

# ROCK FORMATIONS

**CATEGORICAL ANSWERS TO HOW  
BAND NAMES WERE FORMED**

**DAVE WILSON**



## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Lights, Camera, Action!.....   | 17 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by movies or movie titles</i>           |    |
| Author, Author!.....   | 26 |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by books and authors</i>                            |    |
| Hot Off The Press.....   | 37 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by newspapers and magazines</i>         |    |
| Media Darlings.....  | 44 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by TV &amp; radio shows</i>             |    |
| Discography.....   | 50 |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by songs and albums</i>                             |    |
| The Acknowledgements.....  | 67 |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by other groups</i>                                 |    |
| Top Of The Bill.....   | 72 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by other artists</i>                    |    |
| Music Industrial.....  | 77 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by non- performing aspects of music</i> |    |
| Artistic License.....  | 82 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by the Arts</i>                         |    |

## Contents

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|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Ooh, La La!.....  | 86  |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by risqué themes</i>                                 |     |
| Take The Stand.....   | 92  |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by legal issues or which make a statement</i>        |     |
| Re Issues.....  | 99  |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by contemporary themes</i>                           |     |
| A Higher Plane.....   | 103 |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by spiritual issues and coincidences</i>             |     |
| Early Impressions.....  | 107 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by issues from childhood and school</i>  |     |
| I Dub Thee.....   | 117 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were given to them</i>                                 |     |
| Members Only.....   | 133 |
| <i>Bands whose names were inspired by one or more of their members</i>                  |     |
| Nom de Plume.....   | 149 |
| <i>Artists whose stage names are variations of their given name</i>                     |     |
| Also Known As.....  | 157 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names are based on nicknames</i>                             |     |
| Kith And Kin.....   | 169 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by friends and family</i>                |     |
| Hometown Favorites.....   | 178 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by their hometown region</i>             |     |
| Global Village.....   | 190 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by a particular place</i>                |     |
| Traditional.....  | 196 |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by an aspect of history or mythology</i> |     |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Culture Vultures.....</b>   | <b>205</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by an aspect of language or culture</i>     |            |
| <b>A-List Celebs.....</b>  | <b>217</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by famous people</i>                        |            |
| <b>Perpetual Motion.....</b>   | <b>221</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by machinery</i>                            |            |
| <b>Dinner And A Show.....</b>  | <b>227</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by food or drink</i>                        |            |
| <b>All Things Bright And Beautiful.....</b>  | <b>232</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by things animal, vegetable or mineral</i>  |            |
| <b>Take Me Out To The Ball Game.....</b>   | <b>238</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were inspired by sports and games</i>                     |            |
| <b>Artificial Intelligence.....</b>  | <b>241</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were contrived</i>  |            |
| <b>Just Because.....</b>   | <b>252</b> |
| <i>Bands and artists whose names were chosen at random or have no special significance</i> |            |
| <b>Index.....</b>  | <b>262</b> |

## **Lights, Camera, Action!**

Bands and artists whose names were inspired by movies or movie titles

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## ? & The Mysterians

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Group leader “?” used the name Rudy Martinez to collect royalties, although there is some doubt that it is his real name. “Mysterians” came from the low-budget Japanese sci-fi movie *The Mysterians* (1957), directed by Ishiro Honda (sometimes referenced as *Inoshiro* Honda), who achieved fame as director of the original Godzilla movies.

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## 10,000 Maniacs

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Originally formed as Still Life, the new name was inspired by the title of a B-movie directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis, and starring Jeffrey Allen, Connie Mason and Thomas Wood. The movie was actually titled *2,000 Maniacs* (1965), a cult film based on the play *Brigadoon* (about the Scottish village that only appears once each century) and was originally to have been titled “5,000 Maniacs”. The band name was suggested by John Lombardo (guitars) on joining the band. Everyone accepted that “10,000 Maniacs” was the actual title of the movie when in fact no one in the band had seen it.

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## All About Eve

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After first rejecting the names Electric Funeral and Red Red Wound, the group’s final name was taken from the title of the Joseph L Mankiewicz 1950 movie classic *All About Eve*, starring Bette Davis and Anne Baxter, itself based on the play *The Wisdom of Eve* by Mary Orr. Julianne Regan (vocals, b. Julie Ann Regan).

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## Alphaville

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*Alphaville* was the title of a 1965 French science-fiction film directed by Jean-Luc Godard and starring Eddie

Constantine and Anna Karina. The band liked the movie, particularly leading man Constantine. Interestingly, a different band was already using the name “Alphaville” in Spain, necessitating a label change in that country alone by the more famous Alphaville.

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### Army Of Lovers

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The group’s name was chosen by the bisexual leader of the group, Alexander Bard, and was inspired by the title of a German cult film *Armee der Liebenden, oder Revolte der Perversen* (1978) (“Army of Lovers, or Revolution of the Perverts”), directed by Gay Rights activist and filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim. Vocalist La Camilla (b. Camilla Henemark).

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### Bad Company

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*Bad Company* was the title of a 1972 Robert Benton-directed Civil War western starring Jeff Bridges, and was suggested by vocalist Paul Rodgers. It was initially the title of a song he had written with Simon Kirke, prior to the band choosing a name. [Led Zeppelin’s](#) label Swan Song tried to get them to change the name on signing them, considering it to be too dangerous-sounding, but the band refused.

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### Afrika Bambaata

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Afrika Bambaata was born Kevin Donovan, and his stage name is shortened from Afrika Bambaata Aasim, the name of a 19th-century Zulu chief featured in the movie *Zulu* (1964), directed by Cy Endfield and starring Stanley Baker. The name translates as “Chief Affection”.

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## Blues Traveler

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The name Blues Traveler has two sources of inspiration, both involving movies starring Dan Aykroyd, of whom the group are big fans (Aykroyd has appeared on stage with the band several times). One source is *The Blues Brothers* (1980), directed by John Landis, and the other is Gozer the Traveler, a character mentioned in *Ghostbusters* (1984), directed by Ivan Reitman.

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## Boomtown Rats

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Originally known as the Nightlife Thugs, the Boomtown Rats took their name from a gang of Oklahoma kids who were offspring of oil-well laborers, featured in the 1976 movie *Bound for Glory*, directed by Hal Ashby and starring David Carradine. The movie is based on Woody Guthrie's autobiography of the same name. Johnny Fingers (keyboards–b. John Moylett); Pete Briquette (bass–b. Patrick Cusack).

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## Commander Cody & The Lost Planet Airmen

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This band was named by band member George Frayne (AKA Commander Cody), who says the inspiration came from a '50s movie called "Commander Cody and The Lost Planet Airmen", starring Kristen Coffen as Kommando Kody. In fact, the band did a promo with Coffen some years after their formation. However, its likely that the inspiration was a mixture of *Commando Cody* (featured in a 12-chapter series of movies in the early '50s, none of which included "Lost Planet Airmen" in the title), and a late 1940's movie named *Lost Planet Airmen*, directed by Fred Brannon and starring Tristram (not Kristen) Coffin.



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## Counting Crows

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Counting Crows took their name from an old English divination rhyme, comparing the pointlessness of life with the act of counting crows. The poem was quoted in one of vocalist Adam Duritz's girlfriend Mary-Louise Parker's films *Signs Of Life* (1989), directed by John David Coles. Actually, the original poem (which is an old English folk poem) refers to counting magpies rather than crows (it was also adapted in the title song of '70s UK children's TV series *Magpie*), and is supposed to tell the future of someone who sees a flock of magpies, depending on how many birds make up the flock:

One for sorrow, two for mirth,  
Three for a wedding, four for a birth,  
Five for silver, six for gold,  
Seven for a secret not to be told  
Eight for heaven, nine for hell  
And ten for the devil's own sel'. (*Trad.*)

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## Divine

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Born Harris Glenn Milstead, the "Divine" character was created by him and movie director John Waters for the 1966 movie *Roman Candles*. Milstead adopted the name full-time after opening a nostalgia store called "Divine Trash" in Providencetown, Mass.

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## Duran Duran

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After first rejecting the name RAF (the abbreviation for the UK Royal Air Force), the group's final name was suggested by bass player John Taylor during a brainstorming session with keyboard player Nick Rhodes, and was taken from the character played by Milo O'Shea (actually the character's name is "Durand Durand") in the sci-fi movie *Barbarella* (1968), starring Jane Fonda

and directed by Dino de Laurentiis. Coincidentally, some early gigs were played at a venue named Barbarella's in Birmingham, UK where they were formed. Nick Rhodes (keyboards—b. Nicholas Bates), changed his name for “aesthetic” purposes, and his new surname “Rhodes” was also suggested by John Taylor.

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### Fine Young Cannibals

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Fine Young Cannibals were named at random from a movie book, after the 1960 film *All The Fine Young Cannibals*, directed by Michael Anderson and starring Natalie Wood and Robert Wagner.

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### Bobby Gentry

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Born Roberta “Bobby Lee” Streeter, Bobby Gentry took her stage name from the film *Ruby Gentry* (1952), directed by King Vidor and starring Jennifer Jones and Charlton Heston.

