

The History of Rock Music: 1976-1989

New Wave, Punk-rock, Hardcore

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Psychedelic Underground and Dream-pop

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

Paisley Underground 1982-87

The "American Graffiti" phenomenon of the early Seventies, and the subsequent appropriation of the Sixties by the new wave, caused a revival of many of the styles of that happy decade. By far the most pervasive and long-lived was the revival of psychedelia, that kept recurring throughout the Eighties and the Nineties.

Los Angeles had its own movement, the "Paisley Underground". Psychedelia became merely a pretext to concoct baroque, oneiric and hypnotic sounds, often with the help of keyboards and strings. Byrds-ian jangling guitars and naive melodies à la Hollies dominate **Emergency Third Rail Power Trip** (feb/mar - oct 1983) by [Rain Parade](#) (1), with Matt Piucci on vocals and Dave Roback on guitar, as well as the EP **Baroque Hoedown** (fall 1982 - dec 1982) and the album **Sixteen Tambourines** (? 1983 - oct 1983) by Mike Quercio's [Three O'Clock](#) (1).

Needless to say, the Paisley Underground was only the tip of the iceberg.

The [Dream Syndicate](#) (12), formed by guitarists Steve Wynn and Karl Precoda and bassist Kendra Smith, acted as the natural liaison between Television (and the new wave in general) and the new generation of psychedelic rockers. Their first album, **The Days Of Wine And Roses** (sep 1982 - oct 1982), conveyed, more than anything else, the synthesis of Bob Dylan and the Velvet Underground that had been the hidden theme of the new wave. Echoes of the Rolling Stones, the Stooges and the Doors increased the hellish atmospheres of Wynn's confessional trips. While Wynn was lost in his existential panic, Precoda and Smith lifted the music to a majestic level. When Smith left, the "acid" quotient dropped, and the band opted for the quieter jamming of **Medicine Show** (? 1983/? 1984 - may 1984), a presage of the new sound of **Out Of The Grey** (? 1986 - jun 1986), reminiscent of Neil Young's neurotic country-rock; but Wynn was still the only songwriter capable of making his lyrics bleed. **Ghost Stories** (? 1988 - sep 1988) closed the semicircle by almost embracing R.E.M.'s folk-rock. The combination of abrasive guitars, dramatic tension and crude realism coined a language that would inspire countless bands of the 1980s.

One of the most original bands to come out of Los Angeles during those fervent years was [Savage Republic](#) (13), led by guitarist Bruce Licher. **Tragic Figures** (mar 1982 - jun 1982) introduced a psychedelic and industrial music that was mostly instrumental and percussive, inducing trance and fear. The EP **Trudge** (dec 1984/aug 1985 - jan 1986) incorporated more explicitly elements of world-music. The atmospheric **Ceremonial** (dec 1985 - jan 1986) and **Jamahiriya Democratique Et Populaire De Sauvage** (? ? - feb 1988), featuring new member Brad Laner, perfected their synthesis of psychedelic drones, middle-eastern cantillation and tribal rhythms. By the time of **Customs** (nov 1988 - dec 1989), their last album and their masterpiece, they had coined a musical language of extreme tension, instrumental subtlety and exotic appeal. They also spawned the equally bizarre [17 Pygmies](#) (folk-pop ballads and exotic instrumentals). After the split, members of Savage Republic would form other creative and influential bands such as Scenic (Licher) and Medicine (Laner).

The Paisley Underground fostered a generation of psych-poppers that emerged around 1984-85: the [Droogs](#), already veterans of the scene but revealed only by **Stone Cold World** (? 1984 - ? 1984), Russ Tolman's [True West](#), with the EP **Hollywood Holiday** (jan/aug 1983 - ? 1983) and the album **Drifters** (jun 1984 - ? 1984), Arizona-based [Yard Trauma](#), with **Must've Been Something** (? 1985 - ? 1985), the [Steppes](#), with **Stewdio** (? 1987 - early 1988), etc.

Rain Parade's guitarist David Roback and Dream Syndicate's bassist Kendra Smith formed [Opal](#) to paint the ethereal watercolors of the EP **Northern Line** (feb/oct 1985 - dec 1985), an idea that [Kendra Smith](#) (1) would pursue again with the lyrical post-Nico odes of **Guild Of Temporal Adventurers** (dec 1991 - ? 1992).

The recordings by [Drowning Pool](#), such as the double album **Satori** (? 1987 - ? 1987), straddled the line between new wave, psychedelia, ambient, industrial and world-music.

