

## Music from 1986

1986 was the last year of the Second British Invasion -- in June, twenty of the Top 40 songs in the U.S. were performed by British artists, yet most of those who were in-the-know understood that the New Wave phenomenon had pretty much run its course. But no one was sure (especially critics and label execs) how to handle the fact that in the aftermath rock music was fragmenting; some complained that it lacked cohesion, direction -- they couldn't deal with the reality that there was no musical movement to replace New Wave. In hindsight, it's easier to see that 1986 marked the beginning of a period during which artists were freed from the constraints of having to fit into a movement. The resulting diversity of styles, trends and sounds presented the music audience with a smorgasbord; you had the blue-eyed soul of Simply Red, the adolescent pop of the Pet Shop Boys, all-girl pop from the likes of the Bangles, punk redux from bands like Big Audio Dynamite, the sizzling salsa-pop of Miami Sound Machine, the rapping groove of Run D.M.C. and even Falco's techno-rap on "Amadeus." It was an eclectic mix, and the best part about it was that all the music didn't have to sound the same.

It was a good year for soul music, which also benefited from diversity. You had everything from Whitney Houston's traditional balladry, enhanced by her dazzling vocal virtuosity, to Cameo's techno-funky "Word Up," from Billy Ocean's reggae-calypso-pop-soul concoctions to Janet Jackson's monumental Control, which significantly raised the standard for all future efforts in the field. In spite of radio resistance, hip-hop was becoming commercial, and the proof was in the Krush Groove Christmas Party that, against conventional wisdom, filled up Madison Square Garden as 1985 came to a close. Rushing through the door opened by Run D.M.C., Doug E. Fresh and L.L. Cool J became rap's leading lights. Madonna chose the Beastie Boys to open for her on tour, while Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam had a crossover hit with "All Cried Out." Run D.M.C.'s inspired remake of "Walk This Way" introduced rap to white youth, who found in it the anthems of conscientious rebellion that had been conspicuously absent from the music that radio had been spoon-feeding them for years.

Heavy metal was in a state of flux, with the oldtimers like Meat Loaf and Motorhead and a reunited Deep Purple showing their age -- and showing, too, that they were stuck in a traditional rut. It was going to be up to new bands just now appearing on the horizon to change things and inject fresh blood into HM. Meanwhile, pop metal -- or heavy metal lite -- as purveyed by the likes of Bon Jovi and Glass Tiger, was serving a useful purpose in preparing the mainstream for the harder-edged variety that would soon be served up by a fresh crop of hair bands. Robert Cray proved that blues wasn't all about the old guard being reissued in expensive box sets. Jazz was given a new set of clothes by the likes of Sade, with her pop-jazz fusion, and the New Age "white bread" that the American record company execs felt comfortable with but which dyed-in-the-wool jazz cats found a little too vapid for their taste.

While singles sales declined 22%, US album and tape sales rose 6% to \$4.65 billion; CD sales soared 139% to \$950 million. By now it was obvious that the music video had a lot to do with the much-improved bottom line of the past few years, and 1986 saw a continuation of a new trend that had become apparent in '85 -- the use of video filming techniques and, of course, the music itself, in the advertising of everything from automobiles to facial cream and beer to blue jeans. In 1986 the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame opened in Cleveland with initial inductees including Chuck Berry, James Brown, Sam Cooke, Fats Domino, The Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard and Elvis Presley. Among those who died in 1986: Phil Lynott, of Thin Lizzy, at age 34; Albert Grossman, who had once managed Dylan and Joplin; O'Kelly Isley, the oldest of the Isley Brothers, at age 48 of a heart attack; and Richard Manuel, the 42-year-old founding member of The Band, who hanged himself in a Florida hotel room. Boy George was arrested and charged with heroin possession in July; he was found guilty as charged and fined. Meanwhile, Ozzy Osbourne faced much unwanted media attention when a California boy killed himself allegedly after listening to Osbourne's "Suicide Solution." And the original producers of The Monkees television show advertised for new Monkees to star in a 1986 series.

