

TV THEMES

of the '60s

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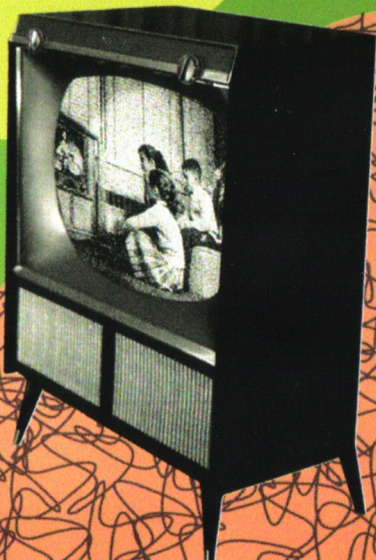
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Hard-boiled cops. Soft-hearted dads. Curvaceous genies. Funny monsters. Even a talking horse. The television universe of the 1960s required a certain suspension of disbelief—and not just in terms of Mister Ed or I Dream of Jeannie. (Was no one the least bit suspicious about Bonanza's Ben Cartwright being a widower three times over?) Yet peoples' remembrances of television in the '60s are very real, due, in no small part, to the distinctive theme songs that helped transport audiences to worlds ranging from the no-nonsense, behind-the-Iron Curtain espionage of Mission: Impossible to the all-nonsense, behind-the-mask camp lunacy of Batman.

At the beginning of the 1960s, there was no hipper job on television than private eye, and few private eyes were hipper than the ones whose Hollywood office bore the unforgettable address 77 Sunset Strip. Stu Bailey (Efrem Zimbalist Jr.) and Jeff Spencer (Roger Smith) were ex-government undercover agents who were often joined in their capers by the slang-talking parking lot attendant from next door, Gerald Lloyd Kookson III—or, as actor Edd Byrnes himself ultimately became known, "Kookie." With its beatnik-styled finger snaps and post-big band horn arrangement, Mack David and Jerry Livingston's jazzy theme **77 Sunset Strip** perfectly captured the breezy,

swinging mood of the show.

Equally hip and clever, but in a far darker way, was Peter Gunn, the atmospheric private eye program with the riveting **Peter Gunn Theme** by composer-conductor Henry Mancini, who also contributed original music that was heard in the jazz club where Gunn (played by suave Craig Stevens) went to hear his girlfriend, Edie (sultry Lola Albright), sing. In fact, Mancini's music proved to be such an integral part of the action that two albums of music from the program were released during its three-year run.

Another veteran composer-conductor who helped a show get rolling, literally, was Nelson Riddle, whose **Route 66 Theme** used a repetitive piano figure and loping horn lines to punch up shots of car wheels spinning along open, endless highways—the main feature of Route 66, which starred George Maharis and future Adam 12 cop Martin Milner as two young men in search of adventure and themselves.

Another show with a numerical title was **Hawaii Five-O**, the name of the crack detective unit presided over by rugged Steve McGarrett, whose inevitable edict to right-hand man Danny Williams—“Book ‘em, Danno”—remains one of TV's all-time classic lines. And, speaking of lines, it was the much-fabled stretch of surf known as the Hawaiian



pipeline that was shown, to the tune of Mort Stevens' splashy **Hawaii Five-O** theme, over the opening credits. The Pacific—or at least stock ocean footage—was also the backdrop to *Adventures in Paradise*, an early-'60s program sound-tracked by Jerry Byrd's tropical-accented **Theme from Adventures in Paradise** and starring Gardner McKay as the thrill-seeking skipper of the *Tiki*, a schooner that did most of its sailing in the Hollywood back lot where the series was filmed.

The adventures were rarely in paradise for the *Mission: Impossible* gang, the ultra-secret group of covert-operating government agents led by Jim Phelps (Peter Graves, brother of *Gunsmoke*'s James Arness). But, whether toppling dictators or foiling assassination attempts, the death-defying actions of the *Impossible Missions Force* were always punctuated by Lalo Schifrin's stutter-steppingly tense **Mission: Impossible** music, probably the most recognized theme song in television history.

