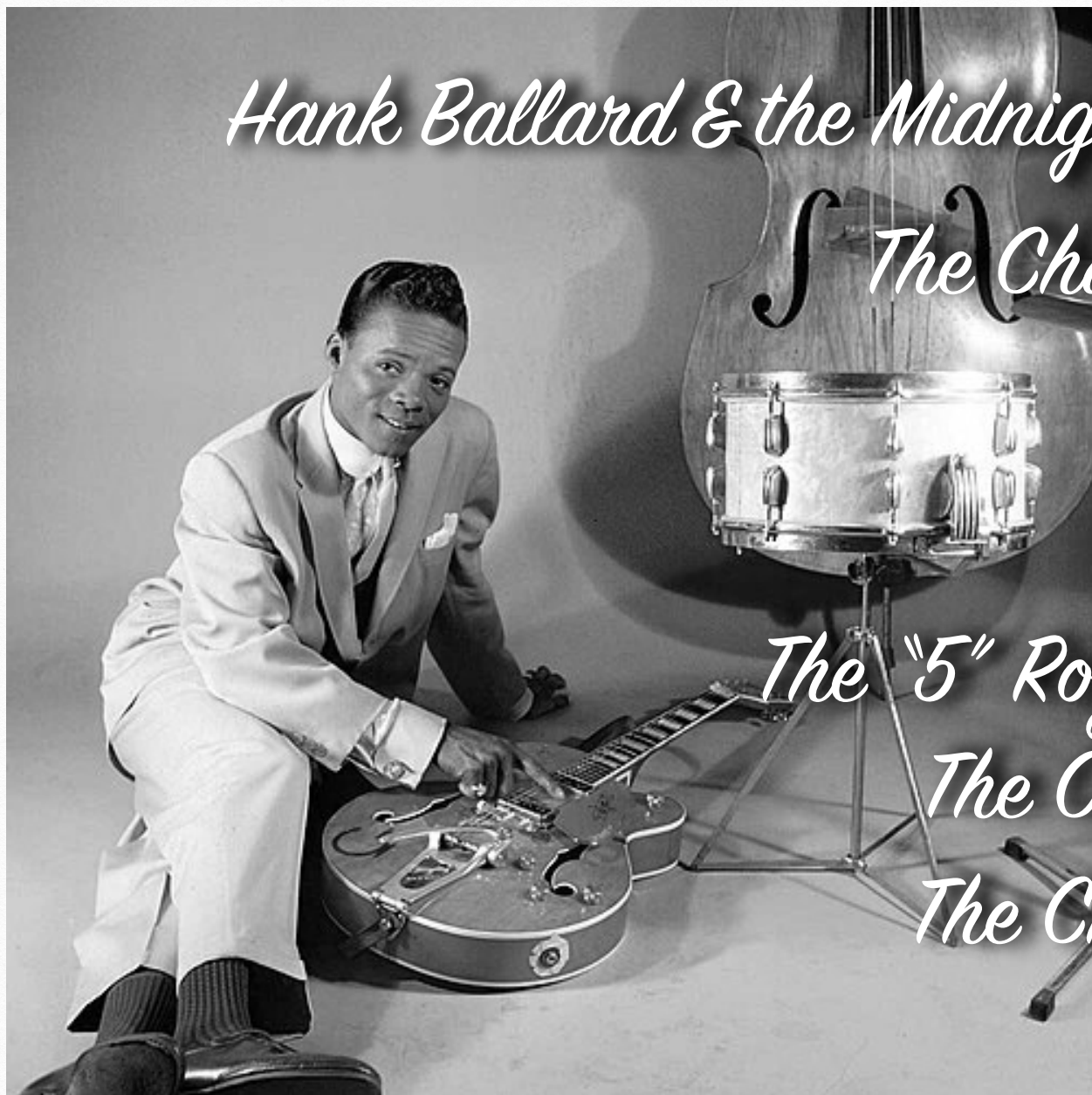


ROCK BEAT



Issue No. 53 - Summer 2026

FREE



Hank Ballard & the Midnighters

The Charms

The "5" Royales

The Crows

The Chords

POP ROCK PUNK ROCK GARAGE ROCK ROOTS ROCK SURF ROCK

NEWS BEAT

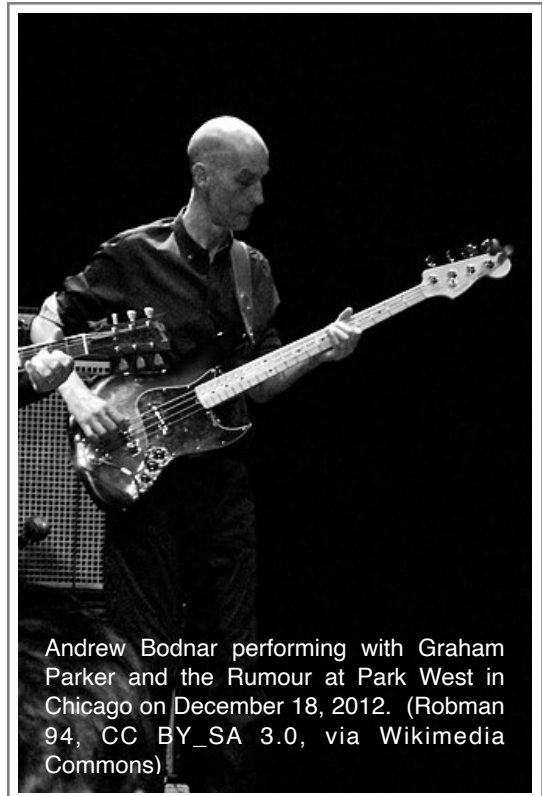
Andrew Bodnar

Andrew Bodnar, best known as the bass player with the **Graham Parker and the Rumour**, passed away on January 5, 2026 at age 71.

Bodnar was born in Newington Butts, South London on September 23, 1954. After playing in the pub-rock band Bontemps Roulez, Bodnar joined the Rumour in 1975. From 1976 to 1980, the Rumour recorded five studio albums with Graham Parker and toured extensively. The Rumour also recorded three albums of their own: *Max* (1977), *Frogs*, *Sprouts*, *Clogs and Krauts* (1979), and *Purity of Essence* (1980).

Whether serving as Graham Parker's backing band or playing on their own, the Rumour were a dynamic and powerful performing unit. As half of the Rumour's rhythm section with drummer **Steve Goulding**, Bodnar played a major role in the band's musical dynamism. Bodnar expertly handled a broad array of styles, ranging from reggae rhythms, to soul grooves, to hard-driving rock 'n' roll.

