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WE'RE WITH STUPID



Some of them were dumb, but their music was divine. **Richie Unterberger** lists 10 of the most extreme garage bands to come out of the US.

THE MISUNDERSTOOD

On the encouragement of then-expatriate British radio DJ John Peel, Riverside, California's Misunderstood travelled to London in 1966 to try to find a more sympathetic audience for their far-out variations on The Yardbirds. They recorded half a dozen superb sides featuring Glenn Ross Campbell's futuristic swooping psychedelic steel guitar, bridging The Yardbirds with sounds to come from Pink Floyd and Jimi

Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

Hendrix. However, their singer, Rick Brown, was drafted into the US Army and most of the rest of the band was kicked out of England soon afterwards.

Where they are now: Brown, after going AWOL and hiding from the FBI for years in India, is now an internationally renowned gemologist and jewellery designer in Bangkok, and working on an autobiographical screenplay.

Recommended: *Before The Dream Faded* CHERRY RED

THE MUSIC MACHINE

The Music Machine's 1966 hit Talk Talk is the ultimate spew of garage angst, its tortuous chord changes complemented by pounding electric keyboards, snaky Asiatic guitar, and Sean Bonniwell's unforgettable guttural howl, "My social life's a dud, my name is really mud". It was the Los Angeles band's only high-charting 45, but from '66 to the end of the decade they released much astonishingly fine garage-psychedelia, with Bonniwell's tormented visions, hard rock melodic hooks, and alternately gravelly/crooning vocals to the fore.



Where they are now: Bonniwell's working on a new CD and Music Machine DVD, and now lives in a garage, where he wrote his autobiography, *Beyond The Garage*.

Recommended: *Turn On: The Very Best Of The Music Machine* COLLECTABLES

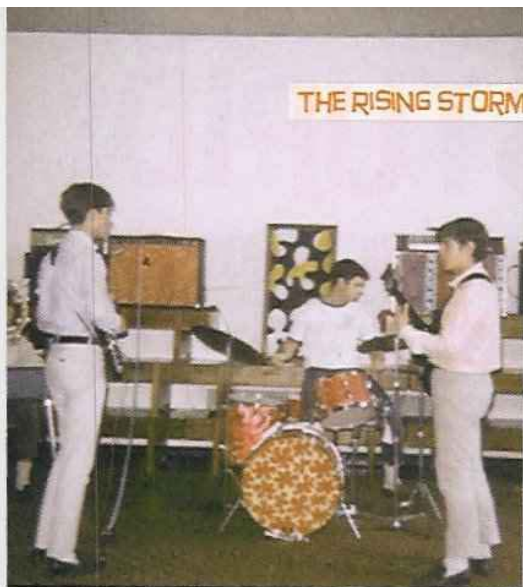
MONKS

The most outrageous American garage band never even performed in the US in the '60s. Formed by GIs stationed in Germany, the Monks dressed in monk robes, shaved their heads into monk haircuts and played harsh, minimalist proto-punk songs like Shut Up and I Hate You with hellish feedback, devil's organ, chanted vocals and electric banjo on their sole album, 1966's *Black Monk Time*. They broke up in 1967 on the verge of an Asian tour that would've taken them to Vietnam.

Where they are now: The group re-formed to record a live album at Cavestomp '99. Bassist Eddie Shaw co-wrote an entertaining memoir, also called *Black Monk Time* (1994), with his first wife, Anita Klemke. Recently remarried, *Black Monk Time* has been optioned for a movie. A new book, *Beltrami's River: In Search Of The Source*, is due this summer.

Recommended: *Black Monk Time* INFINITI ZEROCAMERICAN >





THE RISING STORM

THE RISING STORM

The Rising Storm were formed not in a garage, but in the dorms of the elite Massachusetts prep school Phillips Academy, which counts among its graduates George Bush Sr. A vanity album, cut before they scattered upon graduation, 1967's *Calm Before* mixed typical teen covers with surprisingly fine, Love-style, folk rock ballads, eventually becoming one of the most sought-after '60s garage rarities. The group has reunited on several occasions to play live and record, fitting it around their careers in law, academia, medicine, journalism and ski instruction.

Where they are now: After 26 years of working as a business lawyer in Washington, DC, lead singer Tony Thompson quit his practice this year to start a career in international project finance, hoping he'll "be able to promote music as a means of expanding intercultural communication and understanding".

Recommended: *Calm Before* ARIEL ARTS

13TH FLOOR ELEVATORS

From Austin, Texas, 13th Floor Elevators rattled to the middle of the Hot 100 in 1966 with *You're Gonna Miss Me*, anchored by Roky Erickson's unforgettable yelping vocals, Kinky stop-start power chords and Tommy Hall's fluttering electric jug runs. The group pioneered some of the spiciest garage psychedelia on their albums *The Psychedelic Sounds Of...* and *Easter Everywhere*. The band got derailed, however, when Roky was busted for pot and pleaded insanity, landing in Rusk State Hospital for the criminally insane for three years.

