

The History of Rock Music: 1966-1969

Genres and musicians of the Sixties

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Progressive-rock 1968-72

(These are excerpts from my book ["A History of Rock and Dance Music"](#))

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The "emigration" of rock music from the USA to Britain was not only beneficial but even pivotal for the development and propagation of rock music. First of all, rock music was digested by the British "fashion" industry, which transformed it into a well-publicized, iconic commodity, thus generating cash-cow phenomena such as the Beatles. In Britain rock music became "trendy" when in the USA it was still, mainly, an underground, cult (and occasionally taboo) phenomenon, boycotted by both the major record companies and the (puritan) middle-class audience. The British media made rock music fashionable. If rock music had remained the music of Dylan, Fugs, Zappa and Velvet Underground, it would have remained a cultural phenomenon with a huge impact, capable of producing artistic masterpieces and generating intellectual debates, but, most likely, it would have never captured the imagination of the masses the way it did during the late 1960s. In the USA, rock music had been perceived as a revolutionary event, very much related to a generational gap (between the "great" generation and the "hippy" generation) and an ideological gap (between the Establishment and the underground). In Britain, rock music, while not reneging on those premises, morphed them so that they became popular icons, comparable to the miniskirt and long hair, icons that could appeal not only to juvenile "delinquents" but also to the bourgeois masses. In other words, rock music in the USA was antagonistic, hostile and conflictual; whereas rock music in Britain made peace with society at large. Thus it became a commodity, destined to become, like cinema, one of the arts that exerted the strongest influence on the costume at the turn of the century.

The "British Invasion" also brought an artistic benefit to rock music. Since the beginning, British musicians were less "literal" in their interpretation of the rock'n'roll canon (less rooted in country and blues). Later on, British musicians began to graft onto the spirit of rock'n'roll the artistic, political and philosophical issues of European culture (just like it happened with cinema). Zappa and the Fugs had merely meant to lampoon the USA way of life; the Velvet

Underground and the Jefferson Airplane had merely meant to hail hallucinogenic substances; and Bob Dylan had merely meant to fight political and social injustice; but British musicians did not have (or wanted) to deal with those issues and transfigured them into universal messages that related to the daily lives of people all over the (western) world. For USA musicians, rock was the medium, not the message: for British musicians, rock became the message.

The most notable effect of these processes of "de-contextualization" of rock music was the evolution that led to progressive-rock, whose goal was not to comment on the youth culture, but simply to offer technical innovation. Progressive-rock (rock music that was emancipated from the traditional song format, and mixed different techniques, genres and even rhythms within lengthy, brainy pieces of music) was obviously an evolution of the eccentricities of psychedelic-rock, but was no longer related to a social practice. The artist got decoupled from the audience, and the traditional role of the western artist (as distinct from its audience) was reintroduced. Rock music had been the diary of the youth of the USA. In Britain, it became the equivalent of an essay.

Similarly, folksingers began focusing on introverted themes, closer to the themes of modern poetry and philosophy. Musical satire was redirected towards the psychological nature of dadaism, surrealism and expressionism; and so forth.

Rock music flowed back to the USA as a completely mutated species. The original "grass-roots" phenomenon, raised in thousands of garages by illiterate kids, graduated to an intellectual discipline practiced by university alumni who belonged to artistic schools and movements. In other words, "high" art.

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Last but not least, British rock internationalized rock'n'roll, a fundamentally USA phenomenon. The British musicians de-Americanized it so that it could transcend the USA society (unlike, for example, country music, that would remain closely related to the USA).

Technically speaking, one could claim that progressive-rock began in 1967 with Cream and Nice, i.e. with the groups that reacted to the simple, melodic, three-minute pop of the Beatles. But a more stringent definition, one that considers ambition and pretentiousness, would push the birth date to the Pretty Things' **S.F. Sorrow** (fall 1967/winter 1968 - dec 1968) and the Who's **Tommy** (1969), respectively the first and the most famous rock operas. The prodromes of progressive-rock were also visible on the [Zombies](#)' **Odessey & Oracle** (jun/dec 1967 - apr 1968), and the [Small Faces](#)' **Ogden's Nut Gone Flake** (? 1967/? 1968 - may 1968), which were concept albums released by members of the old guard.

