

The 1960s & 1970s

THE WRECKING CREW

One of the most important aspects of the 60s was a group of session musicians referred, later on, to as
THE WRECKING CREW



The above photo was taken in Gold Star Studios, Hollywood, California, USA. The studio was owned by David S Gold and Stan Ross. Gold designed and built the studio, which became known for unique and amazing echo chambers. This is the studio where Phil Spector learnt his craft from owner and house engineer Stan Ross. It became the studio where Spector did most of his recording and created his famous “Wall of Sound”.

From left to right in clockwise fashion, [Don Randi](#), [Al De Lory](#), [Carol Kaye](#), [Bill Pitman](#), [Tommy Tedesco](#), Irving Rubins, [Roy Caton](#), [Jay Migliori](#), [Hal Blaine](#), [Steve Douglas](#), and [Ray Pohlman](#)

You should also watch the movie **"The Wrecking Crew"** about these musicians, it is amazing, as are they!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6skLoVroiEg>

Consummate musicians that could play anything brilliantly. Do it in one take. And even contribute significantly to the final song. And do as many as FOUR sessions in one day. Experts at sight reading music. Most of them had formal Jazz or Classical backgrounds. The Jazz background is probably why they were so good at improvisation.

The team began to come together from 1957 and by 1960 it was a thing!

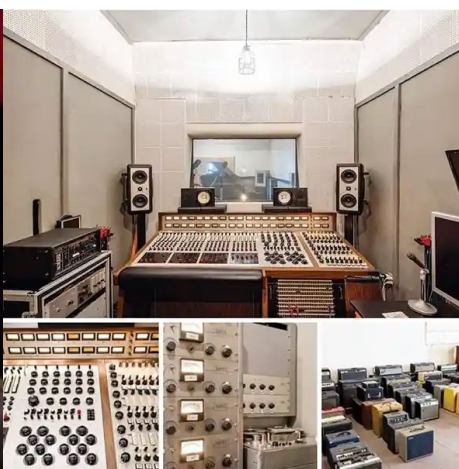
Early members: Hal Blaine (drums), Earl Palmer (drums), Steve Douglas (saxophone), Ray Pohlman (bass and guitar), Howard Roberts (guitar), Howard Roberts (guitar), Irving Cottler (drums), Carol Kaye (guitar, bass)

Gold Star Studios in LA became the focus / gathering point for these musicians. A studio that opened in 1950, but it was from 1958 onward that it started to come into prominence.



They were not really known at the time outside the music industry and probably because record companies wanted you to think that your favourite band played everything themselves.

By 1962 Tommy Tedesco (guitar), Al de Lory (piano), Jimmy Bond (upright bass) had also joined the fold.



The name "The Wrecking Crew" came much later and was popularised by drummer Hal Blaine. He said it related to something said by other purist musicians that they would wreck the music industry.

However, a comment by Bill Aken in 2022, a member of "The Wrecking Crew" gave another version of the name.

“In actuality, it was Phil Spector who originated the Crew’s nickname”. He claimed, “These guys are wrecking my bank account.” and told Bobby, “Call my Wrecking Crew in.”

Phil Spector, who also had been hanging around, began learning his craft from part owner and house engineer, Stan Ross. The other owner and studio designer was David S Gold.

But once Spector formed his own label Philles Records, and began producing artists everything took off – the artists, the studio and The Wrecking Crew. They became Spector’s main house band and contributed significantly to his “Wall of Sound”. Basically it was a wall of musicians. Up to seven guitarists, multiple keyboards etc. And then the huge echo chamber, for which, Gold Star Studios was famous.



More inclusions became Tommy Tedesco (guitar), Al de Lory (piano), Jimmy Bond (upright bass)

The Ronettes “Be My Baby” 1963 recorded at Gold Star Studios had the likes of Hal Blaine (drums), Tommy Tedesco(guitar), Carol Kaye(guitars). It was arranged by Jack Nitsche. The song also featured a full orchestra. The backing vocals were provided by Sonny and Cher (before they were a known act). The song reached #2 on the US charts.

