



SONS OF THE SATAN  
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TIME  
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MUSIC

# SOUNDS OF THE SEVENTIES • 1976: TAKE TWO

- 1 **(Don't Fear) The Reaper**  
Blue Oyster Cult
- 2 **The Boys Are Back in Town**  
Thin Lizzy
- 3 **Sweet Thing** Rufus
- 4 **Tear the Roof Off the Sucker  
(Give Up the Funk)** Parliament
- 5 **Still Crazy after All These Years**  
Paul Simon
- 6 **Love Is Alive** Gary Wright
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- 8 **(Shake, Shake, Shake) Shake Your  
Booty** KC and the Sunshine Band
- 9 **Take the Money and Run**  
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- 1 (Don't Fear) The Reaper
- 2 The Boys Are Back in Town
- 3 Sweet Thing
- 4 Tear the Roof Off the Sucker (Give Up the Funk)
- 5 Still Crazy after All These Years
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The early 1970s were a hectic time for Diana Ross. While trying to establish herself as a contemporary solo artist, she had moved between the top of the charts and the lower reaches of the top 40. Late in 1975, she went to No. 1 with *Theme from Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To)* despite the fact that the movie *Mahogany* had failed to claim the popular success of her 1972 *Lady Sings the Blues*, in which she stunningly portrayed the doomed Billie Holiday.

The follow-up to *Theme from Mahogany* was another ballad, *I Thought It Took a Little Time (But Today I Fell In Love)*. It was making unusually slow progress up the charts, considering that the artist had had a No. 1 hit. The song was on an album that contained another track that DJs were already picking up on—and

that the 5th Dimension quickly cut as a single. **Love Hangover** couldn't have been more unlike a Diana Ross song. Though it started as a torchy ballad, it swelled into an all-out disco stomp, and

Ross and Motown were not disco proponents. In order to get Ross to even sing it, producer Hal Davis had decked out the studios in red strobe lights to create a disco atmosphere; Ross treated it all like a joke well beneath her, and at one point broke out laughing in the middle of a take. But Davis decided to go with that version, and had the last laugh when the song soared to No. 1.

Disco was hitting its peak and even saving a few careers. Johnnie Taylor had started as a gospel artist—he had sung with the legendary Soul Stirrers—before becoming one of the mainstays of the Stax/Volt soul roster in the 1960s.



When the label went under, Taylor struck a new deal with Columbia. His producer, Don Davis, dusted off an old tune he had co-written and reworked it into **Disco Lady**—a record that, ironically enough, wasn't even disco in sound. Taylor not only had his first No. 1 single ever, but also the very first single ever certified platinum (for sales of two million).

Disco wasn't the only new sound in black music. The 1970s saw the rise of George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic, which had started as a retro-vocal group called the Parliaments that had a 1967 hit with *(I Wanna) Testify*. Clinton then formed Funkadelic, and created a whole cosmology built around cultish spiritual precepts and then around what he called simply "the funk." The show and the costumes got stranger and stranger as Clinton essentially invented a whole new form of improvisational music featuring super-syncopated funk rhythms and hard-rock guitars. **Tear the Roof off the Sucker (Give Up the Funk)** was the hit single off of *Motherhip Connection*, an album dealing with extraterrestrials returning to earth in search of

the funk they had left behind.

Dorothy Moore's **Misty Blue** kept Southern soul alive on the charts, while **Sweet Thing** provided the second pop-funk million-seller for Rufus, fronted by Chaka Khan. George and Louis Johnson, the Brothers Johnson, left Billy Preston's band to hook up with Quincy Jones, who used them on his *Mellow Madness* album (which included some of their songs) and his subsequent Japanese tour. Jones then took them into the studio to produce an album of their own, which yielded **I'll Be Good to You**.

