



SPENCER DAVIS GROUP

1964

BULL RING MARKET

In 1963 Spencer Davis was reading German at Birmingham University and playing solo Blues guitar spots at The Golden Eagle. The Winwood Brothers were in their Muff Woody Jazz Band and Pete York was working at GKN in what he delights in calling The Screw Department. When Spencer, Steve and Muff decided to form a band and recruited Pete, they called it, somewhat unimaginatively, The Rhythm and Blues Quartette. They met young music producer, Chris Blackwell who had just founded The Island Music Company. They did the deal on a handshake, a matter that was to come back to haunt them, expensively, many years later. Chris suggested a name-change. Muff suggested The Spencer Davis Group based on the logical premise that Spence was articulate, and the others could stay in bed while he did the interviews. The fact that Steve was the band's featured singer, played piano, organ and guitar magnificently, and was to develop into an important songwriter was not considered. Four short years, 9 singles, 3 albums and 4 EPs later, Steve Winwood left to form Traffic.



THE SPENCER DAVIS GROUP

1965

SMALLBROOK QUEENSWAY

THE SPENCER DAVIS GROUP was one of Brum's greatest gifts to the world of Rock and Roll. They initially took up a Monday residency at The Golden Eagle on Hill Street in Birmingham where almost from the opening night they played to sell-out audiences. It wasn't long before the Spencer Davis Group moved a few yards up Hill Street to play at and fill the Town Hall, on the way to becoming one of the UK's finest ever rhythm and blues combos. Sadly, vocal and keyboard star Steve Winwood left the band to form Traffic after only four years when they were still very much on the ascendant. Nevertheless, they left a massive music legacy with such million-selling hits as *Keep On Running*, *Somebody Help Me*, *I'm A Man* and the band's own composition *Gimme Some Lovin'* which was subsequently recorded by The Blues Brothers for THAT movie. Not bad going for a couple of brothers from Erdington, a Welsh school teacher and a GKN engineer.



THE ROLLING STONES

1964

ATV STUDIOS, ASTON

THE ROLLING STONES took their name from Muddy Waters' *Rollin' Stone* recording, thereby making it clear to all exactly where their roots lay. In 1964, on their first US tour they made a point of visiting Chicago and recording in the famous Chess Studio at 2120 South Michigan Avenue. "Hallowed Ground", said Keith Richards, "there in the perfect sound studio, in the room where everything we had listened to was made, we recorded 14 tracks in two days". One of the songs recorded was their version of Bobby and Shirley Womack's *It's All Over Now* that became their first UK Number One. In 1981 The Stones returned to Chicago to film and record a memorable session at Buddy Guy's Checkerboard Lounge with Muddy Waters, Mojo Buford, Buddy Guy, Lefty Dizz, Junior Wells and more. Mick and the crew can be seen modestly taking a back seat in the proceedings, showing due deference to those Chicago greats.



THE ROLLING STONES

1964

ATV STUDIOS, ASTON

It's clear from the parlous state of today's record industry that we are never again going to hear another great album of the likes of *The Band*. Let it Bleed or *Exile On Main Street*. The necessary investment would never be recouped. But, *Exile On Main Street* by **THE ROLLING STONES** is far more than just an album. It is simply one of the great recordings of all time. Nearly three years in the making, recording in London, South of France and in Los Angeles, it was a momentous undertaking involving fifteen musicians and eight backing singers. By the spring of 1971, the Stones had spent the money they owed in taxes and left Britain before the government could seize their assets. Mick settled in Paris, Keith rented a villa near Nice where they parked The Stones Mobile Recording Unit and the rest of the band settled in the vicinity. For a month they worked every night from eight in the evening until three in the morning, though "not everyone turned up every night", said Charlie. They persevered and nailed it. Perfectly. Eighteen sublime tracks, possibly their greatest artistic achievement.



THE ROLLING STONES

1964

BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL

Back then it was said that a girl could take a Beatle home to meet her mother, but never a Rolling Stone. Just shows how little they knew back then. It's not that the band were rebellious in order to impress, it's just that they wanted to look like their mates looked, just ordinary. Their manager, Andrew Oldham, a publicist who strangely had been directed to them by The Beatles, initially dressed the band in uniform suits. They didn't argue, just drifted back to wearing everyday clothes onstage, Bill Wyman said "We were the first group to break away from the whole Cliff Richard thing where the bands did little dance steps, wore uniforms and had snappy patter". However, it's not easy to be the most successful and rebellious band in the world for fifty years without occasionally finding yourself behind bars. In the Stones' case, on some eleven occasions. Credibility isn't earned easily, even by the world's greatest rock band.