Many of these bands had their roots in blues music. But, just like with psychedelic rock, progressive-rock was yet another case of rock music being redefined by the spirit of jazz music. Improvisation played a minor role in progressive-rock (and this was, after all, the dividing line between psychedelic-rock and progressive-rock) but the construction of songs and especially "suites" mirrored the elaborate, ornate, virtuoso-oriented and relatively free-form experiments of post-bop jazz music. Progressive-rock had too much "structure" to be related to free jazz, but it had enough "freedom" to be related to the progressive-jazz invented by Miles Davis and Charles Mingus, and, even earlier, Duke Ellington. Progressive-rock was the meeting of two minds: the European

tradition of classical music imposing order on the USA tradition of jazz music.

The founding fathers

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The bands that nurtured prog-rock through its early stages were Traffic, Jeff Beck, Family, Jethro Tull and Genesis; while King Crimson, Yes and Van Der Graaf Generator represent the genre at its apex.

Enfant prodige Steve Winwood, who had already penned (vocals, organ and composition) Spencer Davis Group's *Gimme Some Loving* (1966), a feverish gospel hymn, formed [Traffic](#) (2), which debuted with a quintessential psychedelic album, **Mr Fantasy** (nov 1967 - dec 1967), but soon became the leading force of the fusion style that merged folk, blues, soul and jazz. If their jams were never too exciting (reminiscent of lounge-music although in a clever way), they defined a kind of timbric counterpoint that basically changed the whole point of "jamming" (impressionistic instead of emotional) and turned it into the rock equivalent of chamber music. *Dear Mr. Fantasy* (1967) and *Glad* (1970) were their most successful "frescoes", but Winwood's collaboration with Eric Clapton, **Blind Faith** (jun 1969 - aug 1969), credited to [Blind Faith](#) (1), was perhaps better Traffic than Traffic ever were.

Possibly the most influential guitarist in the entire history of rock music, [Jeff Beck](#) (2) was the man who (as a member of the Yardbirds) divulged the science of distortion and feedback. The group that he formed with pianist Nicky Hopkins, bassist Ron Wood and vocalist Rod Stewart recorded **Truth** (may 1968 - aug 1968), which virtually invented hard-rock one year before Led Zeppelin. However, his masterpiece is probably the instrumental jazz-fusion tour de force of **Blow By Blow** (oct 1974 - mar 1975).

[Jethro Tull](#) (2) revisited the blues and folk traditions focusing on the voice and flute of Ian Anderson, who was inspired by medieval minstrels and by jazz great Roland Kirk. **Stand Up** (apr 1969 - jul 1969) is the album that defined their classy, eclectic, jazzy folk-rock. **Aqualung** (feb 1971 - mar 1971), on the other hand, indulged in hard-rock riffs and ponderous rhythms, reinventing the band in the age of Led Zeppelin.

[Family](#) (14) probably produced the best amalgam of blues-rock, psychedelic-rock and progressive-rock, thus bridging three fundamental eras of British music. Boasting the hoarse shout of Roger Chapman, one of the greatest rock vocalists of all times, and a sophisticated guitar-saxophone-violin dynamics, Family borrowed from rhythm'n'blues, music-hall, classical music and San Francisco's acid-rock to arrange their masterpiece, **Music In A Doll's House** (? 1968 - jul 1968). The conflation of dissonances, raga steps, soul horns, Hendrixian glissandos and orchestral flourishes created a merry-go-round of tuneful experiments. The songs on **Family Entertainment** (? 1968/? 1969 - mar 1969) were more cohesive and rocked "harder". The mood, which had been surreal and pastoral, turned tense and anguished. Their sound reached the baroque ecstasy of **Fearless** (summer 1971 - oct 1971), featuring new bassist/violinist John Wetton, **Bandstand** (? 1972 - sep 1972) and **It's Only A Movie** (summer 1973 - sep 1973), albums that, while solidly grounded in rock'n'roll and rhythm'n'blues, and respectful of the song format, hardly relate to the rest of progressive-rock at all.

