"*Thank yew!*" We are in the Phone Booth, on Manhattan's middle-eastern side, 55th between 3rd and Lexington in the discotheque district. On each tiny cocktail-sized table sits a phone, with which you can call a neighboring table and arrange a frug. Mirror balls have just been invented.

The previous summer, in the primal culmination of the British Invasion, The Beatles had filled Shea Stadium. Promoter Sid Bernstein took the opportunity to flash a prophecy across the scoreboard, cryptically sublimating its message between the appearances of Barry & The Remains and Sounds Incorporated: "The Young Rascals Are Coming."

Now, in the early morning hours of November 1965, they've arrived, at the Scene, or Ondine's, or Scott Muni's Rolling Stone, or Harlow's or Trude Heller's or Arthur (where Jordan Christopher holds forth with The Wild Ones).

At this juncture, The (Young) Rascals are a show band, "the most talked about group in New York" according to the blurb in the Phone Booth ad, each movement snapped and precise, oozed and ripened by the loaming sluice of Hammond B-3 that spreads itself along the music's bottom like the earth itself. Their upper instruments—the guitar and percussive "toys" and tripartite vocals—skip them along, imparting a soar to their rhythmatics. To hear this forked-tuning in action, just listen to the freeze of suspended animation as they full-stop "Good Lovin'." Count to seven and feel the band kick back in. Live.

They never just walked on a stage; each Rascal slithered mashed-potato fashion, a personal choreography that slammed home the intricacy of arrangement built into their sound. Dino would flick his head and twirl his sticks, a clockwork drummer; Felix would sit astride the throne of Hammond and respond to each wash of keyboard with one hand aloft; Gene would wrestle his fattest guitar with a jazzer's aplomb; and Eddie would beat a bare patch along the thigh of his corduroy knickers with tambourine and maraca. He was the one who got to say "*Thank*

Yew!" at the end of each song in that high-pitched voice.

The look was Lord Fauntleroy, a gimmick that The Young Rascals got away with because, the way they wore it, it wasn't too far from the high-roll collars and skinny ties and Florsheim boots sported by most of the hybrid bands taking root in northeast America, not to mention the Italo-American connection favored by northeast New Jersey. Despite the fact that The Rascals played their own instruments, they had as much in common with groups like The Four Seasons and The Elegants as they did with the Brit beat

combos.

Most especially, they were a direct line from Joey Dee & The Starliters, who became the house band at the Peppermint Lounge when the twist craze took over America in the early '60s. Along with their theme (*"round and round, up and down, we go"*), they had one of the greatest versions of "Shout" on record, six minutes worth if you flipped the single over, a true blueprint for The Rascals' trademark.

It was a moment Felix Cavaliere would always remember. He had been called from Europe by Joey Dee,

who said that his organ player had left, and asked if Felix would like to come over and take the gig. "When we went on stage for the first time, the first thing I saw was a Hammond B-3 organ," says Cavaliere. "I had seen them before but I had never touched one in my life. But naturally I couldn't let Joey know this. I sat down and played. I don't know how good or bad it sounded, but we got off alive."

Born again is more like it. The grandiose Hammond had previously been the province of instrumentalists like Booker T. Jones, Dave "Baby" Cortez, and the "Harlem Nocturne" Viscounts. Invented by Laurens Hammond to compete sonically with the pipe organ decorating churches and movie theatres, and customized by a rotary speaker competitively designed by Don Leslie, its tone-wheels, drawbars, shuddering vibrato and luxurious overtones had a mass and grind like no other keyboard, complete with bass pedals.

"Felix came up with the concept of our sound," guitarist Gene Cornish corroborates. "He said we'd base everything on the organ. It would be a blanket. The drums and guitar would be the rhythm. Together the organ and guitar would be one complete sound as an orches-

tra. I had to rethink my whole style of playing."