A more melodramatic style was experimented by [Shiva Burlesque](#), featuring Grant Lee Phillips on guitar, on **Shiva Burlesque** (spr/sum 1987 - ? 1987).

Revival, 1983-88

On the East Coast, the psychedelic revival began with new wave bands such as Jeff Conolly's [Lyres](#), out of Boston, and albums such as their **On Fyre** (summer 1983 - jul 1984), manically intent on reproducing the sounds of the Sixties. Only a few years later, for example on **Lyres Lyres** (feb/jun 1986 - oct 1986), did these bands develop an original style that went beyond mere revival.

Ditto for New York's neo-psychedelic bands, which gave their best albums well into the 1980s, when the fad was beginning to die out: [Plan 9](#), with **Dealing With The Dead** (? 1983 - 1983), [Certain General](#), with **November's Heat** (nov 1983 - ? 1984), the [Fuzztones](#), with **Lysergic Emanation** (? 1984 - ? 1985), the [Chesterfield Kings](#), with **Stop!** (? 1985 - ? 1985), the [Vipers](#), with **Outta The Nest** (? 1984 - ? 1984), the [Cheepskates](#), etc. These bands, and their audience, were mainly interested in a fetishist recreation of retro` cliches. Their greatest merit is that they helped rediscover great lost bands of the Sixties such as Standells, Chocolate Watchband, Music Machine, Count Five, Sonics and so forth. Their favorite psychedelic sound was the wild and raw sound of the garages, not the trippy sound of Grateful Dead concerts or the intellectual sound of the Doors.

One of the most creative (not just derivative) neo-psych band of the time was [Das Damen](#) (2). They reworked the grammar of the genre on **Jupiter Eye** (nov 1986 - ? 1987) by

matching acid-rock distortions, heavy-metal riffs, hardcore frenzy and gloomy atmospheres, while **Triskaidekaphobe** (? ? - apr 1988) was a calmer effort that employed the lighter calligraphy of early Pink Floyd and Syd Barrett.

Wisconsin's [Plasticland](#) (1) proved their mastery of Swinging London's idioms on **Color Appreciation**, later reissued as self-titled (? 1982/? ? - jun 1984) and its replicas, **Wonder Wonderful Wonderland** (? 1985 - dec 1985) and **Salon** (? 1987 - ? 1987).

Chicago's [Eleventh Dream Day](#) (3), led by Rick Rizzo and Janet Bean (also in Freakwater), were unique in the way they fused baroque psychedelia and roots-rock. The savage garage-rock of **Prairie School Freakout** (jul 1987 - oct 1988), still influenced by the new wave (for example, the Television-like guitar interplay), was soon abandoned for the warm, "rootsy", domestic simplicity of **Beet** (jun 1989 - nov 1989). The poppy, albeit bleak, **Lived To Tell** (summer 1990 - jan 1991) and its mediocre successors, **El Moodio** (oct 1992 - apr 1993) and **Ursa Major** (? 1994 - ? 1994), perfected Rizzo's formula, up to the manneristic zenith of **Eighth** (? 1996 - feb 1997).

[27 Various](#), featuring guitarist Ed Ackerson, progressed from a raw psychedelic sound to the sprightly power-pop of **Yes Indeed** (? ? - spring 1989).

Sacrilege, 1984-88

The counterbalance to the psychedelic necrophilia that swept the States in the early 1980s was a similar revival, but one focused on the wild, raw and amateurish sound of Sixties' garage-rock.

Jerry Teel's [Honeymoon Killers](#) (11) were the greatest disciples of the Cramps in New York. They debuted with **From Mars** (? ? - ? 1984), which exhibited an even more grotesque and amateurish version of Cramps-ian voodoobilly, but progressed to the orgiastic pow-wows of **Love American Style** (? 1985 - ? 1985), which was even beyond the Cramps: rockabilly, blues, garage-rock, punk-rock, gothic hard-rock and acid-rock were packed into explosive units that created a visceral crescendo of suspense. **Let It Breed** (? 1986 - ? 1986) was a more respectful tribute to their musical roots, but the addition of Cristina Martinez turned **Turn Me On** (? 1987 - jan 1988) into an even bigger paradox of vitriolic guitars and epileptic rhythms. Finally, a new line-up helped Teel mold his masterpiece, **Hung Far Low** (? 1991 - ? 1991), on which his adrenaline-drenched hyper-kinetic imagination is matched by a thick, dense, black wall of sound. Sprinkled with radical moves that evoke Pop Group's primordial rituals as well as Chrome's post-apocalyptic ravages, these demonic bacchanals found, nonetheless, order in chaos and linearity in cacophony. Rather than the Cramps, the reference model was the Stooges via Pussy Galore (a group that was always close to Teel).

