

# The Kinks

One of the great bands of the rock & roll era, the Kinks pioneered hard rock with such wild early ravers as "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night," singles that inspired such peers as **the Who** and **David Bowie** while also pointing the way forward for punk and metal. That turned out to be the first act in a career that ran into the 1990s, making them the only British Invasion band outside of **the Rolling Stones** to last that long. Where **the Stones** always occupied center stage, the Kinks operated on the margins, both by accident and design. Lead singer/songwriter **Ray Davies** fashioned himself as an observer of human behavior, developing a gift for character and commentary that flourished on such mid-'60s singles as "Dedicated Follower of Fashion" and "Sunny Afternoon." As their peers indulged themselves in trippy psychedelia, the Kinks embraced the idiosyncrasies of British culture on **The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society**, a record that helped shape the sound and aesthetic of indie rock in the decades to come. The group may have been outsiders, especially during a stretch in the '70s when **Davies** pushed the band to record elaborate rock operas, yet the Kinks always belonged to the mainstream, managing to bring "Lola" into the Top Ten in 1970 before settling into a long decade on the road where they cultivated a fervent fan base in America. This hard work paid off in the early '80s when the exuberant nostalgia of "Come Dancing" rode an MTV endorsement into the Top Ten, giving the band another decade of work. Over those ten years, the Kinks were eventually whittled down to the core of **Ray Davies** and his brother **Dave**, siblings who battled but usually found common ground in the band. The pair split in the mid-'90s, just as Brit-pop pushed their influence to the forefront, but rumors of a reunion continued to circulate as late as the 2020s, when both brothers said they were collaborating on new music.

Throughout their long, varied career, the core of the Kinks remained **Ray** and **Dave Davies**, who were born and raised in Muswell Hill, London. In their teens, the brothers began playing skiffle and rock & roll. Soon, they recruited a schoolmate of **Ray's**, **Peter Quaife**, to play with them; like the **Davies** brothers, **Quaife** played guitar, but he switched to bass. By the summer of 1963, the group had decided to call itself **the Ravens** and had recruited a new drummer, **Mickey Willet**. Eventually, their demo tape reached **Shel Talmy**, an American record producer who was under contract to Pye Records. **Talmy** helped the band land a contract with Pye in 1964. Before signing to the label, **the Ravens** replaced drummer **Willet** with **Mick Avory**.

The Ravens recorded their debut single, a cover of **Little Richard's** "Long Tall Sally," in January 1964. Before the single was released, the group changed their name to the Kinks. "Long Tall Sally" was released in February of 1964 and failed to chart, as did their second single, "You Still Want Me." The band's third single, "You Really Got Me," was much noisier and dynamic, featuring a savage, fuzz-toned two-chord riff and a frenzied solo from **Dave Davies**. Not only was the final version the blueprint for the Kinks' early sound, but scores of groups used the heavy power chords as a foundation for their own work. "You Really Got Me" reached number one within a month of its release; released on Reprise in the U.S., the single climbed into the Top Ten. "All Day and All of the Night," the group's fourth single, was released late in

1964 and it rose all the way to number two; in America, it hit number seven. During this time, the band also produced two full-length albums and several EPs.

breakneck pace, they were touring relentlessly, as well, which caused much tension within the band. At the conclusion of their summer 1965 American tour, the Kinks were banned from re-entering the United States by the American government for unspecified reasons. For four years, they were prohibited from returning to the U.S., which not only meant that the group was deprived of the world's largest music market, but that they were effectively cut off from the musical and social upheavals of the late '60s. Consequently, **Ray Davies'** songwriting grew more introspective and nostalgic, relying more on overtly English musical influences such as music hall, country, and English folk, than the rest of his British contemporaries. The Kinks' next album, **The Kink Kontroversy**, demonstrated the progression in **Davies'** songwriting. "Sunny Afternoon" was one of **Davies'** wry social satires and the song was the biggest hit of the summer of 1966 in the U.K., reaching number one. "Sunny Afternoon" was a teaser for the band's great leap forward, **Face to Face**, a record that featured a vast array of musical styles. In May of 1967, they returned with "Waterloo Sunset," a ballad that reached number two in the U.K. in the spring of 1967.

1967, **Something Else by the Kinks** continued the progressions of **Face to Face**. Despite the band's musical growth, their chart performance was beginning to stagnate. Following the lackluster performance of **Something Else**, the Kinks rushed out a new single, "Autumn Almanac," which became another big U.K. hit. Released in the spring of 1968, "Wonderboy" was the band's first single not to crack the Top Ten since "You Really Got Me." They recovered somewhat with "Days," but their commercial decline was evident by the lack of success of their next LP. Released in the fall of 1968, **The Village Green Preservation Society** was the culmination of **Ray Davies'** increasingly nostalgic tendencies. While the album was unsuccessful, it was well-received by critics, particularly in the U.S.

band's lack of success, and he left by the end of the year, replaced by **John Dalton**. In early 1969, the American ban upon the Kinks was lifted, leaving them free to tour the U.S. for the first time in four years. Before they began the tour, the Kinks released **Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)**. Like its two predecessors, **Arthur** contained distinctly British lyrical and musical themes, and it was only a modest success. As they were recording the follow-up to **Arthur**, the Kinks expanded their lineup to include keyboardist **John Gosling**. The first appearance of **Gosling** on a Kinks record was "Lola." Featuring a harder rock foundation than their last few singles, "Lola" was a Top Ten hit in both the U.K. and the U.S. Released in the fall of 1970, **Lola Versus Powerman & the Moneygoround, Pt. 1** was their most successful record since the mid-'60s in both the U.S. and U.K., helping the band become concert favorites in the U.S.