They had all been kicking around the club and cabaret circuit for years. Felix had been in a group called The Escorts with Neil Diamond, and had met drummer Dino Danelli at the Metropole and consequently hired him to go on the Las Vegas jaunt with singer Sandy Scott. Vocalist Eddie Brigati and guitarist Cornish had been part of the Dee connection. In early 1965, they would hang out at the Choo Choo Club in Garfield, New Jersey, where Dino was working in a band with Eddie's brother, David, an original Starliter. They played

the Choo Choo until spotted by the owner of the Barge, which was located in the Long Island jet-set resort of Westhampton.

The concept was blue-eyed soul, but rather than assimilating R&B in the Apollo revue tradition of The Righteous Brothers and The Magnificent Men, The Rascals chose to go the route of the white rock'n'roll band. "We were all influenced by Ray Charles," says Dino. "We were trying to get R&B out into the open where it should be. We'd go up to Harlem and browse through the record shops, looking

for artists you would never find on a pop Top 10 chart; it all came from rhythm and blues."

While it's not known whether Sid Bernstein was taking in the sun along the South Shore when he heard of The Rascals, the East Coast concert promoter saw their potential, not to mention the overflow crowds that were flocking to the Barge from the surrounding tri-state area, and proffered pen accordingly. Along with Broadway maven Walter A. Hyman, he worked hard for The Rascals, and proved prophetic when a mini-bidding war (won by Atlantic) saw the band in the studio on

November 2, 1965, cutting their first single.

"**I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore,**" for my 161 seconds' worth, is an epic classic, the essence of The Young Rascals distilled in a quick flash of coming attractions. Opening with an ominous rumble of Hammonic eruption that crescendos into a triumphant streetcorner "yeah," it was written by the team of Pam Sawyer and Laurie Burton, and its heavy-lidded sensualities (*"You know how to part your lips to tantalize..."*) were perfect for Brigati, the group heartthrob. It had all the components of the Rascal-ish sound, emphasizing dynamics and chiaroscuro, with the choirlike *"I love you, I do girl, but you ain't gonna cheat on me..."* buttressed against Gene's muscular solo and the full-out thrash of the chorus with its Spectored bridge beat. Still, it only managed to confirm The Rascals' regional audience, becoming an East Coast hit.

"**Good Lovin'**," released in February 1966, was a remake of a not-so-oldie Olympics' song (it originally charted in May '65) composed by a pair of Brill Building sharpies named Rudy Clark and Arthur "Artie" Resnick. It cruised to #1, a perfectly performed slab of vinyl, possibly befriended by its B-side, the soon-to-be-soul/rock

classic and standard jam staple, **"Mustang Sally."**

Felix would later shy away from the impact of "Good Lovin'," saying, "It wasn't us. The first Rascals album was hard, soul, push, let's-knock-the-brains-off-everybody kind of music. It was our interpretation of other people's records. 'Good Lovin'' was written by someone outside the group."

Yet in a sense, the early stylistic breakthroughs of The Rascals involved texture and arrangement more than compositional creativity. **"Do You Feel It"** was an amped-up "Shout," and among the covers on The Rascals' first album

are moodily reworked versions of Dylan's "Like A Rolling Stone," The Beau Brummels' "Just A Little," Larry Williams' "Slow Down," the Wicked Pickett's **"In The Midnight Hour,"** and an over-the-top Leonard's of Great Neck version of "I Believe." But by the second album, *Collections*, late in '66, the originals were holding their own with the covers: **"I've Been Lonely Too Long"** matched with **"Love Is A Beautiful Thing."**

Even as The Rascals were growing in originality, their early incarnation as a baroque Long Island club band was taking root in a Sound. Centered around the Action House in the heart of LonGuyland, this family tree of groups all sported furniture-sized organs and tambourine twirlers: The Vagrants with Leslie West (Mountain) on guitar, setting their cymbals afire to the strains of "Exodus"; The Hassles with a baby-faced Billy Joel straining behind the B-3 through "You've Got Me Humming"; Vanilla Fudge, moving at a glacial, Sergio Leone pace through The Supremes' "You Keep Me Hangin' On" and The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." The ultimate Revenge of the Cover Bands.

