

The History of Rock Music: 1976-1989

New Wave, Punk-rock, Hardcore

[History of Rock Music](#) | [1955-66](#) | [1967-69](#) | [1970-75](#) | [1976-89](#) | [The early 1990s](#) | [The late 1990s](#) | [The 2000s](#) | [Alpha index](#)

Musicians of [1955-66](#) | [1967-69](#) | [1970-76](#) | [1977-89](#) | [1990s in the US](#) | [1990s outside the US](#) | [2000s](#)

[Back to the main Music page](#)

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Between Acid-rock and Industrial Music

(These are excerpts from my book ["A History of Rock and Dance 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. The foundations had been laid in Britain by Throbbing Gristle and, one generation later, by Zoviet France, Hafler Trio, Coil and Lustmord.

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 [Crystalized Movements](#) (1), starting with **Mind Disaster** (spr/sum 1983 - dec 1983) and particularly **This Wideness Comes** (sep 1988/jul 1989 - ? 1989), were simply pretexts for narcissistic and logorrheic guitar shows. [Vermonster's](#) third album **The Holy Sound Of American Pipe** (? 1992 - ? 1993) experimented with drones and eastern meditation. [BORB's](#) second album **Blast Off** (sum 1992 - ? 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** (sum/fall 1994 - ? 1995), which contains *Passing Word*, and the four live jams of **Secession '96** (may/dec 1995 - ? 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 Franecki, dealt a fatal blow to the song format with the cassettes and records of his project [F/I](#) (1). His best Hawkwind and Chrome impersonations were found in the extended relentless space jams anchored to heavy distorted riffs and

pounding drums of **Space Mantra** (mar/may 1988 - ? 1988) and **Paradise Out Here** (? 1989 - nov 1989). He then formed [Vocokesh](#) (2) 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!** (? ? - sep 1995) and on the more ethnic **Paradise Revisited** (? ? - jun 1998). By the time of **The Tenth Corner** (? ? - feb 2004), Vocokesh had also incorporated free jazz and raga.

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** (apr 1985 - ? 1986) and **Torch Of The Mystics** (jul 1988 - ? 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* (nov 1994) and *Cameo Demons* (jun 1997).

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** (? 1985 - ? 1988) and **Lambent Flame** (? ? - jan 1989) were visionary works with few precedents. Mental insanity kept Acedo from fully developing the material that appeared on **Hymn Of The Master** (may/sep 2000 - ? 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 Finger** (? ? - ? 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** (? ? - sep 1990) and to **Lactating Purple** (? ? - ? 1991), his most violent and hostile work.

Japanese noise-core, 1987-89

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Japan's rock was more than "alternative": it was "anti". A sadistic passion for chaos and noise led to "noise-core", the radical sound of Japan's holy triad.

Kazuyuki "[KK Null](#)" Kishino was the epitome of Japan's noise guitarists. After the two noisecore suites of **Saishiyu Bushitsu** (apr 1985 - ? 1985), Null formed [Absolute Null Punkt](#) with Fushitsusha's drummer Sejiro Murayama, a project that defined Japanese free-industrial-noise improvised music on madcap works such as **Ultima Action** (apr 1987 - ? 1987). [Zeni Geva](#) (2) indulged in dissonant and gloomy orgies, in the

tradition of early Swans and Big Black (but with no bass), on albums such as **Maximum Money Monster** (? 1988 - ? 1990), **Desire For Agony** (sep 1993 - end 1993), and especially **Total Castration** (sep 1991 - end 1991). Null's solo work, notably **Absolute Heaven** (feb 1991/apr 1993 - ? 1993) and **Ultimate Material II** (?? - ? 1995), continued to straddle the border between extreme noise and very extreme noise.

[Merzbow](#), the brainchild of Masami Akita, one of the most prolific musicians of all times (not a compliment), was a theoretician of surrealism in music but practiced a form of savage violence that was more akin to a suicide bombing on non-musical works such as **Rainbow Electronics** (? 1987/jun 1990 - late 1990), **Music For Bondage Performance** (? 1990/? 1991 - ? 1991), **Venereology** (jan/feb 1994 - sep 1994) and **Tauromachine** (may/sep 1997 - jul 1998).

The [Boredoms](#) (2) of guitarist Seiichi Yamamoto and vocalist Yamatsuka Eye were clowns as well as scouts, imitating/exploring Faust's anarchic stream of consciousness on **Soul Discharge** (? ? - aug 1989), Frank Zappa's most childish gags on **Pop Tatari** (? ? - sep 1992), the Residents-like nursery-school bacchanal of **Chocolate Synthesizer** (? ? - jul 1994), and so on. They eventually condensed their aesthetic vision into the 64-minute madcap merry-go-round of *Go* on **Super Roots 5** (? ? - dec 1995), the seven "super" tracks of **Super æ** (mar 1998 - may 1998), the nine-movement suite **Vision Creation Newsun** (? ? - oct 1999) and the hypertribal suite *Seadrum* (? ? - sep 2004).

No less terrible than the three more famous acts, Juntaro Yamanouchi's [Gerogerigegege](#) released the devastated uber-punk scum-idolizing affronts of **Senzuri Champion** (? 1985/?1986 - apr 1987), **Showa** (? ? - oct 1988) and especially **Tokyo Anal Dynamite** (oct 1987 - aug 1990), containing 75 brief songs, emphasizing their passion for defecation and masturbation.

Music for the Death Factory, 1987

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When psychedelic music became overly abstract, it basically became identical to industrial music, especially its original formulation by Throbbing Gristle: white-noise soundtracks depicting the psychological horror of the industrial society.

The most radical implementation of this aesthetic was carried out in New Zealand by [Dead C](#) (15), the collaborative project of Michael Morley and Bruce Russell. The primitive, guitar-based cacophony of **DR503** (feb/jun 1987 - ? 1987), still related to the lo-fi pop school of the era, evolved into **Trapdoor Fucking Exit** (sep 1989/jan 1990 - ? 1993), 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** (dec 1989/sep 1991 - apr 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 Sonne** (jan 1993 - ? 1993), containing three apocalyptic jams (notably *Air*). 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** (? ? - aug 1995), one of their most emotional "sculptures", **Repent** (? ? - ? 1996) and **Tusk** (? ? - jul 1997). They always excelled at abstract chaotic noisy narratives such as *Speederbot* on **Dead C** (dec 1995/aug 1999 - ? 2000), *Forever* on **New Electric Music** (sep 1999/oct 2000 - ? 2002) and *Garage* on **Future Artists** (? ? - may 2007).

Morley's project [Gate](#) (2) indulged in hyper-abrasive and dilated ballads on **Dew Line** (? 1993 - ? 1994), but progressively morphed into the gentle, languid computer-generated electronic music of **The Lavender Head 1.1.1.2-2.1.2.2** (end 1996 - ? 1998).

Russell's long-standing collaboration with violinist Alastair Galbraith, [A Handful Of Dust](#) (1) was best represented by the two lengthy improvisations of **The Philosophik Mercury** (mar/oct 1993 - ? 1994) and by *The City of God*, off **Jerusalem, Street Of Graves** (aug 1996 - feb 1999).

[Bruce Russell](#)'s trilogy of solo albums, **Project For A Revolution In New York** (jan/apr 1997 - ? 1998), **Maximalist Mantra Music** (feb/jul 1998 - ? 1999) and **Painting The Passports Brown** (may 1999 - ? 2000), focused on the atmospheric quality of his extended compositions for distorted guitars and bedroom electronics.