidden theme of the new wave. Echoes of the Rolling Stones, the Stooges and the Doors increased the hellish atmospheres of Wynn's confessional trips. While Wynn was lost in his existential panic, Precoda and Smith lifted the music to a majestic level. When Smith left, the "acid" quotient dropped, and the band opted for the quieter jamming of **Medicine Show** (1984), a presage of the new sound of **Out Of The Grey** (1986), reminiscent of Neil Young's neurotic country-rock; but Wynn was still the only songwriter capable of making his lyrics bleed. **Ghost Stories** (1988) closed the semicircle by almost embracing R.E.M.'s folk-rock. The combination of abrasive guitars, dramatic tension and crude realism coined a language that would inspire countless bands of the 1980s.

One of the most original bands to come out of Los Angeles during those fervent years was Savage Republic (13), led by guitarist Bruce Licher. **Tragic Figures** (1982) introduced a psychedelic and industrial music that was mostly instrumental and percussive, inducing trance and fear. The EP **Trudge** (1985) incorporated more explicitly elements of world-music. The atmospheric **Ceremonial** (1985) and **Jamahiriya** (1988), featuring new member Brad Laner, perfected their synthesis of psychedelic drones, middle-eastern cantillation and tribal rhythms. By the time of **Customs** (1989), their last album and their masterpiece, they had coined a musical language of extreme tension, instrumental subtlety and exotic appeal. They also spawned the equally bizarre 17 Pygmies (folk-pop ballads and exotic instrumentals). After the split, members of Savage Republic would form other creative and influential bands such as Scenic (Licher) and Medicine (Laner).

The Paisley Underground fostered a generation of psych-poppers that emerged around 1984-85: the Droogs, already veterans of the scene but revealed only by **Stone Cold World** (1984), Russ Tolman's True West (1), with the EP **Hollywood Holiday** (1983) and the album **Drifters** (1984), Arizona-based Yard Trauma, with **Must've Been Something** (1985), the Steppes, with **Stewdio** (1988), etc.

Rain Parade's guitarist David Roback and Dream Syndicate's bassist Kendra Smith formed Opal (1) to paint the ethereal watercolors of **Northern Line** (1985), an idea that Kendra Smith (1) would pursue again with the lyrical post-Nico odes of **Guild Of Temporal Adventurers** (1992).

The recordings by Drowning Pool, such as the double album **Satori** (1987), straddled the line between new wave, psychedelia, ambient, industrial and world-music.

A more melodramatic style was experimented by Shiva Burlesque, featuring Grant Lee Phillips on guitar, on **Shiva Burlesque** (1987).

#### *Imitation, 1983-88*

On the East Coast, the psychedelic revival began with new wave bands such as Jeff Conolly's Lyres, out of Boston, and albums such as their **On Fire** (1984), manically intent on reproducing the sounds of the Sixties. Only a few years later, for example on **Lyres Lyres** (1986), did these bands develop an original style that went beyond mere revival.

Ditto for New York's neo-psychedelic bands, which gave their best albums well into the 1980s, when the fad was beginning to die out: Plan 9, with **Dealing With The Dead** (1984), A Certain General, with **November's Heat** (1984), the Fuzztones, with **Lysergic Emanation** (1985), the Chesterfield Kings, with **Stop** (1985), the Vipers, with **Outta The Nest** (1985), the Cheepskates, etc. These bands, and their audience, were mainly interested in a fetishist recreation of retro` cliches. Their greatest merit is that they helped rediscover great lost bands of the Sixties such as Standells, Chocolate Watchband, Music Machine, Count Five, Sonics and so forth. Their favorite psychedelic sound was the wild and raw sound of the garages, not the trippy sound of Grateful Dead concerts or the intellectual sound of the Doors.

One of the most creative (not just derivative) neo-psych band of the time was Das Damen (2). They reworked the grammar of the genre on **Jupiter Eye** (1987) by matching acid-rock distortions, heavy-metal riffs, hardcore frenzy and gloomy atmospheres, while **Triskaidekaphobe** (1988) was a calmer effort that employed the lighter calligraphy of early Pink Floyd and Syd Barrett.

Wisconsin's Plasticland (1) proved their mastery of Swinging London's idioms on **Plasticland** (1985) and its replicas, **Wonder Wonderful Wonderland** (1985) and **Salon** (1987).

Chicago's Eleventh Dream Day (3), led by Rick Rizzo and Janet Bean (also in Freakwater), were unique in the way they fused baroque psychedelia and roots-rock. The savage garage-rock of **Prairie School Freakout** (1988), still influenced by the new wave (for example, the Television-like guitar interplay), was soon abandoned for the warm, "rootsy", domestic simplicity of **Beet** (1989). The poppy, albeit bleak, **Lived To Tell** (1991) and its mediocre successors, **El Moodio** (1993) and **Ursa Major** (1995), perfected Rizzo's formula, up to the manneristic zenith of **Eighth** (1998).

27 Various, featuring guitarist Ed Ackerson, progressed from a raw psychedelic sound to the sprightly power-pop of **Yes Indeed** (1989).

#### *Raw sounds 1986-88*

The counterbalance to the psychedelic necrophilia that swept the States in the early 1980s was a similar revival, but one focused on the wild, raw and amateurish sound of Sixties' garage-rock.

Jerry Teel's Honeymoon Killers (11) were the greatest disciples of the Cramps in New York. They debuted with **From Mars** (1984), which exhibited an even more grotesque and amateurish version of Cramps-ian voooodoo-billy, but progressed to the orgiastic pow-wows of **Love American Style** (1985), which was even beyond the Cramps: rockabilly, blues, garage-rock, punk-rock, gothic hard-rock and acid-rock were packed into explosive units that created a visceral crescendo of suspense. **Let It Breed** (1986) was a more respectful tribute to their musical roots, but the addition of Cristina Martinez turned **Turn Me On** (1988) into an even bigger paradox of vitriolic guitars and epileptic rhythms. Finally, a new line-up helped Teel mold his masterpiece, **Hung Far Low** (1991), on which his adrenaline-drenched hyper-kinetic imagination is matched by a thick, dense, black wall of sound. Sprinkled with radical moves that evoke Pop Group's primordial rituals as well as Chrome's post-apocalyptic ravages, these demonic bacchanals found, nonetheless, order in chaos and linearity in cacophony. Rather than the Cramps, the

reference model was the Stooges via Pussy Galore (a group that was always close to Teel).

Also in New York, the Workdogs used "voodoobilly" to express teen angst on **Roberta** (1988); and in Michigan Elvis Hitler let their Cramps-ian instincts loose on **Hellbilly** (1989); while in North Carolina the Flat Duo Jets resurrected rockabilly.

Boston's Men & Volts (1) were among the most original garage-groups. Their acid/surreal **Hootersville** (1983) fell halfway between Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart.

Oregon's Miracle Workers, with **Inside Out** (1985), and Dead Moon, Pennsylvania's Cynics, with **Blue Train Station** (1986), Boston's Dogmatics, with **Thayer St** (1985) and Ohio's Wolverton Brothers were among the most evil of the new garage-rockers.

A few of them could outdo the masters of the 1960s. The Gibson Bros (1) in Ohio, led by guitarist Don Howland and vocalist Jeff Evans, were natural heirs of the Cramps and Pussy Galore on the blues and rockabilly bacchanals of **Big Pine Boogie** (1988), which is mainly covers, and especially on **Dedicated Fool** (1989). Evans moved to Memphis and formed '68 Comeback, another blues outfit, while Howland formed the Bassholes (1), whose Captain Beefheart-ian blues orgies topped the Gibson Bros' at least on **When My Blue Moon Turns Red Again** (1998).

Boston's Cheater Slicks (1) delivered a similar chaotic orgy of rockabilly and punk-blues on **On Your Knees** (1989).

In Michigan, Mick Collins formed the Gories (1) with Dan Kroha on drums, and revived the tradition of wild/sinister rhythm'n'blues (Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Bo Diddley) on the raw and abrasive **House Rockin'** (1988). Blacktop, the creature of former Gories Collins and former '68 Comeback's Darin Lee Wood, went pop on **I Got A Baaad Feeling** (1995), while the Dirtbombs, mostly Collins' own project, continued along the original rhythm'n'blues path with **Horndog Fest** (1998).

The Original Sins (4), in Pennsylvania, were perhaps the most visceral rockers of this generation. The low-quality high-energy party rock'n'roll presented by **Big Soul** (1987) exploited the barbaric canon of Standells and Seeds (as reinterpreted by vocalist John Terlesky and keyboardist Dan McKinney) to channel epic and cosmic riffs. Albums such as **Hardest Way** (1989), that grafted catchy and almost bubblegum refrains onto ebullient guitar and organ rave-ups, became monuments to teenage frustration. Adding lethal doses of Stooges and MC5, **Self Distruct** (1990) indulged in brutal orgies that were the musical equivalent of the sack of Rome. The psych-pop tour de force of **Move** (1991) and the lamer **Out There** (1992) signaled the end of one of the most exciting careers in evil since the Rolling Stones first walked on a stage.

Michigan's God Bullies (2) were by far the most menacing disciples of the Cramps. The nightmarish voodoobilly of **Plastic Eye Miracle** (1989) and **Mamawombwomb** (1989) was, in fact, a variant that descended from the Sisters Of Mercy as much as from the Cramps. The overall feeling was of a meeting between Freud and Hendrix, as feverish rhythms, dense noisy guitar storms and psychotic groaning competed for attention. Each song was the equivalent of a tribal riot in a horror B-movie.

The Pandoras (1), yet another all-female band from Los Angeles, were real punks, and a major improvement over the Go-Go's. Vocalist/guitarist Paula Pierce had the stigmata of the misfit, bassist Kim Shattuck was the quintessential rebel and at least their second album, **Stop Pretending** (1986), was as anthemic and wild as the male classics of the 1960s.

### ***Desert psychedelia 1982-88***

In the meantime, a country/psychedelic sound emerged from the desert of Arizona, thanks to bands such as the Meat Puppets, Green On Red and Naked Prey.

The Meat Puppets (2) laid a bridge between hardcore and acid-rock with **Meat Puppets II** (1983), and then established themselves as the greatest heirs to the Grateful Dead with **Up On The Sun** (1985), the manifesto of

their "cosmic cow-punk" style. Songs abandoned the punk frenzy and adopted a transcendental (or, simply put, lazy) tone, became more hypnotic than aggressive, incorporated jazz and raga elements and guitarist Curt Kirkwood developed a style that was a synthesis of country, blues, Jerry Garcia's galactic trance and Neil Young's neurotic fury, baked in the scorching sunshine of the South. The distance from the Allman Brothers was shorter than it appeared, as proven by the sophisticated **Mirage** (1987), and even closer were Z.Z.Top, as proven by **Huevos** (1987) and **Monsters** (1989), the latter their most effective stab at power-pop and southern boogie.

Green On Red (1), originally from Arizona although relocated to Los Angeles, offered an odd hybrid of 1960s' garage-rock, 1970s' new wave and 1980s' Paisley Underground, or, better, of punks, beatniks and hippies, on **Gravity Talks** (1983). The sound was defined (or, better, left undefined) by the juxtaposition of the psychedelic overtones of keyboardist Chris Cacavas (reminiscent of Ray Manzarek and Al Kooper, as well as of the guitar fuzz) and the folk-rock accents of guitarist Dan Stuart. After second guitarist Chuck Prophet joined the band, Neil Young and Bob Dylan became the reference points for **Gas Food Lodging** (1985), and Green On Red became at best worthy heirs to the Band, at worst faceless dispensers of "blue-collar rock".

In Arizona, Howe Gelb, the brain behind Giant Sand (3), came up with an original and quirky fusion of rock, country and psychedelia. Not so much prolific as unfocused, Gelb too wasted his talent over a dreadful number of mediocre recordings. **Valley Of Rain** (1985) sounded like a set of chaotic quotations of Neil Young and Dream Syndicate. **Ballad Of A Thin Line Man** (1986) exhibited the epic/doomed tones of Lou Reed and Johnny Thunders. **Storm** (1988), possibly the best work of his early phase, composed a post-modernist puzzle of rural ambience by liberating elements of red-neck roots-rock (gospel, soul, boogie, blues, country) from their sonic habitat. **Love Songs** (1988), enhanced by ex-Green On Red organist Chris Cacavas, continued to blend country, blues and psychedelia, but using a more linear and organic format, which, not surprisingly, evoked the Band and, even less surprisingly, Green On Red. **Swerve** (1990) marked perhaps the zenith of this art of abstraction. Another turning point, **Ramp** (1991), featuring the rhythm section of bassist Joey Burns and drummer John Convertino (the future Calexico line-up), suddenly opted for Neil Young's abrasive country-rock. Giant Sand's masterpiece was probably the 25-minute jam *BBQ Suite*, off the largely improvised **Backyard Barbecue Broadcast** (1995), which stood as a summary of Gelb's nebulous vision up to this point. Gelb later mustered enough consciousness to craft **Chore Of Enchantment** (1999), one of his tighter and more focused works, and probably the most personal and touching of Gelb's "adult" phase.

During the 1980s the psychedelic scene of Texas was relatively subdued, hardly a foreshadow of the following decade's psychedelic deluge. The foundations were laid by the demented hyper-psychedelic punk-rock of the Butthole Surfers (112), one of the greatest bands of the 1980s. Gibby Haynes (vocals) and Paul Leary (guitar) brewed a synthesis of Sex Pistols' punk-rock, Red Crayola's acid-rock and Holy Modal Rounders' acid-folk on the mini-album **Butthole Surfers** (1983), a gallery of demented anthems played in a grotesque and noisy frenzy. **Psychic Powerless** (1985), one of the decade's most significant works, turned out a hysterical, cacophonous nonsense that borrowed from Captain Beefheart's apocalyptic blues, Chrome's delirious space-rock, Pere Ubu's modern dance, the Cramps' psychotic voodoo-billy and Syd Barrett's intergalactic signals. The effect was akin to a hippie cartoon or a circus of epileptic clowns. The lysergic chaos of **Rembrandt Pussyhorse** (1986) was better structured, but still amounted to an encyclopedic annihilation of 30 years of rock'n'roll. Replacing their visionary and infernal imagination with slicker productions, the Butthole Surfers delivered two albums that were tighter and more conventional, **Locust Abortion Technician** (1987) and **Hairway To Steven** (1988), and then proceeded to achieve the impossible, i.e. streamline their abominable punk mess for the mainstream on **Piuhgd** (1991), **Independent Worm Saloon** (1994), and **Electriclarryland** (1996). The last bang was in fact a side-project by Gibby Haynes, **P** (1995), which contained some of his most explosive music ever. Not awkward at all, and in fact quite accessible, the last Butthole Surfers album, **Weird Revolution** (2001), was an eclectic survey of well-played

cliches, incorporating dance and rap music.

#### *Free-form psychedelia 1982-88*

Artistically speaking, it is likely that the most durable works of the psychedelic renaissance came from the musicians who focused on free-form jams rather than the song format. They were mostly isolated, fiercely independent, and influenced by both the classical avantgarde and free-jazz.

From his Connecticut base, self-made psychedelic omnivore Wayne Rogers practiced his Jimi Hendrix fixation in a number of different projects. The records released under the moniker Crystallized Movements (1), starting with **Mind Disaster** (1983) and particularly **This Wideness Comes** (1990), were simply pretexts for narcissistic and logorrheic guitar shows. Vermonster's third album **The Holy Sound Of American Pipe** (1992) experimented with drones and eastern meditation. BORB's second album **Blast Off** (1993) was self-indulgent jamming of an even higher magnitude. Magic Hour (2), a collaboration with Galaxie 500's rhythm section of Naomi Yang and Damon Krukowski, yielded the best results, particularly their second album **Will They Turn You On** (1995), which contains *Passing Word*, and the four live jams of **Secession '96** (1996). These were epic tours de force of schizoid psychedelia, drenched in Hendrix's delirium tremens, in raga-like crescendos, in mind-expanding distorted drones and in hammering space-rock riffs.

In Wisconsin, another lysergic visionary, Richard Frannecki, dealt a fatal blow to the song format with the cassettes and records of his project E/I (1). His best Hawkwind and Chrome impersonation was on **Space Mantra** (1988). He then formed Vocokesh (1) and proceeded to apply analog electronics to raga-rock, interstellar Pink Floyd and Grateful Dead's acid-rock, particularly on the enigmatic and imposing **Smile And Point At The Mountain** (1995) and on the more ethnic **Paradise Revisited** (1998).

The Sun City Girls (1) began as one of the humblest and most underground acts of Arizona, and one decade later had become one of the most pretentious and prolific acts in the world. Their releases of the early 1980s were limited-edition cassettes. The first records, such as **Grotto Of Miracles** (1986) and **Torch Of The Mystics** (1990), were still amateurish, but began to develop the concept of a cosmic psychedelic hard-jazz-rock fusion. Later releases featured more professional performances but were mostly improvised and not edited, thus making an art out of self-indulgence and filler, as proven by the sprawling jams *Ghost Ghat Trespass* (1996) and *Cameo Demons* (2000).

Later into the decade, titanic Arizona guitarist Jesus Acedo and his Black Sun Ensemble (2) attempted a more radical revision of psychedelia, replete with nods to space-rock and free-jazz. The instrumental scores that were collected years later on **Black Sun Ensemble** (1988) and **Lambent Flame** (1988) were visionary works with few precedents. Mental insanity kept Acedo from fully developing the material that appeared on **Hymn Of The Master** (2001), mostly composed several years earlier.

San Francisco's giant of psychedelia was former Chrome's guitarist Helios Creed (3). He had little in common with anyone else. **Superior Catholic Fingers** (1988) and especially **Last Laugh** (1989) were orgiastic maelstroms of galactic glissandos, ripping distortions, hallucinated vocals and demonic tempos, while electronic instruments injected industrial soundscapes in the mix. His sadistic synthesis of early Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Neu, Popol Vuh and Hawkwind led to the delirious **Boxing The Clown** (1990) and to **Lactating Purple** (1991), his most violent and hostile work.

#### *Australian psychedelia 1981-86*

Garage-rock and psychedelia found fertile soil in Australia with the Lime Spiders; the Celibate Rifles (1), particularly on their third album **The Turgid Miasma Of Existence** (1986); the Stems; Died Pretty (1), whose **Free Dirt** (1986), sounded like a cross between Neil Young and the Doors (Frank Brunetti on keyboards); and Dave Faulkner's Hoodoo Gurus (1), who were the Australian equivalent of the Fleshtones, particularly on **Stoneage Romeos** (1984), before turning to power-pop with **Mars Needs Guitar** (1985). They were savage all

right, but a bit too derivative and predictable.

Tex Perkins' Beasts Of Bourbon (1), recorded one of the most original albums of the time, **Axeman's Jazz** (1984), somewhere between Gram Parsons' country-rock, Captain Beefheart's primitive dadaism and Tom Waits' drunk rhythm'n'blues.

They shared most of the line-up (i.e., vocalist and guitarist Kim Salmon) with the Scientists, who experimented with an exciting blend of Creedence Clearwater Revival and Cramps on a series of EPs and mini-albums, including **Blood Red River** (1983), **This Heart Doesn't Run On Blood** (1984), **Atom Bomb Baby** (1985) and **Demolition Derby** (1985).

The most ferocious and uplifting gang of Australian garage-rock was probably Feedtime (11). They delivered the demonic bacchanals of **Feedtime** (1986) with the production quality of a nuclear radiation and the aplomb of rampaging Hun warriors. The anthemic, epileptic and spastic rock'n'roll of this album had few rivals in the history of rock music. The slightly less manic **Shovel** (1986) unveiled their sources of inspiration, which, despite the illiterate image of the trio, included jump blues sarabands, Scottish reels and Indian war dances.

When former Birthday Party's members Rowland Howard (guitar) and Mick Harvey (keyboards), and former Swell Maps' member Epic Soundtracks (drums) joined Simon Bonney's project Crime And The City Solution (2), the result was the gothic nightmare of **Room Of Lights** (1986), reminiscent of the darker edges of spiritual, blues and gospel music, and heavily influenced by Nick Cave's metaphysical suspense. **Shine** (1988), virtually a solo (and emphatic) Bonney record with Harvey sculpting ghostly atmospheres, began the mutation towards an eclectic, theatrical, pop and artful sound, which ended and peaked with the four-part suite *The Last Dictator*, off **Paradise Discotheque** (1990).

These Immortal Souls (1), formed by Howard and Soundtracks after they left Bonney, composed the languid and melodramatic litanies of **Get Lost** (1987), reminiscent of Tom Waits' cocktail lounge in hell.

### ***Euro-garage 1980-86***

The only area in Europe that could compete with USA's and Australia's garage-rock was Sweden. Hanoi Rocks (1), in particular, deserve to be named next to the father founders of the genre. This Finnish equivalent of the New York Dolls evolved from the punkish callowness of **Bangkok Shocks Saigon Shakes Hanoi Rocks** (1981) to the catchy power-pop of **Oriental Beat** (1982) to the slick glam-metal of **Back To Mystery City** (1983). The Nomads played garage-rock with the intensity of heavy-metal, although their records, beginning with the mini-album **Where The Wolf Bane Blooms** (1983), were mainly collections of covers. This tradition peaked with Union Carbide Productions (1) and the satanic rave-ups of **In The Air Tonight** (1987).

Garage-rock in Britain was a minor phenomenon but still counted on the Barracudas, Billy Childish and his many bands (Pop Rivets, Milkshakes, Thee Mighty Caesars, Thee Headcoats); Katrina And The Waves, led by former Soft Boys' guitarist Kimberley Rew; the Prisoners, etc. The most impressive rockers were perhaps Screaming Blue Messiah, the Thee Hypnotics, and the Walking Seeds.

### ***Euro-psychedelia 1980-86***

After pioneers such as the Soft Boys opened the gates at the turn of the decade, a disproportionate number of English bands turned to psychedelia, and most of them simply made pop music camouflaged as psychedelia (the Beatles docet).

Liverpool was at the vanguard of the British psychedelic movement of the 1980s. Echo & The Bunnymen (2) practiced psychedelic-rock at the intersection between the Doors and Joy Division. **Crocodiles** (1980) was a varied effort of pieces that were both hypnotic and shimmering and scoured folk-rock and raga-rock for intriguing sounds. Leaving behind the eccentricities, the band veered towards an elegant and solemn style on **Heaven Up Here** (1982) and **Porcupine** (1983), and eventually achieved the dense and slick arrangements of **Ocean Rain** (1984), their sonic zenith.

Julian Cope's Teardrop Explodes (1) foreshadowed his future solo career with the lush, melodic and spacey songs of **Kilimanjaro** (1980).

Countless bands fished in the same pond: Sound and Wah, both Liverpool bands, the Times, Mighty Lemon Drops, Chameleons, progenitors of the "Mad-chester" phenomenon, House Of Love, featuring Terry Bickers on guitar, etc. They were as original as a bottle of Coca Cola. Timid experiments were attempted by Breathless and Perfect Disaster.

Zodiac Mindwarp and Gaye Bykers On Acid were the leaders of the "grebo" movement, which bridged punk and hippie culture.

Countless amateurs suddenly found a career, notable among them Bevis Frond (1), who was fundamentally a collector of Sixties cliches (Byrds, Syd Barrett, Doors, Jimi Hendrix, the Velvet Underground). He made a career out of carefully-constructed imitations such as **Tryptich** (1988), as if there were no limits to how often one could recycle ideas that were already obsolete in 1969. Occasionally rising to the occasion, he also attempted more experimental jams, such as on **Through The Looking Glass** (1987).

### *Prodromes of dance-psychedelia 1982-85*

Ka-Spel's Legendary Pink Dots (2) were one of the most adventurous (and ever evolving) psychedelic poppers. They began with psychedelic madrigals that were unique in the pastoral way they employed electronic sounds, for example on **Brighter Now** (1982). **Asylum** (1985) veered towards melancholy decadent futuristic pop à la Roxy Music and Ultravox. As Ka-Spel's skills in orchestration improved, he sculpted the neo-classical pop of **Any Day Now** (1987), possibly his artistic peak, and then the eccentric synth-pop of **The Maria Dimension** (1991), and finally experimented with the avantgarde arrangements of **Malachi** (1993), probably his most ambitious work. In between these milestones (each of which contains gems as well as filler), Ka-Spel released many other works of little interest, some credited to the Legendary Pink Dots and some under his own name. The latter tended to be more original, for example the horror-medieval concept **Tanith And The Lion Tree** (1991).

Matt Johnson's The The (2), reveled in haunting atmospheres and dejected themes, the subtle and often cacophonous arrangements creating a permanent sense of terror and paranoia. **Soul Mining** (1982) already contained the embryonic elements of his future investigations: polyrhythmic dance music, pop-soul melodies, tribal world-music, oneiric acid-rock, noir ambience. The gloomy and desperate lullabies of **Infected** (1987), the more visceral and emphatic sermons of **Mind Bomb** (1989), perhaps his best orchestrated work, and the philosophical meditations in a depleted soundscape of **Dusk** (1992), his most self-indulgent work, refined the persona of a real "auteur" of dance-pop.

Three fourths of Bauhaus formed Love And Rockets (2), who defused Bauhaus' gloomy pop and linked it with the generation of shoegazers and ravers. More electronic sounds and dance beats, plus evanescent vocals and evocative guitars, lent **Seventh Dream Of Teenage Heaven** (1985) the quality of a mirage, accomplishing de facto the old hippie ambition of turning acid-rock into abstract trance. After the commercial **Express** (1986) and **Earth-Sun-Moon** (1987), the band reached a new synthesis for the rave generation on the hyper-psychedelic **Love And Rockets** (1989). But the style was still in progress. The lengthy ecstatic litanies of **Hot Trip To Heaven** (1994) contributed to found the genre of acid ambient music (like Stone Roses covering Pink Floyd's *A Saucerful Of Secrets*), whereas the ethereal **Sweet F.A** (1996) exaggerated and diluted the idea (early Pink Floyd fronted by Donovan and arranged by Brian Eno). While not up to their creative standards, the futuristic/hedonistic electronic music of **Lift** (1998) seemed to come full circle and to eventually make sense of their entire career.

### *Dream-pop 1982-87*

The Cocteau Twins (12) gave psychedelic-rock yet another spin. Their "dream-pop" relied on sublime melodies, but delivered by an ethereal contralto (Elizabeth Fraser, one of the most influential vocalists of the decade) and wrapped in layers and layers of oneiric guitar and keyboard lines (both penned by Robin Guthrie). Vocals (and

female vocals) ruled, not guitars on their first, tentative album, **Garlands** (1982). The sound was, at the same time, mellow and thick. The shimmering filigrees of **Head Over Heels** (1983) blended celestial singalongs, middle-eastern psalms, majestic spirituals, vibrant melismas, tinkling guitars and neo-classical keyboards. Cocteau Twins' songs exhibited the levity and grace of madrigals but also the gloom and pomp of requiems. Dream-pop shared the contemplative quality and the passion for textures with shoegazing, but diverged from shoegazing in both narrative development and emotional intensity. In fact, it was fundamentally post-gothic (post-Siouxsie) sensational rock. The pieces released on EP, such as *Hitherto* (1983), *Spangle Maker* (1983), *Pearly-dewdrops Drops* (1984) and *Pepper-tree* (1984), were perhaps even more elegant and lush. The addition of bassist and keyboardist Simon Raymonde, coupled with Fraser's more conscious appropriation of Joan LaBarbara's and Meredith Monk's experiments (voice as the original instrument), completed the magic on **Treasure** (1984), an album of sonic vertigoes imbued with medieval spirituality. The artistic zenith of these two albums also marked the beginning of a self-serving mannerism: the austere and sophisticated **Victorialand** (1986), instead, downplayed both electronics and percussions, relying on acoustic guitar for enhancing Fraser's acrobatics, while **Blue Bell Knoll** (1988) returned to their original recipe but in a relaxed mood that evoked lounge-music (not psychedelia). **Heaven Or Las Vegas** (1990), a collection of regular songs, completely abandoned the experiment.

Ivo Watts-Russell, the mentor of dream-pop, formed his own super-group, *This Mortal Coil*, which indirectly proved how the idea could be used to manufacture atmospheric, evanescent easy-listening.

The duo of multi-instrumentalist Brendan Perry and Australian vocalist Lisa Gerrard, i.e. *Dead Can Dance* (12) transposed the mystic exotica of bands such as Third Ear Band, Popol Vuh and Clannad into the age of dream-pop. The austere, spectral, glacial songs on **Dead Can Dance** (1984) sounded like chamber sonatas and classical lieder, while fusing gothic, medieval and ethnic elements. The magnificent orchestration of **Spleen And Ideal** (1985) upped the ante, as did the religious intensity of Gerrard's performance. Imposing arrangements levelled paleo-slavic hymns, Gregorian liturgy, celtic folk, Tibetan chants, renaissance madrigals, middle-eastern dances. The stately decor and the alternation of Perry's symphonic ballads and Gerrard's free-form odes evoked early King Crimson. The duo played the same formula over and over again, first with the ambitious but unfocused **Within The Realm Of A Dying Sun** (1987), then with the lush, meticulous arrangements (or, better, plethora of sound effects) of **The Serpent's Egg** (1988). During the 1990s, they indulged in trivial repetitions of their least original ideas: the recreation of ancient musical styles on **Aion** (1990), via epoch instruments and dead languages, and **Into The Labyrinth** (1993), the pan-ethnic collage of **Spiritchaser** (1996).

The third major phase in the history of dream-pop was heralded by Norway's *Bel Canto* (3), the project of vocalist Anneli Drecker and multi-instrumentalists and Nils Johansen (which initially featured future Biosphere mastermind Geir Jenssen). **White-Out Conditions** (1987) owed its dark and icy appearance to the influences of laconic bards (Nico, new-age music, gothic rock, Dead Can Dance). Drecker matured on **Birds Of Passage** (1989), unleashing a supercharged persona over dynamic soundscapes worthy of a chamber symphony. Pared down to the duo of Drecker and Johansen, Bel Canto began to mutate into a less organic and more fashionable unit with **Shimmering Warm And Bright** (1992), a transformation that was completed by the lush, decadent dance-pop of the Bjork-influenced **Magic Box** (1996).

Finally, *A R Kane* (1), the remnants of M/A/R/S/S, sculpted gentle psychedelic funk-jazz music, reminiscent of both Miles Davis and Robert Wyatt, in the stylistic puzzle of **69** (1988), thus pioneering the genre that would be called "trip-hop".

### ***Feedback-pop 1985-87***

A more interesting variation on the same song came out of Scotland when *Jesus And Mary Chain* (2) coined "feedback-pop". The idea was quite simple and certainly not new: take the Velvet Underground's *White Light White Heat* and add a catchy melody, or take Phil Spector's "wall of sound" and add a layer of guitar noise.

Massive distortions, coupled with nihilistic ethos borrowed from the Sex Pistols, bestowed on **Psychocandy** (1985) a funereal mood. Its spectral, acid, abrasive lullabies lasted only one season, though. The much lighter **Darklands** (1987) was a collection of melancholy ballads, and **Automatic** (1989), while more cohesive, professional and eclectic than anything they had done before, was basically dance-music, no matter how skewed, and **Honey's Dad** (1992) was even laid-back.

Other bands influenced by feedback-pop were the Green Telescopes, the Telstar Ponies, the Thanes, Ultra Vivid Scene, etc.

### *Shoegazing 1986-87*

Ireland added My Bloody Valentine (1988) to the potion, and something truly magic was finally created in the realm of psychedelia. The mini-album **Ecstasy** (1987) explored the ambiguity that would make their mature sound so haunting and devastating: ecstasy and terror were two faces of the same moon, and that moon shone day and night. Daydreaming and nightmare became the same state of mind as guitars enveloped naive melodies and drums smashed vocal harmonies. **Isn't Anything** (1988) went one step further than Jesus And Mary Chain, in that it renounced punk's violence and harked back to the most dilated forms of acid-rock. Kevin Shields' "shoegazing" guitar fulfilled Jerry Garcia's and Jimi Hendrix' galactic bliss, and helped the sweet litanies grind their way into a transcendental trance. Electronic keyboards joined guitar noise on **Loveless** (1991), the ultimate exploration of textures in rock music. Its stunning chaos can be viewed both as an enraptured "om" to the universe or as a deranged scream in a madman's cell or as a terrified paralysis in the face of a supernatural force. The album changed the meaning of the word "music" by proving the equivalence between "noisy" and "symphonic", the same way that Einstein proved the equivalence between inertial and gravitational mass.

Acid-rock had been about "trance" since the early times of the Grateful Dead and the Velvet Underground, but its commercialization (circa 1967) had created the misunderstanding that "psychedelic" was about bizarre and cute arrangements of very catchy tunes. It took 20 years for these "shoegazers" to rediscover the original meaning of "psychedelic".

Guitarists Peter "Sonic Boom" Kember and Jason Pierce formed Spacemen 3 (2), the band that transformed sustained guitar noise into spiritual meditation, and psychedelia into zen. **The Perfect Prescription** (1987) was supposed to be the musical "transcription of an overdose, but it still resembled a slow-motion replay of Red Crayola's dense maelstrom of dissonances. **Playing With Fire** (1988) achieved an ethereal and transcendent sound which was, de facto, bordering on Brian Eno's ambient music. It is not a coincidence that the group eventually recorded a 45-minute improvisation for distorted guitars, *An Evening Of Contemporary Sitar Music* (1990), explicitly dedicated to LaMonte Young, the guru of static music. Spacemen 3 were, first and foremost, an idea, the idea of unfolding gentle, ecstatic melodies around the drones of distorted guitars, an Indian praxis that had already been employed by Brian Eno and Robert Fripp.

Even more spiritual and contemplative (and minimal) were the soundscapes "painted" by Robert Hampson's Loop (1) on **Heaven's End** (1987). Their songs were mere variations on a droning pattern, with moods ranging from catatonic to violent.

- 1984: A leak at the Union Carbide pesticides plant in Bhopal causes thousands of deaths
- 1984: Apple introduces the Macintosh, which revolutionizes desktop publishing
- 1984: Arab terrorists kill 241 American marines in Lebanon
- 1984: Helmut Kohl is elected chancellor of Germany
- 1984: HIV is identified as the cause of AIDS
- 1984: the CDROM is introduced

- 1984: the Domain Name Server is introduced to classify Internet addresses with extensions such as .com
- 1984: William Gibson's "Neuromancer" popularizes the "cyberpunks"

## **5.15 USA, UK, Europe: The Golden Age of Heavy Metal**

### *The pioneers 1976-78*

Heavy-metal in the 1970s was Blue Oyster Cult, Aerosmith, Kiss, AC/DC, Journey, Boston, Rush, and it was the most theatrical and brutal of rock genres. It was not easy to reconcile this genre with the anti-heroic ethos of the punk era. It could have seemed almost impossible to revive that genre, that was slowly dying, in an era that valued the exact opposite of machoism, and that was producing a louder and noisier genre, hardcore.

Instead, heavy-metal began its renaissance in the same years of the new wave, capitalizing on the same phenomenon of independent labels. Credit goes largely to a British contingent of bands, that realized how they could launch a "new wave of heavy metal" during the new wave of rock music.

Motorhead (1), formed by ex-Hawkwind bassist Ian "Lemmy" Kilminster, were the natural bridge between heavy-metal, Stooges/MC5 and punk-rock. They played demonic, relentless rock'n'roll at supersonic speed: *Iron Horse* (1977), *Metropolis* (1979), *Bomber* (1979), *Jailbait* (1980), *Iron First* (1982), etc. It took Kilminster ten years to find the right balance and the right line-up, but eventually he delivered the album that Motorhead was meant for, **Orgasmatron** (1986).

The other pioneers of the new wave of heavy metal, Judas Priest (1) were rediscovering the evil iconography and gothic overtones of Blue Oyster Cult and Black Sabbath on their second album, **Sad Wings Of Destiny** (1976). They became stars in the 1980s, when they embraced a futuristic and sadomaso look, and began crafting melodic and magniloquent power-ballads.

The first album by Iron Maiden (1), **Iron Maiden** (1980), was another groundbreaking synthesis of classic styles, from Deep Purple to High Tide, from Led Zeppelin to Rush, both anthemic and menacing. It only took the addition of vocalist Bruce Dickinson to turn albums such as **Number Of The Beast** (1982) or the complex **Powerslave** (1984), which is almost progressive-rock, to climb the charts.

Diamond Head (1), led by Guitarist Brian Tatler and vocalist Sean Harris, recorded one of the most original albums of British heavy metal, **Lightning to the Nations** (Woolfe, 1981), that wed Black Sabbath and King Crimson.

These bands pioneered the revival of heavy-metal, but they all had to wait until the mid 1980s before reaping the (commercial) benefits of its boom. By then, a new generation of metal-heads were storming the charts. One of the most successful acts, Def Leppard (1), masters of guitar fierceness, tempo shifts and angular counterpoint, added electronic arrangements to **Pyromania** (1983) and turned seismic jolts such as *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, off **Hysteria** (1987), into baroque artifices.

In the United States a band bridged, like no other, the worlds of new wave and of heavy-metal: Van Halen (1), destined to become the first heavy-metal band ever to top the charts. Formed in Los Angeles by Holland-born virtuoso guitarist Eddie Van Halen (an acrobat of hammering chords, exhausting vibratos, melodic riffs and Hendrix-ian glissandos) and vocalist and sex-symbol David Lee Roth, they streamlined the genre on **Van Halen** (1978), making it more appealing to the everykid, and then they redefined it for an even larger audience when they introduced the synthesizer, thus *Jump* (1984).

By 1984, heavy-metal had become one of the most popular genres around the world.

### *Black metal 1982-85*

Between 1982 and 1985 a truly international phenomenon took place: the "gothic" subgenre of heavy-metal became a full-fledged genre, "black metal", the progenitor of "death metal". Venom (1) in England upped the ante of faster and louder metal with **Black Metal** (1982), while at the same time pushing the boundaries with the suite *At War With Satan* (1983). King Diamond's Mercyful Fate (1) in Denmark focused on macabre themes on **Melissa** (1983). Celtic Frost (1) in Switzerland added symphonic arrangements, rhythm machines, samples and sopranos to albums such as **Into The Pandemonium** (1987). And Helloween (1) in Germany found the common denominator between heavy-metal, Amon Duul and Wagner's operas: the epic and demonic ouvertures of **Walls Of Jericho** (1986) abused of melodramatic and martial overtones, not to mention panzer-like tempos and machine-gun riffs. Black metal was particularly successful in Scandinavia, where bands such as Bathory, Mayhem and Candlemass ensured that gothic rock remained a leading genre for the rest of the decade.

### **Pop-metal 1981-85**

The idea was corrupted almost immediately by the bands of the "shock-rock" (or "metal-glam") scene, who owed more to Alice Cooper and Kiss than to Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin: Twisted Sister in New York, whose anthems *Bad Boys Of Rock And Roll* (1981) and *We're Not Gonna Take It* (1984) were worthy of the Who, Motley Crue in Los Angeles, whose *Live Wire* (1982), *Shout At The Devil* (1983), *Wild Side* (1987) and *Kickstart My Heart* (1989) were depraved but catchy sermons of street life. Gwar would be the ultimate, vulgar instantiation of that idea.

Joan Jett, the former Runaways prodigy, created an image of independent, wild, angry, rebellious female. Visceral anthemic singalongs such as *Bad Reputation* (1981) were not particularly original (basically, hard-rock with catchy pop refrains), but they made Jett a charismatic leader of the movement that would be called "riot grrrrls".

However, American heavy-metal of the 1980s remained mainly a "pop-metal crossover", a genre that would peak in the mid 1980s with New Jersey's Bon Jovi, led by melodramatic shouter Jon Bongiovi and acrobatic guitarist Richie Sambora, a band that coined a magniloquent style with *You Give Love A Bad Name* (1986), *Living On A Prayer* (1986), *Bad Medicine* (1988), *Lay Your Hands On Me* (1988) and *Blaze Of Glory* (1990), while at the same time exploiting sentimental cliches in the ballads *Wanted Dead Or Alive* (1986), *I'll Be There For You* (1988), *Bed Of Roses* (1992) and *Always* (1994).

A unique take on melodic hard-rock was pioneered by Savatage (1) in Florida. **Power Of The Night** (1985) is both a harrowing experience and a stylistic nightmare.

### **Pomp and doom 1982-85**

Other heavy-metal originals pursued pompous and futuristic themes. In New York, remnants of the Dictators mutated into Manowar (1), a heavy-metal band that specialized in glacial atmospheres, majestic medieval visions, Teutonic and Scandinavian mythology, Wagner-ian grandeur, art-rock arrangements, and, last but not least, Conan-like cartoons. Not surprisingly, echoes of Blue Oyster Cult and Rush populate **Battle Hymns** (1982).

In Canada, Voivod (2) were even more explicit in their imitation of Conan The Barbarian, but even more unique in crafting a cerebral and claustrophobic style. **War And Pain** (1984) and, to a lesser extent, **Rrroooaaarrr** (1986) fine-tuned a spasmodic way to tell epic stories. Voivod finally achieved an original synthesis of heavy-metal jargons on **Killing Technology** (1987). After incorporating electronic instruments on **Dimension Hatross** (1988), they reached their artistic peak with **Nothingface** (1989).

A Los Angeles band, Saint Vitus, had the idea that would provide a career to a new generation of heavy-metal bands: take Black Sabbath's slowest and gloomiest riffs, and just play them over and over again. Albums such as **Hallow's Victim** (1985) were obsessive repetitions of Black Sabbath cliches. A few years later, this music would be called "doom-metal".

Doom was also pioneered in Maryland by Pentagram on albums such as **Relentless** (1985).

### **Speed-metal 1983-85**

Los Angeles' "street" scene fostered the cross-pollination of hardcore (Bad Brains, Black Flag) and glam-metal.

Expanding on an intuition by the humble hardcore band D.R.I., "speed-metal" was invented by Metallica (23). They began under the auspices of punk desperation, which they vented with the epileptic fits of **Kill 'Em All** (1983). The jugular shrieks (James Hetfield), the aerial raids by the guitars (Kirk Hammett, who had replaced original member Dave Mustaine, and Hetfield's rhythm guitar), the relentless rhythm (Danish-born drummer Lars Ulrich, bassist Cliff Burton) created a sense of suffocation that simply got worse as the album proceeded from *Hit The Lights* to *Metal Militia*. However, there were countless stylistic tours de force (reminiscent of Diamond Head) concealed in songs such as *Pulling Teeth* and *Seek & Destroy* and the anthemic *Four Horsemen* already belonged to another age. That age was officially inaugurated by **Ride The Lightning** (1984), a work that documented the metamorphosis of "thrash-metal" (in which all instruments were "thrashed" with no attention for detail or for harmony) into "speed-metal" (in which melody, guitar solos, tempo shifts and song dynamics began to prevail). Suddenly, the lengthy and intricate pieces of **Master Of Puppets** (1986) exhibited an elegant, glossy sound that was more appropriate for classical music than for rock'n'roll. The balance between supersonic instrumental prowess, narrative ingenuity and romantic urgency had only a few precedents in the realm of progressive-rock. The band's constant evolution led to the pretentious and austere **And Justice For All** (1988) and to the classy pop-metal of **Metallica** (1991), a pensive work that introduced mid-tempo ballads and chamber strings, and that crowned their quest for the gravest atmosphere with *Enter Sandman*.

In the meantime, the fire-power of Dave Mustaine's Megadeth (2) in Los Angeles was no less terrifying on their first album, **Killing Is My Business** (1985). The hyper-realism of **Peace Sells** (1986) opened new avenues for the genre, while a new and versatile line-up crafted **Rust In Peace** (1990), Mustaine's emotional zenith, as well as the pretentious **Countdown To Extinction** (1992).

The third member of the speed-metal triad, Slayer (1) were, first and foremost, the link between Venom's black metal and Death's death-metal, via a milestone such as **Reign In Blood** (1986).

One more band stands out among the progenitors of speed-metal: Exciter (1), from Canada, who co-founded the genre with the explosive **Heavy Metal Maniac** (1983).

San Francisco boasted a whole bunch of speed-metal weirdos who debuted between 1985 and 1986: Death Angel, with **Ultra Violence** (1986), Exodus, with **Bonded By Blood** (1985), Vicious Rumour, with **Soldiers Of The Night** (1985), and Testament, with **The Legacy** (1987).

New York groomed two of the best. Anthrax (1) crafted a few of the classics: **Spreading the Disease** (1985), their subversive tribute to manic hardcore, **Among The Living** (1987), a model of elegant incandescence, and, to some extent, the apocalyptic concept **Persistence of Time** (1990). White Zombie (2) had begun with **Soul Crusher** (1987) and a proto-grunge sound that was abominable and formidable in the tradition of MC5 and Blue Cheer, but embraced speed-metal on the derivative **Make Them Die Slowly** (1989), and then tweaked the genre to produce the campy horror melodrama **La Sexorcisto** (1992). A more serious attitude, coupled with futuristic production and nods to the fashionable cliches of grunge and industrial-metal, surfaced on **Astro-Creep: 2000** (1995).

The second generation of speed-metal includes two bands from Arizona, Flotsam & Jetsam and Sacred Reich.

The band that made speed-metal a universal language was Sepultura (12), formed in Brazil by vocalist and guitarist Max Cavalera. They began their pursuit of American speed-metal with **Morbid Visions** (1986), a poignant prophecy of moral decay, but affirmed an original style on their third album **Beneath The Remains** (1989). **Arise** (1992) completed their historical mission, of fusing the majestic virtuosity of Metallica's sound and the atrocities of the nascent death-metal sound. Then Sepultura aimed for the mainstream, relaxing some of the ferocity and adding a touch of Brazilian music, on **Chaos A.D.** (1993), their least original but also most successful album yet. Their masterpiece, **Roots** (1996), was a marriage of both worlds, a bold attempt at bridging the gap between avantgarde and mainstream via a cornucopia of promiscuous sounds (tribal orgies and horror extravaganzas, psychedelic solos and unorthodox sampling, catchy rigmaroles and panzer riffs).

### *Grindcore 1986-88*

Under pressure from hardcore, the rhythm of heavy-metal kept getting faster and faster. In the mid 1980s, New York's Nuclear Assault (1), a spin-off of Anthrax, invented "grindcore" with **Game Over** (1986), and perfected it with **Survive** (1988). The genre became immediately popular in Britain, where it simply followed in the footsteps of Crass and Discharge. Napalm Death (1), led by the phenomenal trio of raving lunatic Lee Dorrian, epileptic drummer Mick Harris and kamikaze guitarist Justin Broadrick, defined a new standard of ultrasonic rhythm and fragmented melodies on **Scum** (1987) and raised it to a wall of desperate noise on their milestone recording, **From Enslavement To Obliteration** (1988).

The grindcore and death-metal cultures met when Carcass (1) released **Reek Of Putrefaction** (1988), a horror nightmare narrated by a zombie that made the term "magniloquent" seem a pathetic understatement. After approaching "music" on **Symphony Of Sickness** (1989), they refounded the genre with the lengthy pieces (a contradiction in terms) of **Necroticism: Descanting The Insalubrious** (1991). Bolt Thrower (1) debuted with a concentrate of grindcore cliches, **In Battle There Is No Law** (1988), but their second album, the "fanta-macabre" concept **Realm Of Chaos** (1989), was one of the most original works of the school.

### *Death-metal 1987-89*

In the meantime, under the same pressure of ever increasing frenzy, "black metal" was mutating into "death-metal". "Death-metal" was born from the fusion of Slayer's speed-metal, Helloween's black metal, and Napalm Death's grindcore. The term was coined by Possessed in San Francisco, for their **Seven Churches** (1985), but the cradle of the genre was truly Florida, that would soon count on a number of vicious, truculent, brutal bands. Death (1) opened the party with **Scream Bloody Gore** (1987), but their most accomplished fantasy was **Leprosy** (1988). Even tighter and darker was **Deicide** (1990), although Deicide (1) would never match its bloodlust. Morbid Angel's **Altars Of Madness** (1989) and Obituary's **Slowly We Rot** (1989) were more predictable. Compared with the simple canon of the Florida bands, the albums by San Francisco's Sadus (1), such as **Illusions** (1988), were articulate and (relatively speaking) baroque.

### *Progressive-metal 1986-89*

Heavy metal in the 1980s was not only frenzy and noise. There were bands experimenting with all sorts of crossovers and hybrids. New York's eclectic Living Colour (1), a group of Afro-Americans featuring Hendrix-ian guitarist Vernon Reid and drummer William Calhoun, offered a sophisticated mixture of blues, hard-rock, funk and jazz on **Vivid** (1988). 24-7 Spyz, coming from the same cultural roots, fused the sounds of the violent white youth (hardcore and heavymetal) with the sounds of the violent black youth (rap, funk, reggae). Another example of white/black fusion was Oregon's multi-racial Dan Reed Network.

Progressive-metal blossomed in Seattle, where Queensryche (1) penned one of its masterpieces, the concept album and psychodrama **Operation: Mindcrime** (1988). Other intricate and solemn metal albums were recorded in the Seattle area by Sanctuary, particularly **Refuge Denied** (1987), and keyboardist Greg Giuffria, whose long career peaked with **House Of Lords** (1988).

Ohio's Fates Warning were Queensryche's main disciples with **No Exit** (1988).

In Texas, King's X (1) pursued a brand of prog-metal similar to Rush's with **Gretchen Goes To Nebraska** (1989), while Pantera (1), who had been playing pop-glam-metal for the whole decade, eventually changed style and invented something new with the granitic **Cowboys From Hell** (1990).

A few guitarists ignored the lure of the group stardom and focused on their original style. Joe Satriani (1) led the pack with the soulful impressionism of **Surfing With The Alien** (1987), but it was Eric Johnson (1) who broke new ground with **Tones** (1986), a staggering display of virtuoso playing, although he became famous with the more conventional *Cliffs Of Dover* (1990).

### *Street sound, 1987*

Los Angeles ended the decade with the epic sound of the "street scene", a wild and raw hard-rock sound that was drenched in hyper-realism, nihilism, anger and desperation; the quintessential soundtrack of urban alienation. In the tradition of the Rolling Stones and the Sex Pistols, Guns N' Roses (11) were a band of psychopaths, delinquents, sex maniacs, junkies and alcoholics who liked to show and sound what they were. **Appetite For Destruction** (1987) was as harrowing an experience as being catapulted into a dark narrow alley of the worst Los Angeles neighborhood. William "Axl Rose" Bailey's nasty, offensive, anti-heroic vocal acrobatics fended off the double-guitar attack of Saul "Slash" Hudson and Jeff "Izzy Stradlin" Isabell, who indulged in unbridled concertos of screeching and reckless riffs. The noise, the energy, the lyrics transformed each song into a bloody fistfight. **Use Your Illusion** (1991) added artistic pretensions to the rebellious spirit of their performances, and, in a sense, declared the band's mission impossible.

The commotion was unjustified in the case of Jane's Addiction (1), one of the most over-rated bands of the era, led by hysterical singer Perry Farrell and demonic guitarist David Navarro. **Nothing's Shocking** (1988) was certainly a powerful fresco of moral decay and insecurity (expressionistic shrieks, heavy-metal thunders and psychedelic vertigoes), but its artistic pretenses were not supported by adequate skills, and **Ritual De Lo Habitual** (1990) sounded like a childish version of Led Zeppelin.

Faster Pussycat (1) harked back to the outrageous antics of Rolling Stones, Aerosmith and New York Dolls on **Faster Pussycat** (1987) and especially **Wake Me When It's Over** (1989). LA Guns were the least theatrical and violent of the founding fathers.

Not all L.A. metal band were glam-rockers: Big F (1) **Big F** (1989), led by John "Shreve" Crawford (who had written Berlin's hits), played an original mixture of blues-rock and heavy-metal.

#### ***Funk-metal 1984-86***

One of the great "fusion" ideas of the 1980s was the idea of integrating the brutal rhythmic and vocal styles of funk and rap music with the brutal guitar-driven style of heavy-metal. The pioneering albums by the Red Hot Chili Peppers (2), **Red Hot Chili Peppers** (1984) and **Freaky Styley** (1985), basically discovered what George Clinton and Jello Biafra had in common. The punkish impetus of these albums was due in large part to the mesmerizing style of former Fear bassist Michael "Flea" Balzary, but also to their (sub)cultural background: the decadent, histrionic and irreverent Hollywood scene. The excessive heavy-metal overtones of **The Uplift Mofu Party Plan** (1987) missed the point, and, when John Frusciante replaced guitarist Hillel Slovak who had died of an overdose, the band adopted a mainstream sound. **Mother's Milk** (1989) and **Blood Sugar Sex Magik** (1991) left the rage and the sarcasm behind, yet another sign that the whole Los Angeles scene was going through a painful rehabilitation program.

A milder and more satirical approach to funk-ska-soul-rock fusion was propounded by Fishbone (2). The best document of their frantic, exuberant, exhilarating style was their debut EP, **Fishbone** (1985). Fishbone continued a tradition that dated as far back as the Coasters and had survived via Madness. That party music modeled after high-school pranks grew into an art form on **Truth And Soul** (1988) and achieved a formidable synthesis of ancient and modern, of white and black, of "low" and "high" art, on **Reality Of My Surroundings** (1991), an album that was both ambitious and amusing.

San Francisco expanded on the idea with the creative and satirical work of two of the greatest bands of the late 1980s. Faith No More (12) created a stylistic hybrid that was both inventive, dynamic, driving and catchy. **We Care A Lot** (1985) attempted a fusion/fission of genres that were virtually in opposition, such as punk-rock, funk, progressive-rock, hip-hop, heavy-metal, music-hall. The fearsome trio of keyboardist Roddy Bottum, vocalist Chuck Mosley and guitarist Jim Martin perfected their counterpoint on **Introduce Yourself** (1987), a cauldron of memorable riffs, anthemic melodies, eccentric sound effects, elaborate scores, fiery electronic sounds. The group shone across a repertoire that ran the gamut from naive and romantic to cold and symphonic. Mr Bungle's vocalist

Michael Patton took the helm of the band on **Real Thing** (1989), which didn't change direction at all, despite increased mainstream appeal. The same balance of antipodal elements (of gloom and lightness, of ethereal and aggressive) propelled the versatile songs of **Angel Dust** (1992).

On the other hand, the reckless stylistic cross-breeding of **Victim's Family**, starting with their debut album **Voltage And Violets** (1986), harked back to the skewed jazz-core of Minutemen, despite the theatrics of guitarist Ralph Spight.

#### **Grunge 1985-86**

New York witnessed a revival of hard-rock rooted in the blues-rock tradition with **Raging Slab** and the **Masters Of Reality**, but hard-rock staged its biggest come-back in Seattle. The influence of the new Seattle bands would be far greater than anyone imagined at the time. The groups that began their career in the second half of the 1980s coined the psychedelic/hard-rock style that would become one of the most sensational events of the following decade.

**Green River** (1) were formed by vocalist Mark "Arm" McLaughlin, bassist Jeff Ament and guitarists Steve Turner and Stone Gossard. Grunge was basically born with their debut EP, **Come On Down** (1985). The EP **Dry As A Bone** (1987) and the only full-length, **Rehab Doll** (1988), developed their passion for Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Sixties garage-rock. When Green River split, Gossard and Ament formed Mother Love Bone and Pearl Jam, while Arm and Turner formed Mudhoney.

Jack Endino's **Skin Yard** played cold, frigid, inhuman heavy-metal influenced by the Swans and Black Sabbath, for example on **Skin Yard** (1986).

The **Screaming Trees** (2), led by vocalist Mark Lanegan, wed folk-rock, hard-rock and psychedelic-rock on their early albums, particularly **Even If And Especially When** (1987). They progressed from a punkish mixture of Sixties garage-rock, power-pop and roots-rock to a uniquely ethereal style, that reached a transcendent majesty on **Sweet Oblivion** (1992), an ambitious endeavour that ran the gamut from Blind Faith to Neil Young, and on **Dust** (1996), a largely atmospheric work whose arrangements were almost symphonic.

The **Melvins** (2) rediscovered "stoner-rock" by exaggerating Blue Cheer's and Black Sabbath's slow, heavy, dark grooves. Buzz Osbourne (vocals and guitar) Dale Crover (drums) and Matt Lukin (bass) first sketched out the idea on **Gluey Porch Treatments** (1987). After Lukin joined Mudhoney, Osbourne, Crover and new bassist Lori Black fully developed that idea with **Ozma** (1989), where songs became monoliths of ugly, repetitive, massive chords, stretched to titanic proportions; Tibetan meditation in hell. Thus their masterpieces were lengthy, monotonous, obsessive pieces, somewhere between a stream of consciousness and a slow-motion dinosaur walk: *Boris*, off **Bullhead** (1991); *Charmicarmicat*, off the EP **Eggnog** (1991); *Hung Bunny*, off the mini-album **Lysol** (1992). The trio abandoned that pathological mania on **Houdini** (1993) and **Stoner Witch** (1994), which collect "songs" and not just heavy loads of unpleasant riffs. Later, the Melvins became likely candidates to the title of most self-indulgent band in the world.

Green River's founders Stone Gossard and Jeff Ament formed **Mother Love Bone**, and started a new career with **Apple** (1990), an album that sounded like a collection of Led Zeppelin leftovers. When their vocalist, Andrew Wood, died of an overdose, the two formed yet another band, **Pearl Jam** (2) that went on to become one of grunge's icons. Pearl Jam invented (or re-invented) a hard-rock sound that changed the world, and established a new standard of professional ethics. Fronted by former San Diego surf-punk Eddie Vedder, they shunned any intellectual pretense and focused on the guitar riff. One could almost claim that their entire opus is made of one melodic idea and one riffing idea. They turned obsolescence into an ideology. **Ten** (1991) was majestic and theatrical, and clearly found a middle path between the extreme violence of hardcore and the brainy music of alternative rock, because **Vs** (1993) established the record of copies sold in the first week of release. Both more pensive and more melodic, **Vitalogy** (1994) showed that there was a soul underneath the cliches.

**Mudhoney** (2), Mark "Arm" McLaughlin's and Steve Turner's band, were, instead, garage-rockers. The incendiary,

elementary sound inaugurated with the single *Touch Me I'm Sick* (1988), the EP **Superfuzz Bigmuff** (1988) and the album **Mudhoney** (1989) was an interesting blend of garage-rock clichés (visceral distortion, sloppy riffs, anthemic melodies) and hardcore clichés (thrashing rhythm, epileptic vocals, demented rigmaroles). **Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge** (1991) tidied up the mess and sprayed the stench, but, basically, one could claim that Mudhoney continued to play the same song over and over again.

The riff became a totem with Soundgarden (2), fronted by Chris Cornell, one of the few vocalist who could be both emphatic and monotonous within the same song, propelled by guitarist Kim Thayil, one of Tony Iommi's and Jimmy Page's greatest disciples, and anchored to the seismic rhythm section of bassist Hiro Yamamoto and drummer Matt Cameron. **Ultramega OK** (1988) and **Louder Than Love** (1989) counterfeited the classic sound of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, and enhanced (at least on the former) it with a bit of punk-rock fury and heavy-metal tension, but the masses loved it, and the band's routine (and sold-out) led to the massive success of **Badmotorfinger** (1991), although **Temple Of The Dog** (1991), a joint effort between half of Pearl Jam and half of Soundgarden, was probably more sincere and original. The bad news is that Soundgarden was playing on automatic pilot, but the good news was that they were capable of crafting the most baroque form of hard-rock ever. The tour de force of **Superunknown** (1994) was not only the zenith of their mannerism, but perhaps grunge's ultimate swan song.

Other forms of proto-grunge were the loud and vulgar style of Tad (Tad Doyle's band), and the feverish and bluesy style of Voodoo Gearshift.

Seattle became a gold mine with Nirvana (2), formed by vocalist/guitarist Kurt Cobain and bassist Krist "Chris" Novoselic. They, too, played hard-rock, but they also injected abnormal doses of emotion into it and had a melodic flair that the others lacked. **Bleach** (1989) was both rudimentary, savage and fragile. **Nevermind** (1991), featuring new drummer Dave Grohl (ex-Scream), increased the melodic factor, and found an even more unlikely balance between pathos and disgust, tenderness and rage, melancholy and rebellion. If **Nevermind** had been the manifesto of an age, the brutal **In Utero** (1994) was Cobain's personal odyssey. Sounding like Neil Young's timid alter ego, they embodied the mood of their generation (the "teen spirit"). Their sound became the soundtrack of a generation's nervous breakdown. And more so when Cobain took his life in 1994.

## **5.16 USA & UK: Songwriters of the 1980s**

### ***Female folksingers 1985-88***

Once the effects of the new wave were fully absorbed, it became apparent that the world of singer-songwriters would never be the same again. A conceptual mood had taken over the scene, and that mood's predecessors were precisely the Bob Dylans, the Neil Youngs, the Leonard Cohens, the Tim Buckley's, the Joni Mitchells, who had not been the most popular stars of the 1970s. Instead, they became the reference point for a new generation of "auteurs".

Women, in particular, regained the status of philosophical beings (and not only disco-divas or cute front singers) that they had enjoyed with the works of Carole King and Joni Mitchell. Suzy Gottlieb, better known as Phranc (1), was the (Los Angeles-based) songwriter who started the whole acoustic folk revival with her aptly-titled **Folksinger** (1985), whose protest themes and openly homosexual confessions earned her the nickname of "all-american jewish-lesbian folksinger". She embodied the historic meaning of that movement because she was a punkette (notably in *Nervous Gender*) before she became a folksinger, and because she continued to identify, more than anyone else, with her post-feminist and AIDS-stricken generation in elegies such as *Take Off Your Swastika* (1989) and *Outta Here* (1991).

New Yorker Suzanne Vega (1), with **Suzanne Vega** (1985) and subsequent hits *Luka* (1987) and *Tom's Diner*

(1987), which explored simple people's traumas in a subdued tone, and Bostonian Tracy Chapman (1), a black folksinger (a rarity) who was perhaps Joni Mitchell's more direct heir, mixing the personal and the political on **Tracy Chapman** (1988), conquered the air-waves and made it popular for young women to sing about their psyches.

Los Angeles boasted the most prolific school. **Melissa Etheridge** (1988), the debut by Melissa Etheridge (1), was wild and passionate, and her delivery was the closest to Janis Joplin's of any acoustic folksinger, especially in gospel and r&b-infected numbers such as *Bring Me Some Water*.

**Who's Gonna Save The World** (1987), by Cindy Lee Berryhill, **Union** (1988), by Tony Childs, and **The Indescribable Wow** (1989), by (Leslie) Sam Phillips, exploited the underground success of these folksingers to launch pop careers.

The most genuine street experience was depicted by Texas-born Michelle Shocked (2). She recorded the humble and fiery **Texas Campfire Tapes** (1986) in the spirit of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, singing about the issues of her (punk and post-feminist) generation. Her songwriting peaked with the electrifying **Short Sharp Shocked** (1988), but then Sharp began a stylistic pilgrimage that took her to visit the era of jazz big-bands on **Captain Swing** (1989), folk and blues of the early days on **Arkansas Traveler** (1992) and gospel (on her unreleased fifth album). She finally managed to wed her populist passion and her jazz-blues sound on **Kind Hearted Woman** (1994), her most poignant work, reminiscent of John Mellencamp's rural epics, and to synthesize her musical explorations on the erudite **Deep Natural** (2002). Despite her tormented biography and rebellious attitudes, Shocked was fundamentally a collector of sonic icons à la Ry Cooder.

That standard of female folksinger migrated to the Bay Area via Barbara Manning (1), who had sung on two legendary folk-rock albums such as 28th Day's **28th Day** (1985) and World Of Pooh's **The Land Of Thirst** (1989). Her **Lately I Keep Scissors** (1988) was one of the most intimate and harrowing confessions of the era.

Two Los Angeles-based songwriters who came from the background of saloon-oriented roots-rock and Nashville-ian country music stood out. Lucinda Williams proved to be a worthy heir to Gram Parsons' progressive country-rock on **Lucinda Williams** (1989) before going pop with **Sweet Old World** (1993). Victoria Williams (1) went in the other direction when she followed **Happy Come Home** (1987), arranged and produced by Van Dyke Parks, with **Swing The Statue** (1990), an eclectic and austere collection that mixed her childish warble, elegant post-modernist studies, and personal journeys to the otherworld, while evoking Tom Petty, Van Morrison and Leonard Cohen. It was fitting that she eventually struck a stylistic balance with the chamber ambience of **Musings Of A Creekdipper** (1998).

A more traditional take on folk and country was advocated in Georgia by the Indigo Girls (1), i.e. Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, whose vocal harmonies and country guitars penned introspective journees such as **Indigo Girls** (1989).

#### **Canada 1980-88**

Canada boasted two of the greatest female voices of the time (and of all times).

Jane Siberry (23) was, first and foremost, a versatile and poignant "actress". Rarely had such a plain voice engineered such a phenomenal web of emotions. **No Borders Here** (1983) mixed romantic ballads, oneiric meditations and lugubrious psychodramas. Her eclecticism was sober and artless, but actually extraordinary. The music drew inspiration from the music-hall, easy-listening, tv commercials, off-kilter disco-music as well as from folk and rock music. Siberry did not hesitate to absorb anything in order to confer maximum incisiveness to her hyper-realistic streams of consciousness on the female condition. The balance of an almost childish persona and erudite, post-modernist arrangements was also the scaffolding of **Speckless Sky** (1984), a work that further expanded the psychological and stylistic range of her pieces. That sonic overload reached monumental proportions on **The Walking** (1987), amid lush, jazzy, funky, electronic arrangements. Siberry's delirious imagination had

reached a terminal point: **Bound By The Beauty** (1989) regressed to an acoustic setting (and to a "rootsy" feeling). However, **When I Was A Boy** (1993), a collaboration with producer Brian Eno, was even more avantgarde, a lattice of intricate filigrees immersed in an eerie ambience and scoured by a crowd of voices (whispered, insane, epic, fearful, catatonic, traumatized, numbed). The ghosts of Van Morrison and Tim Buckley hovered over **Maria** (1995), an almost surreal meeting of Freud and jazz. Siberry's acrobatic fusion yielded one of the most disturbing experiences in the history of popular music.

It took Mary Margaret O'Hara (10) four years to complete the avantgarde concept **Miss America** (1988). O'Hara's quirky voice was an instrument in itself, a super-human fusion of avantgarde techniques (such as those pioneered by Meredith Monk) and gospel/soul styling. Coupled with her sophisticated blues and jazz arrangements, it made for memorably intense atmospheres. After the commercial failure of this masterpiece, her second album was never released.

An even more personal and moody style was coined in Canada by Sarah McLachlan (1). She debuted with **Touch** (1988), a collection of miniature acoustic settings handcrafted like jewels. With the cold and stark **Solace** (1991) she developed into a melancholy and pensive chanteuse who could transcend her realistic topics and achieve a sort of sorrowful trance.

### ***Eccentrics 1982-86***

The new wave allowed solitary and fiercely independent musicians to find an audience. Such is the case with Jandek (Sterling Smith), in Texas, who released over 30 albums between 1978 and 2000, and Stevie Moore, in New Jersey, who released more than 100 records, cassettes and discs between 1973 and 2000.

The crazy genius of Daniel Johnston (4) blurred the line between the convivial joker and the tragic bard. Despite mental illness and an erratic lifestyle, his quest for unadulterated pop was meant to be no-nonsense. His home-made cassettes, beginning with the blissful meanderings of **Songs Of Pain** (1981) and staging an early exploit with the jovial and naive **Hi How Are You** (1983), introduced a character who was ideologically and musically closer to Jonathan Richman than, say, Syd Barrett. While these early cassettes only partially revealed the full contours of Johnston's time-warp, **Yip/Jump Music** (1983) gave meaning to his primitive, spartan art. **Continued Story** (1985), his first real studio recording, and **Respect** (1987) contained snapshots of greatness, so Johnston's masterpiece, **1990** (1990), did not come as a surprise. Its merry-go-round of catchy ditties and mad romps composed a demonic concept. The path towards a more accessible sound began in earnest with **Artistic Vice** (1992), the first album on which Johnston fronted a real band, and **Fun** (1994), featuring two Butthole Surfers (Paul Leary and King Coffey). **Fear Yourself** (2003), basically a collaboration with producer Mark Linkous (Sparklehorse), highlighted his melodic talent.

A veteran of the new wave, Pere Ubu's vocalist David Thomas (23) continued the insane program of Pere Ubu's modernist primitivism (or primitive modernism), relying on the same lethal combination of Captain Beefheart-ian vocal transgressions, grotesque and lyrical jamming, spastic dance tempos (or absence thereof). **The Sound Of The Sand** (1982), that gathered old cohorts such as Anton Fier, Allen Ravenstine, Mayo Thompson and Ralph Carney, as well as expats of British prog-rock such as Chris Cutler, John Greaves and Richard Thompson, set the course once and forever: frantic convulsions and cartoonish accompaniments; abstract mini-sonatas for acoustic instruments and electronics that display the casual euphoria of circus and fair music; vocals that radiate candid childishness and proclaim utter nonsense; pyrotechnic lullabies and rigmaroles that lose their thread in merrily apocalyptic soundscapes; a vast and demented range of moods. **Variations On A Theme** (1983), featuring Thompson, Fier, Cutler and Lindsay Cooper, was a work obsessed with Thomas' favorite mood, a mood that is neither tragic nor comic but a perfect (and impossible) fusion of the two. The further deranged picaresque adventures of **More Places Forever** (1985), with Cooper, Cutler and Tony Maimone, betrayed the erudite amalgam of Bertold Brecht, jazz, James Joyce and Dada. **Monster Walks The Winter Lake** (1986) was perhaps

his most accomplished work, due to the terrific chamber quartet of cellist Garo Yellin, keyboardist Ravenstine, bassist Tony Maimone and accordionist Daved Hild. They performed free-form chamber jazz-rock pieces that duly emphasized the voracious absurdity and agonizing madness of the vocalist. **Blame The Messenger** (1987), which was in a sense his "rock" album, showed that the border between Pere Ubu and David Thomas' solo work was merely an imaginary line (Cutler, Jim Jones, Maimone and Ravenstine were, de fact, a typical rock line-up). Thomas' oeuvre as a whole was the a premonition of the universal judgement.

As an adult, Alejandro Escovedo (2), who had played punk-rock with the Nuns in San Francisco, country-rock with Rank And File (1982) in Los Angeles, and roots-rock with the True Believers (1986) in Texas, became one of the most solemn voices of his generation. The melancholy and bleakly autobiographic **Gravity** (1992) was a post-party hangover crossed with Nick Drake's moribund dejection. **With These Hands** (1996) proved that orchestral music and rock'n'roll can coexist without sacrificing the outpour of emotions and confessions.

### **California 1985-88**

One of the most original albums of the era was crafted by former Wall Of Voodoo's vocalist Stan Ridgeway (10): **Big Heat** (1986), a set of tragic, sinister, noir tales set to martial, epic and/or danceable rhythms, enhanced by mourning or nostalgic strings, and imbued with Ennio Morricone's sense of destiny.

Another veteran of the Los Angeles scene, Dave Alvin (ex-Blasters) specialized in moral and realistic vignettes, starting with **Romeo's Escape** (1988).

San Francisco was graced by the isolated voice of Chris Isaak (2), a leftover from the "Sixties revival" movement who internalized Roy Orbison's romantic crooning, Elvis Presley's sobbing tenor, languid lounge music, Ennio Morricone's epic soundtracks, and the Ventures' atmospheric instrumentals. The melancholy and stoic mood of **Silvertone** (1985), well rendered by subterranean guitar strumming, revealed an existential malaise that was not desperate and not frightened, but rather impotent in the face of an immanent and universal force, as if contemplating a nirvana of absolute and eternal sorrow. **Chris Isaak** (1987) was an equally compelling show of desolate private masses and unfocused photographs of a distant grey landscape. His art peaked with the trance-like recital of *Wicked Game* (1989), despite the fact that **Heart Shaped World** (1989), **San Francisco Days** (1993) and **Forever Blue** (1995) offered more lively and less personal reproductions of the 1950s and 1960s.

When he debuted in 1988 with a home-made lo-fi cassette, Smog (14), the alias of Bill Callahan, was a further exaggeration of Isaak's manic depression. A superb architect of fatalist and oneiric atmospheres, Callahan devoted Smog to the paranoic exploration of an obsessive theme, the theme of a life that slowly fades away in nothingness. Smog identified so deeply with his poetry of loneliness that his songs seemed to lull himself into an intoxicating state of apathy and languor. Like Nick Drake before him, Smog conveyed the dismal sense of angst felt by one who did not want to live in a world that he did not love. With the brief, primitive and minimal compositions of **Sewn To The Sky** (1990) and **Forgotten Foundation** (1992), Smog experimented a format of gloomy litanies set to irrational arrangements that recalled Daniel Johnston. **Julius Caesar** (1993), instead, introduced a sophisticated composer and arranger, no matter how spectral and tragic the mood. Songs that ran the gamut from expressionist psychodrama to neoclassical lied, and often sounded like a rehearsal for Lou Reed's funeral, reached deep into the singer's alienation. The even more "mundane" approach of **Wild Love** (1995) refined Smog's chamber pop, the artist spinning his rosary of self-flagellation in a solemn tone, no matter how dark the catacomb in which he was buried alive. On albums such as **Red Apple Falls** (1997), Smog became a master of scripting soundtracks for an ordinary daily life: melodies borrowed from pop, country and classical music hinted at inner tragedies that never surface but simmer in absolute emptiness.