"I'm very proud to say

that a lot of groups copied us," Felix recalls. "That's the highest form of flattery. They grabbed our instrumentation, our harmony and our interplay between instruments. That meant we must have had something going for us, and it gave us the courage to try things of our own."

Expanding exponentially from The Rascals' sound, Gene Cornish announced in early 1967 that "On our new single there isn't any organ. There is no guitar and there are no regular drums. There's a bass, a harpsichord, a piano, a conga drum, tambourine, vibes, a harmonica, a vocal, and

birds."

'Twas "Groovin'," a Latinesca daydream that recalled some of Ben E. King and The Drifters' experiments with tropical rhythms and pop melodies. Atlantic was just the label to understand how it might sound reflecting off the fire escapes and terraces of the urban Summer of Love. It was #1 as the day dawned on a new rock era.

In response, The Rascals exchanged their peaked caps for Nehru shirts, beards, and beads. They dropped the "Young" from their name. "We feel that we have to project something that is not only

nice to hear but something that is beneficial to the people who are listening to it," said Eddie at that Aquarian time.

In the hands of some bands, this turn toward musical positivism might have smacked of guile; but The Rascals were essentially believers. Witness Cavaliere's "I Believe," which closes out The Rascals' '60s discography, balancing Eddie's declaration of principle on the first album. "People Got To Be Free," "Carry Me Back," "A Beautiful Morning," "It's Wonderful"—all were as

uplifting as their titles suggest. Even doubt was cloaked in faith: *"How can I be sure/In a world that's constantly changing...I'll be sure with you."*

The music echoed this lack of meta-conflict. Felix especially was becoming more involved in the challenging mathematics of sound-on-sound than a direct workout of "Land Of A Thousand Dances" might indicate. While not as generally well-known as their earlier pop parade, the later Rascals oeuvre has its own fascinations. The hits kept cropping up regularly, even as their

reach broadened. *Freedom Suite* confirmed their working relationship with Arif Mardin as co(operative)-producer (Tom Dowd had also supervised The Rascals in early studio recordings), centering the songs around the pungent bass of Gerald Jemmott. The strings swirled, the horns punctuated, and **"Heaven"** opened its golden gates.

"Echoes of the Everland" beckoned as The Rascals discovered *"who you really am."* And if the **"See"** era saw the band looking at the world through trip-colored glasses, they could still rock out, as the raved-up coda of that

1969 hit indicated. **"Temptation's 'Bout To Get Me"** might have been a throwback to the Barge, but atmospheric cuts like **"Nubia"** pointed the arrowhead in Cavaliere's direction. By the time the '70s had made their presence felt with *Search And Nearness*, a gospel-inspirational feel had moved The Rascals' distinctive attack into quite another kettle of funk. **"Glory Glory,"** hallelujah!

Only Dino made the transition with Felix to a new record label (Columbia) and a "new" Rascals. Guitarist Buzzy Feinten came aboard to augment the stringed

chair, and the band lasted for a couple of uncharacteristic albums before giving up the holy ghost.

Nor could the others, as the '70s became the '90s, and passed into tradition as a Toyota commercial. Gene joined forces with Dino in a group called Bulldog (which scored a catchy hit with "No"); Gene later developed Fotomaker with Danelli, who showed up drumming in the early '80s for fellow Jerseyite Little Steven. There was a Rascals reunion, but without Eddie Brigati. Eddie sang with his brother David for a bit, and rerecorded "Groovin'" in 1976 with help from Felix. Although a complete Rascals reunion has yet to materialize over the intervening years, their recorded legacy remains forever young.

"Thank Yew!"

–Lenny Kaye

DISC ONE

[1]
I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore

On the strength of their hard-charging rhythm & blues, honed to perfection in the clubs and discos of Long Island and New York City, The Young Rascals were successful right out of the box. Their debut single, "I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore," fared respectably well, reaching #52 on the *Billboard* chart and higher in regional markets. It was written for The Young Rascals by songwriters Pam Sawyer and Laurie

Burton and given an impassioned vocal by Eddie Brigati. "The first time we heard it on the radio Cousin Brucie played it on WABC, which was the powerhouse in New York," says Felix Cavaliere, "I don't know how to describe that elation—this dream materializes in the middle of the street, and you're carrying a portable radio."