Where they are now: After decades of erratic behaviour and sometimes teetering on the brink of poverty, Erickson was living in Austin in early 2003. He is said to be in much better physical and mental health after his brother Sumner (principal tuba player of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra) was named his legal guardian; Roky took medication for his schizophrenia; and Henry Rollins paid \$7,000 for dental work and handmade false teeth for his hero.

Recommended: *Absolutely The Best* VARESE-SARABANDE



ZAKARY THAKS

THE CHOCOLATE WATCH BAND

Never coming close to a hit single, San Jose's Chocolate Watch Band nonetheless waxed some of the greatest fusions of The Rolling Stones' sneering R&B and garage-pop-psychedelia on their Ed Cobb-produced 1966-67 sides, particularly Sweet Young Thing, Are You Gonna Be There (At The Love-In), I Ain't No Miracle Worker and Misty Lane. An appearance in the exploitation flick *Riot On Sunset Strip* guaranteed some notoriety, but the band eventually dissolved after Jaggeresque lead singer Dave Aguilar left in late 1967.

Where they are now: Aguilar became a university professor of astronomy in Colorado and moved into high-level scientific work in the aero-



THE CHOCOLATE WATCH BAND

space industry before fronting a reunited version of The Chocolate Watch Band, which has been performing since the late 1990s.

Recommended: *The Best Of The Chocolate Watch Band* REINO

THE C.A. QUINTET

The pressing of the C.A. Quintet's sole album, 1969's *Trip Thru Hell*, was limited to less than a thousand copies. Yet it's endured as one of the finest, and certainly one of the darkest, garage psychedelic LPs, with its funereal organs, deathwatch bells, bit-by-vampire screams, mournful trumpet fanfares and odd lyrics about cold spiders, Colorado mornings, and actual trips through hell. The Minnesota band began as a pop-soul combo



THE C.A. QUINTET

before taking a trippier turn, and released nothing else before splitting in the early '70s.

Where they are now: Chief songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Ken Erwin has been "down many paths to arrive on a beautiful piece of wooded land in the hills of Wisconsin with my wife Wanda. I have a small business which I work at from time to time. As far as my garage, now I keep a boat in there."

Recommended: *Trip Thru Hell* SUNDAEZ

ZAKARY THAKS

Zakary Thaks' *Bad Girl* epitomises Texas garage raunch, with its furiously galloping guitar, Stones/Kinks-indebted riff-hooks, and nearly surreal teen-angst lyrics ("World fell in, I'm washed ashore, goin' through a rotten floor"). Lead singer Chris Gerniottis was just 15 when he sang and co-wrote the track; the rest of the Corpus Christi band old hands at 17 years of age. The follow-up, *Face To Face*, has some mind-melting Jeff Beck-inspired siren-like guitar, and their half-dozen singles also include impressive Beatlesque pop sides and California psych-influenced dementia.

Where they are now: After moving on to other bands and a stint as a singing waiter in Houston, Gerniottis now teaches at his old high school in Corpus Christi.