Also based in San Francisco, Carraig DeForest was a childish and irreverent folksinger in the vein of Jonathan Richman who accompanied his lullabies with a ukulele on **I Shall Be Released** (1987).

### **Popsingers 1982-86**

Several singer-songwriters rediscovered "pop" melody from the vintage point of the Sixties revival, particularly Michigan's Marshall Crenshaw (1), whose **Marshall Crenshaw** (1982) evoked memories of Buddy Holly, and Los Angeles' Tommy Keene.

Matthew Sweet (2) was a product of the era (and of the land) of R.E.M. He coined a kind of simple, melodic ballad that drew from Big Star's power-pop and the Byrds' jangling folk-rock. Despite the impressive cast (Jody Harris, Fred Maher, Chris Stamey, Anton Fier, Don Dixon, Bernie Worrell, Adele Bertel), Sweet played most of **Inside** (1986) on electronic keyboards and drum-machines. Thanks to the dual guitars of Robert Quine and Richard Lloyd, **Earth** (1989) and **Girlfriend** (1991) presented a far more intriguing sound. While paying homage to the classics of guitar pop, Sweet maintained a tone that was slightly neurotic and off-kilter (à la Television). The intricate group sound of **Altered Beast** (1993) crowned his personal calvary, while the slick production of **100% Fun** (1995) hinted at mainstream pop. The coupling of gentle melodies, introverted lyrics and raw guitars would become one of the most abused clichés of the following decade.

Ben Vaughn, from New Jersey, was a nostalgic bard whose **The Many Moods** (1986) harked back to the classics of rhythm'n'blues and rockabilly.

### **Britain 1981-88**

Britain had a very minor scene for singer songwriters, who were mainly veterans of punk-rock and of the new wave. They seemed mainly interested in recreating sounds of the past. Basically, they reinvented kitsch for the post-punk generation: Lloyd Cole, a master of easy-listening; Paul Roland, an aristocratic and decadent bard who excelled in medieval and esoteric themes, such as on **Danse Macabre** (1987); Jazz Butcher (Pat Fish), a witty and whimsical observer; Martin Newell (who also wrote Captain Sensible's best songs), an elegant XTC-style pop composer; World Party (ex-Waterboys Karl Wallinger), an even more baroque compendium of melodic music; Peter Murphy, the former Bauhaus vocalist and gothic icon, who converted to the orchestral and electronic ballad; Nikki Sudden (Nicholas Godfrey), the former Swell Maps, a nostalgic rocker; his brother Epic Soundtracks (Paul Godley), another orchestral pop singer in the tradition of Frank Sinatra and Burt Bacharach; Marc Almond (ex Soft Cell), the former Soft Cell who became an eccentric French-style chansonnier on **Untitled** (1983); John Foxx, the former Ultravox vocalist who crafted the sophisticated synth-pop of **The Garden** (1983); Gavin Friday, the former Virgin Prunes who walked a similar path at the intersection of Weill's cabaret, Jacques Brel's existential chansons and Tom Waits' noir, on **Each Man Kills The Thing He Loves** (1989), featuring Bill Frisell, Marc Ribot and cellist Hank Roberts; Orange Juice's Edwyn Collins, also seduced by orchestral pop on albums such as **Hellbent On Compromise** (1990); etc.

Relatively few British singer-songwriters of the era broke new ground.

Billy Idol pioneered the pop song in which electronic keyboards, electronic rhythms and a heavy-metal guitar (instead of a rock band) accompany the songwriter. The singer-songwriter for the cyberpunk generation was born with *White Wedding* (1982), *Rebel Yell* (1984), and *Sweet Sixteen* (1986).

Thomas Dolby's **The Golden Age Of Wireless** (1982) was a milestone for home-made lo-fi pop.

Billy Bragg was the authentic, populist folksinger of the punk generation. **Life's A Riot** (1983) introduced a solitary bard devoted to an obsessive and scathing satire of contemporary customs.

Ex-Soft Boys vocalist Robyn Hitchcock (2) created his own musical universe. **Black Snake Diamond** (1981) was basically **Underwater Moonlight** without Kimberley Rew (not a negligible detail), but the real Hitchcock was perhaps better represented by the mostly acoustic **I Often Dream Of Trains** (1984), which wed the ethereal and surreal style commonly associated with Syd Barrett and an intimate tone that was uniquely his own. With his new band, the Egyptians, he embraced a fuller sound on **Fegmania** (1985), his most eclectic work, and the heavily-arranged **Element Of Light** (1986).

The greatest of the British songwriters was probably the former Teardrop Explodes vocalist, Julian Cope (12), one

of the craziest and most creative minds of his generation. **World Shut Your Mouth** (1984) introduced an eclectic and oneiric bard devoted to kitschy melodies, majestic tempos and psychedelic arrangements (enhanced with electronic keyboards). His eccentric vision was fully captured on **Fried** (1984). His songs had the same classic quality of the Doors' melodramas, although his insane lyricism was probably a closer relative of Syd Barrett's. **Saint Julian** (1987) and **My Nation Underground** (1988) focused on his tremendous melodic gift, abandoning the odder edges of the first two albums. A stunning ability to craft impeccable songs led him to more ambitious endeavors: the socio-political concept **Peggy Suicide** (1991) and **Jehovahkill** (1992), so imbued with cryptic symbols to resemble a medieval bestiary. A world expert in German rock of the 1970s, Cope also recorded avantgarde pieces such as **Rite** (1993). He continued to refine his synthesis of Doors, Syd Barrett and Popol Vuh on **Autogeddon** (1994) but failed to fully capitalize on his unique talent.

The most important voice of the decade was probably Nick Cave (123), the Australian expatriot (ex-Birthday Party) who created a unique style of emphatic, metaphysical storytelling. **From Her To Eternity** (1984), featuring the Bad Seeds (Einsturzende Neubaten's guitarist Blixa Bargeld, Magazine's bassist Barry Adamson and Birthday Party's guitarist Mick Harvey on drums), revealed Cave as a preacher of the moral apocalypse. Over the course of several psychodramas, Cave agonized undertook an expressionistic odyssey in a nightmarish atmosphere which was sustained by a subtle texture of sounds at the edge of dissonance. Cave's paranoid crooning or hysteric whining soared towards the negative absolute in the middle of grotesque orgies of hammering instruments or propelled by funeral marches. **The Firstborn Is Dead** (1985) perfected Cave's harrowing narrative art while emphasizing the bluesy and gothic overtones. His "murder ballads" wrapped in increasibly dark symbolism, Cave proceeded to carve a metaphysical hell within the real hell of the human world. His morbid fantasies ideally bridged a werewolf's call of the wild to Verdi's requiem. Compared with so much tension, the meditations of **Your Funeral My Trial** (1986) sounded like light fare. Harvey switched to keyboards for **Tender Prey** (1988) and helped sculpt a more powerful sound. That sound (truly a voice of the apocalypse) propelled Cave's aesthetics of universal sorrow to the spiritual frenzy of **Good Son** (1990). Its hymns (which drew from spiritual and gospel) were still lugubrious, spectral and demonic, but at the same time drenched in visionary folly and rescued by a sense of redemption and salvation. Parallel to his Christian conversion and his relocation to Brazil, it sounded like Cave had reached a cathartic point: his inner ghosts were mutating into guardian angels, and his music was transformed from a soundtrack of hell to an anthem of the universal judgement. This breath-taking synthesis of Jim Morrison, Tom Waits and Bob Dylan, of William Blake, Walt Whitman and William Faulkner, was a mixed blessing: Cave indulged in his verbose noir stories on **Henry's Dream** (1992), and ended up repeating himself on **Let Love In** (1994). The twelve gruesome allegorical **Murder Ballads** (1996), the love odes of **Boatman's Call** (1997) and the piano-based elegies of **No More Shall We Part** (2001) still showed glimpses of his deranged and quixotic genius, but Cave had little to add to his personal Bible.

The figure of the sensual, decadent chanteuse was reborn in the second half of the 1980s, albeit in new settings. Notable female interpreters were Nigerian-born Sade, who was both a late practitioner of the languid pop-soul ballad for cocktail lounges and a precursor of trip-hop; Tanita Tikaram, a sophisticated disciple of Rickie Lee Jones; and Anna Domino, a ghostly jazz-blues performer; and country-pop songwriter Kirsty MacColl (who wrote *They Don't Know* for Tracey Ullman).

Former Lemon Kittens vocalist Danielle Dax (1), proved to be an eccentric arranger and acrobatic singer on **Pop Eyes** (1983), entirely composed, arranged and performed by her, and on the stylistic hodgepodge of the EP **Jesus Egg That Wept** (1984).

Former Police vocalist and jet-set personality Gordon Sumner, better known as Sting (1), coined an introverted, romantic pop-jazz kitsch with the velvety ballads of **The Dream Of The Blue Turtle** (1985), delivered in his world-famous falsetto. **Nothing Like The Sun** (1987) attempted an ethnic/atmospheric fusion along the lines of

Peter Gabriel's **So** or Paul Simon's **Graceland**, but Sting was more credible with the somber **The Soul Cages** (1991), which was basically a set of classical lieder and allegoric poems.

Ex-Smiths vocalist Morrissey launched his solo career with **Viva Hate** (1988), but maintained the worst clichés of the Smiths (the dreadfully pathetic crooning, the operatic melodies, the easy-listening arrangements, the depressed autobiographical meditations) until **Your Arsenal** (1992), his best most aggressive (or, better, less whining) work. Momus (Nicholas Currie) wed Wilde's decadent aesthetics, Byron's romantic spirit, Russell's erudite world knowledge and Pet Shop Boys' synth-pop in a controversial series of meditations on sex and death. If the results rarely matched his ambitions, his style progressed from the pseudo-biblical concept album **Circus Maximus** (1986) to the catchy synth-pop of **Tender Pervert** (Creation, 1988) to the superbly arranged disco-music of **Philosophy** (1995).

Costello was a major influence on the 1980s, as proven by auteurs such as John Wesley Harding.

Ireland's Sinead O'Connor (10), one of the most televised women of her time, channeled punk anger into an acrobatic melisma made of glacial, murderous shrieks and childish, guttural gasps. Her style fused Gregorian chants, African-American spirituals, celtic ballads, middle-eastern litanies, and Meredith Monk's experiments on the human voice. In the process, she became an icon of asexual rebelliousness (as opposed to Madonna's sexual kind). That schizoid persona was propelled on **The Lion And The Cobra** (1987) by hard-rock riffs, discordant electronics, neoclassical arrangements, funk grooves and hip-hop tremors, that delivered the full impact of her traumas. The shocking, epic and articulate vehemence of that debut was lost on **I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got** (1990), which reverted to sophisticated soul-pop music (such as Prince's *Nothing Compares*).

#### ***Celtic pop, 1985-87***

One of the most significant styles of the decade was the atmospheric new-age folk invented by the Irish singer Enya and the Canadian singer Loreena McKennitt, both largely inspired by Celtic music.

Enya Brennan (13), or, better, Eithne Ni Bhraonain (one of the Clannad family), concocted a potion of Celtic-like melodies, exotic rhythms, neoclassical electronics and angelic whispers that would be hugely influential, particularly on new-age music (which, in turn, was also her main influence). Her solo debut, **Enya** (1987), highlighted her talent for composing catchy and celestial melodies, embellishing them with all sorts of crescendos and bridges, and adding march-like tempos to them. The symbiosis between her childish tone and Nicky Ryan's meticulous, almost orchestral arrangements was magical. **Watermark** (1988) refined the idea, increasing the similarities of Enya's tunes (broadly based on nursery rhymes and lullabies) with madrigals, vespers and motets of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance, while at the same time increasing the doses of exotic ingredients. Rather than speculating on the hummability of the tunes, Enya and Ryan bestowed on them a lyrical, austere, solemn and ethereal quality. They also introduced a technique that was pure avantgarde: bring the tune to a standstill, until it becomes abstract sounds in slow, majestic motion. The melody then disappears, but only to reappear after lengthy pauses of immaculate ecstasy. Enya's sound continued to "faint", reaching a sort of coma on the even more ornate **Shepherd Moons** (1991) and **The Memory Of Trees** (1995). But her fundamental gift remained the melodies, as proven by the sublime carillon of *Only If* (1997).

Just like Enya, Loreena McKennitt (2) too had begun interpreting traditional Celtic music. However, she began writing her own music for the oneiric concept **Parallel Dreams** (1989), and then expanded her musical horizons to India and the Far East (and her arrangements to harp, accordion and keyboards, with **The Visit** (1992)). Her angelic and neoclassical approach to Celtic-like melodies peaked with the medieval concept **The Mask And The Mirror** (1994), the most intriguing document of her ethnic and temporal eclecticism, a collection of little symphonies for percussion, wind, string and keyboard instruments. The progression towards the pop world continued with **Book Of Secrets** (1997), a varied and elegant set of baroque string serenades, cossack dances, elegies for violin and tablas, hymns for piano, violin, contralto and choir, etc.

Enya and McKennitt soon had countless imitators in England, notably Heidi Berry.

### *Turning decade, 1988-89*

Surprisingly, towards the end of the decade, the US witnessed a revival of the traditional, brooding folksingers. The sowed the seeds for the styles of the following decade.

In New York, Roger Manning was an angry young folksinger in the tradition of early Bob Dylan and led an "anti-folk" crusade à la Michelle Shocked. In Texas, James McMurtry penned richly-detailed vignettes of the depressed American wasteland, particularly on **Candyland** (1992). In Nebraska, native-American John Trudell sang harsh political sermons.

In Ohio, Mark Edwards' project My Dad Is Dead (1) was devoted to introverted and highly personal confessions (bordering on the suicidal) in an unusually adult tone. Once he embraced power-rock riffs and forceful singing, on **The Taller You Are** (1989), he discovered a new version of Warren Zevon's or Bruce Springsteen's rock'n'roll passion.

Detroit-native Paul Kopasz, better known as Paul K, entrusted his bleak vision of life to bluesy collections such as **The Big Nowhere** (1991) and **Blues for Charlie Lucky** (1993).

New York's Joe Henry (3), staged one of the most impressive metamorphosis, the epitome of his generation's stylistic wandering. On his third album, the acoustic **Shuffletown** (1990), featuring guitarist T-Bone Burnett and jazz musicians Don Cherry (trumpet), Cecil McBee (bass) and Phil Kelly (piano), Henry embraced Van Morrison's folk-jazz, while **Short Man's Room** (1992) echoed the Band's gospel-rock and Bob Dylan's folk-rock, and **Kindness Of The World** (1993) hinted at conventional country-pop. But **Trampoline** (1996), **Fuse** (1998) and **Scar** (2001) presented an artist meddling with hip-hop, hard-rock, electronic arrangements, programmed drumming, tape manipulation and sampling.

A witty populist, sadly overlooked, delighted Canada: Blue Rodeo's keyboardist Bob Wiseman (1) penned the hilarious philosophizing of **In Her Dream** (1989),

Renowned producer Daniel Lanois (1), born in Canada but relocated to New Orleans, reconstructed "roots-rock" from an "ambient" (impressionistic, atmospheric, rarefied) perspective on **Acadie** (1989), dipping it into a glacial and artificial ambience, and then poured his soul into the more sincere **For The Beauty Of Wynona** (1993), an album of "songs", not just "sound".

Husker Du's Bob Mould (4) was unique in excelling both at dejected, personal statements and at catchy popular music. The cathartic self-flagellation of the mostly-acoustic **Workbook** (1989) led to the brutal and bitter introspection of the wildly electric **Black Sheets Of Rain** (1990), which evoked Neil Young's storming and martial nightmares. Both albums were trips into his fragile psyche, mythomaniac orgies that collapsed into the punk contradiction of a nirvana of eternal damnation. **Copper Blue** (1992), instead, credited to his new band Sugar, offered guitar-driven power-pop which was only slightly neurotic and alienated, and the solo **Bob Mould** (1996), on which he played every instrument, crowned his quest for a sound that was both the sound of his music and the sound of his psyche, and turned out to be his most melodic effort.

- 1985: a criminal case is solved thanks to DNA (England)
- 1985: a hole in the Ozone Layer is discovered over Antarctica
- 1985: Mikhail Gorbachev becomes the new leader of the Soviet Union and launches a campaign of openness ("glasnost") and restructuring ("perestroika")
- 1985: Ronald Reagan announces a program of "star wars" (SDI)
- 1985: the Arpanet is renamed Internet
- 1985: there are more immigrants from Asia (48%) than Latin America (35%)

## **5.17 USA & UK: Roots-rock of the 1980s**

### *Cow-punks 1984-86*

Just like the creative outburst of 1966 was followed by the "realignment" of 1970 (with Bob Dylan, the Byrds and the Grateful Dead returning to their musical roots), so was the "new wave" of 1976 followed by a revival of roots-rock. In just a few years, rock'n'roll went from the blasphemous fever of punk-rock to the traditional rhythms of roots-rock.

The difference between 1980 and 1970 was that in the 1980s the "realignment" took place a little bit at a time. It actually began in a disguised form, with the emergence of punk bands that disfigured the traditional styles, such as X, Dream Syndicate and Gun Club.

The idea led to the phenomenon of "cow-punks", punks who played country music but set their stories into the milieu of the misfits, the way Gram Parsons had done a generation earlier. Milestone recordings of the genre included several albums made in the South: **Native Sons** (1984), by Kentucky's Long Ryders; **Lost And Found** (1985), by Tennessee's Jason & The Scorcher; **Dash Rip Rock** (1986), by Louisiana's Dash Rip Rock, **Scarred But Smarter** (1986), by Georgia's Drivin'n'Cryin'.

North Carolina's Fetchin Bones (12) were, by far, the most spectacular "cow-punks" of the era. **Cabin Flounder** (1985) was raw roots-rock dynamated by the vibrant hysteria of vocalist Hope Nicholls (a cross between Patti Smith, X's Exene Cervenka and the Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde). The band played epileptic garage-rock that bordered on the nervous breakdown, blurring the line between rockabilly, slam-dance and hoe-downs. The rhythmic emphasis and the double guitar noise got even more crude and irreverent on **Bad Pumpkin** (1986), while **Galaxy 500** (1987) was mostly a tour de force by the vocalist.

Los Angeles became the headquarters of the first cowpunk wave, thanks to Tex & The Horseheads' **Tex & The Horseheads** (1984), Blood On The Saddle's **Blood On The Saddle** (1984), the Rave-ups' **Town + Country** (1985), Lone Justice's **Lone Justice** (1985), the album that introduced singer Maria McKee, Thelonious Monster's **Next Saturday Afternoon** (1987), and the Beat Farmers' **Tales Of The New West** (1985) in San Diego. Johnette Napolitano led her Concrete Blonde through the rustic and populist rock'n'roll of **Concrete Blonde** (1987).

Ohio's Great Plains, led by nasal vocalist Ron House and featuring organist Mark Wyatt, entertained the colleges with a bouncy, witty and catchy mixture of cow-punk and folk-rock on **Born in a Barn** (Homestead, 1984).

### *Populism 1984-86*

The ultimate creature of Los Angeles' barrios, Los Lobos (2), recycled an exuberant combination of rhythm'n'blues and tex-mex, of Doug Sahm and Flaco Jimenez. **How Will The Wolf Survive** (1984) was possibly the first album to find the common denominator among accordion, bajo sexto, rock guitar and drums. And it did so with the spirit of punk music: Cesar Rosas' incendiary guitar fugues, David Hidalgo's thundering tenor and drummer Louie Perez's uncontrollable urge created an explosive blend. They repeated that orgy of rhythms only once, with the demonic shuffle *Shakin' Shakin' Shakes* (1987), because they were maturing as romantic bards of the barrio and as eclectic calligraphic scholars of musical styles. The touching **The Neighborhood** (1990) and **Kiko** (1992) were simultaneously pensive and encyclopedic. On one hand, the songs plunged the listener into the world of the chicanos. On the other hand, the arrangements mixed orchestral passages a` la Duke Ellington, cajun accordions, cumbia tempos, New Orleans' rhythm'n'blues, mandolin-driven polkas, boogie, funk and rock'n'roll. Los Lobos' caustic, fatalistic and nostalgic social melodrama had become the soundtrack of the American melting-pot and of the American dream.

With **Johnson** (1988), Los Angeles' Pontiac Brothers shifted the emphasis towards populist rock in the vein of the Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen.

Boston's working-class heroes were Dan Zanes' Del Fuegos (1), whose **Longest Day** (1984) harked back to the

1970s, fusing American "blue-collar rock" (Springsteen, Seger, Mellencamp) and British "pub-rock" (Costello, Parker, Lowe).

In the same city, Treat Her Right, Mark Sandman's first band, told haunting stories on **Tied To The Tracks** (1989) using the blues as a vehicle but a blues that was almost too slick to still be blues.

Among the great New York-based populist voices of the second half of the decade, the leaders were the Del-Lords (2), formed by ex-Dictators guitarist Scott Kempner. Kempner, one of the great storytellers of rock music, penned the suave epics of **Frontier Days** (1984) by finding an unlikely common ground between sounds of the Sixties (Mersey-beat hooks, surf choruses, garage distortions) and sounds of the grass-roots (cowboy ballads, folk melodies, Byrds-ian guitars, bluesy rhythms a` la Creedence Clearwater Revival). Refining that idea with a deeper sense of identification with its anti-heroes, **Johnny Comes Marching Home** (1986) sounded like a cycle of solemn odes to the American village, in the spirit of Springsteen's **Born In The USA** and Petty's **Southern Accents**, while sonically continuing the quest for a compromise between the Blasters and the Fleshtones (and furthermore set in Nashville). If the hard-rock sound of **Based On A True Story** (1988) sounded out of context, **Lovers Who Wander** (1990) was a touching, almost philosophical swan-song that wrapped up the group's mission in a blaze of glory.

Elizabeth Brown's Absolute Grey (1), also from New York, assembled carefully dramatized issues on **What Remains** (1986), as well as on its successor **Sand Down The Moon** (1987) that would not be released for three years.

The Silos' second album, **Cuba** (1987), was a good example of how this generation could be derivative of the classics without sounding like the classics at all.

Few roots-rock outfits managed to fuse the domestic tone and the epic tone the way Seattle's Walkabouts (2) did. Chris Eckman's melancholy elegies, Carla Torgeson's solemn and mournful harmonies, and a folk-rock sound that recalled a noisier Fairport Convention, led to the vibrant **Cataract** (1989) and to the prophetic and desolate **Scavenger** (1991). The vast fresco of **New West Motel** (1993) began a progression towards ever more eccentric arrangements.

#### ***West Coast roots-rock 1985-86***

The Bay Area was terrorized by the craziest of all roots-rockers, Santa Cruz-based Camper Van Beethoven (23), one of the most brilliant and influential bands of the decade, led by vocalist and guitarist David Lowery and multi-instrumentalist Jonathan Segel. Other bands had tried a folk/punk fusion, but their version was positively demented. The hilarious **Telephone Free Landslide Victory** (1985) offered a merry blend of ska, country, surf, rock'n'roll, and, last but not least, fake world-music, with a spirit that drew from (at least) punk, the novelty numbers of the 1950s, the music-hall, jug-bands of the 1940s, Ennio Morricone's soundtracks, and the psychedelic freaks of the 1960s. It sounded as the unlikely meeting point of Syd Barrett, Frank Zappa, the Third Ear Band and the Holy Modal Rounders. The instrumental skills increased (particularly Segel's keyboards and violin parts), on **II & III** (1986), allowing them greater freedom as far as counterpoint goes, but also prompting them to play slightly more regular roots-rock (i.e., to focus on the music and not on the gags). Their third album, **Camper Van Beethoven** (1986) was no longer a sendup of world-music but a new kind of world-music. By merging the psychotic verve of the first album and the erudite ultra-fusion of the second album, Camper Van Beethoven had produced the ultimate folk blasphemous. They finally adopted a more mainstream sound on **Our Beloved Revolutionary Sweetheart** (1988), without sacrificing the idea of mixing untouchable genres but vastly reducing their musical negligence, and a serious, adult tone on **Key Lime Pie** (1989), a collection of (relatively) subdued ballads that evoke Neil Young and Bob Dylan.

San Francisco's scene offered a wealth of folk-rock bands. Samuel Coomes' Donner Party (1) specialized in eclectic and mildly psychedelic roots-rock on their two self-titled albums, **Donner Party** (1987) and **Donner**

**Party** (1988), particularly the latter, just a bit more elegiac and nostalgic.

The **Catheads** (3), a supergroup of sort, featuring vocalist Mark Zanandrea, former Ophelias' guitarist Sam Babbitt, former X-Tal's bassist Alan Alan Korn and Donner Party's drummer Melanie Clarin, harked back to the angelic quirkiness of the hippies. **Hubba** (1987) was a gentle infusion of country, blues and folk, while **Submarine** (1988) experimented with neoclassical arrangements and hard-rock guitars. Zanandrea and Clarin's *It Thing* was the ideal continuation of the Catheads: **The Ode** (1992) relished in the juxtaposition of pop and rock, of tradition and new wave, of ethereal and aggressive.

**Thin White Rope** (2), from nearby Davis, displayed the strongest psychedelic overtones, which their best albums, **Exploring The Axis** (1985) and **Sack Full Of Silver** (1990), wed to Guy Kyser's existential angst, releasing visions of a majestic wasteland amid gales of hypnotic quasi-raga country-rock.

Other notable roots-rock albums of the second half of the 1980s from Bay Area bands include: **Downy Mildew's Broomtree** (1987), **Wire Train's In A Chamber** (1983), **28th Day's 28th Day** (1985).

**American Music Club** (13) stood apart as one of the groups that transformed roots-rock into an intimate, almost transcendental experience. Mark Eitzel's laconic pessimism, halfway between Gram Parsons's calm despair, Nick Drake's funereal lament, and Tim Buckley's dreamy agony, acted as the center of mass for the atmospheric psychodramas of **Engine** (1987). The dialectics between instruments (including hazy snippets of strings and keyboards) and vocals punctuated the otherwise evanescent melodies of *Big Night, At My Mercy, Outside This Bar*, in a manner that was also reminiscent of Van Morrison. Eitzel's stream of consciousness reached for a visceral tension on **California** (1988), a work that was both more austere and more introverted. *Firefly, Bad Liquor, Blue And Grey Shirt* and *Highway 5* were not songs but swoons of communication breakdown. The band indulged in psychological impressionism, letting Eitzel's words fluctuate in a mist of emotions. It was also a vocal tour de force of Eitzel, who followed his stories modulating both anger and romance, impersonating both the crooner and the shouter. The bleak and lyrical **United Kingdom** (1989) seemed to complete Eitzel's spiritual self-flagellation, besides absorbing more of the jazz, soul and gospel eloquence for tracks as adventurous as *The Hula Maiden* and *Heaven Of Your Hands*. The nightmare relented on **Everclear** (1991), the album that marked a transition from the "closed" landscape of the first phase to the "open" landscape of the second phase. Less intense but more humane, only a couple of moments (*The Confidential Agent* and *Miracle On 8th Street*) recalled past agonies, but the playing was more accomplished and the arrangements more articulate. The more complex, dense and atmospheric sound **Mercury** (1993), which features *The Hopes And Dreams of Heaven's 10,000 Whores*, and the sophisticated soul-pop of **San Francisco** (1994), capitalized on Eitzel's ability to merge elegant melancholy and roaring passion.

#### **Texas roots-rock 1986-89**

Texas bands, on the other hand, were more on the "cow" side than the "punk" side of the equation. Centered on intellectual Austin, they were seriously trying to be part of a tradition, even when they still embodied the punk ethos. **Timbuk 3** drew from the Dire Straits and Bob Dylan's country-rock phase for **Greetings From** (1986). Michael Hall's **Wild Seeds** (1) borrowed the intense empathy of Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty and wed it to a kaleidoscope of Sixties sounds on **Brave Clean + Reverent** (1986). **Poi Dog Pondering**, a seven-unit combo (including violinist Susan Voelz), harked back to the "jug bands" of the 1950s on their debut EP **Poi Dog Pondering** (1988), a creative stew of country & western, zydeco, skiffle, pop, jazz, folk-rock. **Texas Instruments** concocted one of the best synthesis of folk-rock and punk-rock with **Sun Tunnels** (1988).

On albums such as **Hello Young Lovers** (1989), **Glass Eye** (1) concocted a unique jazz-country-rock fusion that was both brainy and detached, the antithesis of their era.

#### **Great Lakes roots-rock 1986-89**

The Great Lakes had their share of the action. Wisconsin, where the Violent Femmes had changed forever the meaning of "roots-rock", was particularly fertile. Led by singer-songwriters Sammy Llanas and Kurt Neumann, the

BoDeans (1) coined a catchy rootsy style with **Love And Hope And Sex And Dreams** (1986), a style that ran the gamut from the Everly Brothers to Fleetwood Mac (as their 1991 hit *Good Things* would prove). EIEIO (1) were even more varied, evoking Byrds, Little Feat, Band and other masters of roots-rock on **Land Of Opportunity** (1986).

Minneapolis, the new Mecca of hardcore after the renaissance led by Husker Du and the Replacements, was equally fecund. Beat Rodeo's **Home In The Heart Of The Beat** (1986) was one of the albums that countered the monopoly of hardcore.

However, Minneapolis' success story was that of Soul Asylum (2), originally disciples of Husker Du, whose **Made To Be Broken** (Twin Tone, 1986) retained the verve of pop-core while adopting the romantic cliches of power-pop and folk-rock. As guitarist Dan Murphy and vocalist Dave Pirner matured, the band's style veered towards a melodic hard-rock tinged with the Replacements' epos on **Hang Time** (1988). The mainstream sound of **And The Horse They Rode In** (1990) led to *Runaway Train* (1992), their best compromise between generational anthem and power-ballad.

In Ohio, Greg Dulli's Afghan Wigs (1), who had begun as punks with **Big Top Halloween** (1988) and pseudo-grunge rockers with **Up In It** (1990), an abrasive blend of Replacements and Dinosaur Jr, rediscovered soul music and the rhythm'n'blues ballad on **Congregation** (1992), a calmer and catchier collection. Despite the sell-out, **Gentlemen** (1993) was not only meticulously well-crafted but also Dulli's most sinister and disturbing confession.

Chicago's Shrimp Boat (1), featuring vocalist Sam Prekop, coined a jazz-soul-country fusion that sounded like a cross between Camper Van Beethoven and the Minutemen, particularly on their second album, **Duende** (1992).

One of the most original and radical revisions of the blues and country tradition was carried out by a Canadian group, the Cowboy Junkies (1), led by siblings Michael (guitar and songwriting) and Margo (vocals) Timmins. **Trinity Sessions** (1988) paraded melancholy spectral dirges whispered in noir-film atmospheres by a vocalist who sounded like the chanteuse of a cocktail lounge or a Marlene Dietrich of a Frontier brothel.

#### *Alt-country 1988-89*

In Chicago, at the turn of the decade, roots-rock spawned a style that was Nashville's country music transposed into the small bedrooms of the disaffected youth in the small towns of the heartland. Souled American (2), formed by singer-songwriters Joe Adducci and Chris Grigoroff, featuring guitarist Scott Tuma, and inspired by Camper Van Beethoven, penned one of the most lunatic albums of the era, **Fe** (1988), an idiosyncratic stew of country, blues, jazz, reggae and zydeco, delivered at the lazy, lethargic tempos of the Cowboy Junkies. The whackiness was replaced by technical dexterity on **Flubber** (1989), but the lugubrious letargy of **Frozen** (1994) and **Notes Campfire** (1997), both eroded by lengthy nightmarish tracks and stripped-down texture-oriented instrumental jamming, reinvented their sound around Tuma's guitar.

Led by singer-songwriters Jay Farrar and Jeff Tweedy, Uncle Tupelo (1) pretty much invented a new genre when they released **No Depression** (1990), a collection of country ballads played with the fury of hardcore. Abandoning the punk edge and focusing on the depressed stories, the acoustic tour de force of **March 16-20 1992** (1992) invented more than a genre: it created a movement for sincere, populist and political music. **Anodyne** (1993) hinted at the mainstream appeal of this idea. After they parted ways, the two leaders would form two of the most influential bands of the 1990s: Son Volt and Wilco.

Following the melancholy and nostalgic **Jayhawks** (1986) and **Blue Earth** (1989), the Jayhawks (1), formed in Minnesota by vocalist Mark Olson and guitarist Gary Louris, made an album inspired by Neil Young and Gram Parsons, **Hollywood Town Hall** (1992), that embodied the ethos of the urban population in search of rural candor. **Tomorrow The Green Grass** (1995) virtually began a new career, thanks to lush arrangements and harmonies that recalled Fleetwood Mac and Crosby Stills Nash & Young.

The naive pop of Florida's Vulgar Boatmen (1) on **You And Your Sister** (1989) was devoted to simple stories of everyday's life.

These groups planted the seeds for the "alt-country" phenomenon of the 1990s.

#### *Nashville, 1982-89*

In the second half of the decade, Nashville underwent a generational renewal of its own. The "urban cowboys" of the 1980s (Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, Barbara Mandrell), who had turned country music into a commodity, were increasingly out of touch with the younger generation. The gap was bridged by the "new-traditionalist" movement, that harked back to honky tonk and the outlaws, and sometimes borrowed the casual and angry aesthetic of punk-rock. The first neo-traditionalist was arguably George Strait, whose **Strait from the Heart** (1982) set the pace for the rest of the pack. Randy Travis' **Storms Of Life** (1986) Clint Black's **Killin' Time** (1989) also set standards, but it was Garth Brooks who became the superstar of the neo-traditionalists with the numerous hits off **No Fences** (1990) and **Ropin' the Wind** (1991). These were the stars. Others never made the charts, but were no less fluent in the new idiom, for example, Jim Lauderdale, a prolific songwriter whose best album was probably **Planet of Love** (1991),

The music of Lyle Lovett (1) was hardly country music at all. His debut, **Lyle Lovett** (1986), borrowed from country, rock, rhythm'n'blues, jazz, folk and pop. **Pontiac** (1988) achieved a formidable balance of atmosphere, tunesmith, rhythm and melody. Lovett even embraced big-band jazz with **His Large Band** (1989).

**Guitar Town** (1986), by Steve Earle (1), shocked the scene with its loud and frantic sound that mixed rockabilly, honky-tonk and blues, and borrowed the emphasis from Bruce Springsteen's populist rock.

Dwight Yoakam (1), who had debuted in 1984 in an acoustic, unadorned style, matured with the eclectic and introverted **If There Was a Way** (1990) and **This Time** (1993), finally helped by adequate arrangements.

Junior Brown (1) was a virtuoso whose guitar playing turned **12 Shades of Brown** (1990) into one of the most inventive country albums of all times.

Among female interpreters, Trisha Yearwood was probably the one who could claim to be heir to Linda Ronstadt.

#### *Instrumental roots, 1985-88*

Surf music and instrumental music of the Sixties were best represented by Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet (11), but it took a while for guitarist Brian Connelly and his cohorts to release a full-length album. A sequel of superb EPs, such as **Love Without Words** (1985), **Wow Flutter Hiss** (1986) and **Schlagers** (1987), refined their approach to the genre, which is a mixture of nostalgic and neurotic, of old-fashioned and post-modernist. Their instrumental vignettes drew from blues, pop, country, rockabilly, surf, Ennio Morricone, Duan Eddy, and many other sonic icons of the past without ever quoting them "literally". Those vignettes were like metaphors imprinted in a collective subconscious. Their masterpiece, **Dim The Lights Chill The Ham** (1992), was the first album since the Raybeats to revolutionize the idea of instrumental rock'n'roll, while retaining a humorous attitude à la Leo Kottke. **Sport Fishin'** (1993) was slightly more serious and less effervescent.

The resilience of the genre around the world was proven, for example, by Laika & The Cosmonauts's **C'mon Do The Laika** (1988) as far as in Finland.

## **5.18 USA: DJs, rappers, ravers**

One of the problems with the 1980s was that, by the end of the decade, a "rocker" was as obsolete a social and musical figure as a pop singer had been in 1956. During the 1980s three revolutions had taken hold of popular music: the emergence of disc-jockeys as a creative force (in particular in techno music), the advent of hip-hop (and therefore of the "rapper"), and the marriage of industrial music, heavy metal and hardcore (generically associated to the "cyber-punk" culture).

**Rap-music 1979-87**

In 1975 a Jamaican disc-jockey, Clive "Hercules" Campbell, "re-invented" the breakbeat in the Bronx of New York, while another young black man of the Bronx, 13-year old Theodore "Grand Wizard" Livingstone was accidentally discovering the "skratching" sound of a turntable. The technical foundations of rap and hip-hop have been laid by those two more or less random events.

Rap was born as an incestuous inter-cultural phenomenon of New York's poor suburbs (Harlem, Soho, Greenwich Village, Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn). Rap music was an evolution of Jamaica's dub music. The rapper would record his voice over a pre-recorded base of percussions, bass and horns. The precursors of rap were disc-jockeys, or "spinner", who used the technique to comment on the song or to incite to the crowd to dance. The idea of altering the instrumental score originated from the need to provide non-stop dance tracks, but it evolved as disc-jockeys began to pronounce more pretentious slogans that became the equivalent of song lyrics, and as they learned how to operate the electronic equipment to accompany them with more syncopated beats.

Inspired by James Brown, the kids who attended Campbell's parties developed a sexy and stylized manner of dancing. Hip-hop dancing became an artistic idiom on its own. The "b-boys" were only interested in the instrumental break of a song, and Campbell soon learned how to build fictitious tracks out of the breaks of funk songs. While gay discos were becoming more chic and "white", Hercules' parties remained faithful to hardcore funk music. Nearby, Afrika Bambaataa, leader of the Zulu gang, threw his first party at the end of 1976. Meanwhile, Joseph "Grandmaster Flash" Sadler was holding open-air parties, and Sadler was becoming a master of techniques such as "cutting" (cutting a song on the beat), "phasing" (altering the speed of the turntable) and "back-spinning" (spinning a record counterclockwise) that enhanced the overall experience.

The "deejays" became cult figures, the modern equivalent of the Medieval knights, fighting duels that were based on turntable skills.

The first rap records were the Sugar Hill Gang's *Rapper's Delight* (1979) and Kurtis Blow's *Christmas Rapping* (1979) and *Breaks* (1979).

As the dizzy collages of breakbeats, sound effects and song fragments (a veritable form of the "montage" preached by the Italian "futurists" in the 1910s) became more daring, rappers began to focus on lyrics to match the music. Rappers began singing "messages", such as Grandmaster Flash's *Message* (1982) and Bambaataa's *Planet Rock* (1982), that established a form of underground communication between the genre's practitioners. Grandmaster Flash's "messages" were frescoes of ghetto life, fusing socio-political commentary and senseless partying. His *The Adventures... on the Wheels Of Steel* (1981) was one of the first singles to use samples of other people's songs (Chic, Blondie, Queen).

The first conscious artist of rap's aural collage was Afrika Bambaataa (1), the Leonardo of the "beatbox", the rap auteur of *Planet Rock* (1982), *Looking For The Perfect Beat* (1982), *Renegades Of Funk* (1983), *World Destruction* (1984), whose album **Beware** (Tommy Boy, 1986) summarized five years of experiments (facilitated by producer Arthur Baker) in mixing samples, epileptic beats, disco grooves and Kraftwerk's electronic pop, and defined the genre called "electro".

The most important innovation from the point of view of the instruments was the birth of a new instrument, the turntable. In 1983 turntablist DST (DXT) played a solo of "sktratch" on Herbie Hancock's *Rockit*. Slowly, the turntablist became as important as the guitarist in rock music.

The fusion between hip-hop and the rock world was first achieved by Run-DMC (3), whose albums **Run-DMC** (1984), **King Of Rock** (1985) and **Raising Hell** (1986) ran the gamut from hard-rock guitar riffs to politicized raps.

Even better, the collective called Tackhead (23), who released albums under different names, offered one of the most explosive and agit-prop mixes of the two worlds (and many other worlds). Featuring keyboardist Keith

Leblanc, bassist Doug Wimbish, guitarist Skip McDonald and London producer Adrian Sherwood as the live mixing engineer (thus virtually introducing a new instrument of a group's line-up), they first helped former Pop Group's vocalist Mark Stewart make the terrifying **Learning To Cope With Cowardice** (1983) and its follow-up **Mark Stewart** (1987), and then proceeded to reinvent funk, soul, rap and rock via a multi-ethnic montage on Gary Clail's **Tape Time** (1987) and Keith Leblanc's **Stranger Than Fiction** (1989). Their terrorist mission culminated on the apocalyptic vision of **Friendly As A Hand Grenade** (1989).

L.L. Cool J (1) sang about the splendors and the miseries of the ghetto on **Radio** (1985), and then proceeded to coin a hyper-realistic and hyper-egocentric hyper-fusion on the subsequent albums.

Other transitional albums of the "hip-hop" culture were Whodini's **Escape** (1984), Full Force's **Full Force** (1985), Erik B & Rakim's **Paid In Full** (1987). They moved the genre simultaneously towards pop melody (and therefore mass acceptance) and towards a celebration of gang violence (and therefore mass repudiation), a contradiction in terms that would remain inherent in the music.

The "message" became even more relevant with Public Enemy (12), whose agit-prop hip-hop music was an explicit call to arms in the face of urban violence. Sandwiched between the galvanizing but naive **Yo Bum Rush The Show** (1987) and the mature and self-indulgent **Fear Of A Black Planet** (1990), their masterpiece (and hip-hop's masterpiece) **It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back** (1988) was a collection of powerful sermons, reminiscent of the MC5.

Under the influence of Public Enemy, social commentary became more prominent and to the point on Boogie Down Productions's **Criminal Minded** (1987), EPMD's **Strictly Business** (1988), Stetsasonic's **In Full Gear** (1988), Ultramagnetic MCs's **Critical Beatdown** (1988), Gang Starr's **Step In The Arena** (1990), and Brand Nubian's **One For All** (1990).

This eventually led to "gangsta rap", which was not so much about gangster lives but about a recreation of the noir/thriller atmosphere of the drug culture. Schoolly D virtually invented the genre with **Schoolly D** (1986) and **Saturday Night** (1987), but it was in Los Angeles that the form found its natural milieu. NWA formalized it on **Straight Outta Compton** (1988), and two of its members, Ice Cube with **AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted** (1990) and Dr Dre with **The Chronic** (1992), gave it its masterpieces. Gangsta rap became one of America's most significant popular styles and peaked with 2 Pac's **Me Against The World** (1995).

Rap crossed the racial divide with white rappers such as the Beastie Boys (1), particularly on **Licensed To Ill** (1987), and 3rd Bass, whose **The Cactus Album** (1989) was one of the "blackest" albums of the time.

Rap also crossed genders with the advent of a viable generation of female rappers, best represented by M.C. Lyte's **Lyte As A Rock** (1988) and Queen Latifah's **All Hail The Queen** (1989). The most successful female rappers were Salt'N Pepa, whose **Blacks' Magic** (1990) bordered on pop music.

San Francisco produced some of the most virulent agit-prop rap of all times: the Beatnigs (1), with **Beatnigs** (1988), Consolidated (1), with **The Myth Of Rock** (1990), and the Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy (1), with **Hypocrisy Is The Greatest Luxury** (1992).

Hip-hop began to dominate the airwaves at the turn of the decade. New York was still leading the rap nation, thanks to its innumerable "posses" and "crews". The best album to come out of the "Juice Crew" was Kool G Rap & DJ Polo's **Wanted Dead Or Alive** (1990). The "Native Tongues" posse produce at least three notable albums: De La Soul's **3 Feet High and Rising** (1989), Jungle Brothers' **Done By The Forces Of Nature** (1989) and A Tribe Called Quest's **The Low End Theory** (1991).

Western rap slowly became to compete against Eastern rap, thanks to Ice-T's **Power** (1988), MC Hammer's **Let's Get It Started** (1988), Digital Underground's **Sex Packets** (1990), and reached its artistic peak with Cypress Hill's hyper-depressed trilogy of **Cypress Hill** (1991), **Black Sunday** (1993) and **Temples of Boom** (1995).

The brief fad of "new jack swing" was started and ruled by Teddy Riley's Guy, whose **Guy** (1988) wed hip-hop

and rhythm'n'blues in a highly entertaining manner.

In Britain, The Art Of Noise (1), a collective of disc-jockeys and producers featuring electronic musician Anne Dudley, indulged in studio-made instrumental tracks that wed hip-hop beats and catchy melodies, from *Beatbox* (1983) to *Legs* (1986), and predated "ambient house" and other genres on **Who's Afraid Of** (1984). They showed that the new dance-music could be manufactured in the studio, without any need for a "star".

### **Techno 1984-88**

Techno came out of Detroit quietly, hardly noticed, but the work of Juan Atkins (1), Carl Craig (2), Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson will soon change the face of discos around the world.

The inventor of techno was probably Juan Atkins, who in 1981 began making "techno" records in Detroit: pounding and fast rhythm from a Roland sequencer MSK-100, coupled with stripped-down funk arrangements. Atkins was a member of the collective Deep Space Soundworks, formed with high-school buddies Derrick May and Kevin Saunderson and centered around Detroit's downtown disco "Music Institute". Atkins coined the term "techno" to define the high-tech funk of Cybotron, his joint project with synthesizer expert Rick Davis, that produced singles such as *Alleys Of Your Mind* (1981) and *Cosmic Cars* (1982). The identification of "techno" with a fast electronic beat began with their album *Techno City* (1984). Atkin's first single as Model 500, *No UFO's* (1985), fulfilled that idea. Atkins was a visionary, but followed in the footsteps of visionaries who had come before him. His aim was a futuristic music that would wed the abstract funk of Parliament with the robotic synth-pop of Kraftwerk.

In 1988 Atkins, May and Saunderson traveled to Britain and Atkins was invited to play in front of a huge crowd at one of the open-air events called "raves". Atkins soon became a staple of London's underground and helped spread Detroit techno to the rest of Europe through links with labels in Belgium and Berlin. He quickly lost control of the music that he had invented, and even his best album, a sci-fi concept titled **Deep Space** (1995), sounded dated compared with what his disciples were doing around the world.

Saunderson was the brain behind Inner City's *Big Fun* (1988), that pioneered the techno boom of 1988. His music owed more to Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream than to rhythm'n'blues or funk. **Paradise** (Virgin, 1989) was the first full-length album released by a Detroit techno disc-jockey.

The most experimental of the trio of founding fathers, May introduced both a psychological element and a futuristic vision in dance music. Rhythm Is Rhythm's *Nude Photo* (1987) and *Strings Of Life* (1987) were two of the early masterpieces of techno. Broadcast on Alan Oldham's "Fast Forward" radio show, they started the techno revolution. May's baroque, skeletal, melancholy style gained him the nickname of "the Miles Davis of techno".

Carl Craig, May's chief assistant in Detroit and London, was the brain behind Psyche's *Crackdown* (1989) and Innerzone Orchestra's *Bug In The Bassbin* (1995), two influential singles that changed the face of techno. He, too, reached his artistic zenith later in life, with the solo album **Landcruising** (1995) and the Innerzone Orchestra's **Programmed** (1999), two experimental works that distanced him from the dancefloor.

### **House**

"House" music was a more or less natural evolution of disco-music. In fact, its two birth places were two of the historical clubs of disco-music, Chicago's "Warehouse" and New York's "Paradise Garage". In the mid-1980s their resident disc-jockeys (respectively Frankie Knuckles and Larry Levan) began playing (or, better, "spinning") electronic dance music built around drum-machines and soul vocals.

In 1984 the Chicago record store "Imports Etc" began selling "house" records (as a contraction of "Warehouse"), first ones being Jessie "Z Factor" Saunders' *Fantasy*, Frankie Knuckles' *Your Love* and Walter Gibbons' *Set It Off*. In 1986 another Chicago disc-jockey, Nathaniel Jones (aka DJ Pierre, and later known as Phuture), invented "acid house", a kind of house music that was built around the Roland TB-303 bassline machine: Phuture's *Acid Tracks* (1987) was the first acid-house single, and DJ Pierre's *Dream Girl* (1988) was perhaps the most influential.

Progress came quickly with Farley "Jackmaster Funk" Keith's *Love Can't Turn Around* (1986), Steve Hurley's *Music Is The Key* (1986), the first house record to incorporate a rap, Marshall Jefferson's *Move Your Body* (1986), that invented the "deep" sound of house, the Nightwriters' *Let The Music Use You* (1987), Ralphie Rosario's *You Used To Hold Me* (1987), etc. The headquarters of house music moved to Ron Hardy's "Muzic Box" (which had opened in 1983) and house music rediscovered the song format, the melody and the vocals. Todd Terry resurrected the New York scene with some successful sample-based tracks, such as *Alright Alright* (1987), *Weekend* (1988), *Bango* (1988), but, mostly, house music had ended its creative process. Todd Terry defined New York house during the '80s, a varied sampladelic s

If the USA had invented the style, it was certainly Europe that transformed it into mass hysteria. The story revolves around a Spanish tourist town, Ibiza, and a new drug, "ecstasy". Banned in Britain and in the USA, this drug became popular at all-night parties at Ibiza's open-air dance club "Amnesia". The reputation of these parties grew so quickly that Ibiza began to attract young people from all over Europe. After spending the 1987 summer in Ibiza, British disc-jockey Paul Oakenfold organized "Spectrum", the first ecstasy-based party in London. From there it moved to Manchester's "Hacienda", a club that had opened in 1982. Manchester's 1988 "summer of love" was the continuation of the Ibiza scene.

In England it was M/A/R/S/S' *Pump Up The Volume* (1987) that commercialized house music. In Belgium it was Technotronics' *Pump Up The Jam* (1989), the brainchild of American-born producer Jo Bogaert. As it moved to Europe, house music picked up speed: Chicago house was mostly around 120 BPM (the same speed as Detroit techno), but English house often reached 140 BPM. In 1989, 150 people attended a rave called "Love Parade" in Berlin organized by Dr Motte as a political event: that would become not only the largest dance-music event in the world, but the largest event in general (the 2000 Berlin "Love Parade" would attract one million people).

### ***Industrial dance***

Cabaret Voltaire and the other pioneers of industrial music had adopted dance beats in the early 1980s, and the likes of Front 242 and Skinny Puppy had made a career of crossing over into "Electronic Body Music" (EBM).

Jack Dangers' Meat Beat Manifesto (2) were one of the most creative bands of the industrial-dance crossover. Their **Storm The Studio** (1989), offering a thick mix of hyper-cinetic hip-hop rhythms, exuberant samples and electronic dissonance, pioneered "jungle music" for the next decade. When the world caught up, Dangers had already moved one step ahead with **Actual Sounds And Voices** (1998), a collection of torrid jazz jamming and of music composed by breaking down the beats of dance music into an abstract magma of sounds and then rebuilding them again into powerful beats.

### ***Madchester***

The decade was almost over when a movement came out of Manchester that would mark dance music like no other genre of the 1980s: "Madchester", a fusion of psychedelia, techno and pop. It was 1988 when anthems such as KLF's *What Time Is Love* imported acid house from the USA. Manchester's 1988 "summer of love" became a musical movement with the debut of Stone Roses (2), one of the most influential English bands of the decade. **Stone Roses** (1989) epitomized the fusion of hypnotic disco beats, catchy melodies, surreal arrangements, and Sixties-style naif enthusiasm. Mixing Byrds with Abba, and Hendrix with Petula Clark, and James Brown and the Mamas & Papas, songs such as *I Wanna Be Adored*, *She Bangs The Drums* and *Made Of Stone* bridged different languages and civilizations while setting the foundations of a new language and a new civilization. Credit went not so much to vocalist Ian Brown and guitarist John Squire, but to the rhythm section of Alan John "Reni" Wren (drums) and Gary Mounfield (bass). Squire's guitar was more predominant on **Second Coming** (1994), a work heavily infected by hard-rock and southern boogie.

Shaun Ryder's Happy Mondays (1), who had already debuted with the psychedelic funk music of **Squirrel And G-Man Twentyfour Hour Party People** (1987), co-founded the movement with **Bummed** (1989), which

embodied the ecstatic trance of raves but also a proletarian approach to it. Ryder, a sarcastic, nonchalant (and heroin-addicted) "primadonna" of techno, focused on the grooves with the disco-fied **Pills'N'Thrills And Bellyaches** (1990). Years later, he upgraded Madchester to the generation of Beastie Boys and Red Hot Chili Peppers with a new band, Black Grape (1), basically a rapper fronting a horn and keyboard orchestra, and with the multifaceted dance music (funk, hip-hop, jungle, raga, house, reggae, heavy-metal) **It's Great When You're Straight** (1995)

Tim Burgess' Charlatans (1) were emblematic of how "Madchester" soon became more of a social phenomenon than a musical one. **Some Friendly** (1990) merely offered old-fashioned organ-based psychedelic pop-soul.

The idea was infectious and spread from rave to rave throughout the Kingdom. Psychedelic dance albums of the era (often characterized by an orgiastic frenzy) include: Nitzer Ebb's That Total Age (1987), the Weathermen's Black Album (1988) Renegade Soundwave's In Dub (1990), the Shamen's Boss Drum (1992); whereas Pop Will Eat Itself's This Is The Day (1989) and Jesus Jones' Liquidizer (1989) exported to the rave scene the fusion of dance beats and rock guitars already pioneered in hip-hop by the likes of Run DMC.

Among the musicians who transcended the fad, 808 State (2), formed by the trio of producers Martin Price, Graham Massey and Gerald Simpson, but mostly dominated by Massey, were masters of the new electronic instruments and thus the ideal successors to Kraftwerk. Their techniques (which borrowed from Terry Riley's minimalism, Brian Eno's ambient music and Jon Hassell's "fourth-world" music) revolutionized house, techno and industrial music with tracks such as *Pacific State* (1989). The (mostly instrumental) electronic ballets of **808:90** (1989), one of the most elegant house albums of all times, and **Ex:el** (1991), were fluent in jazz-rock and world-music, bordering on progressive-rock.

The other pioneer of ambient house was William Orbit (1), who proved to be an innovative electronic arranger (and world-class producer) with **Strange Cargo** (1988) and especially **Strange Cargo** (1993).

Cabaret Voltaire's Richard Kirk (2) experimented with ambient techno, first as Sandoz on psychedelic albums such as **Digital Lifeforms** (1993), then as Electronic Eye and the jazz, funk and dub fusion of **Closed Circuit** (1994), and finally as himself on the monumental **Number Of Magic** (1993), a labyrinth of ideas.

808 State's co-founder Gerald Simpson became A Guy Called Gerald and recorded one of the first albums of British techno, **Hot Lemonade** (1988), although later he endorsed a cosmopolitan blend of hip-hop, synth-pop, dub and pop-soul.

One last major addition to the canon came from the British dance scene. By using and abusing with the new sampling technology, Coldcut (1), i.e. disc-jockeys Matt Black and Jonathan More, introduced a dance style that was fundamentally a form of sound collage, and, in the process, they turned the "remix" into an art form. **What's That Noise** (1989) was their milestone recording. Their offshoot DJ Food composed with **A Recipe For Disaster** (1995) a frenzied collage of hip-hop beats, dub bass lines, jazzy riffs, electronic effects and rap scratching.

A Scottish band, Primal Scream (1), began in the vein of Jesus And Mary Chain's feedback-pop but went on to establish a unique style of danceable psychedelia. After two albums devoted to mediocre imitations of Sixties pop, producer Andrew Weatherall (not the band) penned the lush, dense kaleidoscope of **Screamadelica** (1991), a dance album that was propelled by both strong disco beats and Rolling Stones-like riffs. Later albums, rich in hype but poor in substance, revealed that the Primal Scream were little more than second-hand revivalists. **XTRMNTR** (2000), a concept album about the evils of modern society, returned to the trick that made them famous: a sophisticated exercise in layered arrangements. That was also the limit of the most over-rated band of the 1990s before Radiohead.

The decade that had begun as the age of depressed cyberpunks ended as the age of the wildest parties ever.

- 1986: A nuclear accident in Chernobyl spreads nuclear radiations around Europe

- 1986: newspapers discover that the Reagan administration sold weapons to Iran to fund anti-communist rebels in Nicaragua ("Irangate")
- 1986: Russia launches the permanent space station MIR
- 1986: Spain joins the European Community
- 1986: the space shuttle "Challenger" explodes during take off killing the whole crew
- 1986: the US has 14,000 nuclear warheads and the Soviet Union has 11,000
- 1986: the US has 14,000 nuclear warheads and the Soviet Union has 11,000
- 1986: the USA bombs Libyan cities to deter colonel Qaddafi
- 1987: Palestinians in the occupied territories begin an uprising against Israeli occupation (first "intifada")

## **5.19 USA, Europe, Japan: the New Age**

### *New-age music 1976-89*

In 1975 Palo Alto guitarist William Ackerman (1) coined the term "new-age music" and founded a record label, Windham Hill, to promote atmospheric instrumental acoustic music.

New-age music was thus born as a reaction to rock music. Rock music was loud and noisy, expressing a teenage spirit. New-age music was quiet and melodic, expressing an adult mood. New-age music had no vocalist, no drums and no electric guitar.

New-age music was, first and foremost, a synthesis. It was a synthesis of cultures (high and low), moods (upbeat, ecstatic, melancholy, spiritual), genres (folk, electronic, jazz, classical, psychedelic), formats (song, symphony, suite, jam) and lifestyles (western and eastern). Since each of these components had existed for decades (if not centuries), new-age music pre-existed itself. The most obvious ancestor of new-age music is classical music itself. Despite the aristocratic way it was presented in the symphony halls and opera houses, classical music had included "mood" instrumental music from the very beginning. Debussy and Satie, in particular, invented new-age music before Ackerman. Composers as diverse as Bach, Strauss, Messiaen, and Stockhausen provided new-age musicians with unlimited sources of inspiration.

The term "new age" was a clear reference to the spiritual mood that had taken hold of the hippy generation. As they grew up, the former hippies became more and more interested in eastern practices for meditation and relaxation. They became an essential part of their lifestyles, and soon created a market for both literature and arts.

A natural relative of new-age music was ECM's aesthetic jazz, which born out of Miles Davis' jazz-rock fusion and his fellow "fusionists" (Weather Report, Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett), had been one of the most significant innovations in jazz during the early 1970s (Oregon, Terye Rypdal, Jan Garbarek). ECM had proven the existence of an adult market that was interested in smooth, elegant and mellow sounds. New-age music simply proceeded to tap an even larger version of that market: the market that had the same need but had no artistic pretensions (i.e., did not require a virtuoso playing the music). ECM's sophisticated counterpoint of timbres and melodies was adapted by new-age music to a humbler format, removing the improvisation and emphasizing the melody.

Ackerman's main reason to found his label had been, actually, the scarce availability of records in the solo acoustic vein of John Fahey, and Fahey would remain another important prototype for all solo new-age musicians. Other

progressive-folk musicians such as Sandy Bull and Robbie Basho had been doing "new-age music" since the early 1960s.

At about the same time, Stephen Hill's program "Music From the Hearts of Space", which had been airing out of nearby Berkeley since 1973, began promoting a similar kind of music, although his favorite musicians employed electronic keyboards rather than acoustic instruments. Here the main influence was "minimalism", the avantgarde music invented by the likes of LaMonte Young and Terry Riley, which was both spiritual and keyboard-based. Riley's *Rainbow In Curved Air* (1968) was the progenitor of all melodic electronic suites, and Young's stationary music was the progenitor of ambient music. The second main influence on electronic new-age music was "kosmische musik", which soon became more important in practical terms. Hill's proteges merely adapted the format of the "cosmic couriers" to a more contemplative and spiritual mood, removing the drama and enhancing the ambience. Needless to say, these musicians learned from the lessons of the early electronic musicians, the likes of Walter Carlos, Jean-Michel Jarre, Vangelis. New-age music was born near the Silicon Valley, the place where electronic keyboards abounded, a natural meeting point of the counterculture and high-tech. In 1983 Yamaha introduced the DX-7, the first synthesizer to be sold by the hundreds of thousands, and Roland introduced the first keyboard enabled with MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), a system to connect musical instruments to computers. The number of electronic musicians rapidly multiplied during the 1980s.

New-age music was very much about achieving nirvana via a union with Nature, and soon began to incorporate sounds of nature. This had been done before, but not as consciously. For example, **One Stormy Night** (1966), by Brad Miller's Mystic Moods Orchestra, incorporated natural sounds, a "cosmic" theme and a hippy mood.

The passion of new-age musicians for eastern music, religion and civilization prompted many of them to fuse western and eastern instruments, and others to further expand their music towards other ethnic sounds. It was an evolution of the Byrds' raga-rock and of Les Baxter's and Martin Denny's "exotica", but facilitated by a larger availability of exotic instruments and of exotic recordings. The naive multi-cultural experiments of hippies such as the Incredible String Band and the Third Ear Band were revisited in a more competent manner by the western purveyors of "world-music". The "serious" origins of world-music hark back to when jazz clarinetist Tony Scott recorded **Music For Zen Meditation** (1964) with Hozan Yamamoto on shakuhachi and Shinichi Yuize on koto, and when Ravi Shankar recorded **West Meets East** (1967) with classical violinist Yehudi Menuhin. But, of course, plenty of jazz musicians (John Coltrane, Don Cherry) and of classical musicians (John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen) had already toyed with eastern, Latin and African music.

Whatever vehicle they chose, new-age musicians shared the simple, unassuming, laid-back quality of their music with the music meant "not to listen to" (as Brian Eno put it): easy-listening orchestras (Richard Clayderman), lounge music (Burt Bacharach), and supermarket muzak (the RCA Victor series of "Moods in Music").

New-age musicians had in common the market (affluent adults) and little else (an instrumental approach). By the mid-1980s there was new-age music for solo instrument, small chamber ensemble, synthetic orchestra and ethnic ensemble.

### *Solo acoustic music*

Ackerman debuted with the acoustic instrumental guitar music of **In Search Of The Turtle's Navel** (1976), but his best album was probably **It Takes A Year** (1977). The guitar was new-age music's first instrument, but it lost steam after the first few years in which albums such as **Aerial Boundaries** (1984), by Michael Hedges (1), and Paul Spear's **Spectral Voyages** (1984) improved over Ackerman's model.

The piano became the main new-age instrument thanks to the success of George Winston and his first suite of free-form melodic piano solos, **Autumn** (1980). At that point, a highly chromatic fusion of folk, jazz and classical was forged by a number of pianists: Michael Jones (13), perhaps the most original, who penned ambitious compositions on **Michael's Music** (1981), **Amber** (1987), **After The Rain** (1988), one of new-age's masterpieces,

and **Air Born** (1994); Marcus Allen (1), author of the romantic **Petals** (1981) and **Solo Flight** (1985); and David Lanz (2), whose **Heartsounds** (1983), **Nightfall** (1985) and **Cristofori's Dream** (1988) are collections of domestic vignettes. Michael Gettel, with **San Juan Suite** (1986), Wayne Gratz, with **Reminescence** (1989), and Peter Kater (1), who crafted **Flesh & Bone's Skeleton Woman** (1993), a rare experiment of piano and vocals, continued the tradition into the 1990s.

Among flutists, the most celebrated was jazz-educated Paul Horn (1), who made a career of recording solo improvisations/meditations "inside" spectacular buildings, such as the ones collected on **Inside The Taj Mahal** (1968) and **Inside The Great Pyramid** (1976).

The harp was another typical new-age instrument, lending itself to the angelic and relaxing tones favored by the genre. The idea was as old as Harry Bee's **Windharp** (1972), a double album entirely devoted to the vibrations of the harp caused by the wind, and was resurrected mainly by Georgia Kelly, whose **The Sound Of Spirit** (1981) emphasized the symbiosis with Nature, and adapted to dance rhythms by Andreas Vollenweider.

The violin and strings in general featured prominently in Daniel Kobialka's work, such as **Echoes Of Secret Silence** (1982), while David Darling (2) focused on the cello on the magnificent **Eight String Religion** (1993) and **Dark Wood** (1995).

Drums were unwelcomed on most new-age albums, but the spiritual wing of new-age music gladly admitted exotic percussions, a tradition that harked back to Henry Wolff and Nancy Hennings' **Tibetan Bells** (1972). Mark Nauseef's Wun Wun (1985), Trilok Gurtu's Usfret (1988) and Glen Velez's Assyrian Rose (1989) were all examples of world-music centered on percussions.

#### *Acoustic ensembles*

Shadowfax created the standard for the new-age acoustic ensemble with albums such as **Shadowdance** (1983). Significant contributions to the "chamber" wing of new-age music came from former members of David Grisman's quintet, whose "jazzgrass" lent itself to a neo-classical interpretation. Violinist Darol Anger, pianist Barbara Higbie, mandolinist Mike Marshall, and bassist Michael Manring formed Montreux, who released borderline albums such as **Sign Language** (1987) and **Let Them Say** (1989), and Anger led their spin-off, the Turtle Island String Quartet (1), whose **Turtle Island String Quartet** (1988) perfected those ideas. If chamber new-age music was mostly influenced by jazz, **Summer Suite** (1983), that featured Teja Bell on guitar, Dallas Smith on lyricon and Jon Bernoff on vibraphone, and Steve Kindler's **Dolphin Smiles** (1987) fused renaissance, psychedelic and folk elements.

#### *Electronic music*

As electronic keyboards became more commonplace, new-age music became increasingly electronic. Pioneering works such as Emerald Web's Dragon Wings And Wizard Tales (1982) and the Nightcrawlers' Nightcrawlers (1984) resumed the experiments of the Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company and the Tonto's Expanding Head Band, and set them in a magical and mysterious universe.

The Los Angeles school, specializing in lengthy suites à la Tangerine Dream, was the most relevant breeding ground for the new electronic music. Michael Stearns (2), after beginning in the "cosmic" of **Planetary Unfolding** (1981), specialized in assembling and playing electronic monsters on **Lyra Sound Constellation** (1983) and **Chronos** (1985). Kevin Braheny (2) opted instead for fairy-tales that explored the universe with the eye of a child: **Perelandra** (1984) and **Galaxies** (1988). Thom Brennan's **Mountains** (1993), recorded in 1987, was one of the most ambitious works.

By far the most prolific and successful artist of the original Los Angeles school was Steve Roach (45). He began as a shy disciple of Schulze's cosmic music with electronic suites such as **Traveler** (1983), but became more and more introspective via the monumental **Structures From Silence** (1984). His masterpiece, **Dreamtime Return** (1988), established the archaic, oneiric, shamanic and psychological coordinates that would ground of all his

subsequent work. **Strata** (1990), a collaboration with Robert Rich, **Australia - Sound Of The Earth** (1991), the Suspended Memories's **Forgotten Gods** (1993), a collaboration with flutist Jorge Reyes and guitarist Suso Saiz, and **Well Of Souls** (1995), a collaboration with Vidna Obmana, were journeys to the collective subconscious. Their soundscapes were alive with the heat of the desert and the darkness of the cosmos. The titanic and terrifying **World's Edge** (1992), **Dream Circle** (1994) and **The Magnificent Void** (1996) increased the doses of angst and unknown, and crowned Roach as the most metaphysical of the cosmic couriers.

A parallel branch of electronic new-age music had to do with the symphonic sound that was made possible by the new generation of keyboards. Constance Demby (11) coined a **Sacred Space Music** (1982) that reached a powerful climax on **Novus Magnificat** (1986), possibly new-age music's ultimate masterpiece.

Demby pioneered a sound that would become more popular in the following decade. Later examples of that genre would be Jay Scott Berry's **Symphony Of Light** (1990) and James Asher's **The Great Wheel** (1990) and **Globalarium** (1993).

During the 1990s, electronic was mainly used to pen impressionistic vignettes and shimmering tapestries, for example on Yanni's **Optimystique** (1980); Steve Douglas' **Rainbow Suite** (1981); William Aura's **Lovely Day** (1981); Suzanne Ciani's **Seven Waves** (1982) and **Dream Suite** (1994); Richard Burmer's **Mosaic** (1984); Tim Story (1)'s **Beguiled** (1991); David Arkenstone's **Valley Of The Clouds** (1987); Ray Lynch's **No Blue Thing** (1989); Steve Haun's **Midnight Echoes** (1989) ; Mychael Danna (1)'s **Sirens** (1991); Don Harriss' **Abacus Moon** (1989); Tim Clement's **Waterstation** (1990); Jon Serrie's **Tingri** (1990); etc. The spectrum was very broad: Ciani, Story and Danna were more austere and visionary, whereas Yanni and others mainly reinvented pop muzak for the electronic age.

The electronic soundscapes sculpted by Robert Rich (7) were second only to Steve Roach's in complexity and psychological depth. In 1982, Rich began to perform "sleep concerts", continuous flows of soothing and static music (à la Brian Eno's *Music for Airports*), such as **Trances** (1983) and **Drones** (1983), a form that he would then abandon till **Somnium** (2001). Instead, Rich progressively increased the density and plasticity of his watercolors, from **Numena** (1987) to **Rainforest** (1989), eventually achieving a kind of morphing "organic" music on **Gaudi`** (1991), **Stalker** (1995), **Fissures** (1997) and **Seven Veils** (1998).

#### **World-music**

World-music for the avantgarde was a completely different beast from world-music for the pop world. While pop artists were adopting melodic, timbric and rhythmic elements of African, Latin and Asian traditions, the avantgarde exploited those elements in a less explicit manner, as referents (backwards) to humankind's ancient past and (forward) to a futuristic global village.

Jon Hassell (122) created a deadly combination that would resonate for decades in world-music compositions: the ghostly sound of his trumpet lost in nightmarish electronic background. His trumpet was both a call of the wild and a wail of grief, both as ancestral as possible in a modernist setting. The quasi-ambient **Vernal Equinox** (1977) and the jazzier (and less successful) **Earthquake Island** (1978) led to his masterpiece, **Dream Theory In Malaya** (1981), one of the fundamental recordings of the decade, that pushed electronic music back into the primordial swamps and jungles of Africa. After the equally eerie **Aka-Dabari-Java Magic Realism** (1983), Hassell abandoned the supernatural tension of those works and contented himself with impressionistic works such as **Power Spot** (1986).

A different origin was represented by Paul Winter (1), a veteran jazz saxophonist who became an itinerant apostle of third-world music. His main contribution to world-music was the hyper-fusion of **Common Ground** (1978), which forged a language made of jazz, animal voices and ethnic folk.

On the other hand, the melodramatic suites orchestrated by Kitaro (1) in Japan, such as **Oasis** (1979) and **Silk Road** (1980), were emblematic of how electronics and world-music conquered the (pop) world.

The tradition of the Third Ear Band was pursued by ensemble works such as Do'Ah's **Light Upon Light** (1978), **Inverness** (1983) by Radiance (former Paul Winter Consort's celloist David Darling, guitarist Jim Scott and oboe player Nancy Rumbel), Ancient Future's **Natural Rhythms** (1981) and Eternal Wind's **Eternal Wind** (1984).

Jon Hassell's and Steve Roach's "de-contextualizing" and "de-constructing" approaches to world-music exerted an enormous influence on the electronic musicians of the 1980s. Seattle-based composer Jeff Greinke (3) fused ambient, industrial and ethnic idioms on **Cities In Fog** (1985), **Timbral Planes** (1988) and **Changing Skies** (1990). Jazz trumpeter Mark Isham (2) crafted the atmospheric and oneiric **Vapor Drawings** (1983) and **Tibet** (1989). Ingram Marshall's **Gradual Requiem** (1983) Michael Brook (1)'s **Hybrid** (1985) and **Cobalt Blue** (1992) Lucia Hwang (1)'s **House of Sleeping Beauties** (1985), Patrick O'Hearn (1)'s **Ancient Dreams** (1985) and **Between Two Worlds** (1987), were works that mixed a austere performance, sublime arrangements, exotic fascination and metaphysical message.

**The Wolf At The Ruins** (1989) and **Blind Messenger** (1997), by Forrest Fang (11), who bridged the spiritual music of Deuter with a more authentic ethnic spirit and a more austere concept of the chamber concerto; **Nierika** (1989) and **Cronica De Castas** (1991), by Jorge Reyes (2); and **Yatra** (1990) and **Dorje Ling** (1992) by David Parsons (1); rank among the late masterpieces in the genre.

New-age music spawned a "Celtic revival" that produced an endless series of speculations on the Celtic tradition, but little of artistic value. It also spawned a less pervasive "Native American revival" that revealed a number of Native American musicians, notably flutist Carlos Nakai, whose collaborations with pianist Peter Kater (2), **Natives** (1990) and **Migration** (1992), were probably the genre's most accomplished works.

It was only a matter of time before Latin music also got the "new age" treatment. The most celebrated album in that vein was Ottmar Liebert's **Nouveau Flamenco** (1989).

#### *German electronic music*

Remnants of "kosmische musik" in Germany abounded.

Peter Frohmader (13) was an impressive talent of composition and orchestration. His gothic nightmares **Nekropolis** (1981), **Cultes Des Ghoules** (1985) and **Ritual** (1986), particularly the middle one, established his credentials in manipulating electronic and acoustic sounds, and in creating claustrophobic atmospheres. The four-part electronic symphony **Homunculus** (1988) shifted gear and attained the menacing intensity of a futuristic vision. **Through Time And Mistery** (1988), his masterpiece, contains compositions that draw inspiration from the Middle Ages as well as from avantgarde composers such as Stockhausen, Ligeti and Cage. Finally, he achieved his mystic phase with albums such as **Cycle Of Eternity** (1994), still dense, tense and metaphysical.