NINA SIMONE

1967

BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL

The **NINA SIMONE** recording of *My Baby Just Cares For Me* is a masterpiece, a perfect rendition of an excellent song by an extraordinary performer. The background, however, is anything but straightforward. The recording was made in 1959, but remained in obscurity until Chanel Number 5 used it in a 1987 UK TV advert and even then it made little impact outside the UK. Nevertheless, Nina spent a near lifetime complaining that she was cheated out of one million dollars of royalties, conveniently overlooking the fact that she had earlier sold the rights for \$3000. Her US career was interrupted by a lawsuit over unpaid taxes, which she claimed were withheld as a protest against American involvement in Vietnam. This forced her to quit U.S. for Europe where she remained. The singer, pianist, songwriter and civil rights activist, born Eunice Kathleen Waymon in North Carolina, died seventy years and more than forty albums later in Bouches-du-Rhone, France.



THE MOVE

1965

WARD END PARK, WASHWOOD HEATH

THE MOVE were an early Birmingham supergroup, formed when Roy Wood left Mike Sheridan & The Nightriders, Jeff Lynne joined from The Idle Race and Carl Wayne quit his own Vikings along with his bass guitarist Ace Kefford and drummer Bev Bevan, while Trevor Burton came in from Danny King & The Mayfair Set. They were to become one of the greatest of Birmingham's rock bands, scoring nine UK hit singles in five years along with four albums, the first of which made the UK top twenty. Never far from controversy, both onstage and off, they made the front pages when they were successfully sued by the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, who for some reason objected to a postcard promoting their *Flowers In The Rain* single which depicted the PM in bed with his secretary, Marcia Williams. This incidentally, was the work of band manager Tony Secunda, not of the band. Roy Wood lost his royalties on the song and Secunda got fired.



THE MOODY BLUES

1964

CARLTON CLUB, ERDINGTON

THE MOODY BLUES helped establish Birmingham as The Rock and Roll Capital of The UK with their Number One single *Go Now*. They formed in 1964 when Denny Laine left his own Denny Laine and The Diplomats to join up with former El Riot & The Rebels members Roy Thomas and Mike Pinder and Graeme Edge and Clint Warwick. Anticipating sponsorship from Mitchells & Butlers Brewery, they intended to name themselves the M&B Five, but when the deal fell through, with band uniforms and bass drum carrying the name M&B, they had to namechange. Hence Moody Blues. After this early hiccup things moved quickly with the band taking a residency at The Carlton Club [later to become Mothers] in Erdington, signing to Decca Records, and striking gold with their second single release. A sad little footnote concerns Aston-born bass player Albert Eccles who became Clint Warwick, co-founded the Moodies and left in 1966, feeling the strain of constant touring, to become a carpenter and spend time with his family.



MICK JAGGER

1964

ATV STUDIOS, ASTON

Few Rock and Roll stars have been as successful and controversial, as adored and as vilified, as influential and as notorious as Michael Philip **MICK JAGGER**. Jagger described himself as an anarchist, which seems to hit the nail pretty much on the head in the light of his confrontations with the law, the overtly sexual stage performances, the well-publicised usage of substances, the provocative lyrics, the procession of associations with the most desirable of women and his seven children with four of them. But Mick Jagger, the singer, is flawless; the greatest blues singer that Britain has ever produced. His own earliest admitted influence was Little Richard and he always remained loyal to his blues roots. In 2012, Jagger, playing The White House with two of his heroes, BB King and Buddy Guy, persuaded Barack Obama to join in on the vocal chorus of *Sweet Home Chicago*, in homage to The President's hometown. That must have been a very nice moment.



MARIANNE FAITHFULL

1964

BIRMINGHAM, HIPPODROME

“Posh Bird Gone Bad”, shouted those headlines, but to a lot of people “Posh Bird Done Good” was more like it. The father of **MARIANNE FAITHFULL** was an Army officer, her mother an Austrian Baroness of the Hapsburg Dynasty. Despite that and the drug abuse that the media consistently over-reported, she is a national treasure. She wrote strong songs, made cracking recordings, had some hits, and found time to deliver convincing acting. Back in the 1960s, to be Mick Jagger’s girlfriend was as good an entrée into the music world as you could get. Discovered by Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham, Marianne left her husband to be with Jagger and had her first hit with *As Tears Goes By*, penned for her by Jagger and Keith Richard. She is still delivering the goods a half-century later, still a star, an enduring and much-loved talent.