Some of the early artists they worked on for Phil Spector included

[Darlene Love](#), [the Ronettes](#), [The Crystals](#), [Ike and Tina Turner](#) “River Deep, Mountain High” single, [the Righteous Brothers](#),

Early **Cher** albums were recorded at Gold Studios, thus striking up a stronger relationship between her and the musicians at Gold Star Studio.

Early **Beach Boys** albums were also recorded at Gold Studios – this started with their 5th album “Shut Down Vol 2” (1964)featuring the songs “Don’t Worry Baby”, “Fun, Fun, Fun”, “The Warmth of the Sun” (1964), then their 8th album The Beach Boys Today” featuring “Help Me Rhonda” (1965), Summer Days (And Summer Nights) featuring “California Girls” and a re-recording of “Help Me Rhonda” (1965), “Pet Sounds” featuring ALL great songs including “Wouldn’t It Be Nice”, “God Only Knows” and Sloop John B”(1966)

The Beach Boys played nearly everything on their first four albums but by the 5th album this changed. The main focus was the vocals, so when it came to recording, they played very few instruments and it was left to session musicians like THE WRECKING CREW.

Example “Pet Sounds” album (1966) had Hal Blaine on drums, Carol Kaye on bass, Tommy Tedesco on acoustic guitar, Glen Campbell on banjo and guitar, Jim Gordon on drums, Jim Horn on saxophone and clarinet, Larry Knechtel on harpsichord, organ and piano. And the list goes on with over FORTY different musicians working on different songs, and different parts of songs, on the album. Such was the capacity of these musicians



Jim Gordon



Jim Horn



Larry Knechtel

More Links

The Wrecking Crew 2 Video

Featuring Glen Campbell, Earl Palmer, Leland Sklar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9-FfwwXRDg>

The Beach Boys – Good Vibrations – link to musicians on the various sessions. There were so many takes and rewrites. But the end product was something that blew everyone away. Just listen to complexity of production and arrangement, the disciplined and innovative musicianship and just one amazing song!!! #1 Smash Hit.

Link to personnel on the song

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Vibrations#Personnel

Link to the song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdt0SOqPJcg>

“Good Vibrations” lost studio footage link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVISVkbJDA>

Carol Kaye: (bass) – initially playing guitar, she eventually settled back into playing bass from about 1963 onwards. It is estimated that Carol played on over **10,000 recordings** in her 65 year recording career. It was also groundbreaking given she appeared to be the only female in this group of sessions musicians.



They were working as much as 15 hour days and as noted by Carol Kaye, were paid exceedingly well, once stating she was earning more than the president.

Born 1935 (currently aged 90). Born in the state of Washington. The family moved to Wilmington, California early on.

Pre The Wrecking Crew, Kaye was playing in jazz bands when, in 1957, she was approached to do a recording with Sam Cooke. This was her first venture into the studio. Her first realisation was she earned more money for one evening's work in the studio than she did all week playing live in nightclubs. The song she recorded with Sam Cooke was "Summertime" / "You Send Me". This became a national hit in the USA.

In 1958, she was approached to work with a new artist Ritchie Valens on "La Bamba". The studio in which this was being recorded was Gold Star Studios, thus connecting her with the studio and hence subsequent link to Phil Spector.

Some of the artists whose records Carol appeared on include

The Ronettes, The Crystals, The Righteous Brothers, Frank Sinatra, Jan and Dean, The Beach Boys, Sonny and Cher, Bobby Vee, Nancy Sinatra, Simon and Garfunkel, Nat King Cole, The Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, The 5th Dimension, Sonny and Cher, The Everly Brothers, Dusty Springfield, The Supremes, Sam Cooke, The Temptations, Martha and the Vandellas, Ray Charles, Ritchie Valens, Buffalo Springfield, Joe Cocker, Ricky Nelson, John Denver, The Carpenters..... etc etc etc

Interview with Carol Kaye link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZcqi7E4E1w>

Links to the personnel lists for a few of her album credits are below and you will see other musicians from “The Wrecking Crew” list