[Genesis](#) (2) updated a classic genre of easy-listening, the sophisticated pop ballad, to the brainy arrangements and twisted dynamics of progressive-rock. The most theatrical of the prog-rock bands, Genesis matched their musical melodramas with a choreography centered on vocalist and mime Peter Gabriel. **Trespass** (jul 1970 - oct 1970) and **Nursery Crime** (aug 1971 - nov 1971) were the albums that codified their art: intellectual folk music that harked back to the repertory of fairy tales and myths, but dilated into non-linear narratives and arranged with the timbric grace of chamber music. Their reference point was the symphonic poem, which in fact is the target of the colossal and pedantic suites that followed, *Supper Is Ready* (1972) and *Firth Of Fifth* (1973). Genesis then turned towards melody with the monumental rock opera **The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway** (aug/oct 1974 - nov 1974), which stands as the summa (for better and for worse) of their career. Drummer Phil Collins would eventually turn the band into a machine of dance-pop muzak hits. By then, Gabriel would have already launched his solo career.

The release of **In The Court Of The Crimson King** (sep 1969 - oct 1969), the debut album by [King Crimson](#) (14), heralded the golden age of progressive-rock. The magniloquent, symphonic sound of Ian McDonald's mellotron enrolled them in the neo-classical movement of Nice, Moody Blues and Procol Harum, but the psychedelic overtones, the medieval visions, the gothic atmosphere and the romantic pathos of the title-track and *Epitaph* set them clearly apart. What guitarist Robert Fripp and bassist Greg Lake penned were majestic ballads, not transcriptions of classical music. *Moonchild* was an abstract, futuristic poem in which the melody was less important than the soundscape, and the violent, syncopated, distorted jam of *21st Century Schizoid Man* invented a new way to put neurosis into music. **In The Wake Of Poseidon** (mar/may 1970 - may 1970) further explored the same ideas, increasing the degree of melodrama and the amount of sound effects, and *Formentera Lady* (1971) was the definitive tour de force of the band. King Crimson had turned rock'n'roll upside down, repudiating the savage form while retaining the emotional content. When Yes drummer Bill Bruford and Family bassist John Wetton joined Fripp for a new, jazzier edition of the band, the sound veered towards harsh, strident, convoluted compositions such as *Lark's Tongues In Aspic* (1973) and brainy, cryptic, virtuoso albums such as **Red** (aug 1974 - oct 1974). King Crimson's third edition, featuring guitarist Adrian Belew and bassist Tony Levin, adopted an even more intellectual stance in compositions such as *Sheltering Sky* (1981). [Robert Fripp](#) (3) never stopped recording stimulating music. Two collaborations with Brian Eno, notably **No Pussyfooting** (sep 1972/aug 1973 - nov 1973), several solo albums, notably **Exposure** (jul 1977/jan 1979 - jun 1979), the manifesto of his "frippertronics", two collaborations with Police's guitarist Andy Summers, notably **I Advance Masked** (sep 1981/may 1982 - oct 1982), a collaboration with David Sylvian, **The First Day** (dec 1992/mar 1993 - jul 1993), were just the tip of the iceberg.

[Van Der Graaf Generator](#) (12) were in many ways the most original of the early prog-rock bands. Their sound (already unique because it was driven by saxophone and keyboards, not guitars) could not be easily related to the archetypes of folk, blues, rock or jazz, despite the fact that it contained elements of them all. The emphasis of their lengthy compositions was on pathos and melodrama, just like in the case of King Crimson, but also on fear and vulnerability. The degree of angst was further increased by Peter Hammill's

pessimistic, claustrophobic lyrics and by his agonizing vocals. The psychological tortures of **The Least We Can Do Is Wave To Each Other** (dec 1969 - feb 1970), the touching and liturgic poems of **H To He Who Am The Only One** (spring/fall 1970 - dec 1970), and the bleak, terrible, delirious visions of **Pawn Hearts** (sep 1971 - oct 1971) combined existentialist emptiness and gothic nightmare. Hammill and his cohorts had invented a whole new way to express the teen angst that had been the emotional fuel of rock'n'roll from the beginning.

