

ROCK MUSIC

NOVELTY CAVEMAN SONGS

THE EVOLUTION OF CAVEMAN SONGS

The vast majority of caveman songs came out in the United States, few other countries in the world seemed to have been inspired by our prehistoric ancestors. And the evolution of the caveman songs is a fascinating story. Probably the first caveman songs come to us in the late 1910s. The earliest known song is "I'm a Cave Man" written by Dave Oppenheim, Al Piantadosi, and Sammy Stept (Anon. n.d. 1) was published in 1919 and the chorus goes – "I'm a cave man/ Yes I'm a cave man/ And I'm crazy over wild, wild women..." Also in 1919 there was "I Want a Cave Man Like William Hart – The Movie Star" written by Kendis & Brockman and later on in 1922 Bailey and Behm wrote, "Ragtime Caveman of Mine." (Anon. n.d. 2) Nothing is known about the content of the two latter songs, but the idea in the title is clearly the rough and ready, somewhat primitive male.



The movies were probably the first to introduce the cave man to the general public. Among the earliest silent film shorts were "The Cave Man" and "A Cave Man's Wooing" in 1912 and the following year, "The Cave Men's War" and "Cave Dwellers." (Willis 1972) Then there was David W. Griffith's "Man's Genesis" in 1912 where Stone Age cavemen live in shelter caves and are threatened by dinosaurs. Griffith's sequel to "Force" in 1914, the same year that Charlie Prehistoric Past" that has him dressed in a tiger flirting with the grass-skirted maidens. And until 1921, when Boris Karloff played the Cave Girl," and 1923, when Buster Keaton bearskin and carried a club (shown here) in



this was "Brute Chaplin did "His skin and derby there were more caveman in "The dressed in a "The Three Ages." popularity of entitled, *The* prolific author of sides of human Some quotes will you is at bottom primitive, and

In the 1920s, with the growing psychoanalysis, a bedside book came out *Caveman Within Us*, by William J. Fielding, a the period. It's a study on the more primitive personality, but it has little scientific basis. provide an idea: "...this Cave-creature within absolutely unethical, anti-social, egotistical, otherwise destitute of all the cherished virtues... If the prehistoric troglodyte could be transported to our midst, his every act would in our eyes brand him as insane... The crowd-impulse to act and hunt in packs is so manifold in its expression that it may be called the psychopathology of everyday life... Yellow journalism is designed to cater to the explosive emotionalism of the modern Caveman... Darwin observed that music has a wonderful power of recalling in a vague and indefinite manner strong emotions which have been felt by our ancestors in ages long gone by."

(Fielding 1922) Thus was set in motion the notion that people sometimes act like primitive caveman.

Then in 1930 the Memphis Jug Band cut “Cave Man Blues,” the first known recording to use the word “caveman” (see under Jazz Music – [Blues](#) – *Cave Man Blues*). However, this blues song was about coal miners and the word “caveman” is clearly used in a figurative sense to mean a sexually active male. Then in 1932 Marlene Dietrich, dressed up in a gorilla costume and sang the boogie, “Hot Voodoo,” which has the verse, “I’d follow a caveman right into his cave” (see under Film Music – Melodrama – *Blond Venus*).

Publicity for the caveman was certainly greatly enhanced by the two comedy movie shorts of the Three Stooges: the first in 1948, “I’m a Monkey’s Uncle,” and the second in 1955, “Stone Age Romeos.” This second film simply did a cover story around the earlier short using selected footage from it, which was supposed to have been shot by Moe, Larry, and Shemp during a field expedition to prove that cavemen still exist.

A long period follows without any known caveman songs until around 1954 when Annette Warren recorded a swing jazz number entitled, “Why Don’t You Act Like a Cave Man” (see under Jazz Music – [Swing](#) – *Why Don’t You Act Like a Cave Man*), This is closely followed by the rhythm ‘n’ blues number, “Cave Man” (see here under Rock Music – [Rhythm ‘n’ Blues](#) – [RK-RB1](#)) where Billy Ward and his Dominoes provided us with the earliest known caveman rock song. That was quickly followed by the little-known classic, “Cave Man Rock” by The Majestics (see under [Rhythm ‘n’ Blues](#) – [RK-RB2](#)).