LITTLE RICHARD

1963

BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

Richard Wayne Penniman, known to the world as **LITTLE RICHARD**, was born in Macon, Georgia in 1932, one of the 12 children of a Church Deacon who sold bootleg liquor, owned a nightclub and officiated at Macon’s New Hope Baptist Church. Church was never far away when Richard delivered his charismatic and dynamic performances, laying the foundations for Rock and Roll. Richard had 28 hit singles, appeared in 22 movies, won countless honours and citations and last appeared live at the Viva Las Vegas Rockabilly Weekend – in March 2013. Certainly not a modest man, Little Richard would describe himself [perhaps accurately] as The Prettiest Man in Rock & Roll. The near-religious fervour that drove his audiences into a frenzied ecstasy scandalised middle America and won millions of fans for The Georgia Peach.



LITTLE RICHARD

1964

BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

Fans of **LITTLE RICHARD**, accustomed to his demonic vocals, unhinged live performances and his wildly rocking singles, must have been disconcerted by his decision in 1957 to quit the music business to become a minister of the church. Apparently taking fright on a flight during a tour of Australia, he prayed to God and promised that if the plane landed safely he would change his ways. The clincher came a few weeks later when a plane in which he was scheduled to have flown in, crashed. He entered Oakwood College in Alabama, received a BA and was ordained a minister in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. His record company tried to keep his conversion a secret, issuing earlier unreleased tracks, but in 1959 gave way and released his first religious album *God Is Real*. In 1962, Rock and Roll bit back, Richard released *Bama Lama Bama Boo* and went back on the road, performing as wildly as ever. However, his attachment to the church never did leave him. However, he often stressed his attachment, preaching and singing gospel.



LITTLE RICHARD

1962

BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL

LITTLE RICHARD grew up in an area of Macon, Georgia where music was omnipresent. Street sellers and evangelists would sing, selling everything from vegetables to religion. Richard, one of 12 children, sang with the family choir and Tiny Tots Quartet where his hyperactive personality singled him out, that and his unusually loud, high-pitched voice. He left home to work as a dancer and singer, attracting customers to the travelling medicine show of Doctor Nubilio, who wore a turban, a brightly coloured cape and carried a black stick. By the age of 15 Richard was a feature with Sugarfoot Sam from Alabam Minstrel Show and then Mr. Hudson's Medicine Show, The Tidy Jolly Steppers and Broadway Follies, where he earned a reputation as a drag performer. At 18 he won a Talent Contest which gave him a recording contract with RCA Victor, releasing four singles that went nowhere. The month he quit RCA, his father, a minister, was killed after a confrontation outside his club. Broke, Richard took a job as dishwasher for Greyhound Lines, but soon got back into music recording for Peacock Records. After a bust-up with label boss Don Robey, Richard got the call from Art Rupe of Specialty Records, went to New Orleans to record with producer Bumps Blackwell, cut *Tutti Frutti* which was released in October 1955. Rock and Roll was born.



JERRY LEE LEWIS

1964

THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, WEST BROMWICH

JERRY LEE LEWIS, pianist, singer and songwriter was, not without good reason, known as The Killer. His stage performances were primitive, seemingly barely under control, anarchic but unequalled. He is one of the three men who best embodied the spirit of Rock & Roll. The other two? Chuck Berry and Little Richard, naturally. Lewis was one of the stars of Sun Records in Memphis where his label-mates were Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins. His rise to international fame was meteoric, fuelled by the massive 1957 hit *Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On*. Lewis was selling more records than Elvis, but his career suffered catastrophically when his marriage to his 13 year old cousin was made public. The scandal caused his performance fees to plummet from \$10,000 a night to \$250. Lewis steadily rebuilt his career with consistently fine recordings and his legendary stage shows. His box-set *All Killer, No Filler* is listed by *Rolling Stone* in their 500 Greatest Albums of All Time and his contribution to Rock and Roll is enormous.