The Beach Boys “Pet Sounds” – link to musicians on the album

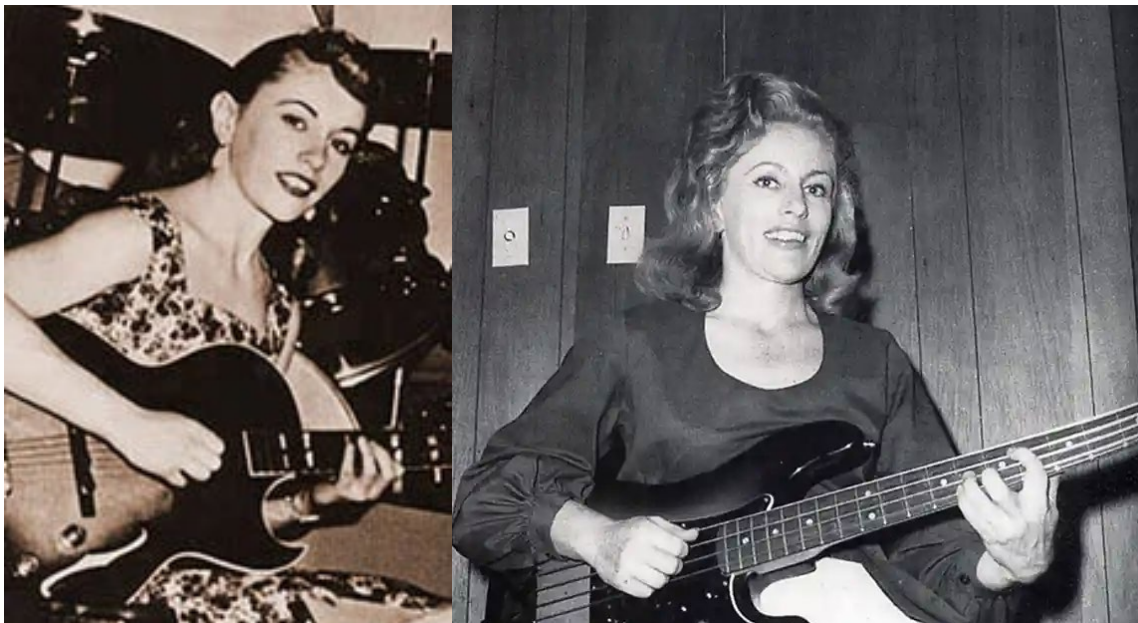
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet_Sounds#Personnel

The Monkees “More of The Monkees”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/More_of_the_Monkees#Personnel

J J Cale “Shades” (1981)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shades_\(J._J._Cale_album\)#Personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shades_(J._J._Cale_album)#Personnel)



Albums

Beach Boys – Today 1965	Neil Young – Neil Young 1968
Cher – Cher 1966	Pet Sounds – The Beach Boys 1966
Cameo – Dusty Springfield 1973	Parsley Sage Rosemary and Time – S&G 1966
More of The Monkees – The Monkees 1967	Shades – J J Cale (1981)



Singles

Bass

Guitar

"Feelin' Alright" – Joe Cocker (1969)	"Summertime" / "You Send Me" – Sam Cooke (1957)
"These Boots Are Made For Walkin'" – Nancy Sinatra (1965)#1 smash hit	"La Bamba" – Ritchie Valens (1958)Top 40 Hit
"Homeward Bound" - Simon and Garfunkel (1966) #5 Hit	"Lets Dance" – Chris Montez (1962) #4 Hit
"River Deep Mountain High" – Ike & Tina Turner (1966)	"Zip-A-Dee Doo-Dah" – Bob B. Soxx & the Blue Jeans (1962)
"I'm A Believer" – The Monkees (1966) #1 Hit	"Da Do Ron Ron" – The Crystals (1963) #3 Hit
"California Girls" – The Beach Boys (1965)	"Then He Kissed Me" – The Crystals (1963) #6 Hit
"Johnny Angel" – Shelley Fabares (1962) <i>Also Glen Campbell(guitar), Hal Blaine(drums) & Darlene Love (backing vocals)</i>	"You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin' " – The Righteous Brothers 1964#1 smash hit
"The Birds And The Bees" – Jewel Akens (1965)#3 Hit	"Unchained Melody" – The Righteous Brothers (1965) #4 Hit
"The Beat Goes On" – Sonny and Cher (1967)#6 Hit	"Good Vibrations" – The Beach Boys (1967)
"The Way We Were" – Barbra Streisand (1973)#1 Smash Hit	



Brian Wilson referred to Carol Kaye as the greatest bass player he had ever met.

