

The History of Rock Music: 1970-1975

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Singer-songwriters 1970-74

(These are excerpts from my book "[A History of Rock and Dance Music](#)")

The New York archetype 1970-72

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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** (dec 1969 - feb 1970), hardly compares with the masterpieces of the era.

Ditto for veteran songwriter [Carole King](#) (1), whose solo album **Tapestry** (jan 1971 - mar 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** (sep/oct 1972 - nov 1972) propelled her to the top of the musical and the feminist movement.

On the other hand, [Phoebe "Snow" Laub](#) was the "real thing", a folk-jazz-blues contralto who seasoned the ballads of **Phoebe Snow** (? 1972/? 1973 - jul 1974) with scat and melisma.

Detroit's gospel singer Laura Lee explored the female condition on **Women's Love Rights** (jul/aug 1971 - oct 1971), alternating singing and rap monologues. The idea was taken up in New York by [Millie Jackson](#), who blended angry raps and erotic whispers on the concept album **Caught Up** (? 1973/? 1974 - oct 1974), a dramatic analysis of adultery (produced by Brad Shapiro).

[Don McLean](#) contributed to the renewal with the nine-minute saga *American Pie* (1971). [Jim Croce](#) excelled both at novelties, such as *You Don't Mess Around with Jim* (1972) and *Bad Bad Leroy Brown* (1973), and at pensive ballads, such as *Time In A Bottle* (1973) and *I Got A Name* (1973), written by Charles Fox. Harry Chapin crafted lengthy narratives, such as *Taxi* (1972) and *Cats In The Cradle* (1973).

Unbeknown to everybody, New York's songwriter [Chip Taylor](#) (Wes Voight), who had written the classics *Wild Thing* (1964) for the Troggs and *Angel Of The Morning* (1968) for Merilee Rush, invented "alt-country" before the term was coined with his albums **Gasoline** (? 1971 - ? 1972) and especially **Last Chance** (? 1973 - ? 1973).

Even less known at the time, [Gary Higgins](#) matched the intensity of David Crosby's psychedelic folk music with his lonely **Red Hash** (feb 1973 - mar 1973).

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** (may/jul 1971 - ? 1971), was a powerful indictment of social ills via vignettes of blue-collar life. Steve Goodman penned the epic *City Of New Orleans* (1971).

The USA heartland, though, would always remain under the influence of country music. [John "Denver"](#) (Deutschendorf), who sang stately, epic odes to domestic, rural, nostalgic USA (*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

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

[Randy Newman](#) (4) revealed his prodigious talent on **Twelve Songs** (? 1969 - feb 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 - may 1972), while **Good Old Boys** (? 1974 - sep 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**, premiered in sep 1995 (feb 1993/jun 1995 - ? 1996) 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** (jun 1971 - nov 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** (? 1968 - ? 1970), **Second Contribution** (? 1968 - ? 1970) and **Collaboration** (? 1971 - ? 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.

Among followers of Joni Mitchell, the most original was perhaps [Linda Perhacs](#), who recorded only the intimate and surreal **Parallelograms** (? 1970 - ? 1970).

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

Former Byrds singer [Gene Clark](#) (1) vented his need for simplicity in the delicate lullabies of **White Light** (mar 1971 - aug 1971).

The "cosmic cowboy" [Gram Parsons](#) (1), after his stints with the Byrds and the Flying Burrito Brothers, composed enough ballads for two albums, **G.P.** (sep/oct 1972 - jan 1973) and especially **Grievous Angel** (july 1973 - jan 1974), both featuring veteran James Burton on guitar, 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** (mar/apr 2000 - sep 2000).

In his solo career, former Byrds guitarist [Roger McGuinn](#) 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** (spring 1973 - jun 1973) and especially **Cardiff Rose** (? 1976 - may 1976) defined the classic sound of the post-hippie synthesis.