[Yes](#) (12), possibly the most accomplished musicians of the progressive-rock generation, were also the ultimate in magniloquence and exhibitionism. Their sound was born out of the fusion of pop, rock, folk, jazz and classical music. They borrowed ideas from the Nice, from renaissance and baroque music, from Crosby Stills & Nash's vocal harmonies, from post-Davis funk-jazz, from psychedelic jamming, and from old-fashioned melodies. If the fusion was not unique, the glacial composure certainly was: Yes albums sounded more like scientific experiments than party music. **The Yes Album** (oct/nov 1970 - feb 1971) introduced their schizophrenia: *Yours Is No Disgrace* and *Starship Trooper* went for strenuous instrumental bravura, while *I've Seen All Good People* revolved around a catchy refrain. The virtuoso performers (particularly drummer Bill Bruford and keyboardist Rick Wakeman) achieved a sublime degree of balance on **Fragile** (sep 1971 - nov 1971), whose *Roundabout*, *South Side Of The Sky* and *Heart Of The Sunrise* flowed like clockwork mechanisms. The apex of Yes' apparent contradiction (a style that was both frigid and romantic) was reached on **Close To The Edge** (apr/jun 1972 - sep 1972), whose *Close To The Edge* and *And I And You* were lengthy, complex and densely chromatic fantasias, and the very definition of "art-rock". On the other hand, the four monumental suites of **Tales From Topographic Oceans** (aug/oct 1973 - dec 1973) proved that extended compositions do require more than mere virtuosity.

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Two line-ups that worked for John Mayall spawned two of the most creative bands of early prog-rock. [Colosseum](#) (10) recorded **Valentyne Suite** (jun 1969 - nov 1969), whose title-track was a side-long phantasmagoria of jazz, blues, classical and hard-rock sounds, brightly chromatic and luxuriant, one of the masterpieces of British progressive-rock. [Mark-Almond](#) (2), the duo of former John Mayall's sidemen Jon Mark (guitar) and Johnny Almond (reeds), specialized in suites of a different kind, mellow and laid-back, centered on simple folk-jazz tunes, skirting lounge-music and easy-listening muzak, such as *The City* (1971), on their first album, and *Sausalito Bay Suite* (1972), on their second album.

Gothic, ethnic and folk variations

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A number of progressive bands introduced Eastern music into their psychedelic and progressive sounds; for example, [East Of Eden](#), with **Mercator Projected** (dec 1968 - feb 1969), and Ian "Lemmy Kilmister" Willis' Sam Gopal, with **Escalator** (oct/nov 1968 - mar 1969).

However, no band achieved the degree of ethnic fusion that the [Third Ear Band](#) (102) achieved on **Alchemy** (dec 1968 - ? 1969), one of the albums that invented

"world-music". An acoustic chamber ensemble of (essentially) tablas, oboe, viola and cello performed Indian, medieval, native North-American, gypsy, middle-eastern, minimalist, jazz, classical and folk music, all within the same song. The four suites on their second album, **Third Ear Band** (apr 1970 - ? 1970), pushed the idea even further: the ethnic sources are not recognizable anymore, and the music flows like a stream of consciousness, a spiritual experience, a daydream. De-contextualized, the "third ear" music is closer to Buddhism meditation than to western composition. The band was equally successful on **Macbeth** (aug 1971 - ? 1972), which added electric and electronic sounds to their ethnic stew.

Around 1970, following the success of Black Sabbath, a number of bands introduced gothic themes and atmospheres into innovative structures: **High Tide II** (? 1970 - ? 1970) by [High Tide](#) (1), a classic of gothic-rock, a collection of violin-driven macabre dances that bridge acid-rock and hard-rock; **Sacrifice** (late 1969 - mar 1970) by [Black Widow](#) (1), which wed Colosseum's jazz-classical suite with, again, gothic overtones; **Death Walks Behind You** (mar/aug 1970 - sep 1970) by [Atomic Rooster](#); **Ceremony** (? 1969 - jan 1970) by [Spooky Tooth](#) (1), a rock mass arranged by avantgarde composer Pierre Henry, a bold concept that wed the aesthetics of art-rock with the vibrations of hard-rock; and Necromandus' **Quicksand Dream** (? 1972 - ? 1990), unreleased for 18 years.