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### Kid Creole

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Born Thomas August Darnell Browder (later shortened to August Darnell), he adopted the stage name alias “Kid Creole” after *King Creole*, the 1958 film directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Elvis Presley. By 1985, he had appointed himself King Creole and began using that name instead of Kid Creole.

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### Klaatu

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This name came from a phrase (“Klaatu Barada Nikto”) spoken in the 1951 sci-fi movie *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (directed by Robert Wise). Michael Rennie's character Klaatu instructed Helen Benson (played by Patricia Neal) to say this in order to prevent the robot Gort from

destroying the Earth. The band had seen the movie, liked it and identified with Klaatu, the central character played by Rennie. Incidentally, the band was originally rumored to have been the reformed Beatles, which at first they made no effort to deny.

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### Mindbenders

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This was suggested by front man [Wayne Fontana](#), and is the title of a 1963 horror film directed by Basil Dearden and starring Dirk Bogarde, which was playing at the local cinema at the time the group was formed.

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### Orb

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This name was taken from the phrase “The orb, the orb, give me the orb”, referring to a pleasure device in Woody Allen’s movie, *Sleeper* (1973). Dr Alex Paterson, founder member, was born Duncan Robert Alex Paterson (hence the use of DR as a prefix).

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### Quireboys

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The Quireboys were initially formed as *The Choirboys*, after a 1978 movie they had seen, starring Charles Durning and James Woods and directed by Robert Aldrich. Construction-worker colleagues of band members Spike Gray and Guy Bailey suggested they change the name to The Queerboys, as a disparaging comment on their image. The final version, Quireboys, was adopted after the name “Queerboys” caused crowd problems at early gigs, and also to help in getting them accepted onto the bill of the 1986 Reading Festival in the UK.

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### Searchers

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*The Searchers* were named after the 1956 western of the same name and directed by John Ford, starring John

Wayne. Mike Pender (vocals, guitars–b. Michael Prendergast); Chris Curtis (drums–b. Christopher Crummy).

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### Siouxsie & The Banshees

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Siouxsie Sioux (*b.* Susan Dallon) took inspiration for her name from Native-American Indians (she hated cowboys), and the group name “Banshees” was taken from the 1970 horror film *Cry of the Banshee*, starring Vincent Price and directed by Gordon Hessler. Budgie (drums–b. Peter Clarke).

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### Terrorvision

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Originally known as Spoilt Bratz, Terrorvision took their final name from a 1986 sci-fi movie called *Terror Vision*, directed by Ted Nicolaou and starring Diane Franklin.

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### Texas

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Texas took their name from Wim Wenders’ 1984 film *Paris, Texas* starring Sam Shephard, because band members Ally McErlaine (guitars) and Sharleen Spiteri (vocals) were particularly fond of Ry Cooder’s slide guitar-based soundtrack.

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### They Might Be Giants

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*They Might Be Giants* is the name of a 1971 film directed by Anthony Harvey and starring George C. Scott and Joanne Woodward. It had initially been used as a stage name by a ventriloquist friend of the band, who offered the use of the name to the group after deciding to quit the business. In the movie, the main character thinks he is Sherlock Holmes, and at one point he makes reference to the novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, by Miguel de Cervantes, in that considering all windmills to be giants

is insanity, but to think that they *might* be giants, i.e. to question what is generally accepted, is the root of all genius. Band member John Linnell has said that the group is “Quixotic”, describing it as either an exercise in futility or a noble quest.

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### Utah Saints

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This name was inspired by the last line of the film *Raising Arizona* (1987) directed by Joel Coen and starring Nicholas Cage. The line mentions Utah, and is spoken in voiceover. The band members added “Saints” to give the name more of a group feel.

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### Johnny “Guitar” Watson

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Born John Watson, the nickname “Guitar” was inspired by the western movie *Johnny Guitar* (1954), directed by Nicholas Ray and starring Joan Crawford and Sterling Hayden. Watson had seen the movie with his record label owner, Joe Bihari.

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### White Zombie

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*White Zombie* comes from the Bela Lugosi horror movie of the same name, made in 1932 and directed by Victor Halperin. Band leader Rob Zombie was born Robert Cummings, first adopting the stage name Robert Straker because he didn’t think the name Cummings sounded evil enough.



# Index

- ? & THE MYSTERIANS, [18](#)  
10 C.C., [87](#)  
10,000 MANIACS, [18](#)  
1910 FRUITGUM CO.,  
[228](#)  
2PAC, [150](#)  
2-Tone, 62  
311, [93](#)  
4 NON-BLONDES, [93](#)  
49ERS, [104](#)  
5TH DIMENSION, [100](#)  
808 STATE, [222](#)  
98 DEGREES, [242](#)  
999, [93](#)
- A R Kane, 143  
A3, [197](#)  
Aaron, Hank, 220  
ABBA, [68](#), 134, 143  
Abbacadabra, 134  
ABC, [242](#)  
AC/DC, [222](#)  
ACE OF BASE, [242](#)  
ACID HOUSE, [222](#)  
ADAM & THE ANTS, [83](#)  
Adams, Douglas, 31  
Adullah, Sigidi, 195  
ADVERTS, [134](#)  
AEROSMITH, [253](#)  
A-HA, [51](#)  
AIR SUPPLY, [104](#)  
ALABAMA, [179](#), 197
- ALAN PARSONS  
PROJECT, [134](#)  
ALARM, [51](#)  
Aldrich, Henry, 45  
ALICE COOPER, [253](#)  
ALICE IN CHAINS, [108](#)  
Alighieri, Dante, 83, 203  
ALISHA'S ATTIC, [108](#)  
ALL ABOUT EVE, [18](#)  
ALL SAINTS, [179](#)  
Allen, Jeffrey, 18  
Allen, Woody, 23  
ALLISONS, [242](#)  
ALLMAN BROTHERS,  
[135](#)  
ALPHAVILLE, [18](#)  
ALTERED IMAGES, [78](#)  
AMBOY DUKES, [27](#)  
AMEN CORNER, [83](#)  
AMERICA, [222](#)  
*American Bandstand*, 120  
Ames Brothers, 247  
AMOS, TORI, [170](#)  
Anderson, Michael, 22  
Anderson, Pink, 75  
Anderson, Stig, 134  
Anger, Kenneth, 219  
ANIMALS, [170](#)  
ANT & DEC, [45](#)  
ANTHRAX, [108](#)  
APACHE INDIAN, [206](#)  
APOLLO 440, [197](#)  
Apple Records, 52, 125



- APPOLONIA, [118](#)  
AQUA, [233](#)  
ARCHIES, [45](#)  
AREA CODE 615, [179](#)  
Armstrong, Louis, 70, 166  
Armstrong, Robert, 42  
ARMY OF LOVERS, [19](#)  
ARNOLD, KOKOMO, [51](#)  
ART OF NOISE, [197](#)  
Ashby, Hal, 20  
ASSOCIATION, [253](#)  
ASWAD, [206](#)  
ATLANTA RHYTHM  
SECTION, [179](#)  
Atlantic Records, 180  
ATOMIC ROOSTER, [170](#)  
Atwell, Winifred, 74  
Aubry, Cecile, 109  
Autry, Gene, 233  
AVERAGE WHITE  
BAND, [118](#)  
Aykroyd, Dan, 20  
AZTEC CAMERA, [51](#)
- B\*WITCHED, [118](#)  
B. BUMBLE & THE  
STINGERS, [118](#)  
B-52s, [100](#)  
BABE RUTH, [218](#)  
BABES IN TOYLAND,  
[108](#)  
BABYFACE, [158](#)  
BACCARA, [233](#)  
Bach, Catherine, 212  
BACHELORS, [243](#)
- BACHMAN-TURNER  
OVERDRIVE, [38](#)  
BACK STREET  
CRAWLER, [51](#)  
BACKSTREET BOYS,  
[179](#)  
BAD COMPANY, [19](#)  
BAD ENGLISH, [239](#)  
BADFINGER, [52](#)  
BADU, ERYKAH, [78](#)  
BAKER, GINGER, [158](#),  
244  
BAKER, LAVERN, [171](#)  
Baker, Stanley, 19  
BALDRY, LONG JOHN,  
[158](#), 174  
Baldwin, James, 83  
Bam Bam and the Calling,  
98  
BAMBAATA, AFRIKA,  
[19](#), 131  
Banana Splits, 45  
BANANARAMA, [45](#)  
BAND, [119](#)  
BAND AID, [243](#)  
BAND OF SUSANS, [135](#)  
BANGLES, [52](#)  
Banner, Spanner, 161  
BANTON, PATO, [206](#)  
BARBECUE BOB, [158](#)  
BARENAKED LADIES,  
[109](#)  
BARRETT, SYD, 75, [158](#)  
BART, LIONEL, [191](#)  
BASIE, COUNT, [159](#)