[Jackson Browne](#) (4) was far more significant than James Taylor in modernizing the trade. The atmosphere of his first album, **Jackson Browne** (summer 1971 - jan 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 - oct 1973), that introduced his long, tormented meditations on life. Browne reached his bleak and cryptic zenith on **Late For The Sky** (? 1974 - sep 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** (mar 1976 - nov 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](#) (25) 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 was 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** (jul 1976 - sep 1976), **Foreign Affairs** (jul/aug 1977 - sep 1977) and **Blue Valentine** (jul/aug 1978 - sep 1978). The bittersweet vignettes of these albums formed the musical equivalent of Balzac's "comédie humaine" transposed to the lowlives of urban USA. 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** (aug 1982 - sep 1983) and **Rain Dogs** (fall 1984/? 1985 - sep 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**, composed in 1984/1985 and premiered in jun 1986 (? 1987 - aug 1987) and **Bone Machine** (? 1992 - aug 1992), bordering on stylistic self-indulgence. **Alice** (? 2001 - may 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.

The South 1968-1971

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Generally speaking, southern musicians were less interested in the "message" and more interested in the "sound".

A picturesque character who was a living encyclopedia of cajun, ranchera, rockabilly, rhythm'n'blues, western swing, [Doug Sahm](#) invented "roots-rock" before they invented the term. The psychedelic **Honkey Blues** (jun 1968 - ? 1968) and the tex-mex **Mendocino** (? 1969 - apr 1969) established his persona of eccentric Bohemian chicano.

[Joe South](#), who had composed *Down In The Boondocks* (1965) for Billy Joe Royal, *Hush* (1967) for Deep Purple, recorded the bleak soul-tinged **Introspect** (? 1968 - ? 1968), on which he both sang and played several instruments, containing *Games People Play* and *Rose Garden*.

Veteran Oklahoman multi-instrumentalist [Leon Russell](#) also dealt with a broad range of styles, from the gospel-tinged **Look Inside The Asylum Choir** (feb 1967 - ? 1968) to the country-soul-jazz balladry of **Shelter People** (aug 1970/jan 1971 - may 1971)

Few musicians have been so influential and so unknown as John "[J.J. Cale](#)" (1),

also from Oklahoma. His "laid-back" style became the standard of reference for most mainstream music, but J.J. Cale was never mainstream himself. The ultimate independent, Cale was never much part of the music scene. His albums, beginning with the quintessential **Naturally** (jun 1971 - dec 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.

Eccentrics 1970-1976

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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** (late 1971 - feb 1972), the first case of "do it yourself" production. On this monumental endeavor 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 A True Star** (? 1972/? 1973 - mar 1973). However, this album emphasized the pop-soul melodic element, and the propensity for the format of the baroquely-produced collage/suite. **Todd** (dic 1973 - feb 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 - sep 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** (mar 1971 - ? 1971) and **Improvisie** (mar 1971 - ? 1971). Peacock's first solo album, **I'm The One** (? 1971 - ? 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** (summer 1980/summer 1981 - spring 1982), composed between 1972 and 1978, and the introverted lieder of **I Have No Feelings** (? 1986 - ? 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 - ? 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** (jan/apr 2000 - sep 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 - ? 1972).

[Swamp Dogg](#) (2), the brainchild of black producer Jerry Williams, toyed with psychedelic soul on **Total Destruction To Your Mind** (? 1970 - ? 1970), an eccentric, satiric and sometimes erotic message-oriented comedy that borrowed from both Sly Stone and Frank Zappa. His *Straight >From My Heart* (1971) was the first 12" 45 single. **Presents The Brand New ZZ Hill** (? 1971 - ? 1971), a soul opera in three acts, crowned his zaniness with a demented feast of gags.

[Jimmy Buffett](#) (1), a hybrid of singer-songwriter, comedian, romantic individualist, eccentric and drunkard, gave his best in the nostalgic and ironic vignettes of **A White Sport Coat & A Pink Crustacean** (? 1973 - may 1973).

The solemn meditations of [Bruce Cockburn](#) (1), at least from **Sunwheel Dance** (sep/dec 1971 - jan 1972) to his zenith, **In the Falling Dark** (sep/nov 1976 - dec 1976), were typical of the era's concerns with the meaning of life (in this case interpreted through a Christian metaphysics).