The "progressive" spirit affected the folk revival as well. After all, Pentangle had already combined jazz and folk, and the Incredible String Band had already combined folk and acid-rock. Other bands proceeded to concoct similar folk-based fusions. While no band matched the importance of those pioneers, a few albums stand out: **Fantasia Lindum** (? 1971 - ? 1971) by [Amazing Blondel](#), inspired by medieval ballads and renaissance madrigals; **Dando Shaft** (? ? - may 1971) by [Dando Shaft](#), which offered perhaps the most competent folk-jazz fusion; **St Radigunds** (may/jun 1971 - sep 1971) by [Spirogyra](#), also inspired by folk and jazz; **First Utterance** (nov/dec 1970 - feb 1971) by the premier psychedelic-folk band, [Comus](#) (1); best of all, **Grave New World** (nov 1971 - feb 1972) by the [Strawbs](#) (1), a psychedelic mass that blends western liturgy and Indian raga.

The second generation

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Progressive bands multiplied in Britain during the early 1970s, but their albums had the tendency to recycle the same ideas over and over again, and frequently with unwarranted pomp. A few gems, though, could still be found: the baroque **Quatermass** (? 1970 - may 1970) by [Quatermass](#) (1); **Galactic Zoo Dossier** (? 1971 - oct 1971) by [Kingdom Come](#), an odd mixture of electronic keyboards, rhythm and blues and Arthur Brown's stage antics; **Mice And Rats In The Loft** (? 1971 - jun 1971) by the trio [Jan Dukes De Grey](#), a deranged case of jazz-folk fusion; **Phantasmagoria** (mar 1972 - apr 1972) by [Curved Air](#) (1), whose baroque suites were graced by violin (Darryl Way), synthesizer (Francis Monkman) and sensual female vocals; **Argus** (jan 1972 - may 1972) by [Wishbone Ash](#) (1), whose energetic jams were propelled by a twin guitar attack.

The bass-drums-saxophone trio [Back Door](#) (1), led by bassist Colin Hodgkinson, was one of the most original instrumental jazz-rock units. Their **Back Door** (jun 1972 - ? 1972) indulged in brief, hectic instrumental jams at the border between

jazz, funk, soul, blues and hard-rock.

Also original were: [Jody Grind \(UK\)](#)'s four-movement suite **One Step On** (? 1969 - nov 1969); [Julian's Treatment](#)'s sci-fi concept **A Time Before This** (? ? - jun 1970); [Titus Groan](#)'s **Titus Groan** (? 1970 - nov 1970), with the suite *Hall Of Bright Carvings*; [T2](#)'s suite *Morning*, off **It'll All Work Out in Boomland** (? 1970 - aug 1970); [Ben](#)'s **Ben** (? 1971 - ? 1971), containing four jazz-rock jams; [Dr Z](#)'s mystical **Three Parts To My Soul** (? 1971 - nov 1971); [Steamhammer](#)'s **Speech** (sep 1971 - feb 1972)), with the suite *Penumbra*; [Nektar](#)'s improvised electronic jazz-rock opera **Journey To The Center Of The Eye** (jun/aug 1971 - ? ?) and their melodic suite **Remember the Future** (aug 1973 - nov 1973).

[Jade Warrior](#) (5) began as second-rate King Crimson copycats, distinguishing themselves only with the mystical and ethnic emphasis of **Last Autumn's Dream** (? 1972 - nov 1972), but subsequently they developed a sound that was not narrative but pictorial in nature, while adopting electronic keyboards and focusing on jazz-rock as their main inspiration. **Waves** (? 1975 - aug 1975) and **Kites** (? 1976 - ? 1976), continuous suites that employ many instruments and many styles, took prog-rock to its formal zenith. **Way Of The Sun** (? 1978 - ? 1978) was already a new genre: hyper-arranged new-age music. The band later converted to cosmic music with the bleak sonic imagery of *Images Of Dune* (1984) and the three celestial suites collected on **At Peace** (? 1985 - ? 1989).

