





# The Dave Clark Five



BY ROB BOWMAN



**A**lthough it might be difficult to grasp if you weren't a popular-music fan at the time, in 1964, at the height of the British Invasion, it was not at all clear which, the Dave Clark Five or the Beatles, would become the most popular and influential rock band of the era. The DC5 represented the second volley of rock & roll mania to emerge from the British Isles with the group's inaugural performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on March 8, 1964 – generating the same riotous, screaming orgasmic frenzy that had greeted the Beatles' debut performance on the same program a mere four weeks earlier.

The quintessential ingredients that fueled the Beatles' early success were unbridled enthusiasm for early American rock and R&B, over-the-top manic energy, group harmony, and a thunderous BIG BEAT. The Dave Clark Five were equally prodigious in all four areas. In fact, while Ringo's drums were certainly a key, propulsive ingredient of the Beatles' sound and the cause of many a parent's complaint that this second wave of rock & roll was just mindless, beat-riddled noise, the Beatles drummer sounded positively polite next to the cataclysmic, primal sound of Dave Clark.

The group's U.S. record label, Epic, attempted to garner interest in the band by playing up a mythical rivalry between the Dave Clark Five and the Fab Four, the British press having already dubbed the DC5 avatars of the Tottenham Sound in contrast to the Beatles' Merseybeat Sound. When the DC5 appeared on *Ed Sullivan* on that fateful Sunday, the band was promoting its first U.S. 45, "Glad All Over," jointly penned by Clark and lead singer and organist Mike Smith.

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The single, which had started zooming up *Billboard's* pop chart three weeks earlier, opened with Clark's unaccompanied drums pounding out the tune's 4/4-stomp groove as he pulverized his snare and floor tom with both arms crashing down simultaneously. It was an electrifying sound that signified in no uncertain terms the filth and fury of early rock & roll that drove parents up the wall while simultaneously giving their children a

massive dose of fun and a sense of the possibilities of being alive. Variations on the opening drum salvo of "Glad All Over" would rear their head more than once during the glam era, perhaps most conspicuously on Gary Glitter's "Rock 'n Roll Part II." It was also a sound that was not lost on the E Street Band's Max Weinberg, who as a young teenager

saw the Dave Clark Five in concert and at that moment decided he wanted to be a rock & roll drummer.

The response to "Glad All Over" and the Dave Clark Five's appearance on *Ed Sullivan* (to an estimated TV audience of 70 million) was such that a week later the band was invited to play the show again. On April 4, the even more primal "Bits and Pieces" followed "Glad All Over" onto the charts. Its nearly Neanderthal introduction, consisting of two bars of brutal foot stomps followed by another two bars of Clark's snare drum, apparently caused a number of U.K. ballroom managers to ban the record, as they feared that the rabid empathetic stomping of the group's fans during the song would permanently damage their venues' floorboards. "Glad All Over" had been similarly banned at dozens of U.K. ballrooms.

Scarcely a month later, on May 2, the group's first U.K. hit from the fall of 1963, a hyperkinetic version

The Dave Clark Five in their prime: Denis Payton, Mike Smith, Dave Clark, Rick Huxley, Lenny Davidson (from left)



# DAVE CLARK 5 VS THE BEATLES

SEPT. POPULAR ANNUAL 1964



The battle of the bands was featured in a September 1964 national teen magazine.

of the Contours' "Do You Love Me," began its ascent up the American charts. By May 30, the band was headlining Carnegie Hall (where it broke the house attendance record by playing twelve shows in three days) and was beginning the first of six complete North American tours, in the process becoming the first British Invasion band to mount a full-scale sell-out tour of the United States. One day later, the group was taping its third appearance on Sullivan's prime-time variety show. Ultimately, the Dave Clark Five would play the Sullivan show a whopping eighteen times, more than any other rock, pop, or R&B artist.

With the band's first North American tour in full gear, in June Epic issued yet another high-energy Dave Clark-Mike Smith original, "Can't You See That She's Mine," which promptly shot up to Number Four on *Billboard's* pop chart. By summer's end, the group's first single to feature a ballad, "Because," penned solely by Clark, topped out at Number Three. Over the next few years, the hits kept coming as the group placed a mind-numbing fifteen records on the *Billboard* Top Thirty between February 1964 and June 1966, outpacing the Rolling Stones, the Supremes, the Four Seasons, and the Beach Boys in terms of chart performance.

The roots of the Dave Clark Five go back to the fall of 1959 in the North London suburb of Tottenham, when Clark put together a skiffle group he dubbed the Dave Clark Quintet to help raise funds for the South Grove Football Club. Shortly thereafter, he decided to form a "real" group – the Dave Clark Five – and took out an ad in *Melody Maker*, through which he found guitarist Rick Huxley. Keyboardist and vocalist Mike



On the air in 1964: Smith, Davidson, Clark, Huxley, and Payton (from left)



Smith signed on later in the year, followed in 1961 by guitarist Lenny Davidson, formerly of the Impalas. With Davidson on board, Huxley moved over to bass. When Clark decided to replace the group's sax player with Denis Payton, from the Mike Jones Combo, all the pieces of the puzzle were finally in place.

