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# GUITAR WORLD



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## MOUNTAIN THE BEST OF MOUNTAIN

Legacy



## SPIRIT THE BEST OF SPIRIT

Legacy



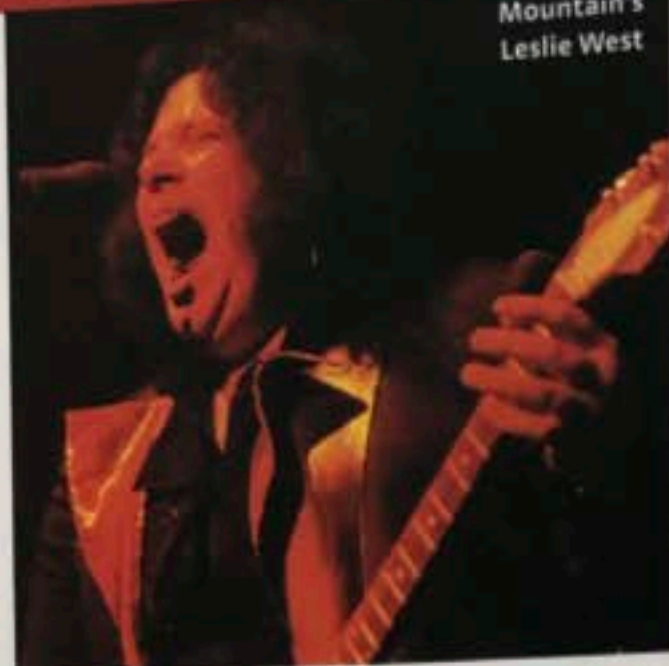
## MOTT THE HOOPLE GREATEST HITS

Legacy

**Best-of collections often fit awkwardly in a discography, falling somewhere between a CliffsNotes career overview and a K-Tel hits collection. But they have their use, especially when dealing with groups that made some great music but no great albums.**

That would certainly be the case with this lot. Mountain, Spirit and Mott the Hoople each formed in the pre-Woodstock Sixties and fell apart in the post-Nixon Seventies. Quirky enough to fall out of the mainstream but savvy enough to generate the occasional hit, they were staples of Album Oriented Rock, the defining sound of FM radio in the Seventies.

Mountain's contribution to the format is neatly summed up in "Mississippi Queen," a riff- and cowbell-driven rocker that is easily the group's best-known track—which is



Mountain's  
Leslie West

ironic, because it hardly typifies the band's output. Formed by Cream producer Felix Pappalardi and Long Island legend Leslie West, Mountain forged a sound that was indebted to Cream's *Disraeli Gears*. Although the resemblance wasn't absolute, riff-based rockers like "Crossroader" were clearly cut from the same cloth as Cream's heaviest. They just weren't tailored as well.

Although the band regularly recorded simple, blues-based fare, its real strength was heavy epics. The sea shanty-spiked "Nantucket Sleighride" was the finest of those efforts, but *Best of Mountain* also includes the band's rendition of Cream bassist Jack Bruce's "Theme for an Imaginary Western"—a song that should have been a hit and never was.

Still, when it came to ambition, Mountain had nothing on Spirit. For one thing, this California-based quintet recorded with a full orchestra for its debut album, working up a richly textured, Prokofiev-like arrangement

for the track "Mechanical World."

Spirit were, in many ways, a little too clever. The band's taste was broad enough and its abilities strong enough to allow it to go in several directions at once. But Spirit's music was most successful when melody and rhythm were made the focus, as on "I Got a Line on You," "Nothin' to Hide," "Morning Will Come," "Uncle Jack" and the minor hit "Nature's Way," a quintet of tracks that is the cream of the group's output.

But who needs melody when you've got attitude? That was the world-view of Mott the Hoople, a motley crew of Britons who started out trying to be new Dylans and ended up the bridge between David Bowie and Lou Reed. Fronted by Ian Hunter and featuring a pre-Bad Company Mick Ralphs on guitar, the group kicked around for several years before Bowie handed them "All the Young Dudes"—and with it, the rock stardom of their dreams.