Austrian multi-instrumentalist Gandalf (1) devoted his career to Tolkien-like fairy-tales such as **Journey To An Imaginary Land** (1980).

Albums such as **Electronic Universe** (1985), by the duo Software (1), or Bernd Kistenmacher's **Wake Up In The Sun** (1987) and **Outlines** (1990), continued the great German tradition of electronic meditations.

In a more somber and austere register, Asmus Tietchens (1) composed the **Marches Funebres** (1989) for electronics and percussions.

In Denmark, Klaus Schonning (2) added Scandinavian naturalism (sense of great wide spaces, arctic landscapes and bright white light) to the stereotypes of "cosmic music" on albums such as **Symphodyse` I** (1989) and **Symphodyse` III** (1991).

- 1988: Pat Robertson founds the Christian Coalition, an anti-abortionist movement
- 1988: a missile fired by an American warship downs an Iranian civilian plane and kills all 290 passengers aboard
- 1988: first fiber optic cable across the Atlantic

- 1988: first genetically engineered animal (Harvard Univ)
- 1988: Libyan terrorists blow up a US civil airplane over Scotland, probably on behalf of Iran
- 1988: Osama bin Laden, in Afghanistan, creates Al Qaeda, a worldwide alliance of (mainly Arab) fundamentalist militants, based on the teachings of Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab
- 1988: Reagan's vice-president George Bush is elected president

## 5.20 USA: Space-pop

### *Space-pop 1986-88*

After the orgy of distortion delivered by dream-pop and shoegazing, restoring a bit of discipline to the genre became a legitimate desideratum in the USA.

One of New York's most creative minds of the 1980s was Mark Kramer (11), a studio maverick with a flair for bizarre arrangements. After playing country music for the new-wave audience with guitar improviser Eugene Chadbourne in Shockabilly, best immortalized on **Earth Vs** (1983), and recording an album of demented folk à la Fugs, **Happiness Finally Comes To Them** (1987), with multi-instrumentalist Ralph Carney (ex-Tin Huey) and singer Daved Hild (ex-Girls), Kramer formed B.A.L.L. with Don Fleming, and Bongwater (12) with the performance artist (and future television actress) Ann Magnuson. Bongwater's masterpiece, **Double Bummer** (1988), was born at the confluence of Kramer's dadaistic tape manipulation and Magnuson's psychoanalytical monologues, with a touch of free-jazz and a lot of retro` passion. Leaving behind the wild experimentation of that post-modernist monolith, Bongwater retreated to a simpler, gentler, catchier form of eccentric pop on **Too Much Sleep** (1989), not too unlike the Jefferson Airplane circa 1967. If **The Power Of Pussy** (1991), a concept on the social value of sex, replete with hyper-realist vignettes of urban angst drenched into claustrophobic atmospheres, belonged more to Magnuson than to Kramer, **The Big Sell-Out** (1992) was Kramer's nostalgic tribute to the hippie civilization. But his entire, prolific and multiform career, was only a prelude to Kramer's colossus, **The Guilt Trip** (1993), a tragicomic and ostensibly autobiographical postmodernist treatise. Whether sung or instrumental, Kramer's pieces were studio-virtuoso efforts. The amount of sonic events constituted a maze of sidetracks and detours in which the very meaning of music disappeared. It was emotional collapse due to information overload. Throughout the album, a logorrheic guitar libido seemed to be Kramer's real voice, but stifled by the hyper-active montage that churned out music like an assembly line. Despite all the artifice, the whole also retained the quality of a social fresco à la Who's **Tommy**. It was, de facto, Kramer's final testament.

The greatest and craziest disciples of classic Pink Floyd came out of Oklahoma: the Flaming Lips (14), whose art bridged the punk ethos and the hippie burlesque. Their aesthetics was in many ways derived by cartoons: shapes that were grossly naive and easily identifiable, stereotyped characters that bordered on parodies, simplified and often implausible situations. **Hear It Is** (1986) was fundamentally still rooted in punk-rock and garage-rock, with overdoses of Stooges and the Velvet Underground (but already with a respectful attitude towards the song format). But other songs harked back to Syd Barrett's oblique lullabies, Neil Young's guitar neurosis and Jim Morrison's melodramatic eloquence. The band was equally versatile in the soft and the hard registers, and it proved it with the semiotic cauldron of **Oh My Gawd** (1987), a post-modernist masterpiece. The arrangements were creative to the point of being grotesque, while abrasive rock'n'roll crescendos, psychotic singalongs and transcendent dirges seemed to fuel each other to ever higher levels of unorthodoxy. **Telepathic Surgery** (1989) reached a demented level of stylistic collage, particularly with the monumental piece *Hell's Angel's Cracker Factory*. The streamlined

sound of **In A Priest Driven Ambulance** (1990) and **Hit To Death In The Future Head** (1992) relied on catchy melodies and sound effects in the tradition of early Pink Floyd, but marked the first retreat into conventional formats. Dreamy litanies and surreal ditties became typical of less and less adventurous albums: **Transmissions From The Satellite Heart** (1993), **Clouds Taste Metallic** (1995) and **The Soft Bulletin** (1999). The notable exception was **Zaireeka** (1997), a set of four discs to be played simultaneously on four different players.

Another surreal take on Pink Floyd's earlier sound was offered by another wildly creative Los Angeles outfit, the **Red Temple Spirits** (12). The extravagant mysticism of **Dancing To Restore An Eclipsed Moon** (1988) had few or no precedents. It rehashed emotional debris left buried under the cosmic and ritualistic hymn of *Interstellar Overdrive*, under the psychotic and metaphysical melodrama of *The End*, under the apocalyptic frenzy of *Sister Ray*, while scouring medieval fairy tales, Tibetan mantras, whirling sufi dances and gothic ballads for intimations of supernatural existence. The lighter **If Tomorrow I Were Leaving For Lhasa** (1989) was the charming and graceful appendix to that ponderous masterpiece.

Detroit's **Viv Akauldren** (1), featuring keyboardist Keir McDonald, added an odd blend of ambient, progressive and world-music to the psychedelic trips of **I'll Call You Sometime** (1987).

Towards the end of the decade in the USA, psychedelic rock mutated into a whole new genre, less involved with studio trickery and/or guitar mayhem, more focused on songwriting while still preoccupied with textures and soundscapes. The lead was taken by Boston's Galaxie 500 and New Jersey's Yo La Tengo, perhaps the two bands that would be most influential on the following decade.

**Galaxie 500** (12), comprised of guitarist Dean Wareham, bassist Naomi Yang and drummer Damon Krukowski, went against the trend when they created an anti-theatrical style devoted to urban alienation. **Today** (1988) was a moonlit tide of languid litanies and whispered singalongs. It was expressionism turned upside down: angst and terror, but in the form of a bloodless stupor, not a loud scream. The trio played back the third Velvet Underground album, Pink Floyd's *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun* and Television's *Torn Curtain*, but filtered of any residual vitality. **On Fire** (1989), their most personal work, was an existential anesthetic. There were echoes of the (acid-rock) past but they were ethereal, sleepy, ghostly: they had been reduced to an inner language of the subconscious. The setting was a wasteland roamed by zombies devoid of any passion, resigned to their emotional impotence and moral isolation, capable only of articulating the emptiness of their lives in a vocabulary of negative words. These were confessions of people who did not even know anymore how to grieve for their own sorrow. These dirges were the exact opposite of the anthemic call to arms of rock'n'roll. An excessive trance dazzled the acid jams of **This Is Our Music** (1990), the most ambitious but also terminal leg of their "trip". Parting ways with Wareham, the former rhythm section of Galaxie 500, Yang and Krukowski assumed the moniker **Damon & Naomi** (1) and recorded **More Sad Hits** (1992), whose gentle breeze was the ideal appendix to Galaxie 500's mission.

**Yo La Tengo** (12), the project of Ira Kaplan and Georgia Hubley, exploited a more obvious synthesis of classic styles. **Ride The Tiger** (1986) "rode" Television's transcendent guitar trance, the finger-picking of country music, the tremolo of psychedelic-rock, the exuberant riffs of instrumental surf bands, and so forth. **New Wave Hot Dogs** (1987) and **President** (1989) failed to capitalize on that synthesis, but **May I Sing With Me** (1992), their boldest sonic experiment, coined a personal language of abstract ballads and moody textures. Each song was an exercise in balance: balance between action and meditation, between rebellion and fatalism, between nonchalance and poignancy. **Painful** (1993) formalized the aesthetics ("shoegazing" drones and simple melodies) behind that philosophy. Despite the lack of novel ideas, the duo could chisel impeccable songs: the mystical feeling that permeated **Electr-O-Pura** (1995), and the intricate and eclectic **I Can Hear The Heart Beating As One** (1997), that casually blended jazz, industrial, dissonant and Indian elements, led to the pure abstraction of **And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out** (2000).

In the age of hardcore punk-rock, the aesthetics of **Phish** (22), a quintet based in Vermont, bordered on the suicidal.

Nonetheless, the band became one of the most significant phenomena of the decade. Phish focused on the live concert, a concept that had been anathema during the 1980s, and rediscovered the guitar solo, the ornate keyboard arrangements, prog-rock tempo shifts, group improvisation and the whole vocabulary of intellectual hippie music, as proven with the lengthy tracks on the cassette **Junta** (1988). The encyclopedic tour de force of **Lawn Boy** (1990) focused on mostly-instrumental melodic fantasies that quoted from an endless list of genres. Guitarist Trey Anastasio inherited Frank Zappa's clownish compositional style, which blended rock, jazz and classical music in pseudo-orchestral fashion, while his cohorts inherited Grateful Dead's dizzy jamming style, and keyboardist Page McConnell added a strong and elegant jazz accent. Their art of stylistic montage peaked with **A Picture Of Nectar** (1992). Its kaleidoscopic suites balanced the melodic center of mass and the centrifugal forces of the instrumental parts, while surfing through an impressive catalog of styles, juxtaposing kitsch sources (exotica, lounge, easy-listening, doo-wop) and chamber duets or jazz solos. The smoother and slicker sound of **Hoist** (1994) closed the epic phase and opened the commercial one in the lighter vein of the Band, the Doobie Brothers, Little Feat and the Allman Brothers. Phish, the first creative group to be completely indifferent to the punk aesthetics, had just changed the world.

## **5.21 USA & Australia: Extreme hardcore**

### *Great Lakes 1984-89*

Some of the wildest, noisiest, most unrelenting hardcore was produced in the Great-Lake states at the end of the 1980s. These were the areas where the legacy of MC5 and Stooges was still alive, and the new generations lived up to it. Wisconsin boasted two of the least orthodox bands. Die Kreuzen (2) bridged the original punk anti-heroes with the post-punk heroes of the 1990s. The hardcore miniatures of **Die Kreuzen** (1984) harked back to the Germs, but the singer was a homicidal madman, not an agonizing suicide. Their melodramatic skills peaked with the better-structured and proto-grunge **Century Days** (1988). Killdozer (2) specialized in antics that were simultaneously grim, ruthless and magniloquent. **Intellectuals Are The Shoeshine Boys Of The Ruling Elite** (1984) and **Snakeboy** (1985) mixed Birthday Party and Cramps with sheer revulsion, and occasionally delved into the most harrowing blues psychodramas since the Doors.

Michigan's Laughing Hyenas (11) beat everyone else in terms of ferocity, cruelty and savagery. The mini-album **Merry Go Round** (1987) introduced their nightmarish art, anchored to John Brannon, Iggy Stogge's worthy disciple, who screamed like an emphatic preacher on the verge of a nervous breakdown. His diction turned into the noise of vomiting on the seminal **You Can't Pray A Lie** (1989), a collection of lugubrious tornado-ballads that at time sounded like southern boogie played by a pack of gorillas and occasionally yielded the most visceral, skewed, excoriating blues since Janis Joplin. It was a theatre of horror, fear, grief, hatred and violence. Surprisingly, the band ended its career with an abstraction of the Rolling Stones sound, **Hard Times** (1995).

The Cows (13), from Minneapolis, were both clowns and delinquents at the same time. Their visceral style was full of sarcasm as well as of defiance. The bacchanals ignited by vocalist Shannon Selberg and guitarist Thor Eisenstrager, and by one of the rowdiest rhythm sections in the world, evoked the Stooges and MC5 via the Butthole Surfers, but were also a self-parody for the entire alt-rock generation. **'Taint Pluribus 'Taint Unum** (1987) and especially **Daddy Has A Tail** (1989) were merry-go-rounds of (deliberately) grotesque, brutal and perverted affronts. The Cows' riotous sonic nonsense got clad in a sturdier wall of noise on **Effete And Impudent Snobs** (1990). Their effervescent napalm-like beastly bluesy rave-ups began to betrayed a rootsy element, that slowly but steadily changed the essence of **Peacetika** (1991) and **Cunning Stunts** (1992), leading to the mature synthesis of **Sexy Pee Story** (1993) and **Orphan's Tragedy** (1994), perhaps the ultimate testament of their mad genius. Their art was the antithesis of elegance.

Indiana's Lazy Cowgirls (2) were punks, but punks who played good, old rock'n'roll. They just happened to play it three times faster and louder than they did in the old days. The Lazy Cowgirls were not lazy at all: they had the Ramones and the New York Dolls in their blood. **Lazy Cowgirls** (1985) and **Tapping The Source** (1987) were party-records for feverish ceremonies of self-destruction, with echoes of Seeds and 13th Floor Elevators.

Death Of Samantha (11), formed by John Petkovic in Ohio, crafted **Strungout On Jargon** (1986), an unlikely combination of Pere Ubu, Television and R.E.M. Emotional vocals, that were alternatively sarcastic and melodramatic, roamed atmospheres that were frequently an even more unlikely hybrid of Ray Davies' clownish realism, Jim Morrison's psychotic shamanism, Brecht's decadent cabaret and Beckett's enigmatic theater. The anthemic and relentless rock'n'roll of **Where The Women Wear The Glory And The Men Wear The Pants** (1988) Five years after disbanding Death of Samantha, Petkovic basically reformed them under a new name, Cobra Verde (1), to record a new album, **Viva La Muerte** (1994), that continued to explore the same border of rock'n'roll, new wave, and pop. Rolling Stones

Phantom 309 (1), based in Mississippi but led by Indiana guitarist and vocalist John Forbes, applied the hardcore propulsion to a blues and rockabilly foundation on **A Sinister Alphabet** (1989).

Nebraska's 13 Nightmares bridged MC5 and Replacements on **Shitride** (1989).

These were among the hardest-sounding of hardcore bands. The journey that had begun with the clownish refrains of the Ramones had reached a madhouse and a maximum security prison.

At least two all-female bands debuted at the end of the decade with a raw and visceral rock'n'roll style that predated the riot-grrrrls of the 1990s: Ohio's Scrawl (1), who served the abrasive and spasmodic **Smallmouth** (1990), while **Velvet Hammer** (1993) revealed Marcy Mays' desperate persona; and Toronto's Fifth Column, with **To Sir With Hate** (1986).

#### *Australia 1985-87*

Australia, one of the countries where punk-rock had originated, raised two of the most extreme bands. King Snake Roost (11) crafted a masterpiece of casual aberration, **Things That Play Themselves** (1988), their second album, as dark and hot as hell itself. Their hardcore was mixed with raw, primitive, clumsy blues and jazz, enhanced by Charlie Tolnay's scorching guitar, and, under the apparent artlessness, referenced a multitude of styles, from Minutemen to Sonny Sharrock. **Ground Into The Dirt** (1990) lost some of the intensity, but was even more experimental.

Stuart "Stu Spasm" Gray, the brain behind Lubricated Goat (4), epitomized punk aesthetics and ethos as much as Foetus or Darby Crash. A citizen of the world, Gray instantiated the band first in Australia, then in Britain and finally in the USA. **Plays The Devil's Music** (1987) sounded like sheer provocation. The "songs" referenced Sex Pistols, Pere Ubu, Suicide and Birthday Party, but no care was put into composing or performing them. **Paddock Of Love** (1988) was tragic where the previous one had been grotesque. The theme of these works was simply the explosive energy, the discharge of sadomaso libido, unbridled violence and massive gloom. Macabre and psychedelic effects increased the suicidal atmosphere. Gray began cleaning up with the electronic **Psychedelicatessen** (1990), which ventured into industrial music and his own idea of dance-music. The New York incarnation of Lubricated Goat, which featured Swans' drummer Vinnie Signorelli, Cop Shoot Cop's guitarist Tod Ashley, Railroad Jerk's bassist Tony Lee and Motherhead Bug's trumpet player Jim Collaruso, changed course again: **Forces You Don't Understand** (1995), his most musical work, offered calmer, wiser and even elegant blues-jazz excursions. Gray came full circle with **Crunt** (1993), a new project launched with wife and Babes In Toyland's guitarist Kat Bjelland, and Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's drummer Russell Simins. Its tight garage-punk was just a bit old-fashioned.

## **5.22 USA, Europe, Britain: Industrial-metal**

### *Industrial-metal*

A seminal achievement of the latter part of the decade was the merger of industrial music with hard-rock and heavy metal, pioneered in Switzerland by the Young Gods (1), whose **L'Eau Rouge** (1989) made music by sampling heavy-metal guitars and symphonic sounds. In France, Treponem Pal used real guitars. In Canada, Numb performed brutal surgery on techno beats.

Formed in Germany by keyboardist Sasha Konietzko, guitarist Nick "En" Esch and English vocalist Raymond Watts (later of Pig), KMFDM (3) debuted with the tentative **What Do You Know Deutschland** (1986) in a derivative robotic style, but found their true voice with **Naive** (1992), an album that was both explosive and robotic, welding blues, dub, gospel, hip-hop and heavy-metal in a substance that was both guitar-driven and keyboards-driven. The idea was refined on **Angst** (1993) by incorporating the steady beats of disco-music and techno, while the guitar riffs were pushed to the fore to compete with Ministry and Nine Inch Nails; and **Nihil** (1995) found a closure of sort, replacing the angst with a nihilistic (but not desperate) acceptance of a grotesque futurism.

However, the fusion of industrial music and heavy-metal was completed mainly by the Chicago bands. Criminal vocals, jack-hammer rhythms, and piercing guitars took over the gothic/atmospheric noise of early industrial music. Al Jourgensen's Ministry (12), and their Belgian offshoot, Luc Van Acker's Revolting Cocks, led the charge. Ministry's first tour de force of machine music, **Twitch** (1986), was still in the vein of Cabaret Voltaire but already displayed the violent fits that eventually took over **The Land Of Rape And Honey** (1988): guitar riffs and distortions, hammering drums, sound effects and demonic vocals gave new meaning to the word "industrial". It was heavy-metal disguised as avantgarde. **The Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Taste** (1989), that featured the classic line-up of vocalist Chris Connelly, bassist Paul Barker and drummer William Rieflin, increased the dose of rhythm and guitars: Jourgensen was basically heading a power-trio and playing a psychotic variation on speed-metal. **Psalm 69** (1992) was not innovative at all, but contained the blasphemy anthem *Jesus Built My Hot Rod* (1991), with Gibby Haynes of the Butthole Surfers on vocals, Ministry's masterpiece and a masterpiece for all of rock'n'roll.

Towards the end of the decade, Chicago became the epicenter of the new industrial genre (Ministry's, not Throbbing Gristle's), thanks to a plethora of bands (My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult, Die Warzau) and to the numerous projects launched in Chicago by former Killing Joke drummer Martin Atkins, notably Pigface (1), whose **Fook** (1992) was typical of his method of recycling 15 years of industrial music.

From this fertile soil Trent Reznor's Nine Inch Nails (12) was born, and the fate of industrial music changed dramatically. Reznor created a persona that was a cross of Dostoevsky's "demons", Goethe's Werther, Nietzsche's "ueber-mensch", and De Sade's perverts. Technically, Reznor took elements from Throbbing Gristle, Pere Ubu, Foetus and Ministry and filtered them through the new computer technology. Reznor thus changed the very meaning of "rock band": the band was him, singer and arranger. Brutal music, nihilistic lyrics and claustrophobic atmospheres turned **Pretty Hate Machine** (1989) into the manifesto/diary of an entire generation. Few albums better summarize the spirit of the 1990s than **The Downward Spiral** (1994). Each song is both a battlefield for the highest possible density of truculent sound effects and a largely-autobiographical ode-psychodrama. The thundering polyrhythms, the chaotic and cacophonous orgies, the grotesque "danse macabres", the chamber blues pieces, the harsh counterpoints, the mournful melodies were carefully assembled to deliver the sense of a man without a past or a present or a future, a man who was a pure abstraction in search of meaning, pure form in search of content. Reznor retreated towards a simpler format, albeit using the same tools (psychotic screaming, killer synths, metallic percussions, brutal distortions), on the double album **Fragile** (1999). Reznor showed that he was

not interested in angst for the sake of angst, and cared more for meditation on his own angst; that he was not indulging in insanity but merely puzzled by it.

Texas' Angkor Wat (11), led by guitarists Adam Grossman and Danny Lohner, coined the futuristic grindcore of **When Obscenities Become Reality** (1989) that was both epic, hysterical and apocalyptic, while **Corpus Christi** (1990) was a more psychological work of morbid atmospheres.

#### *Post-industrial music*

In San Jose, Neurosis (12), added keyboards and samples to their background of speed-metal and hardcore to pen the terrible visions of **Souls At Zero** (1992), that scoured infernal depths and treaded a fine line between improvisation and composition. The tracks on **Enemy Of The Sun** (1993) had no melodic center to speak of. They constantly teetered over the abyss, in a vain quest for an emotional center of mass. Sounds obeyed no geometry, they were outpours of desperation. **Through Silver In Blood** (1996), possibly their masterpiece, was a work of spasmodic tension that constantly teeters on the edge of the psychic abyss. Neurosis' music was one of psychological subtlety, based on the cynical orchestration of eerie dissonances, heavy riffs, frantic drumming, instrumental distortions, screams, whispers and echoes, a blend that mostly sounded like the nightmare of a deranged mind. Their side-project, Tribes of Neurot (1), dealt with experimental minimalist/ambient/psychedelic music. **Static Migration** (1998), an extreme experiment of electronic and guitar-based sound-painting, was mainly a collaboration between Steve Von Till and Pain Teens' Scott Ayers (under the moniker Walking Time Bombs).

In San Francisco, Steel Pole Bath Tub (2) adopted an abrasive and psychological sound/stance that basically fused psychedelic trance, anthemic punk-rock, heavy-metal bloodshed on **Butterfly Love** (1989) and the EP **Lurch** (1990). An even darker mood envelops their most mature album, **Tulip** (1990), the definitive document of their depressed hyper-realism.

Their tape-oriented side-project Milk Cult (2) makes ample use of samples, loops, rhythm boxes, filtered vocals and electronic sounds, but, unlike SPBT, the results are humorous, not tragic. Dada and Salvador Dali would be proud of the sketches on **Burn Or Bury** (1995) and **Project M-13** (2000), that deconstruct and satirize genres while offering a different take on reality. Humour and avantgarde coexist and complement each other.

In New York, Cop Shoot Cop (12) carried out a devastating attack against the conventions of popular music with **Consumer Revolt** (1990). Their songs were terrifying kammerspielen of the post-industrial age, noisy, percussive, unstable bacchanals. Ominous bass lines wove fear against a wall of guitar distortions and lugubrious organ drones. Melodies were torn apart by sudden bursts of noir-tinged big-band swing à la Foetus, by demented collages of sound effects, by piercing guitars and obsessed drumming. Proving that their fury was not only an uncontrollable urge, **White Noise** (1991) was an encyclopedic work, whose songs quoted the most disparate traditions without belonging to any of them. The band learned to play on **Ask Questions Later** (1993), and thus revealed their "blues" soul, despite drowning it into a catastrophic landscape of fractured rhythms, grotesque noise and desolate vocals.

Also in New York, the multimedia collective Missing Foundation (11) created politically-inspired music à la David Peel and the Fugs that borrowed from Foetus and Ministry. **Missing Foundation** (1987) was mainly a bundle of fastidious noise, propelled by grotesque, amateurish playing that packed a mixture of Pop Group's paroxysm and MC5's terrorism. **1933** (1988) was even more barbaric, primitive, minimal, a truly revolutionary work that attempted a dozen different directions.

In Boston, Think Tree's Like The Idea (1992) mixed folk, cacophony, free-jazz, dance beats, orchestral sounds and electronic techniques.

In Texas, Pain Teens (12), a duo of electronics (Scott Ayers) and vocals, bridged psychedelic, erotic, gothic and industrial elements to produce the expressionist, dissonant wasteland of **Case Histories** (1989), and the orgiastic, decadent and psychotic rituals of **Born In Blood** (1990). Barbaric guitars, primordial percussions and agonizing

wails increased the tension in the nightmarish bacchanals of **Stimulation Festival** (1992). Abandoning the therapeutic shock of those albums, Ayers coined a post-Freudian and post-Brechtian form of communication with **Destroy Me Lover** (1993). The compositions sculpted with his collage technique (relying more on guitar feedback and less on vocals) covered a vast territory, from Chrome to Pink Floyd, while retaining the format of the rock song. The storm subsided on **Beasts Of Dreams** (1995), a display of Ayers' magician's skills via a series of musical abstractions.

In England, Justin Broadrick, a former Napalm Death, started Godflesh (12) to play post-industrial music that fuses elements of Foetus and Big Black. **Godflesh** (1988) was one of the bleakest albums since early Swans, and, overall, sounded like the last spasm of a dying man. The horrific monoliths of **Streetcleaner** (1989) fused grind-core and industrial dance, achieving a level of intensity that had few rivals. **Pure** (1992) emphasized heavy-metal guitar and thundering rhythms, and included a 20-minute aural montage of atonal sounds that could compete with Lou Reed's **Metal Machine Music**.

Broadrick also pursued his experimental-noise ambitions with the side-project Final.

The legendary career of Dead Kennedys' front-man and agit-prop preacher Jello Biafra (1) was mainly a sequence of high-level collaborations. His polemic wit and his saber-rattling vocals employed Ministry's guitarist Alien Jourgensen and bassist Paul Barker for one of industrial-metal's masterpieces, Lard's EP **The Power Of Lard** (1988), and its follow-up **The Last Temptation Of Reid** (1990), which paraded explosive raps, terrifying progressions, expressionistic recitation, grotesque dances and demented rigmaroles. He then teamed up with Steel Pole Bath Tub and King Snake Roost's guitarist Charlie Tolnay to form Tumor Circus and record **Tumor Circus** (1991), another dose of terrorism in music.

#### ***Apocalyptic Folk***

A notable exception within the ranks of industrial music came from the musicians who, led by David Tibet's Current 93, moved away from industrial music and ventured into a new form of folk, no less ominous and depressed. That "apocalyptic folk" was industrial music's version of the classical lied. Douglas Pierce and Tony Wakeford launched Death In June (1), the project that was most directly influenced by Tibet. After Wakeford formed Sol Invictus, Pierce released his best collection of emphatic, martial, lugubrious ballads, **Brown Book** (1987). Sol Invictus played magical and ancestral folk, reminiscent of druidic legends and embellished with electronic and neo-classical arrangements.

Straddling the line between Nico, In The Nursery and medieval/exotic music, film music and industrial music, the expressionistic school of Slovenia became the first relevant experience in Eastern Europe: Laibach, Autopsia (1), whose mid-life **Kristallnacht** (1994) was a gothic neo-classical symphony, Laibach (1), whose **Nova Akropola** (1985) was a collection of gloomy post-industrial ballads, and Borghesia led the pack. They had a tendency to focus on depicting horror and violence.

Trespassers W in Holland did something similar on albums such as the philosophical concept **Roots And Locations** (1991).

- 1989: Berlin holds the first "Love Parade", a festival of electronic dance music (one million people)
- 1989: students join in a pro-democracy protest in the Tiananmen Square of Beijing
- 1989: the Berlin wall falls, thus ending the Cold War
- 1989: The Berlin Wall is destroyed by millions of ecstatic Germans, thus leading to the reunification of east and west Germany
- 1989: The Berlin Wall is destroyed by millions of ecstatic Germans, thus leading to the reunification of east and west Germany

- 1989: The Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan
- 1989: the Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan and Afghanistan plunges into chaos
- 1989: the USA fights the drug cartels of Colombian
- 1989: the USA invade Panama and remove dictator Manuel Noriega

## 5.23 USA, Britain, Japan: Punk crossovers

### *New York 1986-89*

As the 1980s came to an end, it became obvious that punk was far from dead. In fact, it was "the" most "alive" of all rock's subgenres. The legacy of hardcore was simple: thousands of bands rehearsing in garages and performing at parties throughout the USA. Not since the Sixties had there been such a universal language in teenage music.

Of the major New York punk-rock bands of the mid 1980s, Adrenalin O.D. were the only ones to truly deserve the attribute "hardcore". Their demented style was closer to California's beach-punk, as proven by the frantic **Humungousfungusamongus** (1986).

Ray Cappo's Youth Of Today became the main apostles of straight-edge hardcore, preaching positive ideals to punks on sermons such as *Take A Stand* (1986). That genre peaked with **Start Today** (1989), the album by the Gorilla Biscuits (1), featuring vocalist Anthony Civarelli and guitarist Walter Schreifels, and with Sick Of It All's **Blood Sweat And No Tears** (1989).

The rest were punks trying to sell hardcore to the heavy-metal crowds. Albums of "punk-metal crossover" by New York bands included **Life Of Dreams** (1986), by the Crumbsuckers (1), and **Immaculate Deception** (1986), by Ludichrist (1), one of the most eclectic. In New York, the genre's artistic peak came later into the decade with Cro-Mags (1), particularly their second album **Best Wishes** (1989), and Prong (1), who boasted the most brutal "grooves" also on their second album, **Force Fed** (1988). Danzig (1) continued his messianic saga under his own name, borrowing from the Doors and Black Sabbath for **Danzig** (1988). The idea began to stink (almost literally) with the Lunachicks, a punkette-group heir to the Plasmatics' scum-rock.

### *Washington 1986-88*

Washington's scene was soon overflowing with experimental punk bands. Some of them (Soulside) were training grounds for future innovators. In particular, Washington was the launching pad for two of the most influential bands of the second half of the decade: Pussy Galore and Fugazi.

Arguably one of the most inept bands of all times, Pussy Galore (2) played blaspheme, obscene, irreverent, barbaric and often out-of-tune punk-blues. The hoarse and demented vocals of John Spencer, the ridiculous guitar strumming of Julia Cafritz and Neil Hagerty framed the sub-amateurish sound of the EP **Groovy Hate Fuck** (1986). They moved to New York, where they added ex-Sonic Youth drummer Bob Bert and keyboardist Cristina Martinez, and they tripled the absurdity of their garage-sound. Thus, their first full-length, **Right Now** (1987), sounded like Captain Beefheart meeting the Cramps and Einsturzende Neubauten in a studio with defective microphones. Spencer disassembled and "de-semanticized" rock'n'roll and then built a new syntax based on the genre's illicit sounds, i.e. on its most subversive codes. And carried out this semiotic operation while posing as a satanic pervert. **Dial M For Motherfucker** (1989) was even more meaningless and pointless, but that was precisely the point. Pussy Galore begot an impressive cast of alternative groups: Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Royal Trux, Bewitched, Boss Hog, etc. Never was an irrelevant entity made so relevant by its irrelevance.

Unrest (23) were formed out of Washington by singer Mark Robinson and drummer Phil Krauth. **Tink Of Southeast** (1987) was an ambitious slab of progressive hardcore that included several instrumental pieces and

incorporated jazz and avantgarde techniques. The extended musical vocabulary of **Malcom X Park** (1988) and the transitional semi-pop of **Kustom Kamal Blackexploitation** (1990), and the addition of bassist Bridget Cross, led into the group's pop phase. Despite their nervous filigree, the songs of **Imperial f.f.r.r.** (1992) were, first and foremost, splendid pop-soul-folk ballads, which, despite the rarefied arrangements and the free-form dynamics, retained strong identities. Robinson was applying the lessons of Van Morrison and Tim Buckley, not the lessons of Fugazi. Whereas the mini-album **Isabel Bishop** (1993) indulged in that impeccable format, the last album, **Perfect Teeth** (1993), was again bold and aggressive like the first one. Having come full circle, Robison dissolved Unrest and wasted his talent in a series of projects that explored Tin Pan Alley's kitsch (Grenadine) and synth-pop (Air Miami).

Fugazi (113) was the new project of Minor Threat's Ian MacKaye and Rites Of Spring's Guy Picciotto. They abstracted hardcore punk-rock into a theatrical form of music, whose ethical and political commitment was as deep as the aesthetic one. MacKaye, moral ascetic and dissolute artist possessed by an otherworldly force, was the driving engine, a sort of Jim Morrison for the hardcore generation, propelled by a dissonant and thundering accompaniment. The first two EPs, **Fugazi** (1988) and **Margin Walker** (1989), which made up the album **13 Songs** (1990), unleashed monster psychological tension to fight a devouring existential fever. The terrorist attack carried out against society by **Repeater** (1990) was more cathartic than destructive, and even presented a zen-like aspect. The two leaders and their phenomenal rhythm section devised countless tricks to keep the tension as spasmodic as possible. Now that he had acquired a new musical language, MacKaye indulged in bending it like a chunk of clay to materialize his inner ghosts. **Steady Diet Of Nothing** (1991), arguably their sonic masterpiece, replaced frenzy with cinematics: songs were always in motion, typically in an obsessive crescendo, fractured and deformed by numerous discontinuities. **In On The Killtaker** (1993) made the package more accessible by bringing out the melody (that was hidden behind the pandemonium) and polishing the guitar-vocals counterpoint. Finally, **Red Medicine** (1995) was the transfiguration of Fugazi: as they mastered the new art of storytelling that they had invented, they proceeded to turn it into a classical language. The sophisticated puzzle of timbres and arrangements, the manic dynamics of pauses and rhythms, the acrobatic repertoire of shy litanies and strident rants Royal Trux (103), i.e. keyboardist Jennifer Herrema and former Pussy Galore guitarist Neil Hagerty, carried out a post-modernist program of revisiting and deconstructing rock music, a program that encompassed countless quotations from the Rolling Stones, Captain Beefheart and Jimi Hendrix, as well as fueling them with the aesthetic excrements of the "no wave". **Royal Trux** (1988) revealed the duo's perverted passion for disfiguring blues-rock and leaving only harmonic ashes behind them. It was a tribute not to a genre (that was the vehicle) but to their generation of stoned and drunk artists (that was the message). There was no music per se: there were only subsonic litanies, limping rhythms and disjointed accompaniment, that mirrored (on a very warped parallel universe) the stereotypes of blues-rock. **Twin Infinitives** (1990), one of the milestone recordings of the era, a sort of **Trout Mask Replica** for the grunge generation, toured an impassable jungle of clumsy and puerile noises. Derailed by pseudo-jazz and pseudo-avantgarde pretensions, its delirious pieces sounded like nuclear bacchanals via spastic jamming. Lacking any sense of order or purpose, the album was a colossal chaos of musical detours. The anarchic and illiterate art that had been foreshadowed and incubated throughout the 1980s by the works of punk-rock, the no wave, industrial music, and so forth, had reached the terminal point. The two devastated psyches had forged a hyper-psychedelic form of cubism. **Royal Trux** (1992) marked a return to a more conventional song format, and **Cats And Dogs** (1993) was virtually a sell-out, despite the knack for extravagant dynamics.

#### *San Francisco 1985-89*

In the mid 1980s, the Bay Area launched a melodic style of hardcore that would be highly influential on the 1990s. The leaders were Mr T Experience (1), progenitors of Berkeley's "Gilman Street" scene, harked back to the Ramones' farcical tone and catchy refrains. The breakthrough album was **Everybody's Entitled To Their Own**

**Opinion** (1986), but the better produced **Milk Milk Lemonade** (1992) is the one that gave punk-pop its mass appeal.

The Dwarves (2) did not belong to any movement or scene, but they played the funniest, reckless and most exuberant punk-rock of the era. From their garage/psychedelic beginnings, they moved on to such inane jokes as **Blood Guts & Pussy** (1990) and **Thank Heaven For Little Girls** (1991), devoting themselves to forbidden dirty themes in the tradition of Alice Cooper and Cramps, and populating their songs of a disturbing crowd of sluts and perverts. But that was, after all, the original, unadulterated, uncivilized spirit of rock'n'roll.

#### *Los Angeles 1986-87*

The leaders of Black Flag remained influential after the split. Greg Ginn continued his virtuoso explorations (solo, with Gone, with Dos and with October Faction), while Henry Rollins (22) emerged as one of the leading voices of the hardcore generation.

A force of nature, Rollins built an awe-inspiring opus on his visceral delivery, an excursion into intense vocal registers running the gamut from Iggy Stooze to Captain Beefheart. Introspection, the object of his manic quest, yielded the psychic hurricanes of **Hot Animal Machine** (1987), a milestone recording that turned the violence of hardcore inside (towards the inner life) rather than outside (society). The pathos owed quite a bit to guitarist Chris Haskett, who applied the eloquent styles of Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix to crafting a new dramatic art of guitar accompaniment. The steel framework of **Life Time** (1988) and the brutal coldness of the mini-album **Hard Volume** (1989) offered an infernal fresco of the human condition via an experimental sound that relied on jazz bass, psychedelic drums, atonal guitar and dynamic tempos. Despite his ego, the Rollins Band was a polycentric unit that was both tight and interactive, and the voice was certainly not the only protagonist of their psychodramas. Songs that appeared to be compact, massive units were actually composite, fragmented structures. This was particularly true on **End Of Silence** (1992), a grunge monolith and a titanic effort, that was both Rollins' supreme cry of desperation and a complex, multilateral stream of consciousness. The instruments had the alienating effect of isolating Rollins' grief, as if nobody was listening to him. A more streamlined and controlled approach on **Weight** (1993) melted and welded jazz passion and heavy-metal prowess, on top of Rollins' customary deliriums.

L7 (2), featuring Suzi Gardner and Donita Sparks on guitars and Jennifer Finch on bass, played a rough and blistering mixture of rock'n'roll, punk-rock and heavy-metal, on **L7** (1988), whereas **Smell The Magic** (1991) turned to pop-metal. They found a magic balance between the wild and the anthemic tones on **Bricks Are Heavy** (1992), particularly with the classic *Pretend We're Dead*, one of rock's immortal refrains. They pioneered "foxcore" and inspired the riot-grrrrls of California.

#### *Pop-core 1986-89*

Towards the end of the decade, when the style invented by Husker Du was beginning to take over the hardcore scene, Boston boasted two of the most successful acts: Evan Dando's Lemonheads (2), who became a hero with the honest and sincere **Hate Your Friends** (1987) and became a star with **It's A Shame About Ray** (1992), one of the albums that signaled the mass acceptance of punk-rock; and Ken Chambers' Moving Targets (1), whose punk spirit triumphed on **Burning In Water** (1986) but was also tempered by the contemporary folk-rock school of R.E.M. and Tom Petty. Chambers continued his punk-pop mission with Bullet Lavolta.

Chicago's Screeching Weasel (2) were among the most effective and entertaining, first with **Boogadaboogadaboogada** (1989), a tour de force of clownish refrains that was also an indirect tribute to Ramones and Buzzcocks, and then with **My Brain Hurts** (1991), one of the few works in this genre that was as melodramatic as demented. Ben "Weasel" Foster impersonated the indifferent kid who has understood nothing of life and society, and whose intellectual level can't go beyond the provincial gossip, but the self-parodying tone harked back to the original spirit of punk-rock and rock'n'roll.

The Didjits (1), from nearby Champaign, rediscovered frantic, anthemic, epic rock'n'roll on albums such as **Hey**

**Judester** (1988).

In the second half of the decade, quite a few Los Angeles punk bands debuted with a melodic style, from porno-punks Chemical People, to militant hardcore agitators NOFX. The mostly female Creamers (1) recorded one of the most powerful albums in the frantic style of the New York Dolls (whirling rock'n'roll and catchy hooks),

**Love Honor And Obey** (1989).

Alabama's Sex Clark Five (1) crafted a humble gem of punk-pop, **Strum Und Drum** (1987).

Goo Goo Dolls (1), from upstate New York, found the formula to sell pop-core to the masses: on **Hold Me Up** (1990) they fused the Replacements' passionate rock'n'roll, Husker Du's punk-pop tunefulness and crisp hard-rock production.

In Minnesota, the only band that capitalized on Husker Du's intuitions was Arcwelder (1), although even their most accomplished albums, such as **Pull** (1993), never recovered Husker Du's magic touch.

The catchiest and most "retro" of the punk-pop bands came from Seattle: the Fastbacks (2) were the ultimate improvement over the ideas of Buzzcocks and Ramones. Albums such as **Very Very Powerful Motor** (1990) and **Answer The Phone Dummy** (1994) were whirlwinds of childish singalongs, reminiscent of Phil Spector and the girl-groups.

Punk-pop was initially an underground phenomenon but soon spread all over the world. In Japan, Shonen Knife (1) made albums such as **Pretty Little Baka Guy** (1986) that could be the ultimate party music: superbly pointless, but irresistible.

#### ***Rogue folk 1985-86***

In England, bands such as Pogues (1) and the Waco Bros applied the principles of punk-rock to folk music. The Pogues were a folk ensemble that played with devilish animosity, conveying the rancor and the rage of the working class and of the lumpenproletariat (and the savage manners of the hooligans). **Rum Sodomy And The Lash** (1985) and the EP **Poguetry In Motion** (1986) distorted the whole point of square-dances and folksongs, turning them into orgiastic, drunk and irreverent tirades. Their "rogue folk" influenced scores of bands (the leftovers of the folk revival) but the Pogues themselves soon abandoned the genre with the eclectic, almost pan-ethnic arrangements of **If I Should Fall From Grace With God** (1988).

Membranes (2), unorthodox disciples of Fall, boasted one of the most defiant and confrontational attitudes, that translated into the memorable psychotic bacchanals of **The Gift Of Life** (1985), that even flirts with jazz and ska, and **Kiss Ass Godhead** (1988), on a more humorous note.

The decade ended with the clownish experiences of Toy Dolls and Chumbawamba (2). The latter (yet another anarchic cell) borrowed ideas from the music hall and the circus, and crafted a sound that was both militant and chaotic, inspired by Brecht's theater and the Fugs' burlesque on semi-musical works such as **Pictures Of Starving Children Sell Records** (1986). The galloping sermons of **Shhh** (1992) began to wed the style of traditional folk songs to dance-music (funk, hip-hop, reggae), an idea that, coupled with more disciplined arrangements, led to the poppy **Tubthumper** (1997).

## **5.24 USA: Noise-rock**

### ***New York's noise-rock 1986-88***

Sonic Youth coined a style that came to be called "noise-rock". It was still abiding by the rules of rock and roll but it was hijacked by dissonant or discordant sounds. Notable purveyors of noise-rock in the second half of the decade were Nice Strong Arm; Rat At Rat R, whose **Rock & Roll Is Dead** (1985) was prophetic; Agitpop (1), whose **Back At The Plain Of Jars** (1986) was reminiscent of Half Japanese and Pianosaur; Ritual Tension (1), whose **I Live Here** (1986) was devoted to clownish non-linear Pere Ubu-esque "dances"; Gut Bank (1), who

recorded an album of amateurish but highly creative noise-rock, **Dark Ages** (1986), and pioneered the "riot-grrrrls" movement.

Robert Poss (a student of avantgarde composers Alvin Lucier, Phil Niblock and Rhys Chatam) led the triple-guitar attack of the Band Of Susans (13). The guitar tornadoes on the EP **Blessing And Curse** (1986) and on the full-length **Hope Against Hope** (1988) gave rock'n'roll a new twist, fusing minimalistic repetition, psychedelic vocals and guitar noise. The concept evoked the Velvet Underground (and even T.Rex), but the execution was loud, driving and discordant in a way that acknowledged hardcore and noise-rock. Their conversion to pop music, on **Love Agenda** (1989), was even more successful than Sonic Youth's, because catchy hooks and rock'n'roll rhythm were matched by grander noise, alternatively hypnotic/ethereal and metallic/neurotic. **The Word And The Flesh** (1991) and **Veil** (1993) capitalized on that alchemic combustion, further sharpening the guitars and polishing the melodies.

The False Virgins' **Skinjob** (1989) was representative of the flood of Sonic Youth imitators to come.

Of Cabbages And Kings (2) were masters of the dramatic tension, thanks to an eclectic fusion that reached out to hardcore as well as to jazz. The EP **Of Cabbages And Kings** (1988) and the mini-album **Face** (1988) were still reminiscent of their roots (Swans, Foetus, Glenn Branca), but an original and unpredictable style developed on **Basic Pain Basic Pleasure** (1990), a work so gripping, gloomy and arcane that seemed to be dedicated to mental disorders, and on **Hunter's Moon** (1992), very influenced by Foetus.

Spongehead (2), a guitar-sax-drums trio, crafted a loose fusion of blues, funk and jazz that resembled Pere Ubu's abstract pop-art on the tentative **Potted Meat Spread** (1989) and on the more mature **Legitimate Beef** (1990). Dave Henderson's tenor sax and Doug Henderson's atonal guitar worked wonders on **Curb Your Dogma** (1993), an emotional as well as technical miracle that ran the gamut from expressionist psychodramas to rowdy pow-wows. And **Infinite Baffle** (1996) even applied the group's recipe to roots-rock with boogie overtones à la ZZ Top.

Finally, Alice Donut played hardcore via Frank Zappa.

#### ***Boston's noise-pop 1985-87***

By the end of the decade noise-rock had already evolved into highly original and personal styles. The most influential bands, that would inspire hundreds of musicians (and particularly grunge musicians) in the following decade, came out of Boston.

Dinosaur Jr (13), formed by guitarist Joseph Mascis and bassist Lou Barlow, set the "noise-pop" standard of the 1990s (a merger of distortion and melody), and acted as the link between Sonic Youth and grunge. Mascis' Neil Young obsession (via the Meat Puppets) surfaced on **Dinosaur** (1985). Layers of loud feedback permeated each note of **You're Living All Over Me** (1987). Each song sounded like a languid acid-rock ballad grafted onto hard-rock spasms. Mascis unleashed unabashed pop melodies over orgiastic and fetishistic guitar noise. **Bug** (1988), the last album with Barlow (who went on to form Sebadoh), capitalized on that invention, that soon became one of the most abused stereotypes in rock music. **Green Mind** (1991), that was de facto Mascis' first solo album and a more accessible one, and **Where You Been** (1993), featuring new bassist Mike Johnson and delving into introspective melodrama, became mere routine.

The Pixies (12), led by vocalist Black Francis (real name Charles Thompson, but later better known as Frank Black) and guitarist Joey Santiago, created another reference standard with their eccentric garage-pop that subverted many cliches of the rock song. Bassist Kim Deal co-wrote some of the best material. Introduced by the ebullient EP **Come On Pilgrim** (1987), a stunning stylistic excursion that ranged from demented exotica to irreverent roots-rock à la Violent Femmes, their eclectic talent blossomed on **Surfer Rosa** (1988). A triumph of the imagination, it took punk-rock to places where it had never been before. Black Francis' slightly psychotic howl and Deal's shimmering warble met Pere Ubu's tortured exuberance, without sacrificing too much to intellectual abstraction. In fact the songs were anchored in the familiar structures of hard-rock and power-pop. It was, mainly,

an exercise in controlled violence. More focused and tighter, **Doolittle** (1989) was simply a formidable display of impeccable songwriting by a team of highly creative musicians. After **Bossanova** (1990), a failed experiment with easy-listening, **Trompe Le Monde** (1991), basically a Francis solo, partially returned to the verve of the early days, but, overall, the last two albums were to the first two albums what the music-hall is to the garage.

#### *The South's art-punk 1985-87*

A school was being born in Kentucky that would be influential throughout the 1990s. Its early leaders were bands at the crossroads between roots-rock and noise-rock, and Tara Key's Antietam (1) were the most typical in bridging those two styles, i.e. the South and Sonic Youth, the rural and the urban sound, tradition and modernism. The savage and awkward playing on **Antietam** (1985) was emblematic of the distance that separated the new generation from the generation of the Fetchin Bones.

Squirrel Bait (1) only recorded an EP (1985) and a full-length album, **Skag Heaven** (1987). Loosely affiliated to Husker Du's pop-core, their sound broke new ground in the way it juxtaposed loud guitars and tragic vocals. After the band's break-up, its main members would contribute to the birth and evolution of genres such as grunge, slo-core and post-rock: vocalist Peter Searcy with Big Wheel, guitarist Brian McMahan with Slint and For Carnation, guitarist David Grubbs with Bitch Magnet, Bastro and Gastr Del Sol.

Blind Idiot God (12), hailing from St Louis (Missouri), were an instrumental power-trio that predated both post-rock and grunge, and that took inspiration from both MC5, Jimi Hendrix, John Coltrane and Glenn Branca. **Blind Idiot God** (1987) unwound an explosive mix of hardcore, heavy-metal and space-rock, dressed up with spices of reggae and funk. The ugly geometry of its mini-rock symphonies had few precedents in popular music. The trio topped that masterpiece with the seismic wall of sound of **Undertow** (1988) and the erudite funk-jazz-reggae-metal crossover of **Cyclotron** (1992).

The wildly schizoid jazz-core instrumental combo Alter Natives (1), formed in Virginia by saxophonist Eric Ungar, matched the progressive sound of Los Angeles' jazzcore bands (Minutement, Saccharine Trust) at least on their debut album, **Hold Your Tongue** (1986).

Tennessee's Phantom Tollbooth (1), too, attempted to fuse hardcore and prog-rock (in a more refined manner than Minutemen) on **One-way Conversation** (1987).

#### *San Francisco 1984-85*

San Francisco continued to be at the cutting edge of new music. Its scene adapted to the style and issues of hardcore with the usual dose of idealism, creativity and wit. The new "eccentrics" were closer in spirit to the early years of the new wave than to the latter days of noise-rock.

Tragic Mulatto (12) debuted with the eight-song mini-album **Judo For The Blind** (1984), a pandemonium of spastic, minimal and primitive concepts, a colossal tribute to nonsense. Pared down to a quartet, Tragic Mulatto's ridicule circus concocted **Locos Por El Sexo** (1987), an artistic paradox that is the musical equivalent of a descent to hell, a relentless romp of indecent bacchanals led by Flatula Lee Roth's saxophone and tuba and by her anthemic, Grace Slick-ian vocal phrasing. An eight-member outfit recorded **Hot Man Pussy** (1989), which expanded the palette to heavy-metal and ethnic music, while Roth launched into witchy spasms and blasphemy exorcisms. Even more psychedelic and exotic, Roth reveled in even more perverted and lugubrious shrieks on **Chartreuse Toulouse** (1990), their swan song.

Slovenly (2) evolved from Saccharine Trust's jazz-core. Since their debut album, the tentative **After The Original Style** (1985), they embraced a bizarre fusion of electronic, funk and jazz, arranged with saxophone, violin and trumpet. *Things Fall Apart*, on **We Shoot For The Moon** (1989), is their equivalent of Ornette Coleman's free-jazz, while **Highway to Hanno's** (1992) perfected their style at the border between avantgarde and music-hall.

#### *Dream-pop 1987-89*

A humbler act, Hugo Largo (11), took the best that the genre had to offer, wed it to classical music and to British

dream-pop. **Drum** (1987) could be defined as a meeting of ecstatic acid-rock and austere chamber music. Its ethereal lieder and exotic lullabies roamed a stylistic landscape that extended from Tim Buckley to new-age music. **Mettle** (1989) increased the hypnotic effect with another batch of jazz, folk, medieval and Indian fusion. Similar projects were conducted, with similar humility, in Georgia by Linda Hopper's **OH-OK**, who recorded only two EPs, and in North Carolina by the **Blackgirls** (1), another female band that released a superb document of existential angst and Raincoats-like eccentric pop, **Procedure** (1989), and the more folk-ish **Happy** (1991).

## **5.25 Appendix: Best albums of the 1980s**

1. Foetus: **Nail** (SomeBizarre)
  2. Bruce Springsteen: **River** (CBS)
  3. Gun Club: **Fire Of Love** (Ruby)
  4. Peter Gabriel: **Passion** (Geffen)
  5. Husker Du: **Zen Arcade** (SST)
- 
6. Mark Stewart: **Learning To Cope With Cowardice** (RoughTrade)
  7. Swans: **Children Of god** (Product)
  8. Sonic Youth: **Daydream Nation** (Blast First)
  9. Pixies: **Surfer Rosa** (4AD)
- 
10. Death Of Samantha: **Where The Women Wear The Glory** (Homestead)
  11. Unrest: **Tink Of Southeast** (Teen Beat)
  12. Cramps: **Songs The Lord Taught Us** (Illegal)
  13. Dream Syndicate: **Days Of Wine And Roses** (JackRuby)
  14. Pandora's Box: **Original Sin** (Virgin)
  15. Blind Idiot God: **self-titled** (SST)
  16. Public Image Ltd: **Flowers Of Romance** (Virgin)
  17. Feelies: **Crazy Rhythms** (Stiff)
  18. Tom Waits: **Frank's Wild Years** (Island)
  19. Richard Thompson: **Shoot Out The Lights** (Hannibal)
  20. Rip Rig Panic: **God** (Virgin)
  21. Waitresses: **Wasn't Tomorrow Wonderful** (WB)
  22. Cocteau Twins: **Head Over Heels** (4AD)
  23. Minutemen: **Double Nickels On The Dime** (SST)
  24. Butthole Surfers: **Psychic Powerless** (TouchAndGo)
  25. Jane Siberry: **No Borders Here** (Open Air)
  26. Stan Ridgway: **Big Heat** (IRS)
  27. Big Black: **Atomizer** (Homestead)
  28. Red Temple Spirits: **Dancing To Restore An Eclipsed Moon** (Nate Starkman & Son)
  29. Pussy Galore: **Right Now** (Caroline)
  30. Guns'n'Roses: **Appetite For Destruction** (Geffen, 1987)
  31. Henry Rollins: **Hot Animal Machine** (Texas Hotel)
  32. Ministry: **The Land Of Rape And Honey** (Sire)
  33. Godflesh: **self-titled** (Silverfish)

34. David Thomas: The Sound Of The Sand (RoughTrade)
  35. Bitch Magnet: **Umber** (Communion)
- 
36. Camper VanBeethoven: Telephone Free Landslide Victory (Independent)
  37. Band Of Susans: **Hope Against Hope** (Furthur)
  38. Julian Cope: World Shut Your Mouth (Mercury)
  39. Mission Of Burma: VS (AceOfHeart)
  40. X: LA (Slash)
  41. American Music Club: **United Kingdom** (Demon)
  42. Nick Cave: From Her To Eternity (Mute)
  43. Dogbowl: **Tit** (Shimmy Disc)
  44. Foetus: **Thaw** (Some Bizarre)
  45. Jane Siberry: **The Walking** (Duke Street)
  46. Bel Canto: **White-Out Conditions** (Crammed Disc)
  47. Soft Boys: Underwater Moonlight (Armageddon)
  48. In The Nursery: **Koda** (Wax Trax)
  49. Enya: Watermark (Geffen)
  50. Primus: **Suck On This** (Prawn Song)
  51. Tackhead: **Friendly As A Hand Grenade** (TVT)
  52. Colin Newman: A-Z (BeggarsBanquet)
  53. Pere Ubu: Art Of Walking (Rough Trade)
  54. Pop Group: For How Much Longer (Rough Trade)
  55. Missing Foundation: **self-titled** (Purge)
  56. Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic: Magnetic Flip (AceOfHearts)
  57. Killing Joke: self-titled (EG)
  58. Dead Kennedys: Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables (CherryRed)
  59. Squirrel Bait: Skag Heaven (Homestead)
  60. Talking Heads: Remain In Light (Sire)
  61. Swans: Filth (Neutral)
  62. Black Flag: Damaged (SST)
  63. Flipper: Generic Album (Subterranean)
  64. Virgin Prunes: If I Die I Die (RoughTrade)
  65. Tuxedomoon: Half Mute (Ralph)
  66. Muffins: 185 (RandomRadar)
  67. Cocteau Twins: Garlands (4AD)
  68. Styrenes: Girl Crazy (Mustard)
  69. Jesus & MAry Chain: **Psychocandy** (Reprise, 1985)
  70. Tom Verlaine: Words From The Front (WB)
  71. Legal Weapon: Death Of Innocence (Arsenal)
  72. Rip Rig Panic: I Am Cold (Virgin)
  73. REM: Murmur (IRS)
  74. Hugo Largo: Drum (Relativity)
  75. Zoogz Rift: **Water** (SST)
  76. Einsturzende Neubaten: Zeichnungen Das Patienten (PVC)

77. American Music Club: **Engine** (Grifter)
78. Fleshtones: **Roman Gods** (IRS, 1981)
79. Misfits: **Walk Among Us** (Ruby)
80. Butthole Surfers: self-titled (Subterranean)
81. Golden Palominos: self-titled (Celluloid)
82. Rollins Band: **Life Time** (Texas Hotel)
83. Sonic Youth: **Sister** (SST)
84. Minor Threat: **Out Of Step** (Dischord)
85. Bad Brains: Rock For light (PVC)
86. Metallica: Kill 'Em All (Megaforce)
87. Univers Zero: **Heatwave** (Recommended, 1986)
88. Virginia Astley: From Gardens Where We Feel Secure (Virgin)
89. Big Black: Songs About Fucking (Touch And Go)
90. Faith No More: **Introduce Yourself** (Slash)
91. Necros: **Tangled Up** (Restless)
92. Savage Republic: **Customs** (Fundamental)
93. Jah Wobble: **Bedroom Album** (Lago)
94. Cocteau Twins: Treasure (4AD)
95. Foetus: Hole (SelfImmolation)
96. Replacement: Let It Be (Zippo)
97. Saccharine Trust: Surviving You (SST)
98. Del-Lords: **Frontier Days** (Enigma)
99. Metallica: Ride The Lightning (Elektra)
100. Pretenders: Learning to Crawl (A&M)
101. Killdozer: Intellectuals Are The Shoeshine Boys (TouchAndGo)
102. Zoogz Rift: **Ipecac** (Azra)
103. Swans: Cop (KCC)
104. Nick Cave: The Firstborn Is Dead (Homestead)
105. David Thomas: More Places Forever (TwinTone)
106. Husker Du: New Day Rising (SST)
107. Fetchin Bones: **Cabin Flounder** (DB)
108. Squirrel Bait (Homestead)
109. Tiny Lights: **Prayer For The Halcyon Fear** (Gaia)
110. Dead Can Dance: Spleen And Ideal (4AD)
111. Chuck Vrtacek: **Learning To Be Silent** (Cordelia)
112. Replacements: **Tim** (Sire)
113. Lazy Cowgirls: **self-titled** (Restless)
114. Camper VanBeethoven: II & III (PitchATent)
115. American Music Club: **California** (Grifter)
116. Annette Peacock: I Have No Feelings (Ironic)
117. Godflesh: **Streetcleaner** (Earache)
118. Death Of Samantha: **Strungout On Jargon** (Homestead)
119. Pussy Galore: **Groovy Hate Fuck** (Shove)
120. UT: **Conviction** (Out)

121. Feelies: Good Earth (Coyote)
122. Butthole Surfers: Rembrandt Pussyhorse(TouchAndGo)
123. David Thomas: Monster Walks The Winter Lake (TwinTone)
124. Dwarves: **Horror Stories** (Voxx)
125. Green: **self-titled** (Gang Green)
126. Yo La Tengo: **Ride The Tiger** (Coyote)
127. Die Kreuzen: October File (TouchAndGo)
128. Didjits: **Fizzjob** (Bam Bam)
129. Flaming Lips: **Telepathic Surgery** (Restless)
130. FIREHOSE: **Ragin' Full On** (SST)
131. Swans: Greed (PVC)
132. Band Of Susans: Blessing And Curse (Trace Elements)
133. Bauhaus: In The Flat Field (4AD)
134. Joy Division: Closer (Factory)
135. Clash: Sandinista (CBS)
136. Cure: Pornography (Fiction)
137. Butthole Surfers: Locus Abortion Technician (TouchAndGo)
138. Replacement: Pleased To Meet Me (Sire)
139. Tragic Mulatto: Locos Por El Sexo (Alternative Tentacles)
140. Fetchin Bones: **Galaxy 500** (Capitol)
141. Lazy Cowgirls: **Tapping The Source** (Bomp)
142. Dinosaur Jr: **You're Living All Over Me** (SST)
143. Universal Congress Of: self-titled (SST)
144. Live Skull: **Dusted** (Homestead)
145. Sinead O'Connor: The Lion And The Cobra (Chrysalis)
146. Smithereens: Especially For You (Enigma)
147. Peter Frohmader: **Through Time And Mistery** (GEMA)
148. My Bloody Valentine: **Isn't Anything** (Creation)
149. Jane's Addiction: **Nothing's Shocking** (Warner Bros)
150. Djam Karet: **Reflections From The Firepool** (HC Productions)
151. Bongwater: **Double Bummer** (Shimmy-Disc)
152. Of Cabbages And Kings: **Face** (Purge)
153. Talk Talk: Spirit Of Eden (EMI)
154. Unrest: **Malcom X Park** (Caroline)
155. King Snake Roost: **Things That Play Themselves** (Aberrant)
156. Fugazi: self-titled (Dischord)
157. Walkabouts: **See Beautiful Rattlesnake Gardens** (PopLlama)
158. Dead Can Dance: **The Serpent's Egg** (4AD)
159. Rudimentary Peni: **Cacophony** (Outer Himalayan)
160. Spacemen 3: **Playing With Fire** (Fire)
161. Soundgarden: **Ultramega OK** (SST)
162. Lard: **The Power Of Lard** (Alternative Tentacles)
163. Chuck Vrtacek: **When Heaven Comes To Town** (Recommended)
164. Galaxie 500: **Today** (Aurora)

165. Missing Foundation: **1933** (Purge)
166. Naked Raygun: **Jettison** (Caroline)
167. They Might Be Giants: **Lincoln** (Bar None)
168. Savage Republic: **Tragic Figures** (Independent Project)
169. Didjits: **Hey Judester** (Touch And Go)
170. Tiny Lights: **Hazel's Wreath** (Gaia)
171. Annette Peacock: **Abstract-Contact** (Ironic)
172. Danzig: **Danzig** (Def American)
173. Lou Reed: **New York** (Sire)
174. **Feedtime** (Aberrant, 1986)
175. Bob Mould: **Workbook** (Virgin)
176. Rapeman: **Two Nuns And A Pack Mule** (Touch And Go)
177. Blake Babies: **Earwig** (Mammoth)
178. Laughing Hyenas: **You Can't Pray A Lie** (Touch And Go)
179. Lazy Cowgirls: **Radio Cowgirl** (Sympathy For The Record)
180. Ministry: **The Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Taste** (Sire)
181. Pussy Galore: **Dial M** (Caroline)
182. Ozric Tentacles: **Pungent Effluent** (Demi Monde)
183. Fear: **The Record** (Slash)
184. Pixies: **Doolittle** (4AD)
185. Slint: **Tweez** (Jennifer Hartman)
186. Galaxie 500: **On Fire** (Rough Trade)
187. Swans: **Burning World** (Uni)
188. Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic: **Faultline** (Ace Of Hearts)
189. Steel Pole Bath Tub: **Butterfly Love** (Boner)
190. Bel Canto: **Birds Of Passage** (Netzwerk)
191. Vulgar Boatmen: **You And Your Sister** (WB)

## 5.26 The greatest bands of the 1980s

1. Foetus
2. Tom Waits
3. Nick Cave
4. Swans
5. Sonic Youth
6. REM
7. Unrest
8. Butthole Surfers
9. Pixies
10. Bruce Springsteen
11. Husker Du
12. Slint
13. Savage Republic
14. Julian Cope

15. Flaming Lips
16. Godflesh
17. Blind Idiot God
18. Camper VanBeethoven
19. Cocteau Twins
20. Rip Rig Panic
21. Gun Club
22. Jane Siberry
23. Metallica
24. American Music Club
25. Minutemen
26. Mission Of Burma
27. Fetchin Bones
28. Dead Can Dance
29. Feelies
30. Bel Canto
31. Cramps
32. Death Of Samantha
33. Waitresses
34. Public Image Ltd
35. Big Black
36. Red Temple Spirits
37. Henry Rollins
38. Ministry
39. Dream Syndicate
40. Bitch Magnet
41. Faith No More
42. My Bloody Valentine
43. Djam Karet
44. X
45. David Thomas
46. Zoogz Rift
47. Dogbowl
48. Band Of Susans
49. Replacement
50. Saccharine Trust
51. Hugo Largo
52. Squirrel Bait
53. In The Nursery
54. Enya
55. Primus
56. Fugazi
57. Walkabouts
58. Tackhead

59. Steel Pole Bath Tub
60. Missing Foundation
61. Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic
62. Killing Joke
63. Dead Kennedys
64. Naked Raygun
65. They Might Be Giants
66. Stan Ridgeway
67. Black Flag
68. Flipper
69. Of Cabbages And Kings
70. Soundgarden
71. Laughing Hyenas
72. Tuxedomoon
73. Cure
74. Muffins
75. Styrenes
76. Tom Verlaine
77. Minor Threat
78. Fleshtones
79. Golden Palominos
80. Necros
81. Pussy Galore
82. Del-Lords
83. Killdozer
84. Misfits
85. Tiny Lights
86. Lazy Cowgirls
87. UT
88. Dwarves
89. Green
90. Yo La Tengo
91. Die Kreuzen
92. Didjits
93. Guns 'n Roses
94. FIREHOSE
95. Bauhaus
96. Joy Division
97. Tragic Mulatto
98. Dinosaur Jr
99. Universal Congress Of
100. Live Skull
101. Sinead O'Connor
102. Smithereens

103. Jane's Addiction
104. Spacemen 3
105. Bongwater
106. Galaxie 500
107. Rudimentary Peni
108. Bob Mould
109. Blake Babies
110. Ozric Tentacles

## 6 The Nineties

### 6.1 Noisier than rock

#### *The decade at a glance*

The 1990s saw the genres of the 1980s grow apart rather than fuse. Each of those genres (lo-fi pop, industrial, gothic, roots-rock, noise-rock, indie-pop, techno, ambient, etc) multiplied and evolved in a fashion largely independent of the others.

The 1990s marked, in many ways, the revenge of the "province". While the "new wave" and punk-rock (and rap and disco) had been centered around the big metropolitan areas in the North and in the West, the 1980s had slowly opened up to the rest of the country. By the time Bill Clinton became president (1992), the South, for example, had regained its grip on down-to-earth popular music, slowly establishing a supremacy over the whole gamut: alt-rock, pop, and, of course, roots-rock. The 1990s were also the age of Seattle, another relatively "provincial" center.

There were perhaps fewer new genres created in the 1990s than in any of the previous decades, but a few stand out: grunge, post-rock, trip-hop, drum'n'bass, glitch music.

#### *New York's legacy 1990-94*

The influence of Sonic Youth was perhaps the most visible. Mostly unknown during the 1980s, Sonic Youth came slowly to represent "the" quintessential alternative band. An even more "alternative" act, Pussy Galore, was a close second. No surprise, then, that a few of the new leaders emerged from those two bands. Bewitched (1) were formed by Pussy Galore's drummer Bob Bert, and recorded a boldly experimental work, **Brain Eater** (1990).

Jon Spencer's wife Cristina Martinez led Boss Hog (2), that re-invented party-music first on **Cold Hands** (1990), featuring Honeymoon Killers' bassist Jerry Teel and Unsane drummer Charlie Ondras, and then on **White Out** (2000), both clever revisitations of rock stereotypes.

Like Pussy Galore, the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion (3) was a bass-less trio playing careless, amateurish, skeletal and grotesque blues. The difference is that Spencer had dispensed with the "punk-rock" factor. A stylist of bad taste, Spencer carried out a postmodernist deconstruction of the blues, first on the cacophonous and viscerally crude **Jon Spencer Blues Explosion** (1992), which was virtually an insult to the great bluesmen of the past, then with the childish **Extra Width** (1993), and finally with the streamlined **Orange** (1994), which was in many ways his most accomplished (albeit not innovative) collection. These works contained psychotic rave-ups, demented jamming and scary vocals, which represented a "hip" kind of background music for the distorted values of the post-punk generation. The sophisticated sloppiness of **Now I Got Worry** (1996) and **Acme** (1998), the first Spencer album that featured a bass, further diluted the original outrage and presented a more civilized (i.e. less beastly) con-man.

New York, which had been the birthplace of noise-rock, had the most varied and crowded scene of noise-rock

bands: the Dustdevils, fronted by the unpleasant vocals of Jaqi Dulany; Babe The Blue Ox, with the odd dynamics of **Babe The Blue Ox** (1993); St Johnny, whose **High As A Kite** (1993) was derivative of Sonic Youth; Bunny Brains, who delivered the creative chaos of **Bunny Magick** (1994); Versus (1), whose **Secret Swingers** (1996) fused Television's transcendental acid-rock and Sonic Youth's atonal pop; Lotion, with the mildly psychedelic **Nobody's Cool** (1996); Sleepyhead, disciples of Sonic Youth who moved on to psychedelic folk.

Overall, noise-rock was a metropolitan, intellectual affair, relatively removed from the populist issues of the American heartland.

### *The legacy of apocalyptic hardcore 1991-92*

Chicago's noise-rock was heavily influenced by the subculture of hardcore, and by Big Black's apocalyptic noise. Jesus Lizard (13) summarized the style better than anyone else. The historical line-up of Scratch Acid vocalist David Yow, Scratch Acid bassist David Sims, Phantom 309's drummer Mac McNeilly, and guitarist Duane Denison, was the vanguard of a new kind of hardcore punk-rock that had absorbed funk, noise and industrial music. The EP **Pure** (1989) and the full-length **Head** (1990) were dramas of of macabre hyper-realism, immersed into urban neurosis as viewed from Yow's sick mind. **Goat** (1991), their most accomplished work, found a magical balance between Yow's psychotic mumbling and screaming (and perverted visions), Denison's elegant vocabulary of grinding, scathing, sobbing, lashing sounds, and a repertory of ever-mutating epileptic rhythms. The quartet penned lugubrious, visceral, vulgar, truculent, abrasive nightmares. A less disordered and less pathological affair, **Liar** (1992) was still highly energetic, sometimes chaotic, and always galvanizing. The instrumental technique refined on **Down** (1994) stood as an impressive contribution to redefining the very essence of rock music. But their music was, first and foremost, a music of fear, the fear of a young urban population whose life was reduced to a series of agonizing spasms. The central character of their stories, a sort of mythological psychopath, was the collective subconscious of that population. If punk-rock had been the sound of a battlefield, the sound of Jesus Lizard was the sound of the wounded who rattled in the cold of the night.

In nearby Minnesota, Flour (1), the project of former Rifle Sport's bassist Peter Conway, recorded albums such as **Luv 713** (1990) that wed Big Black's violence with dance beats and heavy-metal riffs.

Among the most oppressive followers of Jesus Lizard's convoluted power-rock were Missouri's Dazzling Killmen (2), no less brutal but a little jazzier. The cross-fire between vocalist Nick Sakes and guitarist Tim Garrigan, and the rhythm section's jarring movement, molded the infernal atmospheres of **Dig Out The Switch** (1992). The band relished horror psychodramas of ferocious intensity, an art that culminated on **Face Of Collapse** (1994).

Unsane (11), formed in New York by Jon's brother Chris Spencer and drummer Charlie Ondras, concocted a dissonant and violent form of rock'n'roll that borrowed the sheer impetus of hardcore but emptied it of any emotion and melody. The catastrophic riffs, hammering rhythms and uncontrolled vocals of **Unsane** (1991) performed glacial and relentless surgery on the body of a zombie. Cascades of atrocious sounds destabilized its songs and generated a form of hysterical tribalism. Compared with Sonic Youth, the music was spasmodically tragic, not calmly intellectual. Vincent Signorelli replaced Ondras (who had died prematurely) on **Total Destruction** (1994), another work drenched in superhuman angst, another bleak, claustrophobic, painful vision of subhuman life. Even compared to the extreme sound of Big Black, Unsane's music was a further step down the stairway to hell, and the damned weren't even crying anymore.

Kansas City's Season To Risk played similar heavy, tortured music on **In A Perfect World** (1995).

Los Angeles' Distorted Pony (1) delivered the gloomy, menacing, super-heavy, apocalyptic wall of noise of **Punishment Room** (1992), while Slug wed Big Black to an assortment of turntables and hip-hop rhythms, not to mention the monster assault of two basses, on **Swingers** (1993).

In New York, both Drunk Tank (1) with the bleak **Drunk Tank** (1991), and Cell, with **Slo Blo** (1992), further explored the edges of this style.

These bands increasingly mixed noise-rock, grunge and industrial music.

***Between noise-rock and feedback-pop 1991-95***

Indiana's Antenna, formed by former Lemonheads' and Blake Babies' guitarist John Strohm, evolved into Velo-Deluxe (1), whose **Superelastic** (1994) better represented the leader's fusion of roots-rock, power-pop, the Velvet Underground and My Bloody Valentine.