- Bates, Alan, [257](#)  
Bates, H. E., [83](#)  
Bates, Leroy, [172](#)  
BAUHAUS, [197](#)  
Bava, Mario, [52](#)  
Baxter, Anne, [18](#)  
BAY CITY ROLLERS, [253](#)  
BEACH BOYS, [39](#), [119](#), [160](#)  
BEASTIE BOYS, [71](#), [73](#), [135](#)  
BEAT, [27](#)  
BEATLES, [52](#), [68](#), [69](#), [73](#), [79](#), [83](#), [194](#)  
BEAUTIFUL SOUTH, [191](#)  
BECK, [150](#)  
BEE GEES, [171](#)  
BELL BIV DEVOE, [135](#)  
Bell Records, [155](#)  
BELLE AND SEBASTIAN, [109](#)  
BELLE STARS, [198](#)  
BELLY, [135](#)  
Ben & Jerry's, [145](#)  
BEN FOLDS FIVE, [136](#)  
Bennett, Al, [110](#)  
BENNETT, CLIFF & REBEL ROUSERS, [52](#)  
BENTLEY RHYTHM ACE, [206](#)  
BENTON, BROOK, [119](#)  
Benton, Robert, [19](#)  
Berkowitz, David, [212](#)  
Berry, Chuck, [57](#), [73](#)  
BERRY, DAVE, [73](#)  
BETTER THAN EZRA, [27](#)  
Betty Boop, [110](#)  
*Beverly Hillbillies*, [45](#)  
BEVIS FROND, [119](#)  
BHUNDU BOYS, [206](#)  
Bible, [28](#), [200](#), [259](#)  
BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE, [120](#)  
BIG BOPPER, [159](#)  
BIG BROTHER & HOLDING CO., [207](#)  
BIG COUNTRY, [254](#)  
BIG HEAD TODD & THE MONSTERS, [136](#)  
BIG STAR, [180](#)  
Big Youth, [75](#)  
Bihari, Joe, [25](#)  
BILK, ACKER, [207](#)  
Birthday Party, [54](#)  
Bizarre Records, [91](#)  
BJÖRK, [150](#)  
BJORN AGAIN, [68](#), [134](#)  
BLACK CROWES, [109](#)  
BLACK OAK ARKANSAS, [180](#)  
Black Panther, [211](#)  
BLACK SABBATH, [52](#)  
BLACK UHURU, [207](#)  
Black, Jimmy Carl, [143](#)  
Blackwell, Chris, [123](#)  
Blake, William, [84](#)  
BLANCMANGE, [228](#)

- BLIND BLAKE, [150](#)  
BLIND FAITH, [243](#)  
BLIND MELON, [171](#)  
BLINK 182, [254](#)  
BLONDIE, [136](#)  
BLOW MONKEYS, [207](#)  
Blow, Kurtis, 146  
Blue Belles, 155  
BLUE CHEER, [208](#)  
BLUE OYSTER CULT,  
79, [228](#)  
BLUE RONDO A LA  
TURK, [53](#)  
Bluebell Records, 155  
BLUEBELLS, [159](#)  
Bluebells Of Paris, 159  
BLUES TRAVELER, [20](#)  
Bluesology, 174  
BLUR, [120](#)  
BMX BANDITS, [110](#)  
BO DIDDLEY, 61, [159](#)  
BOB & EARL, [136](#)  
Bogarde, Dirk, 23, 137  
BOLAN, MARC, [73](#), 236  
BON JOVI, [136](#)  
BONDS, GARY “US”,  
[243](#)  
*Boney*, 45  
BONEY M, [45](#)  
Bonfire, Mars, 35  
BONHAM, [137](#)  
Bonham, John, 137  
BONZO DOG DOO-DAH  
BAND, [38](#)  
BOO RADLEYS, [27](#)  
BOO YAA T.R.I.B.E., [208](#)  
BOO, BETTY, [110](#)  
BOOKER T & MGs, [191](#)  
BOOMTOWN RATS, [20](#),  
243  
BOSTON, [180](#)  
BOW WOW WOW, [78](#),  
160  
BOWIE, DAVID, 31, 65,  
[198](#)  
Bowie, Sam, 198  
BOX TOPS, [120](#)  
BOXCAR WILLIE, [53](#)  
BOY GEORGE, 78, 94,  
105, [159](#)  
Boylan, John, 180  
Bradford, Janie, 260  
Bramlett, Bonnie, 118  
Brando, Marlon, 68  
Brannon, Fred, 20  
BREAD, [228](#)  
BREEDERS, [94](#), 136  
Brennan, Walter, 59  
BRIAN AUGER  
TRINITY, [137](#)  
Brick, 245  
Bridges, Jeff, 19  
*Brigadoon*, 18  
British Invasion, 35, 132,  
244, 247, 250  
Brooke, L. Leslie, 109  
Brooks, Ray, 258

- Brown, James, 158, 161, 165  
BROWNSVILLE STATION, [191](#)  
Brubeck, Dave, 53  
BUCKINGHAMS, [243](#)  
BUCKS FIZZ, [228](#)  
BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO, [160](#)  
Buffalo Bill, 141  
BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD, [223](#)  
BUGGLES, [244](#)  
Bundy, Ted, 212  
Burgess, Anthony, 30  
Burgess, John, 144  
Burnette, Johnny, 56  
Burroughs, William, 34, 89  
BUSH, [180](#)  
BUTTHOLE SURFERS, [53](#)  
BUZZCOCKS, [38](#), 78  
BYGRAVES, MAX, [160](#)  
Byker Grove, 45  
BYRDS, [254](#)  
C & C MUSIC FACTORY, [137](#)  
C.C.S., [94](#)  
CABARET VOLTAIRE, 61, [198](#)  
Cage, Nicholas, 25  
Caine, Michael, 112  
Cale, John, 64  
Calloway, Cab, 166  
Campbell, David, 150  
Camus, Albert, 28  
CANNED HEAT, [53](#)  
Capitol Records, 119  
CAPTAIN & TENNILLE, [160](#)  
CAPTAIN BEEFHEART'S MAGIC BAND, [171](#)  
CARLISLE, BELINDA, [151](#)  
Carradine, David, 20  
CARS, [223](#)  
CARTER USM, [87](#)  
Carthy, Martin, 64  
CASH, JOHNNY, [151](#)  
Castenada, Carlos, 104  
CAVE, NICK & THE BAD SEEDS, [54](#)  
Cervantes, Miguel de, 24  
Cetinsky, Karol, 31  
Chad Mitchell Trio, 247  
CHAKA DEMUS & PLIERS, [160](#)  
Challenge Records, 233  
CHAMPS, [233](#)  
Chandler, Chas, 130, 154  
CHANDLER, GENE, [218](#)  
Chandler, Jeff, 218  
CHANTAYS, [208](#)  
Chapman, Colin, 66  
CHARLATANS, [255](#)  
CHARLES, RAY, [151](#)  
CHECKER, CHUBBY, [120](#)

- CHEMICAL BROTHERS, [73](#)  
Cherry, Don, 151, 152  
CHERRY, EAGLE-EYE, [151](#)  
CHERRY, NENEH, 151, [152](#)  
Chesterfields, 213  
CHICAGO, [223](#)  
CHICKEN SHACK, [54](#)  
Childs, Francis, 30  
CHI-LITES, [180](#)  
CHINA CRISIS, [161](#)  
CHIPMUNKS, [110](#)  
Christie, Julie, 257  
CHRISTIE, LOU, [121](#)  
Christy, Edwin “Pops”, 202  
CHUMBAWUMBA, [255](#)  
CIRCLE JERKS, [111](#)  
Clangers, 48  
CLANNAD, [208](#)  
CLAPTON, ERIC, [152](#), 243, 244  
Clark, Dick, 120  
Clash, 93, 120, 138  
CLASH, [39](#)  
CLAYDERMAN, RICHARD, [172](#)  
CLEOPATRA, [137](#)  
CLIFF, JIMMY, [244](#)  
Clinton, George, 100, 161  
COASTERS, [180](#)  
COCKNEY REBEL, [181](#)  
COCTEAU TWINS, [54](#)  
Cocteau, Jean, 54  
Coen, Joel, 25  
Coffin, Tristram, 20  
Cohen, Leonard, 63  
Cole, Cozy, 166  
Cole, Julie Dawn, 36  
Coles, John David, 21  
COLLECTIVE SOUL, [28](#)  
COLLINS, BOOTSY, 158, [161](#)  
Colourbox, 143  
Columbia Records, 158  
Columbia TV, 48  
COMMANDER CODY & THE LOST PLANET AIRMEN, [20](#)  
COMMODORES, [255](#)  
COMMUNARDS, [199](#)  
Constantine, Eddie, 19  
CONWAY, RUSS, [121](#)  
Cooder, Ry, 24  
Cook, Norman, 257  
Cooke, Sam, 60  
COOKIE CREW, [229](#)  
COOLIO, [121](#)  
Copeland, Miles, 261  
Copeland, Stewart, 261  
Coppola, Francis Ford, 118  
COREA, CHICK, [161](#)  
Corman, Roger, 101  
Cornell, Ezra, 27  
CORNERSHOP, [208](#)  
CORRS, [137](#)  
COSTELLO, ELVIS, [172](#)  
Council, Floyd, 75