Perhaps the boldest (or, at least, brainiest) fusion of jazz, rock and classical music was attempted by [Gentle Giant](#) (2), particularly on **Three Friends** (dec 1971 - apr 1972) and **In A Glass House** (jul 1973 - sep 1973).

[Emerson Lake & Palmer](#) (1), formed by former Nice keyboardist Keith Emerson, former King Crimson bassist Greg Lake and former Atomic Rooster drummer Carl Palmer a few months after the success of Crosby Stills & Nash, pushed progressive-rock towards technical excesses that, basically, obliterated whatever merit their jazz-classical fusion had. This art of obfuscating art worked best on the futuristic/mythological concept album **Tarkus** (jan 1971 - jun 1971), although their technological peak was perhaps *Karn Evil 9* (1973). Their music, ever more pretentious and magniloquent, was founded on a fundamental misunderstanding of what "virtuoso" means.

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The first three albums recorded by [Roxy Music](#) (12) revolutionized progressive-rock and prepared the way to the new wave and to synth-pop. The styles of Pink Floyd (surreal soundscape), Soft Machine (jazz-rock), Traffic (chromatic jamming), Cream (virtuosity), Led Zeppelin (loudness and frenzy), King Crimson (emphasis and pathos) and the avantgarde (minimalism and cacophony) merged in the inventive bacchanals of their debut album, **Roxy Music** (mar 1972 - jun 1972), which includes the futuristic anthem *Virginia Plain* and several avant-rock pieces fueled by Brian Eno's electronics. Bryan Ferry's emphatic crooning soared unrestrained on **For Your Pleasure** (feb 1973 - mar 1973), that contains the hypnotic synth-dance *Bogus Man*; and attained a kitschy quality on **Stranded** (sep 1973 - nov 1973), whose ballads *Mother Of Pearl* and *A Song For Europe* wed the themes of European decadentism and existentialism with luxuriant arrangements and slick production. *Love Is The Drug* (1975) and subsequent albums would merely sell that idea in the discos.

Continental Europe

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The contagion of progressive-rock spread throughout continental Europe: progressive-rock clearly appealed more to the "intellectual" audience of Europe than rock'n'roll ever did. Sweden's premier progressive-rock group was [Samla Mammas Manna](#) (1), which debuted with **Samla Mammas Manna** (? 1970 - spring 1971). [Algarnas Tradgard](#) (1) concocted the puzzling and oddly orchestrated suites of **Framtiden Ar Ett Svavande Skepp Forankrat I Fortiden** (? 1971 - ? 1972), a meeting of prog-rock jamming, psychedelic freak-out and exotic chamber music.

Holland's most famous psychedelic and prog-rock band was [Focus](#) (1), whose **Focus II** (apr/may 1971 - oct 1971) contains the fast-paced novelty number *Hocus Pocus* and the colossal jam *Eruption*, their equivalent of Colosseum's *Valentyne Suite*. But the most exciting song to emerge from Holland's booming scene was Shocking Blue's *Venus* (1969), a sexy, party rave-up that harked back to Creedence Clearwater Revival's feverish rhythms.

Italy

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Italy hatched one of the most prolific schools of progressive-rock. Italy had no major rock tradition. The progressive school was an unintended consequence of two phenomena: a boom of classically-trained musicians and the 1968 student riots. In 1969, Italy was awash in young erudite musicians who wanted to change the world. They identified with the ideology of the hippies, but retained the language of Bach. Progressive-rock was born out of this contradiction. Notable albums include: the New Trolls' symphonic **Concerto Grosso #1** (mar 1971 - jun 1971); [Premiata Forneria Marconi](#)'s **Storia di un Minuto** (fall 1971 - jan 1972); [Il Balletto di Bronzo](#)'s apocalyptic concept **Ys** (winter/spring 1972 - jun 1972), mostly the brainchild of keyboardist Gianni Leone; Latte E Miele's **Passio Secundum Mattheum** (? 1972 - ? 1972); [Banco del Mutuo Soccorso](#) (1)'s **Darwin** (? 1972 - ? 1972); [Pholas Dactylus](#)' psychodrama **Concerto Delle Menti** (? 1973 - ? 1973); [Le Orme](#)'s Hammond-driven sci-fi saga **Felona e Sorona** (feb 1973 - ? 1973); [Il Rovescio Della Medaglia](#)'s symphonic concept **Contaminazione** (? 1973 - ? 1973); Museo Rosenbach's **Zarathustra** (? 1973 - ? 1973), with the eponymous five-movement suite.