HOWLIN' WOLF

1964

BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL

Rolling Stone Magazine ranked **HOWLIN' WOLF** at Number 51 on their list of The 100 Greatest Artists of All Time. Sam Phillips of Sun Records said, "The soul of this man will never die", and he's been proved correct; Wolf's songs are still played nightly by blues bands across the world. Born Chester Arthur Burnett into a Mississippi farming community, he ran away from home at age 13, was functionally illiterate, yet became one of the most influential and financially successful of all bluesmen, driving to Chicago to join Chess Records in his own car with 4000 dollars in his pocket. In his 40s he went back to school, studied accountancy and business and was probably unique amongst bluesmen at that time in paying band members a decent salary and even benefits such as health insurance, which of course allowed him to employ the very best musicians. He came to Britain in 1964 as part of the American Folk Blues Festival and The Rolling Stones recording of his *Little Red Rooster* reached Number One in the same year. Wolf died in 1976 age 65.



GINGER BAKER

1967

THE SWAN. YARDLEY

"I know I'm a bit of a monster," **GINGER BAKER** told *Melody Maker* in 1964 and, so far as we know, he never knowingly passed up an opportunity to demonstrate it. Peter Edward Baker, born in South London in 1939, played with several rather uncool trad bands before joining Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated where his long and troubled relationship with the late Jack Bruce began. Together they jumped ship to join the Graham Bond Organisation, but Baker had his mind set on bigger things. After the now notorious Graham Bond tour with the Moody Blues and Chuck Berry where he concentrated on enhancing his reputation as a hellraiser, Baker poached John Mayall's guitar man, Eric Clapton, to join him and Bruce in what was probably the UK's first supergroup, Cream. Their influence on generations of blues and rock bands has been monumental and still resonates today, even though they were only active from 1966 to 1968, plus a couple of brief reunions. Ginger went on to join Blind Faith and then form Ginger Baker's Air Force, so-called because they were always high.



CHUCK BERRY

1964

BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME

Singer, guitarist, songwriter, duck-walker Charles Edward Anderson **CHUCK BERRY** is one of the three men who could rightly claim to have been responsible for the shaping of Rock and Roll. Many, quite rightly, consider him to have been the most important American wordsmith of the 20th Century. Born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1926 he was one of the first musicians to be inducted in to The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, with the citation, "he laid the groundwork for not only the Rock and Roll sound, but also a Rock and Roll stance." The second part of the statement possibly refers to the three separate prison sentences, the first for armed robbery while still at high school in 1944. Remarkably, despite these distractions, Chuck Berry recorded some of the greatest music of our time, enjoyed a string of hit records, influenced hundreds of bands, including The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, He wrote monumental songs and toured consistently, which amazingly he still does. John Lennon said, "If you gave Rock and Roll another name, you might call it Chuck Berry."



BLACK SABBATH [ALTERNATIVE]

1968

EDGBASTON

If any one band can claim to be the originators of Heavy Metal, then that band is **BLACK SABBATH**. Strangely, Heavy Metal was not a term used in those days, though Sabbath certainly prided themselves on being heavier than any of their so-called rivals. In fact, their early publicity claimed, "Black Sabbath, the Heaviest Band Around. Makes Led Zeppelin sound like a kindergarten house band." Quite how the Sabs changed from being a perfectly good blues band into the musical phenomenon that we all know and love is shrouded in mystery. It all started with Geezer Butler who contributed the band's name as well as many of the songs. Their music developed naturally from then and it's hard to identify exactly what directly preceded it. Hendrix, yes, to a limited extent, but that only partly explains it. Whatever, Black Sabbath are THE Birmingham Rock Band. Ask yourself this. Who is the world's most famous Brummie? Without doubt, it's Ozzy.



BRIAN JONES

1964

ATV STUDIOS, ASTON

Lewis Brian Hopkins Jones, born in Cheltenham in 1942, the founder and original bandleader of the Rolling Stones was known to the world as **BRIAN JONES**. Jagger and Richards soon overshadowed him in the band as his drug problems diminished his role, and he became more difficult to work with. Bill Wyman said, "Brian formed the band. He chose the members. He named the band. He chose the music we played. He got us gigs, he was very influential and very important, and then slowly lost it." Brian Jones has never been properly recognised for his part in creating possibly the greatest rock band of our time, and he was asked to leave the band in June 1969. Precisely twenty five days later, the body of Brian Jones was found in his swimming pool. His death has never been properly explained and the murder theories abound. He was 27. Jimi Hendrix dedicated a song to him on U.S. television. Jim Morrison of The Doors published a poem. Within two years, both Hendrix and Morrison had died. They were also 27.