- COUNTING CROWS, [21](#)  
COUNTRY JOE & THE  
FISH, [199](#)  
Coverdale, David, 66  
COWBOY JUNKIES, [256](#)  
CRAMPS, [68](#)  
CRANBERRIES, [229](#)  
Cranston, Alan, 41  
CRASH TEST  
DUMMIES, [45](#)  
Crawford, Joan, 25  
CRAWFORD, MICHAEL,  
11, [229](#), 258  
Crazy World of Arthur  
Brown, 171  
CREAM, [244](#)  
CREDENCE  
CLEARWATER  
REVIVAL, [46](#)  
CREW CUTS, [100](#)  
CRICKETS, [28](#), 68, 83  
Crisp, Quentin, 257  
Croker, Brendan, 193  
CROSBY, BING, [39](#)  
CROSS, CHRISTOPHER,  
[121](#)  
CROWDED HOUSE, [172](#)  
CRUSADERS, [244](#)  
Crystal Maze, 147  
CRYSTALS, [172](#)  
Cullimore, Stan, 234  
CULT, [39](#)  
CULTURE CLUB, [94](#)  
CURE, [54](#)  
CURIOSITY KILLED  
THE CAT, [54](#)  
Curtis, Chris, 24, 55  
Curtis, Ian, 96  
Curtiz, Michael, 22  
CURVED AIR, [54](#)  
CYPRESS HILL, [181](#)  
  
D , Chuck, 61  
D, Mike, 71  
D.O.A., [94](#)  
D'ARBY, TERENCE  
TRENT, [152](#)  
DAFT PUNK, [39](#)  
Dahl, Roald, 36  
DALE, DICK, [121](#)  
DAMNED, [137](#)  
DAMONE, VIC, [173](#)  
DANA, [209](#)  
DANNY & THE  
JUNIORS, [111](#)  
DANZIG, [138](#)  
DARIN, BOBBY, [256](#)  
DARLING BUDS, [83](#)  
DAVE DEE, DOZY,  
BEAKY, MICK &  
TICH, [138](#)  
Davidson, Jane, 29  
Davies, W. H., 35  
Davis Sisters, 161  
Davis, Bette, 18, 102  
Davis, Betty Jack, 161  
Davis, Don, 176  
DAVIS, SKEETER, [161](#)

- DAY, DORIS, [122](#)  
DAYNE, TAYLOR, [245](#)  
DAZZ BAND, [245](#)  
DE BURGH, CHRIS, [173](#)  
DE LA SOUL, [245](#)  
de Laurentiis, Dino, 22  
DEACON BLUE, [55](#)  
DEAD KENNEDY'S, [218](#)  
Dean, Elton, 174  
Deane, Leon, 233  
Dearden, Basil, 23  
Decca Records, 73, 75, 125  
DEEP PURPLE, [55](#)  
DEF FX, [256](#)  
DEF LEPPARD, [256](#)  
DefJam, 256  
DeFries, Tony, 127  
DEL AMITRI, [111](#)  
Denson, Ed, 199  
DENVER, JOHN, [191](#)  
DEPARTMENT S, [46](#)  
DEPECHE MODE, [40](#), 81  
DES'REE, [152](#)  
DESTINY'S CHILD, [28](#)  
DETROIT SPINNERS,  
[181](#)  
DETROIT, MARCELLA,  
[181](#)  
Deviants, 177  
DEVO, [95](#)  
DEXY'S MIDNIGHT  
RUNNERS, [209](#)  
DIAMOND, NEIL, [153](#)  
Dickens, Charles, 35  
DIDO, [153](#)  
DIESEL PARK WEST,  
[182](#)  
DIGABLE PLANETS, [245](#)  
DINOSAUR JR, [233](#)  
DIO, [138](#)  
Dio, Johnny, 138  
DION & THE  
BELMONTS, [182](#)  
DIRE STRAITS, [122](#), 193  
DISHWALLA, [40](#)  
Disney, 89  
Ditka, Mike, 240  
DIVINE, [21](#)  
DIVINE COMEDY, [83](#)  
DIXIE CHICKS, [55](#)  
D-MOB, [139](#)  
*Doctor Who*, 49  
DODGY, [139](#)  
DOGS D'AMOUR, [246](#)  
Dolby Laboratories, 111  
DOLBY, THOMAS, [111](#)  
DOMINO, FATS, 120, [162](#)  
DONNEGAN, LONNIE,  
[122](#)  
DOOBIE BROTHERS,  
[209](#)  
DOORS, [84](#)  
Dos Passos, John, 31  
Dove, Billie, 173  
DR ALBAN, [153](#)  
DR DRE, 97, [162](#)  
DR FEELGOOD, [55](#), 62  
DR HOOK & THE  
MEDICINE SHOW, [139](#)  
DR JOHN, [73](#)

- Drakoulis, George, 109  
Drifters, 97  
DRU HILL, [182](#)  
DUBLINERS, [182](#)  
Duke Ellington, 159  
Dukes of Hazzard, 212  
Dumas, Alexander, 224  
DUPREE, CHAMPION  
    JACK, [162](#)  
DURAN DURAN, [21](#), 194  
Durruti, Buenaventura, 199  
DURUTTI COLUMN, [199](#)  
Dust Brothers, 73  
DYLAN, BOB, 58, 73,  
    109, 119, [153](#)  
*Dynasty*, 170
- EAGLES, [104](#)  
EARTH, WIND & FIRE,  
    [104](#)  
EAST 17, [182](#)  
EASTERHOUSE, [192](#)  
EASYBEATS, [46](#)  
Ebsen, Buddy, 45  
ECHO & THE  
    BUNNYMEN, [223](#)  
EDDIE & THE HOT  
    RODS, [139](#)  
Eddy, Duane, 52  
EEK-A-MOUSE, [233](#)  
Eggman, 27  
EINSTURZENDE  
    NEUBAUTEN, [209](#)  
Electric Prunes, 52  
Elf, 194
- ELGINS, [68](#), 131  
Eliot, T.S., 32  
ELLINGTON, DUKE, [162](#)  
Elms, Bob, 195  
EMF, [246](#)  
EN VOGUE, [122](#)  
Endfield, Cy, 19  
ENGLAND DAN & JOHN  
    FORD COLEY, [140](#)  
ENIGMA, [104](#)  
ENYA, [153](#), 208  
EPMD, [140](#)  
ERASURE, [256](#)  
Erving, Julius, 162  
Esquire, 52  
Euripides, 84  
EUROPE, [192](#)  
EURYTHMICS, [78](#)  
EVE 6, [46](#)  
EVERCLEAR, [229](#)  
Everly Brothers, 242  
EVERYTHING BUT THE  
    GIRL, [183](#)  
EXTREME, [87](#)  
EYC, [246](#)  
EYELESS IN GAZA, [28](#)
- FACES, [69](#)  
Factory Records, 57, 199  
Fahey, Siobhan, 181  
Fair, Yvonne, 129  
FAIRPORT  
    CONVENTION, [183](#)  
FAITH NO MORE, [234](#)  
FAITH, ADAM, [111](#), 166



## Index

---

- FALL, [28](#)  
FAME, GEORGIE, [122](#),  
123  
FAMILY, [123](#)  
Famous Flames, 158, 161,  
165  
FANNY, [87](#)  
FARLOWE, CHRIS, [73](#)  
Farlowe, Tal, 74  
Farrow, John, 127  
FAT BOYS, [140](#)  
FAT LARRY'S BAND,  
[140](#)  
FATBOY SLIM, 234, [257](#)  
FATIMA MANSIONS,  
[183](#)  
Feinberg, Louis, 48  
Ferrara Pan Candy Co, 230  
FIELDS OF THE  
NEPHILIM, [199](#)  
Fields, W.C., 219  
FINE YOUNG  
CANNIBALS, [22](#)  
Fish, Albert, 212  
FIXX, [209](#)  
Flea, 70  
FLEETWOOD MAC, [56](#)  
Fleming, Victor, 236  
FLESH FOR LULU, [218](#)  
*Flintstones*, 47, 100  
FLOWERPOT MEN, [46](#)  
FLYING BURRITO  
BROTHERS, [257](#)  
FLYING PICKETS, [210](#)  
FOETUS, [88](#)  
FOGHAT, [239](#)  
Fonda, Jane, 22  
Fontana Records, 246  
Fontana, DJ, 246  
FONTANA, WAYNE, 23,  
[246](#)  
FOO FIGHTERS, [200](#)  
Ford, John, 23  
FORD, TENNESSEE  
ERNIE, [183](#)  
FOREIGNER, [140](#)  
Foster, Denzil, 122  
Foster, Johnny, 129  
Foster, Reb, 132  
FOUR SEASONS, [192](#)  
FOUR TOPS, [246](#)  
Fowler, Clara Ann. See  
Patti Page  
Fowley, Kim, 118, 123,  
260  
Fox, 154  
FRANCIS, CONNIE, [154](#)  
FRANKIE GOES TO  
HOLLYWOOD, [219](#)  
Franklin, Diane, 24  
FREDDIE & THE  
DREAMERS, [56](#)  
FREE, 51, 59, [123](#)  
Freed, Alan, 187  
Freeman, Alan, 49  
FRESH PRINCE, [162](#)  
Friedman, Barry, 223  
FUGEES, [95](#)  
FUGS, [29](#)  
FUN LOVING  
CRIMINALS, [173](#)  
Funicello, Annette, 109