In Minnesota, Polara (1), the project of 27 Various' guitarist Ed Ackerson, bridged late Sonic Youth, Jesus & Mary Chain's feedback-pop and the "Madchester" sound on **Polara** (1995).

In Los Angeles, Further (1) produced **Sometimes Chimes** (1994), which toyed with Dinosaur Jr-like noise-pop.

***East Coast 1993-96***

Later into the decade, a new generation of bands came around playing non-linear, dissonant song-oriented music, and North Carolina (namely, Chapel Hill) was its epicenter. Polvo (12), which were in many ways the leaders of this school, resurrected Television's guitar counterpoint, which straddled the line between neurosis and ecstasy, between western existentialism and eastern transcendentalism, but pushed it to the brink of cacophony and chaos. The effect was to give "atonal" a "subliminal" meaning. The intricate and repulsive guitar collisions of Ash Bowie and Dave Brylawski propelled **Cor-Crane Secret** (1992) inwardly, while shifting and incoherent tempos lent the journey a Freudian intensity, and twisted melodies plunged the "stories" into the realm of Alice In Wonderland. A more erudite effort, **Today's Active Lifestyles** (1993) was, de facto, a series of dissonant micro-concertos, which in turn evoked a gallery of abstract miniatures, not unlike Captain Beefheart's masterpieces. **Exploded Drawing** (1996), possibly their masterpiece, perfected their manual of harmony. While the surface still sounded like a spastic version of Henry Cow, the nonchalant and detached way with which the players secretly toyed with elements of raga, blues and folk amounted to a jungle of improper signs, to a semiotic disaster of the same magnitude as Arto Lindsay's and Mayo Thompson's most heretical endeavors. The more careful arrangements of **Shapes** (1997) revealed that the scaffolding of their sonic kaleidoscope bore psychedelic stigmata. Shunning the over-extended progressive/acid format, Polvo advanced the concept of noise in the format of the pop song more than anyone else since Sonic Youth.

Boston boasted an equally original scene. Live Skull's vocalist Thalia Zedek and guitarist Chris Brokaw (ex-Codeine) formed Come (1) to indulge in noisy Royal Trux-ian blues jamming and neurotic Neil Young-ian ballads. **Don't Ask Don't Tell** (1994) was a collection of nightmarish streams of consciousness.

The Supreme Dicks (11) were among the most intriguing practitioners of the aesthetics that equates "creative" and "primitive". The theatrical bacchanals of **The Unexamined Life** (1993) managed to combine ideas from the Holy Modal Rounders, Kurt Weill and Lou Reed. That kind of drunk, dissonant folk music evolved towards the avantgarde and psychedelia on **The Emotional Plague** (1996), a vastly more ambitious work that resorted to sparse, dilated and warped structures.

Followers of Sonic Youth in and around Boston included Papas Fritas, Small Factory, New Radiant Storm King, Turkish Delight.

In Pennsylvania, Latimer's LP Title (1995) was typical of Sonic Youth's nation-wide influence.

Two of the most original bands were from Washington (and not coincidentally related to Unrest). Tsunami (1), the band of ebullient singer Jenny Toomey, played frantic and muddled roots-rock on **Deep End** (1993). Pitchblende (1), the band of guitarists Justin Chearno and Treiops Treyfid, molded a vehement and jagged attack on **Kill Atom Smasher** (1993).

***Modernism 1993-95***

Ohio's Brainiac (2) concocted a surreal hybrid of new wave and industrial music. Abandoning the punk-rock verve of their Devo-inspired debut album **Smack Bunny Baby** (1993), the short demented songs of **Bonsai Superstar** (1994), featuring new guitarist John Schmersal, revealed a lighter, gentler version of Pere Ubu, the Pixies and

Sonic Youth. Chaotic and retro, that album capitalized on those masters' innovations but, thanks to Tim Taylor's naive synthesizer and to a childish aesthetics, discarded the apocalyptic overtones. **Hissing Prigs In Static Couture** (1996) was a better organized madhouse, despite the relentless, frantic chaos.

Atlanta's Pineal Ventana offered a bold mixture of improvisation, tribal drumming, saxophone drones and edgy screaming on **Living Soil** (1995).

#### ***International noise-rock 1992-95***

England was awash in Brit-pop, but still managed to deliver some of the most creative bands of the era.

Gallon Drunk (11) was one of the most aggressive and intimidating outfits of its time. **You The Night And The Music** (1992) served rock'n'roll and rhythm'n'blues played by a pack of rabid wolves, skewed tribal dances derailed by awkwardly distorted guitar and organ and by demonic changes of tempo and mood. The album revived the lascivious and sinister musical universe of Birthday Party, the Cramps and the Scientists, but in a more catastrophic setting, and amid mutant echoes of Creedence Clearwater Revival and Bo Diddley. The slightly jazzier and more rational **From The Heart Of Town** (1993), featuring reed player Terry Edwards, turned that wild flight of the imagination into a style.

The aesthetics of Jacob's Mouse (1) was even looser. Their **No Fish Shop Parking** (1992) was a cauldron of noise-rock styles.

The Faith Healers (1), featuring guitarist Tom Cullinan, imitated Pixies and Sonic Youth on **Lido** (1992).

Prolapse (1) specialized in angular and abrasive noise-rock, which on the early albums, such as **Backsaturday** (1995), sounded like vitriolic indictments of pop music.

Boyracer behaved like childish hellraisers on **More Songs About Frustration And Self-Hate** (1994), that contains brief songs played with full-throttle clumsiness and clownish nerdiness.

Rosa Mota unleashed the triple guitar assault of **Wishful Sinking** (1995).

Beatnik Filmstars messed with the traditional song format in amateurish ways.

The "Halifax school" in Canada was briefly a phenomenon. Representative albums were **Love Tara** (1993), by Eric's Trip (1), which included Rick White and Julie Doiron, Sloan's Smear (1993), and Jale's Dreamcake (1994).

Switzerland's Sportsguitar and Germany's Blumfeld were Continental bands influenced by noise-pop. The best one was perhaps Germany's 18th Dye, particularly on **Tribute To A Bus** (1995).

- 1990: computer viruses spread over the Internet
- 1990: Iraqi troops (Saddam Hussein) invade Kuwait and are repelled by an international coalition (including most Arab countries) led by the USA
- 1990: Jack Kevorkian performs the first assisted suicide
- 1990: Margaret Thatcher resigns
- 1990: Saddam Hussein's Iraq invades Kuwait and US president Bush organizes an anti-Iraqi coalition
- 1990: the Hubble space telescope is launched
- 1990: the Human Genome Project is launched
- 1990: Tim Berners-Lee of CERN invents the Internet protocol HTTP and the hypertext language HTML (i.e., the World Wide Web)

## 6.2 Progressive sounds

### *East Coast 1990-96*

At the beginning of the 1990s, Phish, more than anyone else, established alternative rock on mainstream radio. Phish were more than just a surrogate of the Grateful Dead for the 1990s. They legitimized a return to the aesthetics of progressive-rock, particularly on the East Coast.

Blues Traveler were a simpler, domestic, rootsy version of Phish. **Blues Traveler** (1990) offered a judicious mixture of ballads and jams, and the band would eventually match and surpass Phish's commercial success.

Motherhead Bug (10) was a bizarre orchestra (accordion, trumpet, saxophone, percussion, trombone, violin, piano), led by multi-instrumentalist David Ouimet, that performed soundtracks for imaginary films. **Zambodia** (1993) was influenced by the music-hall, the circus, cartoons, marching bands, nursery rhymes, Sullivan's operettas. It was the equivalent of the Penguin Cafe' Orchestra for the new generation. Their offshoot Sulfur (1), formed by Ouimet and vocalist and keyboardist Michele Amar, carried out a similar work of stylistic collage, but the mood of **Delirium Tremens** (1998) was tragic rather than comic, and the atmosphere evoked Beckett's absurd theater.

The Spin Doctors became stars with the jovial and catchy ditties of **Pocket Full Of Kryptonite** (1991), that recycled stereotypes of funk, soul, blues, reggae, and rock music. Frank London's combo Klezmatiks played traditional klezmer music with a folk, rock and jazz twist.

One of the leading groups of instrumental neo-prog came out of Boston: Cul De Sac (3). The lengthy tracks on **Ecim** (1992) bridged German rock of the 1970s, John Fahey's transcendental folk, Terry Riley's minimalism and Pink Floyd's psychedelic ragas. Their most innovative work, **China Gate** (1996), increased the doses of jazz and world-music, thus achieving both a convoluted and a hypnotic state of mind. The narrative largely revolved around the counterpoint between Robin Amos' atonal synthesizer and Glenn Jones's post-surf guitar. On **Crashes To Light** (1999) that contrast, enhanced with sophisticated arrangements, became a slick texture that enhanced the melodic center of mass, and even lent the music a spiritual overtone, halfway between trance and fairy tale.

New York boasted talented and innovative combos that descended from the prog-rock bands of the 1980s. The veterans who ran Run On (11), drummer Rick Brown and bassist Sue Garner of Fish & Roses, plus guitarist Alan Licht of Love Child, and violin player Katie Gentile, showed how prog-rock could yield engaging songs and not only difficult constructs. **Start Packing** (1996) was a festival of instrumental lunacy, brainy hypnosis, eccentric arrangements, and lightweight cacophony that mostly stuck to the format of the pop song. The oneiric folk-rock of **No Way** (1997), inconspicuously raised on acid-rock and Indian music, homaged the classics (Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, Neil Young) while steering away from classic rock. Nothing in these albums was obvious. Every note was where it was because "that" was not where it should have been, if one were a traditional composer. Brown and Garner's vision of music was a place where we should (obviously) all have been but have never even dreamed of being. **Still** (1999), credited to Garner and Brown, was, de facto, a late addition to the Run On canon.

### *Noise-punk-jazz 1992-95*

God Is My Co-pilot (1) inherited Half Japanese's miniaturized dementia. **I Am Not This Body** (1992) packed 34 brief, childish, dissonant pieces that parodied all sorts of genres. Their chaotic approach bordered on free-jazz cacophony, and on party music for a madhouse.

In San Francisco, the Molecules, formed by former Rat At Rat R guitarist Ron Anderson, had already done something similar on **Steel Toe** (1991). Ditto for Love Child in New York and their **Witchcraft** (1992).

God Is My Co-pilot's idea was pursued by Spiny Anteaters in Canada, with the goofy, amateurish **Last Supper** (1998), Outhouse in Seattle, for example on **Process Of Elimination** (1998), Blowhole, also in Seattle, and featuring Amy Denio, on **Gathering** (1995), Harry Pussy in Florida, with **Ride A Dove** (1996), and many others.

### *Virginia 1992-96*

During the 1990s, progressive-rock staged a come-back (although it had never truly disappeared), and mainly in the USA. Throughout the decade, Virginia and the Washington area were the epicenter, with bands such as Echolyn (1), whose **Suffocating The Bloom** (1992) contained the 11-movement suite *A Suite For The Everyman*, and Boud Deun, whose best album was probably **Astronomy Made Easy** (1997). They were typical of the genre, derivative of the Canterbury school and of King Crimson.

The most creative group was Rake (12). After the two lengthy improvisations of **Rake Is My Co-Pilot** (1994) that evoked a demented form of free-jazz rather than conventional prog-rock, Rake indulged in **The Art Ensemble Of Rake** (1995), four lengthy suites that ran the gamut from minimalistic repetition to distorted guitar workouts to blues bacchanals to bubbling Moogs to ghostly ambience. **Intelligence Agent** (1996) betrayed the band's stylistic debts towards Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix, Mahavishnu Orchestra and Can.

On the other hand, the most successful Virginia act was the Dave Matthews Band, whose collections, such as **Under The Table And Dreaming** (1994), offered a sophisticated blend of celtic folk, rhythm'n'blues, jazz-rock and world music.

#### *Solo 1990-95*

More spices were added to the progressive-rock scene by New York-based instrumental virtuosos. Marc Ribot (1), who had played with the Lounge Lizards, John Zorn, Tom Waits, and the Jazz Passengers, demonstrated his fluid style, capable of bridging cacophony and melody in a smooth and swinging manner, on **Rootless Cosmopolitan** (1990), featuring jazz masters Don Byron on clarinet and Anthony Coleman on keyboards, and one of the few albums to evoke Peter Green's **End Of The Game**. Ribot's followed that achievement with the minimalist noir jazz of **Requiem For What's His Name** (1992) and the relentless sonic (and frequently dissonant) assault of **Shrek** (1994).

Nicky Skopelitis (2), who had played with Anton Fier, Bill Laswell and Sonny Sharrock, concocted a subtle form of ethnic funk-rock, orchestrated for small multi-national ensembles, on **Next To Nothing** (1989) and **Ekstasis** (1993), the latter featuring bassist Jah Wobble and Can's drummer Jaki Liebezeit.

Buckethead (1), Brian Carroll's extravagant project, specialized in a goofy fusion of heavy-metal, funk and psychedelic music, which he administered on Frank Zappa-esque concept albums devoted to cyberpunk themes, such as **Bucketheadland** (1992) and **Dreamatorium** (1994), credited to Death Cube K. His best album, **Day Of The Robot** (1996), marked a more serious exploration of ambient and dance music.

A unique case, Loren Mazzacane (2) devoted his career to a solo instrumental music that transcended stylistic boundaries, particularly when it crafted abstract country/blues/gospel/folk meditations on **Come Night** (1991) and **Evangeline** (1998).

Just like in the previous decade, a number of Frank Zappa alumni launched solo careers based on unique (and uniquely iconoclastic) styles. Ant-Bee (11), Billy James' project, was responsible for one of the most crazed albums of the decade, **Pure Electric Honey** (1990), that wed Brian Wilson's flair for eccentric arrangements with Frank Zappa's passion for deviant dynamics, and mixed up the result with techniques borrowed from musique concrete and psychedelic freak-outs. **Lunar Muzak** (1997), that collected veterans of the Mothers Of Invention (Bunk Gardner, Don Preston, Jimmy Carl Black), Gong (including Daevid Allen himself), Alice Cooper and Hawkwind (Harvey Bainbridge), was another madhouse party.

The compositions of Mike Keneally (1), whether the sprawling ones on **Hat** (1994) or the microscopic ones on **Boil That Dust Speck** (1995), whether the poppy ditties of **Sluggo!** (1997), his best album, or the all-instrumental tracks of **Nonkertompf** (1999), sounded like sprightly fragments of rock operas.

Gary Lucas was instead a veteran of Captain Beefheart's band. The swirling, cyclical structures of **Skeleton At The Feast** (1991) overflowed with otherworldly guitar inventions.

Run On's guitarist Alan Licht concentrated on anarchic and dadaist noise with the lengthy improvisations of **Sink**

**The Aging Process** (1994), **Rabbi Sky** (1999) and **Plays Well** (2001).

King Crimson's bassist Tony Levin fused world-music and chamber jazz on **World Diary** (1995).

Thinking Plague's guitarist Bob Drake (1) recorded highly original instrumental albums: **Little Black Train** (1996), a reckless venture into progressive bluegrass; **Animal Medallion Carpet** (1999), a wild ride down the dark but fascinating alleys of a very perverted musical mind, one that evoked the lunacy of the Residents and of the Holy Modal Rounders; and **The Skull Mailbox** (2001), which focused on pop melody, but Drake had enough imagination, and enough perversion, to turn each melody into a musical nonsense.

#### **West Coast 1990-91**

Mixing demented novelty tunes and goofy instrumental workouts, San Francisco's Primus (13) seemed to emulate Frank Zappa's versatile and iconoclastic irreverence. **Frizzle Fry** (1990) was typical of their capricious art: like an amusement park, it was a combination of rollercoaster rides, comedy shows, relaxing strolls and childish games. The changes in speed, mood and fashion were as abrupt as virtuoso, thanks to the inventions of bassist Les Claypool (one of the all-time greats), to the quirkiness of former Possessed guitarist Larry Lalonde, and to the monumental support of drummer Tim Alexander. King Crimson-ian instrumental convolution was offset by funny lyrics and a self-demystifying attitude. The intellectual puzzles became popular songs on **Sailing The Seas Of Cheese** (1991) and **Pork Soda** (1993), when the fusion of heavy-metal, funk, jazz and music-hall reached an almost mechanical efficiency. The trio's sonic exploration in **Tales From The Punchbowl** (1995) was more adventurous, but also highlighted the limits of the pop format.

Faith No More-associates Mr Bungle (1) were inspired by Frank Zappa and George Clinton on their debut, **Mr Bungle** (1991).

Seattle-based multi-instrumentalist Amy Denio (2) led and collaborated to a number of bizarre jazz-rock projects in the vein of the Canterbury school, notably the Tone Dogs (1), whose **Ankety Low Day** (1990) was a quirky flight of the imagination, and Degenerate Art Ensemble, that straddled the line between jazz, classical and rock. **Tongues** (1993) set forth her ambitious program of deconstruction of world folk music, that can evoke Pere Ubu's abstract sonatas for accordion and synthesizer as well as Dario Fo's onomatopoeic theater. This led to a string of albums, culminating in **The Danubians** (2000), that were dominated by Denio's bizarre phonetic wordplay and by her spirited accordion playing. With these works she proved to be a devil of a composer, of an arranger, of a performer, and of a conductor.

The same scene spawned Portland's Caveman Shoestore (1), a guitar-less trio formed by vocalist and keyboardist Elaine DiFalco and by veteran jazz players Fred Chalenor (bass) and Henry Franzoni (drums). Their **Master Cylinder** (1992) ran the gamut from pop melody to Soft Machine-esque jazz-rock to dadaistic cacophony to Art Bears-esque lieder.

The Thessalonians (1), based in San Francisco and featuring keyboardists Don Falcone, Paul Neyrinck and Kim Cascone, performed live improvisations for electronic and acoustic instruments, documented on **Soulcraft** (1993), that were the ultimate cybernetic-psychedelic ragas. Falcone's own Melting Euphoria were disciples of the Ozric Tentacles' cosmic-progressive rock.

#### **International progressive 1992-96**

In France, Philharmonie experimented with the unusual format of a guitar trio, particularly on **Les Elephantes Carillonneurs** (1993). The creative and unorthodox aesthetics of the Canterbury school was revived by Xaal, a French instrumental progressive trio whose most ambitious work was **Second Ere** (1995); while Volapuk (1) continued the neoclassical school of Art Zoyd and Univers Zero with albums such as **Slang** (1997).

In Canada, Slow Loris' **The Ten Commandments And Two Territories** (1996) straddled the border between free-jazz and acid-rock.

Sweden continued to enjoy a fertile progressive scene. For example, In The Labyrinth, i.e. Peter Lindahl, blended

neoclassical and ethnic music on **The Garden Of Mysteries** (1994).

In Japan, Happy Family betrayed the influence of King Crimson, Frank Zappa, Magma and Univers Zero on their second album, **Toscco** (1997).

In Britain, saxophonist Kevin Martin launched a number of projects that explored the unlikely marriage of jazz, industrial, dub and punk-rock. The three lengthy jams of **Possession** (1992) and especially the chaotic nightmares of **The Anatomy Of Addiction** (1994), both credited to God (1), were relatively old-fashioned excursions in mood reconnaissance and neurotic stream of consciousness; but Techno Animal (11), a collaboration with Godflesh's guitarist Justin Broadrick, unleashed the destructive force of **Ghosts** (1990), a meeting of Foetus, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Anthony Braxton and one of the most powerful works of its time; a vision that was matched by the brutal and visceral sound of **Under The Skin** (1993) and, to a lesser extent, **Bad Blood** (1998), both credited to Ice (1). Techno Animal's **Re-Entry** (1995), instead, delved into the claustrophobic darkness of ambient dub, summoning the likes of Jon Hassell, Bill Laswell and Brian Eno. **Tapping The Conversation** (1997), a collaboration between Kevin Martin and Dave Cochrane credited to Bug (1), crafted an obsessive sense of fear through a psychophysical torture of extreme hip-hop and dub deconstruction.

#### **Babel 1996-98**

Towards the end of the decade, the Babel of progressive-rock multiplied. In Boston, Bright's Bright (1996) bridged Cul De Sac and shoegazing. In Florida, Meringue mixed the verve and imagination of Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart and Gong on the monumental **Music From The Mint Green Nest** (1996); while Obliterati's Havy Baubaus Infilience (1998) sounded like a meeting of the Art Bears and the Contortions.

Ohio's Witch Hazel (1), the project of multi-instrumentalist Kevin Coral, indulged in a poppy and baroque form of progressive-rock on **Landlocked** (1995).

An erudite form of instrumental progressive-rock was coined in Boston by Cerberus Shoal (2). The neoclassical suites of **And Farewell To Hightide** (1997) and **Element Of Structure/ Permanence** (1997), sounded like Grateful Dead's *Dark Star* performed by a chamber ensemble. Deeper jazz and world-music undercurrents destabilized the two tours de force of **Homb** (1999), while the pieces on the transitional **Crash My Moon Yacht** (2000) sounded like collages. **Mr Boy Dog** (2002), both irriverently amusing and wildly creative in the tradition of Frank Zappa, offered sonic charades that mixed Albert Ayler, Nino Rota, Sonic Youth and Pink Floyd while deconstructing world-music, funk and free-jazz. The dense orchestration and inventive dynamics capitalized on three decades of progressive-rock.

In San Francisco, the Tin Hat Trio (1) evoked the Penguin Cafe' Orchestra and the Lounge Lizards on **Memory Is An Elephant** (1999) with a mixture of jazz, folk, avantgarde and world-music; while Species Being (1) penned the 11-movement suite **Yonilicious** (1998), an adventurous sonic odyssey through the musical genres.

- 1991: 2200 homicides are committed in New York, 1050 in Los Angeles
- 1991: Britain fights alongside the USA against Iraq
- 1991: John Gotti is arrested and the American Mafia declines
- 1991: the "Riot Grrrls!" movement is born at Olympia, Washington
- 1991: The first economic recession ever strikes California
- 1991: The Soviet Union is dismantled and Russia becomes an independent federation under Boris Yeltsin
- 1991: the USA leads the Gulf War against Iraq, the first war to use high-precision bombs guided by the GPS
- 1991: the world-wide web (invented by Tim Berners-Lee) debuts on the Internet

## 6.3 Post-psychedelia

### *East Coast 1990-96*

Psychedelic music was the single greatest invention of the 1960s and remained the dominant genre in the 1990s. The 1960s coined a number of psychedelic styles, and they were still the basic psychedelic styles of the 1990s: the psychedelic pop of the Doors, the psychedelic freak-out of the Red Crayola, the psychedelic trance of the Velvet Underground, and the acid jam of the Grateful Dead. Among the innovations introduced during the 1980s, dream-pop and shoegazing were still popular in the 1990s. Far from merely plagiarizing the classics, the most significant bands of the decade contributed to re-define the art of the sonic trip.

Mercury Rev (1991), originating from upstate New York and featuring John Donahue on guitar and Dave Fridmann on bass, achieved a synthesis of historical proportions. **Yerself Is Steam** (1991) was a psychedelic extravaganza that spanned three decades and three continents. Emotionally, it ran the gamut from Red Crayola's anarchic freak-outs to contemplative/meditative ecstases in the vein of new-age music. Technically, it blended and alternated pop melody, ambient droning, mind-boggling distortion, oneiric folk, martial tempos, pastoral passages, infernal noise and lyrical lullabies. Far from being merely a nostalgic tribute to an age, Mercury Rev's operation started with the hippie vision of nirvana on the other side of a swirling and chaotic music, but tempered the optimism of that program with an awareness of the human condition, and poisoned it with fits of neurosis and decadent atmospheres. The fantasies of **Boces** (1993) were even more variegated and imaginative, veritable collages of sonic events. The dense and busy arrangements, that owed more and more to Fridmann's command of keyboards and orchestration, did not interfere with what was fundamentally a much gentler mood, a distant relative of Kevin Ayers' fairy-tales. The progress towards a joyful and serene sound continued on **See You On The Other Side** (1995), which frequently embraced poppy melodies and facile rhythms, whereas **Deserter's Songs** (1998) marked the zenith of their phantasmagoric orchestrations.

Luna (1), formed by Galaxie 500's guitarist and vocalist Dean Wareham, Feelies' drummer Stanley Demeski and Chills' bassist Justin Harwood, specialized in shy, tender, whispered/conversational pop tunes, best on **Bewitched** (1994).

Minneapolis' Motion Picture (1) achieved zen-like grandeur with **Every Last Romance** (1998).

In Indiana, Arson Garden (1) sounded like the Jefferson Airplane performing renaissance psalms on **Under Towers** (1990).

Flaming Lips' lunatic pop influenced New Jersey's Tadpoles (1), whose **He Fell Into The Sky** (1994) matched the demented grandeur of the masters, the Wallmen in upstate New York, Jennyanykind in North Carolina. Mark Kramer's school of psychedelic pop continued to yield cauldrons of melodic oddities, for example Uncle Wiggly's There Was An Elk (1993).

Midwest groups tended to be derivative of 1960s' psychedelic-pop (Electric Prunes, Strawberry Alarm Clock, Blues Magoos) and garage-rock (13th Floor Elevator, Seeds). Notable albums of this kind were: Green Machine's King Mover (1993) in Minnesota; Outrageous Cherry's Outrageous Cherry (1994) in Michigan; Trunk Federation's The Infamous Hamburger Transfer (1996) in Arizona.

Original Sins' bizarre leader, John Terlesky, created one of the most irrational corpus of music ever recorded under the moniker Brother J.T. (2). Albums such as **Vibrolux** (1994) and **Music For The Other Head** (1996) conceived composition as an utter mess. Mostly, his "songs" were a hysterical rambling over cacophonous imitations of rock'n'roll. The longer tracks sounded like hippie music of the Sixties sucked, chewed and defecated by a psychedelic black-hole. It was a (hazy, incoherent, deranged) mental state, not an art.

Rhode Island's Space Needle (2), featuring keyboardist Jud Ehrbar, were responsible for the titanic nonsense of **Voyager** (1996), an amateurish work that relished technological primitivism and mystical noise. The no less

cryptic hodgepodge of **The Moray Eels Eat The Space Needle** (1997) indulged in instrumental prog-rock jamming, ambient ballads and shoegazing ecstasy.

#### *West Coast 1992-96*

Medicine (1), formed in Los Angeles by Brad Laner, ex-Savage Republic's drummer but now on guitars and keyboards, delivered **Shot Forth Self Living** (1992), a therapeutic shock that owed both to My Bloody Valentine and to Sonic Youth. Trance and noise were also the pillars of follow-up **The Buried Life** (1993).

Seattle's Sky Cries Mary (11), which had adopted an eclectic fusion of jazz, funk, world-music and acid-rock on the EP **Exit At The Axis** (1992), converted to hippie/new-age spirituality with **A Return To The Inner Experience** (1993), which blended Klaus Schulze's cosmic music, David Byrne's African polyrhythms and Nico's catatonic ballads, thereby coining an anti-rethoric form of psychedelia, one that was more an ambience than an ideology. Their masterpiece, **This Timeless Turning** (1994), focused on the intersection between early Pink Floyd and dance music, but hip-hop beats, Hendrix-ian riffs, industrial tornados and ancestral rites percolated through the loose, flaccid lattice.

Both the hippies' philosophy and sound reincarnated in a bizarre San Francisco project, Anton Newcombe's Brian Jonestown Massacre (2). Despite the clumsy recording quality and the amateurish stance, **Methodrone** (1995) and **Their Satanic Majesties' Second Request** (1996) were monumental encyclopedias of psychedelic music, from the Jefferson Airplane to Hawkwind, from the Rolling Stones to the Velvet Underground. Subsequent albums alternated between superbly derivative, such as **Take It From The Man** (1996) and **Give It Back** (1997), majestically musical, such as **Thank God For Mental Illness** (1996), arranged with a wealth of instruments, and dreamy/melancholy, such as **Strung Out In Heaven** (1998). Newcombe mostly followed in the footsteps of deranged street folksingers like David Peel, but his naif folly could also explode in noise collages.

In Vancouver (Canada), Superconductor experimented with a six-guitar line-up.

Quasi, formed in Oregon by Donner Party's guitarist Sam Coomes, specialized in applying old-fashioned, and frequently out-of-tune, keyboards to catchy pop tunes, for example on **Early Recordings** (1995).

Oregon's most hyped band of the 1990s, the Dandy Warhols (1) managed to fuse Brit-pop and the Velvet Underground on **Dandys Rules OK** (1995), but then sold out to generic power-pop with **Come Down** (1997) and **Thirteen Tales From Urban Bohemia** (2000).

The dominant styles of the 1980s and 1990s were still being revised, but the well was clearly drying up.

#### *American shoegazing 1992-96*

The influence of My Bloody Valentine and of the whole "shoegazing" movement became pervasive in America from 1992 on. Notable among the early albums of the genre were Fudge's **The Ferocious Rhythm Of Previs Laziness** (1992) in Virginia, and Drop Nineteens's **Delaware** (1992) in Boston.

Pennsylvania's Lilys (1) evolved from the quiet transcendental bliss of **In The Presence Of Nothing** (1992) to the dilated, majestic amorphous melodies of **Ecce The Photon Band** (1995).

Boston's Swirlies (1) added mellotron, Moog and found noises to the guitar tremolos of **Blondertongue Audiobaton** (1993).

Chicago's Catherine (1) bridged shoegazing and grunge on **Sorry** (1994).

New York's Saturnine 60 (1) sculpted languid ballads that soared with epically distorted apotheoses on **Wreck At Pillar Point** (1995).

New Jersey's Lenola expanded the genre both forward, in terms of structure, and backwards, in term of melody, on **The Last Ten Feet Of The Suicide Mile** (1996). So did Georgia's Seely on **Julie Only** (1996).

New York's Bowery Electric (1), after the embryonic **Bowery Electric** (1995), a collection of lengthy guitar drones, enhanced their trance with dub reverbs, sampler, loops, drum-machines on **Beat** (1996).

Kansas' Shallow enhanced shoegazing with quasi-orchestral arrangements of flute, dulcimer, piano, organ and

cello, besides loops and samples, on **High Flyin' Kid Stuff** (1997).

New Jersey's Flowchart wed My Bloody Valentine's droning symphonies and Enya's magical fairy tales on **Cumulus Mood Twang** (1998).

#### *Beyond space-rock 1992-95*

By fusing the extreme styles of psychedelia that favored the extended, free-form jam (acid-rock, space-rock, raga-rock) over the oddly-arranged tune, a number of groups sculpted epic sonic endeavors.

Lengthy and mostly improvised space jams took up ambitious albums such as: Fuzzhead's **Mind Soup** (1993) from Ohio; Lorelei's **Everyone Must Touch The Stove** (1996) from Virginia; Temple Of Bon Matin's **Bullet Into Mesmer's Brain** (1997) from Pennsylvania; etc.

Crawspace (2), the creature of Indiana-via-L.A. singer Eddie Flowers, produced works such as **Sphereality** (1992) and **The Exquisite Fucking Beauty** (1995), both anarchic and erudite, that went even further into the formulation of psychedelic free-jazz.

A group of Los Angeles musicians straddled the line between industrial music and acid-rock, and produced intriguing works such as Pressured's **Sudden Vertigo** (1994), featuring vocalist Tommy Grenas and keyboardist Len Del Rio, the Anubian Lights' **The Eternal Sky** (1995), featuring Del Rio, and Farflung's **25,000 Feet Per Second** (1995), featuring Tommy Grenas.

Michigan had one of the most fertile scenes. Fuxa, whose **Very Well Organized** (1996) harked back to both German avant-rock of the 1970s and Spacemen 3's shoegazing psychedelia. So did Medusa Cyclone (1), the new project by Viv Akauldren's keyboardist Keir McDonald, on their debut album, **Medusa Cyclone** (1996). Asha Vida's **Nature's Clumsy Hand** (1998) stretched as far as to free-jazz and musique concrete. Gravitar (12) were the noisiest of the bunch, and one of the noisiest groups of all times. **Chinga Su Corazon** (1993) and **Gravitar** (1995), totally improvised, were maelstroms of cacophony. Truculent rock'n'roll progressions built thick walls of noise. Each piece (especially on the second album) was a symphony of spectral dissonances harking back to Throbbing Gristle's macabre "industrial" rituals. Gravitar had endowed Lou Reed's **Metal Machine Music** with a rhythm. **Now The Road Of Knives** (1997), featuring a new guitarist, brought a bit of structure in their abominable chaos, revealing Chrome and Jimi Hendrix as the band's role models.

Oregon's King Black Acid And The Womb Star Orchestra (1) crafted some of the most eclectic, encyclopedic and exhilarating space jams on **Womb Star Sessions** (1995).

Pelt (2), in Virginia, further experimented on the format with **Brown Cyclopedia** (1995), a studio-savvy cross between Royal Trux's **Twin Infinite**, Sonic Youth's **Daydream Nation**, the Velvet Underground's **White Light White Heat** and Pink Floyd's **Ummagumma**. The free-form instrumentals of **Burning Filament Rockets** (1996) and **Max Meadows** (1997), that merged mind-bending psychedelic distortions and mind-opening world instrumentation, the three epic tracks of **Techeod** (1998), that obviously homaged minimalism and free-jazz, and the colossal title track from **Empty Bell Ringing In The Sky** (1999), led to the tour de force of **Ayahuasca** (2001), whose "ragas" defined a post-psychedelic and post-ambient music bridging John Fahey, Grateful Dead, Ravi Shankar and LaMonte Young.

Connecticut's Primordial Undermind (2) evolved from the garage-rock of **Yet More Wonders Of The Invisible World** (1995) and the space ballads of **You And Me And The Continuum** (1998) to the Hawkwind-style jams of **Universe I've Got** (1999) and the free-form space-rock of **Beings Of Game P-U** (2001), two albums which rank among the most "cosmic" and transcendental of the time.

New York's Escapade (1) performed all-instrumental music straddling the line between kraut-rock, hyper-psychedelia and progressive-rock. The three lengthy acid jams of **Searching For The Elusive Rainbow** (1996) and the two epic-length excursions of **Inner Translucence** (1997) led to **Citrus Cloud Cover** (1998), containing the 30-minute *The Sunlight*, a tour of the force within the tour de force, and the best formulation of their

conflagration of free-jazz and avantgarde electronic music.

Towering over every other space-rock band of the era, Philadelphia-based Bardo Pond (12) turned the acid-rock jam into a major art. **Bufo Alvarius** (1995) coined a new form of music built around supersonic drones. The average piece was a rainstorm of guitar distortions, strident turbulences and catastrophic drumming, halfway between MC5's heavy blues and Spacemen 3's shoegazing. It was the soundtrack of a cosmic trauma that still haunts the firmament. While no less brutal, **Amanita** (1996) revealed a spiritual element that harked back to both Popol Vuh's **Hosianna Mantra** and Pink Floyd's *A Saucerful of Secrets*; but nothing could be less religious than the apocalyptic chaos of **Lapsed** (1997). These albums were as musical as Einstein's relativity.

The members of Bardo Pond (guitarists John and Michael Gibbons, drummer Joe Culver, bassist Clint Takeda) also shone on two magnificent collaborations with guitarist Roy Montgomery, both credited to Hash Jar Tempo (110), **Well Oiled** (1997) and **Under Glass** (1999). The former, a seven-movement instrumental jam, is a cosmic hymn of monumental proportions, the psychedelic equivalent of a symphonic mass. Guitars compete for and concur to a universal "om", first running against each other, battling for the highest form of enlightenment, and then joining together in unison. The music emerges from spacetime warps, propelled by seismic rhythms, only to delve into deeper and deeper abysses, hypnotized by an unspeakable force. The second album was even more experimental, less dependent on guitars, and explicitly inspired by classical music. It alternated between glacial, imposing structures and chaotic noise collages, reconciling Wagner and Amon Duul, Verdi and Hawkwind, Bach and Red Crayola.

#### **Texas 1990-95**

By far the most active scene was in Texas. Texas psychedelia had been the craziest since the 1960s, and it claimed again that supremacy in the 1990s, led, of course, by the achievements of the Butthole Surfers. Except that, during the 1990s, this school diverged from punk-rock and moved towards a more experimental form of music, hardly "rock" at all. Spearheading the renaissance were severely irrational Butthole-ian bands.

If possible, Ed Hall (14) even increased the psychedelic-madness quotient of the Butthole Surfers, beginning with the repellent bacchanals and hallucinations of **Albert** (1988). At the least, they grotesquely increased volume and speed on their classic **Love Poke Here** (1990), a gargantuan, shameless blunder that evoked Captain Beefheart's blues, voodoo exorcisms, drunk cowboys' hoedowns, Jimi Hendrix, breakneck hardcore and redneck boogie. **Gloryhole** (1991) was the punk equivalent of Beckett's absurd theater. The slightly more serious (at times even melodramatic) **Motherscratcher** (1993) and the slightly better structured (at times even linear) **La-La-Land** (1995) were also their densest stews of heretical sonic events.

The Cherubs (1), a spin-off of Ed Hall, added sampling, dissonance and hard-rock riffs to Ed Hall's already explosive mix, particularly on second album **Heroin Man** (1994).

ST 37 (1), instead, followed in the footsteps of lysergic cosmic couriers à la Hawkwind on albums such as **Glare** (1995).

Other notable works of Texas' virulent strain of psychedelia included: Bag's **Midnight Juice** (1991), Lithium Xmas's **Helldorado** (1994), Brutal Juice's **Mutilation** (1995),

The hypnotic, transcendental form of acid-rock was also popular in Texas. 7% Solution (1) gave more melodic and dynamic depth to the drone-driven ambient psychedelia of the shoegazers on **All About Satellites And Spaceships** (1996). Furry Things (2) crafted the feedback-driven trance of **The Big Saturday Illusion** (1995) at the intersection of prog-rock, ambient music and acid jams. Its "songs" were grotesque deconstructions of rock'n'roll that twitched under clouds of swirling drones.

Two schools stood up among the various psychedelic acts of Texas, one based in Houston and one based in Dallas. The Houston school was the more conventional of the two. Mike Gunn (1) displayed a morbid fascination with Black Sabbath and Jimi Hendrix on **Hemp For Victory** (1991) and capitalized on it for the slow-motion ragas of

their most original work, **Almaron** (1993). Mike Gunn's bassist Scott Grimm became Dunlavy, devoted to instrumental space-rock; while Mike Gunn's guitarist Tom Carter started Charalambides (1), who experimented with deranged ballads, bizarre samples, guitar freak-outs and tape manipulation on the 100-minute cassette **Our Bed Is Green** (1992) and the double record **Market Square** (1995). Linus Pauling Quartet (1), who originated from the same proto-group as Mike Gunn, filled **Immortal Classics Chinese Music** (1995) with languid, whacky ballads à la Flaming Lips but the extended jams *Improvise Now* (1996) and *The Great Singularity* off their best album, **Killing You With Rock** (1998), aligned them with the boldest sonic surgeons of their era.

A completely different route was followed in Dallas. The Vas Deferens Organization (12), or VDO, founded by New Orleans-natives Matt Castille and Eric Lumbleau, highlighted the link between psychedelic culture and the century-old cultures of dadaism and futurism. They specialized in a form of narrative nonsense for electronics and percussions that relied on a vast sonic puzzle. The three mad suites of **Transcontinental Conspiracy** (1996), featuring Medicine's guitarist Brad Laner, fluctuated between the most childish compositions of Frank Zappa and the most daring pieces of the classical avantgarde. **Saturation** (1996) combined the Mahavishnu Orchestra's wild jazz-rock with Terry Riley's keyboards-driven minimalism, musique concrete with raga. Abandoning the reckless frenzy of those early works, the five compositions on **Zyzybaloubah** (1997) flew with more aplomb, displaying a brainy, pretentious attitude where merry pranksters used to play.

The VDO tribe spawned countless projects. Matt Castille recorded a lengthy suite of psychedelic excesses on **Muz** (1998). Eric Lumbleau formed Sound (1) and recorded the audio montage of **Drunk On Confusion** (1999), worthy of Frank Zappa's most amusing and iconoclastic moments. Mazinga Phaser (1) assembled the unfocused collages of **Cruising In The Neon Glories** (1996) by juxtaposing chamber music, elegiac bebop, gothic dub, space soul, ethereal bossanova and discordant drums'n'bass. Scott Sutton vented his Jimi Hendrix fixation on **Late Nite Songs** (1996), as J. Bone Cro, and his Syd Barrett fixation on **Owners Manual** (1997), as Jaloppy. Further emancipating themselves from the stereotype, Ohm (1), a keyboards-bass-clarinet trio, composed ethnic and electronic music on **O2** (1997).

Texas had its share of conventional psychedelic poppers (Tripping Daisy, Flowerhead, Starfish, Monroe Mustang), but their feeble melodies paled compared with the bolder acts. The notable exception was Sixteen Deluxe (1) with **Backfeedmagnetbabe** (1995).

#### **San Francisco's noise psychedelia 1991-96**

Mason Jones is a San Francisco-based guru of noisy, post-psychedelic, post-ambient, post-cosmic and post-industrial music. His manifestos were the first two collections of experiments released under the moniker Trance (1), **Automatism** (1991) and particularly **Audiography** (1993), whose compositions range from symphonic movement to ethnic watercolor. The formidable wall of noise of **Delicate Membrane** (1996) began the saga of Jones' Subarachnoid Space (12), featuring Melynda Jackson on guitar. The pieces were fully improvised, the sound was majestic, and the mood ranged from suspenseful trance to sheer horror. **Ether Or** (1997) showed that the distance between their therapeutic mayhems and free-jazz was negligible. The idea was further refined on **Almost Invisible** (1997), a massive hodgepodge of astral chaos, frantic ragas, oceanic psalms and abstract soundpainting that represented an ideal soundtrack for the marriage of heaven and hell. Jones had virtually resurrected early Pink Floyd and provided their biography with an alternative ending: a terrible mutation of *A Saucerful Of Secrets* rather than **Dark Side Of The Moon**. **Endless Renovation** (1998), their first studio recording and a more sophisticated variant on that idea (that quoted casually from Frank Zappa, Terry Riley or Colosseum) and **The Sleeping Sickness** (1999), a collaboration with the Walking Timebombs (the Pain Teens' Scott Ayers), simply increased the stylistic confusion around Jones' and Jackson's wild guitar distortions.

Mandible Chatter unleashed Helios Creed-ian guitar fury on the black mass **Serenade For Anton** (1992), before turning to sound manipulation on **Hair Hair Lock & Lore** (1994).

Steven Smith focused on free-form instrumental psychedelia with Mirza's mini-album **Ursa Minor** (1996) and Thuja's **Suns** (2002).

### *The golden age of British psychedelia*

The golden age of British psychedelia was not the 1960s: it was the 1990s. Never had England witnessed such a deluge of psychedelic bands. The scene of raves created an inexhaustible demand for drug-induced, drug-related and drug-facilitating music.

The poppy version of psychedelia (the one that wrapped facile melodies in eccentric arrangements) went hand in hand with the booming phenomenon of Brit-pop: the Telescopes's **Taste** (1989), a more robust version of shoegazing; the Inspiral Carpets, who focused on the nostalgic Farfisa-driven sound on **The Beast Inside** (1991); Verve's **A Storm In Heaven** (1993), which predated their world-wide hit *Bitter Sweet Symphony* (1997); Sundial's **Reflector** (1992), a bridge between California's Paisley Underground and British shoegazers; the Auteurs's **New Wave** (1993), a nostalgic tribute to the hippie era; Whipping Boy's **Heartworm** (1995), in Ireland, a work drenched in neoclassical melancholy; Kula Shaker's derivative but exuberant **K** (1996).

Plus Jellyfish Kiss, the Dylans, Jack, Freed Unit, etc etc. What was truly remarkable about these bands is how derivative and predictable they could sound.

A more sophisticated form of psychedelic pop song was devised by Curve (1), whose **Doppelganger** (1992) aimed for a lush, catchy and dance-oriented form of dream-pop; the Cranberries (1), an Irish band whose **No Need To Argue** (1994) was an album of desolate lullabies propelled by the operatic, guttural and melismatic vocals of Dolores O'Riordan; Rollerskate Skinny (1), also from Ireland, who were among the few bands to match the soulful madness of Mercury Rev on **Shoulder Voices** (1993); and Scotland's Beta Band, whose first two EPs, **Champion Versions** (1997) and **The Patty Patty Sound** (1998), were devoted to intense sound sculpting and disco-oriented shoegazing. In Belgium, dEUS crafted the eclectic and baroque **Worst Case Scenario** (1994).

The hippie spirit, and their favorite style, raga-rock, was resurrected by Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, particularly with the eccentric **Tatay** (1994), which Euros "Childs" Rowlands's keyboards and John Lawrence's guitar turned into, alternatively, a poppier Incredible String Band, a less caustic Bonzo Band, or a more bizarre Brian Wilson. The latter's orchestrations would provide the inspiration for the more conventional **Barafundle** (1997) and **Gorky 5** (1998).

Far less successful commercially, although far more creative, in Britain was the noisy and free-form version of psychedelia that wed Hawkwind's space-rock and early Pink Floyd's interstellar ragas.

Porcupine Tree (2), the project of guitarist Steven Wilson, went through three stages. Initially, **On The Sunday Of Life** (1992), sounded like a compendium of Pink Floyd-ian sounds, from Syd Barrett's oblique ballads to **Ummagumma's** symphonic pieces. Then Japan's keyboardist Richard Barbieri helped fine-tune the languid, fluid, transcendental mini-concertos of **The Sky Moves Sideways** (1994). And, finally, a cohesive combo crafted **Signify** (1996) and **Stupid Dream** (1999) in a fashion reminiscent of early King Crimson's majestic ambience, an idea that eventually led to the slick production of **In Absentia** (2002).

Terminal Cheesecake (2) played space-rock the way avantgarde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen would have played it. Echoes of Chrome, Pop Group and Throbbing Gristle turned **Johnny Town Mouse** (1989) and **Angels In Pigtails** (1991) into nightmarish experiences.

Heads, **Relaxing With** (1996) a demented soup of Stooges, MC5 and Blue Cheer.

Latter-period shoegazers abounded. Ride (1) adjusted the cliché to the era of raves on **Nowhere** (1990). So did Ride's best imitators, Blind Mr Jones, on the mostly instrumental **Stereo Musicale** (1992). Swervedriver (1) turned guitar distortions into an art of quasi-zen vespers, best on **Mezcal Head** (1993).

Both Loop and Spacemen 3 spawned a new generation of bands:

Spacemen 3's guitarist Sonic Boom (Peter Kember) began a stubborn quest for the mystical qualities of sound. His

first success was with **Soul Kiss** (1991), the second, ultra-ethereal album by Spectrum (1). Kember's second success came with Experimental Audio Research (2), or E.A.R., the experimental trio formed with God's Kevin Martin and My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields, who produced at least two innovative recordings: the four cosmic-ambient suites of **Mesmerized** (1994) and the three futuristic concertos of **Millennium Music** (1998).

His former colleague, Spacemen 3's guitarist Jason Pierce, formed Spiritualized (3) as the natural sequel to his old band, with the same rhythm section, Mark Refoy on guitar and newcomer Kate Radley on keyboards. **Lazer Guided Melodies** (1992) was notable for the wildly schizophrenic dynamics that flung most songs between acoustic and quasi-symphonic passages. Pierce's abuse of drones and tremolos to create hypnotic lullabies and wavering ragas reached an almost baroque peak on **Pure Phase** (1995), recorded by the trio of Pierce, Radley and bassist Sean Cook. By then, Pierce had developed a process of scientific layering of sounds that was, basically, an exaggeration of Phil Spector's and Brian Wilson's production styles of yore. The lush trance-pop of **Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space** (1997) was almost the antithesis of his old "shoegazing" style. Overflowing with quotations from multiple genres, traditions and styles (and a penchant for gospel music), it exuded grace and majesty, even when it indulged in instrumental orgies. Pierce's cynical reappropriation of other people's music induced a Babylonian merry-go-round that outdid everybody at their own game while not playing their games at all. Abandoned by both Cook and Radley, Pierce recorded **Let It Come Down** (2001) with help from dozens of external musicians, but the result was a concept album on the subject of "getting high" that did not break any new ground. In general, the point with Spiritualized was whether theirs was art or technology.

Darkside, formed by Spacemen 3's bassist Pete "Bassman" Bain, Hair And Skin Trading Co., formed by Loop's rhythm section, Slipstream, formed by Mark Refoy, the veteran Spacemen 3 and Spiritualized, and Lupine Howl, formed by Spiritualized bassist Sean Cook.

Flying Saucer Attack (2), i.e. the duo of multi-instrumentalists Dave Pearce and Rachel Brook, were among the groups that transformed psychedelic rock into an austere form of chamber music. The albums **Flying Saucer Attack** (1993) and **Further** (1995) refined a kind of shoegazing that relied increasingly on melody, yielding delicate elegies set against a disturbing background of cosmic music, free-jazz, Throbbing Gristle's industrial noise, LaMonte Young's droning music or contemplative new-age music. It was the meeting point of shoegazing and ambient music: a new genre.

In England, dream-pop was no less popular than shoegazing. The influence of the Cocteau Twins was felt on works as different as Kitchens Of Distinction's Love Is Hell (1989) and Miranda Sex Garden's Suspiria (1992), a disco-oriented reconstruction of medieval music, Lush's Spooky (1992), scoured by the abrasive guitars and sugary vocals of Emma Anderson and Miki Berenyi, and Earwig's Under My Skin I Am Laughing (1992), the Cranes' Loved (1994) and Sharkboy's Valentine Tapes (1996).

A few acts matched, if not surpassed, the masters of dream-pop, while exploring different nuances of the genre.

The Pale Saints (1), who had debuted in the ethereal and oneiric style of **The Comforts Of Madness** (1990), introduced hard-rock into dream-pop on **In Ribbons** (1992).

The trance administered by Slowdive (11) relied on the vocal harmonies of Neil Halstead and Rachel Goswell, and on triple-guitar arrangements. The hypnotic, velvety whispers, and the smooth, bright sound of **Just For A Day** (1991) reached for a psychological and even mystical level, that a game of echoes and reverbs merely enhanced. **Souvlaki** (1993) reinterpreted shoegazing as an abstraction of two formats: Strauss' symphonic poem and Brian Eno's ambient music.

Levitation (1), led by former House Of Love guitarist Terry Bickers, were reminiscent of Echo & The Bunnymen's baroque hypnosis on **Coterie** (1991).

Catherine Wheel (1) debuted with a formidable synthesis of Neil Young's neurotic folk and Brian Wilson's eccentric pop, **Ferment** (1992), whose hammering mandalas wove colossal braids of distortions around naive

refrains.

Graham Sutton's Bark Psychosis (10) upped the ante of dream-pop with the extended singles *All Different Things* (1990) and *Scum* (1993), which were abstract mini-concertos built around ineffable melodies. The method was refined with the slow, lengthy sonic puzzles of **Hex** (1994), which fused dissonances, electronics, swirling ragas, jazz drumming, ghostly drones, lounge music, soft funk polyrhythms and so forth, into an organic whole.

Whether the pop, shoegazing or dream-pop variation, England was awash in psychedelic rock as never before.

#### ***Hyper-psychedelia in the Pacific, 1992-97***

Perhaps the most intriguing take on psychedelia came from New Zealand. One of the most significant musicians of the 1990s, Roy Montgomery (22) created a successful hybrid of all these styles with his ensembles Dadamah (10), Dissolve (1), and Hash Jar Tempo (the collaboration with Bardo Pond). Dadamah's **This Is Not A Dream** (1992), featuring bassist Kim Pieters, keyboardist Janine Stagg and Scorched Earth Policy's drummer Peter Stapleton, was a magic recreation of the Velvet Underground's psychedelic trance, updated to the new-wave zeitgeist of the Modern Lovers, sprinkled with effervescent oddities in the surreal vein of Pere Ubu. Dissolve's **That That Is** (1995) was merely an ectoplasm for two guitars, but their **Third Album For The Sun** (1997), by adding keyboards, percussions and cello to the guitar jamming, attained a spiritual solemnity.

In the meantime, Montgomery's solo albums walked an even more arduous path: the impressionistic vignettes of **Scenes From The South Island** (1995) harked back to the transcendental spirit of John Fahey, to the divine introspection of Peter Green, and to the dreamy psalms of David Crosby; while an obscure, symbol-drenched metaphysics and an obsessive preoccupation with the afterlife led Montgomery through the stages of the imaginary Calvary of **Temple IV** (1996). His song-oriented career peaked with **And Now The Rain Sounds Like Life Is Falling Down Through It** (1998), which contrasted introspective melody and metaphysical setting, resulting in a set of rarified, hermetic prayers, each wrapped into a different universe of haunting sound effects. But his philosophy was better expressed with the free-form soundpainting of **True** (1999). **The Allegory of Hearing** (2000) overflowed with innovative guitar techniques and included the 17-minute tour de force of *Resolution Island Suite*, which recapitulated the Montgomery's theory of transcendental harmony the same way that the *Art of the Fugue* summarized Bach's and *Rainbow In Curved Air* summarized Terry Riley's. The sonic mandala of *For A Small Blue Orb*, off **Silver Wheel Of Prayer** (2001) continued his exploration of the individual's relationship with the eternal.

Dean Roberts (1) pursued similar experiments, first with Thela's two albums of lengthy artsy/noisy jams, **Thela** (1995) and **Argentina** (1996), then with his solo project White Winged Moth, that devoted albums such as **I Can See Inside Your House** (1996) to instrumental vignettes situated halfway between John Fahey and Derek Bailey, and finally with the spiritual, ambient, psychedelic and ethnic collections under his own name, such as **Moth Park** (1998) and **All Cracked Medias** (1999), his masterpiece.

The saga of the bands built around Scorched Earth Policy's drummer Peter Stapleton was one of the most intriguing and influential of New Zealand. He joined forces again with guitarist Brian Cook for the the second album by the Terminals (1), the space-out **Touch** (1992), derailed by tribal drumming and dissonant organ. At the same time, Stapleton recorded the Dadamah album with Roy Montgomery. Flies Inside The Sun (1) were born from the ashes of Dadamah (Stapleton, Pieters, Cook and guitarist/keyboardist Danny Butt), but **An Audience Of Others** (1995) and especially **Flies Inside The Sun** (1996) dramatically increased the degree of improvisation and cacophony. In fact, Stapleton, Pieters and Butt recorded the even more abstract **Sediment** (1996), this time credited to Rain (1); and then the trio of Stapleton on drums, Pieters on bass and Dead C's Bruce Russell on guitar formed (a free-noise "supergroup") recorded the six instrumental improvisations of **Last Glass** (1994). Finally, Stapleton and Pieters launched the project Sleep with **Enfolded in Luxury** (1999).

New Zealand's Alastair Galbraith recorded albums, particularly between **Talisman** (1994) and **Cry** (2000), that

were not so much collection of songs as experiments on sound.

The most extreme kind of psychedelia (free-form jams that hark back to Grateful Dead, Red Crayola, early Pink Floyd and Hawkwind) was practiced mainly in Japan. The most imitated band was High Rise, but the man who, over a 30-year career, propelled Japanese acid-rock to the top of the world was Keiji Haino, whose numerous projects were rediscovered during the 1990s.

Similar to Fushitsusha were guitarist Kaneko Jutok's Kousokuya (1), whose **Kousokuya** (1991) indulged even more in free-jazz improvisation.

High Rise bassist Asahito Nanjo was responsible for two of the most brutal projects of the era. Mainliner (11), formed with Acid Mothers Temple guitarist Makoto Kawabata, unleashed **Mellow Out** (1996) and **Sonic** (1997), nuclear tornados of cacophonous Feedtime-like chaos and Chrome-like martian cadences. The former's wall of noise signaled the advent of a new kind of "rock" music, one that relied on unrelenting impetus (just like hardcore) while retaining the mind-expanding qualities of acid-rock.

Musica Transonic (1), a supergroup with Acid Mother Temple's guitarist Makoto Kawabata and Ruin's drummer Tatsuya Yoshida, specialized on a less barbaric fury and even jazzy stylings on albums such as **Introducing** (1995), **A Pilgrim's Repose** (1996) and **Orthodox Jazz** (1997).

The most prolific of this prolific school of space-rockers was, by far, Kawabata Makoto, the (demented) brain and the (logorrhic) guitar behind Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso U.F.O. (3). Synthesizer-heavy progressive jams in the vein of freaks such as Magma and Gong filled their early albums, **Acid Mothers Temple & The Melting Paraiso Ufo** (1997) and **Pataphysical Freak Out Mu** (1999), but subsequent collections became more chaotic and orgiastic. The mini-album **41st Century Splendid Man** (2002), featuring Tatsuya Yoshida of the Ruins, adopted instead a celestial trance bordering on ambient and cosmic music, and **Univers Zen Ou De Zero A Zero** (2002) found perhaps the middle path between the two extremes.

Ghost (2), led by guitarist and vocalist Masaki Batoh, fused Japanese folk music and ambient music on **Ghost** (1991). The surreal orchestration and "ghostly" effects of **Lama Rabi Rabi** (1996), increased the gothic quotient.

An all-female quartet, Angel In Heavy Syrup (1) delivered one of the most intriguing fusions of Pink Floyd and Amon Duul II on **III** (1995).

## 6.4 Surf and garage music

### *Scandinavia's garages 1990-94*

During the 1990s, the single most impressive concentration of garage-rock bands was perhaps in Scandinavia. Hanoi Rocks had led the way, and, one decade later, a number of Scandinavian bands followed their lead, storming through programs of acrobatic rock'n'roll numbers with the sensitivity of a conquering viking.

MC5, Motorhead and New York Dolls were the role models for Sweden's Hellacopters (1), who delivered the impressive punch of **Supershitty To The Max** (1996) and **Payin' The Dues** (1997), and for Norway's Gluecifer.

Norway's Motorpsycho (1) offered perhaps the most eclectic take on the cliches of psychedelic hard-rock on monumental albums such as **Demon Box** (1993), bordering on progressive-rock.

### *Instrumental revival, 1995-98*

Instrumental music staged a massive revival during the 1990s.

Raised on sci-fi serials and horror movies, Alabama's Man Or Astroman (2) invented a cyberpunk version of Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet's postmodernist surf that recalled Devo's satirical/mythological philosophy but dispensed with the silly lyrics. From the naive and exuberant **Is It Man Or Astro-man?** (1993) to the more adventurous **Experiment Zero** (1996), they defined a science of epic guitar twangs, epileptic surf hoedowns, suspenseful vibratos and menacing reverbs.

The Mermen (2), from San Francisco, altered surf music via Neil Young's blues-psychedelic neurosis and Jimi Hendrix's devastating spasms on **Food For Other Fish** (1994), and found a miraculous balance between revival and experimentation with the three creative jams of **A Glorious Lethal Euphoria** (1995). Their compositions, led by guitarist Jim Thomas, alternate between slow, tortured dirges that flowed towards controlled cacophony, somber, colloquial meditations, majestic, symphonic, twang-drenched odes, John Fahey-ian East/West fusion, jazz-rock, raga, etc. **The Amazing California Health And Happiness Road Show** (2000) includes their tour de force, *Burn*. While not as original, an impressive number of groups offered witty and creative takes on the genre. Notable albums of the 1990s included: **The Utterly Fantastic and Totally Unbelievable Sound** (1995) by the Los Straitjackets in Tennessee; **At Home With Satan's Pilgrims** (1995) by the Satan's Pilgrims in Oregon; **Savage Island** (1996) by the Bomboras in Los Angeles; **The Exciting Sounds Of Model Road Racing** (1994) by the Phantom Surfers in San Francisco.

In Canada, Mark Brodie And The Beaver Patrol resurrected the vibrato melodies of the Ventures and Dick Dale on **The Shores Of Hell** (1996), thus following in the footsteps of Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet.

Shark Quest (1), in North Carolina, contaminated surf music with flavors of country and folk on **Battle Of The Loons** (1998).

#### ***Crampsiana, 1993-97***

The spring of garage-rock was not extinguished. The Cramps, in particular, were a massive influence on American garage-rock, from Tennessee, where the Oblivians recorded **Popular Favorites** (1996), to Kentucky, where Bodeco recorded **Bone Hair And Hide** (1992). Reverend Horton Heat (Texan rocker Jim Heath) continued the tradition of mad rockabilly on albums such as the demonic **The Full Custom Sounds** (1993).

Seattle's Gas Huffer (2) played epileptic rock'n'roll with the psychotic impetus of the Heartbreakers and the Cramps but also with the childish silliness of the Ramones. **Janitors Of Tomorrow** (1991) and **Integrity Technology And Service** (1992) were collections of time-warp aberrations.

The Honeymoon Killers' leader Jerry Teel went on to join the Chrome Cranks (1), with whom he produced at least one aberration worthy of the Honeymoon Killers, **Chrome Cranks** (1994).

Ohio's Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments (1), led by Great Plains vocalist Ron House and guitarist Bob Petric, delivered a concentrate of Cramps, Stooges and Ramones on **Straight To Video** (1997).

In North Carolina, Southern Culture On The Skids (2) delivered a stew of old-fashioned styles (surf, rockabilly, country, garage-rock, rhythm'n'blues) with a punk attitude, reaching back to Rolling Stones, Creedence Clearwater Revival and Cramps. They were at their best when they let the bad vibrations flow, such as on **For Lovers Only** (1993), a madhouse of a roots-rock album, and the even more eclectic and exuberant **Ditch Diggin'** (1994).

Shifting from drums to guitar (and wearing a drag-queen costume), Gories veteran Dan Kroha, formed the Demolition Doll Rods, who focused on Cramps' glam-core.

In Minnesota, the veterans of the Lee Harvey Oswald Band (1) concocted the infernal party of **A Taste Of Prison** (1994), which also indulged in the most perverted side of life.

#### ***MC5iana, 1993-95***

Naturally, Michigan was the epicenter of the ferocious sound of MC5, although Go and Speedball did not live up to the same ferocious standards of previous generations.

Ohio boasted two of the best groups. Heirs to MC5's bacchanals, but also a bridge to contemporary genres such as grunge, thrash-metal and hardcore, God And Texas (2) drenched the songs of **History Volume One** (1992) and **Criminal Element** (1993) into feverish distortions and catastrophic drumming. The New Bomb Turks (2) were even more barbaric and breathtaking, particularly on **Destroy Oh Boy** (1993), but anchored the songs of mature albums such as **At Rope's End** (1998) to linear progressions and anthemic melodies.

North Carolina's Pipe with **Six Days Till Bellus** (1995) and Seattle's Tight Bro's From Way Back When, with

**Runnin Thru My Bones** (1999), were also inspired by MC5's frantic rock'n'roll.

Closest to MC5's agit-prop intent were Washington's Love 666 with the mini-album **American Revolution** (1995).

#### *Pacific Northwest, 1992-97*

San Francisco's Mummies (1) were perhaps the ideological leaders of the garage revival, even if they lasted only one album, the orgiastic and lo-fi **Never Been Caught** (1992).

Other notable albums from the Pacific Northwest included the Mono Men's Wrecker (1992), and **Outta Sight** (1993), by Sinister Six (1).

Oregon's garage school, which had been revitalized in the 1980s by the Miracle Workers, continued with Marble Orchard and Gorilla.

Seattle's Makers (1) unwound a feast of fuzz, treble and feedback at full throttle on their third album, **Makers** (1996). The Murder City Devils (1) added the screams of vocalist Spencer Moody and the gothic overtones of an organ to the mayhem of **Empty Bottles Broken Hearts** (1998).

#### *Spenceriana, 1990-95*

New takes on the blues and rhythm'n'blues were tried by bands throughout the country, from Ohio's Prisonshake, with **A Girl Named Yes** (1990), to Boston's 360's, with **Illuminated** (1991), from Kansas' Mercy Rule, formed by 13 Nightmares' guitarist John Taylor, with **God Protects Fools** (1993), to Pennsylvania's Psychone Rangers, **Feel Nice** (1993). Needless to say, the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion became an increasing influence on everybody during the decade.

Some in New York had actually predated Spencer: Marcellus Hall's Railroad Jerk (1) were playing a similar brand of subnormal psycho-blues since their debut, **Railroad Jerk** (1990).

Los Angeles' Clawhammer, led by former Pontiac Brothers' guitarist Jon Wahl, performed the unlikely wedding of Captain Beefheart and Devo on **Clawhammer** (1990).

Ohio's Gits (1), featuring the witchy vocals of Mia Zapata, crossed punk-rock and blues-rock, halfway between X and Sex Pistols, with the addition of an angry feminine touch, on **Frenching The Bully** (1992).

The punk approach to the blues and to soul music was refined by Washington's Delta 72 (1), whose **The R&B Of Membership** (1996) and particularly **Soul Of A New Machine** (1997) were derailed by Sarah Stolfa's organ and Gregg Foreman's primordial howl. Their conceptual revisitation of black music eventually led to imitate the Rolling Stones circa **Exile On Main Street** on the more professional **000** (2000).

Michigan's Mule (1), formed by guitarist Preston Long and Laughing Hyenas' formidable rhythm section (Jim Kimball and Kevin "Munro" Strickland), played blues-rock for hell's saloons. **Mule** (1993) offered harsh, truculent and discordant music that borrowed from Z.Z.Top, Captain Beefheart, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Jimi Hendrix and Creedence Clearwater Revival but savagely deformed the original sources.

Chicago's Red Red Meat (12) started from similar premises but evolved towards a more intellectual exploration of music. **Red Red Meat** (1992) and **Jimmy Wine Majestic** (1993) unleashed the dirty, feverish and unstable vibrations of all the blues irregulars of the past (the Rolling Stones, Captain Beefheart, Pussy Galore, etc), but the atmospheric **Bunny Gets Paid** (1995) veered towards desolate free-form "pieces" that felt like scarred remnants of pop songs. This, in turn, led to the abstract framework of **There's A Star Above The Manger Tonight** (1997), replete with synthesizer and other sophisticated arrangements, which was, de facto, a postmodernist exercise in stylistic deconstruction, bordering on trip-hop and ambient music while retaining the cacophony of Captain Beefheart and Pussy Galore. Red Red Meat guitarist (and original founder) Tim Rutili, drummer Ben Massarella and bassist Tim Hurley set out to further investigate this unfocused sea of sounds as Califone (1). The brooding acid-blues sound of their early EPs, **Califone** (1998) and **Califone** (2000), and of their full-length albums **Roomsound** (2001) and **Quicksand Cradlesnakes** (2003) absorbed jazz, post-rock, samples and loops into the canon of blues depression and gospel ecstasy.

New York's and Jonathan Fire Eater were perhaps the main followers of Jon Spencer, particularly on their debut album, **Jonathan Fire Eater** (1995), before they mellowed down.

In Australia, Bloodloss (1), which were basically Lubricated Goat with Mudhoney's vocalist Mark Arm replacing Stu Spasm, assembled one of the ugliest blues albums of all times, **Live My Way** (1995), disfigured by saxophones, trumpets and keyboards, and influenced by Jon Spencer, Captain Beefheart and the Rolling Stones.

- 1992: Bill Clinton is elected president of the U.S., the youngest ever since John Kennedy
- 1992: one million Americans are in jail
- 1992: racial riots erupt in Los Angeles
- 1992: street gangs terrorize entire areas of metropolises like Los Angeles
- 1992: USA troops land in Somalia to stop fighting by clans, but are massacred

## 6.5 Lo-fi pop

### *Oceania, 1991-94*

Lo-fi pop, the great invention of New Zealand's independent musicians, became one of the main phenomena, world-wide, of the 1990s.

The scene in New Zealand was largely dominated by members of the old bands, and little was added to the canon by the new generations. Graeme Jefferies' Cakekitchen (1) concocted the adult blend of austere melodies, bitter philosophy and elegant arrangements of **World Of Sand** (1992), eventually achieving the intrepid and rarefied atmosphere of **The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea** (1996). Bailter Space (1), led by guitarist Alister Parker, gave their best with the hypnotic and atmospheric noise-rock of **Vortura** (1994), that capitalized on the innovations of My Bloody Valentine and Galaxie 500.

The Underground Lovers (1) updated the psychedelic canon with **Leaves Me Blind** (1993), drenched in exotic and mystical sounds. King Loser were unique in producing a huge noise à la Blue Cheer on **Sonic Super Free Hi-Fi** (1994) and **You Cannot Kill What Does Not Live** (1996). More conventional hard-rock was played by the 3Ds.

In Australia, former Cannanes guitarist Randall Lee's Nice and Ashtray Boy were typical of how the dynasties of the 1980s survived the 1990s. **All Souls Alive** (1994), by the Blackeyed Susans (1), formed by vocalist Rob Snarski and bassist Phil Kakulas, owed the charm of its folk/country chamber elegies to Triffids' guitarist David McComb, Dirty Three's violinist Warren Ellis and drummer Jim White. The Moles' **Untune The Sky** (1991), featuring Richard Davies, was perhaps the most charming oddity, worthy of New Zealand's classic pop.

### *USA, 1990-94*

The legacy of lo-fi pop was felt much stronger in and around the American colleges. Olympia, near Seattle, ruled by Beat Happening, boasted the most fertile scene: Al Larsen's Some Velvet Sidewalk, the Kicking Giants, Lync (Sam Jayne's band, that later evolved into Love As Laughter), Rebecca Gates' Spinanes, etc.

Modest Mouse (1) was the vehicle for Isaac Brock's honest, heart-felt vignettes on **This Is A Long Drive For Someone With Nothing To Think About** (1996), a sprawling chronicle of everyday life in the 1990s. His portraits of drifters, losers and disillusioned fools became much sharper and more musically assured on **The Lonesome Crowded West** (1998), and his most experimental work was **Sharpen Your Teeth** (2002), released by his side-project Ugly Casanova, featuring Black Heart Procession's Pall Jenkins and Califone's Tim Rutili,

The most influential lo-fi band of the 1990s was Pavement (2). **Slanted And Enchanted** (1992) was more attitude than art (and certainly more epigonic than original), but the chaotic, erratic and unassuming delivery was precisely

the point, especially when combined with Stephen Malkmus' bizarre philosophy. **Crooked Rain Crooked Rain** (1993) was even catchy and marginally innocuous.

The contagion spread from Los Angeles (Refrigerator, originators of the "Shrimper scene"), to New York (Fan Modine, Fly Ashtray), from Kansas (Butterglory) to Virginia (Wingtip Sloat), from Oregon (Crabs) to Chicago (Number One Cup), to Toronto (Dinner Is Ruined).

David Berman's Silver Jews (1) coined a "lo-fi" version of the Velvet Underground's boogie-trance, like a cross between Luna and Pavement, on **Starlite Walker** (1994).

Shannon Wright's Crowsdell contaminated Pavement's style with roots-rock on **Dreamette** (1995).

Unfortunately, Pavement's idea was frequently misunderstood as meaning that a mediocre musician could produce an unlimited amount of music while at the same time disregarding any musical obligation. Independent musicians became more and more prolific.

### ***Primitivism, 1992-95***

The more creative strand, the one that descended from Half Japanese and the Residents, was kept alive by groups that shunned the mainstream.

San Diego's Trumans Water (2) **Of Thick Tum** (1992) sounded like a group of musicians who had no desire to play anything, and therefore each song was a bit of a torture. Their music was the opposite of "entertainment", as **Spasm Smash** (1993) proved: a carousel of spastic gestures. It was rock'n'roll filtered by the no wave and Royal Trux's **Twin Infinitives**.

Maryland's Velocity Girl (2) synthesized the new sounds of their time: Sonic Youth's noise-rock, Uncle Tupelo's alt-country, Pavement's lo-fi dynamics. The dissonant pop of **Copacetic** (1993) was a study in contrast: effervescent tempos, wildly off-key guitars, Sarah Shannon's seductive pop-soul register, naive melodies; and **Simpatico** (1994) merely capitalized on the primitive style of strumming/jamming that they had invented to produce postmodernist dissection of pop, soul and even jazz cliches.

Pop primitivism had many faces and was practiced around the country: Los Angeles' Heavy Vegetable, with **The Amazing Undersea Adventures Of Aqua Kitty And Friends** (1994); Pennsylvania's Vegetarian Meat, with **Let's Pet** (1995); Texas' Sincola, with **What The Nothinghead Said** (1995); Louisiana's one-man band Quintron, with **Internet Feedback 001-011** (1996); Florida's Home, with **Netherregions** (1998); New Jersey's Kickstand; and many others.

Sounding like the Holy Modal Rounders singing spirituals and gospel hymns, New Jersey's Danielson Famile reinvented Christian music as lo-fi pop on **A Prayer For Every Hour** (1995). Trumans Water's bassist Glen "Galaxy" Galloway also dedicated his project, Soul Junk (1), to Christian themes, best on **1952** (1995).

## **6.6 Lo-fi singer-songwriters**

### ***Bleak folk, 1990-96***

In a sense, the 1990s "were" the decade of the singer songwriter, as more and more artists decided to go "solo" rather than look for a band. Both the technology (that allowed individuals to arrange their own compositions) and the loose networking of the post-punk generation (that favored more fluid partnerships) helped increase the number of musicians who recorded simply under their own name.

