

Jani Ojala

The Top 100 Albums of the 1960s

"My Beautiful Mine" - My favorite albums from 1960-1969

THE TOP 100 ALBUMS OF THE 1960s

My Beautiful Mine

Jani Ojala

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OPENING WORDS

It was the decade my parents were born in.

You're not doing anybody else but yourself a favor by exploring the 60s; no amount of said exploration is too much. If there ever was a definitive time of the Western world changing, re-evaluating the status quo and making social change, forward-thinking strides in art and entertainment, new art-forms and expansions on older templates that forever redefine the way we look at *art itself*, the sixties were **it**. The sixties were **it**.

Take a look at some of the first albums coming out in 1960, now look at the latest album you know from 1969. **No** time in music has been so **DEFINED BY CHANGE** as this decade.

I took the research/roundup for this project, on a year-by-year basis. As that progress chugged along I realized I should post top-50s representing every year, as markers of my progress!

In my blog-post about the best albums of 1960 I said: "These albums were *particularly fun* to check out in-service of the bigger goal here. [...] 1960, man. The turn of the decade, a modest sixty years ago. Good, mostly innocent music that comes in concise packaging and is easy to digest. Gotta love the early sixties." (January 30, 2020)

When I wrote about 1961 I said: "This was easily one of the best years of music I've ever experienced. There were points I couldn't believe the **pace** this great music was hitting me with. Definitely blew 1960 out of the water, and made me *distressedly* curious and eager about seeing what's still to come." (January 31, 2020)

When I wrote about 1962 I said: "There was what came before the late sixties, and there was what came after it. I'm still eagerly awaiting the time when I get to '66-'69. [...] But 1962 disproved the only negative inclination I had in my own mind about the early sixties. These were **not** simple times. This was a **diverse** year." (March 8, 2020)

When I wrote about 1963: "Whereas 1962's lesson was the sealing of the fact that the early sixties were **not** a simplistic time... 1963 just kept on uppercutting me with incredible music, antagonizing and patronizing me for ever having doubted its all-powerfulness. [...] '63 isn't only remembered for packing in huge amounts of Latin experiments and thousands of renditions of the song *Desafinado*. Surf Rock was also at its' most active, and at its' peak of quality. [...] **Blue Note Records** stepped in kinda like the task force up in this bitch. [...] **Grant Green** felt the spirit and soared right into my heart with his soulful manifesto and his *Latin bit*. **Dinah Washington** switched arrangers and revolutionized her whole sound. **Sam Cooke** found that rasp in his voice. **Henry Mancini** kept being great, the **Berlin Philharmonic** finished their cycle of **Beethoven**-symphonies, and **The Beatles** debuted. And of course...
...**Charles Mingus**." (April 17, 2020)

When I wrote about 1964: "**1964 expanded on everything**. If 1962 proved to me that my suppositions of simplicity *back in my ignorant days* were entirely ill-informed, and if 1963 kept uppercutting me with that same realization, 1964 was an expansion of all the reasons why I turned around on this period, and brought new angles and dimension *to* that belief. [...] 1964: the halfway point. The year **Atlantic** milked their previous Jazz rosters for that scrilla, the year **The Kinks** and **The Rolling Stones** debuted, the year the **Motown Records**-Sound was introduced to the masses, the year when

originality was the rule, and pop-standards from the 1930s-40s were the exception, *for the first time in known memory*. Blue Note kept being dominant. [...] And of course...

...Something came along, that finally got me into Blues.” (May 10, 2020)

About 1965: ”Some were on a come-up, some made their final marks. British Rhythm & Blues and Garage Rock were on the rise, and you could *smell it in the air*_.

You could smell it in the air.

Exotica and Space Age Pop didn’t *die*, but you could feel their influence start to wither as **Bob Dylan** paved some new artistic paths, going thoroughly misunderstood throughout the process [...] That one little charming man from Georgia, had come out of the woodworks the previous year, too. But I wasn’t quite sure about him. I found an amazing amount of talent and quality in his 1964 debut, but wasn’t sure if his touch was gonna get more ”hands-on” in the future albums or not.

...

...My doubts were eradicated.” (August 14, 2020)

About 1966: ”It was still in the air.

Blue Note had the highest batting-average on the majority of my top fifties from this decade. What was left for the biggest powerhouse in music itself, to accomplish?

Well world-domination, of course!

Other things were happening too. Everybody from Brazil and their mother seemed to be making good music. For some reason, Modern Classical music of all streams and venues had a surprisingly vibrant go-around-the sun. The first incarnation of Psychedelic Rock was already making waves but the lumbering beast was still waiting patiently, for its’ time.” (October 26, 2020)

1967: "Psychedelic Rock was already making waves but the lumbering beast was still waiting patiently, for its' time.

What a thing to say. This year right after 1966, **Jimi Hendrix** and The Beatles and **The Doors** and all types of vibrant characters – who nowadays have their names echoing in the halls of the musical Infinite, in-large-part due to these *very* contributions to music – helped make Rock music a new, serious and somewhat competitive landscape that had formed as suddenly as night turns into morning.

I couldn't have been more excited when I was done with 1966 and knew that what was ahead of me – *all that's left* in my research-process – were the three years of music I've been most-eager to deeply explore, for a long time now.