Also in New York, the [Workdogs](#) used "voodoobilly" to express teen angst on **Roberta** (? ? - ? 1988); and in Michigan [Elvis Hitler](#) let their Cramps-ian instincts loose on **Hellbilly** (? 1989 - nov 1989); while in North Carolina the [Flat Duo Jets](#) resurrected rockabilly,

Boston's [Men & Volts](#) (1) were among the most original garage-groups. Their acid/surreal **Hootersville** (? ? - ? 1983) fell halfway between Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart.

Oregon's [Miracle Workers](#), with **Inside Out** (? 1985 - ? 1985), and [Dead Moon](#), Pennsylvania's [Cynics](#), with **Blue Train Station** (jun/jul 1986 - ? 1986), Boston's [Dogmatics](#), with **Thayer St.** (? 1984 - ? 1984) and Ohio's [Wolverton Brothers](#) were among the most evil of the new garage-rockers.

A few of them could outdo the masters of the 1960s. The [Gibson Bros](#) (1) in Ohio, led by guitarist Don Howland and vocalist Jeff Evans, were natural heirs of the Cramps and Pussy Galore on the blues and rockabilly bacchanals of **Big Pine Boogie** (? 1987 - ? 1987), which is mainly covers, and especially on **Dedicated Fool** (? 1989 - ? 1989). Evans moved to Memphis and formed '68 Comeback, another blues outfit, while Howland formed the [Bassholes](#) (1), whose Captain Beefheart-ian blues orgies topped the Gibson Bros' at least on **When My Blue Moon Turns Red Again** (? 1998 - sep 1998).

Boston's [Cheater Slicks](#) (1) delivered a similar chaotic orgy of rockabilly and punk-blues on **On Your Knees** (? 1989 - ? 1989).

In Michigan, Mick Collins formed the [Gories](#) (1) with Dan Kroha on drums, and revived the tradition of wild/sinister rhythm'n'blues (Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Bo Diddley) on the raw and abrasive **House Rockin'** (nov 1988 - ? 1989) and **I Know You Fine, But How You Doin'** (apr/may 1990 - ? 1990). [Blacktop](#) (1), the creature of former Gories' guitarist Collins and former '68 Comeback's guitarist Darin Lee Wood, went beserk on **I Got A Baaad Feeling About This** (aug 1994 - ? 1995), while the [Dirtbombs](#), mostly Collins' own project, continued along the original rhythm'n'blues path with **Horndog Fest** (mar/apr 1997 - sep 1998).

The [Original Sins](#) (4), in Pennsylvania, were perhaps the most visceral rockers of this generation. The low-quality high-energy party rock'n'roll presented by **Big Soul** (apr 1987 - late 1987) exploited the barbaric canon of Standells and Seeds (as reinterpreted by vocalist John Terlesky and keyboardist Dan McKinney) to channel epic and cosmic riffs. Albums such as **Hardest Way** (jan 1988 - summer 1989), that grafted catchy and almost bubblegum refrains onto ebullient guitar and organ rave-ups, became monuments to teenage frustration. Adding lethal doses of Stooges and MC5, **Self Destruct** (may 1990 - ? 1990) indulged in brutal orgies that were the musical equivalent of the sack of Rome. The psych-pop tour de force of **Move** (? 1991 - feb 1992) and the lamer **Out There** (apr 1992 - ? 1992) signaled the end of one of the most exciting careers in evil since the Rolling Stones first walked on a stage.

Michigan's [God Bullies](#) (2) were by far the most menacing disciples of the Cramps. The nightmarish voodoobilly of **Plastic Eye Miracle** (? 1988/apr 1989 - late 1989) and **Mamawombwomb** (? ? - ? 1989) was, in fact, a variant that descended from the Sisters Of Mercy as much as from the Cramps. The overall feeling was of a meeting between Freud and Hendrix, as feverish rhythms, dense noisy guitar storms and psychotic groaning competed for attention. Each song was the equivalent of a tribal riot in a horror B-movie.

The [Pandoras](#) (1), yet another all-female band from Los Angeles, were real punks, and a major improvement over the Go-Go's. Vocalist/guitarist Paula Pierce had the stigmata of the misfit, bassist Kim Shattuck was the quintessential rebel and at least their second album, **Stop Pretending** (win/sum 1985 - feb 1986), was as anthemic and wild as the male classics of the 1960s.