In general, singer-songwriters of the 1990s tended to be more subdued and humbler than in the 1980s and in the 1970s. Their masters were Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen, not Bob Dylan or Bruce Springsteen. One of the most influential styles of the 1990s was the moody and depressed one pioneered by Chris Isaak, Smog and American Music Club in San Francisco. It spread like a disease and almost became a stand-alone genre. Bleak dirges were strummed everywhere.

Georgia's Vic Chesnutt (2), confined to a wheelchair, shared with Smog the honor of having pioneered the style. **West Of Rome** (1992) and **Drunk** (1994) took southern gothic to a very personal and highly emotional level.

The Screaming Trees' Mark Lanegan (12) sculpted the agony of **Winding Sheet** (1990), a journey through the eternal damnation of a soul that was both lyrical, existential and lugubrious. Even more rarified and metaphysical, **Whiskey For The Holy Ghost** (1993) ventured deeper inside in a tender and doleful register, halfway between Leonard Cohen and Nick Cave, while the atmosphere was reminiscent of David Crosby's first solo album, and occasionally claustrophobic like in Tim Buckley's psychedelic nightmares. Lanegan's dilated mind seemed to be imploding on the fragile **Scraps At Midnight** (1998).

In Los Angeles, Mountain Goats (2), John Darnielle's project, was a bizarre experiment for voice, acoustic guitar and cheap organ whose major career was devoted to concept albums such as **Zopilote Machine** (1994), **Sweden** (1995), and **Tallahassee** (2003), mostly about disintegrating relationships, which were as lyrically ambitious as musically humble.

In Oregon, Heatmiser's singer and songwriter Elliott Smith (1) employed spare, acoustic arrangements and anemically whispered lyrics on **Roman Candle** (1994) to pen tuneful vignettes of daily life that merged Nick Drake's melancholia and Simon & Garfunkel's romanticism.

In New York, Jeff Buckley (1) was condemned to re-live his father Tim's turbulent and brief life, but **Grace** (1994) boasted a denser sound, more reminiscent of Van Morrison's soul-jazz ballads.

Toronto's Ron Sexsmith (1) crystallized the idea in the naive/tender style of Tim Hardin and Paul Simon on **Ron Sexsmith** (1995), while wedding it to Jackson Browne's arduous meditations.

Dinosaur Jr's bassist Mike Johnson (2), who had also collaborated to Mark Lanegan's masterpieces, became the most credible candidate to the title of "Leonard Cohen of the 1990s" with the funereal ballads of **Year Of Mondays** (1996) and **What Would You Do** (2002).

His main competition for that title was Nebraska's Simon Joyner (4), a philosopher equipped with Leonard Cohen's deep baritone and doleful vision, but also with a much grander musical ambition. The oneiric **Songs for the New Year** (1997) was Cohen-ian in spirit and letter, but the trilogy recorded with Mike Krassner, beginning with **Yesterday Tomorrow and In Between** (1998) and continuing with the lengthy ballads of **The Lousy Dance** (1999) and **Hotel Lives** (2001), progressively increased the complexity of his compositions, capitalizing on an impressive cast of distinguished jazz, folk and rock musicians (Ken Vandermark on clarinet, Fred Lonberg-Holm on cello, Jeb Bishop on trombone, Ernst Long on flugelhorn, Will Hendricks on vibes), that augmented a rock trio (Ryan Hembrey on bass, Glenn Kotche on percussions, Michael Krassner on guitar). It was a wedding of chamber and pop settings that transported the slow, hypnotic music to a metaphysical dimension, while retaining a deeply-moving, humane dimension.

Los Angeles' Duncan Sheik (1) wrapped the chronic mood of desperation and heartbreak of **Duncan Sheik** (1996) into an "ambient folk-rock" style that merged lush string arrangements and the acoustic style of the troubadours.

Suicidal dirges and stately odes were the soundtrack of the 1990s. Notable albums in the style included: Matt Keating's Scaryarea (1994), from New York; Dave Schramm's Folk Und Die Folgen (1994), from New York; Karl Hendricks' Misery And Women (1994), from Pennsylvania; Damien Jurado's Waters Ave S (1997), from Seattle; Songs:Ohia's Axxess & Ace (1999), from Ohio (Jason Molina); T.W. Walsh's Blue Laws (2001), from Boston.

#### *Neo-pop, 1990-94*

As far as melody goes, the decade was largely marked by the gigantic shadow of Boston's Stephen Merritt (14). His multi-faceted career began under the moniker Magnetic Fields as a humble amateur of pop music who vented his fear and nostalgia via formally impeccable melodies and arrangements. The formative **Distant Plastic Trees** (1991) and **The Wayward Bus** (1992), sung by Susan Anway, and his first masterpiece, **Holiday** (1993), which

was also the first album sung by Merritt himself, coined a form of "introverted kitsch" that quoted the Sixties without sounding derivative and that employed electronic rhythm and instruments in a discrete manner. Despite being light like feathers, Merritt's ditties sounded like tributes to Brian Eno's early albums and to the classics of synth-pop. The concept album **The Charm Of The Highway Strip** (1994), his second masterpiece, perfected the idea. Leaving behind his synth-pop roots, Merritt wed the idyllic register of a Donovan, neoclassical orchestrations and the persona of a bashful lunatic. The algebraic precision of his musical artifacts was only apparently a continuation of Brian Wilson's and Van Dyke Parks' program: Merritt shunned their symphonic opulence and favored the small, intimate format of the chamber ensemble. **Get Lost** (1995) was, first and foremost, an exercise in laying out chamber instruments; but it was also his bleakest statement, and thus redeemed the indulgence with deeply felt emotions. At the same time, Merritt's mission was very much a thorough reexamination of the pop tradition, from Burt Bacharach to Phil Spector, from Tin Pan Alley to doo-wop: his ultimate sin of vanity, the colossal **69 Love Songs** (1999), was a catalog of variations on clichés of pop music. Merritt had managed a synthesis of historical proportions but he carried it out with the humble attitude of an everyman who hardly knew anything about history. In the meantime, he had also released albums as the 6ths and the Future Bible Heroes. The 6ths albums, **Wasps' Nests** (1996) and **Hyacinths and Thistles** (2000), were collection of sugary ditties performed by impressive casts of guest vocalists. The importance of arrangement and production had eventually taken over the importance of lyrics and melodies, and thus wrecked the whole idea of innocent, sincere, heartbreaking music.

Several veterans of the alt-rock movement became top performers in the "neo-pop" category: the first solo album by Violent Femmes' drummer Victor DeLorenzo (1), **Peter Corey Sent Me** (1990); Jellyfish's Jason Falkner, with **Author Unknown** (1996); Guided By Voices' Tobin Sprout, with **Carnival Boy** (1996); former Love Child's leader Will Baum, disguised under the moniker 9-Iron, with the concept album **Make-out King** (1995); etc.

Scottish transplant Chris Connelly (1), who had played in Chicago's industrial combos Ministry and Pigface, reinvented himself as a pensive pop crooner on albums such as **Shipwreck** (1995) and **The Ultimate Seaside Companion** (1998), credited to the Bells.

Frank Black (1), the new alias of former Pixies' vocalist Charles "Black Francis" Thompson, now relocated to Los Angeles, indulged in his trademark "scream of consciousness" on his solo albums **Frank Black** (1993) and **Teenager Of The Year** (1994), still characterized by erratic structures and reckless melodies.

Mike Gira (2) basically continued the atmospheric work of latter-period Swans. His tortured soul engaged in a form of lugubrious and apocalyptic folk, which constituted, at the same time, a form of cathartic and purgatorial ritual. After his solo album **Drainland** (1995), which was still, de facto, a Swans album, assisted by Jarboe and Bill Rieflin, Gira split the late Swans sound in two: Body Lovers impersonated the ambient/atmospheric element, while Angels Of Light focused on the orchestral pop element. On one hand, Gira crafted the otherworldly instrumental music of Body Lovers' **Number One Of Three** (1998) and the subliminal musique concrete of **Body Haters** (1998). On the other, Angels Of Light's **How I Loved You** (2001), a concept on sex, and especially **Everything Is Good Here Please Come Home** (2003), which explored simultaneously the personal, historical and political planes, renewed the similarities with Nico's stately, pagan, ancestral lied.

New Zealand's main singer-songwriters were the leaders of the classic bands of the 1980s: Clean's David Kilgour, who debuted with the catchy **Here Comes The Cars** (1992), the Tall Dwarfs' Chris Knox, etc. Both the leaders of the Go-Betweens recorded solo albums, but only Grant McLennan's **Horsebreaker Star** (1995) lived up to their reputation.

American Music Club's Mark Eitzel became a cocktail-lounge entertainer with **60 Watt Silver Lining** (1996).

A Brian Wilson fixation permeated the work of Australian expatriate Richard Davies (3), who attained a magical balance of Syd Barrett, David Bowie and Donovan on his collaboration with Eric Matthews, **Cardinal** (1995), a

classic of chamber pop, and crafted the austere **There's Never Been A Crowd Like This** (1996) and the surreal **Telegraph** (1998), whose vocal harmonies are reminiscent of Crosby Stills & Nash.

His partner in Cardinal, Eric Matthews, indulged in Van Dyke Parks' orchestrations on his own **It's Heavy In Here** (1995).

In Britain, David Gray was a sophisticated bard in the tradition of Van Morrison who scoured a broad emotional and musical territory, from the passionate confessions of **A Century Ends** (1993) to the vibrant power-ballads of **Sell Sell Sell** (1996), from the fragile pop vignettes of **White Ladder** (2000) to the bleak introspection of **A New Day At Midnight** (2002).

#### *Neo-folk, 1994-98*

Los Angeles happened to be the next stop in the evolution of the genre. Beck (2) Hansen turned eccentricity into stardom and changed the way singer-songwriters sounded and were perceived by the mainstream. With the carefree eclecticism of **Mellow Gold** (1994) Beck invented folk music for the age of hip-hop and proved that stylistic confusion can appeal to the masses. A more organic approach to the fusion of folk, blues, rap, garage-rock and pop enhanced the overall sound of **Odelay** (1996). The fact that his lyrics were free-form associations, and only vaguely hinting to social reality, was somehow consistent with his superficial approach to musical integration (an operation that other musicians had carried out at a deeper level). **Mutations** (1998), reminiscent of Radiohead's subtle orchestrations, and **Midnite Vultures** (1999), a sort of tribute to soul music, rapidly removed the sheen from one of the decade's most over-rated artists.

Beck may have learned his tricks from an obscure and insane folksinger, Paleface, whose **Paleface** (1991) was a bizarre product of the anti-folk movement.

Far more original was the artistic mess concocted by former Red Hot Chili Peppers' guitarist John Frusciante (1) on **Niandra Lades And Usually Just A T-Shirt** (1994), between agonizing blues and demented singalongs, a neurotic and hysterical version of Daniel Johnston.

Virginia's Mark Linkous, who records under the moniker Sparklehorse (2), created studio miracles such as **Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionplot** (1995) and **It's A Wonderful Life** (2001), which coupled oddly original music with melancholy overtones, something that harked back to the Pearls Before Swine.

Soon, eccentric arrangements became as important as the words and the refrains. Ambitious arrangements reached a paradoxical peak at the end of the decade: Sea And Cake's guitarist Archer Prewitt, with **In The Sun** (1997); Washington's Sea Saw, with **Magnetophone** (1996); New York's Illyah Kuryahkin, Dean Wilson's alias, with **Thirtycabminute** (1999); Nebraska's Bright Eyes, the brainchild of Conor Oberst, with **Lifted Or The Story is in the Soil** (2002); etc.

Ohio's Joseph Arthur (1) wed electronica and folksinging, Hall & Oates and Leonard Cohen, trip-hop and Nick Drake on **Big City Secrets** (1997).

In Canada, Rufus Wainwright (1), the son of Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle, went beyond Brian Wilson with **Rufus Wainwright** (1998), an erudite, melodramatic extravaganza that mixed Italian opera, Sullivan's operettas, French cabaret, Broadway show-tunes, and early Brian Eno.

**Visual Audio Sensory Theatre** (1998), or **VAST**, the project of San Francisco-based multi-instrumentalist Jon Crosby, epitomized unrelenting melodrama and symphonic arrangements.

Australia's Ben Lee adopted a high-tech instrumentation of computers, keyboards, samplers and drum-machines on **Breathing Tornados** (1998).

By borrowing ideas from Debussy, Stravinsky and Hindemith rather than Van Dyke Parks or Brian Wilson, San Francisco's Her Space Holiday, the brainchild of Marc Bianchi, coined a form of grand, symphonic pop on albums such as **Manic Expressive** (2001).

Jason Lytle's Grandaddy (1), from Modesto (California), served quirky pop à la Sparklehorse on **Under The**

**Western Freeway** (1997), which became almost futuristic on the socio/sci-fi concept album **The Sophtware Slump** (2000).

Stone Temple Pilot's vocalist Scott Weiland (1) became the eccentric bard of **12 Bar Blues** (1998), another example of stylistic fusion and futuristic folk.

Chicago harbored two wacky satirists in the vein of David Peel. Bobby Conn (1) displayed the wicked, twisted, frequently obnoxious wit of street performers: **Bobby Conn** (1997) was a wild, uncensored ride in a labyrinth of genres, and the concept album **The Golden Age** (2001) sounded like a parody of his generation. Lonesome Organist (multi-instrumentalist Jeremy Jacobsen) evoked early Frank Zappa with **Collector Of Cactus Echo Bag** (1998), a post-modernist merry-go-round of quotations.

#### *Neo-country, 1990-96*

The folk/country tradition largely lost to the post-modernists, but still managed to produce worthy heirs to Gram Parsons and Neil Young.

San Francisco's Richard Buckner (1) pursued Joe Ely's "outlaw" country with a voice reminiscent of Townes Van Zandt on **Bloomed** (1995) and particularly on the concept album **Devotion And Doubt** (1997), backed by Giant Sand and Marc Ribot.

Protagonists of the country-rock renaissance included: in Seattle Gerald Collier (1), with the agonizing **I Had To Laugh Like Hell** (1996), and Pedro The Lion, the project of David Bazan, with **It's Hard To Find A Friend** (1998); in Oregon Varnaline (1), the project of Space Needle's guitarist and multi-instrumentalist Anders Parker, with the hard-rocking **Varnaline** (1997); in New York, Jim White, with **Wrong-Eyed Jesus** (1997); in Ohio, Tim Easton, with **Special 20** (1998); in Georgia, Keven Kinney, the former Drivin'N Crying' singer, with **MacDougal Blues** (1990); etc.

The greatest of this (not so wild) bunch was Freedy Johnston (3), a New York transplant who introduced himself as Neil Young gone cow-punk on the effervescent, edgy and eclectic **Trouble Tree** (1990), but then was rapidly converted to a smoother and streamlined sound. The bleak stories of betrayal, failure and guilt on **Can You Fly** (1992) and **This Perfect World** (1994), featuring guitarist Marc Ribot, cellist Jane Scarpantoni and drummer Butch Vig, relied on impeccable melodies, as if Simon & Garfunkel were playing funeral music. By the time **Never Home** (1997) came out, Johnston had transformed into a more superficial pop auteur.

#### *Neo-populists, 1990-93*

The populists (à la Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, John Mellencamp, etc) were mainly veterans of the punk generation.

The solo work of former Dream Syndicate's vocalist Steve Wynn (1) favored melancholy and introverted confessions at the intersection of Lou Reed, Bob Dylan and Neil Young. **Kerosene** (1990) was too obviously derivative, but **Melting In The Dark** (1996) let loose his passion for Sixties garage-rock, which overflowed on the propulsive, noisy and emphatic **My Midnight** (1999). Wynn's quest for a balance of youthful punk-rock and adult roots-rock, of a music capable of roaring, sweating and bleeding, culminated with **Here Come The Miracles** (2001), a survey of his emotional territory, a varied set of solemn, mournful, upbeat, tender, romantic, rough, demonic, harsh ballads and rave-ups.

Firehose's and Minutemen's bassist Mike Watt (1) entrusted the vignettes of **Ball-Hog Or Tugboat** (1994) to an extraordinary cast of vocalists.

The Replacements' Paul Westerberg (1) remained a bard of ordinary anguish, but only **Suicaine Gratification** (1999) went close to fully realizing his vision.

#### *Neo-blues, 1991-94*

White blues singer-songwriters were obscured by the stars of lo-fi pop and neo-pop. Canada's Sue Foley, a Bonnie Raitt-soundalike, came to prominence with **Young Girl Blues** (1992) but matured as a songwriter with **Walk In**

**The Sun** (1996). Texas' Chris Whitley used his spectacular guitar technique to vent teenage angst on **Living With The Law** (1991) the way punk's anti-heroes did. Los Angeles' Ben Harper, an eclectic Jimi Hendrix-obsessed African-American folksinger, debuted with **Welcome To The Cruel World** (1994), a monumental exercise in stylistic excursion.

*Post-feminism, 1990-99*

The ladies had their own styles (plural). First of all, at the turn of the decade, an eccentric figure of lo-fi psychedelic storyteller emerged out of New York's underground lofts.

New York's multi-instrumentalist Azalia Snail (1) devoted her career to enigmatic and arcane reconstructions of the hippie era. **Snailbait** (1990) wed Gong's cosmic psychedelia and Brian Eno's noise-pop, and **Burnt Sienna** (1992) indulged in psychedelic effects, amid distorted vocals and dissonant music, leading to the chaotic **Fumarole Rising** (1994), the culmination of her program of disintegration of the pop song.

The Swans' vocalist Jarboe (11) resumed that band's apocalyptic folk on **Thirteen Masks** (1992), a set of majestic odes, oneiric visions, psychodramas, fairy tales, religious psalms, and ethnic nightmares that ran the gamut from purely acoustic to subtly electronic. While not as magical and emotional, the vocal tour de force of **Sacrificial Cake** (1995) upped the ante: each song "was" a different voice, and the album as a whole sounded like a grotesque conventicle of personas.

Already early in her career, Lida Husik (22) couldn't decide whether she wanted to be a popster or a sound painter. **Bozo** (1991), produced by Kramer, was a collection of ethereal and dreamy lullabies for voice, guitar, organ and beats. Each song was programmed to sink slowly into the listener's subconscious, like a magic potion. **Your Bag** (1992), on the other hand, was devoted to experimental compositions based on collage techniques. Both albums were drenched into hallucinogens. As she emerged from the haze of drugs, Husik turned to the political stance of **The Return Of Red Emma** (1993), which sounded like a theater piece set to a vast catalog of possible musics. Leaving behind the hallucinated nightmares of her acid-induced early years, Husik regressed to the childish folk tunes of **Joyride** (1995) and **Fly Stereophonic** (1997), which were also her most touching works (particularly the former), while, at the same time, venturing into electronica with the astral lounge music of **Green Blue Fire** (1996), a collaboration with ambient specialist Beaumont Hannant, and with the trance-collages of **Mad Flavor** (1999), which were, first and foremost, aural experiences.

At the same time, the ladies (particularly in New York and Los Angeles) continued the noble and intellectual self-searching saga inaugurated by Joni Mitchell.

Composer, pianist and vocalist Robin Holcomb (11), a staple of New York's jazz avantgarde (Wayne Horvitz's wife and main composer for his New York Composers' Orchestra), debuted with the mostly instrumental improvisations of **Larks They Crazy** (1989), accompanied by the supergroup of Horvitz, Doug Wiselman, Marty Ehrlich, David Hofstra and Bob Previte. A similar ensemble wove the delicate tapestry of **Robin Holcomb** (1990) for her simple, sweet melodies, sung in a register which evoked Nico's glacial and melancholy lament. With these brainy nursery rhymes she achieved a unique fusion of classical, jazz and folk music. Further removed from her jazz roots, **Rockabye** (1992) was a collection of sophisticated songs delivered by an aristocratic chanteuse.

One of the most moving voices of the decade was a humble violinist from Indiana: Lisa Germano (122). Her albums were comparable to the harrowing ending of a thriller. Rather than songs, the carefully assembled elements of **On The Way Down From Moon Palace** (1991) were humble concertos that straddled the line between country, classical and new-age music. Her mournful melodies were reminiscent of Pachelbel's Canon and Albinoni's Adagio while the instrumental setting was a lesson in psychology. **Happiness** (1993) "universalized" her grief, but also climbed one tier down into her personal hell, past, present and future merged in her feeble and confused stream of consciousness. **Geek The Girl** (1994) was both a self-portrait and an allegoric concept. It was both an epic diary of insecurity and a Dantesque journey into the psyche of a girl. It was her most atmospheric work, but also her

most personal. In telling the story of her story, and making it the story of all (women's) stories, she performed the miracle of a kind of simplicity bordering on madness. The majestic dejection of the episodes worked like the exhausting grief of a lengthy funeral. In the process, Germano reenacted Nico's most lugubrious nightmares as well as Leonard Cohen's saddest fables. Her songs had become pure existential shivers. **Excerpts From A Love Circus** (1996) saw the light at the end of the tunnel, although the scene was still unfocused. Leaving behind the claustrophobic excesses of the previous albums, Germano entered a less creepy landscape. Rather than soliloquies, these songs sounded like dialogues between her touching voice and her ghostly violin. But the romantic interlude ended with the maniacal intensity of **Slide** (1998), back to the inner wasteland that ever more eccentric arrangements likened to Alice's Wonderland.

Los Angeles-based vocalist and pianist Tori Amos (3) fused Kate Bush's operatic falsetto, Joni Mitchell's piano-based confessional odes and Cat Stevens' romantic piano figures on **Little Earthquakes** (1991). Its ballads were simple but profound, personal but universal, melodic but discordant, thus achieving a synthesis of emotional states, not only of musical styles. The violence of hyper-realism seemed to prevail over the fairy-tale magic of introversion on **Under The Pink** (1994), a work derailed by syncopated rhythms, dissonant lashes, gospel organs, hysterical fits, orchestral flourishes and moody vocals. Leveraging the experiments of that album, the harpsichord-obsessed **Boys For Pele** (1996) sounded like a work of uncontrolled musical genius: it indulged in timbric juxtaposition, but mostly for its own sake. Backed by a rock'n'roll band and enhanced by electronic arrangements, Amos eventually chose a simpler career, starting with the much more accessible (and trivial) **From The Choirgirl Hotel** (1998).

Juliana Hatfield (12), the Blake Babies' bassist and vocalist, continued to offer a moderate view of youth's troubles. **Hey Babe** (1992) was a masterpiece of whim and contrarian morals, penned by girlish voice, modest melodies, and graceful guitar rock. The self-pitying and self-loathing themes that recurred throughout the album painted a charming and anthemic biography of a teenager growing up. That existential implosion began to show a muscular side on **Become What You Are** (1993), whose sound ranged from folk-rock to hard-rock, and Hatfield definitely lost her (musical) virginity with **Only Everything** (1995), which submerged her artful whining with loud and furious riffs.

Kristin Hersh (2) carried out a solo parallel career to her band Throwing Muses with the acoustic collections **Hips And Makers** (1994), a tender and shy self-tribute via a stream of consciousness that reached the depths of her soul, and **Strange Angels** (1998), two albums of a music that was as cold as ice, as ascetic as a nun's rosary. **Sky Motel** (1999), on the other hand, sounded like a Throwing Muses reunion, and broke the spell.

With the mostly-acoustic and autobiographical **Pieces Of Two** (1995), San Diego-via-Alaska's Jewel Kilcher manufactured a pseudo-hippie persona akin to Joni Mitchell and her proud soprano.

The 10,000 Maniacs' chanteuse Natalie Merchant (1) conceived the fragile, tender, sensual melodies set to sophisticated folk-jazz arrangements of **Tigerlily** (1995).

Poi Dog Pondering's violinist Susan Voelz enveloped the mournful ballads of **Summer Crashing** (1995) in a solemn haze.

Danielle Howle's powerful and disorienting vocals increased the appeal of her deep thoughts on **About To Burst** (1996).

Cat Power (3), the project of New York-transplant Chan Marshall, debuted with the somber and spartan **Myra Lee** (1996) and the desolate, suffocating **What Would The Community Think** (1996). The latter formulated an art that took the shy pessimism of auteurs such as Nick Drake and Laura Nyro to a new dimension of introspection. Its sketchy vignettes and self-analyses coined a subtle and almost embarrassing format, that turned the listener into a voyeur peeping through the keyhole. Marshall was, at the same time, the cameraman and the actress: she played the role of a tormented heroine while she was filming herself playing that role. Her songs were as much acting as

they were singing. Marshall's cinematic genius peaked with the song cycle of **Moon Pix** (1998), enhanced with the ambient, free-form arrangements of Dirty Three's Jim White and Mick Turner. The emotional intensity packed by her half whisper in the gloomy lieder of **You Are Free** (2003) bordered on the suicidal.

Another New Yorker, Fiona Apple, conveyed the anguish of her generation (she was still a teenager) on **Tidal** (1996).

Lili Haydn, a vocalist and violinist who sang with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, concocted an austere blend of classical, folk, jazz, rock and pop on **Lili** (1997).

The melancholy whisper of Edith Frost (11) breathed real life into the hypnotic lullabies of **Calling Over Time** (1997), arranged by Chicago luminaries such as Eleventh Dream Day's Rick Rizzo, Gastr Del Sol's David Grubbs and Jim O'Rourke. Its natural evolution was the chamber pop of **Telescopic** (1998): Frost bled angelic melodies in a shy and introverted voice, which were captured in a web of timbres (cello, violin, flute, accordion, trombone, organ) and perturbed by psychedelic guitar effects. She did to folk music what the first Velvet Underground album did to rock music: carve a bleakly subliminal, darkly metaphysical, cruelly hellish space beneath an apparently innocent surface.

The Fugees' vocalist Lauryn Hill (1) delivered in a versatile, booming voice the elegant and sincere allegories of **The Miseducation Of** (1998), across a broad stylistic range.

Crowsdell's vocalist Shannon Wright (1), an accomplished pianist, penned the austere chamber folk elegies of **Flight Safety** (1999), the nightmarish, emphatic, almost expressionistic music of **Maps Of Tacit** (2000) and, best of all, the theatrical, neoclassical meditations of **Dyed In The Wool** (2001).

The pop-soul divas continued to rule the best-sellers' charts, notably Mariah Carey, one of the most successful artists of all times. The soul-jazz tradition was updated to the new sound technology by the likes of Alana Davis, Poe, and most notably Sophie Hawkins.

#### ***Grrrrls, 1990-99***

Several singer-songwriters bridged the gap between singer-songwriters and the "riot-grrrrls" movement. Propelled by the success of their decade-old anti-folk movement, the new generation took on a wilder, angrier, more sarcastic tone.

Lois Maffeo, one of the leaders of Olympia's "riot grrrrls" movement, best summarized her age on the acoustic **Butterfly Kiss** (1992), featuring Bratmobile's drummer Molly Neuman and the Young Marble Giants' bassist Stuart Moxham.

Buffalo's fiercely independent folksinger Ani DiFranco (2) reached maturity with her fifth album, **Out Of Range** (1994). Her songs vibrated with raw energy and emotion, bit with sarcasm and wit, pondered with angst and depression. DiFranco's art was both personal and social: while she hunted her post-menstrual demons, she also delved into poignant commentary. Her staccato acoustic guitar was no less original, a highly emotional fusion of Delta-blues and Appalachian folk picking. Parables and rants acquired new life with the less spartan format of **Not A Pretty Girl** (1995) and especially **Dilate** (1996); while **Little Plastic Castle** (1998) presented a kinder, gentler folksinger who was less at war with society and more at ease with her own life.

The music of mad Englishwoman Polly Jean Harvey (1) was born at the crossroad between punk rage and a nervous breakdown. Dominated by her vulgar, hysterical voice, reminiscent of Patti Smith and Sinead O'Connor, the country-blues bacchanals of **Dry** (1992) and especially **Rid Of Me** (1993) tore apart very personal and often scabrous dirges. Harvey's soul struggled between pleasure and pain, affection and libido, frustration and desire, and ultimately expose a psyche that was metaphorically nymphomaniac. **To Bring You My Love** (1995) and **Is This Desire** (1998) evolved her style towards labyrinthine production jobs that increased the doses of electronics and downplayed the role of Harvey's voice, and Harvey ended up sounding more like a spectator than a protagonist.

Chicago's Liz Phair (11) came to prominence with a highly intellectual post-modernist and post-feminist exercise, **Exile In Guyville** (1993), theoretically a diary of brutal confessions (and superficially a hyper-realistic orgy of lust) but in practice a vast fresco of the women of her generation, musically modeled after the Rolling Stones' masterpiece but also quoting everybody from Bob Dylan to Juliana Hatfield. Less cynical and more romantic, **Whip-Smart** (1994) and especially **Whitechocolatespaceegg** (1998) focused on her eclectic musical skills. Phair now engaged in a more oblique approach to her sexual and moral appetites, to reconciling sex and love, an approach which revealed her as an impressive innovator of the folk-rock idiom.

DQE (1), the project of Atlanta-based singer-songwriter and guitarist Grace Braun, erupted highly personal, visceral, unpleasant confessions via a frantic vocabulary of shrieks, yelps, roars, whispers and wails on **But Me I Fell Down** (1994).

The rebellious stance of these performers influenced Til' Tuesday's Aimee Mann, who resurrected a changed woman on **I'm With Stupid** (1995).

Two veterans climbed the charts in Los Angeles with a mainstream sound and a mood that were the outcome of these changes: Sheryl Crow, with **Tuesday Night Music Club** (1994), and Meredith Brooks, with **Blurring The Edges** (1997).

A turning point was represented by the success of a Canadian teenager and former disco diva, now transplanted in Los Angeles and acquainted with the punk ethos, Alanis Morissette (10). Her carefree vocal style and romantic exuberance, enhanced by producer Glen Ballard's edgy rock and hip-hop arrangements (which enlisted the likes of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' Dave Navarro and Flea), transformed the songs of **Jagged Little Pill** (1995) into generational and gender anthems.

Neko Case (1) emerged out of the alt-country legion with her third album, **Blacklisted** (2002), featuring Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet's Brian Connelly and Giant Sand's Howe Gelb, Joey Burns and John Convertino.

#### ***British soundscapes, 1993-99***

However, the most influential female singer-songwriter of the 1990s was neither American nor British: Sugarcubes' singer Bjork (3) Gudmundsdottir came out of Iceland, of all places. **Debut** (1993) employed massive doses of electronic keyboards and synthetic rhythms (conducted by producer Nellee Hooper of Soul II Soul) to sculpt dance-pop tunes that combined the savage, vital spirit of rhythm'n'blues with the psychic devastation of the post-industrial age. Along the way, Bjork garnered debris of gospel, jazz, house, hip hop, Broadway show-tunes, etc. Her eccentric vocal style, which was the musical equivalent of cinematic acting, dominated **Post** (1995), an album that focused more openly on the groove and that the producers (Hooper, 808 State's Graham Massey, Howie B and Tricky) turned into a hodgepodge of fashionable sounds. Her traumas sounded more sincere on **Homogenic** (1997), which was also her most cohesive album; while **Selmasongs** (2000) and **Vespertine** (2001) merely admitted her fundamental travesty of kitsch, easy listening and orchestral pop of the past.

Avantgarde oboe player Kate St John (1) concocted an elegant fusion of chamber music and free-jazz on **Indescribable Night** (1995).

Transglobal Underground's vocalist Natacha Atlas (1) speculated on that band's seductive world-fusion on **Diaspora** (1995), **Halim** (1997) and especially **Gedida** (1999).

Sally Doherty's Sally Doherty (1996) focused on multi-layered vocals (inspired by Cocteau Twins' dream-pop and Enya's wordless lullabies) set to a lush acoustic music reminiscent of Michael Nyman's minimalistic repetition, ancient musical forms and ethnic folk.

Heather Duby (10) owed half the artistic success of **Post To Wire** (1999) to the oneiric orchestrations of Pell Mell's Steve Fisk, soundscapes that metabolized all sorts of styles while the singer borrowed from Nico, Enya and Bjork her emotional charge.

In Holland, Solex (10), the project of Dutch used-record specialist Elizabeth Esselink, Solex updated the soul-jazz

diva to the age of samplers and drum machines. The songs on **Pick Up** (1999) and especially **Low Kick And Hard Bop** (2001) were fragments of music glued together and propelled by disjointed beats. The difference between her compositions and the audio cut-up of the avantgarde was that her compositions were actually "songs", and even "melodic" ones. Her silky voice blended naturally with the frigid textures of her collages.

Beth Orton's Central Reservation (1999) bridged Lida Husik's ethereal style and Bjork's orchestral pop.

- 1993: Jiang Zemin is appointed president of China
- 1993: Marc Andreessen develops the first browser for the World Wide Web (Mosaic)
- 1993: Russian troops invade the runaway republic of Chechnya
- 1993: the "Youth Day" in Colorado is the largest youth event since Woodstock

## 6.7 The second coming of Industrial music

### *Aggro, 1990-96*

Born as one of the sub-genres of the new wave, industrial music had explored a wide and wild spectrum of styles, from dance music to white noise.

Throughout the 1990s, the brutal style of Nine Inch Nails (NIN) was pervasive in the USA. Industrial music became a mass phenomenon with NIN's visceral punk ethos applied to mechanical rhythms and arrangements. At the same time, the influence of KMFDM's "aggro" style was less obvious but no less ubiquitous, with most bands trying different variations on the idea of fusing heavy-metal guitars and machines.

San Francisco's Grotus were among the few to try new ways of fusing industrial music and rock music by utilizing a battery of synthesizers, samples, turntables and real drums on **Slow Motion Apocalypse** (1993).

Chicago's NIN followers included: Filter, i.e. Richard Patrick and Bryan Liesegang, who were most derivative on **Short Bus** (1994); Stabbing Westward, with **Ungod** (1994); Acumen (1), who unleashed the industrial-metal fury of **Territory = Universe** (1996) and then mutated into DJ? Acucrack, who unleashed the industrial-metal to experiment with a brutal, all-electronic, version of techno and drum'n'bass, best on **Mutants Of Sound** (1998).

Skrew (1) in Texas, formed by Angkor Wat's frontman Adam Grossman, devoted **Burning In Water Drowning In Flame** (1992) and especially **Dusted** (1994) to a heavier and more frantic sound.

New York's Sister Machine Gun (1), the project of keyboardist Chris Randall, offered a more melodic version of KMFDM on **Torture Technique** (1994).

Around the country, Nine Inch Nails and KMFDM imitators included: Los Angeles' Ethyl Meatplow, with **Happy Days, Sweetheart** (1993), Chicago's Electric Hellfire Club (1), with a classic of satanic rock such as **Burn Baby Burn** (1993), New York's Chemlab, with **Burn Out At The Hydrogen Bar** (1993), San Francisco's Hate Dept, with **Meat Your Maker** (1994). Oregon's 16 Volt (Eric Powell), with **Skin** (1994), Seattle's SMP (1), or Synthesia Murder Program, with **Stalemate** (1995), Los Angeles' Kevorkian Death Cycle, with **Collection for Injection** (1996), Missouri's Gravity Kills (1), with **Gravity Kills** (1996), New York's Bile, with **Teknowhere** (1996), Colorado's Society Burning (1), who produced one of the most violent works, **Tactiq** (1997), Oregon's Hell3ent (Bryant Black), with **Helium** (1998), Arizona's Machines Of Loving Grace, Ohio's Prick, i.e. Kevin McMahon, etc. Los Angeles' Drown (1) wed the genre with prog-metal on **Hold On To The Hollow** (1994), Pennsylvania's God Lives Underwater wed it to Depeche Mode's synth-pop with the all-electronic **Life In The So-Called Space Age** (1998). In most cases, industrial-metal had simply become a pretext for producing dancefloor grooves.

The most original group was Girls Vs Boys (11), formed in Washington by Soulside's guitarist Scott McCloud,

drummer Alexis Fleisig and bassist Johnny Temple, plus Edsel's keyboardist Eli Janney (Silas Greene). Their hardcore roots were erased by Janney's bleak, noir, jazzy soundscapes on **Tropic Of Scorpio** (1992), a work that explored the morbid, expressionist backdrop of industrial music rather than its brutal undertones. Janney doubled on bass for the more cohesive **Venus Luxure No.1 Baby** (1993), which alternated between calm, atmospheric meditations and devastating bursts of power, the former radiating infernal spleen and the latter charging with atonal guitar and dissonant keyboards on top of spasmodic rhythms (hammering bass lines and catastrophic drumming). Nick Drake' mortal anemia met Big Black's harsh, abrasive psychodramas. **Cruise Yourself** (1994) and **House Of GVSB** (1996) focused on the ugliness of that sound, leveraging denser kaleidoscopes of sound effects.

McCloud pursued his sonic research with a new project, New Wet Kojak (2), whose **New Wet Kojak** (1995) and **Nasty International** (1997) were dark, textural studies that mixed electronic and jazz to create eerie atmospheres reminiscent of Robert Wyatt and Morphine.

In Europe, KMFMD's aggro progressed thanks to works such as **Excluded** (1990) by Denmark's Klute (Claus Larsen of Leather Strip); **Pariah** (1991) by Denmark's Sloppy Wrenchbody, **Combat Shock** (1994) by Switzerland's Swamp Terrorists, **Assassins Dk United** (1994) by Denmark's Psychopomps **Transmission Pervous** (1995) by Germany's Steril (1), **Misery Loves Co** (1995) by Sweden's Misery Loves Co, etc.

In Britain, Cubanate (1) blended Anthemic guitar riffs, devilish electronic pulses and sub-human screams like noone else on **Cyberia** (1994); while Pitch Shifter were the main disciples of Godflesh's industrial-tinged grindcore.

#### ***International EBM, 1992-98***

EBM or "electro" (Cabaret Voltaire, Front Line Assembly, Skinny Puppy, Front 242) became more abrasive, brutal and visceral with **Brainstorming** (1992) by Germany's Yelworc (Domink van Reich), **Solitary Confinement** (1992) by Denmark's Leather Strip (Claus Larsen), **Stored Images** (1995) by Belgium's Suicide Commando (i.e., Johan Van Roy), **Bunkertor 7** (1995) by Germany's Wumpscut (Rudy Ratzinger), **Unburied** (1997) by Spain's Allied Vision (Oscar Storm), **El Dia De La Ira** (1998) by Mexico's Hocico, etc.

American EBM, on the other hand, was mostly a grotesque mutation of European EBM. Mentallo & The Fixer (2) fused synth-pop, EBM and dissonant electronics for the infernal visions of **Revelations 23** (1993) and **Where Angels Fear To Tread** (1994). San Francisco's Battery relied on vocalist Maria Azevedo, best captured on **Distance** (1997), to deliver a formidable punch. San Francisco's Scar Tissue (1) crafted one of the most innovative and complex works, **TMOTD** (1997). San Francisco's Xorcist (Peter Stone) was the most successful of the gothic dance acts, best heard on **Damned Souls** (1992).

#### ***Music for the Death Factory, 1990-95***

The original tenet of industrial music (to write white-noise soundtracks depicting the psychological horror of the industrial society) survived in the works of sound sculptors spread all over the world.

The most radical were New Zealand's Dead C (13), i.e. Michael Morley and Bruce Russell. The primitive, guitar-based cacophony of **DR503** (1987) evolved into **Trapdoor Fucking Exit** (1990), which harmonized raga-rock, acid-rock, the Velvet Underground's *Sister Ray* and the Grateful Dead's *Dark Star*, and into the improvised chamber psychedelic jams of **Harsh '70s Reality** (1992), whose rhythm-less, droning, electronic soundscapes evoked both Lou Reed's **Metal Machine Music** and Gordon Mumma's sonic sculptures. More anti-atmospheric improvisations surfaced on **The Operation Of The Sun** (1993). If Brian Eno invented music that should not be listened to, Dead C invented music that is impossible to listen to. However, blurred shapes of ballads appeared behind the thick, magmatic mist of **White House** (1995), one of their most emotional "sculptures", **Repent** (1996) and **Tusk** (1998).

Morley's project Gate (2) indulged in hyper-abrasive and dilated ballads on **Dew Line** (1994), but progressively

evolved towards the gentle, languid computer-generated electronic music of **The Lavender Head** (1998).

Russell's collaboration with violinist Alastair Galbraith, *A Handful Of Dust* (1) was best represented by the two lengthy improvisations of **The Philosophik Mercury** (1994) and by *The City of God*, off **Jerusalem Street Of Graves** (1998)

Bruce Russell's trilogy of solo albums, **Project For A Revolution In New York** (1998), **Maximalist Mantra Music** (2000) and **Painting The Passports Brown** (2001), focused on the atmospheric quality of his extended compositions for distorted guitars and bedroom electronics

Purveyors of noise included: Germany's Genocide Organ, whose **Leichenlinie** (1989) was one of the terrifying albums that bridged the old school and the new school; Philadelphia's *Namanax* (1), with **Multi-Phase Electrodynamics** (1993); Chicago's *Illusion Of Safety*, the project of Dan Burke and Jim O'Rourke, specialized in macabre anguish on albums such as **Cancer** (1992); *Dead Voices On Air* (1), formed in Vancouver by former Zoviet France's collaborator Mark Spybey, with **New Worlds Machine** (1995); Germany's *Maeror Tri* (1), with the monumental **Myein** (1995); etc.

The percussive pandemonium of San Diego's *Crash Worship* was quite unique and hardly documented on **Triplemania II** (1995). Seattle's *TchKung*, too, staged tribal shows that offered vivid views of industrial decay, accompanied by political rants on **Tchkung** (1995).

Notably missing in the 1990s were the British, the very founders of the genre. Perhaps the only significant addition to the canon came from *Towering Inferno* (1), who summarized twenty years of experiments with the terrifying multimedia opera **Kaddish** (1994).

#### ***Digital hardcore, 1992-96***

Several bands had been toying with a fusion of techno and rock. For example, San Francisco's *Babyland* played techno with the fury of punk-rock on **You Suck Crap** (1992).

A far stronger synthesis was achieved in Germany by *Atari Teenage Riot* (10), the project of Berlin's programmer and anarchist Alec Empire (Alexander Wilke) and two vocalists (Carl Crack and Hanin Elias). The "digital hardcore" (supersonic beats, heavy-metal riffs, agit-prop lyrics, videogame-ish sound effects) of **Delete Yourself** (1995) straddled the line between punk-rock and techno. *Alec Empire* (2), the angry young man of techno, toyed with all sorts of styles, notably: the all-electronic **Les Etoiles Des Filles Mortes** (1996), which displayed the influence of avantgarde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and veered towards gothic ambient music; the "drill and bass" of **The Destroyer** (1996); and the nightmarish free-jazz electronica of **The Curse of the Golden Vampire** (1998), a collaboration with Techno Animal's mastermind Kevin Martin.

*EC8OR*, i.e. French keyboardist Patric Catani and German vocalist Gina D'Iorio, conducted a similar campaign with **All Of Us Can Be Rich** (1997), a terrifying, excruciating, nonstop sonic assault made of bulldozer/jackhammer beats, mind-bending distortions and death-metal riffs.

## **6.8 Slo-core**

#### ***Slo-core, 1991-94***

One of the most important innovations of the 1990s to the canon of psychedelic folk-rock was "slo-core", variously defined depending on local variations, but basically a slow, dreamy, melancholy version of dream-pop, a direct descendant of Galaxie 500 and Yo La Tengo, that typically required lengthy and restrained compositions.

Slo-core was sanctified in Chicago by *Codeine* (11) with **Frigid Stars** (1991). John Engle's guitar distortion was so dilated to sound like an organ, Chris Brokaw's drumming sounded like bells tolling for a funeral and Stephen Immerwahr's sleepwalking litanies evoked Nick Drake and Tim Buckley. That emotional "black hole" attained nirvana on **White Birch** (1994), featuring new drummer Doug Scharin: longer songs, deeper trance, slower tempos,

as if they were aiming for a song with no title in which the group does not play and does not sing.

North Carolina's Seam (12), the project of former Bitch Magnet's vocalist Sooyoung Park, fashioned the floating timbres and shimmering textures of **Headsparks** (1991) but, more importantly, the unstable filigree of **The Problem With Me** (1993), a sedate but also forceful work that seemed to merge tender folk-pop and neurotic hardcore, and felt like the slow-motion replay of a volcano's eruption. **Are You Driving Me Crazy?** (1995) was both an even more personal show of the leader and a less abstract, almost "poppier" affair, which led to the atmospheric melodies of **The Pace Is Glacial** (1998).

San Francisco's Red House Painters (111), an acoustic quartet led by introverted poet Mark Kozelek, penned the depressed mantras of **Down Colorful Hill** (1992): shy guitars that played chords as if they were reciting rosaries, and moribund dirges that seemed to end before beginning but then lasted for eternity, created quietly unnerving atmospheres that blurred the border between sorrow and ecstasy. Like with the music of Leonard Cohen, Tim Buckley and Nick Drake, the effect was both subdued and majestic, a contradiction that became the quintessence of their art. The demo-quality of those recordings contributed to the sense of philosophical melancholy, but **Red House Painters** (1993), also known as **Rollercoaster**, revealed a much lighter and brighter mood: rather than whining, Kozelek was contemplating the universe. Each song was a moment in time, an impressionistic watercolor. **Ocean Beach** (1995) brought even more life to the compositions, dispensing with the most austere elements of their slow acoustic chamber folk.

Minneapolis' trio Low (15), too, resurrected the depressed and anemic mood of Nick Drake, but then wed it to LaMonte Young's minimalism and to the Cowboy Junkies' lounge melodies. **I Could Live In Hope** (1994) was the quintessential case of "the whole is more than the sum of its parts": the parts were trivial and scant, but the whole was a triumph of unbridled creativity. Ascetic more than mournful, it sounded like the rock equivalent of Japanese haiku and Tibetan tangka, an art of frigid ballads that drowned in a lattice of empty notes. Low's "song" was chamber music for emotions that slowly faded away, that were never truly felt. At the same time, the unbearable delay and dilation of musical structures fostered and maintained an intensity of feeling that an ordinary refrain would have released in a few seconds. The tranquil jams of **Long Division** (1995) were as musical as circles spreading in a pond, but were given a soul by the whispered thoughts of guitarist Alan Sparhawk and drummer Mimi Parker. **The Curtain Hits The Cast** (1996) turned to electronic keyboards in order to relieve the gloom and lighten up the ambience, and **Secret Name** (1999) expanded the instrumentation by adding a string section, piano and timpani. Low regressed to a more conventional format for **Things We Lost In The Fire** (2001) and attained formal perfection with **Trust** (2002), a masterpiece of subtle metamorphoses, glacial counterpoint and ghostly religious music.

Texas' Bedhead (2), led by Matt Kadane, explored a state of mind between psychedelic trance and teenage angst on **What Fun Life Was** (1994) and **Beheaded** (1996). Their ameobic pieces "grew" rather than simply exist: they were the object of a gradual, evolutionary (and potentially never-ending) process that slowly brought the emotions into focus.

The "slo-core" style became ubiquitous, gathering momentum around the country.

#### ***Ethereal pop, 1990-95***

A variant on "male" slo-core was a style of fragile folk-pop ballads for female whispers and understated arrangements, more or less inspired by the Cowboy Junkies.

The concept was pioneered by a group that originated from the psychedelic movement, Mazzy Star (2). Rain Parade's and Opal's guitarist David Roback replaced Kendra Smith with a more delicate vocalist, Hope Sandoval, and greatly expanded the scope of his music on **She Hangs Brightly** (1990), a melting pot of acoustic folk, Delta blues, oneiric acid-rock and laconic lounge jazz. **So Tonight That I Might See** (1993) barely increased the melodic element of their tender lullabies, which reached alternatively for the galactic, subliminal, mystical and

impressionistic levels.

Somewhat related to this atmospheric and psychological school were the electronic vignettes of His Name Is Alive (3), the brainchild of Michigan's multi-instrumentalist Warren Defever who employed different female singers for each album. Rhythm was optional on **Livonia** (1990), an experimental work that indulged in tape loops and samples but mostly relied on an elegant combination of ghostly neoclassical vocals and surreal electronic effects. Guitars were given more prominence on **Mouth By Mouth** (1993), and the group sound was more earthly, bridging Laurie Anderson's musical theater and dream-pop. The sophisticated, almost ambient **Stars On E.S.P.** (1996), was reminiscent of Brian Wilson's productions but in a skewed, unorthodox way. Defever's arrangements did not shun the obvious: they recreated the obvious in another dimension.

Others included: Illinois' Moon Seven Times (1), featuring Lynn Confield, who specialized in ethereal madrigals that boasted the spiritual depth of a raga on **Moon Seven Times** (1993); Congo Norvell, led by former Gun Club's guitarist Kid Congo Powers and vocalist Sally Norvell, who gave one of the best imitations of the Cowboy Junkies with their **Lullabies** (1993); Boston's Helium (1), led by Mary Timony, who bordered on feedback-pop on **Dirt Of Luck** (1995); Ohio's Elysian Fields, fronted by Marlene Dietrich-ian vocalist Jennifer Charles, with **Bleed Your Cedar** (1996); etc.

#### ***The atmospheric ballad, 1990-9***

Whether it was "slo-core" or simply slow pop, the influence of alt-country or a by-product of psychedelia, the slow, atmospheric ballad became fashionable again.

Los Angeles' Idaho (2), i.e. singer Jeff Martin and guitarist John Berry, were both the most existential and the most psychedelic. **Year After Year** (1993) was a set of suicidal psalms imbued with documentary lyrics and recited in a pensive tone halfway between Leonard Cohen and Lou Reed. Martin's indolent pessimism reached new heights of sweetness on **This Way Out** (1994).

Acetone (1) continued the tradition of (in reverse chronological order) Dream Syndicate, Television, Neil Young, Grateful Dead with collections of transcendental pseudo-country ballads such as **Cindy** (1993).

Pennsylvania's acoustic quintet Low Road (1) wed the aesthetic of slo-core to country music on **The Devil's Pocket** (1994).

That abyss of gloom got rather crowded: Los Angeles' Love Spirals Downwards, who concocted a gothic/exotic/medieval/spiritual variant of the dream-pop cliches made popular by the Cocteau Twins and by Dead Can Dance, for example on **Ardor** (1994); Los Angeles' Spain, with **The Blue Moods Of Spain** (1995); Virginia's Drunk, with **A Derby Spiritual** (1997); etc.

Texas' American Analog Set (1) advanced the oneiric sound pioneered by Galaxie 500, especially on their second album, **From Our Living Room To Yours** (1997).

New York's Calla (1) sculpted shadowy melodies that slowly crept out of their fragile envelopes on the elegant and stately **Calla** (1999), a softly-hallucinated music reminiscent of Ry Cooder's soundtracks and of Mark Lanegan's ambient ballads.

Seattle (and the Northwest in general) originated a close relative of "slo-core", a form of "textural rock" that hanged somewhere between the extremes of roots-rock and post-rock, and emphasized non-linear guitar-based soundscapes. Built To Spill (12) were the reigning champions of the genre throughout the decade. Formed in Idaho by guitarist Doug Martsch, with Caustic Resin's guitarist Brett Netson and Lync's rhythm section, **Ultimate Alternative Wavers** (1993) was mostly a guitar tour de force, but already displayed their slovenly, messy and noisy fusion of Neil Young, Grateful Dead and Sonic Youth. **There's Nothing Wrong With Love** (1994), instead, focused on structure, constraining Martsch's imagination but cohering in a more effective way. **Perfect From Now On** (1997) summed the two, granting the guitar several degrees of freedom while anchoring it to a spectacular group sound (the Spinanes' drummer Scott Plouf, Nelson's bass, cello, mellotron and synthesizer). These articulate

and elegant compositions relied both on lengthy hypnotic jamming and on simple, manageable form. Martsch's relentless guitar ruminations created the noise-rock equivalent of John Fahey's "primitive guitar": introspection, meditation on the meaning of life, contemplation of the universe, and worship of the absolute. **Keep It Like A Secret** (1998) simply channeled that creative force in the format of the rock song.

Silkworm (2) boasted the depressed noise of guitarists Joel Phelps and Andy Cohen. Cohen's introverted mood and neurotic guitar dominated **In The West** (1993) and **Libertine** (1994). Pared down to a trio after Phelps' departure, **Firewater** (1996) veered towards the distorted, metaphysical folk-rock of Dream Syndicate and Neil Young, while highlighting the creative rhythms of drummer Michael Dahlquist and bassist Tim Midgett. **Developer** (1997) was another subtle essay of musical imagery, and perhaps even more arduous.

Red Stars Theory (2) turned Built To Spill's brainy trance upside down, emphasizing the trance, on their mostly-instrumental albums **But Sleep Came Slowly** (1997) and especially **Life In A Bubble Can Be Beautiful** (1999), which fused psychedelic, chamber and country music. Their songs were amoeba-like pseudo-jamming lattices that freely elaborated on a theme relying more on atmosphere and feeling than on structure or dynamics.

The legacy of slo-core was still being felt at the end of the decade on countless recordings: Fuck's **Baby Loves A Funny Bunny** (1996) and Half Film's **East Of Monument** (1998) in San Francisco; Kingsbury Manx's bucolic **Kingsbury Manx** (1999) in North Carolina; the psychological studies of **Past Worn Searching** (1998) by Rainer Maria (1), fronted by Caithlin DeMarrais' austere phrasing, in Wisconsin; etc.

Built To Spill's best pupils were Seattle's Death Cab For Cutie (1), whose painstakingly detailed stories of alienation and defeat on **Something About Airplanes** (1999) employed the "textural" technique of the masters.

#### *British transcendence, 1995-97*

In England, Drugstore's **Drugstore** (1995) was a work of subtle seduction à la Cowboy Junkies and Mazzy Star. Mojave 3 (1), the new project by Slowdive's vocalists Neil Halstead and Rachel Goswell, were modern bards that harked back to the golden age of country-rock and folk-rock (Bob Dylan's **Blonde On Blonde**, early Donovan, Leonard Cohen) but added a metaphysical dimension. **Ask Me Tomorrow** (1996) and especially **Excuses For Travellers** (2000) were devoted to folk and country ballads that a lacerating pain had emptied of all energy and filled with a zen-like acceptance of the mystery of life.

Movietone (1), the project of Flying Saucer Attack's vocalist Rachel Brook and Third Eye Foundation's guitarist Matt Elliot played melancholy twilight ballads à la Mazzy Star on **Day And Night** (1997).

Tram's **Heavy Black Frame** (1999) still revealed the ghost of Nick Drake behind slo-core's agony.

- 1994: Jerry Yang launches the first search engine, Yahoo
- 1994: Netscape, the company founded by Marc Andreessen, goes public even before earning money and starts the "dot.com" craze and the boom of the Nasdaq
- 1994: the "Chunnel" between Britain and France opens
- 1994: the first genetically engineered vegetable (Flavr Savr tomato) is introduced
- 1994: the USA invades Haiti to restore Aristide as president

## 6.9 Dance-music in the age of Techno

### *Body Music*

It took a decade for techno and house to become the dominant dance styles, but, when they did, they spread like wildfire around the globe. The masses reacted enthusiastically, as they had in the 1960s to the hippy phenomenon.

Over the years, the difference between techno and house blurred, and most ravers would not know which one was which (techno was mostly instrumental and descended from Kraftwerk, whereas house was mostly vocal and descended from soul, funk and disco music).

Belgium was one of the epicenters of the fad, perhaps fueled by the school of "electronic body music" (Front 242). **Lust** (1991), by the Lords Of Acid (1), offered wildly throbbing as well as openly erotic dance-music with female vocalist. From Belgium, the new dance-craze spread to Holland and France. Soon, all the European countries overflowed with techno acts.

France's Laurent Garnier, with **Shot In The Dark** (1995), and Japan's Ken Ishii, with **Jelly Tones** (1995), were quintessential techno musicians of the era.

Germany boasted the most varied scene. Disc-jockey Sven Vath (1) virtually invented Frankfurt's "progressive-house" (or, simply, "trance") with the ambient **Accident In Paradise** (1993); while Air Liquide (10), i.e. Ingmar "Dr Walker" Koch and Cem "Jammin` Unit" Oral, spearheaded Cologne's psychedelic techno with the ambitious **The Increased Difficulty Of Concentration** (1995), at the border between collage and stream of consciousness, an album that included the colossal *Robot Wars Symphony*, replete with movements that harked back to (alternatively) Klaus Schulze, Tangerine Dream and Brian Eno. La Bouche, formed in Frankfurt by two black American vocalists, became the most successful acts of melodic techno after they concocted the Euro-techno hits *Sweet Dreams* (1994) and *Be My Lover* (1995); while L@n, the Duesseldorf-based duo of Rupert Huber and Otto Mueller, belonged to the avantgarde with the Neu-influenced robotic electronic music of **L@n** (1996). X Marks The Pedwalk continued the tradition of the industrial dance of the 1980s, whereas Porter Ricks played "intelligent" techno.

Norway's Apoptygma Bezerk (Stephan Groth) explored gothic techno on **Soli Deo Gloria** (1994).

Starting with **Intervision** (1997), Finland-born singer and multi-instrumentalist Jimi Tenor played kitsch music (and sang in a sexy falsetto) to a techno beat with an approach that was the musical equivalent of Andy Warhol's pop art but that mocked everybody from soul to glam.

Sweden seemed to specialize in Abba-like melodies sung to the techno beat, whether in a clearly Abba-derived fashion, as Ace Of Base did with *All That She Wants* (1992) and *Beautiful Life* (1995), or in an ironic synth-pop style, as Aqua (1) did on the exuberant **Aquarium** (1997).

Australia's most creative techno musician was perhaps David Thrusell, who evolved from the naive techno sound of Snog's Lies Inc (1992) to the almost avantgarde industrial-ambient-ethnic fusion of Black Lung's Silent Weapons For Quiet Wars (1994) to the sophisticated techno sculptures of **Hollow Earth** (1994), credited to Soma (1), a duo with Pieter Bourke.

The USA, the homeland of techno, on the other hand, was highly derivative of the European styles. The dance music of New York's Deee-Lite and Los Angeles' Crystal Method was old-fashioned kitsch. The American scene was hardly a match for the English disc-jockeys. Detroit's second (third?) generation was best represented by the work of Jeff Mills, founder of the "Underground Resistance" collective, particularly his experiments on stripped-down techno beat begun with *Waveform Transmission Vol 1* (1992) and culminating with the multi-part symphony **Time Machine** (2001). BT (Los Angeles-based composer Brian Transeau) invented "epic house" (or "progressive house" or "trance") with the single *Embracing The Sunshine* (1995), and his album **IMA** (1996) pushed the boundaries towards out-of-space electronica (the 43-minute *Sasha's Voyage Of IMA*). Wod, the project of Chicago's Tod Miner, concocted a combustion of robotic beats, wild drumming, electronic noises and forceful staccatos, with little or no interest in melody, on **No Peace Without The Beat** (1998).

The exception was San Francisco, the only place where a truly "American" style emerged. Starting with the EP **Magick Sounds of the Underground** (1992), Hardkiss, a trio of San Francisco disc jockeys and producers, began bridging the hippie and the rave eras by specializing in eccentric psychedelic electronica via lush, hallucinatory,

orgasmic jams of acid, cosmic, techno-dub. San Francisco's Daum Bentley became part of that movement, that also included Single Cell Orchestra, Young American Primitive, High Lonesome Sound System, etc. His own project, Freaky Chakra (1), adapted Chicago house, European body music and British techno to acid-rock. *Trancendental Funk Bump/ Halucifuge* (1993) and *Peace Fixation* (1994) upped the ante for the entire movement thanks mainly to their cornucopia of electronic effects. The trippy tracks of **Lowdown Motivator** (1995) spiraled out of control, soaring over a jungle of manically pulsing synths and sequencers.

#### ***British progressive dance***

Britain was a different story altogether. First and foremost, there were countless remnants of the rave season, which means exuberant pop-dance acts: EMF, whose *Unbelievable* (1990) boasted an infectious mixture of bubblegum, psychedelia and rap; Utah Saints, who basically replaced the idea of the "cover song" with the idea of a song made of samples of other songs; New Mind, whose **Fractured** (1993) was a summary of the state of the art; Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine, whose **The Love Album** (1992) offered cartoonish glam-rock and synth-pop embellished with punk rage and scathing satire.

But, inevitably in a world that lived on continuous change, the days of traditional techno and house were numbered. In 1996, for example, legendary disc-jockey Paul Oakenfold launched "Goa Trance" at the "Full Moon Party", yet another dance craze ("Goa Trance" was literally Sven Vath's "trance" via the hippie tribes of Goa, in India), one that actually took hold in Germany and produced such production masterpieces as Paul Van Dyk's *For An Angel* (1998) and Andre Tanneberger's *9pm Till I Come* (1999). And more dance crazes would follow.

#### ***Ambient House***

An unusual form of dance-music became popular in England during the 1990s: "ambient house". The idea (originally from 808 State) was to offer music to "chill out", but soon the soundtracks for "chill-out rooms" created a genre of its own, at the border between techno and minimalism. It caused a major stylistic revolution.

The manifesto of "ambient house" was **Chill Out** (1990), by the wacky duo of Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty, KLF (1), who mixed field recordings, celestial organ drones, languid guitar tones, musical samples, and electronic sounds.

The idea was given artistic depth by pioneers such as Irresistible Force (2), the project of disc-jockey Mixmaster Morris (Morris Gould). **Flying High** (1992) was inspired by avantgarde composers such as Harry Partch and Karlheinz Stockhausen, and was reminiscent of Brian Eno, Steve Reich and Tangerine Dream, while revealing affinities with Terence McKenna's hallucinogenic metaphysica. **Global Chillage** (1994) showcased both the psychedelic factor and the (almost baroque) producer's skills, thus wedding the postmodernist aesthetics of assemblage and acid-rock (after all, his suites were merely a new take on the old form of the free-form jam).

Orb (11), formed by disc-jockey Alex Paterson (who had worked for Paul Oakenfold's "chill-out rooms") with assistance from former KLF's mastermind Jimmy Cauty, codified the revolution that was underway. The music of the EP **A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain That Rules From The Centre Of The Ultraworld** (1989), a cosmic mantra for water and synthesizer, and of the album **Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld** (1991) sounded like new-age music. The lengthy tracks of **U.F. Orb** (1992) were born at the crossroad between Brian Eno's impressionistic landscapes, the postmodernist ideology of stylistic recycling, the new technologies of sampling and the techno beat. They did not have an emotional impact, and they did not unravel in a narrative way: they slowly morphed. *Blue Room* (a 40 minute-long single) featured guitarist Steve Hillage and bassist Jah Wobble, and was Paterson's tour de force of montage and mixing. Paterson had transformed the disc-jockey into a classical composer and transferred collage art to electronic dance music. Rather than fully endorsing the "ambient" style that he had contributed to create, Orb continued to experiment new forms of dance music: **Orbus Terrarum** (1995) and **Orblivion** (1997) rely on a subtle art of choreography to deliver an experience that is both unsettling and hypnotic.

Ultramarine (2), i.e. Paul Hammond and Ian Cooper, laid an unlikely bridge between Canterbury's prog-rock of the 1970s and ambient house. Their ethereal, pastoral vision begin to form on **Every Man And Woman Is A Star** (1992), which was virtually a collection of chamber pieces for flutes, trumpets, pianos, string section, samples and electronic machines, and blossomed on **United Kingdom** (1993), which added stronger dub and jazz ambience and Robert Wyatt's divine vocals.

By 1992 the masters had all debuted and were spawning countless imitations. Global Communication (1), i.e. Mark "Link" Pritchard and Aphex Twin co-founder Tom Middleton, penned the cosmic, minimalist and melancholy soundpaintings and subtle, bionic mutations of **76:14** (1994).

Jonah Sharp's Spacetime Continuum (1), who had collaborated with psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna, electronic soundpainter Tetsu Inoue and ambient dub master Bill Laswell, joined the ambient fray with the polished production, the chromatic arrangements, the organic flow and the psychodramatic tension of **Sea Biscuit** (1994).

Toby Marks, better known as Banco De Gaia (1), was quick to jump on the bandwagon with the alternatively ambient and dance postcards of **Maya** (1994) and **Last Train To Lhasa** (1995).

Paul Frankland's Woob (1) delivered the exotic and impressionistic **1194** (1995), ambient house's musical equivalent of Gauguin's and Rousseau's paintings.

German musicians also excelled the ambient and atmospheric variant of techno/industrial music, marked by slower tempos and sophisticated arrangements: Project Pitchfork, with the romantic and exoteric **Entities** (1992); the tender, delicate minimalism of Bionaut (Joerg Burger), for example on **Ethik** (1993); Haujobb's charming lounge-techno on **Solutions For A Small Planet** (1996); etc.

### **IDM**

Numerous outfits experimented with the format of techno and house music, and with the sampling technology (the real protagonist of this generation's dance-music). The Intelligent Dance Music (IDM) mailing list was set up on the Internet in August 1993 to discuss the works of these artists, and the name stuck.

Orbital (12), i.e. Paul and Phil Hartnoll, crowned the season of raves. Their **Green Album** (1991) and **Brown Album** (1993) did to techno what Art Of Noise had done to hip-hop: they transformed it into a sophisticated art of complex compositions by intellectual "auteurs". The latter, in particular, was a parade of stylish gestures and poses, from sci-fi dissonances to dilated drones, from angelic voices to dadaistic collages, from staccato repetition à la Michael Nyman to machine-like industrial cadences. **Snivilisation** (1994) and especially **In Sides** (1996) turned to narrative logic and emotional content, using the dance beats as mere background.

Eat Static (2), a side project of Ozric Tentacles' drummer Merv Pepler and keyboardist Joie Hinton, used techno beats to reach the same orbit as Gong's effervescent space-hippie prog-rock. The craft of **Implant** (1995) was both insane and imaginative, and was channelled into smoother structures on **Epsilon** (1995), eventually leading to the sophisticated and elegant art of transglobal samples and stylistic cross-breeding of **Science Of The Gods** (1997).

London's disc-jockey Andy Weatherall was one of the men who revolutionized the scene with the Sabres Of Paradise (1), a project that evolved from the inventive techno music of **Sabresonic** (1993) to the loose, fractured, ghostly downtempo of **Haunted Dancehall** (1994), a style that spilled over onto the evocative soundscapes of his next project, Two Lone Swordsmen's **The Fifth Mission** (1995), that blended dub, breakbeats and noise.

Future Sound of London (1), i.e. electronic musicians Garry Cobain and Brian Dougans, incorporated natural sounds (often as a rhythmic element), Klaus Schulze's cosmic music and exotic voices into **Lifeforms** (1994). The harmonic puzzle of **Dead Cities** (1996) returned to frantic rhythms, and used the feverish stylistic changes as yet another rhythmic element.

Black Dog Productions experimented with jazz, minimalism, cosmic and ethnic music on **Spanners** (1994).

Leftfield, i.e. the duo of Neil Barnes and Paul Daley, created techno for non-dancers (slower, softer, lighter) with

**Leftism** (1995).

The general impetus towards "intelligent" dance-music yielded the grotesque phenomenon of electronic musician Richard James (1). The three EPs credited to AFX, starting with **Analogue Bubblebath** (1991, 1992 and 1993) contained harsh, abrasive dance-music, sometimes sounding like a disco version of Morton Subotnick's electronic poems (and they remained his most valuable musical statements). In the meantime, the catchy singles credited to Aphex Twin, *Quoth* (1993) and *On* (1993), were fusing techno and pop, aiming for the charts, and Polygon Window's **Surfing On Sinewaves** (1992) was traditional, throbbing techno music, aiming for dancefloor appeal. To further confuse his persona, Aphex Twin's **Selected Ambient Works 1985-92** (1992) and **Selected Ambient Works Volume II** (1994) were experiments in ambient house and abstract electronic/concrete composition. They were childish and antiquated (and perhaps a joke on music critics), but they increased James' reputation, making him the first star of ambient house. **I Care Because You Do** (1995), his most cohesive work, cleaned up his act, offering atmospheric dance-music with occasional hints to his old virulent style.

Atmospheric techno was also pioneered in Canada by Richie Hawtin, better known as Plastikman (2), whose **Musik** (1994) was a delirious inferno of electronic grooves that aimed for an original fusion of psychedelic, industrial and techno music. Beat liquified on **Consumed** (1998), melody and rhythm-machines faded out, leaving ethereal breathing and heartbeats to compete in an ecosystem of distant and android noises.

In the USA, the most famous techno artist of the 1990s was Richard Melville Hall, aka Moby (1). His early anthems, *Go* (1991) and *Drop A Beat* (1992), were soon superseded by the ambient/new age/neoclassical/minimalist ambitions of **Ambient** (1993) and **Everything Is Wrong** (1993), a passion confirmed by Voodoo Child's **The End Of Everything** (1997), a collection of electronic vignettes à la Brian Eno, and possibly his best work. Vapourspace, i.e. disc-jockey Mark Gage, produced the 35-minute single *Gravitational Arch of 10* (1993) and the **Themes From Vapourspace** (1994), that are reminiscent of avantgarde electronic music and reference Kraftwerk, Philip Glass and Klaus Schulze. But, again, the USA was only the periphery: Britain was the center for IDM.

### ***Transglobal dance***

Another powerful innovation to come out of England was the "transglobal dance" craze. By fusing world-music, electronic arrangements and dance beats, these ensembles coined the ultimate synthesis of the 1990s.

The idea was pioneered by the multiracial group Transglobal Underground (2), featuring Natacha Atlas' exotic melisma, Nick "Count Dubulah" Page's creative sampling, Alex Kasiek's surreal keyboards and Hamid Mantu's forest of percussions, on **Dream Of 100 Nations** (1993) and **International Times** (1994), that fused dance, ambient and ethnic styles. It was not a sterile exercise of Arabic-African-Indian fusion, but a stab at reinventing rhythm itself: their "world beat" was solidly rooted in ethnic traditions from around the world, but was no longer any of them. As they replaced samples with real instruments, they also achieved a warmer (and more authentically "ethnic") sound on **Psychic Karaoke** (1996).

Another multiracial ensemble, Loop Guru (2), overdubbed tape loops, field recordings, vocal samples, and exotic instruments in a way that emanated stronger ambient and jazz flavors. **Duniya** (1995), which included their tour de force, *The Third Chamber*, sounded like a blend of Orbital, Jon Hassell, Brian Eno and Weather Report, and the mellotron-heavy **Amrita** (1995) made the experiment more accessible.

**Future Primitive** (1994) was the manifesto of former Tangerine Dream member Paul Haslinger (12). Swinging from extreme violence to extreme calm, Haslinger unleashed demonic orgies of percussions, techno-funky tempos, heavy-metal riffs, chamber music interludes, industrial beats, screams, electronic distortions and pounding polyrhythms. That futuristic collage technique intensified on **World Without Rules** (1996), which also boasts a stronger ethnic flavor and the sheer violence of a heavy-metal band, while remaining anchored to the format of dance-music. **Score** (1999) completed the trilogy in a more technical vein.

Michael Paradinas, better known as Mu-ziq (1), unleashed the polyrhythmic bacchanals of **In Pine Effect** (1995), that worked more like a therapeutic shock than dance grooves, an idea refined on his most complex work, **Lunatic Harness** (1997), that ran the gamut from symphonic music to jazz, from lounge music to drum'n'bass.

The multiracial quartet Cornershop, led by Tjinder Singh, fused Indian, hip-hop and techno music on **Woman's Gotta Have It** (1995) and on the more commercial **When I Was Born For The 7th Time** (1997).

In the USA, the closest thing to "transglobal dance" was probably Tulku, the project conceived by Native American keyboardist Jim Wilson: **Transcendence** (1995) and **Season Of Souls** (1998), were experiments in ethnic trance music that drew inspiration from various indigenous styles of the world.

Holland's Alain Eskinasi, better known as Brainscapes, used the idea to package relaxing new-age music on **Brainscapes** (1996).

London-born producer, disc-jockey and tablas virtuoso Talvin Singh was an erudite purveyors of this fusion with **OK** (1998).

### **Big Beat**

The last dance "cross-over" of the decade was to be the one between techno and rock music (or "big beat"). This happened almost by accident, as a number of British producers and djs reacted to the intellectual wing of dance-music by focusing on more accessible dance-music that relied on shameless, old-fashioned catchy breakbeats and silly, novelty-like samples. Because it did not depend so much on studio trickery, it could be performed live, thus meeting the demand of the rock audience. Because it could be performed live, it reasserted the importance of the "front-man", the distinctive trait of rock music.

The idea was pioneered in England by Liam Howlett's Prodigy (1) with the hyperkinetic numbers of **Experience** (1992), the versatile and cosmopolitan **Music For The Jilted Generation** (1995) and the super-synthesis of **The Fat Of The Land** (1997), which ran the gamut from ambient to heavy-metal (albeit in a very superficial manner). The Prodigy became the first superstars of the rave culture. Howlett was the brain behind the act, but Keith Flint (the singer) attracted the tabloids. It was techno for the rock market.

An even more obvious premonition was contained in the music of Underworld (2), the trio of disc-jockey Darren Emerson, vocalist/guitarist Karl Hyde and keyboardist Rick Smith. Rock guitars, electronic dance beats and spoken-word found a magic intersection in the lengthy tracks of **Dubnobasswithmyheadman** (1994), each a chameleon continuously changing in texture, melody and tempo without ever losing its identity. The album, a tour de force of dance production techniques, referenced the insistent sequencers of Giorgio Moroder's disco-music but was mainly a container of sound effects, polyrhythms and haunting melodic fragments. **Second Toughest In The Infants** (1996) reprised the combination of existential mood and fantasia-like melodic collage.

