

AXES & SAXES: THE GREAT INSTRUMENTALS

TIME
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MUSIC

The
ROCK'N'ROLL
•ERA•

Digital Remaster

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- 1 **Misirlou** Dick Dale and His Del-Tones
- 2 **Wham!** Lonnie Mack
- 3 **Smokie—Part 2** Bill Black's Combo
- 4 **Hide Away** Freddy King
- 5 **Boss** The Rumlbers
- 6 **Topsy II** Cozy Cole
- 7 **Walkin' with Mr. Lee** Lee Allen and His Band
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- 10 **Penetration** The Pyramids
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- 13 **You Can't Sit Down, Part 2**
Phil Upchurch Combo
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- 15 **El Rancho Rock** The Champs
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Les Cooper and the Soul Rockers
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- 19 **Peter Gunn** Duane Eddy
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- 21 **Percolator (Twist)**
Billy Joe and the Checkmates
- 22 **Tuff** Ace Cannon

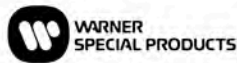
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**AXES & SAXES:
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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

2RNR-36
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Sky 15 El Rancho Rock 16 Baja 17 Wiggle Wobble
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21 Percolator (Twist) 22 Tuff

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The Champs



AXES & SAXES: THE GREAT INSTRUMENTALS

Like rock 'n' roll itself, the rock instrumental traces its roots back to the halcyon days of rhythm and blues, when honking saxophone players upset the conventions of pop and jazz with wild solos and outrageous stage routines. By the early '50s, a host of black saxophonists, including Jimmy Forrest (*Night Train*), Paul Williams (*The Huckleback*), Big Jay McNeely (*Deacon's Hop*) and Hal Singer (*Cornbread*), had scored No. 1 R & B hits with instrumentals. Not surprisingly, the first important instrumentals of the rock 'n' roll era, Bill Doggett's *Honky Tonk (Part 2)* and Sil Austin's *Slow Walk*, were dominated by the sound of the sax.

Throughout the '50s, many rock 'n' roll hits were galvanized by sinuous solos from legends of the tenor sax such as Sam Taylor, King Curtis and Lee Allen. Allen was a mainstay of the house band at the J&M Studios in New Orleans and was featured in hits by Shirley and Lee, Little Richard, Lloyd Price and Fats Domino. Allen's only hit was **Walkin' with Mr. Lee**, an easygoing tune based on a sax riff Allen played in Domino's live shows. A more raucous riff was the basis for the Phil Upchurch Combo's **You Can't Sit Down, Part 2**, an instrumental granted lyrics in the Dovells' successful 1963 remake. A talented jazz and R & B session guitarist, Upchurch backed up singer Dee Clark in 1961 and used *You Can't Sit Down* as the opening theme for Clark's stage show.

The sax-driven R & B instrumental was not the sole province of black musicians, however, as the Viscounts, a white group from New Jersey, proved with their smoldering re-creation of Earle Hagen's haunting **Harlem Nocturne**. In Memphis, Hi Records built its early success on the funky R & B instrumentals produced by two white acts, Bill Black's Combo and Ace Cannon. Both Cannon and Black had worked at Sun Records, Cannon as a session saxophonist and Black as Elvis Presley's bassist. Hi Records

had little success until Bill Black's Combo hit with **Smokie—Part 2**, featuring Martin Willis (another Sun alumnus) on sax.

Ace Cannon had played sax in a number of Memphis bands, including Bill Black's Combo, before he scored his own hit for Hi, **Tuff**. The song was a slow version of *Cattywampus*, a record Bill Justis had recorded for Sun's Phillips International subsidiary. Both Black and Cannon were heavily influenced by Willie Mitchell, the black multi-instrumentalist, bandleader and producer who led Memphis's hottest band. As the '60s progressed, Mitchell became increasingly important at Hi, producing Black and Cannon, writing and recording his own instrumental hits such as **20-75** and eventually playing a major role in the creation of Al Green's recordings in the '70s.

Nineteen fifty-eight marked the beginning of the glory years of the rock instrumental. Not only was there a tremendous upsurge in the popularity of the sound, with 20 instrumentals charting, but it was also the year Duane Eddy ascended to national stardom. Eddy's success—his 27 charted singles are the most by an instrumentalist—helped to establish the electric guitar as rock's most popular lead instrument, and hundreds of guitar-based combos emerged in his wake. The thick-toned, vibrato-heavy style Eddy pioneered is exemplified in both his own treatment of the television theme **Peter Gunn** and in the Ramrods' stirring cover of the 1949 hit (**Ghoul**) **Riders in the Sky**.

