

THE (YOUNG) RASCALS. *Eddie Brigati (October 22, 1946); Felix Cavaliere (November 29, 1944); Gene Cornish (May 14, 1945); Dino Danelli (July 23, 1945). Inducted in 1997.* A pioneering, blue-eyed soul group, the (Young) Rascals merged pounding rock and roll with gritty rhythm and blues. Reared on 1950s R&B, the group's driving force, Felix Cavaliere, frequented Greenwich Village nightclubs in the early 1960s with chums Neil Diamond and Carole King. After purchasing a Hammond B-3 organ, Cavaliere formed Felix and the Escorts with Mike Esposito (later with the Blues Magoos). Dropping out of a pre-med program at Syracuse University, Cavaliere became a full-time musician.

Landing a booking at New York's famed Peppermint Lounge, there Cavaliere met singer Eddie Brigati. Disbanding the Escorts, Cavaliere joined the club's house band, Joey Dee & the Starlites (of "Peppermint Twist" fame) for a European tour, crossing paths with the upstart Beatles.

After leaving Joey Dee for a profitable gig but unchallenging gig behind a Las Vegas cabaret singer, Cavaliere formed an R&B band with teenage jazz drummer

Dino Danelli. The group was expanded with two members from Joey Dee's Starlites, Canadian-born guitarist Gene Cornish and Cavaliere's old acquaintance, singer Eddie Brigati.

Costumed in Italian-styled knickers, the Rascals were named by comedian Soupy Sales. A huge draw around New York City, the group attracted black and white fans alike, wowing audiences with their soulful renditions of Wilson Pickett songs. Drawing the attention of local promoter Sid Bernstein (who had booked the Beatles at Shea Stadium), the Rascals signed a management deal.

Winning a bidding war, R&B powerhouse Atlantic Records signed the renamed Young Rascals as their first-ever rock group. Featuring Brigati on lead vocals, the group's debut release, "I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore" (1965), was a radio hit in spite of its mediocre chart showing. With Cavaliere taking over lead vocal duties, the group reluctantly recorded a cover of the Olympics' 1965 R&B hit "Good Lovin'." Hating the song, the band members were astounded when it topped the pop charts in early 1966.

Beginning with the album *GOOD LOVIN'*, the group was writing most of its own material. With Brigati usually composing the lyrics, and Cavaliere the music, the group landed its first major self-penned hit with "Lonely Too Long." Now attired in paisley, Edwardian clothing, the renamed Rascals enjoyed sellout tours throughout 1967.

But tensions grew when Cavaliere began seeking spiritual guidance from the swami Satchinanda. Assuming the leadership role in the group, Cavaliere further alienated his formerly equal-footed bandmates.

Taking a stylistic turn, the Rascals's fourth album, *ONCE UPON A DREAM* (1968), was highlighted by the hit "It's Wonderful." In place of Cavaliere's trademark Hammond B-3 organ riffs, the Rascals were experimenting with Eastern-influenced sitars.

With the group's fortunes waning by 1969, Cavaliere told writer Edward Kiersh: "we were going so high up we lost control. Everything was happening too quickly. The notoriety overcomes you, the money, the wild parties, the women, the [fans] screaming, the constant pressure to produce. . . . It ruined us" (p. 154). Unhappy with his role as sideman, Brigati resigned from the Rascals in 1971, with Cornish following soon after.

Leaving Atlantic for Columbia Records, the Rascals experimented with jazz. Employing session players from the Crusaders and Paul Butterfield, the group's final album, *THE ISLAND OF REAL* (1972), bombed. Dropped by their record label, they disbanded.

Pursuing other projects, none of the former Rascals would match their previous success. Cornish and Danelli formed Bulldog (landing a minor hit in 1972 with the hit single, "No") and then Fotomaker with former Raspberries guitarist Wally Bryson. Cavaliere found only moderate success as a solo artist, his best effort coming with 1980's *CASTLES IN THE AIR* (highlighted by the hit single "Only a Lonely Heart Sees"). Brigati, in the mid-1970s, joined his brother, David, in a disco band. In the mid-1980s, Danelli joined Steven Van Zandt's band, the Disciples of Soul.

Following a reunion (minus Brigati) at the Atlantic Records 40th Anniversary

concert at Madison Square Garden in May 1988, the Rascals regrouped for a summer tour. Disbanding after several months, the Rascals splintered over Cavaliere's legal ownership the group's name.

Returning to music in 1994, Cavaliere updated his classic Hammond B-3 organ sound on the Don Was co-produced solo album *DREAMS IN MOTION*. In 1995, Cavaliere joined the International Ringo Starr All Star Band, touring with Mark Farner, Billy Preston, and others.

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