Unfortunately, Mott wound up being strangely obsessed with the rock and roll lifestyle, filling "All the Way from Memphis" and "Saturday Gigs" with so many swaggering in-jokes that it was hard to tell if the guys were thrilled to be stars or hoping to laugh the whole tawdry thing away. In short, they were post-modern before their time, and thus beloved by all the pointy-headed young Britons who a few years later gave us punk. Maybe that's why arch, ragged rockers such as "Honoloochie Boogie" and "Roll Away the Stone" have held up better than the conventionally tuneful "Sweet Jane."

—J.D. Considine

## editors' picks

### BLUES



#### Debbie Davies

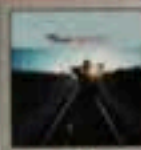
*Key to Love*

SHANACHEE

On *Key to Love*, California blueswoman Debbie Davies pays tribute to her mentor, British blues legend John Mayall, tapping Mayall band veterans Mick Taylor (also a former Rolling Stone) and Peter Green as guests. Taylor's slide-and-sting rip on "A Hard Road" is the best thing he's cut in ages, and Green delivers a jazz solo with fat, elegant octave chords, but it's Davies' show. From her languid slide bends on "Dream About the Blues" to her Clapton-style burn on "Steppin' Out," this is her strongest release yet.

—Ted Druzinski

### BLUES



#### Doyle Bramhall

*Fitchburg St.*

TEPROG

Doyle Bramhall is best known for his songwriting collaborations with Stevie Ray Vaughan, but his second solo album is a collection of blues and soul classics. Still, the album's centerpiece is the lone original: an electric rip through Bramhall's "Life by the Drop," which serves as an aching tribute to SRV, who cut the tune acoustically. Bramhall's son Doyle II lights up a few tracks with edgy, raw leads, but the main attraction is Bramhall's emotive voice and masterful phrasing on tunes like John Lee Hooker's "Dimples" and Howlin' Wolf's "Forty Four." —Alan Paul

### TRIBUTE



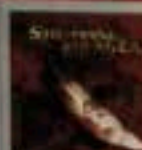
#### Various

*Songs from the Material World: A Tribute to George Harrison*

ROCK

The "quiet Beatle," George Harrison was also one of the most influential musicians to ever bend a string. On this tribute disc, Harrison's near-perfect pop songs are handled with care by various artists, including a former Stone (Bill Wyman, whose Rhythm Kings offer a tight, groove-heavy "Taxman"), a onetime Kink (Dave Davies, who heads for the jangly heart of "Give Me Love [Give Me Peace on Earth]") and a late Who (John Entwistle, who adds a touch of punk to "Here Comes the Sun"). —Ernie Schindler

### METAL



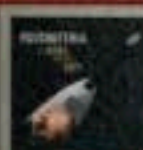
#### Strapping Young Lad

*Strapping Young Lad*

CENTURY MEDIA

On their fourth album, Vancouver's Strapping Young Lad blaze through a collection of intricate metal anthems made even more aggressive by the band's punchy, industrialized production. Guitarist Jed Simon mines the terrain between death metal and thrash with a quick succession of rapid-fire riffs, while frontman Devin Townsend alternates clean vocals with a caustic roar. Tracks like "Relentless" and "Dirt Pride" provide rare sanctuaries of melody in SYL's technical maelstrom. Fans of old-school extreme metal will

### EXTREME GUITAR



#### Psychoteria

*The Hard and the Soft*

PSYCHOTERIA (PSYCHOTERIA.COM)

Guitarist Errol Antzís, who works under the pseudonym Psychoteria, is at his best when he's making musical puns. For example, his spy movie homage, "Peter Gunn," also takes musical potshots at James Bond and *Mission: Impossible*. And the world may never know what possessed him to reshape Focus' classic rock instrumental "Hocus Pocus" into a tribute to Bo Diddley, but somehow we're glad he did.

—Brad Tolinski