In 1958, the Champs' *Tequila* became the first No. 1 rock instrumental. *Tequila* was recorded almost as an afterthought by an ad hoc group of musicians assembled by Dave Burgess to play a session for a vocal group, the Kuf-Linx. The record's success created a demand for a *real* band called the Champs, so Burgess and Danny Flores (a.k.a. Chuck Rio), the author of *Tequila*, formed a group to record and tour. *Tequila*'s follow-up was **El Rancho**

Rock, a souped-up version of the traditional Mexican song, *El Rancho Grande*.

The 1958-1963 period was the golden age of the rock instrumental, which peaked in 1962 when 44 charted. Their decline after 1962 was as abrupt as their ascent in 1958. If you consider the fact that after 1965 almost all instrumental hits were by black artists working in soul-dance styles, then the rise and fall of white instrumental rock was even more dramatic. It came in 1958 and went in 1964.

During this period, influential guitarists such as Duane Eddy, Link Wray and Lonnie Mack emerged. Mack came to prominence in 1963 with his version of Chuck Berry's *Memphis* and followed this with a hard-driving original called **Wham!** England's first hero of the guitar was Hank Marvin, leader of the Shadows, a group that backed British star Cliff Richard as well as recording on their own. Although the Shadows' **Apache** was a smash in England, a version by Danish guitarist Jorgen Ingmann was the hit in the United States.

A major influence on a generation of British guitarists, Freddy King was one of the few black bluesmen to record instrumentals extensively. Named after Mel's Hideaway Lounge in Chicago, **Hide Away** became not only King's biggest pop record but also the most popular blues instrumental ever released. King's modern blues was an important inspiration for Eric Clapton, who recorded *Hide Away* while playing with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in 1966.

During the late '50s, the Pacific Northwest spawned many instrumental acts, including the Wailers, the Frantics, the Viceroyes, Paul Revere and the Raiders (before they added vocals) and, most notably, the Ventures. Songs such as the Wailers' *Tall Cool One*, as well as *Night Train*, *Dirty Robber* and *Louie Louie*, were standards in the repertoires of most Pacific Northwest bands. Certainly the Ventures' repertoire stretched furthest of all, eventually including the pop hits of the day, movie and television themes and even Richard Rodgers' jazz ballet theme, **Slaughter on Tenth**

From California, the Pyramids gained notoriety not only for their surf music but also for their bald heads.





Avenue.

In California, a left-handed guitarist named Dick Dale in 1961 tried to simulate musically the sensation of riding a surfboard. The result, *Let's Go Trippin'*, kicked off Southern California's surf instrumental era. Dale was the first musician to use the Fender portable reverb unit, and his staccato guitar playing became the signature sound of surf recordings. Considered by many the ultimate surf single, **Misirlou**, Dale's version of the Greek pop standard, marked the first use of the new reverb unit on vinyl.

Because of Dale's popularity, surf bands sprang up all over Southern California—and even in less likely places. The Astronauts, from landlocked Boulder, Colorado, had never even heard a surf record until they came to Los Angeles to audition for RCA, a label eager to capitalize on the surf craze. The group quickly mastered the style, as evidenced by their atmospheric treatment of **Baja**. The Rumbleres were actually an R & B-style band, but at the small studio in Wenzel's Music Town in Downey, California (also the birthplace of the Chantays' *Pipeline*), they recorded their only hit, the surf tune **Boss**. *Pipeline* was the musical inspiration for **Penetration** by the Pyramids, a Long Beach surf group that gained notoriety because its members sported shaved heads.

While guitarists and saxophonists dominated instrumental rock, drummers occasionally did more than just keep the beat. Cozy Cole was a veteran jazz drummer who had kept time for Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway before scoring a pop smash in 1958 with the heavy **Topsy II** (named after the character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Cole's record inspired a young Los Angeles drummer named Sandy Nelson, and in 1959, Nelson's *Teen Beat* became the second drum-heavy hit of the era. After his five follow-up singles failed, Imperial Records was ready to drop Nelson, but he revived his career with **Let There Be Drums**.

Despite the fact that after 1964 the pop charts were

dominated by the British Invasion and soul music, instrumental rock left an important legacy. Not only did thousands of teenagers gain an easy entry into bands because of the simplicity of the form, but also, as the sound evolved, it became the first rock style divorced from the blues and country foundations of rock 'n' roll. In this sense, as well as in the tonal and electronic experimentation it encouraged, the instrumental was an important progressive force in rock music.

—Joe Sasyf

From New Orleans, Lee Allen played tenor sax behind rock 'n' roll artists such as Little Richard and Fats Domino.