- FUNKADELIC, [100](#), 158,  
161  
FURY, BILLY, 122, [123](#)  
FUZZBOX, [223](#)
- Gable, Clark, 138  
Gabor, Zsa Zsa, 212  
Gacy, John Wayne, 212  
Gamble, Kenneth, 249  
GANG OF FOUR, [200](#)  
GAP BAND, [183](#)  
GARBAGE, [123](#)  
Garcia, Jerry, 32  
Gates, Bill, 171  
GAYE BIKERS ON  
ACID, [29](#)  
GAYE, MARVIN, [154](#)  
GBH, [95](#)  
Gein, Ed, 212  
Geldof, Bob, 243  
GENE LOVES JEZEBEL,  
[124](#)  
General Foods, 230  
GENERATION X, [29](#)  
GENESIS, [124](#)  
GENTRY, BOBBY, [22](#)  
GEORDIE, [184](#)  
GEORGIA SATELLITES,  
[184](#)  
GERRY & THE  
PACEMAKERS, [141](#)  
Gibran, Kahlil, 34  
*Gidget*, 212  
Gilbert & Sullivan, 80  
GILLESPIE, DIZZY, [162](#)
- GIN BLOSSOMS, [219](#)  
GO WEST, [200](#)  
GO-BETWEENS, [257](#)  
Godard, Jean-Luc, 18  
Godfrey, Arthur, 154  
GO-GO'S, [100](#)  
GOLDEN EARRING, [56](#)  
GOLDIE, [163](#)  
Golliwogs, 46  
GOO GOO DOLLS, [40](#)  
Good, Jack, 112  
Goodman, John, 100  
*Goons*, 47  
Gordy, Berry, 74, 115, 131  
GORKY'S ZYGOTIC  
MYNCI, [210](#)  
GRAHAM CENTRAL  
STATION, [141](#)  
Gramsci, Antonio, 214  
GRAND FUNK  
RAILROAD, [192](#)  
GRANDMASTER FLASH  
& THE FURIOUS  
FIVE, [163](#)  
GRANT LEE BUFFALO,  
[141](#)  
GRASS ROOTS, 105, [257](#)  
GRATEFUL DEAD, [29](#),  
114  
Gray, Zane, 32  
Greeley, Horace, 200  
GREEN DAY, [56](#)  
GREEN JELLY, [229](#)  
Green, Mick, 55  
Green, Peter, 56

## Index

---

- Griffey, Dick, 260  
Grossman, Albert, 130  
GROUNDHOGS, [57](#)  
Grundy, David, 73  
GRYPHON, [201](#)  
GUESS WHO?, [247](#)  
Guida, Frank, 243  
GUNS N ROSES, [69](#)  
GURU JOSH, [141](#)  
Guthrie, Woody, 20  
Guy Called Gerald, 222
- HALEY, BILL & THE  
COMETS, [234](#)  
Halperin, Victor, 25  
Hamblett, Chris, 29  
HAMMER, MC, [220](#)  
Hansen, Bibbe, 150  
HAPPY MONDAYS, [57](#)  
Harless, Lynn, 176  
HARPER'S BIZARRE, [40](#)  
HARRIS, PEPPERMINT,  
[124](#)  
Harrison, George, 87  
Harvey, Anthony, 24  
Hasbro, 249  
Hatchet, 202  
HATFIELD & THE  
NORTH, [192](#)  
Hawes, Tim, 63  
Hawkins, Screamin' Jay,  
76  
HAWKWIND, 59, [141](#)  
Hayden, Sterling, 25  
HEART, [258](#)  
HEAVEN 17, [30](#), 243  
HEAVY D & THE BOYZ,  
[142](#)  
Hedges, Ray, 118  
Hells Angels, 211  
Helms, Chris, 207  
Hemingway, Earnest, 27  
HENDRIX, JIMI, 34, [154](#)  
Herbert, Herbie, 126  
Herbert, Victor, 108  
HERMAN'S HERMITS,  
[47](#)  
Hernandez , Gilberto, 40  
Hernandez, Jaime, 40  
Hess, Rudolph, 195  
Hesse, Herman, 34  
Hessler, Gordon, 24  
Heston, Charlton, 22  
Hill, Andy, 228  
Hill, Z Z, 76  
Hines, Earl, 159  
Hitler, Adolf, 203  
HMV Records, 78, 144  
Hodgson, Peter, 170  
HOLE, [84](#)  
HOLIDAY, BILLIE, 75,  
[173](#)  
HOLLIES, [74](#)  
HOLLY, BUDDY, 74, [125](#)  
HOLLYWOOD  
ARGYLES, [184](#)  
Hollywood Rose, 69  
Holman, Bill, 200  
Honda, Ishiro, 18  
HONEYCOMBS, [142](#)  
Hooke, Jack, 188  
Hooker, John Lee, 57

- HOOTERS, [79](#)  
HOOTIE & THE  
BLOWFISH, [173](#)  
Hoover, J. Edgar, 61  
Hornsby, Dan, 158  
Horwitz, Jerome Lester, 48  
Horwitz, Moses, 48  
HOT CHOCOLATE, [125](#)  
HOT TUNA, [88](#)  
HOTHOUSE FLOWERS,  
[57](#)  
Hotlegs, 87  
HOUSE OF LOVE, [30](#)  
HOUSEMARTINS, 191,  
[234](#), 257  
HOWLIN' WOLF, [74](#)  
HUES CORPORATION,  
[219](#)  
Huff, Leon, 249  
Hughes, Howard, 219  
HUMAN LEAGUE, [239](#),  
243  
HUMPERDINCK,  
ENGELBERT, [125](#)  
HUNTER, TAB, [125](#)  
Hurt, Mississippi John, 88  
HÜSKER DÜ, [239](#)  
Huston, John, 138  
Huxley, Aldous, 28, 84  
  
IAN, JANIS, [174](#)  
Iceberg Slim, 219  
ICEHOUSE, [57](#)  
ICE-T, [219](#)  
ICICLE WORKS, [30](#)  
  
Idle, Eric, 65  
IDOL, BILLY, 29, [112](#)  
IGGY POP, [163](#)  
Illuminati, 201  
Ingrams, Michael, 11  
INSPIRAL CARPETS,  
[184](#), 194  
International Submarine  
Band, 257  
INXS, [126](#)  
IRON BUTTERFLY, [234](#)  
IRON MAIDEN, [224](#)  
Island Records, 123  
IT'S A BEAUTIFUL  
DAY, [247](#)  
  
J GEILS BAND, [142](#)  
Jackson, Papa Charlie, 150  
Jacques-Dalcrose, Emil, 78  
JAM, [79](#)  
JAM & SPOON, [142](#)  
JAMES, [143](#)  
JAMES GANG, [201](#)  
James, Henry, 109  
James, Jesse, 66, 201  
JAMES, TOMMY & THE  
SHONDELLS, [79](#)  
JAMIROQUAI, [95](#)  
JANE'S ADDICTION,  
[174](#)  
Janov, Arthur, 33, 35  
JAPAN, [247](#)  
Jarry, Alfred, 84  
JEFFERSON AIRPLANE,  
[126](#)

## Index

---

- Jefferson, Blind Lemon, 58, 126
- JESUS & MARY CHAIN, [230](#)
- Jesus Christ, 203, 259
- JESUS JONES, [210](#)
- JESUS LOVES YOU, [105](#)
- JETHRO TULL, [201](#)
- JO JO GUNNE, [57](#)
- JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS, [154](#)
- JODECI, [164](#)
- John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, 56
- JOHN, ELTON, [174](#)
- JOHNNY & THE HURRICANES, [185](#)
- JOHNNY KIDD & THE PIRATES, 55, [201](#), 247
- Johnson, Bob, 234
- Johnson, Jack, 162
- Johnson, Lonnie, 122
- Johnson, Tommy, 53
- JOLSON, AL, [174](#)
- Jones, Davy, 198
- Jones, Jennifer, 22
- Jones, Mick, 138
- Jones, Spike, 253
- Jones, Tom, 125
- JOURNEY, [126](#)
- JOY DIVISION, [31](#), 96
- JUDAS PRIEST, [58](#)
- Jungle Brothers, 131
- JUSTIFIED ANCIENTS OF MU-MU, [201](#)
- KAJAGOOGOO, [112](#)
- KANSAS, [185](#)
- Karina, Anna, 19
- Karloff, Boris, 52
- Karlsson, Moki, 152
- Katz, Matthew, 247
- Ka-Tzetnik #135633. See Karol Cetinsky
- Keep, Ted, 110
- Kelley, Walt, 114
- Kerouac, Jack, 76
- KHAN, CHAKA, [210](#)
- KID CREOLE, [22](#)
- KID ROCK, [164](#)
- Kidman, Nicole, 110
- KING, [143](#)
- KING CRIMSON, 58, [105](#)
- KING, B.B., [164](#)
- King, Jonathan, 87, 124
- KINGSMEN, [175](#)
- KINKS, 68, [101](#)
- Kirk, James, 65, 143
- Kirk, Rahsaan Roland, 61
- KISS, [248](#)
- KISSING THE PINK, [240](#)
- KLAATU, [22](#)
- Klassnik, Robin, 90
- KLF, 96, [201](#)
- KNACK, [258](#)
- KNIGHT, GLADYS & THE PIPS, [175](#)
- Knopfler, Mark, 193
- Knowle, Beyonce, 28
- KOOL & THE GANG, [164](#)