As mentioned earlier, it was when she was called to a session at Capitol Records in 1963, to fill in for a no-show bassist that she decided this would be her first instrument.

Her focus was on making hit records and what hook she could contribute to make it so.

She soon became the number one go to bass guitarist.

The Beach Boys frequently wanted Kaye, and she cut numerous songs (including "Good Vibration", "California Girls," "Help Me, Rhonda," and "Heroes and Villains") on various albums including *Pet Sounds* and *Smile*. The Beatles bassist Paul McCartney (b. 1942) stated that the contrapuntal bass lines on the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* directly inspired his playing on the *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper's* albums. McCartney assumed that the bassist was bandleader Brian Wilson, unaware it was actually Kaye who had played those admirable bass figures.

The main hook in Sonny and Cher's hit "The Beat Goes On" was a Carol Kaye creation.

Further, Kaye wrote the catchy intro lick to Glen Campbell's 1968 No. 3 hit "Wichita Lineman."

Kaye also played on Frank Zappa and the Mothers' 1966 debut album, *Freak Out!*; the Doors' 1967 No. 1 hit "Light My Fire"; Joe Cocker's 1969 hit "Feeling Alright"; Nancy and Frank Sinatra's 1967 No. 1 smash "Somethin' Stupid"; and Barbra Streisand's 1973 No. 1 smash "The Way We Were."

Hal Blaine: (drums) appeared on more than FORTY #1 hits and 150 top 10 hits. Is credited with being one of the most recorded drummers in history.



Born 1929 - Died 2019 (aged 90)

The Crystals, The Ronettes, Nat King Cole, 5th Dimension, The Byrds, Petula Clark, The Mamas and the Papas, Captain and Tennile, Bobby Vee, The Beach Boys, The Carpenters, Elvis Presley, Lesley Gore, Frank Sinatra, John Denver, Johnny Rivers, Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, Andy Williams, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, Jan and Dean, Barbra Streisand, Connie Francis, Helen Reddy, Paul Revere and the Raiders, Nancy Sinatra, Dean Martin

Singles

Steely Dan "Any World That You're Welcome To" 1975 (from album "Katy Lied")

Elvis Presley "Can't Help Falling In Love"

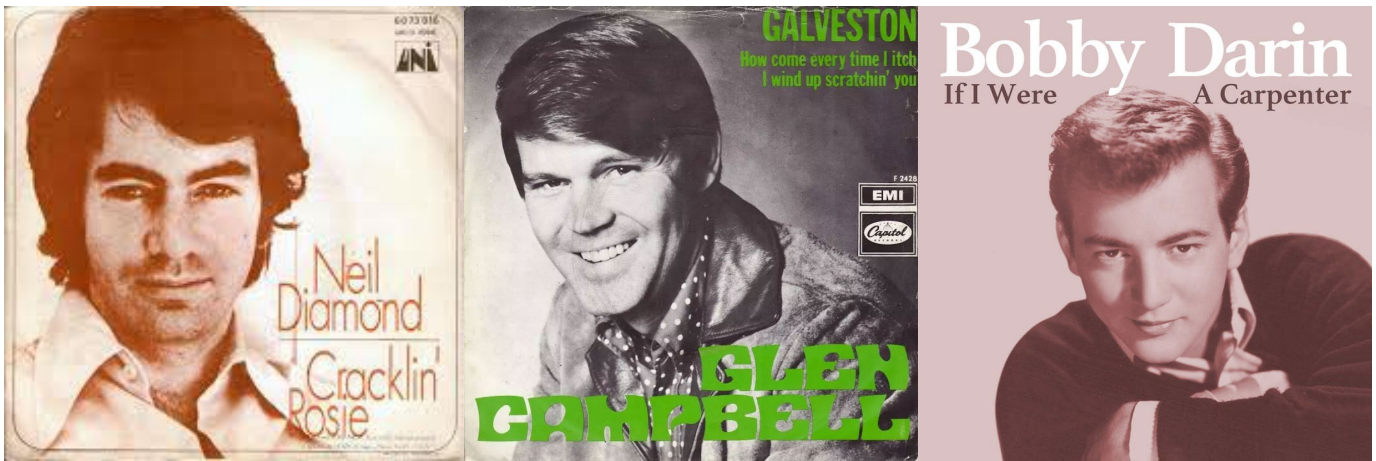
Neil Diamond "Cracklin' Rosie" (1970), "Holly, Holy" (1969)