In addition to his work with the Rumour, Bodnar contributed his bass skills to a number of other recordings, including "Watching the Detectives" by **Elvis Costello**, "I Love the Sound of Breaking Glass" by **Nick Lowe**, "Thin Line Between Love and Hate" by the **Pretenders**, and (continued on page 3)



Andrew Bodnar performing with Graham Parker and the Rumour at Park West in Chicago on December 18, 2012. (Robman 94, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

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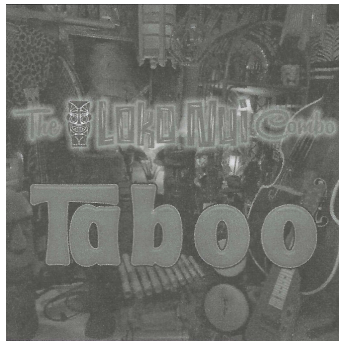
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Cover photo: Promotional photo of Hank Ballard. (Ace Records UK, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

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Surf Beat

By Terry Wilson



The Loko Nui Combo have released their debut single, "Taboo," a remake of the Arthur Lyman exotica classic. Rather than using a vibraphone, the group uses a drippy, reverbed guitar to play the song's melody, giving it more of a

surf-music sound. The guitar is backed by a bongo-and-bass-driven groove with a distorted rhythm guitar providing atmosphere. This is really great, one other best things that I've heard recently. I'm really looking forward to hearing more from this group.

(lokouicombo.bandcamp.com)



The Bablooneys' 2024 debut album, *Late to the Party*, was one of the best instrumental surf albums in recent memory. (See issue number 50.) The Quebec-based band now is back with their sophomore effort, *Goin' for It!*, and it proves that

their debut album was no fluke.

As on their first album, the Bablooneys maintain a traditional, '60s-era surf-guitar sound and perform songs with a strong sense of melody. The album kicks off with "Waveline" which features a drippy, reverbed guitar playing a catchy melody with a saxophone weaving in and out. "Soup Surfer" features interplay between a twangy, Duane Eddy-style guitar and a Boots Randolph-style saxophone. On "Flinch," the band alternates Dick Dale-style double picking with "Wipe Out"-style drum solos. "Pomona Fireball" starts as a moody, atmospheric number reminiscent of the Sandals before erupting into a hard-driving rocker. Drummer Chaney Lagueux, who keeps things moving and grooving expertly throughout the album, gets a

drum showcase on "Cup O' Coffee." "Rovin' with Norma" features a chiming guitar playing a breezy melody. The closing track, "Overcast" adds some rhythm and blues to the band's sound with twangy guitar, a growling saxophone, and a strong dance groove

With *Goin' for It!*, the Bablooneys continue to establish themselves as one of the best bands on the contemporary surf-music scene.

(thebablooneys.bandcamp.com)

News Beat (continued from page 2):

Escape Artist by **Garland Jeffreys**. Bodnar also played on several of Graham Parker's post-Rumour albums.

In 1999, Bodnar launched a solo career with the *Obsessed* EP. He went on to release further recordings, including "Flash in a Diamond," "The Punch House," and "The Man in the Rhyme."

From 2012 through 2015, Bodnar participated in the reunion of Graham Parker and the Rumour, playing on the albums *Three Chords Good* and *Mystery Glue*, appearing in the movie *This Is 40*, and performing live.

Andrew Bodnar will be sorely missed but he leaves behind a strong musical legacy.

Chat GPG

By Gary Pig Gold

Although a tad too young for *The Mickey Mouse Club* (besides, I was always more of a *Three Stooges* kinda kid m'self)

It was within the comforting, semi-erotic-even (well, for a 10-year-old it was) darkness of a circa-'65 Saturday afternoon matinee at the local movie pit that I first became aware of...**Annette Funicello**

...in *Beach Blanket Bingo*

...or maybe it was *Muscle Beach Party*?

...perhaps *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* even?

Then an entire decade later, in the throes of deep deep Beach Boy collecting, I acquired a copy of "The Monkey's Uncle" (in a picture sleeve even!) and thought, while certainly not one of B. Wilson's most stellar productions, it was pretty darn worthy of taking its place in my burgeoning collection right alongside "Honolulu Lulu" and "I Live for the Sun."

Around this same time I caught Annette's all-too-brief cameo consoling Davy Jones in the Mokees' most masterful *Head*, lampooning her goody-goody image just like, yes, the Miley of her time. Soon the Eighties found her spooning out Skippy™ Peanut Butter to bat-beheader Ozzy, then doing the "Jamaica Ska" with Fishbone in that Absolutely Required Viewer *Back to the Beach*.

In other words? Truly a Gal for All Seasons.

Cue to the 28th of April, 1984,

And What should I happen to find in a Vancouver junk shop - for the then quite astronomical cost of \$15 (Canadian) - but an original pressing of the Annette Funicello / Dorothy Lamour soundtrack platter to the Alta Vista (as in Disney) / AIP (as in American International Pictures; always a sign of cinematic quality) classic, *Pajama Party*!

now, While this record was, and is, *certainly*, no *Annette Sings Anka* (and Canadian consumers were typically cheated out of the *Party* platters's original American full-Technicolor gatefold packaging), *PJP* as those kids over on TikTok might be calling it more than fulfills its mission to provide musical accompaniment to Tommy Kirk's undercover Martian (named Go Go), Annette's shady neighbor J. Sinister Hulk, his henchman Chief Rotten Eagle (Buster Keaton, I kid you not) and, thank gawd, my hero Eric Von Zipper and his loyal pack of Rats. Watch closely and you'll glimpse Teri Garr fruggin away here and then there as well.

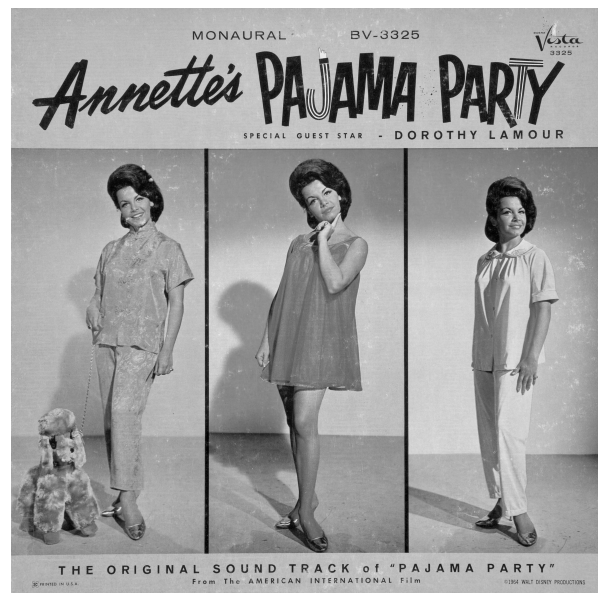
Budget? \$200,000.

Box office take? Impossible, then and now, to calculate. But despite its apparent success at teen-

populated drive-ins, I'd still say *Pajama Party* grossed considerably less that year than *Mary Poppins*' \$103 million

Nevertheless, Annette gamely reprised the title track a full quarter of a century later in ...yes...*Back to the Beach*.

So There!!



To subscribe to Gary Pig Gold's Chat GPG blog, please visit chatgpg.wordpress.com.