[2]

GOOD LOVIN'

The Young Rascals went straight to the top on their second try with a brash, uptempo arrangement of "Good

Lovin'," a song originally cut by The Olympics. "Long before we recorded it, we did it live, and it always had the same response: People jumped out of their seats to dance," says Cavaliere. "It was a dancing song, a party song, so we knew we had a winner." Because the hard-working Rascals got to test their material in front of crowds that liked to dance, they knew instantly what did and didn't work. While they were certain they'd cut a great record, the group wasn't quite as prepared

for the success that followed it. "I always related it to what the astronauts must feel like when they get up into orbit," says Cavaliere. "Before you knew it, you looked down and, good god, the earth was so far away!"

[3]
Do You Feel It

The Young Rascals opened their shows with "Do You Feel It," the only band-penned song on their eponymous first album. The idea was to get the crowd worked up right from the git-go. Cavaliere explains: "We were trying to get that level right up there

where it was like, 'This is gonna be a serious evening, folks'—serious in terms of the energy level we tried to create immediately. That's what 'Do You Feel It' is about: 'Are you with us? Do you know what we're trying to do? Do you feel what we're trying to feel?' It was like a jam, almost."

[4]

MUSTANG SALLY

It was the Young Rascals, not Wilson Pickett, who first discovered and recorded an obscure soul song called "Mustang Sally." They cut "Land Of 1000 Dances" before Pickett too. "Not to take anything away

from Wilson Pickett," says Cavaliere, "but Atlantic copped those from us and gave them to him. He did them a little faster, but he heard the seeds of those ideas from our band."

[5]

BABY LET'S WAIT

This was another Sawyer/Burton song that came to the band via Atlantic's A&R department. It is drenched in Cavaliere's Hammond organ and Brigati's soulful, boyish vibrato.

[6]

IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

In the '60s, Wilson Pickett's "In The Mid-

night Hour" appeared on every fraternity and bar band's set list, and The Young Rascals were no exception. Their bare-boned version drips with soul, as befits the first white act signed to the Atlantic label.

[7]

You Better Run

This manic number rumbled and surged in the best garage-rock tradition. Listen to the broken rhythms on the intro and to Gene Cornish's grungy roller-coaster guitar. The Atlantic brass were a little disappointed, though, when it "only" reached #20 after the #1 showing of "Good Lovin'." Yet it was

the first of what would become a string of solid chart hits written by the team of Brigati and Cavaliere.

[8]

WHAT IS THE REASON

This soul-pop toe-tapper featured piano instead of organ and rock-solid tom-tom rolls from Dino Danelli, one of the '60s' sturdiest drummers. It was the leadoff track from *Collections*, The Young Rascals' second album, and also appeared on the flip of "Come On Up." It must have been a good song, because "we were very conscious of B-sides," says Cavaliere.

[9]
I've Been Lonely Too Long

After relative commercial disappointments with "You Better Run" (#20) and "Come On Up" (#43), "I've Been Lonely Too Long" scored high enough to salvage The Young Rascals' reputation as songwriters within the record company. "There was a little rumbling going on as to our writing and production ability," Cavaliere chuckles. "It's always the same: When you win, you're a genius, and when you lose: 'Let's replace them.' 'Lonely Too Long' really turned the tide. I have a tremen-

dous place in my heart for that song. It was based upon the type of song you were hearing at the time, such as "Ain't Too Proud To Beg."' I just felt we clicked, finally, as a writing team with that."

[10]
Come On Up

"Come On Up" was a boisterous, syncopated call to the dance floor that, bafflingly, missed the Top 40 by three positions. "Here's a song that a lot of people want to hear now, yet they didn't buy it then," Cavaliere says, laughing. "It obviously wasn't tailored for the radio. It was tailored for that

same audience of dance people we were still playing to."

[11]
Too Many Fish In The Sea

The Young Rascals recorded this Motown chestnut primarily for the English market, where it was released as a single. "I don't remember exactly why, but for some reason I thought that would do well over there," recalls Cavaliere.