Glen Campbell "Galveston"

The Beach Boys "Good Vibrations"

Shelley Fabares "Johnny Angel" (1962)

Bobby Darin "If I Were A Carpenter" (1966)



Albums

Hal played on every Simon and Garfunkel album except their first album: "Sounds of Silence" (1966), "Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme" (1966); "Bookends" (1968); "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (1970)

On all the Mamas and Papas albums except the last one "If You Can Believe Your Eyes and Ears" (1966); "The Mamas and the Papas" (1966); "The Mamas and Papas Deliver" (1967); "The Papas and the Mamas" (1968)

- * America "Homecoming" (1972)
- * Emmylou Harris "Evangeline" (1981)

Links to the personnel lists for a few of his album credits are below and you will see other musicians from "The Wrecking Crew" list

Neil Diamond "Tap Root Manuscript" (1970)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tap_Root_Manuscript#Personnel

The Beach Boys "All Summer Long"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Summer_Long_\(album\)#Personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Summer_Long_(album)#Personnel)

The Mamas and the Papas "The Mamas and the Papas"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mamas_%26_the_Papas_\(album\)#Personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mamas_%26_the_Papas_(album)#Personnel)



Tommy Tedesco: guitar, mandolin, ukelele, sitar

Guitar Player magazine describe him as the most recorded guitarist in history.

Born 1930, he relocated to Los Angeles in 1953.



He joined the house band at the Crescendo Club, a prominent Sunset Strip venue, backing performers such as [Peggy Lee](#), [Mel Tormé](#), [Johnny Mathis](#), and [the Mills Brothers](#)

Transitioning to session work he initially work on popular TV shoe “The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet” (a show featuring a very young Ricky Nelson and Dave Nelson). Ozzie and Harriet’s real last name was Nelson and they were Ricky and Dave’s real parents. He next contributed to score of the 1956 movie blockbuster “Around The World in 80 Days”.

By the early 60s he was working with likes of Hal Blaine and Carol Kaye at Gold Star Studios and hence becoming part of The Wrecking Crew.

Selective credits

Albums

“That’s Life” – Frank Sinatra (1966)
“What’s New” – Linda Ronstadt (1983)
“Waitress in a Donut Shop” – Maria Muldaur (1974)
“The Mamas and the Papas” – The Mamas and the Papas (1966) <i>also Hal Blaine (drums)</i>
“Surf City (and Other Swinging Cities)” – Jan and Dean (1963)
“Venice Blue” – Bobby Darin (1965)
“Twist Uptown” – The Crystals (1962)
“Twisting The Night Away” – Sam Cooke (1962)
“The Beach Boys Today” – The Beach Boys (1965)
“Serenade” – Neil Diamond (1974)
“Together” – Anne Murray (1975)

Film Soundtracks / TV Themes

The French Connection (1971)
Jaws (1975)
The Godfather (1972)
The Deerhunter (1978)
Field of Dreams (1989)
Gloria (1980)
Batman TV theme (1966)
Bonanza TV theme (1959)
Mission Impossible TV theme (1966)
MASH TV theme (1972)
Green Acres TV theme (1965)

Link to Frank Sinatra album credits for “That’s Life” 1966

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/That%27s_Life_\(Frank_Sinatra_album\)#Personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/That%27s_Life_(Frank_Sinatra_album)#Personnel)