THE HISTORY OF ROCK 'N' ROLL

Part 15

By Geoff Cabin

Hank Ballard and The Midnighters

Another vocal group that brought a strong gospel influence to r&b was Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. The group was formed as the Falcons on the East Side of Detroit in the early '50s and originally consisted of Charles Sutton on lead vocals, Henry Booth on tenor vocals, Freddie Pride on baritone vocals, and Sonny Woods on bass vocals.¹ The Falcons modeled themselves after groups like the Orioles, the Five Keys, and the Dominoes.² After about six months, Freddie Pride was drafted and replaced on baritone vocals by Lawson Smith.³

The Paradise Theater in Detroit held an amateur talent contest on Tuesday nights.⁴ On October 16, 1951, the Falcons entered the contest and took first prize singing the Five Keys' recent hit "The Glory of Love."⁵ This brought the Falcons to the attention of the bandleader, Johnny Otis, who was headlining at the Paradise Theater at the time.⁶ Otis signed the Falcons to a management contract and secured them a deal with Federal Records, a subsidiary of King Records.⁷ Around the same time, the group changed their name to the Royals after learning that there was another group called the Falcons.⁸

In March 1952, Federal released the Royals' first record, "Every Beat of My Heart," a slow ballad written by Johnny Otis. In spite of a strong performance by the group, the record failed to chart.⁹ (In 1961, Gladys Knight and the Pips covered "Every Beat of My Heart," and it became their first hit, going to number one on the r&b charts and number six on the pop charts.¹⁰)

Shortly after the Royals recorded "Every Beat of My Heart," Lawson Smith left for military duty and was replaced by Hank Ballard, another native of Detroit.¹¹ Ballard eventually would take over as lead singer of the Royals and become the group's primary songwriter.

After a few more unsuccessful records, the Royals scored their first hit on the r&b charts in the summer of 1953 with "Get It," a number written by Hank Ballard.¹² The song was a mid-tempo, shuffle-driven



Promotional photo of Hank Ballard. (Ace Records UK, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

number, with Ballard's gospel-inflected singing backed by doo-wop-style vocals from the group.

In early 1954, the Royals scored a big, breakthrough hit with "Work with Me Annie." Following an opening guitar riff by Arthur Porter, "Work with Me Annie" featured Ballard's gospel-inflected vocals backed by the other group members singing "ah-oom" over boogie-woogie piano and a shuffle beat. Due to the song's suggestive lyrics, many radio stations refused to play it.¹³ In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, the song became a huge hit, going to number one on the r&b charts in the spring of 1954, where it remained for seven weeks.¹⁴ The song also crossed over to number 22 on the pop charts.¹⁵ Following earlier crossover hits, such as "Sixty Minute Man" by the Dominoes and "Gee" by the Crows, "Work with Me Annie" further popularized rhythm and blues with the teenaged pop audience and helped to pave the way for the rock 'n' roll explosion, which was about to happen.¹⁶

Around the time that "Work with Me Annie" was a hit, the Royals changed their name to the Midnighters to avoid confusion with the "5" Royales, who were in the process of leaving the Apollo label and signing with King Records, Federal Records' parent company.¹⁷

The Midnighters followed "Work with Me Annie" with the equally provocative for the time "Sexy Ways," which went to number 2 on the r&b charts in the summer of 1954.¹⁸ The Midnighters then continued the saga of Annie with a follow-up record, "Annie Had a Baby," which took the Midnighters back to number one on the r&b charts in the late summer of 1954.¹⁹

The popularity of the "Annie" records and the controversy surrounding them prompted a number of acts to record answer records.²⁰ The most notable of these was "The Wallflower" by Etta James. James was born Jamesetta Hawkins in Los Angeles on January 25, 1938.²¹ As a youngster, she sang in the choir of the St. Paul Baptist Church in Los Angeles.²² In 1954, James came to the attention of bandleader Johnny Otis while she was singing in a vocal trio called the Peaches with the sisters Abbye and Jean Mitchell.²³ In response to the "Annie" records, James and Otis wrote a song entitled "Roll with Me Henry" - "Henry" being a reference to Henry "Hank" Ballard.²⁴ (Ballard also was given a writer's credit for the song since it was based on "Work with Me Annie."²⁵) The song's original title, "Roll with Me Henry," was considered too suggestive and was changed to "The Wallflower" when it was released by Modern Records.²⁶

"The Wallflower" featured James engaging in a call and response duet with an uncredited Richard Berry, best known as the writer of "Louie, Louie."²⁷ The record went to number one on the r&b charts in early 1955, and launched James on a long and successful, if troubled, career.²⁸ Meanwhile, the pop singer and former big-band vocalist, Georgia Gibbs, quickly recorded a watered-down version of "The Wallflower" under the title "Dance with Me Henry" and it became a number-one pop hit, also in early 1955.²⁹

The Midnighters went on to record two further follow-up records, "Annie's Aunt Fannie" and "Henry's Got Flat Feet (Can't Dance No More)," before the "Annie" craze ran its course.

In the summer of 1955, the Midnighters scored another hit with "It's Love Baby (24 Hours a Day)" a 12-bar blues with doo-wop-style background vocals and a bluesy guitar solo by Cal Green.³⁰

After a few years absence, the Midnighters, now billed as "Hank Ballard & the Midnighters," returned to the r&b charts in the spring of 1959 with a double-sided hit that featured the romantic ballad, "Teardrops on Your Letter," on one side and the uptempo dance number, "The Twist," on the other.³¹ The following year, Chubby Checker would record a nearly identical-sounding cover of "The Twist," score a

huge hit with it, and launch an international dance craze.³²

Over the course of the next year, the Midnighters scored hits with "Kansas City," "The Coffee Grind," and "Finger Poppin' Time."³³

In the fall of 1960, the Midnighters returned to number one on the r&b charts with one of their greatest records, "Let's Go, Let's Go, Let's Go."³⁴ The song was a gospel style number with a strong backbeat emphasized by handclaps, and a sing-along refrain.

The Midnighters continued to score hits with "The Hoochi Coochi Co," "Let's Go Again (Where We Went Last Night)," "The Continental Walk," "The Float," "The Switch-A-Roo," "Nothing But Good," "Keep on Dancing," and "Do You Know How to Twist."³⁵ As the sixties progressed and the British Invasion began, however, the hits had stopped coming and the Midnighters broke up in 1965.³⁶

Hank Ballard went on to score a couple of minor hits on the r&b charts with "How You Gonna Get Respect (When You Haven't Cut Your Process Yet)" in 1968 and "From the Love Side" in 1972.³⁷ He also continued to perform as a solo artist and with new lineups of the Midnighters.³⁸ Hank Ballard died on March 2, 2003 at the age of 75.³⁹

The Charms

The Charms were another vocal group that helped to popularize r&b with the pop audience.