[12]
Love Is A Beautiful Thing

One of The Young Rascals' funkiest and most infectious numbers, "Love Is A Beautiful

Thing" is highlighted by the tight vocal harmonies and call-and-response interplay of Brigati and Cavaliere, who wrote it as well.

[13]

Groovin'

"Groovin'" is the number with which The Rascals remain most closely identified. It heralded a shift in the band's sound from uptempo R&B to something mellower, sunnier, and more romantic. As Cavaliere puts it, "the edge was off." The inspiration for the song's rhythmic signature came from the Latin *baion* rhythms Cavaliere remembered hearing at mountain resorts in upstate New York where he worked before The Young Rascals. As for the song's overt romanticism, "I had met this wonderful woman and was going through this period that was tailor-made to that style of music," he says. "I was in this totally blissful state, and I was able to get that feeling across to Eddie so he could lyricize it." Oddly, Atlantic didn't want to put out "Groovin'" until legendary disc jockey Murray the K—proclaiming, "Man, that's a smash!"—went to bat on the band's behalf. "Groovin'" shot to #1 for two weeks and returned for two more weeks, after being temporarily dislodged by Aretha Franklin's "Respect."

[14]

A Girl Like You

Another sunny pop song celebrating the joys of falling in love, "A Girl Like You" swung from halting uncertainty ("Don't know what it's all about") to ecstatic celebration. On the coattails of "Groovin'," it cracked the Top 10. "A Girl Like You" featured the most prominent use of horns to date by The Rascals.

[15]

Find Somebody

"A brighter day might

come tomorrow," prophesied Brigati against a backdrop of tambourine and sitar-like guitar sounds. Psychedelia had arrived in The Young Rascals' camp, as in so many others'.

[16]
How Can I Be Sure

Arguably the finest vocal Eddie Brigati ever laid down, "How Can I Be Sure" was a sophisticated bit of pop cabaret whose swirling waltz rhythms and minor-keyed, melancholy mood carried the increasingly eclectic Rascals inside the Top 5. That completed their remarkable hat trick of

hits from the summer of '67, "Groovin'," "A Girl Like You," and "How Can I Be Sure."

[17]

If You Knew

"If You Knew" was a good example of close-harmony singing between Felix and Eddie, with Gene strumming an acoustic guitar behind them. It was the B-side of "Lonely Too Long" but made a belated LP appearance on *Groovin'*.

[18]

I'm So Happy Now

Gene Cornish was a fine rhythm guitarist; often he contributed a track or two to Rascals

albums as well. "I'm So Happy Now" ranks as one of the group's poppier outings, with a tentative but charming vocal from Cornish and prominent use of horns on the chorus.

[19]
EASY ROLLIN'

[20]
RAINY DAY

[21]
IT'S WONDERFUL

[22]
SILLY GIRL

[23]
FINALE: ONCE UPON A DREAM

The Rascals' fourth album, besides being the first to drop the

"Young," was their response to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Titled *Once Upon A Dream*, it yielded only one hit single—"It's Wonderful," which reached #20—but the band wasn't thinking of AM radio so much as cutting an album that hung together conceptually, with a heady song-to-song flow. Cavaliere credits Arif Mardin, the revered Atlantic staff producer and The Rascals' long time recording "supervisor," for helping to pull together the challenging string and horn arrangements. Drummer Dino Danelli, who regularly designed the band's album covers, assembled a remarkable gatefold collage that captured the footloose, idealistic spirit of the decade.

The concept linking the songs on *Once Upon A Dream* was "based on this fairy-tale situation: how life should be, or how we saw it," says Cavaliere. "There was an awfully great mood at that time in the studio and on the record that I relate to when I hear those songs. There was a real dreamy quality and a real consciousness-raising." The group, again taking their cue from The Beatles, filmed a promotional video for "It's Wonderful," which was the group's most overtly psychedelic single.