Desert psychedelia 1982-88

In the meantime, a country/psychedelic sound emerged from the desert of Arizona, thanks to bands such as the Meat Puppets, Green On Red and [Naked Prey](#).

The [Meat Puppets](#) (2) laid a bridge between hardcore and acid-rock with **Meat Puppets II** (apr/may 1983 - apr 1984), and then established themselves as the greatest heirs to the Grateful Dead with **Up On The Sun** (jan 1985 - mar 1985), the manifesto of their "cosmic cow-punk" style. Songs abandoned the punk frenzy and adopted a transcendental

(or, simply put, lazy) tone, became more hypnotic than aggressive, incorporated jazz and raga elements and guitarist Curt Kirkwood developed a style that was a synthesis of country, blues, Jerry Garcia's galactic trance and Neil Young's neurotic fury, baked in the scorching sunshine of the South. The distance from the Allman Brothers was shorter than it appeared, as proven by the sophisticated **Mirage** (fall 1986/mar 1987 - apr 1987), and even closer were Z.Z.Top, as proven by **Huevos** (aug 1987 - oct 1987) and **Monsters** (? 1987/may 1989 - ? 1989), the latter their most effective stab at power-pop and southern boogie.

[Green On Red](#) (1), originally from Arizona although relocated to Los Angeles, offered an odd hybrid of 1960s' garage-rock, 1970s' new wave and 1980s' Paisley Underground, or, better, of punks, beatniks and hippies, on **Gravity Talks** (jul 1983 - fall 1983). The sound was defined (or, better, left undefined) by the juxtaposition of the psychedelic overtones of keyboardist Chris Cacavas (reminiscent of Ray Manzarek and Al Kooper, as well as of the guitar fuzz) and the folk-rock accents of guitarist Dan Stuart. After second guitarist Chuck Prophet joined the band, Neil Young and Bob Dylan became the reference points for **Gas Food Lodging** (dec 1984 - apr 1985), and Green On Red became at best worthy heirs to the Band, at worst faceless dispensers of "blue-collar rock".

In Arizona, Howe Gelb, the brain behind [Giant Sand](#) (3), came up with an original and quirky fusion of rock, country and psychedelia. Not so much prolific as unfocused, Gelb too wasted his talent over a dreadful number of mediocre recordings. **Valley Of Rain** (? 1985 - ? 1985) sounded like a set of chaotic quotations of Neil Young and Dream Syndicate. **Ballad Of A Thin Line Man** (jan/jul 1986 - ? 1986) exhibited the epic/doomed tones of Lou Reed and Johnny Thunders. **Storm** (fall 1987 - ? 1988), possibly the best work of his early phase, composed a post-modernist puzzle of rural ambience by liberating elements of red-neck roots-rock (gospel, soul, boogie, blues, country) from their sonic habitat. **The Love Songs** (? 1988 - ? 1988), enhanced by ex-Green On Red organist Chris Cacavas, continued to blend country, blues and psychedelia, but using a more linear and organic format, which, not surprisingly, evoked the Band and, even less surprisingly, Green On Red. **Swerve** (? 1990 - ? 1990) marked perhaps the zenith of this art of abstraction. Another turning point, **Ramp** (? 1991 - ? 1991), featuring the rhythm section of bassist Joey Burns and drummer John Convertino (the future Calexico line-up), suddenly opted for Neil Young's abrasive country-rock. Giant Sand's masterpiece was probably the 25-minute jam *BBQ Suite*, off the largely improvised **Backyard Barbecue Broadcast** (jun 1993/apr 1995 - ? 1995), which stood as a summary of Gelb's nebulous vision up to this point. Gelb later mustered enough consciousness to craft **Chore Of Enchantment** (? 1998/? 1999 - mar 2000), one of his tighter and more focused works, and probably the most personal and touching of Gelb's "adult" phase.