Musically speaking, the frenzy increased with the Chemical Brothers (2), i.e. "Madchester" veterans Tom Rowlands and Ed Simons, whose **Exit Planet Dust** (1995) and **Dig Your Own Hole** (1997) recycled overdoses of funk, heavy-metal and hip-hop, confusing the languages of Public Enemy, Kraftwerk and the Stooges.

The prophecy of "big beat" was fully realized later in the decade by Norman Cook, better known as Fatboy Slim (2). The "songs" on **Better Living Through Chemistry** (1996) and **You've Come a Long Way Baby** (1998) were wacky collages of styles set to dance beats and fragmented into jerky segments, a praxis that, despite the high-school prank mood, was reminiscent of the deconstruction/reconstruction techniques of postmodernist art.

Unlike most techno musicians, Basement Jaxx (1), i.e. disc-jockeys Felix Burton and Simon Ratcliffe, composed real "songs", songs that stood on their own, such as *Samba Magic* (1996) and *Fly Life* (1996). On top of it, the exuberant, catchy, frantic techno with reggae and latin overtones of **Remedy** (1999) erupted with the fury of punk-rock.

Their only rivals were France's Daft Punk (1), whose **Homework** (1996) featured a retro fixation for Giorgio Moroder's disco-music, high-energy frenzy, and well-formed songwriting.

Other groups that tried to bring back the fun into dance music included Bentley Rhythm Ace and (from Scotland) Bis. They both were retro musicians offering little or no innovation, but plenty of catchy hooks and irresistible beats.

#### *Dance music for non-dancers*

Ambient house transformed into avantgarde music with Scanner, born Robin Rimbaud (1). His works achieved intense melodramas through either hypnotic layering of found sounds or subliminal repetition of soundbites and beats. His early recordings, such as **Mass Observation** (1994), focused on austere sound-collages of telephone conversations. Exposing the existential nudity of the wireless society, Rimbaud contented himself with providing a passive documentary of the city's aural cacophony. His most challenging soundscapes were on **Spore** (1995) and the **Lauwarm Instrumentals** (1999), a bold excursion from new-age meditational pieces to symphonic apotheoses.

Faithless (1), the project of producers and disc-jockeys Rollo Armstrong and Ayalah "Sister Bliss" Bentovim, penned the elaborate, acrobatic, chameleon-like arrangements of **Reverence** (1996).

The Lo-Fidelity Allstars opted for a "street" approach to dance music, rooted in urban alienation and decadence, with albums such as **How To Operate With A Blown Mind** (1998), while the music sampled (literally and metaphorically) half a century of dance styles, from soul to funk, from dub to house, from hip hop to trip-hop.

Luke Slater (1) crafted **Freak Funk** (1997), an eclectic potpourri of hip-hop, propulsive funk and ambient textures. Christian Vogel (1) was a significant composer of "dissonant" techno, particularly challenging on **Specific Momentific** (1996) and the programmatic **All Music Has Come To An End** (1998).

In Ireland, David Holmes composed works, such as his third album, **Bow Down To The Exit Sign** (2000), that mixed audio verite` segments and an eclectic range of musical styles.

In Japan, Susumu Yokota wove the intricate grooves of **Cat Mouse And Me** (1996) in a continuum of sonic bliss before turning to ambient house with **Magic Thread** (1998).

## **6.10 Foxcore**

### *The riot-grrrrls of Seattle*

Hardcore punk-rock had been mostly a male phenomenon. Girls were excluded from hardcore the same way they were excluded in society from many other male-only rituals, whether street gangs or American football. The "riot grrrrls" movement of the 1990s changed the sociopolitical landscape of punk-rock by introducing the "girl factor" into the equation of frustration/ depression/ desperation/ anger.

The riot-grrrrls movement originated largely in and around Seattle (Olympia, to be precise), and indeed it was Seattle that boasted the most fertile scene for female-only bands. The movement's manifesto was the article "Women, sex and rock and roll", published by "Puncture" in 1989. The first radio program to address the angry young girls was "Your Dream Girl", conducted by Lois Maffeo on Olympia's KAOS. One of the earliest riot-grrrrls was Molly Neuman, who joined Allison Wolfe to create the fanzine "Girl Germs", one of the main alternative media for American college girls. In the summer of 1991 they celebrated themselves at the Olympia campus, shouting their slogan "Revolution Girl Style Now!" The mood had been changing throughout the 1980s: the magazine "Sassy" had been founded already in 1987 as an alternative, not afraid to tackle brutal themes, to the conventional magazines for teenage girls.

Artistically, these young girls harked back to New York's female folksingers of the 1980s (who began singing the female condition in hyper-realistic terms, not only from a sociopolitical point of view but also from an intimate-diary point of view), to California's all-female punk bands (Runaways, Pandoras, Frightwig, L7, not to mention Sugar Baby Doll, formed in San Francisco in 1986 by future foxcore stars Kat Bjelland, Courtney Love

and Jennifer Finch), and to a few creative all-female British bands (Raincoats, X-Ray Spex, Slits). To some extent, female intellectual rockers such as Patti Smith, Chrissie Hynde, Exene Cervenka, Lydia Lunch, Kim Gordon were all influential in defining the riot-grrrrl ethos. Seattle/Olympia was one of the areas with the most sophisticated "do it yourself" infrastructure: it was not difficult for these girls to begin releasing their own cassettes and CDs (e.g., via the label founded by Beat Happening's Calvin Johnson). In nearby Vancouver, anarchic poetess Jean Smith had formed Mecca Normal in the mid-1980s to create polemic works such as **Calico Kills The Cat** (1988), which became an inspiration for the riot-grrrrls of Seattle.

This was a musical movement founded on the lyrics, not on the music, so their sound varied wildly. But, mostly, the vocals were quite unattractive (they tended to imitate a scream, rather than enhance a melody) and the playing was quite amateurish. The female voice had been treated as an instrument (a sound) in the male-dominated musical culture: it now became a vehicle for a message. The rest of the music was largely redundant and/or optional.

They were rebels, but only to an extent. Their message was not revolutionary: their message was intimate. They dealt with the real problems of teenage girls, from rape to loneliness. Their fanzines were not agit-prop pamphlets, they were blackboards to write on about their intimate experiences. The fundamental fact of the riot grrrrls was that their heroine was not terrible: she was terrified.

Musically, the riot-grrrrl phenomenon began in february 1991, when Kathleen Hanna and Tobi Vail formed Bikini Kill (1) at Olympia's Evergreen College, and released the cassette **Revolution Girl Style Now** (1991), followed by the even more furious mini-album **Pussy Whipped** (1993). Hannah would later clean up her act, and, dressed like a housewife from the Sixties, release a solo album credited to **Julie Ruin** (1998), offering her post-feminist meditations in a surprisingly radio-friendly format (a fusion of electronica, dub, and hip-hop). Even more accessible was **Le Tigre** (1999), the album recorded with video director Sadie Benning and music critic Johanna Fateman.

Even less musical was **Pottymouth** (1993), the debut album of Molly Neuman's Bratmobile Other original riot-grrrrls were Calamity Jane, who released **Martha Jane Cannary** (1992) four years after the first singles; Dickless, whose **Saddle Tramp** (1990) revealed the roaring vocals of Kelly Canary that would detonate the Teen Angels' **Daddy** (1996); Donna Dresch's Team Dresch, who hailed lesbianism on **Personal Best** (1994). They mostly played ragged rock'n'roll overflowing with angst and propelled by screeching guitars and primitive drumming.

Courtney Love's Hole (1) was one of the bands that launched the new female aesthetics nation-wide, thanks to Love's slutty attitude (an extension of the kind of depraved punk provocation already inaugurated by the likes of Lydia Lunch and Madonna) and to her marriage with Nirvana's Kurt Cobain. **Pretty On The Inside** (1991) was indeed a powerful statement of psychological devastation, its desperate ballads delivered in spasmodic fits.

Unrelated to the political movement, but sharing its visceral and raw approach to rock'n'roll, Seven Year Bitch (1) delivered **Viva Zapata** (1994), and Sleater-Kinney (1), i.e. songwriters Corin Tucker and Carrie Kinney, delivered **Call The Doctor** (1995), two albums that easily matched the emphasis of the early riot-grrrrls while focusing on the music.

#### *California's foxcore*

The contagion soon spread to California.

San Francisco, whose Frightwig had pioneered the idea, boasted the Mudwimin, formed by Frightwig's guitarist Mia Levin and Tragic Mulatto's drummer Bambi Nonymous, with **Skiz** (1992); Stone Fox, lesbians who played melodic hard-rock on **Burnt** (1994); 4 Non Blondes, whose **Bigger Better Faster More** (1992) was highlighted by the Janis Joplin-style roar of openly-lesbian Linda Perry; Tribe 8, a radical lesbian band that played loud and fast "homocore" on **Fist City** (1995); and more moderate groups such as Tiger Trap, the project of Sacramento-based Rose Melberg, who played romantic punk-pop on **Tiger Trap** (1993), and Ovarian Trolley, with

the even less aggressive **Crocodile Tears** (1993).

The spectrum was broad, but was eventually unified and sold to the masses by the Donnas, a novelty act (four teenage girls from Palo Alto all named Donna who played tight punk-rock with a strong Ramones fixation) equipped with producer Darin Raffarelli's catchy, energetic, anthemic tunes on **The Donnas** (1996), released when they graduated from high school, and **American Teenage Rock 'N' Roll Machine** (1998).

Los Angeles (where L7 ruled) was home to some of the most successful and influential bands: the Red Aunts, a sort of cross between the Sex Pistols and the Rolling Stones on **#1 Chicken** (1995); That Dog, featuring violinist Petra Haden and bassist Rachel Haden (daughters of jazz great Charlie Haden), who honed the intellectual **Totally Crushed Out** (1995); the Muffs (1), a vehicle for former Pandoras bassist Kim Shattuck, who seemed to re-live the careers of wild female rockers of the past on **Blonder And Blonder** (1995).

#### *Post-feminism*

The Midwest (where Scrawl were already a legend) was no less prolific of girl-only bands: Illinois' Corndolly; Indiana's Smears; Minnesota's Zuzu's Petals, perhaps the best heirs to the Scrawl with **When No One's Looking** (1992). On the other hand, Veruca Salt (1), led by the songwriting duo of Nina Gordon and Louise Post, offered little more than power-pop on **American Thighs** (1994).

Perhaps the most talented musicians of the entire scene were Minneapolis' Babes In Toyland (11), led by vocalist and guitarist Kat Bjelland. **Spanking Machine** (1990) was already an eruption of cathartic violence, but **Fontanelle** (1992) was a set of psychological traumas, a witchy pandemonium of voodoo/pow-wow rhythms, hysterical screams and massive distortions, from which Bjelland vomited harrowing lyrics, mad with rage, disenchantment, hopelessness and frustration. The trio managed to express the schizophrenic coexistence of the innocent, apprehensive, defenseless child with the experienced and corrupt slut, junkie and juvenile delinquent. The Babes In Toyland invented an art of extreme emotions: more than singing or playing theirs was "acting", and it was "acting" one's own life.

Sugarsmack (10) were the vehicle for Fetchin Bones' vocalist Hope Nicholls, one of the most extraordinary voices of her generation. **Top Loader** (1993), assembled with help from Pigface's Martin Atkins, came through as a catalog of terrifying neuroses, mixing industrial music, rap, heavy-metal, blues, acid-rock, and conveyed in her visceral, guttural, demonic style that fused Patti Smith's hysteria and Lydia Lunch's depravation.

The phenomenon was hardly visible on the East Coast. New York's Free Kitten was mainly a supergroup of female intellectuals (mainly Pussy Galore's Julia Cafritz and Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon). Luscious Jackson, featuring keyboardist Vivian Trimble, were white female rappers in disorienting soundscapes of jazz, funk and lounge music. The Murmurs were a duo of female folksingers, capable of running the gamut from angelic folk to distorted hard-rock on **Pristine Smut** (1997), their third and best album. Cake Like were the closest thing to a riot-grrrrl in New York, particularly on **Delicious** (1994).

Washington's Slant 6 were punk-poppers, catchy and amusing on **Soda Pop = Rip Off** (1994).

Pork in Texas, Pee Shy in Florida, Picasso Trigger in North Carolina, featuring acrobatic vocalist Kathy Poindexter, were riot-grrrrls of the South.

In the rest of the world, "riot grrrrls" did not enjoy much of an audience, except for Huggy Bear in England.

- 1995: 36 million cars are manufactured in the world, of which 7.6 million in Japan and 6.3 million in the USA, although 8.6 million cars are sold in the USA alone
- 1995: a right-wing extremist blows up a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 160 people in the worst terrorist incident in the history of the USA
- 1995: African-American Muslim Louis Farrakhan organizes the

"million man march" on Washington

- 1995: David Koresh's Branch Davidian religious fanatics fight the FBI at Waco, Texas
- 1995: despite worldwide protests, France conducts a nuclear test at the Polynesian atoll of Mururoa
- 1995: Jacques Chirac is elected president of France
- 1995: the DVD is introduced

## 6.11 Brit and non-Brit pop

### *Pop renaissance*

In the first half of the 1990s, pop music vastly outnumbered underground/experimental music. It was the revenge of melody, after a quarter of a century of progressive sounds. A cycle that began with the demise of the Beatles and the rise of alternative/progressive rock, and that continued with the German and Canterbury schools of the 1970s, and then punk-rock and the new wave, and peaked with the alt-rock and college-pop of the 1980s, came to an abrupt, grinding halt in the 1990s.

The more fashionable and rewarding route was, however, the one that coasted the baroque pop of latter-day Beach Boys, Van Dyke Parks, Big Star and XTC, the one that coupled catchy refrains and lush arrangements. The single most important school may have been San Francisco's, which had originated in the 1980s with the Sneetches. Jellyfish (2), featuring guitarist Jason Falkner, wrote perhaps the most impeccable melodies of the time. **Bellybutton** (1990), a milestone of naive, bubblegum melodic music inspired by Merseybeat and later Beach Boys, was both cartoonish and shimmering, while the arrangements on **Split Milk** (1993) were almost baroque.

Other devote followers were Imperial Teen, led by former Faith No More's keyboardist Roddy Bottum, the Mommyheads, MK Ultra, Overwhelming Colorfast, Smash Mouth, Orange Peels, masters of the retro` on **Square** (1997), Beulah, with **Handsome Western States** (1997), etc.

In Seattle, the melodic tradition of the Green Pajamas and the Young Fresh Fellows was continued by Juan Atkins' project, 764-Hero, with **Get Here And Stay** (1999), and by Super Deluxe with **Famous** (1995).

Elsewhere, similar sounds were produced by Velvet Crush in Rhode Island; Material Issue in Chicago, with **International Pop Overthrow** (1991); Rembrandts in Los Angeles; etc.

The Eggs (1), in Virginia, were among the most creative, particularly on their second album, **Exploder** (1993), that featured exotic instruments, synthesizer, trombone, and oboe.

New York-based Fountains Of Wayne, on the other hand, became America's prime Brit-poppers through **Fountains Of Wayne** (1996) and **Utopia Parkway** (1999).

Quite unique was the style of the Ben Folds Five in North Carolina, because keyboardist and vocalist Folds was an unusual disciple of Todd Rundgren and Elton John, best heard on the ballads of **Ben Folds Five** (1995).

In Oklahoma, Tyson Meade's Chainsaw Kittens (1) launched a revival of glam-pop with **Violent Religion** (1990), a concentrate of Aerosmith, New York Dolls, T. Rex, Cheap Trick, Patty Smith, Stooges, Velvet Underground, etc. Glam-pop's comeback continued with Sponge in New York, and Running With Scissors in Seattle.

Canada's most successful pop bands were the Barenaked Ladies, revealed by **Gordon** (1992), and the Crash Test Dummies, with **God Shuffled His Feet** (1993).

### *Elephant 6*

The breakthrough in this quest for the perfect melody came from the south, from Georgia and Louisiana, where a group of bands (the "Elephant 6" collective) started the single most influential school of the decade in pop music.

Robert Schneider, founder of the movement and founder of the Apples In Stereo (1), was the Phil Spector of this generation: the songs on **Tone Soul Evolution** (1997) were miracles of pop metabolism, incorporating one century of melodic tricks.

Will Hart's Olivia Tremor Control (2) struck an elegant balance between retro' Sixties sound and state-of-the-art production techniques on **Dusk at Cubist Castle** (1996) and **Black Foliage** (1999), which were, first and foremost, tours de force of eccentric and oneiric pop arrangements. Each song was a mini-collage of oddities and spaced-out harmonies, and the albums in their entirety could be viewed as one giant, frantic collage, a work of pop-art à la Andy Warhol.

Neutral Milk Hotel (1), Jeff Mangum's creature, codified that style on **In the Aeroplane Over The Sea** (1998), one of the most perfect pop albums of the era.

Elf Power's A Dream In Sound (1999), their best album, was fundamentally bubblegum music: cheesy pop for brainless people. Nonetheless, it was the elegance and the decorum that still made it unique even within that garbage can.

The works by Of Montreal, or Kevin Barnes, such as **The Gay Parade** (1999), were whimsical collections of carefully-crafted pop tunes assembled and sequenced in a way to compose a flamboyant psychedelic vaudeville.

These bands raised dramatically the qualitative standard of pop songs, a fact clearly visible in popsters of the next generation: Ladybug Transistor (1), the project of New York-based guitarist and trumpeter Gary Olson, particularly with the sumptuous arrangements of **Beverley Atonale** (1997); Art DiFuria's Photon Band (1), from Pennsylvania, with the sophisticated and encyclopedic **All Young In The Soul** (1998); Flake in New Mexico, with **Flake Music** (1997); Marcy Playground in Minnesota, with **Marcy Playground** (1998); Superdrag in Kentucky, with **Regretfully Yours** (1996); etc.

### *Folk-pop*

College-pop (or indie-pop or alt-pop) continued to strive. The new trend, though, was to follow the route opened by Tom Petty and R.E.M., the hybrid of power-pop and folk-rock that, mutatis mutandis, is what the Byrds taught in the 1960s. Just add a touch of populism. Bands that played in this style included: Minnesota's Hang Ups, with their second album **So We Go** (1997); Ohio's Throneberry, with **Sangria** (1994); Texas' Fastball, with their second album **All The Pain Money Can Buy** (1998); Chicago's Fig Dish, with **That's What Love Songs Often Do** (1995); San Diego's Supernova, with **Ages 3 And Up** (1995); Los Angeles' Possum Dixon, with **Star Maps** (1996); Florida's Matchbox 20; etc.

### *Brit-pop*

As it was often the case in rock music, the most publicized phenomenon was also the least artistically interesting. "Brit-pop" became a derogatory term, one associated with ephemeral and dubious acts that speculated on facile melodies and trivial arrangements. If the British Invasion of the 1960s had at least revitalized the USA scene, the "Brit-pop" invasion of the 1990s... was hardly an invasion at all. The Brit-pop bands were all terribly similar and terribly... tedious. In the end, only a few of them managed to have one or two world-wide hits, and most of them added very little to the history of rock music (other than yet another proof of the aberrations of its industry).

In 1990 Brit-pop had not materialized yet as a "fad", but the seeds were already being planted by bands such as Lightning Seeds, with their retro' classic **Cloudcuckooland** (1990), and La's, with **La's** (1990), specializing in sculpting memorable and unassuming melodies. Teenage Fanclub produced one of the best imitations of Big Star with **Bandwagonesque** (1991).

Heavenly (2) inherited the Primitives' passion for melodious simplicity. Fronted by former Talulah Gosh's singer Amelia Fletcher, they resurrected the age of Petula Clark, the girl-groups and bubblegum music on **Heavenly Vs Satan** (1991). Their romantic and naive approach to the pop tune evolved with **Le Jardin De Heavenly** (1992) and **Decline And Fall** (1994) into a new form of revisionist art, one that transformed Britain's perennial Sixties

revival into an international language.

Scotland's Eugenius, the new project by former Vaselines' guitarist/singer Eugene Kelly, Dodgy, and Ireland's Frank And Walters, also predated the 1994 explosion.

But the massive Brit-pop phenomenon began in earnest with the bands destined to rule the world (according to the British press of the time): the Boo Radleys (1), who turned "retro" with **Giant Steps** (1993), Blur, who attained stardom with **Parklife** (1994), and Oasis, the band (or the "bluff") that best personified the fad, from the exuberant **Definitely Maybe** (1994) to the multi-million seller **Morning Glory** (1995).

The most stunning feature of these bands was their absolute lack of imagination. They continued a British tradition, dating from at least the Beatles, of pop musicians who had nothing to say but said it in a sophisticated manner.

Then it became a race to produce ever more predictable music. Each "next big thing" hailed by the British press was merely a copy of a copy of a copy of something that was not particularly exciting even the first time around.

Love Split Love, the new band by Psychedelic Furs' singer Richard Butler, and Ash in Ireland were typical.

If nothing else, Suede (1), featuring guitarist Bernard Butler and vocalist Brett Anderson, offered an original take on glam-pop on **Suede** (1993), one that inspired bands such as the Super Furry Animals, with **Fuzzy Logic** (1996), and Placebo, with **Placebo** (1996).

The Smiths were a strong influence on the Sundays, Echobelly, Gene.

The exceptions to the rule of mediocrity were few. Former Microdisney's guitarist Sean O'Hagan, proved his stature as a Brian Wilson-style arranger on the first two albums by the High Llamas (1), **Gideon Gaye** (1995) and especially the ambitious and monumental **Hawaii** (1996). Supergrass sounded like the heirs to the Buzzcocks, at least on **I Should Coco** (1995).

One "next big thing" led to another "next big thing", and soon England was attacked by a revival of the "mod" culture of the 1960s (read: the Who and, more recently, the Jam). Pioneered by Ocean Color Scene, particularly with **Moseley Shoals** (1996), this school yielded Menswear, These Animal Men, Wildhearts, perhaps the most energetic and blasphemous of the pack with **Earth Vs The Wildhearts** (1993), and, much later, Comet Gain, that resurrected the idea on more hysterical works such as **Tigertow Pictures** (1999).

Inspired by the new wave of the 1970s, bands such as Low Pop Suicide, led by former Gang Of Four's and Shriekback's bassist Dave Allen, Elastica, fronted by Justine Frischman and harking back to Blondie's and the Cars' disco-punk sound of the 1970s on **Elastica** (1995), Sleeper, also relying on a female voice (Louise Wener) on **Smart** (1995), offered a less trivial kind of commercial rock.

The ultimate product of Brit-pop were the Spice Girls, as hyped and as inept as the Mersey-beat groups of 30 years earlier.

The second half of the decade saw a rapid decline of Brit-pop, although Catatonia, another Echobelly-wannabe with **International Velvet** (1998), Mansun, with **Attack of The Grey Lantern** (1997), Stereophonics, with **Word Gets Around** (1997), and Scottish bands such as Adventures In Stereo, with **Alternative Stereo Sounds** (1998), and Embrace, with **The Good Will Out** (1998), tried to keep the flame alive.

Trembling Blue Stars, the project of former Field Mice's frontman Bob Wratten, that continued Field Mice's "bedroom-pop" on a more personal basis with **Her Handwriting** (1996), halfway between Lycia's gothic depression and the Cure's somber existentialism.

The Tindersticks (1) deployed elegant quasi-orchestral arrangements, that relied mostly on the delicate polyphony of guitar, keyboards and violin, on **Tindersticks** (1993). Its songs were the ideal soundtrack for brothels packed with philosophers. Stuart Staples' voice (a Chris Isaak soundalike) was lost in the labyrinth of his own visions, haunted by the giant shadows of Tom Waits, Nick Cave and Leonard Cohen. But the subtlety of that work drained away as the band (a "big" band) opted for orchestral pop and lounge music on **Tinderstick** (1995) and **Curtains** (1997).

Scotland's Usurei Yatsura were unusual in that they embraced Pavement's lo-fi approach on **We Are** (1996). The Delgados turned to sumptuous orchestral pop with **The Great Eastern** (2000).

#### *Lounge-pop*

A brief fad in America was "lounge-pop", that was rediscovered in Rhode Island by Combustible Edison: the soundtrack to their "Combustible Edison Heliotropic Oriental Mambo and Foxtrot Orchestra", partly collected on **I Swinger** (1994), was its manifesto, while their third disc, **The Impossible World** (1998), wed it to the other big fad of the time, trip-hop.

In Canada, Zumpano, featuring singer/guitarist Carl Newman, fully acknowledged that zeitgeist on their second album, **Goin' Through Changes** (1996), adopting lounge music and easy-listening within the alt-rock framework. New York's Ivy, fronted by the breathy vocals and exotic accent of French-born singer Dominique Durand, delivered bittersweet vain ballads on **Realistic** (1995). Los Angeles' Sukia (born Ross Harris) played futuristic lounge music for keyboards, horns, drum machines and samplers on **Contacto Espacial Con El Tercer Sexo** (1996). In Sweden, the Cardigans, who wrapped Nina Persson's soft, sensual, dreamy phrasing around sophisticated, lush, lounge-pop arrangements on **Life** (1995).

North Carolina's Squirrel Nut Zippers harked further back in time, to the ballroom blues-jazz combos of the 1940s, on **Hot** (1996).

Two Georgia bands flirted with easy-listening: Jody Grind (1), whose vibrant jazzy vocalist Kelly Hogan propelled **One Man's Trash Is Another Man's Treasure** (1990), and the Opal Foxx Quartet, with the elaborate **The Love That Won't Shut Up** (1993).

#### *Retro futurism*

Brit-pop begot other melodic sub-genres.

Stereolab (12) were not the first and were not the only ones, but somehow they came to represent a nostalgic take on Sixties pop music that employed electronic rhythms and arrangements. Built around the collation of keyboardist Tim Gane (ex-McCarthy) and French vocalist Laetitia Sadier, i.e. the juxtaposition of hypnotic, acid instrumental scores and surreal, naive vocals, as refined by their early EPs **Super 45** (1991) and **Super-Electric** (1991), Stereolab walked a fine line between avantgarde and pop. As they continued to fine-tune the idea on **Peng** (1992), echoing the trance of the Velvet Underground, Neu and Suicide, while increasing the doses of electronic sounds, Sadier's voice became a sound and an instrument, contributing more than catchy refrains to the allure of the mini-album **Space Age Batchelor Pad Music** (1993), the aesthetic manifesto of their chamber kitsch. Stereolab probably reached their zenith with the singles of John Cage Bubblegum (1993) and Jenny Ondioline (1993), that inspired the stylistic tour de force of **Transient Random Noise Bursts With Announcements** (1993). Stereolab had coined a new musical language, as austere as classical music and as light as easy-listening. New keyboardist Katharine Gifford contributed to the elegant and smooth sound of **Mars Audiac Quintet** (1994), their most accomplished fusion of nostalgia and futurism, although not as innovative as the previous album. **Emperor Tomato Ketchup** (1996) was even more impersonal, pure sound for the sake of sound, pure abstraction of kitsch music. Stereolab injected Soft Machine's progressive-rock, Terry Riley's minimalism, Neu's robotik rhythm, Pink Floyd's atmospheric psychedelia into the fragile melodic skeleton of British pop music.

"Retro futurism" was pioneered also by Saint Etienne (2). Bob Stanley and Pete Wiggs bridged Depeche Mode's synth-pop, the Sixties pop revival, sensual disco-like vocals (Sarah Cracknell) and almost neo-classical arrangements on the sophisticated production exploits of **Foxbase Alpha** (1991) and **So Tough** (1993). They were unique in crafting a celestial, effervescent and ghostly fusion of jazz, funk, lounge and house music. **Tiger Bay** (1994) achieved pure nirvana, pure ambience, pure style. At their best, it felt as if a Broadway star of the 1950s was backed by Giorgio Moroder on electronic keyboards and by an orchestra conducted by Ennio Morricone.

The genre soon became one of the most abused musical lingos of the 1990s: State Of Grace (1), who matched

Saint Etienne's achievements on **Jamboreebop** (1996), Space, with **Spiders** (1996), Broadcast, whose early singles were much more original than **The Noise Made By People** (2000), etc.

These bands laid the foundations for the success of Add N To X (11), a British trio on analog keyboards whose retro-futurism was inspired by Tangerine Dream, Suicide, Cabaret Voltaire, Kraftwerk and Devo. **On the Wires of Our Nerves** (1998) evoked a dark, claustrophobic, teutonic fantasy of mechanical monsters gone mad. It wasn't electronica, the way Led Zeppelin's was not blues. They discovered a rougher and deeper dimension of electronica, just like Led Zeppelin had discovered a rougher and deeper dimension of blues. They discovered "hard electronica" just like Led Zeppelin discovered "hard rock". **Avant Hard** (1999), instead, put aside the uncompromising sonic onslaught for a more mature symphony of tones and textures.

### ***Japanese Kitsch***

Japanese bands excelled at this parodistic and futuristic approach to kitsch and muzak.

Pizzicato Five (1), who had turned supermarket muzak into a sub-genre of synth-pop on **Couples** (1987), became one of the leading retro' bands when they enrolled eccentric vocalist Maki Nomiya, the ideal alter ego of electronic keyboardist Yasuharu Konishi. The single *Lover's Rock* (1990), possibly their masterpiece, and the album **This Year's Girl** (1991) celebrated their passion for icons of the Sixties (James Bond soundtracks, hare-krishna chanting, novelty numbers, silly dance crazes), whereas later collections such as **Bossa Nova** (1993) and **Happy End Of The World** (1997) experimented with a format closer to orchestral disco-music.

Cibo Matto (1), the duo of Miho Hatori and Yuka Honda, specialized in musical satire inspired by junk food and implemented via a casual assembly of jazz, hip-hop, funk and dissonances. **Viva La Woman** (1996) performed a clownish postmodernist massacre of stereotypes.

Fantastic Plastic Machine (1), the creature of producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, debuted with **Fantastic Plastic Machine** (1998), a collection of ultra-hip, glamorous cross-cultural tunes composed via a montage of cliches of western pop music.

Buffalo Daughter (1) wed both a retro' and a progressive ideology. **Captain Vapour Athletes** (1996) and especially **New Rock** (1998) delivered ebullient, quirky synth-rock for electronic keyboards, turntables and samplers.

Multi-instrumentalist Cornelius (1), born Keigo Oyamada, composed "pop tunes" by overdubbing "found" samples and stereotypical music, achieving on **Fantasma** (1997) and, partially, **Point** (2002) a kind of eclectic postmodernist nonsense. The most creative aspect of his compositions was how elements of "musique concrete" (found noises that were sampled, looped and refined) got to be integrated with the rhythmic and melodic infrastructure of the songs without sacrificing the aural appeal of the song.

### ***International Kitsch***

Outside Britain and Japan, there were other significant acts of "futuristic kitsch".

French duo Air (1), Nicolas Godin and Jean Benoit Dunckel, indulged in the retro' sound of vintage analog keyboards on **Moon Safari** (1998), a work marked by a zany campiness that exuded Pink Floyd's psychedelic majesty, jazz's subdued ambience, random quotations from the history of soul, funk and disco music, and more than a passing mention of Burt Bacharach's and Ennio Morricone's scores.

While not as successful as Air, Mocket in Seattle, with **Fanfare** (1997), and Komeda in Sweden, with **What Makes It Go** (1998), pursued similar routes to disorienting pop muzak.

Germany had a crowded scene of its own.

Stereo Total, the project of Berlin-based vocalist and electronic wizard Brezel Goering, concocted a goofy, anarchic, exuberant, multi-ethnic (and multi-linguistic) fusion of new wave, punk-rock, disco music and synth-pop, bridging girl-groups, funk, Giorgio Moroder and the Ramones, which turned **Monokini** (1997) into the sonic equivalent of a Marx Brothers movie.

**Beanfield** (1998) proved that the heart of Munich-based Michael Reinboth, better known as Beanfield, was in jazz fusion, but his subconscious was still entangled in the genres of his childhood.

Le Hammond Inferno, the project of Berlin-based producers and disc-jockeys Marcus Liesenfeld and Holger Beier, copied Pizzicato Five on **Easy Listening Superstar** (1999).

#### *Post-pop*

Radiohead (2), the most hyped and probably the most over-rated band of the decade, upped the ante for studio trickery. They had begun as third-rate disciples of the Smiths, and albums such as **Pablo Honey** (1993) and **The Bends** (1995) that were cauldrons of Brit-pop cliches. Then **OK Computer** (1997) happened and the word "chic" took on a new meaning. The album was a masterpiece of faux avantgarde (of pretending to be avantgarde while playing mellow pop music). It was, more properly, a new link in the chain of production artifices that changed the way pop music "sounds": the Beatles' **Sgt Pepper**, Pink Floyd's **Dark Side Of The Moon**, Fleetwood Mac's **Tusk**, Michael Jackson's **Thriller**. Despite the massive doses of magniloquent epos à la U2 and of facile pathos à la David Bowie, the album's mannerism led to the same excesses that detracted from late Pink Floyd's albums (lush textures, languid melodies, drowsy chanting). Since the production aspects of music were beginning to prevail over the music itself, it was just about natural to make them "the" music. The sound of **Kid A** (2000) had decomposed and absorbed countless new perfumes, like a carcass in the woods. All sounds were processed and mixed, including the vocals. Radiohead moved as close to electronica as possible without actually endorsing it. Radiohead became masters of the artificial, masters of minimizing the emotional content of very complex structures. **Amnesiac** (2001) replaced "music" with a barrage of semi-mechanical loops, warped instruments and digital noises, while bending Thom Yorke's baritone to a subhuman register and stranding it in the midst of hostile arrangements, sounding more and more like an alienated psychopath. Their limit was that they were more form than content, more "hype" than message, more nothing than everything.

Radiohead inspired the "post-pop" generation of 1997-98: Six By Seven, whose **The Things We Make** (1998) was basically a neurotic version of the "Madchester" sound of the Stone Roses; Coldplay, whose **Parachutes** (2000) was mainly a display of dynamic and emotional ranges; Travis; Dream City Film Club; etc.

#### *Teen-pop*

The real million-sellers in the USA were the "teen pop" sensations of the south: Oklahoma's Hanson, Louisiana's Britney Spears, and Florida's Backstreet Boys, N Sync and Take 5.

## 6.12 Grunge

### *The golden age of Seattle*

Grunge was one of the big phenomena of the 1990s, although it was largely confined to the United States. Grunge was essentially a revival of 1970s' hard-rock. However, it was also identified with the musical renaissance of Seattle, that suddenly became one of the world's centers for rock music, and "grunge" came to include just about any band that played in that city.

The road had been opened in the late 1980s by Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Melvins and Mudhoney, with four distinctive styles that involved "hard" vibrations. Those were the four cardinal points of Seattle's grunge. Nirvana had turned grunge into a slot machine.

Alice In Chains (1) perfected a form of gloomy pop-metal and of power-ballad with **Facelift** (1990) and especially the stark melodrama of **Dirt** (1992). Jerry Cantrell's psychotic vocals and Layne Staley's sharp riffs transformed their songs into bloodsheds.

Followers of their bittersweet hard-rock included My Sister's Machine, with **Diva** (1992), Truly, with **Fast Stories** (1995), and the most successful band of the second generation, the Foo Fighters, formed by Nirvana's drummer

David Grohl, Germs' guitarist Pat Smear and Sunny Day Real Estate's rhythm section, with the even poppier **Foo Fighters** (1995), which was truly a Grohl solo album.

A multitude of derivative bands appeared after Nirvana's 1991 success: Candlebox, Sweet Water, Green Apple Quickstep, Love Battery, etc.

Few bands truly experimented with the format. Hammerbox (1) were possibly the most imaginative: their fusion of punk, country, blues, funk and metal elements on **Numb** (1993) was unrivaled.

GodHeadSilo (2), the duo of bassist Mike Kunka and drummer Dan Haugh, played nightmares not sounds. The gargantuan pieces of **Scientific Supercake** (1994) were catalogs of terrifying sounds borrowed from Chrome, Unsane and Melvins. **Skyward In Triumph** (1996) did not sound human at all, submerged by an irrational noise of galactic riffs, demonic screams and crushing cadences.

An even more claustrophobic atmosphere was penned by Hammerhead (1) with the ugly, post-hardcore sludge of **Ethereal Killer** (1993).

Atomic 61 (1) wed Melvin's apocalyptic sensibility to Jimi Hendrix's blues-rock on **Tinnitus In Extremis** (1993).

#### ***Grunge around the world***

Nearby Oregon had Sprinkler and Pond.

Everclear (1) was the project of Art Alexakis, a sincere populist, bard of the misfits, who expressed teenage angst via a mythological review of provincial life on **Sparkle And Fade** (1995) and especially **So Much For The Afterglow** (1997), the latter embellished with layers of keyboards, horns, strings and choirs. His mission peaked (morally, if not artistically) with the solemn and touching concept album **Songs From An American Movie** (2000), whose lush arrangements were almost symphonic.

Southern California, long the main center for heavy-metal, jumped on the bandwagon with Scott Weiland's Stone Temple Pilots (1), who virtually cloned Pearl Jam and Soundgarden on **Core** (1993) and **Purple** (1994), and Blind Melon, two of the most successful grunge bands of the 1990s, but also two of the most derivative.

Tool (3) was the most innovative band to emerge from grunge's second generation. **Undertow** (1993) announced their sinister, threatening and (in a subtle way) explosive blend of Led Zeppelin, grunge, heavy-metal and progressive-rock. The lengthy and brainy suites of **Aenima** (1996) displayed a shimmering elegance that was almost a contradiction in terms, but that was precisely the point: Tool's art was one of subtle contrasts and subdued antinomies, one in which existential rage and titanic will competed all the time. It was also a diary of primal angst, and the lyrical level truly paralleled the instrumental level. **Lateralus** (2001) expanded on that two-level approach, with tracks that, musically, were multi-part concertos or mini-operas, and, lyrically, were Freudian sessions that elicited all possible interior demons.

And even more original assimilation of progressive-rock's language was carried out by a San Diego band that relocated to England, God Machine (1), on **Scenes From The Second Storey** (Fiction, 1993).

Helmet (1), formed by Band Of Susans' guitarist Page Hamilton, were the undisputed leaders of New York's grunge. **Strap It On** (1990) defined their sound: stormy, dense and dark; a dull, continuous, torrential noise that created a manic tension.

Quicksand, formed by Gorilla Biscuits' guitarist Walter Schreifels, fused hardcore and grunge in a more straightforward manner on **Manic Compression** (1995).

Surgery (1) were to Helmet what the Rolling Stones were to the Kinks. The supercharged blues-rock frenzy of **Nationwide** (1990) and the savage and incendiary sound of EP **Trim 9th Ward Highrollers** (1993) had no class and no artistic pretenses: they simply displayed animal instincts.

Austria's H.P. Zinker (relocated to New York) offered a jazzy version of grunge on **Beyond It All** (1990).

Chicago had actually co-pioneered the genre with Urge Overkill, particularly on their second album, **Americruiser** (1990), a compromise between their experimental debut and the melodic style that would make them famous.

Bands such as Hum and Soil kept it alive.

Out of Chicago also came the only hard-rocking band that could compete with the popularity of Seattle's grunge: the Smashing Pumpkins (2). Gish (1991) crossed the boundaries of grunge, progressive-rock and acid-rock, unifying the power of riffs and the subtlety of dynamics. Siamese Dream (1993) gave the idea psychological depth and dramatic emphasis: languid melodies were delivered in a neurotic register by Billy Corgan while James Iha's guitar screeched a wall of noise. They were more "recitations" than songs, and the band's achievement was to strike a balance between elegance and savagery. The monumental Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness (1995) sounded like a series of uncontrolled urges to experiment with all sorts of formats (symphonic, acoustic, bubblegum, glam, easy-listening, avantgarde). The common denominator of these schizophrenic fits was the atmosphere, a disorienting blend of fairy tale and Freudian confession.

In a matter of a few years, pretty much every state in the USA got its own grunge heroes: Massachussetts (Anastasia Screamed), Kansas (Paw), Minnesota (Failure, etc.

Scarce (1), formed in Rhode Island by guitarist/vocalist Chick Graning on the ashes of Anastasia Screamed, penned the memorable Deadsexy (1995), one of the most melodic and melodramatic grunge albums of the era.

Soon, a few crossover experiments tried to expand the horizons of the genre. Detroit's Big Chief fused grunge with funk, blues, hip-hop and soul on Face (1991); and Minneapolis' Walt Mink added jazz and psychedelia on Miss Happiness (1992).

In the south, grunge merged with the local tradition of "southern boogie" and with the countless flavors of blues, soul and gospel: Alabama's Verbena, with Souls For Sale (1997); Georgia's Collective Soul, with Hints Allegations And Things Left Unsaid (1994); Texas' Toadies, with Rubberneck (1994); Oklahoma's Nixons; etc. A band from the south, Florida's Creed, was actually the sensation of the third generation, thanks to the Pearl Jam imitations of My Own Prison (1997) and Human Clay (1999).

England's contingent was not as numerous and not as significant, but could still count on Bivouac, Fudge Tunnel, Terrorvision, and Bush, the most successful thanks to Sixteen Stone (1994).

British bands that eskewed Brit-pop and played virulent hard-rock included the Manic Street Preachers, with Generation Terrorists (1992); 50 Tons Of Black Terror's Gutter Erotica (1997) was an album of brutal, convoluted, harsh music in the tradition of Jesus Lizard.

Notable Australian albums of grunge included Magic Dirt's Friends In Danger (1997), and Silverchair's Frogstomp (1995); whereas Blinker The Star were the stars of Canada's grunge.

- 1996: Osama bin Laden calls for worldwide attacks on Americans, including civilians, while his commandos spread around the world, from Somalia to the USA
- 1996: Pakistan helps the Taliban overthrow the Afghan government
- 1996: the "mad cow disease" spreads in Britain and millions of cows have to be slaughtered
- 1996: the computer "Deep Blue" by IBM beats the world champion of chess
- 1996: Walt Disney builds a dream town, Celebration, in Florida
- 1996: with help from Osama bin Laden, the Taliban militia dislodges the mujahedin government from Afghanistan and installs one of the most fundamentalistic Muslim governments in the world

## 6.13 Rap of the 1990s

### *Rap-music 1988-95*

The most significant event of the early 1990s was probably the advent of Wu-Tang Clan, a loose affiliation of nine rappers, including Robert "RZA" Diggs, Gary "Genius/GZA" Grice, Russell "Ol' Dirty Bastard" Jones and Clifford "Method Man" Smith. Their **Enter the Wu-Tang** (1993) upped the ante for the entire scene, while, at the same time, appealing to a broad audience.

The 1990s were the years of hip-hop's commercial recognition, thanks to albums such as Snoop Doggy Dogg's **Doggystyle** (1993), Nas' **Illmatic** (1994), GZA/Genius' **Liquid Swords** (1995), the Fugees' **The Score** (1996).

Outkast's **Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik** (1994) and especially **Aquemini** (1998) was representative of southern hip-hop, with its emphasis on soul melodies and pop arrangements.

Progressive rap of the kind pioneered by Public Enemy thrived with works such as Arrested Development's **3 Years 5 Months and 2 Days In The Life** (1998), the product of rapper Todd "Speech" Thomas and disc-jockey Timothy "Headliner" Barnwell.

This was also the decade of "jazz-hop" fusion, thanks to the Digable Planets' **Reachin'** (1993), Guru's **Jazzmatazz Volume 1** (1993), the Roots' **Do You Want More** (1995), the Fun Lovin' Criminals' **Come Find Yourself** (1996).

In 1996 two rap singles reached the #1 spot in the pop charts.

During the 1990s, white rap acts caught up with blacks. The most celebrated white rapper was Marshall Mathers, aka Eminem (2), whose **The Slim Shady** (1999) and **The Marshall Mathers LP** (2000) unleashed angry rants at American society and resonated with the masses of disaffected white kids from the suburbia. But other albums by white rappers, for example Everlast's **Eat At Whitey's** (2000), "black-exploited" hip-hop better than blacks ever did.

The whole model of the "singer songwriter" was revolutionized by the advent of white rappers such as Eminem: they introduced not only the syncopated rhyming but also the brutal subjects of rap music to an audience of middle-class white kids.

## 6.14 Roots-rock in the age of Alt-country

### *Alt Country*

The revolution in roots-rock that began in the late 1980s in Chicago with Souled American and Uncle Tupelo continued in the 1990s and began a new genre altogether. Those bands had rediscovered country and folk music for the hardcore generation: their descendants dumped hardcore for the most spartan and traditional of sounds.

Uncle Tupelo bred two offshoots. Jay Farrar's Son Volt were mostly a vehicle for their leader's philosophizing: **Trace** (1995) was a concept album that analyzed the collective subconscious of the people of the Mississippi river. Jeff Tweedy's Wilco (2) expanded Uncle Tupelo's vocabulary towards the Byrds' folk-rock, Neil Young's mournful ballads, the Rolling Stones' drunk rhythm'n'blues, the Band's domestic gospel-rock, Bob Dylan's **Blonde On Blonde** and Big Star's baroque pop on their second album, **Being There** (1996). Jay Bennett's keyboards helped pen arrangements that left their roots way behind. **Summer Teeth** (1999), the natural evolution of that idea, was thus a studio product that relied heavily on electronic sounds, and **Yankee Hotel Foxtrot** (2002), their most experimental album, was a hodgepodge of eccentric arrangements and skewed melodies, a majestic nonsense that bridged the Beach Boys' **Pet Sounds** and Radiohead's **OK Computer**.

Kentucky's Will Oldham (1), who also recorded under the monikers Palace Brothers, Palace Songs, Palace Music and Palace, virtually jumpstarted the "alt-country" movement with **There Is No One What Will Take Care Of**

**You** (1993), an album that displayed the qualities of independent alternative rock while playing old-fashioned country music. Oldham's acoustic folk was not terribly emotional: **Days In The Wake** (1994) was perhaps his most personal statement.

The acoustic revival spread to Kentucky, where Freakwater had been already active. A collaboration between Eleventh Dream Day's drummer Janet Bean and Catherine Ann Irwin, two singer/songwriters who seemed little concerned with the alternative/avantgarde rock of their time, Freakwater began in the vein of primitive folk music but evolved with **Old Paint** (1995) to deliver a bleak vision of humankind in a stark, neutral style.

Alt-country, or (from Uncle Tupelo's classic album) "no-depression folk", ruled the second half of the decade, and influenced even bands that had little to do with the acoustic revival. Notable albums of the time were: **Tales Of Brave Ida** (1994), by New York's Ida (the songwriting duo of Daniel Littleton and Elizabeth Mitchell); **Milk And Scissors** (1996), by Chicago's Handsome Family; **Egg Fusion** (1996), by Kentucky's Retsin, i.e. songwriters Tara Jane O'Neil and Cynthia Lynn Nelson; **Dog Days** (1995), by Mississippi's Blue Mountain; **Let Me Bring You Down** (1996), by Two Dollar Guitar (the project of Jad Fair's associate Tim Foljhan); **Strangers Almanac** (1997), by North Carolina's Whiskeytown; etc.

Los Angeles' Grant Lee Buffalo (1), led by Shiva Burlesque's guitarist Grant Lee Phillips, penned **Fuzzy** (1993), whose style was power-pop that sounded like folk music, an odd hybrid of American Music Club, Woody Guthrie and Big Star.

Seattle's Citizens' Utilities (1), on the other hand, crafted a baroque form of country-rock, relying on three-part vocal harmonies as much as on tension-filled dynamics and eccentric instrumental touches, with **Lost And Foundered** (1996), **No More Medicine** (1997), their most poignant work, and **Sunbreak** (1999).

Boston's Scud Mountain Boys were almost slo-core on **Massachusetts** (1996), but vocalist Joe Pernice later formed Pernice Brothers and turned to pop orchestration on **Overcome By Happiness** (1998).

Boston's Willard Grant Conspiracy (1) played elegant, evocative and melancholy country music on the introspective monolith **3am Sunday @ Fortune Otto's** (1996) that evolved into the solemn and depressed ballads of **Mojave** (1999), which often sounded like Chris Isaak interpreting Neil Young's *Harvest* or Bob Dylan's *Knocking On Heaven's Door*.

The alt-country movement spawned singer-songwriters such as Chicago's Robbie Fulks, with **Country Love Songs** (1996); and Tennessee's Josh Rouse, with **Dressed Up Like Nebraska** (1998).

### **Chamber Folk**

In the mid 1990s a new evolution of roots-rock led to a form of "chamber folk", a folk/country style that employed an expanded instrumentation and loitered at the border between noise-rock and post-rock.

Tennessee's Lambchop (11) can be credited with proving the viability of the idea. The pieces on **I Hope You're Sitting Down** (1994) were artful digsuises of a gentle and downbeat minstrel (guitarist/frontman Kurt Wagner) in a maze of keyboards, horns and strings. The music was more often funereal than exuberant, and the atmosphere was the equivalent of "film noir" in a Nashville setting. **How I Quit Smoking** (1996) was a more private affair, but still wrapped in arrangements that were pastoral, neoclassical, nostalgic, dreamy.

Nebraska's Lullaby For The Working Class (11), led by vocalist/guitarist Ted Stevens and multi-instrumentalist Mike Mogis, used an arsenal of acoustic instruments to pen fragile, post-modernist folk songs that expanded on Palace Brothers' melancholy alt-country concept. The sounds of the instruments were scattered like ambient sounds on **Blanket Warm** (1996), turning each song into an impressionistic painting. The sound of **I Never Even Asked For Light** (1997) was sleepy and abstract, often hypnotic, as it lulled elusive melodies in a sea of warm tones; and **Song** (1999) further reduced the pace, plunging in a serene slumber. The effect fell halfway between Van Morrison's **Astral Weeks** and Hindemith's kammermusik.

Los Angeles' Geraldine Fibbers (1), fronted by former Ethyl Meatplow's vocalist Carla Bozulich, bridged the gap

with urban culture in the desolate, hyper-realistic stories of **Lost Somewhere The Earth And My Home** (1995). Chicago's Pinetop Seven (1), Darren Richard's project, specialized in majestic and post-apocalyptic ballads arranged in a sophisticated style encompassing a wide range of settings, especially on their third album **Bringing Home The Last Great Strike** (2000).

Ohio's Mysteries Of Life, featuring Antenna's rhythm section of Jacob Smith and Freda Boner, offered another imitation of Van Morrison's neoclassical folk-soul with **Keep A Secret** (1996).

Quite unique was the baroque, new-age sound of Louisiana's Subdudes.

#### **Country-rock**

Modern country-rock was best represented by Detroit's Volebeats (1), whose eclectic and schizophrenic style, that incorporated surf music, world music, Ennio Morricone and many other influences, was best immortalized on their fourth album **Solitude** (2000).

Ohio's Ass Ponys (1) concocted one of the most original variants on country-rock on **Mr Superlove** (1990), that was rustic in principle but afflicted by urban neurosis in practice.

Boston's Blood Oranges fused bluegrass and grunge on **The Crying Tree** (1994).

Colorado's Sixteen Horsepower (1) attacked the sonic icons of America's rural traditions (whether Louisiana's zydeco or Kentucky's bluegrass) from the vintage point of California's "acid" folk-rock on **Sackcloth & Ashes** (1996); and the painstakingly orchestrated elegies of **Low Estate** (1997) shifted the focus towards David Eugene Edwards' noble empathy.

Among the works that renovated the country style with the impetus and eccentricity of alternative rock were: **Bottle Rockets** (1993), by Missouri's Bottle Rockets; **Toreador Of Love** (1993), by Oregon's Hazel, featuring guitarist Peter Krebs; **Play Cell** (1994), by San Francisco's Tilt; **For The Sake Of Argument** (1995), by Kentucky's StranglMartin; **The Medicine Is All Gone** (1998), by Idaho's Caustic Resin; **Too Far To Care** (1997), the third album by Texas' Old 97's.

At the same time, cow-punks mutated into something even weirder. Chicago's New Duncan Imperials applied Bonzo Dog Band's aesthetics to the country and blues tradition on **Hanky Panky Party Voo** (1990); Pennsylvania's Strapping Fieldhands applied the Holy Modal Rounders aesthetics (atonal guitars and grotesque vocals) to Appalachian folk music on **Discus** (1994).

The Grifters (11), the project of Tennessee songwriters Scott Taylor and David Shouse, were the terrorists of alt-country: **So Happy Together** (1992) was to roots-music what Sonic Youth's noise-rock had been to classic rock, a barbaric psycho-industrial bacchanal that rarely coalesced, a merry-go-round of drunk vocals, atonal guitars and erratic rhythms. Just a bit less grotesque and abrasive, **One Sock Missing** (1993) still evoked the specters of Captain Beefheart, Red Crayola and Pussy Galore. A better structured and bluesier approach surfaced on **Crappin' You Negative** (1994) and the EP **Eureka** (1995) achieved a synthesis of sort, offering "tunes" that were both catchy and demonic. Not surprisingly, **Ain't My Lookout** (1996) and **Full Blown Possession** (1997) ended up sounding like the Rolling Stones.

Ohio's Moviola struck a balance between country-pop and heavily-distorted acid-rock on **The Year You Were Born** (1996).

Punk-rock and bluegrass were fused by Bad Livers in Ohio, for example on the intimidating **Hogs On The Highway** (1997); by Split Lip Rayfield in Kansas, for example on the grotesque **In The Mud** (1999); and by Blue Rags in North Carolina.

#### **Folk-rock**

Several San Francisco-based groups significantly updated the folk-rock canon: X-Tal, with **Reason Is 6/7 Of Treason** (1990), Harm Farm, with **Spawn** (1990), Bedlam Rovers, best on **Wallow** (1993), Tarnation, with **Gentle Creatures** (1995). Best of this batch were Swell (1), who derailed the arcaic structures of blues and country music

with extravagant dynamics and arrangements. **Swell** (1991) and especially **Well?** (1993) were festivals of the irregular, coupled with existential lyrics.

But the most successful were the Counting Crows, whose style on **August And Everything After** (1993) was a humbler take on classic roots-rock (Van Morrison-ian vocals, Byrds-ian guitar jangle and gospel organ à la Band) Cracker (1), led by former Camper Van Beethoven's vocalist David Lowery, unleashed the virulent roots-rock of **Kerosene Hat** (1993).

Sacramento's Cake toyed with country, blues, tex-mex, funk, reggae and salsa stereotypes dressing them up on **Motorcade Generosity** (1994) with quirky arrangements and an eclectic sense of humour that evoked Camper Van Beethoven and Primus.

Third Eye Blind looked for a middle path between hard-rock and folk-rock on **Third Eye Blind** (1997).

A South Carolina band, Hootie & The Blowfish, which debuted with the charming **Cracked Rear View** (1994), was responsible with the Counting Crows for the continuing popularity of folk-rock.

Louisiana's Better Than Ezra (1), led by Kevin Griffin, attained a higher standard of philosophical depth with **Deluxe** (1995).

Other folk-rock acts included Boston's Wheat (1), with the graceful, melancholy folk-rock of **Medeiros** (1997) and **Hope And Adams** (1999), and Los Angeles' Wallflowers, with **Bringing Down The Horse** (1996).

#### *Soul-rock*

Southern blues-rock was still alive and kicking, and actually staged a powerful comeback with Georgia's Black Crowes (1), whose tasty imitation of the Rolling Stones and the Faces (but more soul-rock than blues-rock) on **Shake Your Money Maker** (1990) was briefly a sensation.

#### *British folk-rock*

Folk-rock in England had never died, but had certainly gotten close to utter insignificance with generic acts such as Levellers and Bluetones. At the turn of the decade, Fire & Ice's baroque **Runa** (1996) and Scott 4's hip-hop tinged **Recorded In State LP** (1998) helped revitalize the genre.

An original variant of roots-rock was experimented by Gomez on **Bring It On** (1998), an album that relied on studio-production technique more than on traditional songwriting.

Scotland boasted much more original purveyors of folk-rock. Belle And Sebastian (2), one of the leading bands of the second half of the decade, rediscovered Donovan's gently whispering vocals, and his naive blend of melodic and poetic elements. **Tigermilk** (1996) focused on the intense pathos of low-key tunes, an apparent oxymoron that Stuart Murdoch's recitation turned into a new form of art. His fragile, modest style acquired a shimmering look and feel on **If You're Feeling Sinister** (1997). Many more instruments contributed to the magic of **The Boy With The Arab Strap** (1998) and **Fold Your Hands Child** (2000), but the lush arrangements rarely interfered with Murdoch's heart-wrenching lullabies.

Appendix Out, the project of singer songwriter Ali Roberts, focused on elegant and cadaveric music for dramatic meditations on the spartan **The Rye Bears A Poison** (1997) and on the more seductive **Daylight Saving** (1999), a marvel of discrete chamber arrangements.

Arab Strap, the project of vocalist Aidan Moffat and multi-instrumentalist Malcolm Middleton, indulged in the moody and disorienting atmospheres of **Philophobia** (1998).

The Corrs, an Irish group, were by far the most commercially successful folk-rock act of the decade, but hardly an artistic event.

#### *World music*

World-music got more and more sophisticated, but fewer and fewer artists. Notable among creative works that used ethnic styles were **Rapid** (1997), by Hungary's Kampec Dolores, and **The Rhythm Of The Ritual** (1994), by Belgium's Hybryds.

Perhaps the most creative world-music ensemble in the world was the Polish ensemble Atman (2), whose **Personal Forest** (1993) and **Tradition** (1999) were collages of surreal blends of Eastern and Western music, in the vein of the Third Ear Band and the Incredible String Band. Atman's multi-instrumentalist Marek Styczynski and vocalist Anna Nacher started a new project, Projekt Karpaty Magiczne, or Magic Carpathians Project, devoted to an ambient, cosmic, jazz version of Atman's pan-ethnic music on **Ethnocore II** (2001).

- 1997: Amazon.com is launched on the web as the "world's largest bookstore", except that it is not a bookstore, it is a website
- 1997: Britain cedes Hong Kong back to China
- 1997: Britain cedes Hong Kong back to China
- 1997: British biologist Ian Wilmut clones a sheep, Dolly.
- 1997: Jiang Zemin unveils a plan to privatize China's state-owned enterprises
- 1997: there are 23,000 McDonald's restaurants in 109 countries

## 6.15 Hardcore in the age of Punk-pop

### *Emocore*

While magazines kept publicizing the "death of punk-rock", hardcore became a pervasive movement that did not leave any town (or country) untouched. As if galvanized by its own death, the movement took on a life of its own and became a genre within the genre. In the 1990s that genre, in turn, spawned a number of sub-genres.

First and foremost, there was "emocore", the style invented in the late 1980s by Rites Of Spring and the Washington contingent. Their "emotional" hardcore alternated quiet and furious musical parts, admitted moody arrangements, indulged in time changes and mid-tempo rhythms, leveraged emotional singing that could whisper as well as shout within the same song, and was not limited to the short/fast format of hardcore. In other words, it was almost the negation of hardcore.

While the genre was, by definition, rather loose, bands that fell into the category during the 1990s included: San Francisco's Jawbreaker, with **Unfun** (1990); Oregon's Heatmiser, the group of songwriter Elliott Smith, with **Dead Air** (1993); Los Angeles' Weezer, the most successful of the batch, with **Weezer** (1994); Seattle's Sunny Day Real Estate (1), the vehicle for songwriter Jeremy Enigk, with the lengthy and elaborate compositions of **Diary** (1994); Los Angeles' Sense Field; Wisconsin's Promise Ring, with **30 Degrees Everywhere** (1996); Illinois' Braid, with **The Age Of Octeen** (1996); Texas' At The Drive In, featuring guitarist Omar Rodriguez and singer Cedric Bixler, with **In Casino Out** (1998); Kentucky's Elliott, with **False Cathedrals** (2000); Kansas' Appleseed Cast, with **Mare Vitalis** (2000); Arizona's Jimmy Eat World, with **Bleed American** (2001); etc. All of them emphasized melody over fury, and emotions over rebellion.

Seaweed (1) moved from the popcore of **Weak** (1992) to the grunge, metal and punk hybrid of **Four** (1993) to the power-ballads of **Spanaway** (1995), showing a maturity that was unusual within the hardcore scene; and then vocalist Aaron Stauffer, a worthy heir to the melodic/populist tradition of Bob Mould (Husker Du) and Paul Westerberg (Replacements), formed Gardener (1) with Screaming Trees' bassist Van Conner, which released the natural evolution of Seaweed's sound: the romantic **New Dawning Time** (1999).

Rainer Maria (1) relied on the male/female vocal harmonies of Kyl Fischer and Caithlin DeMarrais, and on complex dynamics for the psychological studies of **Past Worn Searching** (1998).

### *Washington's progressive hardcore*

Washington was still the home of a highly-creative hardcore scene, the epitome of "progressive hardcore".

Nation Of Ulysses (10) concocted the explosive, theatrical agit-prop sound of **Plays Pretty For Baby** (1992), an album that was the Clinton-age equivalent of MC5 and Public Enemy. The band's cacophony was tamed by hysterical vocalist Ian Svenonius in an epic way. Guitarist Tim Green moved to San Francisco and formed the Fucking Champs, while Svenonius reformed the band with a slightly different line-up and a new name, Make-Up (2): **Destination Love** (1996), a conceptual exercise of community-based music, and the more organic **In Mass Mind** (1998) experimented with a deranged gospel-funk-rock sound borrowed from Gang Of Four, Pop Group and Contortions.

Shudder To Think (1) became the King Crimson of hardcore with **Get Your Goat** (1992) and **Pony Express Record** (1994), featuring new guitarist Nathan Larson, that were full of sophisticated and eccentric nuances.

Jawbox (1), led by former Government Issue's bassist Jay Robbins, created an opus that was both melodic and eclectic, charged with pathos as well as neurosis, on **Grippe** (1991) and **Novelty** (1992), only to increase the doses of electricity on **For My Special Sweetheart** (1994).

Edsel (1) not only applied the noise-rock lessons of Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr and My Bloody Valentine on **Everlasting Belt Co** (1993) but continued to evolve it until they reached the level of polish, adulteration and elasticity of **Techniques Of Speed Hypnosis** (1995)

Lungfish (1) were the vehicle for Daniel Higgs' sociopolitical philophizing. His favorite medium was the tension-filled and almost messianic simplicity of **Pass And Stow** (1994), and eventually he and his cohorts fell under the spell of Indian ragas and Buddhist trance on **Indivisible** (1997) and **Artificial Horizon** (1998).

Circus Lupus (1) experimented with post-hardcore ideas that were as adventurous and irregular as Minutemen's and Saccharine Trust's on **Super Genius** (1992), displaying a technical prowess that was virtually unmatched. Circus Lupus' vocalist Chris Thomson and guitarist Chris Hamley started Monorchid (1) to pursue a sound that was even more jarring and feverish, as documented on **Let Them Eat** (1997).

Branch Manager's **Branch Manager** (1995) Smart Went Crazy's **Now We're Even** (1996) were among the albums of hardcore punk-rock that were almost progressive-rock.

In the meantime, Chisel, on **Set You Free** (1997), and especially Dismemberment Plan (1), on **Emergency and I** (1999), a sci-fi concept album enhanced with all sorts of studio witchcraft, fused progressive hardcore with new wave and power-pop.

No other scene in the world mustered so many talents as Washington's.

### *Ska-core*

The fusion of ska and punk-rock, pioneered in Britain in the late 1970s, became extremely popular everywhere in the USA during the 1990s.

The San Francisco Bay Area was one of the epicenters of the ska-punk revolution. Operation Ivy were part of Berkeley's legendary "Gilman Street" scene, but their album **Energy** (1989) stretched beyond punk-rock, encompassing ska and surf. From their ashes, two groups were born. Their guitarist, Tim "Lint" Armstrong, formed Rancid (1), and proceeded to sell the idea to the masses. **Rancid** (1993) and especially **Let's Go** (1994) disguised the rebellious spirit of hardcore under the appearance of exuberant wit, irresistible rhythms and catchy refrains. It was Clash's recipe for a new generation; and the less threatening potion of **And Out Come The Wolves** (1995) found an even bigger audience. The other group, Dance Hall Crashers (1), boasted two female singers and favored joyful fanfares played with a naive verve more akin to girl-groups of the Sixties than hardcore of the Nineties, particularly on **Lockjaw** (1995).

The phenomenon was also pioneered in Boston by Mighty Mighty Bosstones, who penned amusing collections such as **Question The Answers** (1994).

Elsewhere, Wisconsin's Less Than Jake delivered the explosive **Pezcore** (1994); Kansas' Gadjits the infectious **At Ease** (1997); New York's Slackers the eclectic **Redlight** (1997); Washington's Pietasters the soul-inflected **Willis**

(1997); Chicago's Lucky Boys Confusion the multi-faceted **Growing Out Of It** (1998); etc.

Los Angeles became the capital of ska-core thanks to Bradley Nowell's Sublime (1), who coined one of the most anthemic styles on **40 Oz To Freedom** (1992); No Doubt, fronted by a female vocalist (Gwen Stefani), who broke through with **Tragic Kingdom** (1995); Voodoo Glow Skulls, with generic packages such as **Band Geek Mafia** (1998); Hepcat, Reel Big Fish, Suicide Machines, etc.

Best in England were probably Citizen Fish, born from the ashes of the Subhumans, and best in the rest of Europe were probably Sweden's Millencolin. Irish expatriates Black 47 fused Celtic music, ska, punk-rock, rap and rhythm'n'blues, starting with **Fire Of Freedom** (1993).

### ***Punk-pop***

Hardcore climbed the charts (twenty years after it was invented by the Ramones) with "popcore", the new variation on Buzzcock's punk-pop. It was, again, San Francisco that bridged the gap between the charts and the punks.

By capitalizing on the style pioneered in the mid 1980s by Mr T Experience, Green Day (1) became one of the money-making machines of the decade, thanks to the infectious hooks and riffs of **Dookie** (1994) and to the generic pop of *Time Of Your Life* (1997) and *Minority* (2000).

The success of Green Day helped unveil a crowded scene: A.F.I., No Use For A Name, Pansy Division, leaders of "queer-core", etc.

The Seattle scene, which had been primed by the Fastbacks, yielded several of the best pop-core bands.

Rusty Willoughby's Pure Joy belonged to the generation of the Fastbacks, but emerged only with **Carnivore** (1990). Willoughby and the Fastbacks's drummer Nate Johnson formed Flop (1), who revisited the deceptive simplicity of Cheap Trick and the Buzzcocks on impeccable packages such as **Flop & The Fall Of The Mopsqueezer** (1992) and especially **Whenever You're Ready** (1993).

Other purveyors of fast and loud bubblegum included: Pop Suckle, Fitz Of Depression, MXPX, etc.

Although its bands (Descendents, Bad Religion and the likes) had inspired Green Day, in the 1990s Los Angeles was, de facto, a colony of San Francisco, recycling whatever was successful up north. Pennywise (1) led the charge with **Pennywise** (1991), and a sound that, while respectful of the masters of "beach punk", was also more pensive and atmospheric, eventually achieving the depth of **Unknown Road** (1993). Many of the Los Angeles bands of this generation surfaced after Green Day's breakthrough, but had been roaming the city's clubs for years: Face To Face, with **Don't Turn Away** (1992); Joykiller, formed by T.S.O.L.'s veterans; F.Y.P.; etc. Most successful of them all were Offspring (1), who competed with Green Day's mass appeal on **Smash** (1994).

The Humpers sounded more sincere than the average of these clones of Screeching Weasel, because their **Positively Sick On 4th Street** (1992) harked back to the original style of the Ramones and the New York Dolls.

The Streetwalkin' Cheetahs rediscovered catchy punk-rock for the "street" generation on **Overdrive** (Alive, 1997). Chicago, the city where Screeching Weasel had preached the gospel of punk-pop, boasted perhaps the greatest of punk-poppers, Pegboy (11). Formed by Naked Raygun's guitarist John Haggerty and other hardcore veterans, they crafted a sound that was frantic and barbaric, but that, at the same time, carried hummable tunes. Every single beat of **Strong Reaction** (1991) was "wrong" in a unique way that made it just about "perfect", delivering a dynamite emotional punch straight to the core of Haggerty's stories. Abandoning the excesses of that stormy and visceral style, Pegboy penned **Earwig** (1994), hell's version of Green Day.

Poster Children began with the brainy noise-rock of **Tool Of Man** (1992) but converted to a more accessible style on **Junior Citizen** (1995).

Another bastion of punk-pop was located in North Carolina: Mac McCaughan's Superchunk (1) resurrected the original spirit of punk-rock, but without the negative overtones (the Ramones rather than the Sex Pistols). The exuberant mood of their second album, **No Pocky For Kitty** (1991), was almost the anti-thesis of hardcore.

Punk-pop became a unifying idiom for America's teenagers: Canada's Cub, with **Betti-Cola** (1993); Washington's

Tuscadero, with **Pink Album** (1994); New Jersey's Wrens, with **Silver** (1994); Alabama's Shame Idols, with **I Got Time** (1995); etc.

New Hampshire's Queers (1), delivered a barrage of catchy, pummeling refrains on **Love Songs For The Retarded** (1993), coupled with outrageously decadent sex/drugs lyrics, and eventually turned their career into a tribute to the Ramones.

England's punk-pop elite basically comprised five bands: Leatherface, Senseless Things, Ned's Atomic Dustbin, Mega City Four, Seers, none of which deserved the notoriety granted to them by the British press. In any event, their sound tried in vain to counter the avalanche of Brit-pop. It was, instead, Brit-pop that eventually influenced (in an evil way) punk-rock and led to the crass commercial sounds of Fretblanket and Idlewild, perhaps the best of the bunch with **Hope Is Important** (1999).

#### **California garage-punk**

An eclectic punk-rock style was pioneered in San Diego by Pitchfork, the band of guitarist John Reis and vocalist Rick Farr, who recorded **Eucalyptus** (1990) and went on to form Drive Like Jehu (11), one of the most innovative punk bands in the world. They first turned angst into a shimmering cascade of emotions on **Drive Like Jehu** (1991), and then proceeded to compose the soundtrack of a nervous breakdown on **Yank Crime** (1994), one of the most catastrophic and excoriating albums of the time, whose vocabulary was so complex and effective that guitar-based punk songs began to sound like hyper-dramatic mini-symphonies.

Rocket From The Crypt (11), the new band formed by Drive Like Jehu's guitarist John "Speedo" Reis, embodied the quintessence of both 1960s' garage-punk and 1990s' hardcore. **Paint As A Fragrance** (1991), a parade of lethal, abrasive, turbo-charged acts of fury, was only the appetizer for **Circa Now** (1993), an anthemic synthesis of wild rock'n'roll that evoked the Fleshtones as well as the Heartbreakers. Their art of riffs was so recklessly retro` that albums such as **Scream Dracula Scream** (1995) and **RFTC** (1998) sounded like collections of covers.

Albums such as aMiniature's Plexiwatt (1992) and Fluf's Mangravy (1993) laid the foundations for the scene that eventually yielded the commercial success of Tom DeLonge's Blink 182 with **Enema Of The State** (1999).

In San Francisco, Zen Guerrilla (2) blended punk's demented speed with black music (blues, soul and rhythm'n/blues) on the roaring **Positronic Raygun** (1998), the fervent **Trance States In Tongues** (1999) and the visceral **Shadows On The Sun** (2001).

#### **Jazzcore**

"Jazzcore" thrived in the background, but the idea that had been of Minutement, Universal Congress, Saccharine Trust and others fueled the creative work of numerous bands. The Los Angeles school was continued by Bazooka (1), saxophonist Tony Atherton's hardcore adaptation of the ideas of Frank Zappa, Albert Ayler and Thelonious Monk, particularly on **Perfectly Square** (1993); and by Trash Can School, whose **Sick Jokes And Wet Dreams** (1992) harked back to the visceral blues-punk sound of Pop Group and Birthday Party.

Utah's Iceburn (2) fused the languages of progressive-rock, jazz, metal and hardcore on **Firon** (1992) and on the monumental **Hephaestus** (1993). The latter's brainy jams opened a number of stylistic avenues that the band would take a decade to fully explore. **Poetry Of Fire** (1995) introduced elements of classical music and atonal avantgarde, not to mention Indian ragas, while veering towards the loose structures of free-jazz, a metamorphosis that continued on Iceburn Collective's **Meditavolutions** (1996), featuring the suite *Sphinx*, one of their most terrible and accomplished works, and was completed with the three lengthy group improvisations of **Polar Bear Suite** (1997).

San Diego's Creedle unleashed **Silent Weapons For Quiet Wars** (1994), inspired by John Zorn's hyper-kinetic nonsense jazz.

New York's Stratotanker offered atonal punk-jazz on **Baby Test The Sky** (1996) that evoked the unlikely wedding of Captain Beefheart and Miles Davis.

Oregon's Irving Klaw Trio wed the spastic dementia of Red Crayola and Captain Beefheart with the avant-jazz architecture of Frank Zappa and Can on **Utek Pahjoo Mogol** (1997).

The Minutement were still an important reference point for the dissonant, angular hardcore of combos such as Maryland's Candy Machine, for example on **A Modest Proposal** (1994), and Virginia's Kepone, mostly on **Ugly Dance** (1994).