[24]

A Beautiful Morning

Once again The Rascals would undergo a period of transition, shifting from the idealistic, paradise-found romanticism of "A Beautiful Morning" (which closed out the "Groovin'" era on a high note, reaching #3) to the more political, real-world concerns of "People Got To Be Free." The latter was recorded only two months after "A Beautiful Morning," and therein hangs a tale of a troubled year in the life of America and the counterculture.

DISC TWO

[1]

People Got To Be Free

Felix Cavaliere was taking a brief vacation on the island of Jamaica when he heard that Robert Kennedy had been assassinated. Many Americans were upset, but Cavaliere was devastated, as The Rascals had gotten involved with Kennedy's election campaign. "We thought this man was going to make a difference," says Cavaliere. "That was the last time I ever had that thought in our electoral process. When he was assassinated, it just did something. Something clicked." What came out of Cavaliere and The Rascals was "People Got To Be Free," a #1 song that defined their insistent idealism with energy and passion. "We were trying to say, 'Look, man, this is your brother. Help him.' That's it. 'You're not better and he's not better. You're equal, and people should be free.'"

[2]

Island Of Love

[3]

Look Around

[4]

A Ray Of Hope

[5]

Heaven

All of the above songs, plus "People Got To Be Free," appeared on *Freedom Suite*, a double album released in 1968. It featured another ambitious Dino Danelli cover—all silver, with a deluxe hand-tinted photograph of the band on the front. The reason for the extended length of the LP was simple: "We just had a lot of music running through us in those days," explains Cavaliere. "I felt a lot of creative energy. There wasn't enough room on two sides!" The Rascals charted two more singles from *Freedom Suite*: "A Ray Of Hope," written for and about Ted Kennedy, and "Heaven," a gospel-style number that professed churchy

optimism against a lively backdrop of horns. Incidentally, "A Ray Of Hope" earned Cavaliere an invitation to a Kennedy family function, where he was personally thanked by Ted.

[6]

See

Among the best of The Rascals' later singles, "See" was a spacey, ferocious rocker driven by a fuzz bass line and a jagged guitar flight obviously inspired by Hendrix, Clapton, et al. The song reached #27 just about the time the counterculture hordes were gearing up for Woodstock.

[7]
I'd Like To Take You Home

[8]
Temptation's 'Bout To Get Me

[9]
Nubia

[10]
Real Thing

[11]
Carry Me Back

The last Rascals single to break the Top 40, "Carry Me Back" was a rootsy hoe-down, a wailing, gospel-flavored expression of yearning for simpler times. The album it came from, *See*, turned out to be the last to include Eddie Brigati,

who'd virtually stopped writing with Cavaliere. It fell to the latter to produce both words and music, and he stretched himself more than ever, as is evident on the jazzy, lush "Nubia." He still delivered a full complement of craftsmanlike pop-soul nuggets such as "Real Thing" and "I'd Like To Take You Home." While the group was beginning to experience some internal friction, the cracks in the foundation were not yet evident—at least on record.

[12]
RIGHT ON

[13]
READY FOR LOVE

[14]
I BELIEVE

[15]
GLORY GLORY

Search And Nearness, The Rascals' final recording for Atlantic, was released in 1971. They were nothing if not prolific in their tenure on the label, releasing seven albums plus a greatest-hits set (*Time Peace*) during that span. The pace at which they were forced to create may itself have had something to do with their dissolution, which particularly affected singer and lyricist Brigati. "I think that basically he just got very tired of the pressure," theorizes Cavaliere. "I can understand getting worn out from that." In any event, his presence had diminished to the point where he sang on only three songs (none by Cavaliere) and wasn't even listed as a band member. As had become the pattern, The Rascals augmented their ranks with some fine jazz and soul musicians from the Atlantic stable, including bassist Chuck Rainey, horn players Joe Newman and Joe Farrell, and backup singers The Sweet Inspirations. The group got into some funky sloganeering on "Right On" and more gospel-feel *hallelujahs* on

"Glory Glory," the latter of which almost cracked the Top 40. The most soulful and naturalistically Rascals-like album cuts were "Ready For Love" and "I Believe," which briefly rekindled the old fire one last time.

—*Parke Puterbaugh*