Predating all of these albums was Antonio Bartocetti's project, [Jacula](#), which used the massive sound of the church organ to concoct the gothic/decadent nightmare **In Cauda Semper Stat Venenum** (? 1969 - ? 1969).

A sub-genre of Italian prog-rock was Italian jazz-rock, well represented by albums such as [Osanna](#)'s jazz-rock nightmare **Palepoli** (? 1973 - ? 1973), Arti & Mestieri's chamber jazz-rock workout **Tilt** (? 1974 - ? 1974), and Perigeo's **Genealogia** (jul 1974 - ? 1974). Walter Maioli's Aktualala added ethnic flavors to jazz improvisation on their **Aktuala** (? 1973 - ? 1973).

The greatest of the jazz-rock bands was [Area](#) (1), fronted by vocalist Demetrio Stratos, one of the most original singers of his age, whose **Arbeit Macht Frei** (? 1973 - ? 1973) merged agit-prop lyrics, jazz-rock jamming, raw electronics,

Middle-eastern scales, and Stratos' psychotic warbling. While the group evolved towards the quirky free-jazz of **Caution Radiation Area** (? 1974 - ? 1974) and **Maledetti** (? 1976 - ? 1976), [Demetrio Stratos](#) recorded experimental albums entirely devoted to the human voice such as **Metrodora** (? 1976 - ? 1976) and especially **Cantare la Voce** (? 1978 - ? 1978).

The late years of Italian progressive-rock yielded Pierrot Lunaire's **Gudrun** (? 1975/? 1976 - ? 1977), the brainchild of Arturo Stalteri, [Picchio Dal Pozzo](#)'s **Picchio Dal Pozzo** (? 1975 - ? 1976), that ranks with the best of the Canterbury imitations, Corte dei Miracoli's **Corte dei Miracoli** (? 1976 - ? 1976), a double-keyboards tour de force, La Bottega Dell'Arte's **Dentro** (? 1977 - ? 1977), that matched the instrumental prowess with memorable melodies, and Locanda delle Fate's **Forse le Lucciole Non Si Amano Più** (? 1977 - ? 1977), a refined work that stands as a sort of swan song of the entire movement.

[Goblin](#) specialized in soundtracks for the horror films of director Dario Argento, particularly **Profondo Rosso** (feb 1975 - ? 1975) and **Suspiria** (? 1976 - ? 1977).

Italian multi-instrumentalist [Luciano Cilio](#), who committed suicide in 1984, penned the five-movement chamber symphony **Dialoghi del Presente** (? 1977 - ? 1977).

France

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The French landscape of British-style symphonic rock was less vital than the Italian one, but a handful of groups mined entirely new sub-genres.

Christian Vander's [Magma](#) (12) debuted their sci-fi concept on the ambitious and naive **Magma** (apr 1970 - ? 1970), borrowing ideas from free-jazz and Gong, and perfected it on their first masterpiece, **Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandöh** (? 1973 - dec 1973), an eclectic and idiosyncratic rock opera that spans an amazing range of styles, from Verdi to Frank Zappa. **Kohntarkosz** (spring 1974 - jun 1974) was their most musical work, largely inspired by Mahavishnu Orchestra's jazz-rock, whereas **Udu Wudu** (may/jun 1976 - ? 1976) was a more electronic affair.

Red Noise penned **Sarcelles-Locheres** (nov 1970 - dec 1970), featuring the 19-minute instrumental suite *Sarcelles C'est L'Avenir*, a ludicrous combination of Fugs' dementia, Frank Zappa's satirical noise-pop and Soft Machine's jazz-rock.