#### *Old school*

More or less straightforward hardcore punk-rock was still pervasive, from New York's crowded scene (Daisycutter, Action Swinger), to Los Angeles' super-crowded scene (Dead Fucking Last, Dave Smalley's Down By Law, Michael "Popeye" Vogelsang's Farside, Dallas Don Burnet's Lutefisk, Ten Foot Pole, Total Chaos, Lagwagon, Guttermouth).

Best in New York (and most faithful to the Ramones and the Sex Pistols) were D Generation, with **D Generation** (1994); and Electric Frankenstein, with **The Time is Now** (1995); while Chavez became contenders for the title of greatest Mission Of Burma disciples with the huge hard-rock riffs of **Gone Glimmering** (1995).

Seattle boasted two of the best revival bands. Supersuckers (1) indulged in Ramones-ian verve on **The Smoke Of Hell** (1992), and Zeke (1) unwound a breathless parade of lightning-speed bullets on their second album **Flat Tracker** (1996).

Boston's Dropkick Murphys were the Pogues of the 1990s, detonating traditional Irish songs and even appropriating the sound of bagpipes.

Ohio's Gaunt, with rapid-fire collections such as **Kryptonite** (1996), were also among the best disciples of the Ramones and the Clash.

New York also boasted a vigorous "straight-edge" movement that included: Shelter, the new band of Youth Of Today's singer Ray Cappo; Karl Buechner's Earth Crisis; H2O.

England was awash in the sweet sound of Brit-pop and could hardly host a hardcore scene. However, bands such as Daisy Chainsaw and Tiger lived up to the heritage of England's great punks, while others added new flavors to that ferocious sound. Silverfish (1) propelled (and, at the same time, sabotaged) angry young girl Lesley Rankine's roars and wails with an anthemic and seismic mixture of unrefined adrenaline and concentrate vitriol on **Fat Axl** (1991) and **Organ Fan** (1992). Skunk Anansie, a multi-racial group fronted by bold black lesbian feminist Deborah Anne "Skin" Dyer, unleashed a politicized blend of funk, blues, hardcore, reggae, hip-hop and metal on albums such as **Stoosh** (1996).

Norway's glam-punks Turbonegro (1) recorded one of the most impressive hardcore albums of the decade, **Apocalypse Dudes** (1998), that sounded like a hardcore version of Alice Cooper and Kiss.

#### *Post-hardcore*

In the second half of the decade, the influence of avantgarde hardcore bands such as Fugazi, Henry Rollins and Jesus Lizard led to a "post-hardcore" style that was convoluted, jittery, sinister, ugly.

Seattle's Unwound (14), the vehicle for Justin Trosper's epileptic sermons, learned the lessons of Sonic Youth, Fugazi and Jesus Lizard and applied them to the brutal, harrowing vision of **Fake Train** (1993), broadening the lexicon of hardcore with techniques that borrowed from the blues as well as from the avantgarde, while maximizing the emotional impact. It was music that transpired angst and alienation, music of harsh tones, agonizing tempos, demonic vocals. Unwound's essay in intolerable tension continued with **New Plastic Ideas** (1994) and **The Future Of What** (1995), that channelled Trosper's hellish angst into a Morse code of ghastly shrieks and gut-wrenching riffs. while flirting with jazz and avantgarde manners, **Repetition** (1996) and **Challenge For A Civilized Society** (1998) clarified the subtle mission of the band: a sound that was as loud as the sense of confusion and insecurity of their generation.

Phantom 309's vocalist/guitarist John Forbes recorded the raw and vulgar **Sahara Of The Bozart** (1992) with Dirt

and then the frenzied and dark **Put The Creep On** (1994) with Mount Shasta.

Texas bred a school of musicians who blended elements of different local schools of the 1980s: hardcore (e.g., Poison 13), psychedelic (e.g. Butthole Surfers) and industrial (e.g., Pain Teens). Crust (1) crafted **Crust** (1991) and especially **Crusty Love** (1994), a chaotic, claustrophobic and cacophonous post-industrial symphony. Drain (1), the side-project of Butthole Surfers' drummer King Coffey, mixed Red Crayola, John Cage and nursery-school mayhem on **Pick Up Heaven** (1992). The music of **Pistol Swing** (1993) by Johnboy (1) sounded like a chain reaction inside a nuclear reactor, a repulsive magma of manic impulses and subhuman hallucinations.

Several bands from Illinois and Minnesota straddled the line between hardcore and grunge: Janitor Joe, on **Big Metal Birds** (1993); Tar, on **Jackson** (1991); Calvin Krime, on **You're Feeling So Attractive** (1998).

Ohio's Terrifying Experience, the project of Guided By Voices' guitarist Mitch Mitchell, experimented with progressive hardcore on **Supreme Radial** (1999). So did Los Angeles' Stanford Prison Experiment, that tried to bridge that style and funk-metal on **The Gato Hunch** (1995).

Seattle's Juno (1) specialized in open-ended structures with a wide range of dynamics on **This is the Way It Goes And Goes And Goes** (Desoto, 1999) and **A Future Lived in Past Tense** (2001).

## **6.16 From grindcore to stoner-rock**

### *A metal nation*

If the 1980s had been the golden age of heavy metal, the age when heavy metal was accepted by the masses and climbed the charts, the 1990s saw the fragmentation of the genre into rather different styles, that simply expanded on ideas of the 1980s.

As usual, pop-metal, the genre that appealed to the masses, was, artistically speaking, the least significant variant of heavy metal. It spawned stars such as Los Angeles' Warrant, with **Cherry Pie** (1990); Boston's Extreme, specialized in "metal-operas" à la Queen such as **Pornograffiti** (1990); and Pennsylvania's Live, with **Throwing Copper** (1994); etc.

Los Angeles had to live with remnants of its "street-scene" (Guns N' Roses, Jane's Addiction), although they sounded a lot less sincere and a lot less powerful than the original masters. Ugly Kid Joe, Life Sex And Death, Dishwalla, Ednaswap, etc.

Glam-metal staged a comeback of sort in Florida with Marilyn Manson (1), the product of Brian Warner's deranged mind. Propelled by the brutal sounds of keyboardist Madonna Wayne-Gacy and guitarist Daisy Berkowitz, Warner's theatrical exhibition of degenerate, depraved animal instinct wed Alice Cooper's scum-rock and Nine Inch Nails' industrial-hardcore on **Portrait Of An American Family** (1994). By borrowing the energy of speed-metal, **Antichrist Superstar** (1996) sold the gimmick to the masses.

### *Prog-metal*

Progressive-metal was far more capable of producing new ideas. Notable albums of the 1990s in the style of Queensryche and the likes included: **Last Decade Dead Century** (1990), by Michigan's Warrior Soul; **Wonderdrug** (1994), by New York's Naked Sun; etc.

Dream Theater (11), formed at Boston's prestigious Berklee College of Music, established a new standard for progressive metal. Their second album, **Images And Words** (1992), constructed lengthy melodic fantasias that relied on symphonic magniloquence (Kevin Moore on keyboards), fluid instrumental passages (John Petrucci on guitar), haphazard rhythms (Mike Portnoy on drums) and romantic emphasis (James Labrie on vocals). At the same time breathless and catchy, rock and neoclassical, impulsive and brainy, this style became even more elaborate on **Awake** (1994), although it lost some of its bite, which got further diluted in the seven-movement suite *A Change Of Seasons* (1995).

In Europe, significant prog-metal contributions included the symphonic metal of **Land Of Broken Hearts** (1993), by Denmark's Royal Hunt, and the monumental suite *Black Rose Immortal*, from **Morningrise** (1996), by Sweden's Opeth.

Switzerland's Alboth! (1), a piano-bass-drums trio, invented a new genre at the border between jazz and industrial metal, between Cecil Taylor and Young Gods. The jackhammer rhythms and torrential piano clusters of **Liebefeld** (1992) were both visceral and sophisticated.

#### **Death metal**

The terrifying sound of grindcore and death-metal continued to thrive in the USA thanks to New York's Brutal Truth (1), with **Extreme Conditions Demand Extreme Responses** (1992), Buffalo's Cannibal Corpse, with **Tomb of the Mutilated** (1992), Louisiana's Acid Bath, with **When The Kite String Pops** (1994).

And thanks to the creative work of three American groups, "death-metal" was rapidly mutating into something at the same time more terrible and more musical.

Type O Negative (101) in New York achieved the most shocking fusion of metal, industrial and gothic languages. With vocalist Peter "Steele" Ratajczyk convincingly impersonating a psychopath who uttered nihilist, racist, sexist, fascist invectives, keyboardist Josh Silver molding grandiose sonic architectures, and guitarist Kenny Hickey highlighting the turpitude of the stories with excoriating noises, the terrifying vision of **Slow Deep And Hard** (1991) acquired a metaphysical dimension besides and beyond its hyper-realistic overtones, bridging the philosophical themes of sex and death the way a black mass would do. Moral ambiguity translated into musical ambiguity, as anthemic choruses wavered like funereal dirges, epic riffs shrieked like agonizing spasms in the struggle for survival, and homicidal fantasies peaked with evil apotheosis. Contrasts and juxtapositions blurred the difference between hell and paradise. Each song was structured as a sequence of movements, each movement arranged in a different fashion, and the sequence leading to unrelenting suspense. They sounded like Wagnerian mini-symphonies composed in Dante's Inferno and supercharged with fear and despair. The apocalypse subsided on **Bloody Kisses** (1993), a more sincere fresco of urban violence.

Today Is The Day (22), in Tennessee, straddled the border between grindcore, noise-rock, death-metal, hardcore, progressive-rock and industrial music. The visceral nightmares of **Supernova** (1993) were full of sonic experiments and stylistic twists, but **Willpower** (1994) went beyond the "ambience" to extract sheer angst from Steve Austin's screams and the trio's assorted cacophony. Each song sounded like a natural catastrophe, each song was the soundtrack of an irrational state of mind. Scott Wexton's sampling machines (replacing the bass player) bestowed an electronic flavor to **Today is The Day** (1996). The effect was to enhance the progressive-rock part of the equation, a fact that help sustain the stylistic collage of **Temple Of The Morning Star** (1997): no less macabre and emphatic, the music also felt surreal and cathartic. It was still the sound of a psychological torture, but one that mirrored some kind of supernatural beauty.

Fear Factory (11), in Los Angeles, painted their harrowing mural of urban decadence with an emphasis on rhythm: thrashing, grinding beats spread like neurotransmitters inside the nervous system of the cyberpunk manifesto **Soul of a New Machine** (1992). Songs evolved rather than just erupt. The music of **Demanufacture** (1995), featuring Front Line Assembly's keyboardist Rhys Fulber, seemed to come from another world, saturated with blasphemous truths about this world. Its cascading bombshells kept morphing into cingulate beasts and emanating poisonous miasmas.

This triad pretty much subverted the conventions of the genre, and created a new kind of music, tailored for the issues and the mood of the cyberpunk generation.

The connection between hardcore and heavy-metal had been kept alive by New York's Biohazard, especially on **Urban Discipline** (1993). A new form of metal-punk mixture was secreted towards the end of the decade by Missouri's Coalesce (1), who vomited the formidable metal-punk maelstrom of **Give Them Rope** (1998), and New

Jersey's Dillinger Escape Plan, with **Calculating Infinity** (1999).

#### ***Scandinavian black metal***

More or less independently of death-metal, a new school of "black metal" arose out of northern Europe, particularly Scandinavia. Notable works included: Entombed's **Left Hand Path** (1990). Darkthrone's **A Blaze In The Northern Sky** (1991); Immortal's **Battles In The North** (1994); Mayhem's **De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas** (1994); Enslaved's **Eld** (1997); etc. And add, in England, Cradle Of Filth's **Dusk and Her Embrace** (1997).

The greatest black-metal band of the decade was probably from Norway, Emperor (1), whose **In The Nightside Eclipse** (1994) was a concentrate of violence but also a metaphysical (and symphonic) inspection in the otherworld. Among more experimental acts, Ved Buens Ende, also from Norway, wed black metal and post-rock on **Written In Waters** (1995). Satyricon's **Nemesis Divina** (1996) set a new standard for the genre.

Tiamat, Therion, and Amorphis invented a neoclassical version of death metal, which preferred the sound of keyboards. Norway's Theatre of Tragedy even adopted operatic vocals. Haggard introduced symphonic arrangements.

#### ***Doom metal***

"Doom-metal" (a slow, gothic, baroque exaggeration of Black Sabbath's deadly grooves) became more and more popular in England thanks to a number of progressively more sophisticated groups. Paradise Lost, who debuted with **Paradise Lost** (1990), were the least creative of the founding fathers, but Cathedral (1), featuring vocalist Lee Dorrian (ex-Napalm Death), invented a new format with the lengthy and lyrical suites of **Forest Of Equilibrium** (1991), and My Dying Bride (1) perfected that format with an almost baroque grandeur on **The Angel & The Dark River** (1995).

America's doom-metal had fewer and lesser adherents: Los Angeles' Obsessed stand out.

The greatest heirs to the throne of doom-metal were still British. Electric Wizard (12), led by singer/guitarist Justin Osborn, inflated the heaviness of doom-metal to the point that music did not flow anymore: it just boomed, a long, dull, oppressive sound. **Electric Wizard** (1995) blended the holy triad of stoner-rock (Black Sabbath, Blue Cheer and Hawkwind) in a new form that was an implosion of each of them, but its twin album **Come My Fanatics** (1997) was even more powerful (even heavier, duller, darker and more sluggish), a tidal wave of gloomy sounds. The colossal-oriented approach led to **Dopethrone** (2000), whose extended tracks towered over an even more apocalyptic wasteland.

During the second half of the decade, bands such as England's Orange Goblin, with **Frequencies From Planet Ten** (1997), and Sweden's Katatonia, with **Discouraged Ones** (1998), offered other variants on the stereotype.

#### ***Super-doom***

The Melvins had pioneered a different style, a style that manically emphasized and extended the psychedelic grooves of Black Sabbath. Their "super-doom" grunge was continued in Seattle by Earth (12) were the most extreme of Seattle's "doom-rockers". The titanic instrumental tracks of the EP **Extra-Capsular Extraction** (1991) and the album **2** (1993) relied on colossal drones and heavy rhythms seen through the distorted lense of Dylan Carlson's neurosis. Earth's music sounded like the casual jamming of extraterrestrial monsters. It merged elements of LaMonte Young's avantgarde minimalism and Eastern music's transcendental ecstasy and drenched them into gothic-scifi atmospheres. They were not "songs", they were hyper-psychedelic states of mind. **Phase 3** (1995) and the more accessible **Pentastar - In The Style Of Demons** (1996) continued Carlson's virtual sampling of historical riffs of hard-rock in a more earthly setting. Compared with their evil symphonies, Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* was classical music.

Karp (1) packed a mad carnival of cacophonous maelstroms, spasmodic psychodramas, rowdy voooodoo-billy and monolithic trance on **Moustaches Wild** (1994).

Earth's main followers were Sunn (1), the new project of Engine Kid's guitarist Greg Anderson, particularly on

their monumental **Zero Zero Void** (2000).

Super-doom was not limited to the Pacific Northwest.

Louisiana's Eyehategod, who debuted with **In the Name of Suffering** (1990), opened the way to an entire "sludgcore" scene in the South. Texas' Sweet Pea, with **Chicks Hate Wes** (1996), were among the many that followed suit.

Georgia's Harvey Milk (2) drained the loud, slow, brutal and mean-spirited creatures of **My Love Is Higher** (1996) and **Courtesy And Good Will Toward Men** (1997) of any emotions, carving a niche between Type O Negative, Swans and Melvins.

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#### IN PREPARATION

### ***Stoner rock***

"Stoner-rock" was another evolution of the Black Sabbath sound: super-psychedelic, super-heavy and super-loud. It came out of southern California with Kyuss (and their offshoots Queens Of The Stone Age and Unida) and continued to thrive around San Francisco (Sleep) and Los Angeles (Fu Manchu and Nebula).

New York's "stoners" were led by Monster Magnet. Wellwater Conspiracy, formed by Monster Magnet's guitarist John Paul McBain and Soundgarden's drummer Matt Cameron, played virulent garage-rock on **Declaration Of Conformity** (1997).

The second generation included Atomic Bitchwax and spread to Boston (Nightstick, Roadsaw).

Outside the USA, the main stoners and super-doomers were Boris from Japan.

### ***Funk-metal***

The real money machine of the 1990s was funk-metal. In the 1980s bands such as Red Hot Chili Peppers and Primus had concocted a hybrid of funk and hard-rock. Earlier, Run DMC had already experimented with a fusion of rap and heavy-metal. These two simple ideas made up the scaffolding of much hard-rock of the 1990s.

Los Angeles was funk-metal's home turf: Lenny Kravitz, Infectious Grooves, Eleven, Sugar Ray, Battery Acid, etc. Elsewhere, funk-rock's stars included Barkmarket and Scatterbrain (1), whose **Scamboogery** (1992) was one of the most versatile, in New York, Presidents Of The USA (Seattle), 311 (Nebraska), Urban Dance Squad (Holland), H-Blockx (Germany).

Rap-metal was also headquartered in Los Angeles. The explosion began with Rage Against The Machine and turned into something completely different halfway into the decade with the advent of Korn. Then came the deluge: Orange 9mm (New York), Senser (England), Deftones (San Francisco), Simon Says (Sacramento), etc.

The intense, macabre, excruciating, self-flagellating music of Korn was the dominant factor at the end of the century and came to symbolize an entire generation of disillusioned kids. The "post-Korn generation" that dramatically changed the landscape of heavy metal included after 1997: Staind (Boston), Kid Rock (Michigan), Cold (Florida), Puya (Florida), Apartment 26 (England), Reveille (Boston), etc. Needless to say, Los Angeles had the largest share of such brutal outfits: Incubus, Limp Bizkit, Orgy, System Of A Down, etc.

The variety of the heavy-metal world was increased by agit-prop acts such as P.O.D. (San Diego), glam acts such as Nashville Pussy (Georgia), satirical acts such as Saturn's Flea Collar (and their offshoot Saturn's Flea Collar, out of San Francisco).

## **6.17 Alt-rock**

### ***Body Music***

A new genre had been coined in the 1960s by bands such as Pixies: it was melodic, but not trivial; it was rock albeit eccentric; it was passionate albeit not hardcore. That "alt-pop" format continued in the 1990s in the centers

of college-pop. First and foremost, Boston itself: besides the extended Pixies family (Belly, Breeders, Kelly Deal 6000), the Boston scene included also Letters to Cleo and Jack Drag. Boston was also the home base of one of the greatest bands of the decade, Morphine, whose style borrowed heavily from blues and jazz but shared the same casual approach to melody.

Then Georgia, with Magnapop and Toenut (later Tyro).

Los Angeles' Madder Rose (2) was an oddly schizophrenic band that relied on the contrast/friction (rather than the amalgam/fusion) of Billy Cote's abrasive guitar and Mary Lorson's sweet vocals. **Bring It Down** (1993) and **Panic On** (1994) were poetic, idyllic works whose mood fluctuated between autumnal singalongs and tormented rockers. They converted to trip-hop with **Tragic Magic** (1997) and reinvented themselves with the surreal stylistic melange of **Hello June Fool** (1999).

Then North Carolina, the new center of attraction, with Archers Of Loaf, Dillon Fence, Small 23. Spatula's Medium Planers and Matchers (1995),

In New York a few unorthodox pop bands did something similar: Dogbowl, King Missile, serious Nothing Painted Blue Furslide.

Holland was perhaps the most renown place for college-pop, out of the USA, thanks to Daryll-Ann, Bettie Serveert, Nightblooms.

By bridging Pixies' eccentric pop with new wave's eccentric dance music, Garbage (from Wisconsin) obtained the success that had eluded the Pixies.

The genre peaked, however, with the tragic philosophy of Los Angeles-based Eels.

#### *Noise-rock's epitaph 1995-97*

In the mid-1990s noise-rock picked up steam again. The new generation was led by creative outfits that reinvented rock music by embedding twisted melodies into atonal structures and, sometimes, irregular rhythms. Frequently, their songs were aural puzzles soaked in the history of rock music. Occasionally, their method straddled the line between trance and dissonance. Significant albums in this genre to come out of New York included: Poem Rocket's Felix Culpa (1996), Lynnfield Pioneers' Emerge (1997) , **Fantastic Spikes Through Balloon** (1996) by Skeleton Key (1), **In An Expression Of The Inexpressible** (1998) by Blonde Redhead (1).

Firewater (2) was a noise super-group formed by Cop Shoot Cop's vocalist Tod Ashley, Jesus Lizard's guitarist Duane Denison, Motherhead Bug's pianist/trombonist Dave Ouimet, Soul Coughing's percussionist Yuval Gabay and and Laughing Hyenas' drummer Jim Kimball. Ashley's tormented soul dominates **Get Off The Cross** (1997) and **The Ponzi Scheme** (1998), wandering in the paleo-gothic purgatory inhabited by the likes of Tom Waits and Nick Cave.

- 1998: a pill to fight impotency, Viagra, is the best-seller of the year
- 1998: Britain and northern Ireland agree on a solution for autonomy
- 1998: Clinton is impeached for lying about his adultery with Monica Lewinsky
- 1998: Osama bin Laden, from his base in Afghanistan, wages a holy war against the USA by bombing two USA embassies in Africa
- 1998: Pierre Omidyar founds Ebay, a website to trade second-hand goods
- 1998: socialdemocrat leader Gerard Schroeder becomes chancellor of Germany and Joschka Fischer's Green Party joins the government coalition
- 1998: Yahoo, Amazon, Ebay and scores of Internet-related start-ups create overnight millionaires

## 6.18 Gothic rock

### *Body Music*

The gothic brand of punk-rock, dark-punk, that was born during the heydays of the new wave redefined gothic rock as something deeper and stronger than Black Sabbath and Alice Cooper. Siouxsie's influence on future generations of gothic rockers is undeniable, regardless of the artistic value of her records. Gothic rock was, first and foremost, an attitude, and remained such during the 1990s. That attitude was refined during the 1990s by a generation of bands that could take advantage of improved studio technology and electronic keyboards.

Somewhat surprisingly, the leadership moved from Britain to the United States. Britain's gothic was limited to late purveyors of apocalyptic folk such as Sorrow and Nature And Organisation.

Germany's gothic school was far more imposing, thanks to Aurora, Trauma and Phallus Dei.

Germany's Das Ich (1), i.e. vocalist Stefan Ackermann and multi-instrumentalist Bruno Kramm, produced **Staub** (1994), a symphonic work of heroic proportions.

However, it was Sweden that came to rule European gothic: Brighter Death Now, In Slaughter Natives, Love Is Colder Than Death, Mortiis, Ordo Equilibrio, Raison D'etre, Arcana, Deutsch Nepal, founded the "sound constructivist" school of ambient/ gothic/ industrial music which relies on atmospheric keyboards and sometimes classical instruments to create terrifying visions of the otherworld. This genre is closer to classical music than to rock music.

In the United States, gothic rock was anchored around the Projekt label, which mainly recruited bands in Arizona and California and promoted a similar "classical-oriented" approach to the gothic mood. From Arizona came Lycia (perhaps the greatest), Lovesliescrushing, Soul Whirling Somewhere, Skinner Box, and, later, Audra. Los Angeles also boasted several important sound sculptors, beginning with Black Tape For A Blue Girl (another world leader), and continuing with Human Drama, Cradle Of Thorns, Faith And The Muse, Thanatos, Trance To The Sun.

Offshoots of that school were to be found in Chicago (Arcanta), New York (Rasputina, Reverb Sleep, Voltaire), Missouri (C17H19NO3), Georgia (Sunday Munich), Sacramento (Claire Voyant), and Seattle (Faith & Disease).

San Francisco's gothic bands were descendants of 1980s' gothic clubs: Switchblade Symphony, Candymachine88, Children Of The Apocalypse, Lies, Tel Basta, etc.

New York's Voluptuous Horror were among the few to insist on the antics rather than the atmosphere.

Since 1991, when the Berlin wall fell, Eastern Europe has developed a very creative school of rock music, often indebted towards the local folk traditions and often looking towards the avantgarde. Heirs to the "expressionistic" school created by Laibach and Autopsia were Uz Isme Doma in the Czech Republic, Transmisia in Croatia, and Der Blutharsch in Switzerland.

In Australia, Darrin Verhagen's Shinjuku Thief (2) assembled collages of industrial, ambient, jazz and dance elements on **Bloody Tourist** (1992) and achieved the magniloquent orchestral gothic of **The Witch Hammer** (1993).

## 6.19 Drum'n'bass

### *Body Music*

Dance music of the 1990s largely rejected the simple, jovial, edonistic approach to body movement that had ruled since James Brown invented funk music in the 1960s. If disco-music and techno/house had simply imported new technologies (both for rhythm and arrangements) into the paradigm of funk, the 1990s brought back the old

technology. One of the most important ideas to come out of Britain was "jungle" or "drum'n'bass", a style that rediscovered the traditional rhythm section to provide additional power to the electronic beat. The result was a syncopated variant of house, a fusion of hip hop and techno.

The style had been predated by Meat Beat Manifesto in 1990 and was adopted at the London club "Rage" by disc-jockeys Fabio and Grooverider.

The "inventors" were Roni Size, LTJ Bukem, 4 Hero (and their offshoots Jacob's Optical Stairway, Tek 9), T Power (Chocolate Weasel), Plaid (1), an emanation of Black Dog Productions that revolutionized jungle with **Mbuki Mvuki** (1991).

However, the golden age of jungle began in 1995 with the advent of Goldie, who also invented "ambient jungle", symphonic jungle and "time stretching". Acts such as Source Direct and Adam F defined the sound of mainstream "drum'n'bass".

At the same time, Photek, James Hardway and Fila Brazillia merged "drum'n'bass" with jazz.

Major additions to the drum'n'bass canon originated from different sources. Boymerang (1), the new project of former Bark Psychosis frontman Graham Sutton, sculpted **Balance Of The Force** (Regal, 1997), a conceptual work of art that straddled the boundaries between pop, jazz and avantgarde.

"drill and bass" is very fast drum'n'bass

"Techstep" is fast, brutal drum'n'bass: DJ Trace, Ed Rush, Nico, Panacea. Germany's Panacea (1), i.e. Mathias Mootz, borrowed elements from death-metal and industrial music and applied them to drum'n'bass on **Low Profile Darkness** (1997).

Thanks to ever more intricate beats and to free structures borrowed from jazz, Jungle music rapidly became one of the foundations for avantgarde music. Spring Heel Jack and Squarepusher were but the most austere of the visionaries of "conceptual jungle". Other notable musicians that composed avantgarde jungle included Klute, Twisted Science, Witchman, Faultline. Two female composers stand out: Andrea Parker and Neotropic.

Towards the end of the decade, Propellerheads led the subgenre of drum'n'bass that assimilated tribal African beats ("big beat").

Japan's Bisk also ranks among the visionaries of jungle experimentation.

Jungle came to the US in the second half of the decade, thanks to British expatriates such as DJ Dara. In New York, acts such as Datach'i, Dylan Group and Mice Parade created bold experiments for which the term "progressive jungle" is more appropriate.

## 6.20 Trip-hop

### *Body Music*

England's great invention of the late 1990s was "trip-hop", the style that bridged dance beats, psychedelic dub trance and soft-jazz atmosphere. Pioneered in the 1980s by dance collectives such as A R Kane and Coldcut, sophisticated singers such as Sade and Neneh Cherry, and pop bands such as Cowboy Junkies and Blue Nile, trip-hop was born in earnest in Bristol, England, the home base of Soul II Soul, Massive Attack, Breakbeat Era, Nightmares On Wax Up Bustle And Out Something similar was happening in London thanks to disc-jockeys such as London Pressure Drop.

The commercial break-through came in 1994 with Portishead Tricky (Nearly God) 95 Funki Porcini Red Snapper Rockers Hi-Fi Skylab Smith & Mighty

Then came the deluge: Howie B, Baby Fox, Lamb, Morcheeba, Sneaker Pimps, Day One, ever less original and ever more derivative.

Funk (Brand New Heavies) and soul (Jamirocqui) helped the style stabilize. Fundamental attempted an original

fusion of world-music and rap.

Even more important for the development of this atmospheric pseudo-dance genre was instrumental hip-hop, in particular the work of DJ Shadow, a Los Angeles native, of Japanese dj DJ Krush, and of Herbalizer.

More or less related to trip-hop were Gus Gus in Iceland, Perfume Tree in Canada, Tosca (Peter Kruder and Richard Dorfmeister) in Austria, Whale in Sweden.

Luke Vibert's Wagon Christ (and Plug) and DJ Vadim pioneered an atmospheric form of sound collage that led to the impressive compositions of Amon Tobin (Cujo) and to the experiments of Groove Armada, Death In Vegas, Cinematic Orchestra, and San Francisco's Grassy Knoll.

The subliminal jams of DJ Cam (French dj Cam Laurent Daumail), for example on **Substances** (1996), that frequently employ samples of obscure jazz records, hover in an ether halfway between dub, hip-hop and ambient jungle.

On the other side of the Atlantic ocean, New York was the scene of the "Illbient" movement. Sub Dub spearheaded the fusion of hip hop, ambient house, middle-eastern folk and dub, and DJ Spooky defined it with a chaotic and non-melodic fusion of drum & bass, hip hop, dub. Illbient was cross-fertilized with world-music (Towa Tei), avantgarde (Bob Neill) and jazz (DJ Logic), a movement that probably peaked with We.

Dub had a life of its own in the western world: Thievery Corporation in Washington, Twilight Circus Dub Sound System in England, Pole in Germany, reinvented the genre as a stark and austere form of art.

- 1999: 13 students are killed in a high school of Littleton, Colorado, by two students
- 1999: an outbreak of the West Nile virus kills nine people in New York
- 1999: artificial viruses spread through the Internet
- 1999: Clinton announces a second year of budget surplus, the first time since 1957 that the USA has had two consecutive years of budget surplus
- 1999: Microsoft is worth 450 billion dollars, the most valued company in the world, even if it is many times smaller than General Motors, and Bill Gates is the world's richest man at \$85 billion (1/109th of the US economy)
- 1999: NATO bombs Serbia to stop repression against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo
- 1999: NATO bombs Serbia to stop repression against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo
- 1999: Scotland inaugurates its own Parliament
- 1999: the AIDS epidemis peaks
- 1999: the recording industry sues Napster, a website that allows people to exchange music
- 1999: the US has 250 billionaires, and thousands of new millionaires are created in just one year
- 1999: the world prepares for the new millennium amidst fears of computers glitches due to the change of date (Y2K)
- 1999: Yeltsin resigns and is succeeded by Vladimir Putin
- 1999: two heavily-armed students massacre teachers and fellow students at a high-school in Columbine and then commit suicide

## 6.21 Post-rock

### *Post-rock*

The single most important regional school of the 1990s may well turn out to be the one that came from the most unlikely of musical scenes and the one that sold the least records: Kentucky's post-rock. Squirrel Bait had started something that their offshoots, in a sense, the 1990s began in 1989, when Slint and Bitch Magnet debuted. They introduced a convoluted, angular, cerebral style, that had little in common with rock and roll's edonistic foundations. Basically, theirs was progressive-rock for an age that did not appreciate emphatic emotions anymore. Besides other (and less relevant) splinter groups of Squirrel Bait (Bastro, featuring Bitch Magnet's guitarist David Grubbs and drummer John McEntire) Big Wheel, King Kong), the school was continued throughout the decade by ever more ambitious ensembles (all descendants of Squirrel Bait) such as Gastr Del Sol, an evolution of Bastro's last line-up with Bundy Ken Brown on bass, For Carnation, June Of 44, Rodan (later Sonora Pine) Aerial M (or Papa M), Rachel's, and Shipping News.

Hybrid vibrations, that mixed a post-punk ethos with the austere stance of progressive-rock and the sounds of dub and jazz, emanated also from New York, in particular thanks to the creative careers of Ui, Soul Coughing, and Lapse (previously Van Pelt).

Post-rock was codified in Chicago with a German accent (as in "Can, Faust, Neu") by Tortoise and their countless descendants: U.S. Maple, Rex, Sea And Cake, Aluminum Group (the supreme purveyors of easy-listening in the age of post-rock), Sabalon Glitz, Joan Of Arc, Bill Ding, Town And Country, etc.

Jim O'Rourke (3), Illusion Of Safety's guitarist, introduced into rock music an abstract concept of music that drew from the likes of John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey. The improvisations for "prepared" guitar of **Remove the Need** (1989), the ambient/industrial noise of **The Ground Below Above Our Heads** (1991), the electronically-manipulated chamber music of **Tamper** (1991), the musique concrete of the monumental **Disengage** (1992) and of **Scend** (1992), the chaotic free-noise of **Terminal Pharmacy** (1995) revealed one of the most eclectic, visionary and radical minds of the decade. His first venture into a more accessible style was Brise-Glace, a collaboration with other Chicago luminaries, which yielded the ambient blend of jazz, rock and dub of **When In Vanitas** (1994). O'Rourke's experimental fury subsided with the tributes to John Fahey's "primitive guitar music" of **Happy Days** (1997) and especially **Bad Timing** (1997). And then, suddenly, he reinvented himself in the tradition of orchestral pop and easy listening with **Eureka** (1999).

Chicago Frontier. **Heather** (1997) shoegazing, King Crimson, Can, Public Image Ltd, Tortoise and ambient dub Slint's influence remained visible on other Chicago-based ensembles, notably Cheer-Accident and Dianogah.

In Chicago, the Denison-Kimball Trio (2), or DK3, formed by Jesus Lizard's guitarist Duane Denison and Laughing Hyenas/Mule/Firewater's drummer James Kimball, played nocturnal jazz with a profusion of atonal and abrasive tones on **Walls In The City** (1994), sounding like Lounge Lizards on drugs, and achieved a sophisticated synthesis of jazz, blues, rock and avantgarde on **Soul Machine** (1995), following the addition of jazz saxophonist Ken Vandermark, and **Neutrons** (1997).

Post-rock was also defined by the tortured scores composed by Trans Am (Maryland) Six Finger Satellite (Rhode Island), Brick Layer Cake (Minnesota), Thee Speaking Canaries (Pennsylvania), etc. Seattle's Engine Kid, with **Bear Catching Fish** (1993);

Washington's El Guapo (1) added manic doses of electronics to its stew of Soft Machine, Contortions, Pop Group, Fall on **Super System** (2002).

Jazz was a major factor in alienating this school from the traditional foundations of rock and roll. Both New York and Chicago boasted a tightly-knit community of musicians at the border between post-rock and avant-jazz: Jackie-O Motherfucker and Andrea Parkins in New York, Isotope 217, Him, Out of Worship, Flying Luttenbachers,

Zeek Sheck, Euphone, and Fred Lonberg-Holm's ensembles (Terminal 4) in Chicago.

Chicago's Duotron (1), played a psychotic form of abstract pieces that ran the gamut from progressive-rock to noise to absurdist vaudeville to no wave and free-jazz, particularly on **We Modern We Now** (1995).

Post-rock also fostered a resurgence of instrumental music. It first arose through oddly creative combos such as Boston's Concussion Ensemble (and their offshoot Alloy Orchestra), but found their prophets and visionaries in Pennsylvania's Don Caballero (and their offshoot Storm & Stress).

Chicago's Trenchmouth (1), led by vocalist Damon Locks and guitarist Chris DeZutter, mixed heavy-metal solos, and elements of ska, funk, reggae and jazz on the philosophical and visionary concept albums **Inside The Future** (1993) and **Vs The Light of The Sun** (1994), to the point that their final **The Broadcasting System** (1996) was virtually a tribute to the dub civilization.

Instrumental rock music became more and more ambitious throughout the rest of the decade: 5ive Style and Salaryman (out of Chicago), Doldrums (Virginia), Tractor Hips (North Carolina), You Fantastic (Missouri), Electric Company (Los Angeles), Tribes Of Neurot, Fucking Champs and 310 (San Francisco), Necks (Australia), rank among the most significant rock acts of the 1990s.

San Francisco's A Minor Forest indulged in the lengthy instrumental improvisations of **Flemish Altruism** (1996).

Arizona spawned a bizarre school of instrumental music, running the gamut from the surreal roots-rock of Calexico and Friends Of Dean Martinez to the ambient/cosmic suites of Scenic.

Chicago had the most prolific scene, thanks to Brokeback, Pullman, Scissor Girls, Michael Krassner's Boxhead Ensemble (and Lofty Pillars).

Towards the end of the decade more exciting styles were introduced by Godspeed You Black Emperor (and their offshoot Silver Mt Zion) and Shalabi Effect (both out of Montreal), Phylr (New York), Gorge Trio (later Colossamite, from Minnesota), Turing Machine (Washington) and Tarentel (San Francisco).

Two of the greatest post-rock instrumental bands were Australian: Dirty Three and Terminals (with their offshoots Flies Inside The Sun, Rain, Renderers, Sleep). Their example was followed by Hungry Ghosts.

Post-rock owed a huge debt to German rock of the 1970s. Therefore, it is not surprising that Germany rapidly became one of the epicenters. Mouse On Mars, To Rococo Rot (and their spin-off Tarwater), Notwist (and related Village of Savoonga), Lali Puna, Tied & Tickled Trio, Kreidler, Karamasov, Laub, Trance Groove, made up a formidable generation of experimental bands, worthy of their predecessors Can, Neu and Faust.

France's lesser scene could still count on Ulan Bator and Tone Rec.

England had a different school of intellectual rock, well represented by Disco Inferno, Scorn (and side-project Lull), Pram and Moonshake at the beginning of the decade. Their styles were related to the progressive and psychedelic rock of the era. Laika and Piano Magic continued their approach to rock avantgarde, and, towards the end of the decade, bands such as Quickspace, Snowpony, Echoboy, were still pursuing experiments far removed from the inane Brit-pop that ruled mainstream British rock. The chamber soundtracks of Barry Adamson and Spleen inhabit a landscape of their own.

Ditto for Scotland, where twenty years of naive pop were suddenly contrasted by the likes of Long Fin Killie, Richard Youngs, Ganger, Nectarine #9, and especially Mogwai (and the related projects of Fiend and Macrocsmica).

In the meantime, out of Virginia came Labradford (and their side-project Pan American) and their elaborate concertos, that both rediscovered the appeal of analogic keyboards and coined a new form of chamber music, a sort of "ambient rock". Seattle's Jessamine (with their side-projects Fontanelle and Southerning) and Magnog, Chicago's James Plotkin, Windsor For The Derby (New York via Florida), were among the relevant musicians of this generation.

Texas' psychedelic school spawned a pseudo-ambient movement devoted to an austere study of sound. Stars Of

The Lid (2), the Austin-based duo of Adam Wiltzie and Brian McBride, manipulated found sounds, acoustic instruments and electronics to produce the ambient concertos of **Ballasted Orchestra** (1997). A more austere exploration of melody and movement was carried out on **The Tired Sounds Of Stars Of The Lid** (2001).

Minnesota's Salamander (1) indulged in abstract soundpainting on **Red Ampersand** (1998) and turned the title-track of **Red Mantra** (1999) into an avantgarde concerto.

Steve Fisk and his bands Pell Mell and Pigeonhed were the highlights of Seattle's post-rock scene. Satchel

As usual, remnants of San Francisco's hippie/freak culture hardly fit any of the reigning fads. Thinking Fellers Union Local 282 were, in a sense, the Residents of the 1990s, inspiring a generation of Double U, Fibulator, Miss Murgatroid, Sharkbait, Uz Zub, to perform bizarre and witty rock music.

The contagion spread to Oregon, where bands such as Bugskull and New Bad Things offered no less demented music.

Boston's Land Of The Loops and particularly Canada's Vampire Rodents made music out of sound collage.

Japan's rock was more than "post": it was "anti". A sadistic passion for chaos and noise led to "noise-core", the radical sound of Japan's holy triad: Zeni Geva, Merzbow, Boredoms (and side-projects Hanatarashi and Ooioo).

They were soon flanked by Space Streakings, Ground Zero, Guitar Wolf, Melt-Banana, Ultra Bide`, Nimrod, etc.

By the turn of the millennium, post-rock was no longer an isolated phenomenon. Lowercase and I Am Spoonbender came out of San Francisco, Bare Minimum and Hovercraft out of Seattle, Rollerball out of Portland, And You Will Know Us and Paul Newman out of Texas, etc.

Indiana's Tombstone Valentine (1), fronted by vocalist Richelle Toombs, renewed the art of space-rock with **Hidden World** (1998), an album which blended the surreal element of Pink Floyd's **Piper At The Gates Of Dawn**, the percussive element of 1970s' German avant-rock, and the exotic element of the Third Ear Band.

San Diego's scene was a late bloomer, albeit a sophisticated one that yielded the talents of Three Mile Pilot, Black Heart Procession, Maquiladora and Tristeza.

Canada's Bran Van 3000 and Brazil's Soul Fly heralded an even bolder degree of stylistic fusion.

New York's Oneida (1) carved an odd niche for themselves with the convoluted psychedelic and post-rock freak-outs of **A Place Called El Shaddai's** (1998), a mixture of Blue Cheer, Sonic Youth, and Can that blossomed on the sophisticated and harrowing **Each One Teach One** (2002).

Seattle's Old Time Relijun (2) were possibly the greatest disciples of Captain Beefheart in the 1990s, devoted to organizing musical structures out of sheer chaos. The psychotic jazz-rock of **Songbook Vol 1** (1997) evoked a meeting of the Contortions and Albert Ayler, but the more experimental **Uterus And Fire** (1999) was reminiscent of Jon Spencer's deformed blues except that the focus was on DeDionysos's vocal histrionics, while atonal guitars and childish drums created a divine mayhem. The leader's saxophone solos and a demented rhythm section graced **Witchcraft Rebellion** (2001).

## 6.22 Ambient and glitch music

### *Electronic Ambience*

New studio techniques and new electronic and digital instruments allowed rock music and avantgarde music to create new kinds of composition and performance.

The multinational ensemble Trance Mission (based in San Francisco), the French combo Lightwave were still composing electronic music in the spirit of the previous decade (although with intrepid new ideas).

San Francisco's Kim Cascone (1) mined the border between ambient music and musique concrete both on Heavenly Music Corporation's In A Garden Of Eden (1993) and on PGR's The Morning Book of Serpents (1995).

Uwe Schmidt's multi-faceted saga began with Lassigue Bendthaus and unfocused electronic soundscapes such as the ones on **Render** (1994). His ambient/atmospheric project Atom Heart was more successful, particularly with **Morphogenetics Fields** (1994). N+'s Built (1996), which was virtually a tribute to cosmic music, and the numerous collaborations with Tetsu Inoue (such as Datacide), Bill Laswell and Pete Namlook completed his training in the field of lengthy, static electronic poems. But his activity ranged from Latin music, explored by Senor Coconut Y Su Conjunto, for example on **El Gran Baile** (1997), to the digital ambient/industrial jazz-rock of Flanger, a collaboration with percussionist Bernd Friedman, on **Templates** (1999).

#### *Electronic Ambient World Music*

Exploiting Steve Roach's idea, a number of musicians scoured the territory at the border between new-age music, ambient music and world-music.

In Belgium, Vidna Obmana (2), Dirk Serries' project, fused Brian Eno and Steve Roach. Serries practiced electronic soundpainting on the ambient trilogy begun with **Passage In Beauty** (1991), but **Echoing Delight** (1993) shifted the emphasis on spiritual and tribal evocations. This is the genre in which Serries gave his most original and poignant works, first **Spiritual Bonding** (1994), a collaboration with Steve Roach and Robert Rich, and then **Crossing The Trail** (1998).

In Canada, Kenneth Newby (10), a member of the Trance Mission collective, penned **Ecology Of Souls** (1993), perhaps the most accomplished fusion of electronic music and exotic instruments.

In California, A Produce (1), Barry Craig's project, crafted **Reflect Like A Mirror** (1993), an impeccable follow-up to Brian Eno's and Harold Budd's classics.

In Canada, Delerium (3), an offshoot of Front Line Assembly, crossed over into gothic, dance and pop music with meticulously and lushly arranged albums such as **Stone Tower** (1990), **Spiritual Archives** (1991) and **Spheres** (1994). Their associates Will (1) composed the pagan mass **Pearl Of Great Price** (1991) in a similar vein.

Enigma and Mo Boma in Germany, as well as Deep Forest in France, elaborated a pseudo-ethnic ambient style that would be very influent on commercial music. Eden and Trial Of The Bow in Australia were subject to the combined influence of Dead Can Dance and Enya (exotic/ gothic/ medieval music). So was, of course, former Dead Can Dance's multi-instrumentalist Brendan Perry and vocalist Lisa Gerrard.

In Japan, Onna-Kodomo offered a languid and spiritual fusion of western classical music and eastern classical music on **Syuuka** (1997), in a vein similar to Popol Vuh's **Hosianna Mantra**.

#### *Transglobal trance*

There were some serious innovations in the realm of world-music, and first of all in Britain, the homeland of "transglobal dance".

TUU (2), mainly Martin Franklin's project, delivered arcane, sacred and ethnic trance on **One Thousand Years** (1992), evoking both Third Ear Band and Popol Vuh. **All Our Ancestors** (1995) approached chamber music and Jon Hassell's fourth-world music, while the more electronic **Mesh** (1997) was influenced by Steve Roach's sinister soundscapes.

Voices Of Kwahn offered an elegant fusion of quirky vocals and electronic/ethnic ambience on **Silver Bowl Transmission** (1996).

In the USA, Georgia's Macha (1) penned the mostly improvised **Macha** (1998) and the quasi-symphonic **See It Another Way** (1999); while New York's Badawi (1), Raz Mesinai's project, achieved a new level of sophistication on **Jerusalem Under Fire** (1997); and Tuatara (1), a supergroup made of REM's Peter Dinklage, Screaming Trees' drummer Barrett Martin, Luna's bassist Justin Harwood and jazz saxophonist Skerik (Nalgas Sin Carne), indulged in studio magic on the all-instrumental **Breaking The Ethers** (1997).

#### *Droning Music*

In parallel, and totally unrelated to dance music, the post-shoegazing psychedelic bands were beginning to play a

guitar-driven ambient music. The pioneers were Germany's Maeror Tri and England's Seefeel. Soon, shoegazing veterans such as Main, E.A.R., Rapoon, O.Rang, were sculpting drone-based symphonies.

This trend of rock-oriented ambient music peaked with Bristol's trinity of Flying Saucer Attack, Amp and Third Eye Foundation (and its offshoot Foehn).

#### ***Ambient guitar noise 1994-99***

At the turn of the century, "ambient guitar noise", the genre descendant of Flying Saucer Attack, was accepted by a broader American audience and became, de facto, a self-standing genre of music.

Windy & Carl (12), the project of Detroit's guitarist Carl Hultgren, added Windy Weber's ethereal vocals to the equation. **Portal** (1994) indulged in the angelic hypnosis of the shoegazers, but the drifting nebulae of **Drawing Of Sound** (1996) created friendly soundscapes for vocals to roam, despite the monumental spires of guitar distortion and the absence of rhythm. By demoting the guitars to the background and promoting the electronic keyboards to the forefront, the three lengthy tracks of **Antarctica** (1997) veered towards German "kosmische musik" of the 1970s. The organic and fibrillating **Depths** (1998) developed that idea into a full-fledged marriage of heaven (the cosmic drones) and hell (the menacing density of the sound).

Pennsylvania's Azusa Plane (1), the project of guitarist Jason DiEmilio, formalized a mystical psycho-acoustic art of guitar drones and overtones on **Tycho Magnetic Anomaly And the Full Consciousness of Hidden Harmony** (1997).

The genre of instrumental drone-oriented psychedelic music was perfected by Oregon's Yume Bitsu (12). The lengthy, trancey, ethereal suites with a dramatic edge of **Giant Surface Music Falling to Earth Like Jewels From The Sky** (1998) were reminiscent of both German cosmic music and British shoegazers. On **Yume Bitsu** (1999), the quintessential album of extended psychedelic jams, guitarists Adam Forkner and Franz Prichard painted (or, better, drilled) soundscapes of incredible brightness, enhanced by the surreal palette of Alex Bundy's keyboards.

Surface of Eceon (1), formed in New York by former Yume Bitsu guitarist Adam Forkner, penned **The King Beneath the Mountain** (2001), an album of epic-length triple-guitar textures, adrift in a solemnly calm sea of languid notes that recalled both Popol Vuh and Pink Floyd, but refracted through the lenses of Dali's surrealism.

#### ***Glitch Music***

In the second half of the decade, a new style was born in Europe that employed digital events (such as the "glitches" of defective compact discs) to produce disconcerting ambient music. This ultra-minimal techno was pioneered by Autechre in England, and prospered in Germany, where Oval (and their offshoot Microstoria), Two Lone Swordmen, Alva Noto, Arovane, Funkstorung, found a connection between the German avant-rock of the 1970s and this new "glitch music".

Mika Vainio's Pan Sonic and Zero in Finland, Christian Fennesz in Austria, Vladislav Delay in Finland again, Herbert in England, Boards Of Canada in Scotland, proved the unlikely spreading of the idea around the continent, as did Ryoji Ikeda and Neina in Japan, and Matmos, Kid 606, and Kit Clayton in San Francisco.

#### ***More Ambience***

In the meantime, ambient house was evolving under the guidance of studio gurus such as Nobukazu Takemura (Japan), Richie Hawtin (aka Plastikman) (Canada), Atom Heart (Germany), Burnt Friedman's Drome (Germany), Biosphere (Norway), Psychic Warriors Ov Gaia (Holland),

Purely ambient music was pursued by electronic musicians such as Tetsu Inoue (particularly with his project Datacide) in Japan, Ashera in Australia, Andrew Lagowski in England, Thomas Koner in Germany, Terre Thaemlitz in New York, Liquid Mind in Los Angeles, who sculpted **Ambience Minimus** (1994), Alio Die (1) in Italy, Stefano Musso's project, who assembled **Sit Tibi Terra Levis** (1991).

#### ***Noise***

On the more radical front of noise and sound manipulation, musicians such as Klangkrieg (Germany), RhBand (Los Angeles), Ether (Utah), Voice Of Eye (Texas), Life Garden (Arizona), Philosopher's Stone (England), Bill Horist (Seattle), Jessica Bailiff (Ohio), Bethany Curve, (San Francisco), Tomorrowland (Michigan), Fibreforms (later Kiln) (Michigan), Birchville Cat Motel (New Zealand), Nigel Bunn (New Zealand), were composing symphonies of "textures" (as opposed to "instruments"), sometimes with abrasive tones and sometimes with an ambient/ new age feeling, occasionally bordering on "musique concrete", as in the case of Aube (Japan).

Indirectly, hip hop helped establish a new artistic figure: the turntablist. As more and more genres adopted the turntable as an instrument, it was inevitable that "virtuosi" began to appear: Georgia's DJ Faust was the first to record an all-scratching album; Japan's Otomo Yoshihide and San Francisco's Live Human were as proficient and creative with the turntable as Hendrix with the guitar, inviting comparisons with free-jazz.

#### *Ambient avantgarde*

Australian composer Paul Schutze (12) was inspired by Miles Davis, Brian Eno and Jon Hassell on **New Maps Of Hell** (1992), **The Rapture Of Metals** (1993) and **Apart** (1995).

Former Happy The Man's keyboardist Kit Watkins (1) composed the austere **Thought Tones** (1992) and **Circle** (1993), a suite for electronic sounds and natural sounds.

Raphael (1) was one of Harold Budd's most austere followers on **Music To Disappear In** (1988) and **Angels Of The Deep** (1995), whereas Eliane Radigue (1) proved to be La Monte Young's greatest disciple on **Trilogie De La Mort** (1998).

Happy The Man's keyboardist Kit Watkins (1) too turned to ambient music. **Circle** (1993), which contains three suites for natural sounds and electronica.

In a lighter mood, Richard Bone (2) was equally at ease with the surreal synth-pop of **Vox Orbita** (1995) and the ambient symphony of **Eternal Now** (1996).

Cevin Key (1) of Skinny Puppy has composed a magniloquent symphony for "subconscious electronic orchestra", **Music For Cats** (1998), that mixes Brian Eno, Klaus Schulze and ambient house.

#### *Further developments*

Hood (1) began as followers of Flying Saucer Attack with **Cabled Linear Traction** (1994), but, via the melancholy folk-rock of **Rustic Houses Forlorn Valleys** (1998), they mutated into a different band. Their most original achievement, **Cold House** (2001), juxtaposed gentle melodies, acoustic instruments, layers of cutting-edge electronica, digital clicks and fractured beats, which resulted in pop songs undermined by a seismically fragile foundation.

Neil Campbell's Vibracathedral Orchestra (2) drew inspiration from minimalist composers such as LaMonte Young and Pauline Oliveros. working with a variety of acoustic instruments, as well as electronics, they turned **Lino Hi** (2000), **Versatile Arab Chord Chart** (2000) and **Dabbling With Gravity** (2002) into mystical experiences.

In Iceland, Sigur Ros (1) specialized in lengthy suites that leveraged celestial vocals and orchestral drones on **Agaetis Byrjun** (1999).

## **6.23 Appendix: Best albums of the 1990s**

1. Royal Trux: **Twin Infinitives** (Drag City)
  2. Nick Cave: **The Good Son** (Mute)
  3. Lisa Germano: **Geek The Girl** (4AD)
  4. Morphine: **Good** (Accurate, 1992)
- 
5. Mercury Rev: **Yerself Is Steam** (Beggars Banquet, 1991)

6. Vampire Rodents: **Lullaby Land** (Re-Constriction)
  7. Slint: **Spiderland** (Touch & Go)
  8. Fugazi: **Repeater** (Dischord, 1990)
  9. My Bloody Valentine: **Loveless** (Sire)
  10. Hash Jar Tempo: **Well Oiled** (Drunken Fish)
  11. Cop Shoot Cop: **Consumer Revolt** (Circuit, 1990)
  12. Babes In Toyland: **Fontanelle** (Reprise)
  13. Nine Inch Nails: **The Downward Spiral** (TVT)
- 
14. Type O Negative: **Slow Deep And Hard** (Roadrunner)
  15. Dogbowl: **Cyclops Nuclear Submarine Captain** (Shimmy Disc)
  16. Thinking Fellers Union Local 282: **Mother Of All Saints** (Matador)
  17. Tortoise: **Millions Now Living Will Never Die** (Thrill Jockey)
- 
18. Dadamah: **This Is Not A Dream** (Majora, 1992)
  19. Lycia: **The Burning Circle And Then Dust** (Projekt)
  20. Mark Lanegan: **Whiskey For The Holy Ghost** (SubPop)
  21. Magnetic Fields: **The Charm Of The Highway Strip** (Merge)
  22. Stereolab: **Transient Random Noise Bursts With Announcements** (Elektra)
  23. Lightwave: **Mundus Subterraneus** (Hearts Of Space)
  24. Rollins Band: **End Of Silence** (Imago)
  25. Jarboe: **Thirteen Masks** (Sky)
  26. Black Tape For A Blue Girl: **Remnants Of A Deeper Purity** (Projekt)
  27. Pain Teens: **Destroy Me Lover** (Trance Syndicate)
  28. Phish: **A Picture Of Nectar** (Elektra, 1992)
  29. Dirty Three: **Ocean Songs** (Touch & Go)
  30. Ed Hall: **Love Poke Here** (Boner)
  31. Orb: **U.F.Orb** (Big Life)
  32. Von Lmo: **Cosmic Interception** (Variant)
  33. Suspended Memories: **Forgotten Gods** (Hearts Of Space, 1993)
  34. Windy & Carl: **Drawing Of Sound** (Icon)
  35. For Carnation: **Marshmallows** (Matador)
  36. Labradford: **Labradford** (Kranky)
  37. Shinjuku Thief: **Bloody Tourist** (Extreme)
  38. Motherhead Bug: **Zambodia** (Pow Wow)
  39. Kenneth Newby: **Ecology Of Souls** (Songlines)
  40. Sugarsmack: **Top Loader** (Invisible)
  41. Unwound: **Fake Train** (Kill Rock Stars)
  42. Steve Roach: **World's Edge** (Fortuna, 1992)
  43. Kramer: **The Guilt Trip** (Shimmy-Disc)
  44. Autechre: **Incunabula** (Warp, 1993)
  45. Belly: **Star** (Sire)
  46. Aurora: **Dimension Gate** (Hyperion)
  47. Mo Boma: **Myths Of The Near Future** (Extreme)

48. Cows: **Sexy Pee Story** (Amphetamine Reptile)
49. Soul Coughing: **Ruby Vroom** (Slash)
50. Bardo Pond: **Bufo Alvarius** (Drunken Fish)
51. Today Is The Day: **Supernova** (Amphetamine Reptile)
52. Smog: **Wild Love** (Drag City)
53. Portishead: **Dummy** (Go Disc)
54. Mazzy Star: **So Tonight That I Might See** (Capitol)
55. Bark Psychosis: **Hex** (Circa)
56. Brainiac: **Hissing Prigs In Static Couture** (Touch & Go)
57. Velo-Deluxe: **Superelastic** (Mammoth)
58. Cobra Verde: **Viva La Muerte** (Scat)
59. Nirvana: **Nevermind** (Geffen)
60. Girls Against Boys: **Venus Luxure No 1 Baby** (Touch & Go)
61. Built To Spill: **Perfect From Now On** (Warner)
62. Pram: **Helium** (Too Pure, 1994)
63. Doldrums: **Acupuncture** (Kranky)
64. Vidna Obmana: **Spiritual Bonding** (Extreme)
65. Air Liquide: **The Increased Difficulty Of Concentration** (Smile)
66. Low: **Long Division** (Vernon Yard)
67. Six Finger Satellite: **The Pigeon Is The Most Popular Bird** (SubPop)
68. Johnboy: **Pistol Swing** (Trance)
69. Today Is The Day: **Temple Of The Morning Star** (Relapse)
70. Hash Jar Tempo: **Under Glass** (Drunken Fish)
71. Cul De Sac: **Crashes To Light** (Thirsty Ear)
72. Sive Style: **Miniature Portraits** (SubPop)
73. Bran Van 3000: **Glee** (Capitol)
74. Calexico: **The Black Light** (Touch And Go)
75. Red House Painters: **Down Colorful Hill** (4AD)
76. Robert Rich: **Seven Veils** (Hearts Of Space, 1998)
77. **Unsane** (Matador)
78. Jesus Lizard: **Goat** (Touch & Go)
79. Jon Spencer Blues Explosion: **Orange** (Matador)
80. Firewater: **The Ponzi Scheme** (Jetset)
81. Gallon Drunk: **You The Night And The Music** (Clawfist, 1992)
82. Orbital: **II** (Ffrr)
83. Primus: **Sailing The Seas Of Cheese** (Interscope)
84. Transglobal Underground: **Dream Of 100 Nations** (Nation)
85. Amon Tobin: **Bricolage** (Ninjatune, 1997)
86. Liz Phair: **Exile In Guyville** (Matador)
87. Breeders: **Last Splash** (Elektra)
88. Slowdive: **Just For A Day** (Creation)
89. Tindersticks : **self-titled** (Rough Trade)
90. Juliana Hatfield: **Hey Babe** (Mammoth)
91. Robin Holcomb: **self-titled** (Elektra)

92. Subarachnoid Space: **Delicate Membrane** (Charnel Music)
93. Gravatar: **Now The Road Of Knives** (Charnel)
94. Dissolve: **Third Album For The Sun** (Kranky)
95. Polvo: Exploded Drawing (Touch & Go)
96. Run On: **Start Packing** (Matador)
97. Bugskull: **Phantasies And Senseitions** (Road Cone)
98. Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments: **Straight To Video** (Anyway)
99. Kyuss: **Blues For The Red Sun** (Dali)
100. Jane's Addiction: **Ritual de lo Habitual** (Warner)
101. Sun City Girls: **Torch Of The Mystics** (Majora)
102. Pegboy: **Strong Reaction** (Quartersticks, 1991)
103. Daniel Johnston: **1990** (Shimmy Disc)
104. Geraldine Fibbers: **Butch** (Virgin)
105. Flying Luttenbachers: **Revenge** (Skin Graft, 1996)
106. Ozric Tentacles: **Erpland** (Demi Monde)
107. Swans: **White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity** (Young God)
108. Nation Of Ulysses: **Plays Pretty For Baby** (Dischord)
109. Screeching Weasel: **My Brain Hurts** (Lookout)
110. Pavement: **Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain** (Big Cat)
111. Yo La Tengo: **May I Sing With Me** (Alias, 1992)
112. Paul Schutze: New Maps Of Hell (Extreme, 1992)
113. New Bomb Turks: **Destroy Oh Boy** (Crypt, 1993)
114. Tori Amos: **From The Choirgirl Hotel** (Atlantic)
115. Belle & Sebastian: **If You're Feeling Sinister** (Enclave, 1997)
116. Bjork: **Homogenic** (Elektra, 1997)

## 6.24 The greatest bands of the 1990s

1. Tortoise
2. Morphine
3. Bardo Pond
4. Nine Inch Nails
5. Cop Shoot Cop
6. Cul De Sac
7. Royal Trux
8. Slint
9. Lisa Germano
10. Vampire Rodents
11. Built To Spill
12. Orb
13. Soul Coughing
14. Portishead
15. Dirty Three
16. My Bloody Valentine

17. Lycia
18. Magnetic Fields
19. Lightwave
20. Thinking Fellers Union Local 282
21. Mercury Rev
22. Black Tape For A Blue Girl
23. Stereolab
24. Autechre
25. Type O Negative
26. Jon Spencer Blues Explosion
27. Jesus Lizard
28. Primus
29. Nirvana
30. Girls Against Boys
31. Red House Painters
32. Labradford
33. Today Is The Day
34. Smog
35. Rollins Band
36. Babes In Toyland
37. Dogbowl
38. For Carnation
39. Cows
40. Ed Hall
41. Jarboe
42. Roy Montgomery
43. Pain Teens
44. Phish
45. Windy & Carl
46. Unwound
47. Belly
48. Aurora
49. Mo Boma
50. Polvo
51. Mazzy Star
52. Bark Psychosis
53. Brainiac
54. Cobra Verde
55. Vidna Obmana
56. Low
57. Six Finger Satellite
58. 5ive Style
59. Bran Van 3000
60. Juliana Hatfield

61. Unsane
62. Orbital
63. Transglobal Underground
64. Liz Phair
65. Breeders
66. Tindersticks
67. Pavement
68. Gravitator
69. Subarachnoid Space
70. Radiohead
71. Run On
72. Bugskull
73. Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments
74. Kyuss
75. Sun City Girls
76. Robin Holcomb
77. Daniel Johnston
78. Ozric Tentacles

## 7 2000

The 1990s saw the apex and the downfall of the music industry. In 1979 Sony and Philips had invented the compact disc (CD), a digital storage for music, and the same year Sony had launched the "Walkman" portable stereo. In 1981 MTV debuted on cable tv. During the 1980s these innovations spread and redesigned the way music was marketed and sold. As the new paradigm took hold, the music industry seemed to enjoy its best time ever. In 1996 Mariah Carey's *One Sweet Day* topped the U.S. charts for an unprecedented 16 weeks, breaking all the Presley and Beatles records. In 1997 Elton John's *Candle in the Wind* became the best-selling song of all times, passing Bing Crosby's *White Christmas*. In 1999 'N Sync set the new record of sales in the first week of a new release (2.4 million copies)

In 1999 the music world was ruled by five majors:

1. Seagram/Polygram/Universal,
2. Warner/Elektra/Sire/Atlantic,
3. Sony/Columbia/Epic,
4. EMI/Virgin/Capitol/Chrysalis,
5. BMG/Jive/Private/American/Windham Hill. The world's music market was worth 38 billion dollars. The five "majors" controlled 95% of all albums sold in the world, and 84% of the 755 million albums sold in the USA:
  1. Universal with 27% (26.3% in the USA),
  2. Warner with 20% (15.7%),
  3. Sony with 18% (16.2%),
  4. EMI with 16% (9.4%),
  5. BMG with 14% (16%).

The USA accounted for 37% of world sales, Japan for 16.7%, Britain for 7.6%, Germany for 7.4%, France for 5.2%, Canada for 2.3%, Australia for 1.7%, Brazil for 1.6%, Holland for 1.5%, Italy for 1.4%. Basically, the

compact disc had helped the music industry to multiply its revenues. But the record companies missed the real "enemy". In 1999 Shawn Fanning founded the Napster on-line music service that allowed anyone with a computer and a modem to share music files with others over the Internet. They could be played on the PC itself or on the portable MP3 devices (that had been introduced in 1998). Millions of Internet users did not need to pay outrageous prices for their favorite music: in fact, they didn't need to pay anything.

In 2000 French media giant Vivendi purchased Seagram: Warner remained the only American "major", as Universal had become French, Sony was Japanese, EMI was British, and BMG was German.

In 2001 sales for the record industry slipped 5% (their first decline in ages), a fact that was widely blamed on the on-line sharing services. The same year, Napster was found guilty of breaching copyright law and forced to suspend its service, but others took its place.

