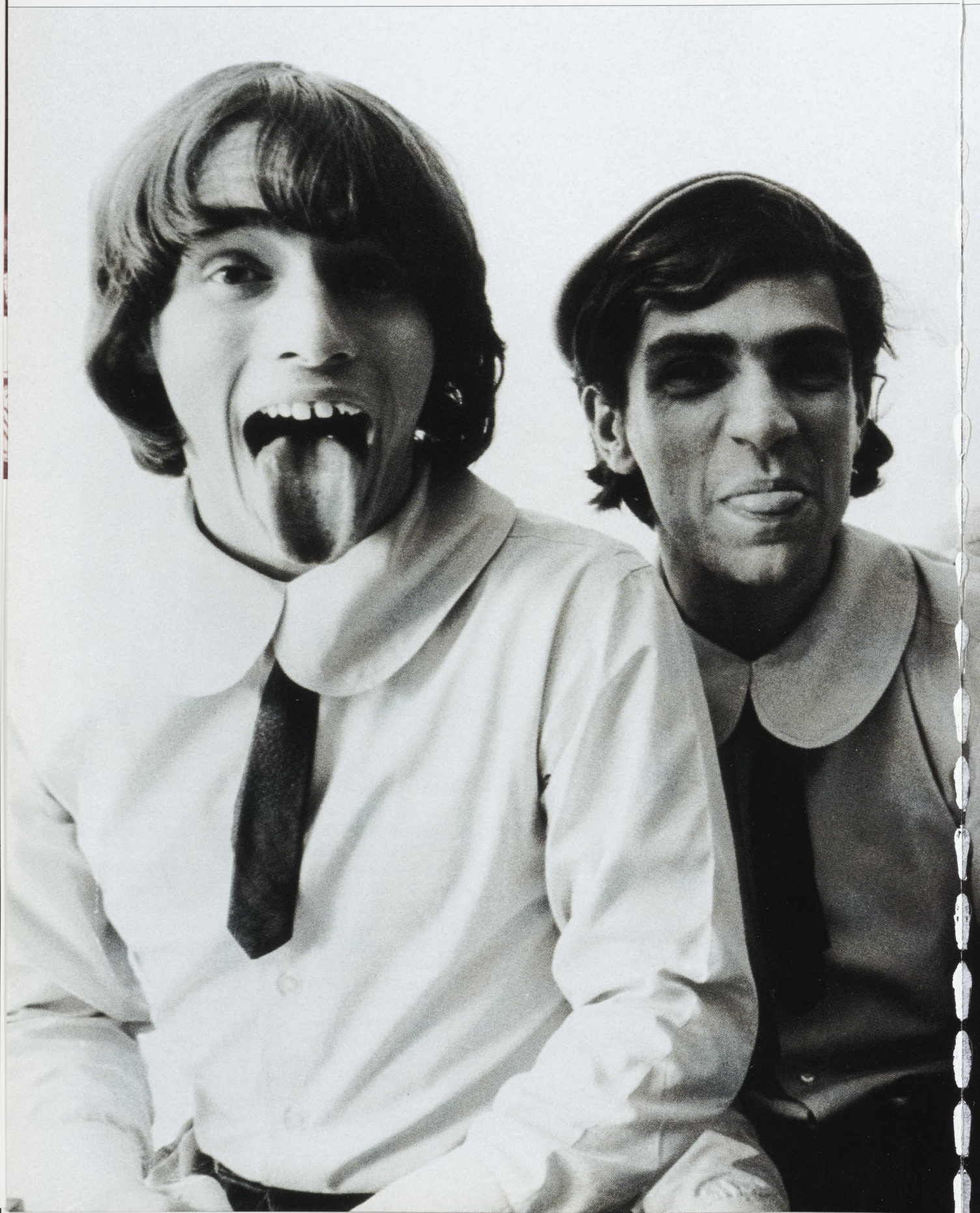


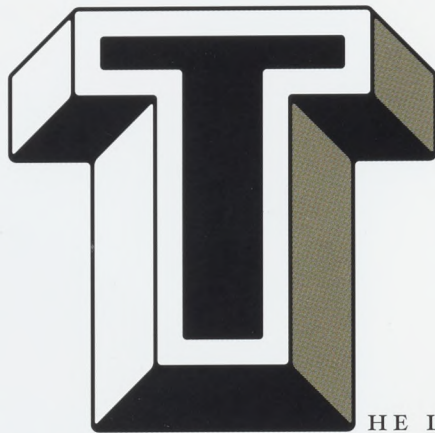
P E R F O R M E R S



(((THE YOUNG RASCALS)))



Previous pages: Young Rascals at play: Eddie Brigati, Felix Cavaliere, Gene Cornish, Dino Danelli (from left)



THE LONG ISLAND SOUND. Let us caress it: thick slabs of Hammond B-3 organ, all furniture polish and drawbars and majesty; a chopping rhythmic guitar; a precise, almost clockwork sense of percussion; a vocalese whose tremolo vibratos as if doubling back on itself, riding a wave form of infinite shimmy. Pure show and go. ♡ SURELY THE CROWDS AT SHEA STADIUM waiting for the Beatles had no idea they were witnessing the birth of a phenomenon when, in the summer of 1965, promoter-manager Sid Bernstein flashed THE YOUNG RASCALS ARE COMING on the scoreboard. Only those who had made their way to a small South Shore Long Island club called the Barge might have had any faith in this apocalyptic prophecy, and even then, with the

band dressed in matching Lord Fauntleroy knickers and caps, performing R&B-influenced covers in an increasingly go-for-baroque manner, there was little to suggest that this quartet would ultimately mean anything more than a summer romance.