While the plot-thickened intrigue on shows such as *Mission: Impossible* and *The Saint* (the British-produced action series that opened with Edwin Astley's **Main Theme from The Saint** and starred Roger Moore as a sharp-witted rogue who righted wrongs by swindling swindlers) often made it difficult to tell the good guys from the bad, no such problems existed on *Batman* or

The Green Hornet, two series drawn from comic books whose characters were painted in some of the broadest strokes ever seen on television. Propelled by the rocking **Batman Theme**, which was almost as minimal as the show's plots, the "Dynamic Duo" of Caped Crusader Bruce Wayne and his sidekick and ward, Dick Grayson, battled to rid Gotham City of such dastardly scoundrels as the Joker and the Penguin. While *Batman* and *Robin* often had to rely on their (POW!) fists to (BOOM!) fight crime, the *Green Hornet* left the hand-to-hand combat to his manservant, Kato, played by kung fu master Bruce Lee, whose karate chops and leg kicks came as fast and furious as trumpeter Al Hirt's assault on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumble Bee* in **Green Hornet Theme**.

The Addams Family came not from a comic book but from cartoonist Charles Addams' macabre drawings in *The New Yorker*, where the gloriously demented Gomez, Morticia and company merrily frolicked amongst the guillotines and gallows of their dungeon-like home. While Victor Mizzy's **The Addams Family: Main Theme** may have described them as "creepy," "spooky" and, memorably, "altogether ooky," the Addams were weirdly lovable—as were Herman, Lily and the rest of the residents at 1313 Mockingbird Lane, *The Munsters*, whose horror movie-parodying **Theme from The Munsters** became a garage-rock staple.



The Monkees weren't a garage-rock band; they just played one on TV. And until the Beatles-aping "Prefab Four" actually learned how to play together as a group, most of their music was written, arranged and produced by others—including Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart, who composed **Theme from The Monkees** well before Micky Dolenz (who ultimately sang it) or any of the other Monkees were even hired. Speaking of TV-invented rock bands, The Partridge Family was inspired by the real-life Cowsills, the mother-and-kids pop-rock band that sang **Love American Style** for the comedy anthology show. Johnny Cash was another recording artist with a TV sideline; he mournfully sang **The Rebel** for the series about ex-Confederate soldier Johnny Yuma, who wandered through the West after the Civil War ended.

One act did such a good job with a theme song that they became part of the show: bluegrass legends Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, whose infectious 1963 hit, **The Ballad of Jed Clampett**, led to regular appearances (as themselves) on the long-running *The Beverly Hillbillies*. **Petticoat Junction** was the title song for the show about widowed Kate Bradley who, without a

fortune like Jed Clampett's, had to scrape by with her three fetching daughters (Billie Jo, Bobbie Jo and Betty Jo) as owners of the Shady Rest Hotel—known to the residents of Hooterville as Petticoat Junction. (Bradley was played by veteran actress Bea Benaderet, who was the original voice of Betty Rubble on *The Flintstones*. Its cheery theme, **Meet the**

Flintstones, was not yet composed when the program—the first-ever prime time animated series—debuted.) (For that matter, neither was Hugo Montenegro's **I Dream of Jeannie**, which replaced another tune to become the show's theme song in 1967.)

Sixties television certainly saw its share of single parents. Besides the aforementioned Ben Cartwright, patriarch of the Ponderosa Ranch (the giddy-yupping, cattle-punching theme song **Bonanza** was written by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans; Livingston also performed the clip-clopping **Mister Ed**), there was *My Three Sons* dad Steve Douglas

who, as played by onetime Hollywood leading man Fred MacMurray, displayed a saintly amount of patience and understanding. The **My Three Sons** theme was composed by Frank DeVol, a musician-actor whom '70s TV viewers might recall as bandleader Happy Kyne on the Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman spin-off, *Fernwood 2-Night*.

And, of course, there was *The Andy Griffith Show*'s Andy Taylor: father of Opie, nephew of Aunt Bee, cousin of Barney Fife and sheriff of Mayberry, North Carolina—not to mention a homespun philosopher whose easygoing rural manner was neatly evoked by Earle Hagen and Herb Spencer's whistling **The Andy Griffith Theme**, which conjured up

images of country roads, fishing holes and skimming rocks.