- 2000: life expectancy in the USA is 77
- 2000: the NASDAQ stock market crashes, wiping out trillions of dollars of wealth
- 2000: the population of the USA is 280 million and the most populated state is California with over 30 million people
- 2000: British and American biologists decipher the entire human DNA
- 2000: Clinton announces a record budget surplus, the largest in US history
- 2000: George W Bush becomes president on a technicality, even though Clinton's vice-president Al Gore wins the majority of votes
- 2000: the divorce rate in the USA is 57%, the highest ever in history
- 2001: the USA enters a recession, ending the longest economic expansion of its history
- 2001: the USA tests a missile defence shield
- 2001: the Voyager leaves the solar system
- 2001: Arab terrorists affiliated with Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization blow up the World Trade Center, killing 4,000 people
- 2001: the USA bombs the Taliban out of power in Afghanistan and chases Al Qaeda members throughout the world
- 2001: several cases of the biological weapon anthrax are detected around the United States
- 2001: Bush announces that the US withdraws from the anti-ballistic treaty (ABM)
- 2001: 3% of the American population is in jail
- 2002: Russia becomes an ally of NATO
- 2002: US stock markets crash, following corporate scandals, the third consecutive year of decline
- 2002: Bush announces the first budget deficit since 1998, bringing the grand total to six million billion dollars (about \$21,000 per US citizen)
- 2002: American scientists synthesize a live virus from chemicals
- 2002: Wal-Mart is the biggest company in the world with over 200 billion dollars in revenues (followed by Exxon and General Motors, also American)
- 2002: the West Nile virus spreads from state to state and kills dozens of

people

- 2002: George W Bush enacts a doctrine of first strike against foes and of continued military supremacy by the USA
- 2002: a serial sniper (John Allen "MUhammad" Williams) shoots a dozen people at random in the Washington/Maryland area

## 8 Appendix: Chronology of Events

1888	? Charles Ives' "Variations on America" is the first polytonal piece
1892	? Popular music becomes big business and music publishers rent offices around Union Square in New York City, an area that is renamed "Tin Pan Alley" (sheet music is the primary "product" of popular music and the industry is dominated by music publishing houses)
1894	? Hawaiian guitarist Joseph Kekeku invents the slide guitar (by fretting the guitar with a comb)
1895	? the first jazz band, the Spasm Band, first performs in New Orleans
1905	? Arnold Schoenberg composes atonal music
1906	? Thaddeus Cahill builds the first electronic instrument
1907	? Ferruccio Busoni publishes "Entwurf einer neuen Aesthetic der Tonkunst", predicting the use of dissonant and electric sound in musical composition
1909	? The term "jazz" is used for the first time in the song <i>Uncle Josh in Society</i> (but it refers to ragtime)
1910	? John Lomax publishes "Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads"
1911	? Arnold Schoenberg publishes the book "Theory of Harmony", in which he preaches the 12-tone system of composition (the first form of "serialism")
1912	? The American Society for Composers (ASCAP) is founded to protect songwriters ? The first blues is published, Hart Wand's <i>Dallas Blues</i>  ? Henry Cowell introduces "tone clusters" in <i>The Tides of Manaunaun</i> (1912) by striking the keys with forearm and fist
1913	? Italian "futurist" Luigi Russolo publishes "L'Arte dei Rumori", in which he proclaims noise to be the sound of the 20th century, and especially noise produced by machines, such as his own "Intonarumori"
1914	? Jerome Kern invents the "musical" by integrating music, drama and ballet and setting it into the present 
1916	? Henry Cowell composes quartets using combinations of rhythms and overtones that are impossible to play by humans
1916	? Cecil Sharp publishes a collection of folk music from the Appalachian mountains

**History Of Rock Music(Compiled By Prodigy)**

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1917	? The first jazz record is cut in New York 🇺🇸
1920	? Mamie Smith's <i>Crazy Blues</i> is the first blues to become a nation-wide hit ? Eric Satie composes music not to be listened to ("musique d'ameublement", furniture music)
1921	? 106 million records are sold in the USA, mostly published on "Tin Pan Alley", but control of the market is shifting to the record companies
1922	? Trixie Smith cuts <i>My Man Rocks Me With One Steady Roll</i> ? Texan fiddler Eck Robertson cuts the first record of "old-time music"
1923	? Bessie Smith cuts her first blues record ? John Carson records two "hillbilly" songs and thus founds country music 🇺🇸
1924	? The Music Corporation of America (MCA) is founded in Chicago as a talent agency ? German record company Deutsche Grammophon (DG) founds the Polydor company to distribute records abroad ? Riley Puckett introduces the "yodeling" style of singing into country music
1925	? The Mills Brothers popularize the "barbershop harmonies" ? Carl Sprague is the first musician to record cowboy songs (the first "singing cowboy" of country music) ? Nashville's first radio station is founded (WSM) and begins broadcasting a program that will change name to "Grand Ole Opry"
1926	? Bing Crosby cuts his first record and invents the "crooning" style of singing thanks to a new kind of microphone ? Blind Lemon Jefferson is the first bluesman to enter a major recording studio ? Will Shade founds the first "jug band" in Memphis, inspired by Louisville's first jug bands ? Vitaphone introduces 16-inch acetate-coated shellac discs playing at 33 1/3 RPM (a size and speed calculated to be the equivalent of a reel of film) ? General Electric founds the Radio Corporation of America (RCA)
1927	? Russian composer Leon Termen performs the first concerto with the "theremin" ? Jimmie Rodgers, the first star of country music, adopts "yodeling" style of singing, the blues style of black music, and the Hawaiian slide guitar ? Classical composer Kurt Weill begins a collaboration with playwright Bertold Brecht, incorporating jazz, folk and pop elements in his soundtracks
1928	? The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) of 47 affiliate stations is founded ? Maurice Martenot invents an electronic instrument, the Ondes-Martenot
1929	? Decca is founded in Britain as a classical music company ? RCA buys Victor Talking Machines ? The "Great Depression" destroys the record industry ? Boogie pianist Meade Lux Lewis cuts <i>Honky-tonk Train</i> ? Blind Lemon Jefferson dies
1930	? The first "fanzines", science fiction pulp magazines "Comet" and "Time Traveller", are founded, to allow sci-fi fans to communicate

## History Of Rock Music(Compiled By Prodigy)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Leon Termen invents the first rhythm machine, the "Rhythmicon"</li> </ul>
1931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? EMI, formed by the merge of Gramophone and the British subsidiary of Columbia, opens the largest recording studio in the world at Abbey Road in London</li> <li>? Edgar Varese premieres a piece for percussions, <i>Ionisation</i></li> <li>? Adolph Rickenbacker invents the electric guitar</li> <li>? Gene Autry's <i>Silver Hairde Daddy Of Mine</i> popularizes the "honky-tonk" style of country music</li> </ul>
1932	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Thomas Dorsey's <i>Precious Lord</i> invents gospel music in Chicago </li> <li>? Milton Brown and Bob Wills invent "western swing" </li> </ul>
1933	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Cuban bandleader Ignacio Pineiro releases <i>Echale Salsita</i>, the song that gives the name "salsa" to Cuba's dance music</li> <li>? Only six million records are sold in the USA</li> <li>? Jimmie Rodgers dies</li> </ul>
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? John Lomax and his son Alan begin recording black music of the southern states, and discover the gospel genre of "rocking and reeling"</li> <li>? Laurens Hammond invents the Hammond organ</li> <li>? Bill Monroe's <i>Kentucky Waltz</i> popularizes the "bluegrass" style</li> </ul>
1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The radio program "Hit Parade" is launched</li> <li>? Woody Guthrie writes the <i>Dust Bowl Ballads</i> and becomes the first major singer-songwriter</li> <li>? Max Gordon founds the jazz club "Village Vanguard" in New York</li> </ul>
1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Roy Acuff becomes the first star of Nashville's country music</li> </ul>
1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Records by the "big bands" are the best sellers</li> </ul>
1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Bluesman Robert Johnson cuts his first record</li> <li>? Pete Johnson and Joe Turner cut their first boogie records in Kansas City</li> <li>? Boom of boogie woogie in Chicago</li> <li>? CBS buys Columbia</li> </ul>
1939	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Leo Mintz founds a record store in Cleveland, the "Record Rendezvous", specializing in black music</li> <li>? John Cage composes <i>Imaginary Landascape N.1</i> for magnetic tape</li> <li>? The "Grand Ole Pry" moves to Nashville's "Ryman Auditorium" and is broadcasted by the national networks</li> <li>? The Panoram visual jukebox is invented (plays short films of records, the first music videos)</li> </ul>
1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Disney's "Fantasia" introduces stereo sound</li> <li>? Pete Seeger forms the Almanac Singers to sing protest songs with communist overtones</li> </ul>
1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Arkansas' radio station KFFA hires Sonny Boy Williamson to advertise groceries, the first case of mass exposure by blues singers</li> <li>? "La Discotheque" opens in paris, a club devoted to jazz music</li> </ul>
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Bing Crosby's <i>White Christmas</i> becomes the best-selling song of all times (and will remain so for 50 years)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Louis Jordan launches "jump blues" (rhythm and blues) with <i>Choo Choo Ch'Boogie</i> </li> <li>? Los Angeles bluesman T-Bone Walker incorporates jazz chords into the blues guitar with <i>I Got A Break Baby</i></li> <li>? Capitol is founded in Hollywood, the first major music company which is not based in New York</li> <li>? Savoy is founded in Newark (NJ) to promote black music</li> </ul>
1943	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The first "disc jockeys" follow the American troops abroad</li> <li>? Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein produce the musical <i>Oklahoma</i> that uses choreographer Agnes de Mille to design the ballets</li> <li>? King is founded in Cincinnati to promote black music</li> </ul>
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Les Paul invents "echo delay", "multi-tracking" and many other studio techniques</li> <li>? White bluesman Johnny Otis assembles a combo for <i>Harlem Nocturne</i> that is basically a shrunk-down version of the big-bands of swing</li> <li>? Mercury is founded in Chicago</li> <li>? Jules Bihari founds Modern Records in Los Angeles, specializing in black music</li> </ul>
1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Muddy Waters cuts the first records of Chicago's electric blues</li> <li>? Carl Hogan plays a powerful guitar riff on Louis Jordan's <i>Ain't That Just Like a Woman</i></li> <li>? Damstadt in Germany sets up a school for avantgarde composers</li> <li>? Lew Chudd founds Imperial Records in Los Angeles, specializing in black music</li> <li>? The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) film company opens a recording business to sell their movie soundtracks</li> <li>? Specialty Records is founded by Art Rupe in Los Angeles to specialize in black popular music</li> </ul>
1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? "Billboard" writer Jerry Wexler invents the term "rhythm and blues" for electric blues</li> <li>? Roy Brown writes and cuts <i>Good Rockin' Tonight</i> in Texas</li> <li>? Six majors control the music market: Columbia, RCA Victor, Decca, Capitol, MGM, Mercury</li> <li>? The Hollywood-based tv program of Korla Pandit (John Red), pretending to be an Indian guru and playing a Hammond organ, publicizes exotic sounds</li> <li>? Chess Records is founded in Chicago by two Polish-born Jews to promote rhythm and blues</li> <li>? Ahmet Ertegun founds Atlantic in New York to promote black music at the border between jazz, rhythm and blues and pop</li> </ul>
1948	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Pete Seeger forms the Weavers, which start the "folk revival"</li> <li>? Detroit rhythm'n'blues saxophonist Wild Bill Moore releases <i>We're Gonna Rock We're Gonna Roll</i></li> <li>? Columbia introduces the 12-inch 33-1/3 RPM long-playing vinyl record</li> <li>? Pierre Schaeffer creates a laboratory for "musique concrete" in Paris and performs a concerto for noises </li> <li>? Rodgers &amp; Hammerstein's <b>Tale Of The South Pacific</b> introduces exotic sounds to Broadway</li> <li>? Ed Sullivan starts a variety show on national television (later renamed "Ed Sullivan Show")</li> <li>? Homer Dudley invents the Vocoder (Voice Operated recorder)</li> <li>? Memphis' radio station WDIA hires Nat Williams, the first black disc jockey</li> <li>? The magazine "Billboard" introduces charts for "folk" and "race" records</li> </ul>
1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Moondog virtually invents every future genre of rock music</li> <li>? Fats Domino cuts <i>The Fat Man</i>, a new kind of boogie</li> <li>? Hank Williams' <i>Lovesick Blues</i> reaches the top of the country charts</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Scatman Crothers cuts <i>I Want To Rock And Roll</i> (1949), with Wild Bill Moore on saxophone</li> <li>? RCA Victor introduces the 45 RPM vinyl record</li> <li>? Todd Storz of the KOWH radio station starts the "Top 40" radio program</li> <li>? The "Billboard" chart for "race" records becomes the chart for "rhythm and blues" records</li> <li>? Aristocrat changes its name to Chess</li> </ul>
1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Jac Holzman founds Elektra in New York to promote new folk and jazz musicians</li> <li>? Les Baxter's <b>Music Out of the Moon</b> incorporates exotic themes in instrumental music</li> <li>? Dutch electronics giant Philips enters the recording business</li> </ul>
1951	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The white Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed decides to speculate on the success of Leo Mintz's store and starts a radio program, "Moondog Rock'n'Roll Party", that broadcasts black music to an audience of white teenagers</li> <li>? The first rock and roll record, Ike Turner's <i>Rocket 88</i>, is released</li> <li>? The first juke-box that plays 45 RPM records is introduced</li> <li>? Karlheinz Stockhausen joins the school of music at Darmstadt and begins composing "elektronische musik"</li> <li>? The French national radio sets up a studio to record electronic music in Paris and the West Deutsche Radio creates a similar studio in Cologne (the NWDR)</li> <li>? John Cage composes music for radio frequencies</li> <li>? Howling Wolf and Joe Turner popularize the "shouters"</li> <li>? Victor and Columbia agree to split the record market: Victor sells 33 RPM long-playing records and Columbia sells 45 RPM records</li> <li>? Gunter Lee Carr cuts the dance novelty <i>We're Gonna Rock</i></li> <li>? The first Jamaican studio opens and begins recording "mento" music</li> </ul>
1952	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Bill Haley forms the Comets, the first rock and roll band</li> <li>? The Weavers, accused of being communists, are forced to dissolve</li> <li>? Dick Clark's "Bandstand" tv program airs from Philadelphia every weekday afternoon</li> <li>? The Cleveland disc jockey Alan Freed (aka Moondog) organizes the first rock and roll concert, the "Moondog Coronation Ball"</li> <li>? John Cage composes multi-media pieces that use a computer</li> <li>? Les Paul invents the Gibson guitar, the first solid-body electric guitar</li> <li>? Roscoe Gordon, a Memphis pianist, invents the "ska" beat with <i>No More Doggin'</i></li> <li>? Sam Phillips founds Sun Records and declares "If I could find a white man who sings with the Negro feel, I'll make a million dollars"</li> <li>? Electronic engineers Harry Olsen and Hebert Belar create the first synthesizer at RCA's Princeton Laboratories, the Mark I</li> <li>? Charles Brown's <i>Hard Times</i> is the first hit by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller to enter the charts</li> </ul>
1953	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Bill Haley's <i>Crazy Man Crazy</i> is the first rock and roll song to enter the Billboard charts</li> <li>? The Orioles' <i>Crying in the Chapel</i> is the first black hit to top the white pop charts</li> <li>? Leo Fender invents the Stratocaster guitar</li> <li>? Sam Phillips records the first Elvis Presley record in his Sun studio of Memphis using two recorders to produce an effect of "slapback" audio delay</li> <li>? Hank Williams dies at 30</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? CBS launches a sub-label, Epic</li> <li>? The black market constitutes 5.7% of the total American market for records</li> <li>? Vee-Jay is founded in Indiana, owned by a black couple and specializing in black music</li> </ul>
1954	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Boom of doo-wop</li> <li>? Bill Haley's "Rock Around The clock" is the first rock song used in a movie soundtrack</li> <li>? Joe Turner cuts the blues novelty <i>Shake Rattle And Roll</i></li> <li>? The record companies switch from 78 RPMs to 45 RPMs</li> <li>? EMI buys Capitol</li> <li>? The Country Music Disc Jockeys' Association (CMA) is founded in Nashville</li> <li>? Japanese electronic company TTK (later Sony) introduces the world's first transistor radio</li> <li>? The first Newport Jazz Festival is held, the first jazz festival in the world</li> <li>? Otto Luening's <i>Fantasy In Space</i> and Vladimir Ussachevsky's <i>A Poem In Cycles And Bells</i> pioneer "tape music" at Columbia University</li> </ul>
1955	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? "Rebel Without A Cause" and "Blackboard Jungle" establish a new role model for teenagers, the rebellious loner and sometimes juvenile delinquent</li> <li>? Pete Seeger releases the first album of African music by a white musician, <b>Bantu Choral Folk Songs</b></li> <li>? Lonnie Donegan's <i>Rock Island Line</i> launches a new genre in Britain, "skiffle"</li> <li>? Hungarian composer Georg Ligeti, while studying at Cologne, coins a "texture music" that has minimal movement</li> <li>? Chuck Berry cuts his first rock and roll records, the first ones to have the guitar as the main instrument, and invents the descending pentatonic double-stops (the essence of rock guitar)</li> <li>? Bo Diddley invents the "hambone" rhythm</li> <li>? The Chordettes and the Chantels are the first girl-groups</li> <li>? Ray Charles invents "soul" music with <i>I Got A Woman</i>, a secular adaptation of an old gospel </li> <li>? The magazine "Village Voice" is founded by Dan Wolf, Ed Fancher and Norman Mailer</li> <li>? Ace Records is formed by Johnny Vincent in New Orleans, specializing in black music</li> </ul>
1956	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? <i>Heartbreak Hotel</i> starts Presley-mania</li> <li>? The rock'n'roll music of white rockers is called "rockabilly" (rock + hillbilly)</li> <li>? Screamin Jay Hawkins' <i>I Put A Spell On You</i> introduces voodoo into rock'n'roll</li> <li>? Wanda Jackson is the "queen of rockabilly"</li> <li>? The popularity of rock and roll causes the record industry to boom and allows independent labels to flourish</li> <li>? Ska develops in Jamaica</li> <li>? Martin Denny's <b>Exotica</b> invents a new genre</li> <li>? Louis and Bebe Barron's soundtrack for the science-fiction film <b>Forbidden Planet</b> uses only electronic instruments</li> <li>? Norman Granz founds Verve to promote alternative jazz musicians</li> <li>? Elektra pioneers the "compilation" record, containing songs by different musicians</li> </ul>
1957	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Golden age of the teen-idols</li> <li>? Link Wray's <i>Rumble</i> invents the "fuzz-tone" guitar sound</li> <li>? LaMonte Young composes music for sustained tones</li> <li>? Max Mathews begins composing computer music at Bell Laboratories</li> <li>? Harry Belafonte's <i>Banana Boat</i> launches "calypso"</li> </ul>

1958	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Golden age of instrumental rock</li> <li>? Eddie Cochran overdubs all instruments and vocals on <i>Summertime Blues</i> and <i>C'mon Everybody</i></li> <li>? The Kingstone Trio's <i>Tom Dooley</i> launches the folk revival</li> <li>? Lowman Pauling invents guitar distortion and feedback on the Five Royales' <i>The Slummer The Slum</i></li> <li>? The film company Warner Brothers enters the recording business</li> <li>? Big Bill Broonzy dies at 65</li> <li>? RCA introduces the first stereo long-playing records</li> <li>? Don Kirshner opens offices at the Brill Building</li> <li>? David Seville's <i>The Witch Doctor</i> and the Tokens' <i>Tonite I Fell In Love</i> are the first novelty hits</li> <li>? Edgar Varese premieres his <i>Poeme Electronique</i> in a special pavilion designed by architect Le Corbusier, where the music reacts with the environment</li> <li>? John Fahey invents "American primitivism"</li> <li>? Bobby Freeman's <i>Do You Wanna Dance</i> begins the "dance craze"</li> <li>? The Columbia-Princeton studio is established in New York for avantgarde composers, with an RCA Mark II synthesizer</li> <li>? Stax is founded in Memphis to promote black music</li> </ul>
1959	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Frank Zappa and Donald Van Vliet cut a record together</li> <li>? In Jamaica Theophilus Beckford cuts the first "ska" song, <i>Easy Snapping</i></li> <li>? Rick Hall founds the FAME studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama</li> <li>? The Drifters' <i>There Goes My Baby</i> introduces Latin rhythm to pop music</li> <li>? The first Newport Folk Festival is held</li> <li>? John Cage performs "live electronic music"</li> <li>? LaMonte Young and others found the "Fluxus" movement</li> <li>? Barry Gordy founds Tamla Motown in Detroit to release party-oriented soul records</li> <li>? Chris Blackwell founds Island in Jamaica</li> <li>? Morton Subotnick, Terry Riley, Pauline Oliveros and others found the "Tape Music Center" near San Francisco</li> <li>? Raymond Scott invents the first sequencer, the "Wall of Sound"</li> <li>? 600 million records are sold in the USA</li> <li>? Buddy Holly dies at 22 in a plane crash</li> <li>? Since 1955, the US market share of the four "majors" has dropped from 78% to 44%, while the market share of independent record companies increased from 22% to 56%</li> <li>? Since 1955, the US market has increased from 213 million dollars to 603 million, and the market share of rock and roll has increased from 15.7% to 42.7%</li> </ul>
1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Twist is the biggest dance-craze in the year of the dance-crazes</li> <li>? Larry Parnes, Britain's most famous impresario, arranges a show for the Silver Beatles in Liverpool</li> <li>? The Shirelles' <i>Will You Love Me Tomorrow</i> coins a form of romantic multi-part vocal harmonies</li> <li>? The British producer Joe Meek uses the recording studio like an instrument for <b>I Hear a New World</b></li> <li>? Eddie Cochran dies at 22</li> <li>? The word "reggae" is coined in Jamaica to identify a "ragged" style of dance music, with its roots in New Orleans rhythm and blues 🚫</li> <li>? The movie-jukebox "Scopitone" is invented in France (a refinement of the Panoram)</li> <li>? Russ Solomon opens the first Tower Records in Sacramento (California), the first music megastore</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Philips buys Mercury</li> <li>? Frank Sinatra founds Reprise Records</li> </ul>
1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Dick Dale uses the term "surfing" to describe his instrumental rock and roll 🚫</li> <li>? Bob Dylan arrives at New York's Greenwich Village</li> <li>? British bluesman Alexis Korner forms the Blues Incorporated, with a rotating cast that will include Charlie Watts, John Surman, John McLaughlin, Mick Jagger, Brian Jones, Keith Richard, Eric Burdon, Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker, etc</li> <li>? Howling Wolf cuts the <b>Rocking Chair</b> album, the masterpiece of rhythm'n'blues</li> <li>? July: The magazine "Mersey Beat" is founded in Liverpool</li> <li>? The Tokens' <i>The Lion Sleeps Tonight</i> uses operatic singing, Neapolitan choir, yodel, proto-electronics</li> <li>? Stax begins to produce soul records in Memphis</li> <li>? Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff found Philadelphia International to produce soul records with orchestral arrangements</li> <li>? Robert Ashley and Gordon Mumma organize the first ONCE festival of avantgarde music at Ann Arbor (Michigan)</li> <li>? LaMonte Young creates the "dream house", where the environment is part of the music</li> <li>? MGM buys Verve</li> <li>? The "Peppermint Lounge" opens in New York</li> </ul>
1962	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The Beach Boys' <i>Surfin'</i> (released in december 1961) launches surf-music in the charts</li> <li>? The American producer Phil Spector creates a style of production named "wall of sound"</li> <li>? the Tornado's futuristic instrumental <i>Telstar</i> is the first British record to top the USA charts</li> <li>? Most pop hits are written and produced at the Brill Building</li> <li>? First show of the Rolling Stones at the Marquee (July 12)</li> <li>? First show of the Beatles at the Cavern (August 18)</li> <li>? Robert Wyatt and others form the Wilde Flowers, the beginning of the dynasty of the Canterbury school</li> <li>? Seattle guitarist Jimi Hendrix begins working as a session-man</li> <li>? The bishop of New York forbids Catholic students from dancing the Twist</li> <li>? Golden age of the girl-groups</li> <li>? Herb Alpert founds A&amp;M in Los Angeles</li> <li>? Boom of the Tamla Motown record label</li> <li>? MCA buys the American recording company Decca</li> <li>? The US market share of the four "majors" drops to 26%</li> </ul>
1963	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? "Beatlesmania" hits Britain</li> <li>? The Trashmen's <i>Surfin' Bird</i> and the Surfaris' <i>Wipe Out</i> extend the scope of surf music</li> <li>? Davy Graham in Britain and Sandy Bull in the USA fuse folk, blues, jazz and Indian raga</li> <li>? Eric Clapton joins the Yardbirds</li> <li>? Daevid Allen of the Wilde Flowers experiments with tape loops</li> <li>? A soul record, Marvin Gaye's <i>Can I Get A Witness</i>, becomes the anthem of British mods</li> <li>? The Kingsmen stage the first <i>Louie Louie</i> marathon (playing the song over and over again for one hour), and garage-rock is born 🚫</li> <li>? Pierre Henry's <i>Rock Electronique</i> employs electronic riff and rhythm</li> <li>? 50% of American recordings are made in Nashville</li> <li>? Elmore James dies at 45</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The FBI spies on folksingers such as Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs.</li> <li>? Warner buys Reprise</li> </ul>
1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Don Van Vliet forms the Magic Band and adopts the nickname Captain Beefheart</li> <li>? Jesse Colin Young's <b>The Soul Of A City Boy</b> is a folk album that employs jazz musicians</li> <li>? The "British Invasion" exports to the USA the enthusiasm created by Beatlesmania in the UK</li> <li>? The riff of <i>You Really Got Me</i> by the Kinks virtually invents hard-rock</li> <li>? Millie Small's <i>My Boy Lollipop</i> is the first worldwide ska hit</li> <li>? The Yardbirds use guitars to produce feedback and fuzz</li> <li>? Debbie Reynolds makes a video for <i>If I Had A Hammer</i>, the first music video</li> <li>? Wilson Pickett creates an evil, ferocious kind of soul music with <i>In The Midnight Hour</i></li> <li>? Charles Dodge and James Randall perform "computer music"</li> <li>? ESP is founded by lawyer Bernard Stollman</li> </ul>
1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? March: Bob Dylan's <i>Mr Tambourine Man</i> begins the season of psychedelic music</li> <li>? June: the Byrds' version of <i>Mr Tambourine Man</i> invents "folk-rock"</li> <li>? The Supremes have four number-one hits and the Four Tops have two, all of them written by Tamla's team of Brian Holland, Lamond Dozier and Eddie Holland</li> <li>? John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, featuring Eric Clapton, import Chicago's rhythm and blues to Britain and become the epitome of "blues-rock"</li> <li>? Country Joe McDonald releases the first "rag babies", agit-prop music to support Berkeley's civil-rights movement</li> <li>? Fred Neil's <b>Bleecker And McDougal</b> is a folksinger who merges folk, blues and psychedelic music</li> <li>? James Brown coins a percussive style of soul, the predecessor of "funk"</li> <li>? Dick Clark's "Where the Action Is" airs from a different location every time</li> <li>? Graham Bond plays the first mellotron on record</li> <li>? The Righteous Brothers' <i>You've Lost That Loving Feeling</i> launches "blue-eyed soul"</li> <li>? The Rolling Stones' <i>Satisfaction</i> is banned by radio stations across the UK and USA</li> <li>? The "Diggers" turn San Francisco's Haight Ashbury into a "living theater"</li> <li>? Bob Dylan cuts <i>Like A Rolling Stone</i> and unveils an electric band at the Newport Festival</li> <li>? Sonny Boy Williamson dies at 66</li> <li>? The Who's <i>My Generation</i> creates a new kind of rebellious rock anthem</li> <li>? In America garage-bands spring up everywhere</li> <li>? Robbie Basho's <b>Seal Of The Blue Lotus</b> fuses raga, jazz, blues and pop music</li> <li>? The Kinks' <i>Till The End Of The Day</i> introduces Indian music into rock and roll</li> <li>? The Byrds' <i>Eight Miles High</i> invents raga-rock</li> <li>? The San Francisco band Charlatans perform for six days in front of a hippie crowd</li> <li>? Andy Warhol incorporates the Velvet Underground in his multimedia show "The Exploding Plastic Inevitable"</li> <li>? The Warlocks (Grateful Dead) are hired to play at the "acid tests" (Ken Kesey's LSD parties), where they perform lengthy instrumental jams, loosely based on country, blues and jazz</li> <li>? Otis Redding's <i>I've Been Lovin' You Too Long</i> is soul music in which the instrumental backing has de facto replaced the gospel choir</li> <li>? Terry Riley and Steve Reich compose music based on repetition of simple patterns ("minimalism")</li> <li>? October: The Family Dog Production organizes the first hippie festival at San Francisco's Long Shoreman's Hall</li> <li>? November: Bill Graham opens the "Fillmore" as a venue for San Francisco's new bands</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Bob Dylan's <b>Highway 61 revisited</b>, Donovan's <b>Fairy Tale</b></li> <li>? Alan Freed dies at 42 of a kidney disease</li> <li>? The "Whiskey-A-Go-Go" opens on Sunset Blvd in Hollywood</li> <li>? Noel Black's movie <b>SkaterDater</b> is the first skateboarding movie</li> </ul>
1966	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Boom of the blues revival in the USA and Britain</li> <li>? The Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead move to the Haight-Ashbury of San Francisco, the epicenter of "acid-rock" and of the "Summer of Love" 🚫</li> <li>? March: Bob Dylan's <b>Blonde On Blonde</b>, the first double record and the first concept album</li> <li>? The Velvet Underground cut their first record in two days in the spring of 1966</li> <li>? The 13th Floor Elevator's <b>The Psychedelic Sound Of</b> and the Jefferson Airplane's <b>Takes Off</b> are the first albums marketed as "psychedelic"</li> <li>? Paul Butterfield's <i>East-West</i> is a jam that fuses Afro-American and Indian improvisation</li> <li>? June: The elaborate arrangements of the Beach Boys' <b>Pet Sounds</b> define a new standard for pop music</li> <li>? July: Frank Zappa's <b>Freak Out</b>, the first double album of rock and roll</li> <li>? Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones plays dulcimer, flute, oboe, sitar, marimba, mellotron, etc on the band's singles</li> <li>? The Beach Boys' <i>Good Vibrations</i> is the first pop hit to employ electronic sounds</li> <li>? The Fugs' <i>Virgin Forest</i> experiments with collage, tapes and world-music</li> <li>? The Holy Modal Rounders invent "acid-folk"</li> <li>? Year of the jam: <i>Virgin Forest</i> by the Fugs, <i>Up In Her Room</i> by the Seeds, <i>Going Home</i> by the Rolling Stones, <i>Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands</i> by Bob Dylan, etc</li> <li>? The Cream, the first "power-trio" debut and sell millions of copies with albums of improvised jams</li> <li>? Bob Dylan has a serious motorcycle accident and disappears for a while</li> <li>? First bubblegum hits</li> <li>? London disc-jockey John Peel begins broadcasting American psychedelic music from his radio program "Perfumed Garden"</li> <li>? The UFO Club begins organizing "Spontaneous Underground" shows in London</li> <li>? The magazine "Crawdaddy" is founded in New York</li> <li>? Sire is founded in London</li> <li>? Robert Moog begins selling his synthesizer</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: 13th Floor Elevator's <b>Psychedelic Sound</b>, Laura Nyro's <b>More Than A New Discovery</b>, Fugs' <b>Second Album</b>, West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band's <b>Part One</b></li> </ul>
1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? A "Human Be-In" is held at the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco</li> <li>? June: Monterey festival</li> <li>? Ralph Gleason founds the magazine "Rolling Stone"</li> <li>? <b>Velvet Underground &amp; Nico</b> (january) introduces droning, cacophony and repetition (besides improvisation) to rock music, and connects rock music to the avantgarde</li> <li>? Frank Zappa releases <b>Absolutely Free</b>, the first rock opera</li> <li>? Dyke And The Blazers cut <i>Funky Broadway</i>, the song that gives a genre its name</li> <li>? <b>The Doors</b> (january) fuses rock and roll, blues, psychedelia, Indian raga, free-form poetry and drama</li> <li>? The Jefferson Airplane's <b>Surrealistic Pillow</b> (february) is the first album of San Francisco's acid-rock</li> <li>? Red Crayola's <b>Parable Of Arable Land</b> (march) turns psychedelic rock into abstract sound-painting</li> <li>? The Incredible String Band's <b>5,000 Spirits</b> introduces medieval and middle-eastern music into rock and roll</li> </ul>

- ? Jimi Hendrix debuts and turns the electric guitar into the equivalent of the symphonic orchestra
- ? The Pink Floyd debut and invent space-rock with *Interstellar Overdrive*
- ? Family Stone's bassist Larry Graham invents the "funk" bass lines
- ? Swedish band Parson Sound fuses rock and minimalism in lengthy trance-drone jams
- ? The French composer Pierre Henry writes a rock mass, **Messe Pour Le Temp Present**, that mixes symphonic, rock and electronic instruments
- ? The Nice perform keyboard-driven arrangements of classical and jazz music
- ? 40 psychedelic bands perform at the "14 Hours Technicolour Dream" in London
- ? Otis Redding dies at 26
- ? Woody Guthrie dies at 55
- ? Mort Garson's **Zodiac Cosmic Sounds** employs synthesizers
- ? Warner Brothers purchases Atlantic
- ? Chrysalis is founded in London
- ? The alternative press flourishes and a number of alternative papers unite in the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), including the Los Angeles Free Press, the East Village Other, the Berkeley Barb, San Francisco's Oracle, Detroit's Fifth Estate, Chicago's Seed, and Austin's Rag
- ? In Jamaica, disc jockey Ruddy Redwood makes instrumental versions of reggae hits
- ? Neil Diamond's *Red Red Wine* is the first reggae hit by a pop musician
- ? Morton Subotnick releases a free improvisation on synthesizer, *Silver Apples of the Moon*, the first work specifically commissioned for the recording medium
- ? Other significant albums of the year: Captain Beefheart's **Safe As Milk**, Holy Modal Rounders's **Indian War Whoop**, Love's **Da Capo**, Jefferson Airplane's **After Bathing At Baxter's**, Kaleidoscope's **Side Trips**

1968

- ? The Electric Prunes release a mass performed with rock instruments, **Mass In F Minor**
- ? Gram Parsons invents "country-rock" with the International Submarine Band 
- ? The Creedence Clearwater Revival fuse Louisiana blues, soul and folk-rock
- ? The Cockettes, a hippie-decadent musical theater troupe of drag queens, debuts in San Francisco, the first glam-rock experience
- ? The Soft Machine debut, the leading group of the Canterbury school 
- ? The Silver Apples experiment with electronics in a rock and roll format
- ? The Steppenwolf's *Born To Be Wild* contains the expression "heavy metal" that comes to identify a new genre 
- ? Blue Cheer debut, playing heavy psychedelic music (the prototype for stoner-rock) 
- ? Toots And The Maytals' *Do The Reggae* launches reggae in the USA
- ? Joni Mitchell establishes the figure of the intellectual female singer-songwriter
- ? The Band's **Music From Big Pink** invents "roots-rock" by fusing folk, gospel, country, and rock
- ? The Pretty Things' **S.F. Sorrow** is the first British rock opera
- ? Van Morrison's **Astral Weeks** invents abstract, free-form folk-rock by fusing soul, jazz, folk and psychedelia
- ? Tim Buckley's **Happy Sad** fuses folk and free-jazz
- ? John Fahey's **Voice Of The Turtle** fuses instrumental folk, jazz and raga
- ? The Pentangle and the Fairport Convention debut, the leading groups of British folk-rock
- ? The musical "Hair" opens on Broadway, the first musical that uses rock music
- ? 10,000 people attend the first Isle of Wight festival in England
- ? Bob Krasnow founds Blue Thumb, that values the cover design as much as the music

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Walter Carlos' <b>Switched On Bach</b> turns the synthesizer into a pop instrument</li> <li>? Syd Barrett, mentally unstable, leaves the Pink Floyd</li> <li>? Conrad Schnitzler, Hans-Joachim Roedelius and Klaus Schulze found the Zodiak Free Arts Lab in Berlin, the first venue for electronic music</li> <li>? The magazine "Creem" is founded in Detroit, with Lester Bangs, Robert Christgau, Dave Marsh</li> <li>? Youstol Dispage dies</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Velvet Underground's <b>White Light White Heat</b>, Leonard Cohen's <b>Songs</b>, Jimi Hendrix's <b>Electric Ladyland</b>, Pink Floyd's <b>A Saucerful Of Secrets</b>, United States Of America's <b>self-titled</b>, Pearls Before Swine's <b>Balaklava</b></li> </ul>
1969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? August: 300,000 people attend the Woodstock festival</li> <li>? Warner, Atlantic and Elektra are unified as WEA</li> <li>? King Crimson's <b>In The Court Of The Crimson King</b> and Frank Zappa's <b>Uncle Meat</b> herald the golden age of progressive-rock</li> <li>? Jazz giant Miles Davis records <b>Bitches Brew</b>, an album that combines funk/soul rhythms and electronically-amplified rock instruments</li> <li>? Neil Young invents a neurotic, dissonant form of guitar accompaniment</li> <li>? German group Can plays rock music inspired by the classical avantgarde and modern jazz</li> <li>? Led Zeppelin's debut launches hard-rock and defines the LP as rock's medium of choice</li> <li>? Crosby Stills &amp; Nash popularize West Coast's vocal harmonies</li> <li>? Nico's <b>Marble Index</b> brings gothic, archaic and classical elements into rock music</li> <li>? Captain Beefheart cuts "'Trout Mask Replica'", possibly the greatest rock album ever</li> <li>? The Who release <b>Tommy</b>, the most famous rock opera</li> <li>? Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones dies at 27</li> <li>? 150,000 people attend the rock festival at the Isle of Wight</li> <li>? The Third Ear Band invents "world-music"</li> <li>? Holger Czuckay's <b>Canaxis 5</b> fuses electronics and ethnic music</li> <li>? Beaver &amp; Krause's <b>Ragnarok Electronic Funk</b> uses the Moog with acoustic instruments</li> <li>? Annette Peacock improvises live with the synthesizer</li> <li>? The MC5's <b>Kick Out The Jams</b> and <b>The Stooges</b> create a new Detroit sound founded on extreme violence</li> <li>? The world's music market is worth two billion dollars</li> <li>? Capricorn is founded in Alabama</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Jefferson Airplane's <b>Volunteers</b>, David Peel's <b>Have A Marijuana</b>, Colosseum's <b>Valentyne Suite</b>, Band's <b>II</b>, Pink Floyd's <b>Ummagumma</b>, Grateful Dead's <b>Aoxomoxoa</b></li> </ul>
1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? King Tubby invents "dub" in Jamaica using the recording console like an instrument</li> <li>? Syd Barrett retires from music</li> <li>? 12,000 people attend the alternative festival at Glastonbury, in England</li> <li>? ZZ Top and Allman Brothers launch "southern-rock"</li> <li>? Black Sabbath debut, playing heavy, dark rock music (the prototype for black metal and doom metal)</li> <li>? Todd Rundgren plays all instruments by himself on <b>Runt</b>, the first "do it yourself" production</li> <li>? German group Kluster (Cluster) plays keyboards-based instrumental music that is inspired by the industrial society</li> <li>? At the peak of British jazz-rock, the Soft Machine cut <b>Third</b></li> <li>? Smokey Robinson's <i>The Tears Of A Clown</i> fuses vaudeville, classical music and soul music</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? T.Rex's <i>Ride A White Swan</i> opens the age of glam-rock</li> <li>? David Geffen founds Asylum Records</li> <li>? Richard Branson founds Virgin to promote alternative musicians</li> <li>? Pierre Boulez founds the IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique) at the Centre Pompidou in Paris</li> <li>? Robert Moog unveils the Minimoog, the first portable synthesizer</li> <li>? September: Jimi Hendrix dies at 28</li> <li>? October: Janis Joplin dies at 27</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Nico's <b>Desert Shore</b>, Soft Machine's <b>3</b>, Tim Buckley's <b>Lorca</b>, Syd Barrett's <b>Barrett</b>, Van Morrison's <b>Moondance</b>, Amon Duul II's <b>Yeti</b>, Third Ear Band's <b>Third Ear Band</b>, Peter Green's <b>End Of The Game</b></li> </ul>
1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Jim Morrison of the Doors dies at 27 (July 3)</li> <li>? The German band Tangerine Dream invents "kosmische musik", using synthesizers and sequencers </li> <li>? Johnny Thunders forms the New York Dolls, a band of tranvestites with a trash aesthetic that plays very fast and simple rock'n'roll</li> <li>? Alice Cooper mixes decadence, horror and hard-rock in his "shock rock"</li> <li>? Marvin Gaye, Isaac Hayes, Curtis Mayfield and Stevie Wonder begin producing artsy soul records</li> <li>? The musical <i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i> by Andrew Lloyd Webber opens on Broadway</li> <li>? Tonto's Expanding Head Band release <b>Zero Time</b>, the first pop album entirely played at the synthesizer</li> <li>? The Joy Of Cooking debut, the first band led by feminists</li> <li>? Alice Cooper's <b>Love It To Death</b> launches horror-shock rock</li> <li>? German group Faust plays rock songs that are studio collages of rock music, electronic sounds and "concrete" noise</li> <li>? Marvin Gaye's <i>Mercy Mercy Me</i> is the first ecological song</li> <li>? Duane Allman dies at 25</li> <li>? Gene Vincent dies at 36</li> <li>? A benefit concert for Bangla Desh is attended by rock stars</li> <li>? Sandy Pearlman of "Crawdaddy" uses the expression "heavy metal" for <i>Artificial Energy</i> on <b>The Notorious Byrd Brothers</b></li> <li>? Malcom McLaren opens a boutique in London that becomes a center for the non-conformist youth</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: John Fahey's <b>America</b>, Captain Beefheart's <b>Mirror Man</b>, Can's <b>Tago Mago</b>, Kevin Ayers's <b>Shooting At The Moon</b>, Robbie Basho's <b>Song of The Stallion</b>, Joni Mitchell's <b>Blue</b>, David Crosby's <b>If I Could Only Remember My Name</b></li> <li>? "Creem" writer Dave Marsh coins the term "punk-rock" for the music of Question Mark &amp; The Mysterians</li> </ul>
1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Popol Vuh's <b>In Den Gaerten Pharaos</b> is recorded inside a cathedral and fuses electronic music and Eastern music (predating new-age music)</li> <li>? Deuter's <b>Aum</b> is released, a fusion of Eastern and Western religious music, of acoustic instruments and natural sounds</li> <li>? Tangerine Dream's <b>Zeit</b> is a double album that contains four side-long suites</li> <li>? Annette Peacock's <b>I'm The One</b> fuses synthesizer and vocals</li> <li>? Neu! plays obsessively rhythmic music</li> <li>? Klaus Schulze's <b>Irrlicht</b> is a cosmic symphony played with electronic instruments</li> <li>? Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell form the Neon Boys</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Japanese group Taj-Mahal Travellers plays lengthy improvised psychedelic jams</li> <li>? David Bowie's <b>Rise And Fall of Ziggy Stardust</b> is the culmination of glam-rock</li> <li>? By fusing Mersey-beat, folk-rock and hard-rock, the Big Star coin power-pop 🇺🇸</li> <li>? Boom of singer-songwriters</li> <li>? The Vertigo label is founded to promote progressive-rock</li> <li>? Philips and Siemens merge their music companies into Polygram and buy MGM/Verve</li> <li>? "Rolling Stone" writer Vince Aletti writes an article on "disco music"</li> <li>? Cameroon-born and Paris-based musician Manu Dibango invents "disco music" with <i>Soul Makossa</i> 🇷🇺</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Rolling Stones's <b>Exile On Main Street</b>, Roxy Music's <b>Roxy Music</b>, Nick Drake's <b>Pink Moon</b>, Yes's <b>Close To The Edge</b>,</li> </ul>
1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? George Lucas' film <b>American Graffiti</b> launches the nostalgic revival of the music of the 1950s and 1960s</li> <li>? <b>Mother Mallard's Portable Masterpiece Company</b> is an album of lengthy electronic suites</li> <li>? 500,000 people attend the Watkins Glen festival (Allman Brother, Grateful Dead, Band)</li> <li>? "The Midnight Special" debuts on tv, led by Wolfman Jack and Helen Reddy</li> <li>? The film <b>The Harder They Come</b> brings reggae to the West</li> <li>? September: Gram Parsons dies at 26</li> <li>? Barry Oakley of the Allman Brothers dies</li> <li>? Pink Floyd's <b>Dark Side Of The Moon</b> invents a polished, keyboard-based sound for pop music, and would remain in the Billboard charts for over 600 weeks</li> <li>? Mike Oldfield cuts an album-long suite of instrumental music, <b>Tubular Bells</b>, all played by himself</li> <li>? Asylum buys Elektra</li> <li>? Roland introduces the SH-1000, Japan's first synthesizer</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Popol Vuh's <b>Hosianna Mantra</b>, Gong's <b>Radio Gnome Invisible</b>, John Fahey's <b>Fare Forward Voyagers</b>, New York Dolls's <b>I</b>, Magma's <b>Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandoh</b>, Faust's <b>IV</b>, Klaus Schulze's <b>Cyborg</b></li> </ul>
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The Rocky Horror Picture Show is released</li> <li>? Barry White plays orchestral soul for the discos</li> <li>? August: The Ramones debut at the CBGB's and launch punk-rock 🇺🇸</li> <li>? The Residents reinvent rock music with <b>Meet The Residents</b></li> <li>? The Grateful Dead, the most successful live band of all times, performs using 25 tons of loudspeakers</li> <li>? Robert Wyatt cuts <b>Rock Bottom</b>, possibly the greatest Canterbury album</li> <li>? Nick Drake dies at 26</li> <li>? Brian Eno's <b>Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy</b> fuses electronics and pop, and introduces post-modernism into rock music</li> <li>? The magazine "Trouser Press" is founded to cover the British music scene</li> <li>? Kraftwerk's <i>Autobahn</i> becomes the first hit entirely played on electronic instruments and with an electronic rhythm, the blueprint for disco-music</li> <li>? July: Patti Smith's <i>Piss Factory</i> is the first single of New York's "new wave"</li> <li>? August: the "new wave" groups begin performing at New York's club CBGB's</li> <li>? Technics introduces the Technics SL-1200, a turntable that becomes popular among New York DJs</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Henry Cow's <b>Unrest</b>, Yahowa 13's <b>Penetration - An Aquarian Symphony</b></li> <li>? Greg Shaw founds Bomp Records in San Francisco, specializing in garage-rock</li> </ul>

1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Boom of funk music</li> <li>? Giorgio Moroder releases the first tracks of European "disco-music" and invent the extended "disco mix"</li> <li>? Lou Reed releases <b>Metal Machine Music</b>, an album of pure noise</li> <li>? Jamaican disc-jockey Clive "Hercules" Campbell re-invents the breakbeat in New York, thereby inventing "rap music" and "hip hop" 🇺🇸</li> <li>? The Queen film a bizarre, artistic video for <i>Bohemian Rhapsody</i></li> <li>? Tim Buckley dies at 28</li> <li>? "Saturday Night Live" debuts on tv</li> <li>? Robert Moog introduces the Polymoog, the first commercial polyphonic synthesizer</li> <li>? 13-year old (Grand Wizard) Theodore Livingstone accidentally discovers the "scratching" sound of a turntable and uses it at a party in the Bronx</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Neil Young's <b>Tonight's The Night</b></li> <li>? December: John Holmstrom founds the fanzine "Punk" in New York, the first fanzine for punk-rock and new-wave music</li> </ul>
1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Pere Ubu cut <b>Modern Dance</b>, possibly the greatest new-wave album</li> <li>? Richard Hell cuts <i>Blank Generation</i></li> <li>? David Grisman coins "newgrass", a fusion of jazz and bluegrass</li> <li>? <b>Wanted: The Outlaws</b>, featuring Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Tompall Glaser and Jessi Colter, is the first country album to be certified platinum</li> <li>? April: the first Ramones album is released</li> <li>? July: a Ramones tour organized by Malcom McLaren exports punk-rock to Britain</li> <li>? September: the Saint's <i>I'm Stranded</i> is the first Australian punk-rock single</li> <li>? November: the Sex Pistols' <i>Anarchy In The UK</i> is the first British punk-rock single</li> <li>? Boom of reggae music outside of Jamaica</li> <li>? Phil Ochs dies at 36</li> <li>? Howling Wolf dies at 66</li> <li>? William Ackerman invents new-age music and founds Windham Hill 🇺🇸</li> <li>? New York disc-jockey Grandmaster Flash begins spinning on Boston Road, where he experiments with "cutting" and "phasing"</li> <li>? The magazine "Musician" is founded</li> <li>? December: Blondie's first album bridges the gap between disco-music and punk-rock</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Patti Smith's <b>Radio Ethiopia</b>, Penguin Cafe` Orchestra's <b>Music From The Penguin Cafe</b></li> </ul>
1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Punk spawns a self-publishing revolution ("do it yourself") both for music and for magazines ("Ripped &amp; Torn", "Sniffin' Glue", "48 Thrills")</li> <li>? The film "Saturday Night Fever" starts the disco fever by promoting disco-music beyond gays and blacks</li> <li>? April: The Screamers are a punk band that uses two keyboards and no guitars and performs at multimedia events on the Hollywood strip</li> <li>? Boom of independent labels</li> <li>? Suicide's <b>Suicide</b> fuses rockabilly and electronic music</li> <li>? Elvis Presley dies at 42</li> <li>? Peter Laughner of Pere Ubu dies</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Three members of the Lynyrd Skynyrd are killed in a plane crash</li> <li>? Ronnie VanZandt dies at 28</li> <li>? Bukka White dies at 71</li> <li>? Marc Bolan of the T.Rex dies at 29</li> <li>? The disco "Warehouse" opens in Chicago and Frankie Knuckles becomes its resident disc-jockey</li> <li>? The magazine "OP" (later "Option") is founded in Olympia and becomes the reference for independent music of all genres</li> <li>? Roland introduces the first commercial rhythm machine</li> <li>? Martin Mills's record store Beggars Banquet becomes an independent label</li> <li>? London record store Rough Trade becomes an independent label</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1976 include: Beserkley (Berkeley), Stiff (London)</li> <li>? October: The Avengers' <i>We Are The One</i> is the first single of the punk scene of San Francisco's Mabuhay Garden club</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Television's <b>Marquee Moon</b>, Clash's <b>Clash</b>, Talking Heads's <b>77</b></li> </ul>
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Brian Eno discovers the no-wave of DNA, Mars, Contortions, Lydia Lunch </li> <li>? Brian Eno invents ambient music </li> <li>? The Public Image Ltd bridge dub and punk</li> <li>? The disco "Paradise Garage" for black gays opens in New York and its founder Larry Levan becomes the first superstar disc-jockey</li> <li>? The California composer Monte Cazazza and the British band Throbbing Gristle coin "industrial music", that soon finds its headquarters in the English industrial town of Sheffield </li> <li>? July: The Germs' <i>Forming</i> is the first single of California's punk-rock</li> <li>? Fred Frith organizes the "Rock In Opposition" (RIO) festival that unites progressive-rock and militant politics</li> <li>? Keith Moon of the Who dies at 32</li> <li>? Sandy Denny dies at 31</li> <li>? "Crawdaddy" ceases publications</li> <li>? Mute is founded</li> <li>? Roland introduces the MC-4 sequencer, the first sequencer for the masses</li> <li>? Dave Smith (Sequential Circuits) introduces the Prophet-5, the world's first microprocessor-based musical instrument, and ushers in the age of digital synthesizers, replacing the voltage-controlled (analog) synthesizers</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Residents's <b>Not Available</b>, Talking Heads's <b>More Songs About Building And Food</b>, Michael Hoenig's <b>Departure From The Northern Wasteland</b></li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1978 include: Ace of Hearts (Boston), Cherry Red (London), Rhino</li> </ul>
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The Pop Group's <b>Y</b> delivers agip-prop anthems in a style that fuses punk-rock, jazz, dub and funk</li> <li>? December: Clash's <b>London Calling</b> mixes punk-rock with reggae, ska, funk, blues, etc</li> <li>? The Talking Heads' <b>Fear Of Music</b>, produced by Brian Eno, fuses new wave and funk, and invents "techno-funk"</li> <li>? The B52's fuse new wave and dance music</li> <li>? The Specials launch a ska revival in Britain</li> <li>? Todd Rungren makes the first video-disc</li> <li>? Sony and Philips invent the compact disc (CD), a digital storage for music</li> <li>? Eleven fans die at a Who concert</li> <li>? Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols dies at 21</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Lowell George of the Little Feat dies at 34</li> <li>? Maybellene Carter dies at 70</li> <li>? Sony launches the "Walkman" portable stereo</li> <li>? The Australian company Fairlight Instruments introduces the first keyboard-based digital sampler, the CMI</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1979 include: Alternative Tentacles (San Francisco), SST (Los Angeles), Factory (London)</li> <li>? The world's music market is worth over 10 billion dollars and five "majors" control over 70% of it</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Chrome's <b>Half Machine Lips Move</b>, Pere Ubu's <b>New Picnic Time</b>, Public Image Ltd's <b>Second Edition</b>, This Heat's <b>This Heat</b>, Contortions's <b>Buy</b></li> </ul>
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Beggars Banquet employee Ivo Watts-Russell founds 4AD</li> <li>? The Cramps' <b>Songs The Lord Taught Us</b> invents "voodooobilly" </li> <li>? The Bad Brain's <i>Pay To Cum</i> fuses punk-rock and reggae in Washington</li> <li>? Ian MacKaye forms the Minor Threat in Washington</li> <li>? A psychedelic revival spreads from the UK to the US</li> <li>? The Minutemen play dissonant, funky, jazzy, punk-rock in Los Angeles</li> <li>? The Sugar Hill Gang cuts the first "hip hop" record in New York</li> <li>? Glenn Branca composes music for dissonant and percussive guitars</li> <li>? David Geffen founds Geffen Records</li> <li>? John Bonham of the Led Zeppelin dies at 33</li> <li>? Bon Scott of the AC/DC dies at 25</li> <li>? John Lennon of the Beatles is murdered at 40</li> <li>? Ian Curtis of the Joy Division commits suicide at 23</li> <li>? Derby Crash dies at 22</li> <li>? Polygram buys the British recording company Decca</li> <li>? Warner acquires Sire</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1981 include: Wax Trax, On-U-Sound</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Bruce Springsteen's <b>River</b>, Feelies's <b>Crazy Rhythms</b>, Soft Boys's <b>Underwater Moonlight</b>, Colin Newman's <b>A-Z</b>, Pere Ubu's <b>Art Of Walking</b>, Pop Group's <b>For How Much Longer</b></li> </ul>
1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Juan Atkins begins making "techno" records in Detroit (pounding and fast rhythm from a Roland sequencer MSK-100, stripped-down funk) </li> <li>? Venom's <b>Welcome To Hell</b> invents "black metal"</li> <li>? Billy Idol weds hard-rock and disco-music</li> <li>? New Zealand bands such as Tall Dwarfs and Clean invent "lo-fi pop" </li> <li>? New York rapper Afrika Bambaataa pays tribute to Kraftwerk with <i>Planet Rock</i> and thus invent "electro"</li> <li>? Boom of synth-pop in England</li> <li>? Husker Du and Replacements wed hardcore and pop in Minneapolis</li> <li>? Michael Jackson films a 15-minute, highly cinematic video for <i>Thriller</i></li> <li>? MTV debuts on cable tv with the Buggles' "Video Killed The Radio Star"</li> <li>? Simon and Garfunkel reunite for a live concert in Central Park for a crowd of 500,000</li> <li>? Mike Bloomfield dies at 37</li> <li>? Alex Harvey dies at 32</li> <li>? Bob Marley dies at 34</li> </ul>

	<p>? Independent labels founded in 1981 include: Touch &amp; Go, Epitaph, Dischord, Flying Nun</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Rip Rig Panic's <b>God</b>, Gun Club's <b>Fire Of Love</b>, Public Image Ltd's <b>Flowers Of Romance</b>, Deuter's <b>Silence Is The Answer</b></p>
1982	<p>? The Sonic Youth invent "noise-rock" </p> <p>? The R.E.M. resurrect folk-rock and launch Georgia's neo-pop school</p> <p>? The club "Batcave" opens in London, catering to the gothic (dark-punk) crowd</p> <p>? The Cocteau Twins invent dream-pop</p> <p>? The Violent Femmes wed the aesthetics of punk-rock and the format of roots-rock</p> <p>? A pacifist concert is held in Central Park attended by 800,000 people</p> <p>? Sony and Philips introduce the "compact disc"</p> <p>? Mike Gunderloy begins mailing "Factsheet Five", a fanzine of fanzine reviews</p> <p>? 800,000 people attend a concert in New York's Central Park with Springsteen and others (for nuclear disarmament)</p> <p>? The magazine "Maximum Rock and Roll" is founded and becomes the reference point for punk-rock</p> <p>? The magazine "Puncture" is founded and becomes the reference point for alternative rock</p> <p>? Peter Gabriel organizes the WOMAD festival, dedicated to world music, art and dance</p> <p>? Rock critic Lester Bangs dies at 34</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: David Thomas's <b>The Sound Of The Sand</b>, Dream Syndicate's <b>Days Of Wine And Roses</b>, Richard Thompson's <b>Shoot Out The Lights</b>, Waitresses's <b>Wasn't Tomorrow Wonderful</b>, Fear's <b>The Record</b>, Misfits's <b>Walk Among Us</b>, Mission Of Burma's <b>VS</b>, Flipper's <b>Generic Album</b></p>
1983	<p>? Metallica's <b>Kill 'Em All</b> invents speed-metal</p> <p>? Turntablist DST (DXT) plays a solo of "sktratch" on Herbie Hancock's <i>Rockit</i></p> <p>? The Frightwig's <b>Cat Faboo Farm</b> is the first hardcore album by a female punk band</p> <p>? Madonna becomes the folk icon of the punkettes</p> <p>? The Suicidal Tendencies fuse hardcore and heavy-metal</p> <p>? The psychedelic revival leads to Los Angeles' "Paisley Underground"</p> <p>? Big Black's <b>Lungs</b> coins a claustrophobic form of hardcore</p> <p>? Run DMC fuse hip hop and heavy metal</p> <p>? Trouser Press magazine dies and the first "Trouser Press Guide", edited by Ira Robbins, is published</p> <p>? Yamaha introduces the DX-7, the first synthesizer to be sold by the hundreds of thousands</p> <p>? Roland introduces the first keyboard enabled with MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), a system to connect music instruments to computers</p> <p>? Muddy Waters dies at 68</p> <p>? Michael Jackson's <b>Thriller</b> spends 37 weeks at number one and becomes the best-selling album of all times</p> <p>? Tower Records lunches its own magazine, "Pulse"</p> <p>? Felix Pappalardi of Mountain is murdered</p> <p>? Independent labels founded in 1983 include: Creation, Projekt,</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Swans's <b>Filth</b>, Cocteau Twins's <b>Head Over Heels</b>, REM's <b>Murmur</b>, Mark Stewart's <b>Learning To Cope With Cowardice</b>, Jane Siberry's <b>No Borders Here</b>, Butthole Surfers's <b>Butthole Surfers</b>, Sonic Youth's <b>Confusion Is Sex</b>, Einsturzende Neubaten's <b>Zeichnungen Das Patienten</b></p>
1984	<p>? The Chicago record store "Imports Etc" sells "house" records (as a contraction of "Warehouse", the disco where DJs play electronic dance music built around drum-machines and soul vocals), first ones being Frankie Knuckles' <i>Your Love</i></p>

	<p>and Walter Gibbons' <i>Set It Off</i> 🚫</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? A new British invasion (of dance-rock bands) sweeps America</li> <li>? The Red Hot Chili Peppers invent funk-metal</li> <li>? The Pogues' <b>Red Roses For Me</b> weds punk-rock and folk-rock ("rogue-folk")</li> <li>? Van Halen's <i>Jump</i> is the first heavy-metal song to top the Billboard charts</li> <li>? Boom of new-age music</li> <li>? John Chowning founds the CCRMA (Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics) at Stanford University</li> <li>? Ensoniq introduces the synthesizer Mirage, that includes a built-in sampler, making it cheap to create samples-based music</li> <li>? Marvin Gaye dies at 45</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1984 include: Cuneiform, Homestead</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Husker Du's <b>Zen Arcade</b>, Minutemen's <b>Double Nickels On The Dime</b>, Nick Cave's <b>From Her To Eternity</b>, Replacement's <b>Let It Be</b>, Birdsongs Of The Mesozoic's <b>Magnetic Flip</b>, Julian Cope's <b>World Shut Your Mouth</b>, Foetus's <b>Hole</b></li> </ul>
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? A Chicago disc-jockey, DJ Pierre (later Phuture), invents "acid-house", built around the Roland TB-303 bassline machine 🚫</li> <li>? Youth Of Today invent "straight-edge" hardcore</li> <li>? Green River invent "grunge" in Seattle 🚫</li> <li>? Operation Ivy fuse ska and hardcore in Berkeley</li> <li>? Merzbow begins releasing cassettes of noise music in Japan 🚫</li> <li>? Rites Of Spring invent "emo-core" in Washington 🚫</li> <li>? Phranc's <b>Folksinger</b> starts the acoustic folk revival</li> <li>? The Jesus And Mary Chain's <b>Psychocandy</b> fuses noise and pop</li> <li>? "Live Aid", a multi-national benefit concert</li> <li>? The magazine "Spin" is founded in New York</li> <li>? German media giant Bertelsmann buys RCA and founds BMG</li> <li>? MCA buys Chess</li> <li>? Alternative Press is founded to cover the scene of independent rock</li> <li>? Digidesign releases recording and editing software for the Macintosh, that allows anyone to compose music and store it on a computer disk</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1985 include: Amphetamine Reptile, C/Z, Chemikal Underground</li> <li>? D. Boon of the Minutemen dies at 28</li> <li>? Joe Turner dies at 74</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Butthole Surfers's <b>Psychic Powerless</b>, Foetus's <b>Nail</b>, Sonic Youth's <b>Bad Moon Rising</b>, Swans's <b>Cop</b>, Nick Cave's <b>The Firstborn Is Dead</b>, David Thomas's <b>More Places Forever</b>, Husker Du's <b>New Day Rising</b>, Fetchin Bones's <b>Cabin Flounder</b>,</li> </ul>
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Bristol disc-jockeys form the Wild Bunch, whose sound mixes soul, dub and hip hop</li> <li>? Ministry's <b>Twitch</b> fuses industrial music and hardcore</li> <li>? The Melvins perform long, droning, super-heavy dirges</li> <li>? Mr T Experience and Green Day with their punk-pop style are protagonists of the "Gilman St scene" in Berkeley</li> <li>? Paul Simon's <b>Graceland</b> incorporates African music into folk and rock music</li> <li>? Richard Manuel of the Band dies at 43</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Larry Harvey burns a wooden man at a San Francisco beach in front of a small crowd of friends, the first Burning Man event</li> <li>? Robbie Basho dies at 45</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1986 include: Silent</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Big Black's <b>Atomizer</b>, Stan Ridgway's <b>Big Heat</b>, Death Of Samantha's <b>Strungout On Jargon</b>, Flaming Lips's <b>Hear It Is</b>, UT's <b>Conviction</b>, David Thomas's <b>Monster Walks The Winter Lake</b>, Swans's <b>Holy Money</b></li> <li>? Subpop is founded in Seattle</li> </ul>
1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The My Bloody Valentine invent "shoegazing" psychedelia 🇺🇸</li> <li>? Zeni Geva's <b>How To Kill</b> is the first album of Japanese "noise"</li> <li>? Coldcut's <i>Say Kids What Time Is It</i> is the first dance hit made of samples</li> <li>? Napalm Death invents grindcore 🇺🇸</li> <li>? Paul Butterfield dies at 45</li> <li>? Detroit disc-jockey Derrick May cuts <i>Nude Photo</i> and <i>Strings Of Life</i>, which are broadcast on Alan Oldham's "Fast Forward" radio show and start the techno revolution</li> <li>? Guns'N'Roses' <b>Appetite For Destruction</b> and Jane's Addiction's first album vent the anger of Los Angeles' "street scene"</li> <li>? Enya fuses celtic music, electronic keyboards, and avantgarde vocals</li> <li>? Public Enemy play highly politicized hip-hop</li> <li>? The drug "ecstasy", banned in Britain and the USA, becomes popular at all-night parties at the open-air dance club "Amnesia" of Ibiza (Spain) that attracts people from all over Europe</li> <li>? After spending a summer in Ibiza, British disc-jockey Paul Oakenfold organizes "Spectrum", the first ecstasy-based party in London</li> <li>? Philips acquires the whole of Polygram</li> <li>? The Roland D50 ushers in the age of digital keyboards for the masses</li> <li>? M/A/R/S/S' <i>Pump Up The Volume</i> is the first hit built as a collage of samples</li> <li>? Death's <b>Scream Bloody Gore</b> invents death-metal 🇺🇸</li> <li>? Dave Datta at the University of Wisconsin creates an on-line archive of musical information on the Internet</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1987 include: Invisible, Estrus,</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Swans's <b>Children Of God</b>, Henry Rollins's <b>Hot Animal Machine</b>, Unrest's <b>Tink Of Southeast</b>, Blind Idiot God's <b>I</b>, Pussy Galore's <b>Right Now</b>, Guns And Roses's <b>Appetite For Destruction</b>, American Music Club's <b>Engine</b>, Bel Canto's <b>White-Out Conditions</b>, Jane Siberry's <b>The Walking</b>, Flaming Lips's <b>Oh My Gawd</b></li> </ul>
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The Pixies' <b>Surfer Rosa</b> signals the apex of "college-rock"</li> <li>? Fugazi play a tortured, existential form of hardcore in Washington</li> <li>? Soundgarden's <b>Ultramega OK</b> is the first hit album of Seattle's grunge sound 🇺🇸</li> <li>? Roy Orbison dies</li> <li>? Nico dies at 49</li> <li>? Acid-house spreads from Ibiza to Manchester's club "Hacienda" (the "second summer of love", "Madchester") via secretive, all-night house and techno parties called "raves"</li> <li>? Sony buys CBS</li> <li>? "Creem" ceases publications</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1988 include: Wiiiija, Lookout</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Sonic Youth's <b>Daydream Nation</b>, Pixies's <b>Surfer Rosa</b>, Death Of Samantha's <b>Where The Women Wear The Glory</b>, Red Temple Spirits's <b>Dancing To Restore An Eclipsed Moon</b>, Rollins Band's <b>Life Time</b>, Ministry's <b>The Land Of Rape And Honey</b>, Foetus's <b>Thaw</b>, Peter Frohmader's <b>Through Time And Mistry</b>, My Bloody Valentine's <b>Isn't Anything</b>, Band Of Susans's <b>Hope Against Hope</b>, Godflesh's <b>I</b>, Mary Margaret O'Hara's <b>Miss America</b></li> </ul>
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Nine Inch Nail's <b>Pretty Hate Machine</b> is an electronic album of brutal hardcore</li> <li>? Slint's <b>Tweez</b> inaugurates the age of post-rock </li> <li>? 808 State's <i>Pacific State</i> invents "ambient house" </li> <li>? The Ptolemaic Terrascope magazine is founded by Bevis Frond and Phil McMullen</li> <li>? 150 people attend a "rave" called "Love Parade" in Berlin organized by Dr Motte as a political event</li> <li>? Polygram acquires Island</li> <li>? The Stone Roses debut, leading the Madchester scene</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1989 include: Matador, Merge, Sympathy for the Record Industry</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Peter Gabriel's <b>Passion</b>, Pandora's Box's <b>Original Sin</b>, Flaming Lips's <b>Telepathic Surgery</b>, Bitch Magnet's <b>Umbra</b>, Dogbowl's <b>Tit</b>, Godflesh's <b>Streetcleaner</b></li> </ul>
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Paradise Lost invents "doom-metal" </li> <li>? Meat Beat Manifesto invents "jungle" (or "drum'n'bass") music, a syncopated variant of house, a fusion of hip hop and techno, that is adopted at the London club "Rage" by disc jockeys Fabio and Grooverider </li> <li>? Stevie Ray Vaughn dies</li> <li>? The Burning Man sculpture is moved to Black Rock Desert</li> <li>? Warner merges with Time Life to become the world's largest media conglomerate</li> <li>? Polygram acquires A&amp;M</li> <li>? MCA buys Geffen</li> <li>? EMI buys Chrysalis</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1990 include: Trance Syndicate, Drag City, Ninja Tune, Warp, Too Pure</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Royal Trux's <b>Twin Infinitives</b>, Nick Cave's <b>The Good Son</b>, Fugazi's <b>Repeater</b>, Phish's <b>Lawn</b>, Cop Shoot Cop's <b>Consumer Revolt</b></li> </ul>
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Codeine's <b>Frigid Stars</b> invents "slo-core" </li> <li>? Molly Neuman forms the Bratmobile in Olympia, the first riot-grrrl band</li> <li>? Boom of Seattle's grunge (Nirvana's <b>Nevermind</b>, Pearl Jam's <b>Ten</b>)</li> <li>? The Primal Scream's <b>Screamadelica</b> fuses rock'n'roll and acid-house</li> <li>? Kyuss' <b>Wretch</b> coins "stoner" rock</li> <li>? Mariah Carey becomes the first artist ever to have her first five singles all make #1 on the Billboard charts</li> <li>? Revival of the melodic song in Britain ("Brit-pop")</li> <li>? The Prodigy's <i>Charly</i> pioneers "big beat" </li> <li>? Massive Attack's <b>Blue Lines</b> invents "trip-hop" </li> <li>? Garth Brooks' <b>Ropin' the Wind</b> is the first country album to debut at number one in the pop charts</li> <li>? The "Lollapalooza" festival is born as the road show accompanying Jane's Addiction's final tour, but soon becomes an itinerant display of alternative rock</li> <li>? Freddie Mercury of the Queen dies of AIDS</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Johnny Thunders dies</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1991 include: Skin Graft, Kill Rock Stars, VHF,</li> <li>? A Paul Simon concert in Central Park draws an audience of 750,000 people</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Slint's <b>Spiderland</b>, Dogbowll's <b>Cyclops Nuclear Submarine Captain</b>, Type O Negative's <b>Slow Deep And Hard</b>, Unsane's <b>Unsane</b>, Jesus Lizard's <b>Goat</b>, Swans' <b>White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity</b>, Fugazi's <b>Steady Diet Of Nothing</b></li> </ul>
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Rage Against The Machine's first album fuses funk, rap and heavy-metal</li> <li>? Atari Teenage Riot wed techno and hardcore ("digital hardcore")</li> <li>? D.J. Shadow is the first virtuoso turntablist on record</li> <li>? The Pavement's <b>Slanted And Enchanted</b> launches lo-fi pop in the charts</li> <li>? Boyz II Men set the new record for the longest running # single with "End Of The Road"</li> <li>? Disc-jockey Gregor Asch (DJ Olive) organizes the first Lalalandia multimedia party in Williamsburg and coins the word "illbient" 🇨🇭</li> <li>? MP3 is invented as a format to store music in computers</li> <li>? EMI acquires Virgin Records</li> <li>? The first edition of Michael Erlewine's "All Music Guide" is published</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1992 include: Cleopatra, Thrill Jockey, Nothing</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Morphine's <b>Good</b>, Dadamah's <b>This Is Not A Dream</b>, Thinking Fellers Union Local 282's <b>Mother Of All Saints</b>, Red House Painters's <b>Down Colorful Hill</b>, Babes In Toyland's <b>Fontanelle</b></li> </ul>
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Labradford's <b>Prazision</b> launches the revival of analogical keyboards</li> <li>? Beck's <i>Loser</i> is a folk song for the age of hip-hop</li> <li>? Pearl Jam's <b>Vs</b> sells one million copies the first week of release</li> <li>? Autechre's <b>Incunabula</b> turns dance music into an abstract art</li> <li>? LTJ Bukem's <i>Music</i> invents "ambient jungle"</li> <li>? In London techno and jungle merge and yield "techstep"</li> <li>? German disc-jockey Sven Vath's <b>Accident In Paradise</b> invents "progressive house" (or "trance")</li> <li>? The Transglobal Underground launch "transglobal dance"</li> <li>? The magazine "Magnet" is founded, specializing in independent rock</li> <li>? Polygram buys Motown</li> <li>? Frank Zappa dies of cancer</li> <li>? Kranky is founded in Chicago</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Kenneth Newby's <b>Ecology Of Souls</b>, Vampire Rodents's <b>Lullaby Land</b>, Stereolab's <b>Transient Random Noise Bursts With Announcements</b>, Pain Teens's <b>Destroy Me Lover</b>, Mark Lanegan's <b>Whiskey For The Holy Ghost</b>, Morphine's <b>Cure For Pain</b>, Barkmarket's <b>Gimmick</b>, Girls Against Boys's <b>Venus Luxure No 1 Baby</b>, Sugarsmack's <b>Top Loader</b></li> </ul>
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Tortoise's first album leads the "post-rock" generation</li> <li>? Korn's first album fuses rap and grunge</li> <li>? Oval's <b>Systemisch</b> invents "glitch" music 🇨🇭</li> <li>? Portishead's <b>Dummy</b> launches trip-hop</li> <li>? The British government enacts the "Criminal Justice Bill" aimed at curbing raves</li> <li>? 4 Hero's <b>Parallel Universe</b> introduces jazz in jungle</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Sub Dub spearhead the fusion of hip hop, ambient house, middle-eastern folk and dub, the precursor to the "illbient" scene</li> <li>? Green Day's <b>Dookie</b> is the best-sold punk-rock album of all times</li> <li>? Kurt Cobain of Nirvana commits suicide</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1994 include: Rather Interesting</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Lisa Germano's <b>Geek The Girl</b>, Nine Inch Nails's <b>The Downward Spiral</b>, Magnetic Fields's <b>The Charm Of The Highway Strip</b>, Aurora's <b>Dimension Gate</b>, Von Lmo's <b>Cosmic Interception</b>, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's <b>Orange</b>, Today Is The Day's <b>Willpower</b></li> </ul>
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame And Museum opens in Cleveland</li> <li>? Legendary disc-jockey Wolfman Jack dies</li> <li>? Vivian Stanshall of the Bonzos dies</li> <li>? Sterling Morrison of the Velvet Underground dies</li> <li>? Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead dies, after performing 2,200 live concerts</li> <li>? The Chemical Brothers' <b>Exit Planet Dust</b> invents "big beat" that fuses techno and rock</li> <li>? Seagram acquires MCA</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1995 include: Digital Hardcore</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Lightwave's <b>Mundus Subterraneus</b>, Lycia's <b>The Burning Circle And Then Dust</b>, Air Liquide's <b>The Increased Difficulty Of Concentration</b>, Alanis Morissette's <b>Jagged Little Pill</b>, Low's <b>Long Division</b>, Bardo Pond's <b>Bufo Alvarius</b>, Fugazi's <b>Red Medicine</b>,</li> </ul>
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? DJ Spooky's <b>Songs Of A Dead Dreamer</b> (Asphodel, 1996) launches the "illbient" scene of New York with a chaotic and non-melodic fusion of drum &amp; bass, hip hop, dub</li> <li>? Naut Humon organizes "Recombinant", a multimedia festival for electronic musicians, in San Francisco</li> <li>? Two rap singles reach the #1 spot in the pop charts</li> <li>? "Macarena" is the biggest dance craze since the twist (one of its mixes stays at #1 for 14 weeks)</li> <li>? Jeffrey Lee Pierce of the Gun Club dies</li> <li>? Mariah Carey's <i>One Sweet Day</i> tops the U.S. charts for an unprecedented 16 weeks</li> <li>? The DVD is introduced in Japan</li> <li>? Disc-jockey Paul Oakenfold launches "Goa Trance" at the "Full Moon Party"</li> <li>? BMG buys Windham Hill</li> <li>? Independent labels founded in 1996 include: Alien8</li> <li>? Other significant albums of the year: Black Tape For A Blue Girl's <b>Remnants Of A Deeper Purity</b>, Tortoise's <b>Millions Now Living Will Never Die</b>, Labradford's <b>Labradford</b>, Windy &amp; Carl's <b>Drawing Of Sound</b>, For Carnation's <b>Marshmallows</b>, Neurosis's <b>Through Silver In Blood</b>, Subarachnoid Space's <b>Delicate Membrane</b>, Vas Deferens Organization's <b>Transcontinental Conspiracy</b>, Polvo's <b>Exploded Drawing</b></li> </ul>
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? Roni Size's <b>New Forms</b> blends jungle's breakbeats with live instruments and singing</li> <li>? Matmos uses "organic" samples (noises, not instruments) to compose music</li> <li>? Elton John's <i>Candle in the Wind</i> becomes the best-selling song of all times, passing Bing Crosby's <i>White Christmas</i></li> <li>? Laura Nyro dies</li> <li>? Tim Taylor of Brainiac dies</li> <li>? John Denver dies</li> <li>? The Terrastock festival for psychedelic music is held in Providence (Rhode Island)</li> </ul>

	<p>? Nusrat Fateh Ali dies</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Hash Jar Tempo's <b>Well Oiled</b>, Built To Spill's <b>Perfect From Now On</b>, Gravatar's <b>Now The Road Of Knives</b>, Dissolve's <b>Third Album For The Sun</b>, Amon Tobin's <b>Bricolage</b></p> <p>? Townes VanZandt dies at 52</p>
1998	<p>? The first portable MP3 devices are introduced</p> <p>? Seagram acquires Polygram and combines MCA and Polygram into the Universal Music Group, which thus comprises Polygram, MCA, Geffen, Mercury, Polydor, London, Vertigo, Verve, A&amp;M, Island, Motown, Decca, DG</p> <p>? Independent labels founded in 1999 include: Absolutely Kosher, Tiger Style</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Dirty Three's <b>Ocean Songs</b>, Bran Van 3000's <b>Glee</b>, Calexico's <b>The Black Light</b>, Roy Montgomery's <b>And Now The Rain</b></p>
1999	<p>? Moondog dies at 83</p> <p>? Mark Sandman of Morphine dies</p> <p>? Shawn Fanning founds the Napster online music service</p> <p>? Barry Hogan organizes the first "All Tomorrow's Parties" festival in England</p> <p>? 'N Sync set the new record of sales in the first week of a new release (2.4 million copies)</p> <p>? "Option" ceases publications</p> <p>? The music world is ruled by five majors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Universal,</li> <li>2. Warner/Elektra/Sire/Atlantic,</li> <li>3. Sony/Columbia/Epic,</li> <li>4. EMI/Virgin/Capitol/Chrysalis,</li> <li>5. BMG/Jive/Private/American/Windham Hill.</li> </ol> <p>? The world's music market is worth 38 billion dollars. The five "majors" control 95% of the albums sold in the world, and 84% of the 755 million albums sold in the USA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Universal with 27% (26.3% in the USA),</li> <li>2. Warner with 20% (15.7%),</li> <li>3. Sony with 18% (16.2%),</li> <li>4. EMI with 16% (9.4%),</li> <li>5. BMG with 14% (16%).</li> </ol> <p>? The USA accounts for 37% of world sales, Japan for 16.7%, Britain for 7.6%, Germany for 7.4%, France for 5.2%, Canada for 2.3%, Australia for 1.7%, Brazil for 1.6%, Holland for 1.5%, Italy for 1.4%.</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Black Heart Procession's <b>2</b>, Heather DUBY's <b>Post To Wire</b>, Hash Jar Tempo's <b>Under Glass</b></p> <p>? Independent labels founded in 1999 include: Family Vineyard</p>
2000	<p>? Mum's <b>Yesterday Was Dramatic Today Is Ok</b> mixes glitch electronica, chamber instruments and folk-rock</p> <p>? Berlin's "Love Parade" becomes the largest dance event in the world, attended by almost one million people</p> <p>? 27 people die of ecstasy in just one year in England</p> <p>? Curtis Mayfield dies</p> <p>? Tomata du Plenty dies</p> <p>? 25,000 people attend the Burning Man festival at Black Rock Desert, which has become a city of art installations</p> <p>? July: San Francisco hosts "Skratchcon", a conference for turntablists</p>

	<p>? French media giant Vivendi buys Seagram. Warner is the only "major" that is still American: Universal is now French, Sony is Japanese, EMI is British, BMG is German</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Spring Heel Jack's <b>Disappeared</b></p>
2001	<p>? Sales for the record industry slip 5% (first decline in ages)</p> <p>? Napster is found guilty of breaching copyright law</p> <p>? John Fahey dies</p> <p>? Sandy Bull dies</p> <p>? Fred Neil dies</p> <p>? Joey Ramone dies</p> <p>? Florian Fricke of Popol Vuh dies</p> <p>? "Puncture" ceases publications</p> <p>? 62 albums released by the Universal group sell more than 1 million copies in 2001</p> <p>? Other significant albums of the year: Solex's <b>Low Kick And Hard Bop</b>, Lofty Pillars's <b>Amsterdam</b>, Scott Tuma's <b>Hard Again</b></p>
2002	<p>? Dee Dee Ramone dies</p> <p>? Joe Strummer dies at 50</p> <p>? Otis Blackwell dies at 72</p> <p>? EMI buys Mute</p> <p>? "Pulse" ceases publications</p> <p>? Independent labels founded in 2002 include: Eastern Developments</p>
2003	<p>? Apple introduces the on-line music service "iTunes"</p>