- KORN, [88](#)  
Korner, Alexis, 94, 123  
Kossoff, Paul, 51  
KRAFTWERK, [185](#)  
KRAMER, BILLY J, [258](#)  
Ku Klux Klan, 93  
Kubrick, Stanley, 30  
KULA SHAKER, [105](#)  
KURSAAL FLYERS, [224](#)  
KWS, [143](#)
- L.L. COOL J, [248](#)  
L7, [47](#)  
LA Guns, 69  
LA'S, [185](#)  
LABELLE, PATTI, [155](#)  
LADYSMITH BLACK  
MAMBAZO, [69](#)  
LAMBRETTAS, [224](#)  
Landis, John, 20  
lang, k d, 155  
Laurel and Hardy, 108  
LEADBELLY, [165](#)  
LED ZEPPELIN, 19, [126](#),  
137, 256  
Lee, Bruce, 163  
Lee, Harper, 27  
Lee, Jackie, 136  
LEE, PEGGY, 56, [127](#)  
Leicester City FC, 182  
Leigh, Michael, 90  
LEMONHEADS, [230](#)  
Lennon, John, 68, 116, 258  
Lennon, Julia, 258  
Lennon, Julian, 258  
Leonard, Sugar Ray, 240  
Lester, Dick, 258  
LET'S ACTIVE, [211](#)  
Levant, Brian, 100  
LEVEL 42, [31](#)  
LEVELLERS, [202](#)  
LEWIS, GARY, [155](#)  
Lewis, Herschell Gordon,  
18  
Lewis, Jerry, 155  
Lewis, Sinclair, 253  
Lewis. C.S., 33  
LEYTON BUZZARDS,  
[186](#)  
LIMMIE & THE FAMILY  
COOKIN', [175](#)  
LIMP BIZKIT, [175](#)  
LINDISFARNE, [193](#)  
LINKIN PARK, [186](#)  
LITTLE FEAT, 55, [143](#)  
Little Rascals, 160  
LITTLE RICHARD, [165](#)  
LITTLE RIVER BAND,  
[193](#)  
Livermore, Lawrence, 56  
LIVING COLOUR, [47](#)  
LIVING IN A BOX, [96](#)  
LOBO, [235](#)  
Locklear, Heather, 170  
Lonesome Sundown, 239  
Loog-Oldham, Andrew,  
127  
LOS LOBOS, [235](#)  
Losey, Joseph, 257  
LOTUS EATERS, [211](#)

- Louis, Joe, 162  
LOVE, [105](#)  
LOVE AND ROCKETS,  
[40](#)  
Love, Mike, 160  
LOVERBOY, [248](#)  
LOVIN' SPOONFUL, [88](#)  
Lowry, Ray, 29  
Lucas, Henry, 212  
Lugosi, Bela, 25  
LULU, [127](#), 218  
LYMON, FRANKIE &  
THE TEENAGERS, [112](#)  
Lynch, David, 256  
LYNYRD SKYNYRD,  
[113](#)
- M, [193](#)  
M/A/R/R/S, [143](#)  
Machiavelli, Niccolo, 150  
Mack, Roy, 120  
MADNESS, [58](#)  
Madonna, 212  
Maerth, Oskar Kiss, 95  
Mailer, Norman, 29  
MAMAS & PAPAS, [211](#)  
MANFRED MANN, [144](#),  
198  
MANHATTAN  
TRANSFER, [31](#)  
MANIC STREET  
PREACHERS, [127](#)  
Mankiewicz, Joseph L., 18  
Manne, Shelly, 144  
Manson, Charles, 211  
MANSUN, [58](#)
- MANTRONIX, [249](#)  
Manus, Willard, 32  
MARCELS, [101](#)  
MARILLION, [32](#)  
MARILYN MANSON,  
[211](#)  
Marin, Cheech, 172  
MARMALADE, [230](#)  
Marsalis, Wynton, 57  
MARSHALL TUCKER  
BAND, [105](#)  
MARTHA & THE  
MUFFINS, [144](#)  
MARTHA & THE  
VANDELLAS, [74](#)  
Martin, Bobby, 155  
MARTIN, DEAN, [219](#)  
Martin, Nicola, 228  
Martin, Terry, 108  
Marvelettes, 146  
Marvin & Johnny, 68  
Marvin, Lee, 68  
Marx Brothers, 130  
Mason, Connie, 18  
Massey, Marion, 127  
MASSIVE ATTACK, [249](#)  
MATCHBOX, [58](#)  
MATCHBOX 20, [101](#)  
MATTHEWS  
SOUTHERN  
COMFORT, [58](#)  
Mayall, John, 56  
MC5, 75, [186](#)  
MCA Records, 209  
McCartney, Paul, 75, 79,  
116

- McCartney, Stella, 116  
McCOYS, [59](#)  
McDonald, Ian, 58  
McDonald's, 218  
McElroy, Thomas, 122  
McLaren, Malcolm, 78,  
130  
McLaughlin, John, 137  
MEAT LOAF, [113](#)  
Meaux, Huey P., 250  
Meek, Joe, 142  
MEGADETH, [41](#)  
Mekler, Gabriel, 34  
Melanie, 179  
MELLENCAMP, JOHN  
COUGAR, [127](#)  
Melody Maker, 81  
MERSEYBEATS, [187](#)  
MERTON PARKAS, [101](#)  
METALLICA, [41](#)  
Meyer, Russ, 114  
MFSB, [249](#)  
MIDNIGHT OIL, 126, [128](#)  
MIGHTY MIGHTY  
BOSSTONES, [187](#)  
Milburn, Amos, 54  
Miller, Max, 160  
Miller, Mitch, 128  
Miller, Perry. See Jesse  
Colin Young  
MILLI VANILLI, [212](#)  
Mills, Gordon, 125  
MINDBENDERS, [23](#)  
MINK DEVILLE, [144](#)  
MISSION, [224](#)  
MITCH RYDER & THE  
DETROIT WHEELS,  
[259](#)  
MITCHELL, GUY, [128](#)  
Mitchell, Joni, 172  
MIZELL, HANK, [74](#)  
MOBY GRAPE, [113](#), 114  
MODERN LOVERS, [249](#)  
Mohawk, Frazier. See  
Barry Friedman  
MOLLY HATCHET, [202](#)  
MONKEES, [69](#), 198  
MONRO, MATT, [74](#)  
Monroe, Marilyn, 138, 211  
Montana, Bob, 45  
*Monty Python's Flying  
Circus*, 65  
MOODY BLUES, [59](#)  
Moog, 225  
Moon, Keith, 126  
Moorcock, Michael, 142  
Morris, Gary, 126  
Morrison, Van, 55  
Morrisey's, 65  
MORTON, JELLY ROLL,  
70, [89](#)  
MÖTLEY CRÜE, [70](#)  
MOTORHEAD, [59](#), 63  
Motown, 115, 129, 131,  
254, 260  
MOTT THE HOOPLE, [32](#)  
Mottley Croo, 70  
MOUNTAIN, [59](#)  
Mozart, Wolfgang  
Amadeus, 53