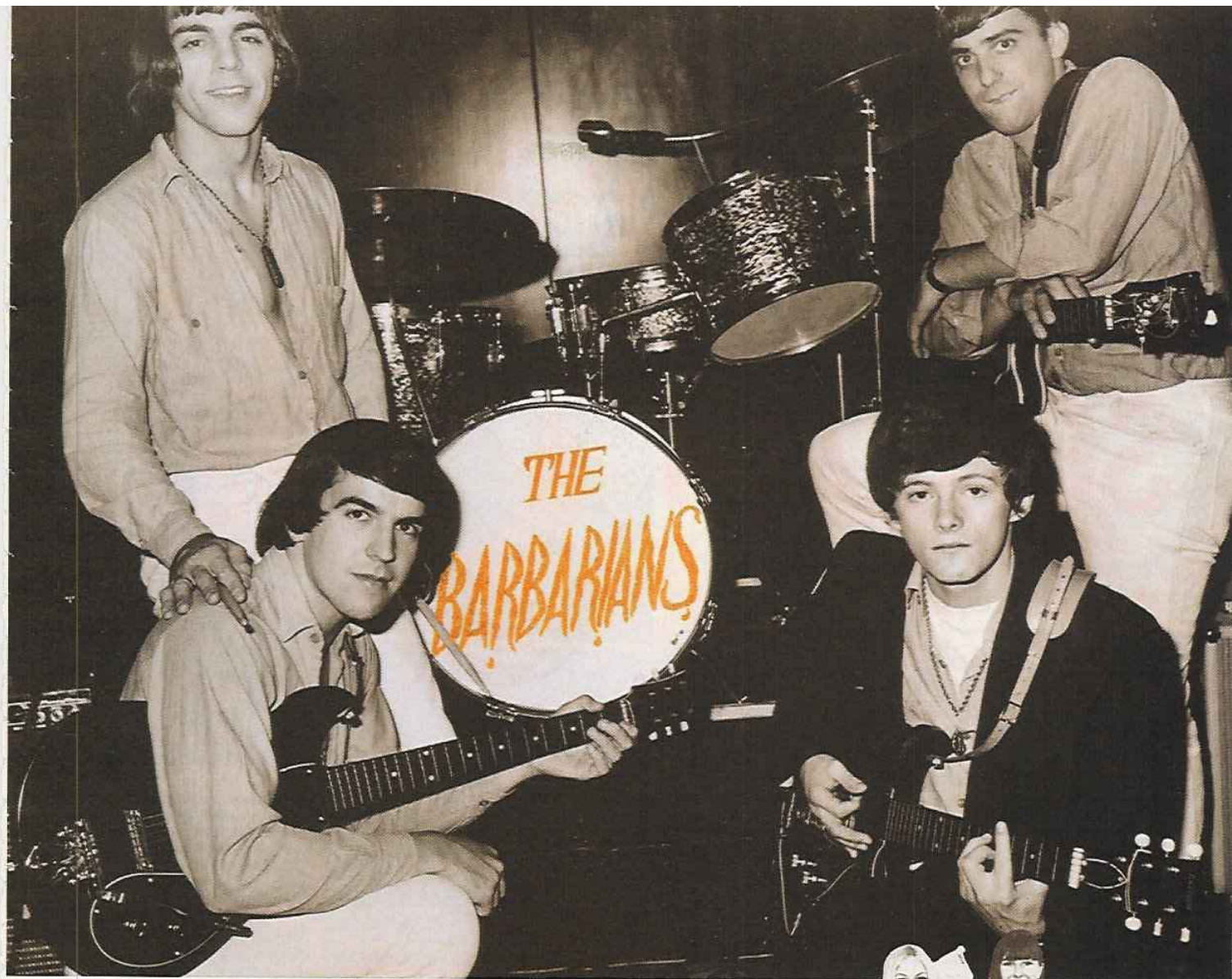
Recommended: *Form The Habit* BEATRICKET

THE BARBARIANS

The Barbarians' sole album is in most respects rather ordinary. But the Boston band managed three moments of genuine glory: the outrageously titled (for 1965) minor hit single *Are You A Boy Or Are You A Girl*; an appearance on the classic 1964 rockumentary *The T.A.M.I. Show*, where they sang their best song, the Mersey-punk hybrid *Hey Little Bird*; and Moulty, in which hook-handed drummer Victor 'Moulty' Moulton spoke about losing his limb and overcoming adversity by joining a band. Backing on the song was by The Hawks, later to become The Band.

Where they are now: Moulty later played in a version of The Barbarians with his sons Eric and Tory. He now runs a cleaning business near Boston.

Recommended: *Are You A Boy Or Are You A Girl* SUNDAEZ



THE PLEASURE SEEKERS

Featuring just-teenage bassist Suzi Quatro and her lead guitarist sister Patti, Detroit's all-female Pleasure Seekers cut the rowdiest song in the admittedly small girl garage group sub-genre, *What A Way To Die*, whooping, "Well, I may not live past 21, but woo! What a way to die!" between declaring a passionate preference for cold beer over good loving. The Zombies-like B-side to this 1965 stormer, *Never Thought You'd Leave Me*, was rather fine as well. But only two additional singles – and a tour of Vietnam for American troops – followed before The Pleasure Seekers split.

Where they are now: Suzi Quatro moved to London and reeled off a string of glam-pop UK smashes in the 1970s, including the chart-topping *Can The Can* and *Devil Gate Drive*, and other biggies like *48 Crash* and *The Wild One*. She's still touring Europe and Australia, completing her twentieth tour *Down Under* in early 2003.

Recommended: *What A Way To Die/Never Thought You'd Leave Me*

(REISSUED AS A SEVEN-INCH VINYL SINGLE ON NORTON)

MORE GARAGE

Best fanzine with heavy '60s garage coverage is the aptly titled *Ugly Things* (www.ugly-things.com). For shops with deep CD and vinyl stock, try *Midnight Records* (www.midnightrecords.com) at 263 W. 23rd St in Manhattan, which also does mail order, and the space housing both *Standout* and *Minus Zero Records* in 2 Blenheim Crescent in Notting Hill, west London. On the web, www.60sgaragebands.com has interviews and news on reissues and reunions. www.cicadelic.com/zak40.htm has a 75-page interview with Zakary Thaks' Chris Germiottis and Carl Becker, who ran their label, *J-Beck*. The ultimate starter CD compilation is Rhino's 4-CD *Nuggets* box.

Thanks to Mike Stax for his assistance.