Dobie Gillis, around whom *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* revolved, had two parents, but given his ever-rocky relationship with his dad, grocer Herbert T. ("I gotta kill that boy—I just gotta"), he might have been better off with only kindly mom Winnie to guide him through adolescence—an adolescence that, as Lionel Newman's theme song **Dobie** accurately described, found him with only one thing on his hormone-driven mind: girls. In fact, had Dobie appeared on one of the many popular TV game shows of the 1960s—like, say, *Match Game*, whose jaunty theme, **A Swingin' Safari**, was a hit for Billy Vaughn in 1962—chances are he would have answered any question with the name "Thalia Menninger," since she was just about all that poor Dobie ever had on his mind. Any red-blooded American teenage boy who spent his high school years sitting next to Tuesday Weld (who played Thalia) might have done exactly the same thing. The '60s were like that.

—Billy Altman





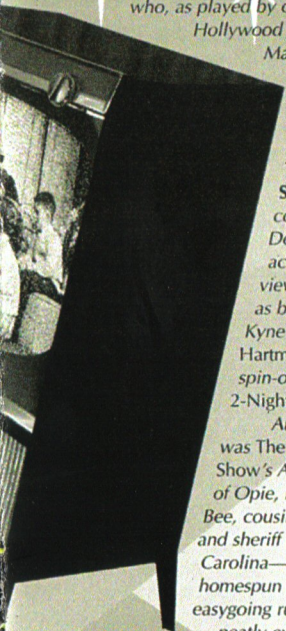
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**The My Three
Sons** theme was
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DeVol, a musician-
actor whom '70s TV
viewers might recall
as bandleader Happy
Kyne on the Mary
Hartman, Mary Hartman
spin-off, Fernwood
2-Night.

And, of course, there
was The Andy Griffith
Show's Andy Taylor: father
of Opie, nephew of Aunt
Bee, cousin of Barney Fife
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DISCOGRAPH

1 Bonanza David Rose and His Concert Orchestra

• Music and lyrics by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans. Jay Livingston Music/MCA Music Publishing, A Division of MCA Inc. ASCAP. MGM 12965 (1960). Under license from PolyGram Special Markets, a division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. Did not chart.

2 The Ballad of Jed Clampett Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs with the Foggy Mountain Boys

• Music and lyrics by Paul Henning. Carolintone Music Company, Inc. BMI. Columbia 42606 (1962). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a division of Sony Music, a group of Sony Music Entertainment Inc. No. 44*

3 The Addams Family: Main Theme Victor Mizzy and His Orchestra and Chorus

• Music and lyrics by Victor Mizzy. Union Music Co. ASCAP. RCA 8477 (1964). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. Did not chart.

4 Route 66 Theme Nelson Riddle and His Orchestra

• Music and lyrics by Nelson Riddle. Screen Gems-EMI Music Inc. BMI. Capitol 4741 (1962). Courtesy Capitol Records, under license from EMI-Capitol Music Special Markets. No. 30*

5 The Rebel Johnny Cash

• Music and lyrics by Richard Markowitz and Andrew J. Fenady. Warner Bros. Inc. ASCAP. Columbia 41995 (1961). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a division of Sony Music, a group of Sony Music Entertainment Inc. Did not chart.

6 Peter Gunn Theme Henry Mancini and His Orchestra

• Music and lyrics by Henry Mancini. Northridge Music Inc. ASCAP. RCA 7460 (1959). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. Did not chart.

7 77 Sunset Strip Don Ralke

• Music and lyrics by Jerry Livingston and Mack David. Hallmark Music Co./PolyGram International Publishing, Inc. ASCAP. Warner Bros. 5025 (1959). Produced under license from Warner Bros. Records Inc. Did not chart.

8 A Swingin' Safari Billy Vaughn and His Orchestra

• Music and lyrics by Bert Kaempfert. Screen Gems-EMI Music Inc./GEMA. BMI. Dot 16374 (1962). No. 13*

9 The Andy Griffith Theme Andy Griffith

• Music and lyrics by Earle Hagen and Herb Spencer. Larrabee Music, Inc. BMI. Capitol 4539 (1961). Courtesy Capitol Records, under license from EMI-Capitol Music Special Markets. Did not chart.