## Index

---

- M-PEOPLE, [144](#)  
MR BIG, [59](#)  
MUDDY WATERS, 62,  
[165](#), 198  
MUNGO JERRY, [32](#)  
Murder Inc., 139  
Mustaine, Dave, 41
- Nance, Jack, 256  
Neal, Patricia, 22  
NED'S ATOMIC  
DUSTBIN, [47](#)  
NEW CHRISTY  
MINSTRELS, [202](#)  
New Edition, 60  
NEW KIDS ON THE  
BLOCK, [60](#)  
NEW MODEL ARMY,  
[202](#)  
New Monks, 70  
NEW ORDER, 57, [96](#)  
NEW RADICALS, [96](#)  
NEW RIDERS OF THE  
PURPLE SAGE, [32](#)  
NEW YORK DOLLS, [114](#)  
New Yorker, 200  
Newton-John, Olivia, 212  
NICE, [60](#)  
NICO, [175](#)  
Nicodemus, 160  
Nicolau, Ted, 24  
NIGHTHAWK, ROBERT,  
[60](#)  
Nin, Anais, 30  
NINE BELOW ZERO, [60](#)
- NINE INCH NAILS, 123,  
[259](#)  
NIRVANA, [106](#)  
NOOSHA FOX, [153](#)  
NOTTING HILLBILLIES,  
[193](#)  
NRBQ, [79](#)  
NSYNC, [176](#)  
Nugent, Ted, 27  
Nutter, Alice, 255  
NWA, [97](#)
- O'Brien, Carl "Cubby",  
191  
O'Jay, Eddie, 176  
O'JAYS, [176](#)  
O'Shea, Milo, 21  
O'SULLIVAN, GILBERT,  
[80](#)  
OASIS, [194](#)  
OHIO PLAYERS, [187](#)  
OINGO BOINGO, [84](#)  
Okeh Records, 119  
Olds, Ransom Eli, 225  
Orange Juice, 65, 143  
ORB, [23](#)  
ORCHESTRAL  
MANOUEVRES IN  
THE DARK, [60](#)  
ORLANDO, TONY &  
DAWN, [155](#)  
Orr, Mary, 18  
OSBOURNE, OZZY, 52,  
[165](#)  
OSIBISA, [212](#)

- OZRIC TENTACLES, [230](#)
- Pacino, Al, 254
- Page, Buck, 33
- PAGE, PATTI, [48](#)
- Palmer, Fats, 162
- Palmer, Robert, 194
- Papatakis, Nico, 175
- PAPER LACE, [187](#)
- Parfitt, Rick, 128
- Parker, Charlie, 76
- Parker, Mary-Louise, 21
- PARLIAMENT, 158, 161, [212](#)
- Parnes, Larry, 122, 123, 132
- PARSONS, GRAM, [155](#)
- Paton, Tam, 254
- Patton, Charley, 65
- PEACHES & HERB, [145](#)
- Peanuts, 167
- PEARL JAM, [176](#)
- Pearlman, Sandy, 228
- Peck, Gregory, 254
- PERE UBU, [84](#)
- Perkins, Carl, 58
- Perry, Lee, 66
- PET SHOP BOYS, [176](#)
- Phelge, James, 62
- Philips, Sam, 151
- Phillips, Dick, 253
- Phillips, Steve, 193
- PHISH, [145](#)
- Piano Red, 55
- Pick Of The Pops*, 49
- PIL, [97](#)
- PINK FAIRIES, [177](#)
- PINK FLOYD, [75](#), 158
- Pitt, Kenneth, 198
- PIXIES, [259](#)
- PJ & Duncan, 45
- Plank, Connie, 185
- PLANXTY, [80](#)
- Platters, 60
- PM DAWN, [106](#)
- POCO, [114](#)
- POGUES, [89](#)
- Pohl, Frederick, 30
- POI DOG PONDERING, [213](#)
- POLICE, [145](#), 261
- Poole, Brian, 108
- POP WILL EAT ITSELF, [41](#)
- PORTISHEAD, [187](#)
- Pound, Ezra, 27
- POWELL, COZY, [166](#)
- POWER STATION, [194](#)
- PREFAB SPROUT, [114](#)
- PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, [249](#)
- Presley, Elvis, 22, 246
- PRETENDERS, [60](#)
- Pretty Boy Floyd, 71
- PRETTY THINGS, [61](#), 177
- Price, Vincent, 24, 101
- PRIMAL SCREAM, [33](#), 35

- Prince, 118, 132  
Prince Buster, 58  
Princess Anne, 255  
PROBY, P J, [177](#)  
PROCOL HARUM, [235](#)  
PRODIGY, [225](#)  
Professor Longhair, 73  
PRONG, [225](#)  
PROPELLERHEADS, [213](#)  
PSYCHEDELIC FURS, [61](#)  
PUBLIC ENEMY, [61](#)  
PUCKETT, GARY & THE  
UNION GAP, [203](#)  
PUFF DADDY, [166](#)  
PULP, [41](#)  
PURIFY, JAMES &  
BOBBY, [145](#)  
Pye Records, 142
- Qing, Madame Jiang, 200  
Q-TIPS, [115](#)  
Quantick, David, 41  
QUEEN, [250](#)  
QUEEN LATIFAH, [213](#)  
QUICKSILVER  
MESSENGER  
SERVICE, [106](#)  
QUIET RIOT, [128](#)  
Quintana, Ron, 41  
QUIREBOYS, [23](#)
- R.E.M, [259](#)  
Radiators, 225  
RADIOHEAD, [61](#)  
RAINBOW, [194](#)  
Ramirez, Richard, 212
- RAMONES, [75](#)  
Rand., Ayn, 28  
Randle, Bill, 100  
Rapid, Steve, 225  
*Rascals*, 49  
RATT, [42](#)  
Ray, Nicholas, 25  
RAYDIO, [145](#)  
RCA Records, 233  
RED HOT CHILI  
PEPPERS, [70](#)  
REDBONE, [213](#)  
Reed, Lou, 219  
Reese, Della, 74  
Reitman, Ivan, 20  
Rennie, Michael, 22  
REO SPEEDWAGON,  
[225](#)  
REPLACEMENTS, [259](#)  
RESIDENTS, [129](#)  
Rhinoceros, 170  
Rhodes, Todd, 171  
Rice, Anne, 33  
RICHARD, CLIFF, 97,  
[129](#)  
Richmond, Fritz, 89  
RIGHTEOUS BROS, [129](#)  
Riley, Terry, 54  
Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai  
Andreevich, 118  
RIP, RIG & PANIC, [61](#)  
RIVERS, JOHNNY, 100,  
[187](#)  
Riviera, Jake, 172  
Robinson, Smokey, 146  
Robinson, Sugar Ray, 151

- Robinson, Sylvia, 80  
ROCKWELL, [115](#)  
Rodgers, Ginger, 212  
Roget's Thesaurus, 27  
Roland, 222  
ROLLING STONES [62](#),  
71, 127  
ROMAN HOLLIDAY, [75](#)  
RONETTES, [146](#)  
ROSE ROYCE, [129](#)  
Rose, William, 69  
Ross, Ricky, 55  
Roulette Records, 79, 121  
Rowe, Dick, 243  
ROXETTE, [62](#)  
ROXY MUSIC, 45, [188](#)  
Ruffin, David, 131  
RUFUS, [42](#)  
RUN DMC, [146](#)  
RUNAWAYS, [260](#)  
Rundgren, Todd, 253  
RUNRIG, [213](#)  
RUSH, [214](#)  
Ruth, Babe, 218  
RUTLES, [194](#)
- S.O.S. BAND, [194](#)  
Salinger, J. D., 120  
Samwell, Ian, 129  
Sara Lee, 212  
SASH, [146](#)  
*Saturday Night Live*, 79  
SAVAGE GARDEN, [33](#)  
Savoy Brown, 239  
SAYER, LEO, [166](#)
- SCAGGS, BOZ, [166](#)  
*Scooby Doo*, 115  
Scott, George C., 24  
SCRITTI POLITTI, [214](#)  
SEARCHERS, [23](#)  
Sekhara, Kula, 105  
SELECTER, [62](#)  
SEPULTURA, [63](#)  
SEX PISTOLS, [130](#)  
SHADOWS, [97](#), 129  
SHAGGY, 115  
SHAKESPEAR'S  
SISTER, [63](#), 181  
Shakespeare, William, 83,  
192  
Shakur, Afeni. See Alice  
Faye Walker  
Shakur, Lumumba, 150  
Shakur, Mutulu, 150  
SHALAMAR, [260](#)  
SHAM 69, [188](#)  
SHAMEN, [214](#)  
SHANNON, DEL, [177](#)  
SHANTÉ, ROXANNE,  
[250](#)  
Shea, Robert, 201  
Sheeley, Sharon, 177  
Shelley, Pete, 78  
Shephard, Sam, 24  
SHOCKED, MICHELLE,  
[156](#)  
Shulman, Irving, 27  
SIGUE SIGUE SPUTNIK,  
120, [215](#)  
Simmons, Russell, 146