During the 1980s the psychedelic scene of Texas was relatively subdued, hardly a foreshadow of the following decade's psychedelic deluge. The foundations were laid by the demented hyper-psychedelic punk-rock of the [Butthole Surfers](#) (112), one of the greatest bands of the 1980s. Gibby Haynes (vocals) and Paul Leary (guitar) brewed a synthesis of Sex Pistols' punk-rock, Red Crayola's acid-rock and Holy Modal Rounders' acid-folk on the mini-album **Butthole Surfers, Also Known As Pee Pee The Sailor And Brown Reason To Live** (jul 1982/feb 1983 - jul 1983), a gallery of demented anthems played in a grotesque and noisy frenzy. **Psychic... Powerless... Another Man's Sac** (? 1984 - dec 1984), one of the decade's most significant works, turned out a hysterical, cacophonous nonsense that borrowed from Captain Beefheart's apocalyptic blues, Chrome's delirious space-rock, Pere Ubu's modern dance, the Cramps' psychotic voodoobilly and Syd Barrett's intergalactic signals. The effect was akin to a hippie cartoon or a circus of epileptic clowns. The lysergic chaos of **Rembrandt Pussyhorse** (? 1984/? 1985 - apr 1986) was better structured, but still amounted to an encyclopedic annihilation

of 30 years of rock'n'roll. Replacing their visionary and infernal imagination with slicker productions, the Butthole Surfers delivered two albums that were tighter and more conventional, **Locust Abortion Technician** (? 1985/? 1986 - mar 1987) and **Hairway To Steven** (jan 1988 - feb 1988), and then proceeded to achieve the impossible, i.e. streamline their abominable punk mess for the mainstream on **Piouhgd** (? ? - mar 1991), **Independent Worm Saloon** (? ? - mar 1993), and **Electriclarryland** (? ? - may 1996). The last bang was in fact a side-project by Gibby Haynes, **P** (aug 1995 - nov 1995), which contained some of his most explosive music ever. Not awkward at all, and in fact quite accessible, the last Butthole Surfers album, **Weird Revolution** (? ? - aug 2001), was an eclectic survey of well-played cliches, incorporating dance and rap music.

Australian psychedelia, 1981-86

Garage-rock and psychedelia found fertile soil in Australia with the [Lime Spiders](#); the [Celibate Rifles](#) (1), particularly on their third album **The Turgid Miasma Of Existence** (jul 1985/mar 1986 - jun 1986); the [Stems](#); [Died Pretty](#) (1), whose **Free Dirt** (nov 1985 - ? 1986), sounded like a cross between Neil Young and the Doors (Frank Brunetti on keyboards); and Dave Faulkner's [Hoodoo Gurus](#) (1), who were the Australian equivalent of the Fleshtones, particularly on **Stoneage Romeos** (? 1983/? 1984 - mar 1984), before turning to power-pop with **Mars Needs Guitars** (? 1984/? 1985 - may 1985). They were savage all right, but a bit too derivative and predictable.

Tex Perkins' [Beasts Of Bourbon](#) (1), recorded one of the most original albums of the time, **Axeman's Jazz** (oct 1983 - ? 1984), somewhere between Gram Parsons' country-rock, Captain Beefheart's primitive dadaism and Tom Waits' drunk rhythm'n'blues.

They shared most of the line-up (i.e., vocalist and guitarist Kim Salmon) with the [Scientists](#), who experimented with an exciting blend of Creedence Clearwater Revival and Cramps on a series of EPs and mini-albums, including **Blood Red River** (mid 1983 - sep 1983), **This Heart Doesn't Run On Blood**, **This Heart Doesn't Run On Love** (oct 1983 - sep 1984), **Atom Bomb Baby** (jan 1985 - jun 1985) and **Demolition Derby** (oct 1984 - feb 1985).

The most ferocious and uplifting gang of Australian garage-rock was probably [Feedtime](#) (11). They delivered the demonic bacchanals of **feedtime** (? 1985 - dec 1985) with the production quality of a nuclear radiation and the aplomb of rampaging Hun warriors. The anthemic, epileptic and spastic rock'n'roll of this album had few rivals in the history of rock music. The slightly less manic **Shovel** (? 1986 - jan 1987) unveiled their sources of inspiration, which, despite the illiterate image of the trio, included jump blues sarabands, Scottish reels and Indian war dances.

When former Birthday Party's members Rowland Howard (guitar) and Mick Harvey (keyboards), and former Swell Maps' member Epic Soundtracks (drums) joined Simon Bonney's project [Crime And The City Solution](#) (2), the result was the gothic nightmare of **Room Of Lights** (mar/sep 1986 - late 1986), reminiscent of the darker edges of spiritual, blues and gospel music, and heavily influenced by Nick Cave's metaphysical suspense. **Shine** (? 1987 - apr 1988), virtually a solo (and emphatic) Bonney record with Harvey sculpting ghostly atmospheres, began the mutation towards an eclectic, theatrical, pop and artful sound, which ended and peaked with the four-part suite *The Last Dictator*, off **Paradise Discotheque** (nov 1989 - ? 1990).

