

# 1968



*Frankie*  
**ROCK**

**TIME**  
**LIFE**  
MUSIC

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Against a backdrop of incredible political and social turmoil — the escalation of the Vietnam conflict, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, race riots across the nation, and street battles outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago — rock prospered in 1968 as never before. *Billboard* reported that in 1967 consumers had spent more than one billion dollars on records, and that albums had outsold singles, both firsts for the industry. Though 45s and AM radio were hardly dead, the LP had emerged as the leading recording medium, and the rise of “underground” FM radio stations reinforced the significance of this format.

Rock was obviously the dominant entertainment form of the young, but the music had grown in so many different directions that it was impossible to speak of a unified rock audience. The cultural schisms plaguing America were mirrored by the proliferation of musical subgenres: folk-rock, country-rock, hard rock, psychedelic rock, art-rock, blues-rock, bubble gum and plain old pop. As Sylvester Stewart, a.k.a. Sly Stone, put it, “Different strokes for different folks.”

No group bridged the gaps between soul, pop and counterculture factions more successfully than San Francisco’s Sly and the Family Stone. With a show-stopping combination of funky rhythms, idealistic messages, outrageous costumes and wild choreography, this sexually and racially integrated septet ushered soul music into a more artistically progressive era. In *Everyday People*, Sly Stone revolutionized R & B by creating a democracy of sound where numerous voices and instruments carried on a kinetic musical dialogue.

Even Motown was affected by Stone’s groundbreaking psychedelic-soul fusion and became more musically adventurous. Producer Norman Whitfield wrote a new page of Motown history in *Cloud Nine* by the Temptations.

*A young Aretha Franklin before her reign as Lady Soul*



With lead singer David Ruffin gone (replaced by Dennis Edwards), Whitfield now used all five singers equally, letting their voices pop in and out of the song's relentless funk bottom. The lyrics, which contrast the bleak reality of ghetto life with the escape offered by drugs, were also quite daring by Motown standards. The Temps' Otis Williams later remarked, "When that came out the establishment was a little bit stunned. They were used to us

singing *Ol' Man River* and *Ain't Too Proud to Beg*, but suddenly we were into a heavier kind of song."

Motown suffered a loss in 1968 when its top songwriting and production team, Holland-Dozier-Holland, left the label amid a flurry of lawsuits. To compensate, Motown enlisted four songwriters and a five-man production team to create **Love Child** for the Supremes. This uncharacteristic slice of social commentary about illegit-



*The Cream of British musicians:  
Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton*

imate children gave the Supremes another No. 1 hit. On *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the group reinforced the song's message by shedding their usual glamorous outfits in favor of cutoffs, sweatshirts and bare feet.

Aretha Franklin, the most successful soul singer of the '60s, chalked up nine top-10 hits in 1967 and 1968, including **Think** and **Since You've Been Gone**. In *Think*, Franklin's piano introduction and her excited climb through the chorus of "freedom . . . freedom . . . freedom" make clear her gospel roots. In the 1980 film *The Blues Brothers*, Franklin appeared as the proprietor of a diner and raised the roof with a scintillating performance of the song.

If soul music found its queen in Aretha Franklin, it lost its crown prince when Otis Redding died in a plane crash at Lake Monona, outside of Madison, Wisconsin. Ironically, this occurred on December 10, 1967, exactly three years after the death of Redding's hero, Sam Cooke. Redding's sweat-soaked performance at the Monterey Pop Festival earlier that year had astonished the largely hippie audience, and he was on the verge of a major commercial breakthrough when tragedy struck. Unfortunately, his only big pop hit was the posthumously released (**Sittin' on**) **The Dock of the Bay**, a wistful, folkish composition quite different from the down-home soul that had already made Redding a top star in black America and Europe.

One of the pallbearers at his funeral was Johnnie Taylor, who replaced Sam Cooke in the Soul Stirrers when Cooke went pop in 1957. Like Redding, Taylor eventually recorded for the Memphis-based Stax/Volt label. His **Who's Making Love** ("to your old lady while you are out making love") typified the earthy concerns of Southern soul music. Stax's dynamic duo of Sam and Dave also scored a big 1968 hit with the celebratory **I Thank You**.

"Blue-eyed" soul also flourished as the Rascals continued their string of hits with **A Beautiful Morning**

and the Box Tops returned to the top 10 with **Cry Like a Baby**. Many white bands had absorbed the blues, and such groups as Big Brother and the Holding Company, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Canned Heat and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers introduced the sound to receptive rock audiences. This stimulated interest in the real thing, and blues greats Muddy Waters, B. B. King and Albert King, among others, attracted a large white following through their appearances at the hippest rock concert halls, including the two Fillmores, West and East.