- Simple Minds, 54  
SIMPLY RED, [166](#)  
Sinatra, Frank, 219  
Sinatra, Nancy, 114  
Singer, Art, 111  
SIOUXSIE & THE  
    BANSHEES, [24](#)  
SIR DOUGLAS  
    QUINTET, [250](#)  
SISTERS OF MERCY, [63](#),  
    224  
SIXPENCE NONE THE  
    RICHER, [33](#)  
Skinner, Leonard, 113  
SKUNK ANANSIE, [235](#)  
SLADE, [130](#)  
Slim Harpo, 59  
SLY & ROBBIE, [146](#)  
SLY & THE FAMILY  
    STONE, [215](#)  
SMALL FACES, 60, 69,  
    [101](#)  
SMASH MOUTH, [240](#)  
SMASHING PUMPKINS,  
    [260](#)  
Smith, Fred 'Sonic', 75  
Smith, Funny Papa, 74  
Smith, Mark E, 29  
Smith, Patti, 75  
SMITHS, 63, [250](#)  
SMOKIE, [146](#)  
SNEAKER PIMPS, [71](#)  
SNOOP DOGGY DOGG,  
    [167](#)  
SOFT MACHINE, [34](#)  
Sommer, Helmut, 156  
SONIC YOUTH, [75](#)  
Soul City Records, 100  
SOUL II SOUL, [147](#)  
Soule, John, 200  
SOUNDGARDEN, [85](#)  
SOUP DRAGONS, [48](#)  
Sousson, Simon, 260  
SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY &  
    THE ASBURY JUKES,  
        [188](#)  
SPANDAU BALLET, [195](#)  
SPARKS, [130](#)  
SPEAR OF DESTINY,  
    [203](#)  
Specials, 63  
SPECIALS AKA, [80](#)  
Speck, Richard, 212  
SPICE GIRLS, [63](#)  
Spice, Richie, 161  
SPIN DOCTORS, [130](#)  
SPIRIT, [34](#)  
SPLIT ENZ, [102](#)  
Springfield, Dusty, 147  
SPRINGFIELDS, [147](#)  
Springsteen, Bruce, 188  
SQUEEZE, [64](#)  
ST. ETIENNE, [240](#)  
Stack, Robert, 127  
Star, Belle, 198  
Starr, Edwin, 129  
Starr, Maurice, 60  
Starr, Sam, 198  
STATUS QUO, [102](#), 128  
Stax Records, 191  
STEELEYE SPAN, [64](#)  
STEELY DAN, 55, [89](#)

- STEPPENWOLF, [34](#)  
Stevens, April, 55  
STIFF LITTLE FINGERS,  
[64](#)  
STING, 145, [167](#)  
STONE PONEYS, [65](#)  
STONE ROSES, [71](#)  
STONE TEMPLE  
PILOTS, [89](#)  
Stone, Oliver, 254  
Stone, Sly, 146  
STOOGES, [48](#)  
Storm, 143  
STRANGLERS, [42](#)  
STRAWBERRY  
SWITCHBLADE, [65](#)  
STRAWBS, [188](#)  
STRAY CATS, [236](#)  
Stuart, Mel, 36  
Studdy, George, 38  
STYX, [203](#)  
SUEDE, [65](#)  
SUGAR RAY, [240](#)  
SUGARHILL GANG, [80](#)  
Sullivan, Peter, 201  
SUMMER, DONNA, [156](#)  
Sun Records, 151  
Supercat, 206  
SUPERGRASS, [260](#)  
SUPERTRAMP, [35](#)  
SUPREMES, [260](#)  
SUTCH, SCREAMIN'  
LORD, [76](#)  
Swan Song Records, 19  
SWEET, [115](#)  
SWINGING BLUE  
JEANS, [48](#)  
T. REX, [236](#)  
T. Texas Tiny, 121  
TALK TALK, [65](#)  
TALKING HEADS, [48](#), 61  
TAMS, [102](#)  
Tappi Tikarrass, 150  
Tate Doggy Dogg, 167  
TEARDROP EXPLODES,  
[42](#), 51  
TEARS FOR FEARS, 33,  
[35](#)  
TELEVISION, [261](#)  
Temple, Julien, 119  
Tempo, Nino, 55  
TEMPTATIONS, 68, [131](#)  
TENPOLE TUDOR, [147](#)  
*Terminator*, 242  
TERRORVISION, [24](#)  
TEXAS, [24](#)  
Thalidomide, 218  
THAT PETROL  
EMOTION, [98](#)  
Thatcher, Margaret, 96  
THEY MIGHT BE  
GIANTS, [24](#)  
THIN LIZZY, [42](#)  
Thirlwell, Jim, 88  
Thomas, Dylan, 153  
THOMPSON TWINS, [115](#)  
Thowing Muses, 135  
THREE DOG NIGHT, [215](#)  
Three Stooges, 48

- THROBBING GRISTLE, [90](#)  
TIMELORDS, [49](#)  
TIN MACHINE, [65](#)  
TLC, [147](#)  
TOAD THE WET  
    SPROCKET, [65](#)  
Tokyo Ghetto Pussy, 143  
Tolkein, J.R.R., 32
- TOM TOM CLUB, [195](#)  
TONE LOC, [167](#)  
Took, Steve, 177  
TOOTS & THE  
    MAYTALS, [148](#)  
Top of the Pops, 63  
Tornadoes, 56  
TOTO, [236](#)  
TOWER OF POWER, [90](#)  
TRAFFIC, [225](#)  
TRAMMPS, [98](#)  
Translator, 95  
Tremeloes, 108  
TRIBE CALLED QUEST, [131](#)  
TRICKY, [167](#)  
TROGGS, [203](#)  
TSOP, 249  
TUBES, [35](#)  
Tung, Mao-Tse, 199  
Turner, Ike, 131  
TURNER, TINA, [131](#)  
TURTLES, 69, [132](#)  
Tushingham, Rita, 258  
TWIN, SHANIA, [215](#)  
Twiggy, 212  
Twink, 177  
TWITTY, CONWAY, [195](#)  
TYLER, BONNIE, [43](#)  
Tyrannosaurus Rex, 177  
U2, [225](#)  
UB40, [216](#)  
UGLY KID JOE, [71](#)  
Ulvaeus, Bjorn, 68  
UNIT FOUR PLUS TWO, [49](#)  
UPSETTERS, [66](#)  
URE, MIDGE, [167](#)  
URIAH HEEP, [35](#)  
UTAH SAINTS, [25](#)  
UTFO, 250
- Vallee, Hubert Prior, 76  
VALLEE, RUDY, [76](#)  
Valley, Jean, 192  
VAN DER GRAAF  
    GENERATOR, [226](#)  
Van Der Graaf, Robert  
    Jemison, 226  
VANILLA FUDGE, [132](#)  
VANITY 6, [132](#)  
Vaughan, Frankie, 219  
VAUGHAN, STEVIE  
    RAY & DOUBLE  
    TROUBLE, [64](#)  
VELVET  
    UNDERGROUND, 61,  
    64, [90](#)  
Ventures, 59  
Verlaine, Paul, 251  
VERUCA SALT, [36](#)

- Verve, The, 58  
Vibrators, 64  
Vidor, King, 22  
VILLAGE PEOPLE, [195](#)  
Vincent, Gene, 124  
Vinson, Eddie “Clean  
Head”, 136  
Virgil, 153  
Visconti, Luchino, 137  
Visconti, Tony, 236  
VOICE OF THE  
BEEHIVE, [102](#)  
VOIDOIDS, RICHARD  
HELL & THE, [250](#)  
von Praunheim, Rosa, 19
- W.A.S.P., [91](#)  
Wace, Robert, 101  
Wagner, Robert, 22  
WAH!, [148](#)  
WAILERS, [98](#)  
Wake, Ric, 245  
Walken, Christopher, 79  
Walker, Alice Faye, 150  
WALKER, JUNIOR, [168](#)  
WAR, [98](#)  
Warhol, Andy, 150  
Warner Brothers, 129  
Waronker, Si, 110  
Warsaw Pakt, 31  
WAS (NOT WAS), [115](#)  
Waters, John, 21  
WATSON, JOHNNY  
“GUITAR”, [25](#)
- Wayne, John, 24  
WEE PAPA GIRL  
RAPPERS, [177](#)  
Weidof, Rudy, 76  
WELLS, KITTY, [66](#)  
Wenders, Wim, 24  
WHAM, [216](#)  
Wheatley, Denis, 52  
WHITE ZOMBIE, [25](#)  
WHITESNAKE, [66](#)  
Whitfield, Norman, 129  
WHO, 126, [251](#)  
WILD CHERRY, [231](#)  
WILDE, MARTY, 123,  
[132](#)  
Wilder, Gene, 36  
Williams, Hank, 74  
Williamson, Sonny Boy, 60  
Wilson, Harry, 126  
Wilson, Robert Anton, 201  
Wilson, Tony, 199  
WINGS, [116](#)  
Wise, Robert, 22  
WISHBONE ASH, [261](#)  
*Wizard of Oz*, 236  
Wolfsbane, 224  
WONDER STUFF, [116](#)  
Wood, Natalie, 22  
Wood, Thomas, 18  
Wooden Horse, 153  
Woods, James “Pip”, 175  
Woodward, Joanne, 24  
Wright, Jimmy, 112  
WU-TANG CLAN, 204



## Index

---

Wyngarde, Peter, 46

X-Files, 46, 200

X-RAY SPEX, 43

YARDBIRDS, 76, 253

YAZOO, [81](#)

YES, [261](#)

Youlden, Chris, 239

YOUNG RASCALS, 49

Young, Jesse Colin, 66

Young, Mighty Joe, 90

Young, Paul, 115

YOUNGBLOODS, [66](#)

Younger, Cole, 66

Zappa, Frank, 143, 171

ZAPPA, FRANK &

MOTHERS OF

INVENTION, [91](#)

Zeppelin, Eva von, 127

ZUCCHERO, 168

ZZ TOP, [76](#)