[These Immortal Souls](#) (1), formed by Howard and Soundtracks after they left Bonney, composed the languid and melodramatic litanies of **Get Lost (Don't Lie)** (early 1986/mid 1987 - oct 1987), reminiscent of Tom Waits' cocktail lounge in hell.

Euro-garage 1980-86

The only area in Europe that could compete with USA's and Australia's garage-rock was Sweden. [Hanoi Rocks](#) (1), in particular, deserve to be named next to the father founders of the genre. This Finnish equivalent of the New York Dolls evolved from the punkish callowness of **Bangkok Shocks Saigon Shakes Hanoi Rocks** (feb 1981 - feb 1981) to the catchy power-pop of **Oriental Beat** (nov 1981 - jan 1982) to the slick glam-metal of **Back To Mystery City** (apr 1983 - may 1983). The [Nomads](#) played garage-rock with the intensity of heavy-metal, although their records, beginning with the mini-album **Where The Wolf Bane Blooms** (oct 1983 - dec 1983), were mainly collections of covers. This tradition peaked with [Union Carbide Productions](#) (1) and the satanic rave-ups of **In The Air Tonight** (winter 1987 - sep 1987).

Garage-rock in Britain was a minor phenomenon but still counted on the [Barracudas](#), [Billy Childish](#) and his many bands (Pop Rivets, Milkshakes, Thee Mighty Caesars, Thee Headcoats); [Katrina And The Waves](#), led by former Soft Boys' guitarist Kimberley Rew; the [Prisoners](#), etc. The most impressive rockers were perhaps [Screaming Blue Messiah](#), the [Thee Hypnotics](#), and the [Walking Seeds](#).

Euro-pop, 1980-86

After pioneers such as the Soft Boys opened the gates at the turn of the decade, a disproportionate number of English bands turned to psychedelia, and most of them simply made pop music camouflaged as psychedelia (like the Beatles did).

Liverpool was at the vanguard of the British psychedelic movement of the 1980s. [Echo & The Bunnymen](#) (2) practiced psychedelic-rock at the intersection between the Doors and Joy Division. **Crocodiles** (jun 1980 - jul 1980) was a varied effort of pieces that were both hypnotic and shimmering and scoured folk-rock and raga-rock for intriguing sounds. Leaving behind the eccentricities, the band veered towards an elegant and solemn style on **Heaven Up Here** (mar 1981 - may 1981) and **Porcupine** (oct 1982 - feb 1983), and eventually achieved the dense and slick arrangements of **Ocean Rain** (sep 1983/winter 1984 - may 1984), their sonic zenith.

Julian Cope's [Teardrop Explodes](#) (1) foreshadowed his future solo career with the lush, melodic and spacey songs of **Kilimanjaro** (? - may 1980).

Countless bands fished in the same pond: [Sound](#), with **Jeopardy** (? 1980 - nov 1980), and [Wah](#), both Liverpool bands, Ed Ball's the [Times](#), the [Mighty Lemon Drops](#), the [Chameleons](#), progenitors of the "Mad-chester" phenomenon, [House Of Love](#), featuring Terry Bickers on guitar, etc. They were as original as a bottle of Coca Cola. Timid experiments were attempted by [Breathless](#) and [Perfect Disaster](#).

[Zodiac Mindwarp](#) and [Gaye Bykers On Acid](#) were the leaders of the "grebo" movement, which bridged punk and hippie culture.

Countless amateurs suddenly found a career, notable among them [Bevis Frond](#) (1), who was fundamentally a collector of Sixties cliches (Byrds, Syd Barrett, Doors, Jimi Hendrix, the Velvet Underground). He made a career out of carefully-constructed imitations such as **Triptych** (? 1988 - jul 1988), as if there were no limits to how often one could recycle ideas that were already obsolete in 1969. Occasionally rising to the occasion, he also attempted more experimental jams, such as on **Through The Looking Glass** (? 1967/? - ? 1987).