In Los Angeles, blues scholar Alan "Blind Owl" Wilson and record collector Bob "the Bear" Hite formed Canned Heat as a jug band in 1965. They took the name from Tommy Johnson's *Canned Heat Blues* and landed their first hit with an adaptation of a blues number by Floyd Jones, **On the Road Again**. Thanks to Wilson's harmonica playing and fragile falsetto delivery, Canned Heat was unique in its ability to capture the flavor of prewar country blues within a rock framework.

Status Quo from London pursued a decidedly more psychedelic sound in their only real American hit, **Pictures of Matchstick Men**, which was pulled off their fancifully titled British debut album, *Picturesque Matchstickable Messages*. The band prospered in England throughout the '70s as a boogie band, earning itself the derogatory tag "the poor man's Canned Heat." For pure flower-power mysticism, however, it was hard to top England's trippy minstrel, Donovan Leitch. His **Hurdy Gurdy Man** arose from a dream he had about a medieval musician in rags winding the droning stringed instrument as he moved across an ocean. In the song a tambura, a long-necked Indian lute, evokes the hurdy-gurdy, and Jeff Beck answers on electric guitar.

After a number of teen-oriented hits such as *Hanky Panky* and *Mony Mony*, Tommy James and the Shondells adopted a more sophisticated, psychedelic approach on **Crimson and Clover**. The Monkees also became more



ambitious once they fired musical director Don Kirshner and started writing more of their own material. **Valleri**, though, was a Tommy Boyce-Bobby Hart composition the group had originally performed on a 1967 episode of their TV show but did not record. After some DJs taped the show and began airing the song, Monkees fans wrote Colgems Records demanding its release and, somewhat reluctantly, the group cut it.

Despite their surly image and thunderous hit, *Wild*

*Thing*, the Troggs softened up and got in step with the love and peace generation with a hit ballad, **Love Is All Around**. There was no shortage of harder sounds, however, with groups like Iron Butterfly and Blue Cheer taking rock to decibel levels previously associated only with jet airplanes. Steppenwolf helped name this phenomenon when they sang about "heavy metal thunder" in their famous biker anthem, **Born to Be Wild**, which was later featured in the film classic *Easy Rider*.

*Psychedelic soul brothers and sisters, Sly and the Family Stone*



The hardest, fastest, loudest and most musically proficient blues-based band of the era undoubtedly was England's Cream, led by guitar hero Eric Clapton. This power trio became the prototype for thousands of three-piece hard-rock bands, few of which ever matched Cream's flair for the heavy riff and the flamboyant solo. Both

bassist Jack Bruce and drummer Ginger Baker were jazz-trained musicians who freed their instruments from the traditional role of mere rhythmic support. Though the group's live performances were largely improvisatory, their two biggest chart successes, **Sunshine of Your Love** and *White Room*, revealed a more disciplined, economical approach.

In many respects, 1968 was a year of extremes and contrasts. While the now-psychedelicized Beatles and the hippies pushed rock toward a visionary future, its past surfaced in unexpected ways. After a long battle with drugs, the once-swaggering Dion emerged as an introspective folkie with **Abraham, Martin and John**. A nearly forgotten Elvis Presley returned as the leather-clad King of Rock 'n' Roll in a triumphant TV special. And Frankie Lydon, once the 13-year-old sensation who helped bring rock 'n' roll to life in 1956 with *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*, died of a drug overdose at 26, virtually forgotten. Perhaps Jim Morrison of the Doors captured the spirit of the times best when he sang, "Strange days have found us."

— Joe Sasyf



*Canned Heat, the "boogie men" of rock (left to right): Bob Hite, Fito de la Parra, Alan Wilson, Henry Vestine and Larry Taylor*