The Charms were formed in the fall of 1952 by some students at Withrow High School in Cincinnati.⁴⁰ The group's original lineup consisted of Bob Smith (tenor), Rolland Bradley (tenor), Joe Penn (baritone / tenor), and Richard Parker (bass).⁴¹ In 1953, Otis Williams began appearing with the group as a substitute and eventually became a full-time member and the group's lead singer.⁴²

After the Charms appeared at a Withrow variety show in the spring of 1953, they came to the attention of Syd Nathan, the owner of the Cincinnati-based King Records.⁴³ Nathan signed the Charms and initially assigned them to Rockin' Records.⁴⁴ Around the same time, Bob Smith was replaced on tenor vocals by Donald Eugene Peak.⁴⁵ The Charms first record, "Heaven Only Knows" was released in July 1953, but failed to go anywhere.⁴⁶ Syd Nathan subsequently moved the Charms from the Rockin' label to the reactivated DeLuxe label.⁴⁷

The Charms achieved their breakthrough in the fall of 1954 with "Hearts of Stone." The song originally had been recorded by the Los Angeles-based vocal group, the Jewels and released on the small "R&B" label.⁴⁸ The song, which was written by Jewels' member, John Torrence, was a catchy, uptempo number.⁴⁹ The Charms quickly covered the song, giving it a smoother and more polished sound, with a

great vocal performance by Otis Williams.⁵⁰ With better distribution and promotion from King, the Charms' version of the song eclipsed the Jewels' version.⁵¹ The Charms' version of "Hearts of Stone" went to number one on the r&b charts, where it remained for nine weeks, and also crossed over to number 15 on the pop charts.⁵² Late in the year, a heavily-sweetened version of "Hearts of Stone" by the Fontane Sisters went to number one on the pop charts.⁵³

In early 1955, the Charms scored a top-ten r&b hit and number 28 pop hit with the novelty song, "Ling Ting Tong," around the same time that the song was a hit for the Five Keys.⁵⁴ The Charms then scored another top-ten r&b hit with "Two Hearts," which featured a catchy tune set to a shuffle rhythm.⁵⁵ Pat Boone subsequently covered "Two Hearts" for his Dot Records debut and scored a top 20 hit on the pop charts with it.⁵⁶

In the spring of 1955, the other members of the Charms parted company with Otis Williams, went out on their own, and continued to bill themselves as the Charms. Williams put together a new group that consisted of Rollie Willis on baritone vocals, Grafton Diggs on tenor vocals, Lonnie Carter on tenor and baritone vocals, and Matt Williams on bass vocals, who was shortly replaced by Chuck Barkdale.⁵⁷ The new group was billed as Otis Williams and His Charms.⁵⁸

In May 1955, De Luxe issued Otis Williams and His Charms' first single, "Gum Drop," a song written by Rudy Toombs.⁵⁹ The members of the original group then brought a lawsuit to stop Williams' new group from using the name "the Charms."⁶⁰ As a result, "Gum Drop" was reissued credited to "Otis Williams and His New Group."⁶¹ "Gum Drop" failed to chart; it was eclipsed by a cover version by the Canadian group, the Crew Cuts, which went to number 10 on the pop charts.⁶² The lawsuit eventually was resolved with the result that the members of the original group billed themselves as the Charms and Otis Williams' and his new group billed themselves as Otis Williams and His Charms.⁶³

In early 1956, Otis Williams and His Charms scored a hit on both the r&b and pop charts with "That's My Mistake," an uptempo shuffle with a sax solo.⁶⁴ That spring, they scored another hit with a cover of "Ivory Tower," a then-current pop hit for both Cathy Carr and Gale Storm.⁶⁵ The Charms version of "Ivory Tower" went to number 5 on the r&b charts and number 11 on the pop charts.⁶⁶ Otis Williams and His Charms scored a final hit on the r&b charts in the summer of 1957 with "United," a doo-wop style number with a prominent bass vocal and bluesy guitar licks.⁶⁷ In 1961, the group scored two minor hits on the pop charts with "Little Turtle Dove" and "Panic," neither of which made the r&b charts.⁶⁸

In the mid-sixties, Williams signed with Columbia's Okeh subsidiary and recorded some soul-oriented records.⁶⁹ In 1971, he recorded a country

album, *Otis Williams and the Midnight Cowboys*, and scored a minor hit on the country charts with "I Wanna Go Country."⁷⁰

The "5" Royales

Another vocal group that brought the excitement of gospel to r&b was the "5" Royales. In fact, the "5" Royales first started as a gospel group called the Royal Sons Quintet, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina in the late '30s.⁷¹ The group was led by singer, songwriter, and guitarist, Lowman Pauling, and the original lineup also included his brother Clarence Pauling, his second cousin Windsor King, along with Anthony Price and William Samuels.⁷² Over the next few years, the group experienced a number of personnel changes with Windsor King and Anthony Price departing to enter the military and Clarence Pauling leaving to join the Wings Over Jordan Choir.⁷³ They were replaced by Johnny Tanner, Otto Jeffries, and Jimmy Moore.⁷⁴

In 1951, the Royal Sons Quintet signed with Apollo Records.⁷⁵ The group's first release was the gospel number, "Bedside of a Stranger."⁷⁶ Around this time, the group experienced another personnel change when William Samuels went into the Navy and was replaced by Obadiah "Scoop" Carter.⁷⁷ After releasing a few more gospel singles, the group decided to try their hand at secular music.⁷⁸ The group's first secular single was "Too Much of a Little Bit," which was issued under the name the Royals.⁷⁹ The group subsequently changed their name to the "5" Royales to avoid confusion with the Detroit-based Royals (who later changed their name to the Midnighters).⁸⁰

In early 1953, the "5" Royales made a breakthrough when they hit number one on the r&b charts with "Baby, Don't Do It."⁸¹ The song featured Johnny Tanner's emotion-packed vocals backed by piano and a riffing horn section provided by the Charlie "Little Jazz" Ferguson Orchestra. That spring, the "5" Royales returned to number one on the r&b charts with "Help Me Somebody."⁸² The song was a slow ballad with Johnny Tanner's pleading vocals again backed by the Charlie "Little Jazz" Ferguson Orchestra. Over the next year, the "5" Royales continued to score hits on the r&b charts with "Crazy, Crazy, Crazy," "Too Much Lovin'," and "I Do."⁸³ The group experienced yet another personnel change when Otto Jeffries left the group and was replaced by Johnny Tanner's brother Eugene.⁸⁴

In 1954, the "5" Royales left the Apollo label and signed with the King Records.⁸⁵ The group's first release for King was the gospel-style "I'm Gonna Run It Down," but it failed to go anywhere.⁸⁶ After several more unsuccessful releases, the "5" Royales returned to the top ten on the r&b with the ballad, "Tears of Joy" in the summer of 1957.⁸⁷ Later in the summer, they



scored another top-ten r&b hit with “Think,” a rocking number that showcased Lowman Pauling’s bluesy guitar licks.⁸⁸ In 1960, James Brown covered “Think” and it again became a top-ten hit on the r&b charts.⁸⁹ In 1958, the “5” Royales released Lowman Pauling’s classic ballad “Dedicated to the One I Love.”⁹⁰ The record failed to chart, but the song subsequently became a big hit for the Shirelles in 1961 and the Mommas and Poppas in 1967.⁹¹

After a final release, the Carolina-beach-style dance number, “(Something Moves Me) Within My Heart,” the “5” Royales parted company with the King label.⁹² Over the next several years, the group recorded for a number of small independent labels, but without any success. Sadly, Lowman Pauling dropped out of music and ended up working as a janitor at a synagogue in Brooklyn.⁹³ Suffering from epilepsy, Pauling died on December 26, 1973 at age 47.⁹⁴

The Crows

The Crows were another vocal group that helped bring r&b / early rock ‘n’ roll to the pop charts with their hit “Gee.”