Prodromes of dance-psychedelia 1982-85

Ka-Spel's [Legendary Pink Dots](#) (2) were one of the most adventurous (and ever evolving) psychedelic poppers. They began with psychedelic madrigals that were unique in the pastoral way they employed electronic sounds, for example on **Brighter Now** (? ? - dec 1982). **Asylum** (? ? - ? 1985) veered towards melancholy decadent futuristic pop à la Roxy Music and Ultravox. As Ka-Spel's skills in orchestration improved, he sculpted the neo-classical pop of **Any Day Now** (jul 1987 - ? 1987), possibly his artistic peak, and then the eccentric synth-pop of **The Maria Dimension** (? ? - ? 1991), and finally experimented with the avantgarde arrangements of **Malachai** (? ? - ? 1992), probably his most ambitious work. In between these milestones (each of which contains gems as well as filler), Ka-Spel released many other works of little interest, some credited to the [Legendary Pink Dots](#) and some under his own name. The latter tended to be more original, for example the horror-medieval concept **Tanith And The Lion Tree** (? ? - sep 1991).

Matt Johnson's [The The](#) (2), reveled in haunting atmospheres and dejected themes, his subtle and often cacophonous arrangements creating a permanent sense of terror and paranoia. **Soul Mining** (? 1982 - oct 1983) already contained the embryonic elements of his future investigations: polyrhythmic dance music, pop-soul melodies, tribal world-music, oneiric acid-rock, noir ambience. The gloomy and desperate lullabies of **Infected** (? ? - nov 1986), the more visceral and emphatic sermons of **Mind Bomb** (oct 1988/may 1989 - jul 1989), perhaps his best orchestrated work, and the philosophical meditations in a depleted soundscape of **Dusk** (? 1992 - feb 1993), his most self-indulgent work, refined the persona of a real "auteur" of dance-pop.

Three fourths of Bauhaus formed [Love And Rockets](#) (2), who defused Bauhaus' gloomy pop and linked it with the generation of shoegazers and ravers. More electronic sounds and dance beats, plus evanescent vocals and evocative guitars, lent **Seventh Dream Of Teenage Heaven** (? 1984 - oct 1985) the quality of a mirage, accomplishing de facto the old hippie ambition of turning acid-rock into abstract trance. After the commercial **Express** (? 1986 - sep 1986) and **Earth-Sun-Moon** (? ? - sep 1987), the band reached a new synthesis for the rave generation on the hyper-psychedelic **Love And Rockets** (? ? - sep 1989). But the style was still in progress. The lengthy ecstatic litanies of **Hot Trip To Heaven** (? ? - sep 1994) contributed to found the genre of acid ambient music (like Stone Roses covering Pink Floyd's *A Saucerful Of Secrets*), whereas the ethereal **Sweet F.A** (? 1995 - mar 1996) exaggerated and diluted the idea (early Pink Floyd fronted by Donovan and arranged by Brian Eno). While not up to their creative standards, the futuristic/hedonistic electronic music of **Lift** (? 1998 - oct 1998) seemed to come full circle and to eventually make sense of their entire career.

Dream-pop 1982-87

The [Cocteau Twins](#) (12) gave psychedelic-rock yet another spin. Their "dream-pop" relied on sublime melodies, but delivered by an ethereal contralto (Elizabeth Fraser, one of the most influential vocalists of the decade) and wrapped in layers and layers of oneiric guitar and keyboard lines (both penned by Robin Guthrie). Vocals (and female vocals) ruled, not guitars on their first, tentative album, **Garlands** (spring 1982 - jun 1982). The sound was, at the same time, mellow and thick. The shimmering filigrees of **Head Over Heels** (? 1983 - aug 1983) blended celestial singalongs, middle-eastern psalms, majestic spirituals, vibrant melismas, tinkling guitars and neo-classical keyboards. Cocteau Twins' songs exhibited the levity and grace of madrigals but also the gloom and pomp of requiems. Dream-pop shared the contemplative quality and the passion for textures with shoegazing,

but diverged from shoegazing in both narrative development and emotional intensity. In fact, it was fundamentally post-gothic (post-Siouxsie) sensational rock. The pieces released on EP, such as *Hitherto* (1983), *Spangle Maker* (1983), *Pearly-dewdrops Drops* (1984) and *Pepper-tree* (1984), were perhaps even more elegant and lush. The addition of bassist and keyboardist Simon Raymonde, coupled with Fraser's more conscious appropriation of Joan LaBarbara's and Meredith Monk's experiments (voice as the original instrument), completed the magic on **Treasure** (aug/sep 1984 - oct 1984), an album of sonic vertigoes imbued with medieval spirituality. The artistic zenith of these two albums also marked the beginning of a self-serving mannerism: the austere and sophisticated **Victorialand** (? 1985 - apr 1986), instead, downplayed both electronics and percussions, relying on acoustic guitar for enhancing Fraser's acrobatics, while **Blue Bell Knoll** (? 1988 - oct 1988) returned to their original recipe but in a relaxed mood that evoked lounge-music (not psychedelia). **Heaven Or Las Vegas** (summer 1990 - sep 1990), a collection of regular songs, completely abandoned the experiment.