DISCOGRAPHY

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

- 1. Misirlou** Dick Dale and His Del-Tones • Music by *N. Roubanis*. Colonial Music Publishing. BMI, Deltone 5019 (1962). Courtesy of Surfbeat Music. Did not chart.
- 2. Wham!** Lonnie Mack • Music by Lonnie Mack. Trio Music Co., Inc./Fort Knox Music Inc. BMI, Fraternity 912 (1963). Produced under license from Elektra/Asylum Records. No. 24*
- 3. Smoke—Part 2** Bill Black's Combo • Music by William P. Black. Irving Music Inc. BMI, Hi 2018 (1959). Courtesy of Hi Records. No. 17*
- 4. Hide Away** Freddy King • Music by Freddy King and Sonny Thompson. Fort Knox Music Inc./Trio Music Co., Inc. BMI, Federal 12401 (1961). Courtesy of Gusto Records. No. 29*
- 5. Boss** The Rumblems • Music by Jack Wenzel. Regent Music Corporation. BMI, Dot 16421 (1963). Courtesy of MCA Records, Inc. No. 87*
- 6. Topsy II** Cozy Cole • Music by Edgar Battle and Edward Durham. Cosmopolitan Music Publishers. ASCAP, Love 5004 (1958). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 3*
- 7. Walkin' with Mr. Lee** Lee Allen and His Band • Music by Lee Allen. Angel Music Inc. BMI, Ember 1027 (1958). Courtesy of Murray Sporn. No. 54*
- 8. Slaughter on Tenth Avenue** The Ventures • Music by Richard Rodgers. Chappell Music. ASCAP, Dalton 300 (1964). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 35*
- 9. Let There Be Drums** Sandy Nelson • Music by Sandy Nelson and Richard Podolor. Metric Music Co. BMI, Imperial 5775 (1961). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 7*
- 10. Penetration** The Pyramids • Music by Steve Leonard. Dorsey Publishing Co. ASCAP, Best 13002 (1964). Courtesy of John Hodge. No. 18*
- 11. Harlem Nocturne** The Viscounts • Music by Richard Rodgers and Earle Hagen. Shapiro, Bernstein and Co. ASCAP, Madison 123 (1959). Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 52*
- 12. Apache** The Shadows • Music by Jerry Larden. Regent Music Corp. BMI, Columbia DB 4484 (1960). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. Did not chart.
- 13. You Can't Sit Down, Part 2** Phil Upchurch Combo • Music by Dee Clark, Cornell Muldrow and Kal Mann. Conrad Music. BMI, Boyd 3398 (1961). Courtesy of EMI, a Division of Capitol Records, Inc., under license from CEMA Special Markets. No. 29*
- 14. (Ghost) Riders in the Sky** The Ramrods • Music by Stan Jones, Edwin H. Morris Co. ASCAP, Amy 813 (1961). Produced under license from Arista Records, Inc. No. 30*
- 15. El Rancho Rock** The Champs • Music by Silvano R. Ramos and Ben Raleigh. JAT Music. BMI, Challenge 59007 (1958). Produced under license from CBS Special Products, a Service of CBS Records, a Division of CBS Records, Inc. No. 30*
- 16. Baja** The Astronauts • Music by Lee Hazelwood. Atlantic Music Corp. BMI, RCA 8194 (1963). Courtesy of RCA Records, a label of BMG Music. No. 94*
- 17. Wiggle Wobble** Les Cooper and the Soul Rockers • Music by Les Cooper. Bob-Dan Music Co. BMI, Everlast 5019 (1962). Courtesy of Rhino Records, Inc. No. 22*
- 18. 20-75** Willie Mitchell • Music by Willie Mitchell. Irving Music Inc. BMI, Hi 2075 (1964). Courtesy of Hi Records. No. 31*
- 19. Peter Gunn** Duane Eddy • Music by Henry Mancini. Northridge Music Inc. ASCAP, Jamie 1168 (1960). Courtesy of Jamie Records. No. 27*
- 20. The Lonely Surfer** Jack Nitzsche • Music by Martin Cooper and Jack Nitzsche. Martin Cooper Music. ASCAP, Reprise 20202 (1963). Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 39*
- 21. Percolator (Twist)** Billy Joe and the Checkmates • Music by Lou Bideu and Ernie Freeman. Meadowlark Music. ASCAP, Dore 620 (1962). Courtesy of Janus Records Inc. No. 10*
- 22. Tuff** Ace Cannon • Music by Ace Cannon. Irving Music Inc. BMI, Hi 2040 (1961). Courtesy of Hi Records. No. 17*

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NOTES INSIDE

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