The group formed in Harlem in the early ‘50s and initially consisted of Daniel “Sonny” Norton on lead vocals, Harold Major and Jerry Wittick on tenor vocals, Bill Davis on baritone and tenor vocals, and Gerald Hamilton on bass vocals.⁹⁵ The group received their big break when they won first prize at the Wednesday night amateur talent contest at the Apollo Theater.⁹⁶ This brought them to the attention to an agent named Cliff Martinez.⁹⁷ Martinez teamed the Crows with another of his clients, the singer and pianist Viola Watkins.⁹⁸ The Crows provided backing vocals for Watkins and she served as pianist and arranger for the Crows.⁹⁹

The Crows experienced a personnel change when Jerry Wittick left the group to join the military, and was replaced by Mark Johnson, who served primarily as the group’s guitarist, but also sang occasionally.¹⁰⁰

Cliff Martinez took the Crows and Viola Watkins to George Goldner.¹⁰¹ Goldner ran a Latin music label called Tico, and recently had established a new label, Rama, to try to expand into the rhythm and blues market.¹⁰²

In April 1953, Rama released the first single by the Crows, “Seven Lonely Nights” / “No Help Wanted.”¹⁰³ “Seven Lonely Nights” was a cover of the Georgia Gibbs pop hit and featured Viola Watkins on vocals backed by the Crows.¹⁰⁴ The flip side, “No Help Wanted” was a cover of the Carlisles’ country hit with the Crows’ vocals backed by Viola Watkins’ boogie-woogie piano.¹⁰⁵ The single failed to go anywhere.¹⁰⁶

In May 1953, Rama released the Crows’ second single, “I Love You So” / “Gee.”¹⁰⁷ “I Love You So” was a ballad, while “Gee” was a catchy dance number.

Initially, the record didn’t go anywhere. Then, in late 1953, it received an assist from the disc jockey, Dick “Huggy Boy” Hugg, who broadcast on KRKD from the front window of Dolphin’s record store in downtown Los Angeles.¹⁰⁸ Hugg’s girlfriend liked the record’s flip side, “Gee.”¹⁰⁹ Following an argument that prompted her to leave the studio, Hugg repeatedly played “Gee” on the air to try to get her to return.¹¹⁰ After receiving airplay by Hugg, “Gee” began to take off on the West Coast.¹¹¹ By early 1954, the song’s popularity had spread to other parts of the country and it began to take off nationally.¹¹² In March 1954, the song entered the national pop charts, eventually peaking at number 14 and continuing the trend of r&b songs catching on with the pop audience.¹¹³ In April 1954, eleven months after it had been released, “Gee” entered the r&b charts, where it rose to number 2.¹¹⁴

The Crows recorded a few more singles for Rama, but failed to score any more hits and disbanded in early 1955.¹¹⁵ While the group had only one hit, it was a hit that played a significant role in popularizing r&b with the teenaged pop audience and paving the way for the rock ‘n’ roll explosion, which was about to happen.

The Chords

With their hit “Sh-Boom,” the Chords were another vocal group that helped r&b / early rock ‘n’ roll break through to the pop charts.

The Chords were formed in the Bronx in 1951 by members of four other local vocal groups - Carl Feaster (lead tenor) and Claude Feaster (baritone) came from the Tunetoppers; Jimmy Keyes (tenor) came from the Four Notes; Floyd “Buddy” McRae (tenor) came from the Keytones; and William “Ricky” Edwards



Promotional photo of the Chords. (Cat Records, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.)

(bass) came from an earlier group called the Chords.¹¹⁶ The new group originally called themselves the Keytones but then changed their name to the Chords.¹¹⁷

The Chords worked up an original song called “Sh-Boom,” which they used to audition for Bobby Robinson of Red Robin Records, but he turned them down.¹¹⁸

In 1954, the Chords came to the attention of Oscar Cohen, who worked for Joe Glaser’s Associated Booking Corporation.¹¹⁹ Cohen took the Chords to Ahment Ertegun and Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records, who were looking for a vocal group to do an r&b cover of the Patti Page pop hit “Cross Over the Bridge.”¹²⁰ In April 1954, Atlantic announced that it had signed the Chords to their newly-established subsidiary, Cat Records.¹²¹

Shortly afterwards, Cat Records released the Chords first single, “Cross Over the Bridge” with “Sh-Boom” on the flip side. As it turned out, it was “Sh-Boom,” that received all of the attention. After the Los Angeles disc jockey Dick “Huggy Boy” Hugg flipped the record over and played “Sh-Boom” on his show on KRKD, the song started to take off on the west coast and then in other parts of the country.¹²² The record featured doo-wop-style vocals with some nonsense lyrics, a strong dance beat, and a wailing tenor sax solo by session ace Sam “the Man” Taylor.

When Atlantic saw the reaction to “Sh-Boom,” they cancelled the “Cross Over the Bridge” single and

issued a new single with “Sh-Boom” on the A Side and another original song, “Little Maiden,” on the flip side.¹²³ “Sh-Boom” ended up going to number two on the r&b charts in the summer of 1954.¹²⁴ The record also went to number five on the pop charts, making it the first rock ‘n’ roll record to crack the pop top ten.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, a pop cover version of “Sh-Boom” by the Crew Cuts, went to number one on the pop charts.¹²⁶

In September 1954, Cat released the Chords follow-up record, “Zippity Zum,” but it failed to catch on.¹²⁷

The Chords then ran into a problem with their name. It turned out that there already was another group called the Chords, who had released a song called “In the Woods” on the Gem label in August 1953.¹²⁸ The other group brought a legal action challenging the Chords right to use the name.¹²⁹ As a result, the Chords changed their name to the Chordcats and then the Sh-Booms, but singles released under those names failed to go anywhere.¹³⁰

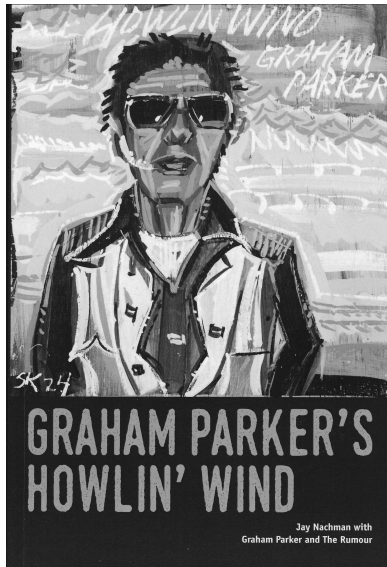
In the spring of 1956, the group left Atlantic.¹³¹ After releasing a final single on the Vik label, a subsidiary of RCA, the group broke up.¹³² Although the Chords had only one hit, it was an extremely important one, bringing rock ‘n’ roll to the pop top ten for the first time and heralding the start of the rock ‘n’ roll explosion.