Ivo Watts-Russell, the mentor of dream-pop, formed his own super-group, [This Mortal Coil](#), which indirectly proved how the idea could be used to manufacture atmospheric, evanescent easy-listening.

The duo of multi-instrumentalist Brendan Perry and Australian vocalist Lisa Gerrard, i.e. [Dead Can Dance](#) (12) transposed the mystic exotica of bands such as Third Ear Band, Popol Vuh and Clannad into the age of dream-pop. The austere, spectral, glacial songs on **Dead Can Dance** (? 1981/? 1983 - feb 1984) sounded like chamber sonatas and classical lieder, while fusing gothic, medieval and ethnic elements. The magnificent orchestration of **Spleen And Ideal** (sep/nov 1985 - sep 1986) upped the ante, as did the religious intensity of Gerrard's performance. Imposing arrangements levelled paleo-slavic hymns, Gregorian liturgy, celtic folk, Tibetan chants, renaissance madrigals, middle-eastern dances. The stately decor and the alternation of Perry's symphonic ballads and Gerrard's free-form odes evoked early King Crimson. The duo played the same formula over and over again, first with the ambitious but unfocused **Within The Realm Of A Dying Sun** (apr/may 1987 - jul 1987), then with the lush, meticulous arrangements (or, better, plethora of sound effects) of **The Serpent's Egg** (? 1988 - oct 1988). They indulged in the recreation of ancient musical styles on **Aion** (? 1990 - jul 1990) via period instruments and dead languages.

Scotland's [Cindytalk](#), the brainchild of vocalist Gordon Sharp, followed the demonic, punkish self-flagellation concept **Camouflage Heart** (jan/jul 1984 - ? 1984) with **In This World** (? 1985/? 1987 - ? 1988), a diptych of two complementary albums: a collection of haunting chamber industrial dirges and a set of melancholy and fragile instrumental ambient piano tapestries.

The third major phase in the history of dream-pop was heralded by Norway's [Bel Canto](#) (3), the project of vocalist Anneli Drecker and multi-instrumentalists and Nils Johansen (which initially featured future Biosphere mastermind Geir Jenssen). **White-Out Conditions** (? ? - ? 1987) owed its dark and icy appearance to the influences of laconic bards (Nico, new-age music, gothic rock, Dead Can Dance). Drecker matured on **Birds Of Passage** (? ? - ? 1989), unleashing a supercharged persona over dynamic soundscapes worthy of a chamber symphony. Pared down to the duo of Drecker and Johansen, Bel Canto began to mutate into a less organic and more fashionable unit with **Shimmering, Warm And Bright** (? 1991 - ? 1992), a transformation that was completed by the lush, decadent dance-pop of the Bjork-influenced **Magic Box** (? ? - ? 1996).

Finally, [A R Kane](#) (1), the remnants of M/A/R/S/S, sculpted gentle psychedelic funk-jazz music, reminiscent of both Miles Davis and Robert Wyatt, in the stylistic puzzle of **69** (? ?

? - ? 1988), thus pioneering the genre that would be called "trip-hop".

Feedback-pop 1985-87

A more interesting variation on the punk-pop song came out of Scotland when [Jesus And Mary Chain](#) (2) coined "feedback-pop". The idea was quite simple and certainly not new: take the Velvet Underground's *White Light White Heat* and add a catchy melody, or take Phil Spector's "wall of sound" and add a layer of guitar noise. Massive distortions, coupled with nihilistic ethos borrowed from the Sex Pistols, bestowed on **Psychocandy** (feb 1985 - nov 1985) a funereal mood. Its spectral, acid, abrasive lullabies lasted only one season, though. The much lighter **Darklands** (? 1987 - aug 1987) was a collection of melancholy ballads, and **Automatic** (? ? - sep 1989), while more cohesive, professional and eclectic than anything they had done before, was basically dance-music, no matter how skewed, and **Honey's Dad** (? 1990/? 1991 - mar 1992) was even laid-back.

Other bands influenced by feedback-pop were the [Green Telescopes](#), the [Telstar Ponies](#), the [Thanes](#), and [Ultra Vivid Scene](#).

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