Maryland's [Mark Tucker](#) (1) debuted with a limited-edition LP, **Batstew** (? 1975 - ? 1975), that mixed poppy tunes and field recordings, sounding as demented as Wild Man Fischer against a backdrop of electronic sounds. After a long period of insanity, he crafted an avantgarde concept album, **In The Sack** (? 1981/oct 1982 - ? 1983), credited to T. Storm Hunter, highlighted by two psychedelic-jazz instrumentals, *Shelly* and *Can't Make Love*.

Britain 1970-72

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The one former Cream member to enjoy popular success was [Eric Clapton](#), despite the fact that his music always tended to be 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** (late 1971 - oct 1972), **White City** (sep/oct 1985 - nov 1985), **Iron Man** (? 1988/jan 1989 - jun 1989), **Psychoderelict** (? 1990/? 1993 - jun 1993).

[Vashti Bunyan](#) (1) composed **Just Another Diamond Day** (nov 1969 - ? 1970), a cycle of psalms drenched in eastern mysticism in the idyllic tone of early Donovan.

Van Der Graaf Generator's vocalist [Peter Hammill](#) (2) 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** (feb/mar 1973 - 1973), that pioneered the fusion of chamber music and folk music, and especially **Nadir's Big Chance** (dec 1974 - feb 1975), that pioneered punk-rock, carry out 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** (oct 1971 - late 1971), on which he overdubbed and looped three vocalists, a percussionist and himself over three extended compositions, but on **Out** (? 1976 - ? 1997), unreleased for two decades, the songs were already taking on the surreal quality that would lead to **Flying Doesn't Help** (? 1978 - ? 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** (feb 1972 - apr 1972) and especially **I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight** (may 1973 - apr 1974). Then he absorbed sufism and proceeded to chisel out the stately, funereal elegies of **Pour Down Like Silver** (summer 1975 - nov 1975), and thus achieved the transcendental bleakness of his masterpiece, **Shoot Out The Lights** (nov 1981 - apr 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 - jun 1983), but mostly would maintain an emotional balance that translated into the mature elegance of **Amnesia** (? 1988 - oct 1988) and **Rumor And Sigh** (? 1991 - may 1991)

Hawkwind's lyricist, [Robert Calvert](#) (2), composed two surreal concept albums, **Captain Lockheed and the Starfighters** (mar 1973/jan 1974 - may 1974) and **Lucky Leif and the Longships** (apr 1975 - sep 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 USA avantgarde. **The Academy In Peril** (? 1972 - jun 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** (may 1974 - oct 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 - aug 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** (dec 1989/jan 1990 - apr 1990), with Lou Reed, **Wrong Way Up** (apr/jul 1990 - oct 1990), with Brian Eno, and especially **Last Day On Earth** (? 1994 - apr 1994), with Bob Neuwirth. 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 - sep 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** (dec 1967/jan 1968 - nov 1968) and **Electronic Sounds** (nov 1968/feb 1969 - may 1969) were pure avantgarde, and the triple-album **All Things Must Pass** (may/sep 1970 - nov 1970) was an ambitious hodgepodge of Donovan-esque raga-psychedelic folk-rock.

One of the greatest melodic tunesmiths of the 1970s, [Elton John](#) (1), born Reginald Dwight, coined a style of piano-based pop ballad that bridged gospel hymns and renaissance motets. The album-oriented approach of **Tumbleweed Connection** (mar 1970 - oct 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. The double album **Goodbye Yellow Brick Road** (may 1973 - oct 1973) alone constituted an erudite compendium of pop music disguised as lightweight pastime.

Realism 1973-74

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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 USA citizens. 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 USA. His declamations combine populist demagogy, patriotic passion and prophetic vision in a way that is quintessentially USA. 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 USA citizens 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** (aug 1973 - sep 1973), recalled both Van Morrison and Taj Mahal, while **Born To Run** (jan 1974/jul 1975 - aug 1975) introduced his torrential "wall of sound". **The River** (aug 1980 - oct 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** (jan 1982/mar 1984 - jun 1984), another super-charged set of anthemic songs.

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

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

[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*).

[Dan Fogelberg](#) lived with the contradiction of being an urban (Los Angeles-based) country songwriter, penning soft ballads such as *Power of Gold* (1978) and a concept album like **Innocent Age** (? 1980/? 1981 - aug 1981) about the childhood traumas.