10 Theme from The Munsters Jack Marshall

• Music and lyrics by Jack Marshall and Bob Mosher. Duchess Music Corporation. BMI. Capitol 5288 (1964). Courtesy Capitol Records, under license from EMI-Capitol Music Special Markets. Did not chart.

11 Petticoat Junction Curt Massey

• Music and lyrics by Paul Henning and Curt Massey. Carolintone Music Company, Inc. BMI. Capitol 5135 (1964). Courtesy Capitol Records, under license from EMI-Capitol Music Special Markets. Did not chart.

12 Dobie Lionel Newman and His Orchestra with Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires

• Music and lyrics by Lionel Newman and Max Shulman. Weiss-Barry Inc. BMI. Decca 31066 (1960). Did not chart.

13 Mission: Impossible Lalo Schifrin

• Music and lyrics by Lalo Schifrin. Bruin Music Company. BMI. Dot 17059 (1968). No. 41*

14 Hawaii Five-O Mort Stevens and His Orchestra

• Music and lyrics by Mort Stevens. EMI April Music Inc. EMI April Music Inc. ASCAP. Capitol LP 410 (1970). Courtesy Capitol Records, under license from EMI-Capitol Music Special Markets. Did not chart.

15 Jeannie Hugo Montenegro, His Orchestra and Chorus

• Music and lyrics by Hugo Montenegro and Buddy Kaye. Screen Gems-EMI Music Inc. BMI. RCA 9050 (1967). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. Did not chart.

16 Theme from The Monkees The Monkees

• Music and lyrics by Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart. Screen Gems-EMI Music. BMI. Colgems LP 101 (1966). Licensed from Rhino Records Inc. Did not chart.



- 22 Meet the Flintstones** *Hoyt Curtin* • Music and lyrics by Joseph Barbera, Hoyt Curtin and William Hanna. Barbera-Hanna Music. BMI. Courtesy of Hanna-Barbera Productions, Inc. Did not chart.
- 28 Batman Theme** *Neal Hefti* • Music and lyrics by Neal Hefti. EMI Miller Catalog Inc. ASCAP. RCA 8755 (1966). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. No. 35*
- 29 Mister Ed** *Jay Livingston* • Music and lyrics by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans. Jay Livingston Music/MCA Music Publishing, A Division of MCA Inc. ASCAP. Courtesy of Jay Livingston Music. Did not chart.
- 30 Love American Style** *The Cowsills* • Music and lyrics by Arnold Margolin and Charles Fox. Bruin Music Company. BMI. MGM 14084 (1969). Under license from PolyGram Special Markets, a division of PolyGram Group Distribution, Inc. Did not chart.
- 31 My Three Sons** *Frank DeVol* • Music and lyrics by Frank DeVol. WB Music Corp. ASCAP. ABC LP 513 (1965). Did not chart.
- 32 Green Hornet Theme** *Al (He's The King) Hirt* • Music and lyrics by Billy May. EMI Hastings Catalog Inc. BMI. RCA 8925 (1966). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. Did not chart.
- 33 Main Theme from The Saint** *Edwin Astley and His Orchestra* • Music and lyrics by Edwin Astley. EMI Miller Catalog Inc. ASCAP. RCA LP 3631 (1966). Courtesy of BMG Music/The RCA Records Label, under license from BMG Direct Marketing, Inc. Did not chart.
- 34 Theme from Adventures in Paradise** *Jerry Byrd* • Music and lyrics by Lionel Newman. EMI Robbins Catalog Inc. ASCAP. Monument 419 (1960). Under license from Sony Music Special Products, a division of Sony Music, a group of Sony Music Entertainment Inc. No. 97*

*Indicates highest Billboard chart position

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TV Themes of the '60s was produced by Time-Life Music in cooperation with MCA Special Markets & Products, Inc.

The Author: Billy Altman writes about pop music for numerous publications, including *People* and *The New York Times*. A former editor of *Creem*, he is executive producer of the award-winning *RCA Heritage Series*, and teaches a course on music and culture at New York's School of Visual Arts.

Time-Life wishes to thank William L. Schurk of the Music Library and Sound Recordings Archives, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio, for providing valuable reference material.

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9. The Andy Griffith Theme
10. Theme from The Monkees
11. Petticoat Junction
12. Double
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15. Jeannie
16. Theme from the Flintstones
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