The Dave Clark Five honed their skills playing first at U.S. Army bases and then on the huge Mecca Ballroom circuit, which featured 200 bands performing for a million-plus punters every week. By 1963, the group's live show had developed to the point where the DC5 were awarded the Mecca Gold Cup as the "Best Band in the Country." Not bad for a group that had yet to record its first hit single. After false starts with an instrumental on Ember and two further singles on the Pye subsidiary Piccadilly (one vocal and the other instrumental; both originally cut as publisher's demos), the DC5 were courted by an A&R exec from EMI after he witnessed the band mesmerize an audience of several thousand at its home base, the Royal Tottenham Mecca Ballroom. Incredible enough, Clark, who not only produced all the group's records but also managed the outfit, negotiated a much higher royalty rate than those garnered by any of his contemporaries and brilliantly insisted on a reversion clause that gave him back the rights to the group's masters a few years after they were released.

The first single the band cut for the EMI subsidiary Columbia, "The Mulberry Bush," died a quick death, but its second U.K. Columbia release, the aforementioned "Do You Love Me," managed to dent the British Top Thirty in October



Dave Clark (center) plus four

1963. When "Glad All Over" topped the Brit charts in January 1964, Clark set his sights on conquering North America.

If simple over-the-top manic energy was the sine qua non of vintage rock & roll, then the Dave Clark Five epitomized everything great about the genre. More than any other of the



You got what it takes: The band's first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, March 8, 1964.





Catch us if you can: Dave and the boys taking off in 1964

British Invasion groups, this one embodied the glorious go-for-broke spirit of fifties rock & roll. To that end, in addition to the hammer-of-the-gods drumming of Clark, the group's sound was defined by saxophonist Denis Payton's growling, distorted solos and the underrated Mike Smith's ebullient, double-tracked, balls-to-the-wall vocals. Guitarist Davidson and bassist Huxley, in tandem with Smith's keyboards, contributed their fair share to the rhythmic, riff-laden onslaught that defined the group, but ultimately they tended to stay in the background, playing a supportive role.

The instrumental fury concocted by the Dave Clark Five underpinned dynamic vocal arrangements, with all five members of the group fervently chiming in on background vocals, regularly engaging in call and response with Smith's tough but soulful lead vocals. The composite sound was swathed in stunning levels of echo and reverb, the most extreme example being November 1964's "Anyway You Want It," later covered by Kiss.

As 1964 gave way to 1965, the Dave Clark Five reached back to their roots, scoring hits with impassioned, rocking reinterpretations of Chuck Berry's "Reelin' and Rockin'," Chris Kenner's "I Like It Like That," and Bobby Day's "Over and Over," the latter providing the group with its biggest hit, topping the charts at year's end. The group also starred in its first film in '65, titled *Catch Us If You Can* in the U.K. and *Having a Wild Weekend* in the States. The British title song was released as a single and zoomed straight into the Top Five. "Having a Wild Weekend," while not issued on 45, was one of the group's most frenetic tracks. It starts off with Smith exclaiming, "1-2-3-4," one minute and fifty seconds later blasting its way to a close. You gotta believe that Johnny,

Joey, Dee Dee, and Tommy Ramone were intoxicated by this and many other of the DC5's great recordings.

The hits continued through 1966 and 1967, albeit generally peaking at slightly lower chart positions than the group had enjoyed in 1964 and 1965. An exception was April 1967's horn-laden, Stax-imbued cover of Marv Johnson's "You Got What It Takes," which reached Number Seven. Three months later, after a grueling two-month tour of the U.S., the Dave Clark Five followed in the footsteps of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and decided to retire from touring. As rock music began to move in radically different directions, by the summer of 1967, the DC5 were still making singles-oriented, raucous, fifties-influenced rock & roll. By the end of 1969, the group ceased to chart in America. Surprisingly, the group enjoyed a renaissance in the U.K. and throughout Europe, placing ten singles on various European charts between January 1968 and December 1970, its last Top Ten British single, "Everybody Get Together," a version of the Youngbloods' similarly titled song. That same year, the band crafted a radical rearrangement of Neil Young's "Southern Man."

In May 1970, the Dave Clark Five called it quits, their leader stating at the time, "We had planned twelve months before to stop in 1970, while we were still enjoying it." Clark and Smith recorded further tracks for an album under the *nom de disque* Dave Clark and Friends to fulfill contractual obligations in the U.K. Subsequently, Clark cowrote and produced a hit London musical, *Time*. Opening in London's West End in 1986, the show starred Sir Laurence Olivier and Cliff Richard, the latter eventually replaced by David Cassidy. The multimillion-selling soundtrack album, composed and produced by Clark, provided hits for Olivier, Freddie Mercury,



Cliff Richard, Julian Lennon, and Stevie Wonder. Mike Smith went on to write commercial jingles, recorded and toured briefly in a duo with former Manfred Mann vocalist Mike d'Abo, and later formed Mike Smith's Rock Engine. Tragically, in 2003 he suffered a spinal cord injury in a fall at his home in Spain and has been bedridden ever since. In recent years, Lenny Davidson has been teaching classical guitar and playing in a classical guitar orchestra, and Rick Huxley is now in the electronics wholesaling business. For many years, Denis Payton ran a successful real estate agency and continued to play music with his group Formula 1. Sadly, Payton succumbed to cancer in December 2006.

In their heyday, the Dave Clark Five cut some of rock & roll's most exciting and formidable singles. The band's efforts resulted in two dozen charting singles, fifteen U.S. albums, and more than 100 million records sold worldwide. Tonight, the Dave Clark Five rightly assume their place alongside their British Invasion counterparts the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Who, and the Kinks as members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. ♪



The DC5 live in 1965



Glad all over: Clark and the band survey their bestsellers, 1966