Brazil

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Brazil lived under military dictatorship from 1964 until 1985. Despite the political repression (that forced many musicians into exile), Brazil experienced rapid economic growth that created a relatively wealthy middle-class. Brazil's economic boom mirrored the economic boom of a few years earlier in Western Europe, minus the political freedom.

If bossanova was the reactionary sound of the 1960s, "Tropicalismo" was the idealistic movement of the decade. It introduced foreign elements into Brazilian music (both jazz and rock) and it replaced the traditional instruments with

modern instruments such as the electric guitar. The birth date of tropicalismo was the 1967 festival of the Musica Popular Brasileira (MPB): Caetano Veloso's *Alegria Alegria* and Gilberto Gil's *Domingo no Parque* defied the conventions of Brazilian music and were interpreted as a challenge to the dictatorship. Tropicalismo soon spread to poetry, the visual arts, theater and cinema, and, in turn, musical tropicalismo absorbed elements from the other arts. Veloso's and Gil's album **Tropicalia ou Panis et Circensis** (? 1968 - apr 1969) became a dividing line in Brazilian culture. The three queens of Brazilian pop music were also influential in publicizing the new generation of songwriters: Gal Costa (a sort of Brazilian hippy), Maria Bethania (a sort of Brazilian androgynous husky Edith Piaf) and Elis Regina (perhaps the most gifted).

[Caetano Veloso](#) (3), the most literate and daring of the tropicalista, whose music debuted on Gal Costa's **Domingo** (? 1967 - jul 1967), expanded the horizons of Brazilian music by turning it into a highly personal experience. *Alegria Alegria* (1967) and *Tropicalia* (1967) virtually defined tropicalismo. His second self-titled, **Caetano Veloso** (apr/may 1969 - aug 1969) and **Transa** (? 1971 - late 1971) introduced an austere, vulnerable and introverted voice who was not afraid to experiment with the sound of the Anglo-saxon music of the (psychedelic) era. **Muito** (? 1978 - jul 1978), the lush, eclectic albums **Estrangeiro** (? 1989 - jun 1989) and **Livro** (? 1997 - ? 1998) were experimental works that continued to upgrade Veloso's stylistic hybrid.

On his own, [Gilberto Gil](#) concocted a pop-samba-jazz-rock fusion on **Expresso 2222** (apr 1972 - jul 1972).

The other great poet of the movement, [Milton Nascimento](#) (2), coined a hybrid style that combined elements of pop, samba and jazz with progressive-rock arrangements and erudite lyrics. His fluid and energetic vocal style peaked with the double-album **Clube Da Esquina** (? 1972 - ? 1972) and its cycle of sophisticated ballads, and lent itself naturally to jazz, as proven by **Milagre Dos Peixes** (1973 - ? 1974), the ultimate manifestation of his soundpainting (percussion, piano, strings, guitar, falsetto vocals, jungle sounds), **Minas** (? 1975 - ? 1975), **Geraes** (? 1976 - ? 1976) and collaborations with Airtó Moreira, Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter.

[Egberto Gismonti](#) fused European classical music, jazz-rock and Brazilian choro on albums such as **Sonho 70** (? 1970 - ? 1970), **Academia De Dancas** (? 1974 - ? 1974), and **Dance Das Cabecas** (nov 1976 - ? 1977).

[Chico Buarque](#) (1), an outspoken critic of the dictatorship, composed hit songs, starting with *Morte e Vida Severina* (1965) and *A Banda* (1966), and albums, notably **Construção** (? 1971 - ? 1971), that best represented the zeitgeist of the age. A writer and a playwright, he also composed **Opera do Malandro** (? 1977/? 1978 - ? 1978), based on John Gay's **Three-Penny Opera**.