Maxine Nightingale and Hot Chocolate represented the British wing of black music. Nightingale came from one of the first black families in Wembley, where she began singing in neighborhood pubs. After doing session work around London, she moved to Los Angeles and appeared in *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. **Right Back Where We Started From** was cut as a favor to writer-producers Pierre Tubbs and Vince Edwards, and charted in England well before it did in the U.S. **You Sexy Thing** was the biggest stateside hit for Hot Chocolate, the most enduring of the

black British groups, which was formed in 1970 around writer-singer Errol Brown.

Hall and Oates took black vocal groups (and the Righteous Brothers) as their models. Daryl Hall wrote **She's Gone** after failing to reconcile with his estranged wife, Bryna Lublin, and it went to No. 60 for the duo in 1974. Tavares rode it to No. 1 on the R & B charts later that year, and in 1976 Hall and Oates's former label (Atlantic) reissued the original. Between recognition gained from Tavares' version and the fact that Hall and Oates had just gone top 10 for the first time with *Sara Smile*, *She's Gone* fared much better the second time around.

The mid-'70s also marked the triumph of arena-rock. Peter Frampton's album *Frampton Comes Alive* delighted the music industry by selling 12 million on the strength of constant touring by the former Humble Pie singer-guitarist. The hit single **Baby, I Love Your Way** contributed to this industry success story. Blue Oyster Cult, until that time strictly an album group known for its tongue-in-cheek proto-metal, surprised fans with **(Don't Fear) The Reaper**, a melodic pop

song that sounded like the Byrds. Bad Company proved with **Young Blood**, a revival of the Coasters' song from 1957, that the Brits weren't through yet.

Foghat, the quintessential British boogie band of the era, had its first hit single with **Slow Ride**. And the heavy-metal band Kiss eased into the top 10 for the first time with, of all things, a ballad, **Beth**, written by drummer Peter Criss in the style of Rod Stewart.

Thin Lizzy was an Irish rock quartet fronted by black bassist Phil Lynott, who pledged allegiance to the memory of Jimi Hendrix, though Bruce Springsteen (whose own star was then just in ascendance) was the clear inspiration for the rousing **The Boys Are Back in Town**. Gary Wright left his native New Jersey to study medicine in Europe and wound up in Spooky Tooth, a popular British band at the end of the psychedelic era. He returned to the States for his solo debut, *Dream Weaver*, an all-synthesizer album that he wrote and produced, playing most of the instruments as well. **Love Is Alive** made it to No. 2 and stayed on the charts for 27 weeks.

Soon after scoring with his first No. 1

record, *The Joker*, in 1974. Steve Miller fled the San Francisco Bay Area for a remote farm near Medford, Oregon, where he took a sabbatical that stretched past a year. The next time he entered a studio it was with a new group to cut the album *Fly Like an Eagle*, which included **Take the Money and Run**.

Roxy Music best symbolized one of the directions rock was headed. Led by Bryan Ferry, who was best known for wearing a tux and deconstructing rock standards on his solo albums, Roxy Music was considered the avatar of '70s art-rock stylishness and decadence. They had enjoyed a cult following since forming in 1971 (when the band included Brian Eno), but **Love Is the Drug**, which evoked the disco scene with Ferry's patented coyness, proved their only U.S. hit. It came from an album called *Siren*, featuring model Jerry Hall—later Ferry's girlfriend and even later Mrs. Mick Jagger—on the cover. Soon after this success, Roxy Music went into a state of suspended animation, which seemed like the group's ultimate commentary on the whole pop process.

—John Morthland

## DISCOGRAPHY

*\*Indicates highest Billboard chart position*

1. **(Don't Fear) The Reaper** Blue Oyster Cult • *Music and lyrics by Donald Roeser. B.O. Cult Songs Inc. ASCAP. Columbia 10384. © 1978 Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a Division of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc. No. 12\**
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5. **Still Crazy after All These Years** Paul Simon • *Music and lyrics by Paul Simon. Paul Simon Music. BMI. Columbia 10332. © 1982 Paul Simon. Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. No. 40\**
6. **Love Is Alive** Gary Wright • *Music and lyrics by Gary Wright. MCA Inc. ASCAP. Warner Bros. 8143.*

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