

The History of Rock Music: 1970-1975

Genres and musicians of the Seventies

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The Early 1970s: A Crisis Of Confidence

After the orgy of social upheavals of the 1960s (civil-rights movement, peace marches, hippies, political assassinations), the 1970s opened in a tense but somehow exhausted mood. In 1972 president Richard Nixon, who had been so viscerally anti-communist, met with Chinese communist chairman Mao Zedong. In 1973 the USA, defeated, withdrew from Vietnam, and two years later the communists completed their conquest of the country. In 1973 another crisis erupted: following a war against Israel, members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries imposed an oil embargo against the West. Oil prices skyrocket and precipitated a world depression. In 1974 more turmoil: president Nixon was forced to resign after the Watergate scandal had exposed his criminal habits. Many felt that the USA had already begun its decline. Europe had its own problems. Britain was rapidly declining, having lost its empire and its economy stuck in a downward spiral. The continent had been rocked by violent Marxist-inspired movements, and two countries (Germany and Italy) had to cope with extremists who engaged in terrorism (the Baader-Meinhof and the Red Brigades), while the whole continent also became a target for Palestinian terrorism, and Britain had to fight the Irish nationalist movement IRA. Britain (and some smaller countries) finally joined the European Economic Community in 1972. Germany had become the economic superpower of Europe, leaving behind Britain, France and Italy. During the 1970s the Volkswagen's "Beetle" became the most produced car of all times, a living symbol of Germany's economic might. Ironically, the two countries that the USA had defeated in the war, Germany and Japan, had become the USA's main competitors worldwide.

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