Italy

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Italy had a prolific school of singer-songwriters (or, better, "cantautori"), who began to emerge in the years following the student riots of 1968, a sort of sociocultural divide for post-war Italy. Lucio Battisti's melancholy soul-pop ballads (co-written with lyricist Giulio "Mogol" Rapetti) pretty much defined the

post-1968 era: *Il Paradiso* (1969), *Un'Avventura* (1969), *Acqua Azzurra Acqua Chiara* (1969), *Mi Ritorni In Mente* (1969), *Emozioni* (1970), *Pensieri e Parole* (1971) and *Il Mio Canto Libero* (1972). [Fabrizio DeAndre`](#) (2) was an epic bard, capable of bridging the French "chansonniers" of the 1950s and the Greenwich Movement of the 1960s, who crafted the pessimist Dante-esque journey in the metropolitan hell **Tutti Morimmo A Stento** (aug 1968 - nov 1968), the socio-religious parables of **La Buona Novella** (? 1970 - nov 1970), and the philosophical exotica of **Creuza de Ma'** (? ? - mar 1984), a collaboration with former PFM's Mauro Pagani. [Francesco Guccini](#) was an articulate sociopolitical chronicler who portrayed his generation's mood on **Radici** (spring 1972 - ? 1972). [Alan Sorrenti](#) crafted the free-form psychedelic concept **Aria** (summer 1972 - ? 1972), with a lengthy title-track in the vein of Tim Buckley, perhaps the most innovative piece of the Italian "cantautori". Something similar was achieved by Juri Camisasca's **La Finestra Dentro** (? 1973 - ? 1974). [Claudio Rocchi](#) had predated both with transcendent and psychedelic title-track of **Volo Magico N.1** (? 1971 - dec 1971).

[Franco Battiato](#) (1) ventured into avantgarde music with **Fetus** (? 1971 - jan 1972), **Pollution** (? 1972 - nov 1972), perhaps his zenith, **Sulle Corde Di Aries** (? 1973 - ? 1973), **Clic** (? 1974 - ? 1974), that mix electronics, found sounds, collage techniques, rock instruments and catchy arias, thus bridging Italy's melodic tradition and Germany's Kraftwerk-ian expressionism in a visionary whole.

[Paolo Conte](#) (1), who had already written some of Italy's most memorable melodies (such as *Azzurro*, 1968), coined an understated style of crooning halfway between Leonard Cohen and Louis Armstrong, as well as an elegant style of arrangement that mixed freely Latin and African-American cliches. Albums such as **Paolo Conte** (? 1984 - ? 1984) portrayed a unique philosopher-chronicler-bard.

Japan

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In the 1970s a few Japanese singer-songwriters began experimenting with new formats. The trend yielded albums such as [Kan Mikami's Bang](#) (? 1974 - ? 1974), heavy on electronics and free-jazz, and [Kazuki Tomokawa's Sakura No Kuni No Chiru Naka O](#) (? 1980 - ? 1980), with a 15-minute Wagnerian tour de force.

In Japan a national genre was being created by singer and actress [Keiko Fuji](#): called "enka", it was a style of simple melodies and fatalistic spleen. Her album **Shinjuku no Onna** (? 1970 - mar 1970) was the nation's bestseller for several years.

In fact, Kan Mikami's music felt like avantgarde country ballads sung in an irreverent tone but, in reality, it was simply Anglosaxon folk, blues, funk and jazz music filtered through the lens of enka music. To it he simply added quirky vocal impersonations.

France

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The French scene for singer-songwriters was still dominated by the

"chansonniers" of the post-war period, but the 1968 riots greatly affected the collective psyche of the young generation.

French singer-songwriter [Gerard Manset](#) penned the ten-movement orchestral suite **La Mort D'Orion** (? 1970 - ? 1970).

French anti-yeye girl [Brigitte Fontaine](#) had a profound influence as a brainy Arabic-tinged folk-pop-jazz siren, mixing politics and poetry with strings and keyboards (multi-instrumentalists Areski Belkacem) on albums such as **Comme A La Radio** (nov 1969 - ? 1970), featuring the Art Ensemble of Chicago, **L'Incendie** (? 1971 - ? 1974), perhaps the most adventurous, and **Brigitte Fontaine** (? 1971 - ? 1971).

However, a major event in France was the release of **Histoire de Melody Nelson** (apr 1970/feb 1971 - mar 1971) a seven-song suite that chronicles a pervert's escapade with a nymphet, by veteran chansonnier [Serge Gainsbourg](#) (Lucien Ginzburg).

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