## DISCOGRAPHY

\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

1. **Born to Be Wild** Steppenwolf • Music and lyrics by Mars Bonfire. Original issue: Dunhill 4138. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 2\*
2. **Cry Like a Baby** The Box Tops • Music and lyrics by Dan Penn and Spooner Oldham. Original issue: Mala 593. Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 2\*
3. **Crimson and Clover** Tommy James and the Shondells • Music and lyrics by Peter Lucia and Tommy James. Original issue: Roulette 7028. Produced under license from Roulette Records, a Division of ABZ Music Corp. No. 1\*
4. **I Thank You Sam and Dave** • Music and lyrics by David Porter and Isaac Hayes. Original issue: Stax 242. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 9\*
5. **Love Is All Around** The Troggs • Music and lyrics by Reg Presley. Original issue: Fontana 1607. Produced under license from PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 7\*
6. **(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay** Otis Redding • Music and lyrics by Otis Redding and Steve Cropper. Original issue: Volt 157. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 1\*
7. **Sunshine of Your Love** Cream • Music and lyrics by Jack Bruce, Pete Brown and Eric Clapton. Original issue: Atco 6544. Produced under license from PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 5\*
8. **Everyday People** Sly and the Family Stone • Music and lyrics by Sylvester Stewart. Original issue: Epic 10407. Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS, Inc. No. 1\*
9. **Pictures of Matchstick Men** Status Quo • Music and lyrics by Francis Rossi. Original issue: Cadet Concept 7001. Courtesy of Precision Records and Tapes. No. 12\*
10. **Since You've Been Gone** Aretha Franklin • Music and lyrics by Aretha Franklin and Ted White. Original issue: Atlantic 2486. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 5\*
11. **Hurdy Gurdy Man** Donovan • Music and lyrics by Donovan Leitch. Original issue: Epic 10345. Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS, Inc. No. 5\*
12. **Abraham, Martin and John** Dion • Music and lyrics by

- Dick Holler. Original issue: Laurie 3464. © 1979 Laurie Productions, Inc. Released by arrangement with 3C Records. No. 4\*
13. **Cloud Nine** The Temptations • Music and lyrics by Barrett Strong and Norman Whitfield. Original issue: Gordy 7081. Courtesy of Motown Record Corp. No. 6\*
  14. **Midnight Confessions** The Grass Roots • Music and lyrics by Lou Josie. Original issue: Dunhill 4144. Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 5\*
  15. **On the Road Again** Canned Heat • Music and lyrics by Floyd Jones and Alan Wilson. Original issue: Liberty 56838. Courtesy of EMI-Manhattan Records, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc. No. 16\*
  16. **Tighten Up** Archie Bell and the Drells • Music and lyrics by Billy Buttler and Archie Bell. Original issue: Atlantic 2478. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 1\*
  17. **A Beautiful Morning** The Rascals • Music and lyrics by Felix Cavaliere and Eddie Brigati. Original issue: Atlantic 2493. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 3\*
  18. **La La Means I Love You** The Delfonics • Music by Thomas Bell, lyrics by William Hart. Original issue: Philly Groove 150. Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 4\*
  19. **You Keep Me Hangin' On** Vanilla Fudge • Music and lyrics by Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier and Edward Holland Jr. Original issue: Atco 6590. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 6\*
  20. **Love Child** Diana Ross and the Supremes • Music and lyrics by Pam Sawyer, R. Dean Taylor, Frank Wilson and Deke Richards. Original issue: Motown 1135. Courtesy of Motown Record Corp. No. 1\*
  21. **Valleri** The Monkees • Music and lyrics by Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart. Original issue: Colgems 1019. Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 3\*
  22. **Think** Aretha Franklin • Music and lyrics by Aretha Franklin and Ted White. Original issue: Atlantic 2518. Produced under license from Atlantic Recording Corp. No. 7\*
  23. **Who's Making Love** Johnnie Taylor • Music and lyrics by Homer Banks, Betty Crutcher, Don Davis and Raymond Jackson. Original issue: Stax 0009. Courtesy of Fantasy Records. No. 5\*
  24. **Like to Get to Know You** Spanky and Our Gang • Music and lyrics by Stuart Scharf. Original issue: Mercury 72795. Produced under license from PolyGram Special Projects, a Division of PolyGram Records, Inc. No. 17\*

- 1 **Born to Be Wild** Steppenwolf
- 2 **Cry Like a Baby** The Box Tops
- 3 **Crimson and Clover**  
Tommy James and the Shondells
- 4 **I Thank You** Sam and Dave
- 5 **Love Is All Around** The Troggs
- 6 **(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay**  
Otis Redding
- 7 **Sunshine of Your Love** Cream
- 8 **Everyday People** Sly and the Family Stone
- 9 **Pictures of Matchstick Men** Status Quo
- 10 **Since You've Been Gone** Aretha Franklin
- 11 **Hurdy Gurdy Man** Donovan
- 12 **Abraham, Martin and John** Dion
- 13 **Cloud Nine** The Temptations
- 14 **Midnight Confessions** The Grass Roots
- 15 **On the Road Again** Canned Heat
- 16 **Tighten Up** Archie Bell and the Drells
- 17 **A Beautiful Morning** The Rascals
- 18 **La La Means I Love You** The Delfonics
- 19 **You Keep Me Hangin' On** Vanilla Fudge
- 20 **Love Child** Diana Ross and the Supremes
- 21 **Valleri** The Monkees
- 22 **Think** Aretha Franklin
- 23 **Who's Making Love** Johnnie Taylor
- 24 **Like to Get to Know You**  
Spanky and Our Gang

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NOTES INSIDE

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
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
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