The Beach Boys “Pet Sounds” – link to musicians on the album

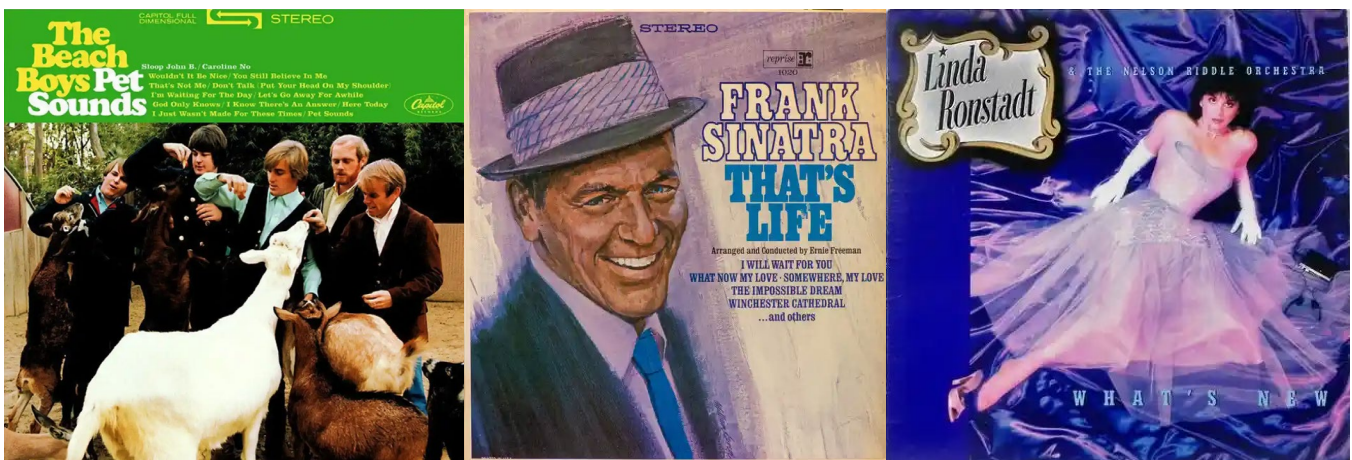
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet_Sounds#Personnel

The Mamas and the Papas “The Mamas and the Papas” (1966) – link to musicians on the album

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mamas_%26_the_Papas_\(album\)#Personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mamas_%26_the_Papas_(album)#Personnel)

Linda Ronstadt “What’s New” (1983) – link to musicians on the album

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What%27s_New_\(Linda_Ronstadt_album\)#Personnel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What%27s_New_(Linda_Ronstadt_album)#Personnel)



Tommy Tedesco and Frank Zappa

Tommy Tedesco and Carol Kaye

Their peak years were 1963 to 1971

The Members

Bass	Brass, woodwinds, harmonica, and backing vocals
Joe Osborn	Steve Douglas (saxophone) attended High School with Phil Spector
Max Bennett	Jim Horn (saxophone and flute)
Red Callender (upright bass and tuba)	Plas Johnson (saxophone)
Chuck Rainey	Nino Tempo (saxophone)
Jimmy Bond (upright double bass)	Jackie Kelso (saxophone)
Lyle Ritz (ukelele and bass)	Jay Migliori (saxophone)
Chuck Burghofer (acoustic upright bass)	Gene Cipriano (saxophone)
Bob West	Bill Green (saxophone)
	Allan Beutler (saxophone)
	Richard Hyde (trombone)
Drums	Lew McCreary (trombone)
Hal Blaine	Dick Nash (trombone)
Jim Gordon	Bud Brisbois (trumpet)
Frank Capp	Roy Caton (trumpet)
John Clauder	Chuck Findley (trumpet)
Forrest Draper	Ollie Mitchell (trumpet)
Joe Porcaro	Tony Terran (trumpet)
Jim Keltner	Tommy Morgan (harmonica)
	Ron Hicklin Singers (backing vocals)
Percussion	Jim Horn (saxophone and flute)
Gary Coleman	Plas Johnson (saxophone)
Julius Wechter	Nino Tempo (saxophone)
Milt Holland	Jackie Kelso (saxophone)
Gene Estes	Jay Migliori (saxophone)
Victor Feldman	
Guitar	Keyboards
Carol Kaye	Leon Russell
Glen Campbell	Mac Rebennack (Dr John)
Tommy Tedesco	Mike Melvoin
Barney Kessel	Don Randi
James Burton	Lary Knechtel
Bill Pitman	Al de Lory
Ray Pohlman	Mike Rubini
Howard Roberts	
Al Casey	Unofficial Members
Billy Strange	Sonny Bono (percussion)
Don Peake	Cher (backing vocals)
Jerry Cole	
Bill Aken	
Mike Deasy	
Doug Bartenfeld	
Irv Rubins	
Dennis Budimir	