End Notes

1. Marv Goldberg, “The Royals,” *Marv Goldberg’s R&B Notebooks*, www.uncamarcy.com/Royals/royals.html, accessed January 2, 2026.
2. Goldberg, “The Royals.”
3. Goldberg, “The Royals.”
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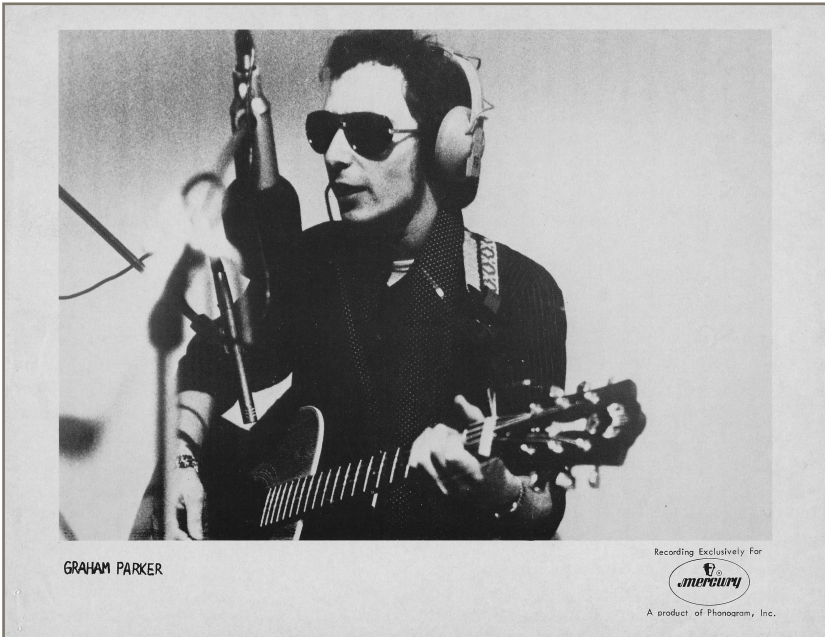


Graham Parker's Howlin' Wind:
Jay Nachman with Graham Parker and the Rumour
(Tangible Press)

By Geoff Cabin

Back in the spring of 1976, Graham Parker seemed to come out of nowhere with one of the greatest debut albums of all time - *Howlin' Wind*. On the album, the 25-year-old Parker came across as a fully-developed artist with a soulful singing voice and exceptional songwriting skills, backed by a fantastic band. Parker proved himself conversant in a wide variety of styles ranging from r&b to rockabilly to reggae to straight-ahead rock 'n' roll. And it was no fluke - before the year was out, Parker had released a second great album, *Heat Treatment*.

In his excellent new book, *Graham Parker's Howlin' Wind*, Jay Nachman traces the phases of Parker's development as a



Early promotional photo of Graham Parker.

musician leading up to *Howlin' Wind* and chronicles the making of the album. Unlike, say, Bruce Springsteen, Parker was not someone who had honed his skills by playing in bands since he was a teenager. In fact, before making *Howlin' Wind*, Parker had relatively little experience playing in bands. Instead, as Nachman documents, Parker followed a more idiosyncratic path to becoming a musician.

Parker grew up in the village of Deepcut, about 25 miles southwest of London. In his teens, Parker got into soul and ska, then developed an interest in British blues, particularly the music of Peter Green. After leaving school, Parker spent time on the channel island of Guernsey where he smoked hash, dropped acid, and got into in psychedelic music.

During this time, Parker picked up a guitar and started making his first attempts at writing songs.

Back in England, Parker started listening to singer/songwriters like James Taylor and Neil Young and concentrating more seriously on writing songs. He continued to work on his songwriting while spending time in Morocco and Gibraltar, where he also occasionally played with a psychedelic band variously known as Narziss, Pegasus, and Terry Burbot's Magic Mud.

Back in England again, Parker returned to his soul-music roots and began to focus more seriously on establishing some sort of career in music. He met Stuart Johnson, signed a publishing deal with Johnson's company, Tower Bridge Music, and recorded demos in Johnson's garden studio.



Early promotional photo of Graham Parker and the Rumour. Left to right: Andrew Bodnar, Graham Parker, Brinsley Schwarz, Bob Andrews, Stephen Goulding, and Martin Belmont.

(These are the recordings that later appeared on *The Middlesex Demos* CD.)

Parker also tried to find other musicians to work with by placing an ad in *Melody Maker*. As a result of the ad, Parker met the guitarist and songwriter Noel Brown and, through him, met Paul Riley, a former member of the pub-rock band, Chilli Willi and the Red Hot Peppers. Riley introduced Parker to the music industry veteran Dave Robinson. Robinson had managed the pub-rock band, Brinsley Schwarz, and had been instrumental in establishing the pub-rock circuit in London. (Robinson would go on to found Stiff Records with Andrew “Jake Riviera” Jakeman.) At the time, Robinson was operating a recording studio at the Hope and Anchor Pub in London and looking for acts to record. Robinson recorded a three-song demo tape of Parker, which included “Between You and Me.” When Charlie Gillett played “Between You and Me” on his *Honky Tonk* radio show, it caught the attention

of Phonogram A&R man, Nigel Grainge, and led to a recording contract.

As Nachman chronicles, Parker’s arrival on the music scene in London coincided with the end of the pub rock scene. Pub rock bands were breaking up, which left a lot of musicians at loose ends. A number of veterans of the pub rock scene began rehearsing at Newlands Tavern with an eye toward forming a band. These were Brinsley Schwarz (guitar) and Bob Andrews (keyboards) from Brinsley Schwarz; Martin Belmont (guitar) from Ducks Deluxe; and Andrew Bodnar (bass) and Stephen Goulding (drums) from the Skyrockets and Bontemps Roulez. This is the group that would evolve into the Rumour. Nachman provides background on all of the members of the Rumour, including a detailed history of Brinsley Schwarz, as well as an overview of the pub-rock scene in general.

Parker was brought together with the Rumour through Dave Robinson and it was decided

that they would back Parker on his debut album. Nick Lowe, another alumnus of Brinsley Schwarz, was recruited to produce the album. Nachman documents the recording of the album, which took place at Eden Studios, and concludes by providing a detailed analysis of each song on the album

Graham Parker’s Howlin’ Wind is an outstanding work of rock ‘n’ roll history. It is well researched and well written. Nachman has interviewed Parker, the members of the Rumour, Dave Robinson, Nick Lowe, and just about every one else connected with the making of the album. The book also is well illustrated with photos, record sleeves, and memorabilia. Even long-time Graham Parker fans will learn a lot by reading the book. Indeed, the book is a must-read for Parker fans, who couldn’t have asked for anything better.

(grahamparkershowlinwind.net)



The Great Yellow Light: Willie Nile

(River House Records)

By Al Masciocchi

It is hard to believe, hard to admit, that Willie Nile has a recording career going back 46 years now, to 1980’s self-titled debut album. Just like Bruce Springsteen was one of a seeming cast of thousands dubbed “a new Bob Dylan”, Nile was one of the earliest to be called “the new Bruce Springsteen.”

Either of those sobriquets is hard to live up to regardless of the amount of talent you have; Springsteen himself is the rare exception. Nile has been plugging away for a long time without tasting much commercial success.

It certainly isn't for lack of talent; he's got plenty of that. And it's not because he doesn't have a true rock & roll heart; you don't keep at it for as long as he has without that heart. Fifteen or so studio albums, more than a few live albums, and regular touring both solo and with his band. Has to be love because I doubt he is getting rich.