expired in early 1971, leaving them free to pursue a new record contract. By the end of 1971, the Kinks had secured a five-album deal with RCA Records, which brought them a million-dollar advance. Released in late 1971, **Muswell Hillbillies**, the group's first album for RCA, marked a return to the nostalgia of the Kinks' late-'60s albums, only with more pronounced country and music hall influences. The album failed to be the commercial blockbuster RCA had hoped for. A few months after the release of **Muswell Hillbillies**, Reprise released a double-album compilation called **The Kink Kronikles**, which outsold their RCA debut. **Everybody's in**

**Showbiz** (1973), a double-record set consisting of one album of studio tracks and another of live material, was a disappointment in the U.K., although the album was more successful in the U.S.

blown rock opera called **Preservation**. When the first installment of the opera finally appeared in late 1973, it was harshly criticized and given a cold reception by the public. **Act 2** appeared in the summer of 1974; the sequel received worse treatment than its predecessor. **Davies** began another musical, *Starmaker*, for the BBC; the project eventually metamorphosed into **Soap Opera**, which was released in the spring of 1975. Despite poor reviews, **Soap Opera** was a more commercially successful record than its predecessor. In 1976, the Kinks recorded **Davies'** third straight rock opera, **Schoolboys in Disgrace**, which rocked harder than any album they released on RCA.

signed with Arista, and refashioned themselves as a hard rock band. Bassist **John Dalton** left the group near the completion of their debut Arista album; he was replaced by **Andy Pyle**. **Sleepwalker**, the Kinks' first album for the label, became a major hit in the U.S. As the band was completing the follow-up to **Sleepwalker**, **Pyle** left the group and was replaced by the returning **Dalton**. **Misfits**, the band's second Arista album, was also a U.S. success. After a British tour, **Dalton** left the band again, along with keyboardist **John Gosling**; bassist **Jim Rodford** and keyboardist **Gordon Edwards** filled the vacancies. Soon, the band was playing arenas in the United States. Even though punk rockers like **the Jam** and **the Pretenders** were covering Kinks songs in the late '70s, the group was becoming more blatantly commercial with each release, culminating in the heavy rock of **Low Budget** (1979), which became their biggest American success, peaking at number 11. Their next album, **Give the People What They Want**, appeared in late 1981; the record peaked at number 15 and went gold. For most of 1982, the band was on tour. In the spring of 1983, "Come Dancing" became the group's biggest American hit since "Tired of Waiting for You," thanks to the video's repeated exposure on MTV; in the U.S., the song peaked at number six, in the U.K. it climbed to number 12. **State of Confusion** followed the release of "Come Dancing," and it was another success, peaking at number 12 in the U.S. For the remainder of 1983, **Ray Davies** worked on a film project, **Return to Waterloo**, which caused considerable tension between himself and his brother. Instead of breaking up, the Kinks merely reshuffled their lineup, but there was a major casualty: **Mick Avory**, the band's drummer for 20 years, was fired and replaced by **Bob Henrit**. As **Ray** finished post-production duties on **Return to Waterloo**, he wrote the next Kinks album, **Word of Mouth**. Released in late 1984, the album was similar in tone to the last few Kinks records, but it was a commercial disappointment and began a period of decline for the band; they never released another record that cracked the Top 40.

they would record for Arista. In early 1986, the band signed with MCA in the U.S. and London in the U.K. **Think Visual**, their first album for their new label, was released in late 1986. It was a mild success but there were no hit singles from the record. The following year, the Kinks released another live album, appropriately titled **The Road**, which spent a brief time on the charts. Two years later, the Kinks released their last studio record for MCA, **UK Jive**. During 1989, keyboardist **Ian Gibbons** left the band. The Kinks were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1990, but the induction did not help revive their career. In 1991, a compilation of their MCA records, **Lost & Found (1986-1989)**, appeared, signaling that their contract with the label had expired. Later in the year, the band signed with Columbia and released an EP

called **Did Ya**, which didn't chart. Their first album for Columbia, **Phobia**, arrived in 1993 to fair reviews but poor sales. By this time, only **Ray** and **Dave Davies** remained from the original lineup. In 1994, the band was dropped from Columbia, leaving the group to release the live **To the Bone** on an independent label in the U.K.; they were left without a record label in the U.S.

Despite a lack of commercial success, the band's public profile began to rise in 1995, as the group was hailed as an influence on several of the most popular British bands of the decade, including **Blur** and **Oasis**. **Ray Davies** was soon on popular television shows again, acting as these band's godfather and promoting his autobiography, **X-Ray**, which was published in early 1995 in the U.K. **Dave Davies'** autobiography, **Kink**, was published in the spring of 1996.

Rumors of a Kinks reunion began circulating in the early 2000s, only to be quieted following **Dave Davies'** stroke in June 2004. **Dave** would later recover fully, spurring another round of reunion rumors in the late 2000s, yet nothing materialized. **Peter Quaife**, the band's original bassist, died of kidney failure on June 23, 2010. Following his death, **Ray** started demo'ing material with **Mick Avory**, and **Dave** slowly became part of the project. As the band prepared a 50th Anniversary reissue of **The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society**, the Davies brothers and **Avory** confirmed they were working on a new Kinks album -- the first the drummer was involved with since 1984's **Word of Mouth**. Before any new music appeared, the Kinks celebrated the 50th Anniversaries of both **Arthur** and **Lola** with deluxe-edition reissues, which appeared in 2019 and 2020, respectively. The anniversary editions continued in 2022, when **Muswell Hillbillies** and **Everybody's in Showbiz** -- the first two albums released under their RCA contract -- were paired in a deluxe box set.