

# The History of Rock Music: 1970-1975

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## Psychedelic Madness 1970-74

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

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### *Psychedelic minds 1970-73*

TM, ®, Copyright © 2005 [Piero Scaruffi](#) All rights reserved. The boom of psychedelic music, and the psychological liberation brought about by the hippie 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, **The Madcap Laughs** (aug 1969 - jan 1970) and the even better **Barrett** (jul 1970 - nov 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 Daliesque 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** (jul 1969 - ? 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 - may 1971), with *Uncle Harry's Last Freak-out*, and **Kings Of Oblivion** (? 1973 - jun 1973).

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** (jun 1970 - nov 1970) before retiring for almost a decade. Borrowing the format of the jam session from jazz music, but the atmosphere from Ernst's surrealist 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 volcanoes, 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) pioneered "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). **X In Search Of Space** (may/aug 1971 - oct 1971) and **Doremi Fasol Latido** (may/aug 1971 - oct 1971), summarized on their **Space Ritual** (dec 1972 - may 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 several cases of similar madness. Buffalo Springfield's bassist [Bruce Palmer](#) (1) released **The Cycle Is Complete** (? 1970 - ? 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 could lay claim to have invented 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** (dec 1970/jan 1971 - feb 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** (fall 1971 - end 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** (? 1985 - ? 1986), a metaphysical rock opera.

Protest folksinger [Buffy Saint-Marie](#) sang the hallucinated **Illuminations** (? 1969 - dec 1969), arranged with electronic sounds by composer Michael Czajkowski.

[Ya Ho Wha 13](#) (1) were formed in 1969 (also in Los Angeles) by a middle-aged beatnik called Jim Baker who believed himself a god and went by the nickname of Father Yod. On albums such as their masterpiece **Penetration: An Aquarian Symphony** (spring 1973/? 1974 - oct 1974), they delivered extreme psychedelic sound that employed tribal drums and distorted guitars in a deliberately childish manner.

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

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

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Psychedelic-rock had been imported into Japan by countless cover bands and by original bands such as the Jacks, whose **Vacant World** (? 1968 - sep 1968) was an early classic. Japanese space-rock was born with [Hadaka no Rallizes](#) (also known as Les Rallizes Denudes), a band that 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** (jul 1972 - ? 1972) and **August 1974** (aug 1974 - may 1975), their music ranged from cosmic hisses to nightmarish distortions, from pow-wow bacchanals to Tibetan-style chanting and droning.

The [Far East Family Band](#), fronted by guitarist and vocalist Fumio Miyashita and featuring the young keyboardist Masanori "Kitaro" Takahashi, was the successor to his Far Out band that had recorded the two lengthy Pink Floyd-ian suites of **Far Out** (? ? - mar 1973). The new line-up excelled at quasi-cosmic trips such as *Nipponjin* on **Nipponjin** (mar/may 1975 - aug 1976) and the six-movement *Parallel World* on **Parallel World** (nov/dec 1975 - ? 1976).

Lost Aaraaff's **Lost Aaraaff** (? 1971 - ? 1991) was devoted to three improvised jams. Their young guitarist, [Keiji Haino](#) (4) penned the eastern mass **Ama No Gawa - Milky Way** (? 1973 - ? 1993). Then, inspired by free-jazz master Takayanagi Masayuki, Haino formed [Fushitsusha](#) (2), featuring second guitarist Maki Miura and drummer Jun Kosugi, 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** (feb/apr 1998 - jun 1998) and **I Saw It** (? ? - jan 2000) were equally torrential. In the meantime, Haino was also busy with Nijiumu and [Vajra](#) The latter, fronted by veteran folksinger Kan Mikami and featuring titanic drummer Toshiaki Ishizuka, improvised colossal noise-folk-punk-rock jams such

as **Tusgaru** (? ? - ? 1995) and **Ring** (? ? - ? 1996). Haino's solo albums included the galactic suites **Affection** (dec 1991 - ? 1992) and **Execration That Accept To Acknowledge** (? ? - ? 1993), as well as 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** (? ? - may 2001), which contains a hypnotic piece for hurdy-gurdy and treated voice, and an industrial collage of metallic noises, distortions and ghostly vocals, as well as to **C'est Parfait** (mar 2002 - jan 2003), one live track for rhythm box and vocals of Wagnerian intensity, and **Yaranai Ga Dekinai Ni Natte Yuku** (? ? - aug 2006), a manic tour de force of solo overdubbed guitar and vocals. His collaborations included **Animamima** (jun 2004 - may 2006), with a twenty-piece sitar orchestra.

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.

The eclectic style of the [Flower Travellin' Band](#) (1) peaked with the five-part suite **Satori** (? 1970 - ? 1971), a confluence of acid-rock, blues-rock, space-rock and hard-rock.

[Magical Power Mako](#) (the brainchild of guitarist Makoto Kurita, a pupil of composer Toru Takemitsu) predated digital folk with the tape manipulation and collage à la **Faust Tapes** of **Magical Power Mako** (summer 1970 - ? 1973), while **Super Record** (summer 1973/? 1975 - apr 1975) ventured into different kinds of Asian influences.

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