Regardless of the level of success, it hasn't stopped Nile from putting out an album that has to rank near the top of his catalog. There is a strong, rocking triad to start things off with "Wild Wild World", "We Are, We Are", and "Electrify Me". These form a State Of The Union address for current times. And "Union" goes from the macro (as the first title indicates) to the micro (as the third does), sometimes both macro and micro in the same songs. One or both appear in most of the album's ten tracks.

Another track, the rocking, neo-rockabilly "Tryin' To Make A Livin' In The U.S.A." touches again on both the macro and micro while broadly winking at his lack of success and how a hit could change it all ("With a melody to break your heart and tears at the end, The bill collector at the door will never come again").

The musicianship is rock solid all the way through with Willie Nile Band members Jimi Bones (guitars), Johnny Pisano (bass), and Jon Weber (drums) providing the back-up as well as vocalists like Paul Brady (on "An Irish Goodbye") and Steve Earle (on "Wake Up America") and veteran session aces like David Mansfield and Waddy Watchel guesting.

The days of being a "new Bruce" carrying any weight or importance are long over but it isn't

a stretch to say he is more an old Bruce these days than the original. This is gritty, heart-felt, heartland rock & roll. It's not too late to get on board.

(willienile.bandcamp.com)



Waterloo Sunrise: The Rokerati
(Kool Kat)

By Geoff Cabin

Waterloo Sunrise is the debut album of the Rokerati, a group led by UK-based singer, songwriter, and guitarist David McCarthy. McCarthy appears to have been heavily influenced by early rockers like Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly as well as latter-day roots-rockers like Dave Edmunds, John Fogerty, and George Thorogood. The Rokerati play in a style that combines roots rock with catchy pop tunes and perform in a manner that is bursting with energy and exuberance.

The album kicks off with "Shake the Tree," a raucous rocker with a catchy melody framed by twangy guitar riffs. "16 Things" is another catchy rocker played at a breakneck tempo and propelled by Chuck Berry-style guitar riffs. "Endless Sea of Stars," "The Way It Goes," and "Miles Away" mine similar territory with equal success. On "Leave Again," the band sets a country-tinged melody to a mid-tempo shuffle rhythm. "Emoji Mojo" is set to a John Lee Hooker-style boogie beat and punctuated with bluesy guitar riffs. On "Rain, Rain, Rain," the group combines

an irresistibly-catchy melody with a propulsive rhythm.

Waterloo Sunrise is a fun album filled with good-time rock 'n' roll that provides a much-needed breath of fresh air on the music scene.

(koolkatmusik.com)



The King of Queens: Keith Streng

(Drowned World Records)

By Beverly Paterson

Born half a century ago in Queens, New York, The Fleshtones remain a dependable crowd pleaser, thrilling audiences far and wide with their festive brand of punky, funky garage rock. And that brings us to the band's guitarist, Keith Streng, who recently released his debut solo album, *The King of Queens*, which acknowledges his celebrated roots, compounded by moments of novel exploration.

Produced by Kurt Bloch of Fastbacks, Young Fresh Fellows and Split Squad fame, the set also features input from Peter Buck of REM, Scott McCaughey (The Young Fresh Fellows, REM), The Liminanas, Dynamite Shakers and The Red Chuck Tabernacle Choir.

The first song on the disc, the appropriately titled "Rock and Roll Is At It Again" stands as an electrifying ode to everything great about the genre. Keith's raw, shouting vocals, stomping rhythms, a football cheer styled chorus, trashy drums and piercing riffs power the boisterous track,

recalling a cool mash up of The Sonics, The Stooges and The Sweet.

Grinding and crunching with hefty intensity, "In The Court of Kings and Queens" involves a near-shattering explosion of squalling guitars of the metallic variety, while the radio-friendly "How Pretty Is Pretty" is indeed pretty, delivered at a sprightly pace promoting jangling chords and radiant melodies.

A ghostly vibe directs the sleepy-eyed, psychedelic tinted "Beautiful Collision," where cuts such as "I'm a Boy, I'm a Girl" and "Just a Number" favor raggedy, swaggering garage rock reflexes. Propelled by an insistent, repetitious beat, "FireFlies" is further marked by a showcase of high-pitched harmonizing, giving the song a hypnotic feel. Wrapped in a bright and glossy sheen, surrounded by sweeping flourishes and icy Goth inspired vocals, "Until Forever" sounds like a long lost top-forty hit from the eighties.

Peddling a keen sampling of moods and textures, *The King of Queens* connects on all levels, making Keith's maiden voyage a certified success.



Love Is Alive: Jeremy
(JAM)

By Geoff Cabin

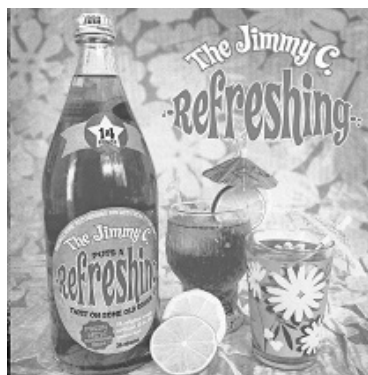
Love Is Alive is the latest installment of the collaboration between Jeremy Morris and Ken Stringfellow. They once again draw on the classic pop and rock

sounds of the '60s and '70s to create music that sounds both contemporary and timeless. As always, there is lots of skillful song craft and outstanding guitar playing.

The album's title track sets a catchy melody to a wall of layered guitars and swirling keyboards. "Cast Away Our Fears" features a breezy melody backed by jangly guitar reminiscent of the Byrds. On the heavy-duty psychedelic rocker, "Coming My Way," Jeremy employs a heavier, distorted guitar sound and the song builds to a climactic guitar workout. "Chain Reaction" combines Jeremy's guitar-pop sound with a bass-and-drum-driven dance groove. The album includes a new version of "Over Now" with a lush arrangement that features synth strings and a soaring guitar solo. "You Rescued Me" combines a catchy melody with jangly guitar. The closing track, "Love Waits," is a melodic, piano-based ballad that concludes with a spacey instrumental section.

With *Love Is Alive*, Jeremy Morris and Ken Stringfellow continue to keep the sounds of classic guitar pop alive and well.

(jamrecordings.com)



Refreshing: The Jimmy C
(Kool Kat)

By Geoff Cabin

The Jimmy C is the *non de plume* of Jamie Coghill, a

singer and multi-instrumentalist based in Melbourne, Australia. Coghill plays in a power-pop and garage-rock style, with lyrics that range from deeply affecting to darkly humorous. He also makes occasional forays into spaghetti-western style instrumentals. *Refreshing* contains recent one-man-band home recordings that show Coghill to be a highly-skilled songwriter and performer.