[Jean-Claude Vannier](#) (1) the arranger of Serge Gainsbourg's **Histoire De Melody Nelson** (apr 1970/feb 1971 - mar 1971), composed another concept album, the all-instrumental **L'Enfant Assassin des Mouches** (may 1970 - ? 1972), that ran the gamut from collages of found sounds to demented symphonic rock, from exuberantly old-fashioned fairground music to orchestral easy-listening music.

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[Vangelis](#) (13) led Aphrodite's Child, a group of Greek musicians residing in France, whose posthumous **666** (end 1970/mar 1971 - mar 1972) is a unique collection of magical incantations, satanic invocations and psychedelic jamming.

Vangelis pursued a career of stately, melodramatic (and increasingly electronic) instrumental suites, whose archetypes were **L'Apocalypse Des Animaux** (? 1970 - ? 1973) and **Heaven And Hell** (sep 1975 - late 1975). Specializing in orchestral apotheosis, Vangelis would be celebrated for his movie soundtracks. One of the pioneers and stars of new-age music, he would return to more ambitious pieces with **Invisible Connections** (? 1985 - ? 1985) and **Mask** (? 1984 - ? 1985).

USA

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In the USA, tremendous impetus to progressive-rock came from Miles Davis' **Bitches Brew** (aug 1969 - mar 1970), an album that combined soul rhythms and electronically-amplified rock instruments. Frank Zappa's **Uncle Meat** (1969) was rock's most competent (and irreverent) answer to Miles Davis. Veteran jazz arranger Quincy Jones was another pioneer of sorts, combining a jazz brass section and funk-rock rhythms on **Walking In Space** (jun 1969 - ? 1969).

[Chicago](#) (3) attempted an explosive fusion of jazz horns and rock'n'roll guitar on **Chicago Transit Authority** (jan 1969 - apr 1969), **Chicago II** (aug 1969 - jan 1970) and **Chicago III** (dec 1970 - jan 1971), each of these a double album, characterized by wild and sometimes brutal creativity.

Ten Wheel Drive, formed by vocalist Genya Ravan (a Janis Joplin sound-alike), keyboardist Mike Zager and guitarist Aram Scheffrin, were one of the first jazz-rock fusion groups with a horn section, debuting with **Construction #1** (spring 1969 - ? 1969).

[Insect Trust](#) (1) attempted a super-fusion of jazz, blues, country and acid-rock somewhere between Blues Project's sophisticated ballads and Captain Beefheart's demented jams on **Insect Trust** (? 1968 - ? 1968), and veered towards free-jazz on their second album, **Hoboken Saturday Night** (? 1969 - ? 1970).

[Gil Scott-Heron](#), a poet and novelist who turned musician and predated rap music with his spoken-word pieces, championed a Miles Davis-inspired fusion of jazz, funk and rock (on top of his Phil Ochs-inspired agit-prop lyrics) on, for example, **Pieces Of A Man** (apr 1971 - ? 1971) and *The Bottle* (1973).

Two bands led by violinists were notable: [Flock](#) (1), whose *Truth* (1969) was one of the most accomplished jams of the time, led by Jerry Goodman (who later joined the Mahavishnu Orchestra); and [It's A Beautiful Day](#) (1), whose **It's A Beautiful Day** (? 1969 - may 1969) sprayed acid-rock with exotic perfumes.

[Joy Of Cooking](#) (1), one of the first bands led by female musicians (singer-songwriters Terry Garthwaite and Toni Brown) and one of the earliest to deal with feminist issues within popular music, released three delightful albums, **Joy Of Cooking** (? ? - mar 1971), **Closer to the Ground** (jun/jul 1971 - aug 1971) and **Castles** (mar 1972 - may 1972), that experimented with elastic song structures over a laid-back, folk-jazz-blues fusion infrastructure.

So-called "progressive-rock" (basically, all rock music that is not mainly melodic) aimed at incorporating the styles invented by the jazz and classical

avantgarde into the format of the electric and electronic rhythm-based ensemble (the rock band), a program that unconsciously drifted towards inter-disciplinary and total music, an ambition clearly visible in Frank Zappa's stylistic pastiches.

In 1970 Jimi Hendrix died and Syd Barrett retired. An era had ended; but its seeds were sprouting.

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