People who became famous in their own right

Sonny and Cher

Leon Russell

Mac Rebennack (Dr John)

Glen Campbell

People Who Became More Well Known Musicians

Larry Knechtel (keyboards) became a member of Bread

Chuck Findley (trumpet)

Jim Horn (saxophone and flute)

James Burton (guitar) who became Elvis Presley's main guitarist and band leader.

Victor Feldman (percussion) – he also became an integral part of Steely Dan, appearing on every album until his death in 1985.

Jim Keltner (drums) has worked on solo albums for John Lenno, George Harrison, Ringo Starr

Jim Gordon (drums) would later surface as Eric Clapton's drummer in Derek and the Dominoes

Chuck Rainey (bass) also appearing on Steely Dan albums.

Joe Porcaro (drums) father of Jeff, Mike and Steve from Toto



Of interest Britain had a similar group of musicians.

The Wrecking Crew were, in many ways, the American cousins of London's own previously nameless team of session musicians consisting of Vic Flick (guitar), Big Jim Sullivan (guitar), **Jimmy Page** (guitar), John Baldwin (later using name **John Paul Jones**) (bass, keyboards), Ronnie Verrell (drums), Barry Morgan (drums), Alan Weighell (bass), Dave Richmond (bass), Les Hurdle (bass), Ronnie Price (piano), Mike Moran (keyboards), Eric Ford (guitar), Bryan Daly (guitar), Alan Parker (guitar) Clive Hicks (guitar), Clem Cattini (drums) and Bobby Graham (drums) who played on so many of the hits of the 60's that originated in the London studio scene. The Breakaways (an all girl trio) were often called upon for backing vocals.

They played on hundreds of sessions including Donovan, Hermans Hermits, Jeff Beck, Cat Stevens, Rod Stewart, Shirley Bassey, Lulu, Dusty Springfield, Tom Jones, Wayne Fontana, The Walker Brothers, Roy Harper and numerous others.

Similarly, they were completing two or three sessions a day.

Note **Jimmy Page** and **John Paul Jones** would later form one half of Led Zeppelin. Their session work lasted from 1963 to around 1968.

John Paul Jones was also utilised by producers like Mickey Most for his arranging skills.

Jimmy Page was favoured guitarist for record producer Shel Talmy.

Jimmy Pages session credits included

Singles

"I Can't Explain" – The Who (1964) – producer Shel Talmy

"As Tears Go By" – Marianne Faithful (1964) – producer Andrew Loog Oldham

"Tobacco Road" – The Nashville Teens (1964) – producer Mickie Most

"Heart of Stone" - The Rolling Stones (1964) - producer Andrew Loog Oldham (also Clem Cattini on drums)

The version with Page & Cattini appears on a later compilation release called "Metamorphosis" (1975)

The version on the UK album "Out Of Our Heads" has only Rolling Stones members. So this was probably a demo at the time.

"Baby Please Don't Go" (1964) / "Here Comes The Night" (1965) / "Mystic Eyes" (1965) - Van Morrison & Them

"Goldfinger" – Shirley Bassey (1964)

"Downtown" - Petula Clark (1964) – also Vic Flick, Ronnie Verrel, Big Jim Sullivan, Bobby Graham and The Breakaways did backing vocals

"The Crying Game" – Dave Berry (1964)

"Its Not Unusual" – Tom Jones

Albums

He appeared on FIVE tracks of Joe Cocker's debut album recorded in 1968 including his version of "With A Little Help From My Friends". [Link below to the album and the personnel on the album.](#)

[Joe Cocker – "With a Little Help From My Friends" \(album\)\(1969\)](#)

Jimmy also appeared on several Roy Harper albums including "Stormcock", "Lifemask" and "Valentine"