None of this is said to de-value all my endeared takeaways about earlier years, all the music that found itself etched into my heart and my state-of-being, music I fell utterly in love with. But *Jesus Christ. 1967.*

A thing that could alone have made this year remarkable, was that '67 is when **Jimi Hendrix** debuted, **Al Green** debuted, **James Carr**, **Pink Floyd** debuted, The Doors debuted, **Sly & The Family Stone** debuted, **Leonard Cohen** debuted, **Van Morrison** (unwillingly) debuted as a solo artist.

A thing that could alone have made this year remarkable, was how the persistent wind in Blue Note's sails *still* managed to get that house in the top-tiers where it stood at the top, the last two years, *towering over the crowd*. This label could *still* do no wrong in 1967.

A thing that could alone have made this year remarkable, was how **Antônio Carlos Jobim** kept dominating. He had *three albums* out of '67's Top 50, which says much more than when **John Coltrane** did those numbers in my earlier yearly-lists because the competition, sadly, wasn't as hardcore in '60-'61 as it is here. One thing you need to understand about Mr. Jobim, the singular individual *embodiment of the sound of Brazil*, is that this man already had more songs in the Great American Songbook of standards than probably anybody else –

certainly more from the 50s and 60s. All of his famous songs came before this year. This year he just *got a brand new bag*, and **still** dominated a year the way he did.

A thing that could alone have made this year remarkable, was how much obscure releases of very regional music hit my radar and absolutely knocked my socks off, amidst all this other craziness goin' on.

And what else... **The Velvet Underground** and **Nico** debuted. John Coltrane put his horn down for good. Numerous incredible soundtracks, creative energy blowin' out of the Summer of Love's collective *wazoo*." (November 30, 2020)

1968: "The famous Summer of Love was over but all things socially going on, despite taking darker turns on-occasion, yielded in largely expected new inspiration. Young people everywhere had gathered around the creative space that the turn into the late-sixties, had established and made impossible *not to* notice.

1968 came, and now it was time for artists to *expand*. Expand on their expression, expand on their output, the sound created by studio-manipulation which was starting to get looked at differently *everywhere* thanks to recent giant-releases like ***Pet Sounds*** and ***Strange Days***.

There was no stopping 1968. Across all genres, it was a joyride of bright new talents and colorful new ideas. It was in the artwork, it was in the performance and in the execution. Despite being one of the most turmoil-fueled years of the mid-20th century, and all-around a time of uncertainty and change... maybe even *because* of it... 1968 was a year of giant creative steps.

Blue Note kept chugging along ahead of everybody else. Crazy Rock acts like The Jimi Hendrix Experience, The Doors, **The Chocolate Watchband**, **Big Brother & The Holding Company**, Pink Floyd, **Crazy World of Arthur Brown**, were laying down creative landmarks that would be looked at as representing the times just as much

as *their own definitive stages*, as history looks back on them now. [...] The greatest sci-fi film of all time got released. Starring a character named David Bowman on an incredible odyssey, it would set ever-the-memorable precedent for a coming year which everybody knew – it was **in the air** – would be *colossal*.

And of course...

...there was the decade's best album." (March 4, 2021)

1969: "Nine 10/10 albums.

9.

Good years, incredible ones that I heard hundreds of records from, prior to this, at most have managed like five. 1969 managed *NINE*.

The free love-movement and the creative new waves surrounding it were at their peak. Hollywood had changed, music had gotten way more complex in the past two years, more mysterious, more inspired by the world around it. Woodstock (for better or for worse) happened in August. A man walked on the moon and **David Bowie's** *Space Oddity* was playing from radios.

Progressive Rock as a standalone subgenre was basically **created** in England.

Miles Davis ushered in a whole new **age** of Jazz music – something the late sixties had been building towards with their under-hand, but needed somebody to really *announce*. Jazz Fusion was *here*. The old, acoustic way of doing things was going to be *over* for a time. The complete takeover of rich, electric textures and deep rhythms, is easily the biggest revolution Jazz experienced since the emergence of Modal Jazz a decade ago. Some could take that comparison even *further* back, to when the 1940s made it clear Bebop was the new thing.

King Crimson debuted. **Nick Drake** debuted. **Led Zeppelin** debuted. **Frank Zappa** (as a solo artist) debuted. **The Meters** debuted. **Tony Williams** debuted. **Roberta Flack** debuted. **Jukka Tolonen** debuted. **1969 is the greatest year of recorded music.**" (April 13, 2021)

I had more and more to say, the more I heard. But truthfully... none of the things I'll say about this decade, are gonna be more valuable to you than finding out things about the history and legacy of all of these albums, some of them celebrated and some forgotten, some boundary-pushing and some appeal-driven... some trendy, some influential... I forgot what I was saying.

Welcome to reading my top 100 albums of the 1960s.

It was the decade my parents were born in.

1,700 albums I listened to, as research. 7 albums a day, with very few off-days, for roughly 1,5 years. Followed by spending a summer reading stories and backgrounds.

36 of these albums have a 10/10-rating from me; the other 64 sitting at 9.5/10. All in all this was way too selective.

All in all I'm a little bit exhausted.

So come over to the window. Let me tell you about some albums again.

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