Over three decades later, the Rascals have achieved True

Love. The blue-eyed soul and brown-eyed body that they brought to their music has become a Sound to be reckoned with. And their passage through musical life – as exemplified by their many hits: “Groovin’,” “Good Lovin’ ” and other similar contractions – tells the tale of an era when the promise of psychedelia brought a gospel-tinged element of faith, sense of wonder and optimism to the Top Forty: “A Beautiful Morning” and “People Got to Be Free.” Who could argue with that?

The Rascals lineage begins with Joey Dee and the Starlites, whose “Peppermint Twist” put a West 45th Street New York go-go lounge on the dance-craze map. Keyboardist Felix Cavaliere, then a journeyman musician working the club circuit, was called to Europe to fill in with the Starlites, and found a massive Hammond organ awaiting him. He had never played one before but immediately saw the possibilities.

“Felix came up with the concept of our sound,” said guitarist Gene Cornish, whom Felix met as part of the Dee connection, along with singer Eddie Brigati. “The drums and guitar would be the rhythm, and the organ would be a blanket over everything.” Along with drummer Dino Danelli, they honed this textural frontier at the Choo Choo Club in Garfield, New Jersey, before the Barge booked them for the summer.

“It all came from R&B,” said Dino, whose stick twirling and head snapping became a Rascals trademark. “We

Here come the love beads, enter the Rascals: Cornish, Cavaliere, Danelli, Brigati (from left)





were very influenced by Ray Charles.” The British Invasion had opened up the possibilities for rock bands, even as the group’s awareness of the tri-state doo-wop tradition enhanced their harmonies, Italo-soul in a white pop combo context. By November 1965, the Phone Booth discotheque was heralding them as the “Most Talked About Group in New York,” and they were heading into the studios of Atlantic Records to cut their first single.

A regional hit, “I Ain’t Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore” set the hallmark of the Young Rascals’ early style, working a spectrum of dynamics that was a study in abrupt contrast, loud raveups crescendoing into sudden silence broken only by the lonesome whine of a high Leslied note, Eddie playing the teen idol card as well as “the toys” (twin tambourines). When they followed it a couple months later with a version of the Olympics’ “Good Lovin’” that went Number One nationally, the Rascals had borne out Bernstein’s prediction and more.

They retained their showband roots live, Felix waving his hand in the air as he kicked at the bass pedals and washed his other arm across the twin keyboards, Gene slithering across the stage, Dino snatching at the cymbals and Eddie shouting out *Thank yew!* at the end of each song. Their debut album captures how it must have sounded pouring off the bandstand to a crowded dance floor – “Like a Rolling Stone” to “In the Midnight Hour” to “Mustang Sally.” Truly Young Rascals.

By the second album, they had begun growing upward, interspersing more group originals (“You Better Run,” “I’ve Been Lonely Too Long”) with their stylized covers. On a col-

lision course with the Summer of Love in early 1967, the Rascals might have been swept under the Oriental rug when “pop” became a dirty word to a scruffier breed of bands. Instead, they donned beads and Nehru shirts and found their own brand of East Coast mysticism. Groovy, or should we say “Groovin’”?

As the (no longer Young) Rascals, their concerns were weightier and more worldly, culminating in the Arif Mardin-produced double-album *Freedom Suite*; along the way, their pop sensibility took in “How Can I Be Sure,” “Love Is a Beautiful Thing,” “A Girl Like You” and other expressions of divine light at the end of a tunnel. “Groovin’” had shown that the Rascals need not be limited to the instruments at hand – “On our new single there isn’t any organ, no guitar and no regular drums. There’s a bass, a harpsichord . . . vibes, a harmonica . . . and birds,” Gene said at the time of its release – and they allowed their imaginations free rein.

Jazzier elements entered their newfound social consciousness, and the Rascals expanded orchestrally, relying on guest musicians. In the early Seventies, augmented by guitarist Buzzy Feiten and with Brigati and Cornish moving on to more solo concerns, the Rascals became Felix’s expressive vehicle. The band switched to Columbia for its final albums before entering the realm of history, of which this induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is a richly deserved *Thank yew!* ◀

On TV: Singer Brigati (obscuring organist Cavaliere), guitarist Cornish and drummer Danelli (from left)