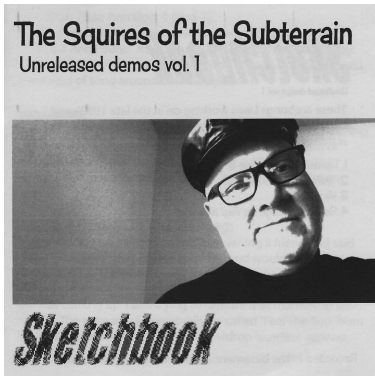
The opening track, "The Back Roads to Ruin," is a catchy rocker with a hard-edged guitar sound. "Don't Cry" is a pop-rock number that features a buoyant melody and breezy background vocals. On "Just a Fool" Coghill sets a sinuous melody to a slow-burning groove, augmented by bluesy guitar riffs. "All Nite Ride" features quiet, understated vocals set to a relaxed, mid-tempo groove.

Coghill ventures into spaghetti-western territory with the instrumental "Sonora Desert Theme," which combines twangy acoustic guitar picking with atmospheric slide guitar. "El Deserto Des Los Muertes" is another heavily atmospheric instrumental with distorted and echo-laden guitar over a slow, dirge-like groove.

Perhaps the standout track on the album is "Sending Home the Dead," a brooding number with a haunted and funereal atmosphere provided by background vocals and a melodic. The song has taken on added poignancy and relevance due to recent events.

All in all, *Refreshing* is an outstanding and highly-enjoyable album.

(koolkatmusik.com)



**Sketchbook: Unreleased Demos
Volumes 1- 3: The Squires of
the Subterrain**
(Rocket Racket)

By Geoff Cabin

Recording under the *nom de plume* of Squires of the Subterrain, Christopher Earl has been a leading figure on the indie-pop scene since back in the '90s. Starting with a series of cassettes (selections from which are collected on *Pop in a CD*) and continuing through albums like *Strawberries on Sunday*, *Lemon Malarky*, and *Slightly Radioactive*, Earl has produced an impressive body of music, working on an 8-track recorder in his basement. Earl draws inspiration from the pop and psychedelic sounds of the '60s, in particular from *Pet Sounds* and *SMiLE*-era Brian Wilson. The result is music that is adventurous and experimental while always remaining accessible and retaining a strong pop sensibility.

Earl has recently released three volumes of demos that provide a window into his creative process. They contain early versions of songs that later turned up on albums as well as experimental bits and pieces.

Volume 1 contains two versions of the chamber-pop number, "Teardrop Blue," which later evolved into "The Lost and Found" on the *Strawberries on Sunday* album. Both versions of the song have relatively spare arrangements, with the second

version adding a vocal section in the middle and a spacey outro featuring the sound of a calliope. "Setting a Design on You / Morning," which later became the title track of the *Feel the Sun* album, has the pastoral sound of *Wild Honey*-era Beach Boys.

On Volume 2, the lushly-arranged "Cover Girl" is an attempt to capture the sound and spirit of the *Pet Sounds* album, and it succeeds admirably. "Gravity" alternates sections of melodic vocals backed by organ with wordless vocals that are reminiscent of "Cabinessence." "Whistles and Bells" is an experiment in the sort of modular songwriting that Brian Wilson employed on the *SMiLE* album, with discrete sections edited together to create a sound collage.

On Volume 3, "Looking into the Sun" is a classic-sounding pop ballad with a lush arrangement. "Trace Your Head (to Pieces)" is another *Pet Sounds*-style number, driven by organ, bass, and guitar.

Anyone interested in delving deeper into the music of the Squires of the Subterrain, will find lots of enjoyable and interesting listening on these three volumes of demos.

(squiresofthesubterrain.com)



Baby Moon: The Wellingtons
(Kool Kat)

By Geoff Cabin

Baby Moon is the latest album by the Wellingtons from Melbourne, Australia. The band has a classic power-pop sound that combines catchy pop melodies with an aggressive guitar attack and a hard-driving beat.

The album's lead track, "Always Gonna Be That Girl," exemplifies the band's sound - the song features an ultra-catchy melody with Zac Anthony's impassioned vocals backed by hard-edged guitar sounds and thundering drums. "She Still Loves Me" is set to a fast, hard-driving beat and propelled by strummed, ringing guitars. On "Lola," the band sets a catchy melody to a jaunty rhythm backed by acoustic guitar and piano. "I Won't Turn Away" is another ultra-catchy number with a harmony-laden refrain.

Bassist Kate Goldby takes the lead vocal on three songs, which adds variety to the band's sound. "The Things I Did Before" is a catchy pop-rock number reminiscent of the Go-Gos; "Sad Today" captures the girl-group sound of the early sixties; and "Not Ready to Give Up" is a slow ballad with Goldby's vocal backed by organ and chiming guitar.

The album concludes with "The Long Goodbye," a catchy rocker with a fast, propulsive beat.

Fans of power pop will find lots to like on *Baby Moon*.

(koolkatmusik.com)



***There Is Somebody Out There:*
Jeremy
(JAM)**

By Geoff Cabin

There Is Somebody Out There is Jeremy's tribute to Pink Floyd. On the album, Jeremy covers a good selection of Pink Floyd songs, ranging from the early Syd Barrett era ("Interstellar Overdrive"), to the immediate post-Syd era ("Fearless," "Obscured by Clouds) to the band's mid-to-late-'70s heyday ("Breath," "Wish You Were Here," "Comfortably Numb.") Jeremy seems to have studied the songs and arrangements until he has totally absorbed them and knows them inside out. As on his Byrds' tribute album, *Flying High* (see review in issue number 52), Jeremy puts his own spin on the songs by adding new instrumental passages, which include lots of sensational guitar playing.

In addition to the covers, Jeremy includes an original number, "There Is Somebody Out There," apparently an answer to Pink Floyd's "Is There Anybody Out There?" The number is an instrumental that goes through a variety of different sections, ranging from spacey synthesizer soundscapes to dramatic guitar work. Jeremy also includes a cover of John Wicks' "That Girl Is Emily," which Wicks wrote as a tribute to Syd Barrett. The song is a catchy pop-rock number, which is right up Jeremy's alley.

Fans of Pink Floyd should thoroughly enjoy these new

interpretations of Pink Floyd songs.
(www.jamrecordings.com)



***Hope and Fury:* Joe Jackson
(Ear Music)**

By Geoff Cabin

In the course of his career, Joe Jackson has worked in a wide range of musical genres. His latest album, *Hope and Fury*, finds him returning to the more pop-oriented style of his albums of the '70s and '80s. Jackson is backed on the album by his usual band of Graham Maby on bass, Teddy Kumpel on guitar, and Doug Yowell on drums, augmented by Paulo Stagnaro on percussion.

The opening track, "Welcome to Burning by Sea," is set in a seaside town similar to Jackson's hometown of Portsmouth. The song has a dance groove driven by Latin percussion with verses delivered in a rapid-fire, rap-like manner before bursting into an anthemic refrain. Jackson's acerbic wit is on display in "I'm Not Sorry," his non-apology for being politically incorrect. The song is another Latin-flavored track, driven by percussive piano chords. "After All This Time" is a mid-tempo rocker framed by a memorable guitar riff. In "At the End of the Pier," Jackson contrasts life on an amusement pier in 1922 with 2022. The album closes with the piano-based ballad, "See You in September," a bittersweet and wistful reflection on aging.

Hope and Fury finds Jackson in top form and ranks with his best work.
(www.joejackson.com)