In a few cases the “caveman” of the title and the lyrics is intended to be a prehistoric man living in a cave, but in the vast majority of songs here the notion of “caveman” is entirely figurative implying a modern man whose personality or life style resembles the preconceived notions about prehistoric men and women.

In 1958 the movies inspired a rockabilly novelty, “I Was a Teenage Caveman” written and performed by Randy Luck and within days covered by the legendary horror movie host John Zacherle (see [Rockabilly](#) – [RK-RB20](#) & [21](#)). Then in 1959 things picked up with Joe Villa & The Royal Teens doing “Caveman” (see [Rock ‘n’ Roll](#) – [RK-RR2](#)) and Jerry Coulston’s “Cave Man Hop” (see [Rockabilly](#) – [RK-RY6](#)).



Wiley Miller – *Non Sequitur* – July 2014

An obscure rhythm ‘n’ blues novelty “Kingdom of Moo” by Tommy Cherry & His Niteriders became the first song inspired by the comic strip character, Alley Oop. Released in late 1959 on a Mobile, Alabama label this preceded by several months Dallas Frazier’s evergreen, “Alley Oop,” performed by The Hollywood Argyles, which entered the U.S. charts on June 1960 and reached the No. 1 position for one week in July.

“Alley Oop” was the breaker caveman rock song which set the trend and from then on caveman songs rolled out at a regular pace almost every year. Tommy Roe did up “Caveman” (see [Rock ‘n’ Roll](#) – [RK-RR3](#)) and The Vibrations had “Cave Man” (see [Rockabilly](#) – [RK-RB3](#)). In 1965 Gary Paxton, lead singer of Hollywood Argyles, wrote and sang “Be a Caveman” (see

Garage – [RK-GR](#)), which was picked up by three other well-known garage bands. And in 1966 Buddy Scott & Jimmy Radcliffe wrote “I Gonna Find a Cave,” a caveman anthem that was first recorded by Charlie Starr and also Billy Lee Riley (of “Red Hot” fame) and went on to be covered by seven others (see [Rockabilly](#) – [RK-RY11](#) to [19](#)). The year after another all-time classic “Cave Man” by Vernon Garrett (see Soul – [RK-SL2](#)) followed by the psychedelic-blues masterpiece, “Stone Age Man,” by Joseph [Longeria] (see Psychedelic – [RK-PY](#)).

Another stunner, “Neanderthal Man” earned The Hot Legs a worldwide hit within five weeks after its release in June 1970 (see the section [Neanderthal Man](#)). Throughout the 70s and 80s more Paleolithic artifacts turned up regularly ranging from Hot Chocolate’s, “Caveman Billy” (see Soul – [RK-SL3](#)) to the Jimmy Caster Bunch’s epic saga of caveman and cavewoman soul vignettes starting with “Troglodyte (Cave Man)” in 1972; then “Luther the Anthropoid;” and ending with “The Bertha Butt Boogie” in 1974 (see Soul – [RK-SL1](#), [17](#), & [18](#)). The Cramps introduced their hard-hitting “Caveman” on a world tour in the first quarter of 1980 before recording it at A & M Studios in Los Angeles (see New Wave – [RK-NW](#)).

To get a detailed overall perception of the evolution of caveman rock over the decades check the next section “Overview 1954-2005.”

You wanna know what caveman rock is like when it’s entirely improvised? Go to Mike Wadleigh’s giant masterpiece, *Woodstock* (1970), about an hour and twenty minutes in, it starts to rain, people cope with the situation, some even start sliding in the mud and others start a jungle chant, a repetitive jungle chant. You got it; you’re there or you wish you were.

Starting in 1976 the huge Paléo festival is held every year in **paleo** FESTIVAL NYON, Switzerland, one of the major open-air music festivals in mainland Europe and the biggest in Switzerland. The word “paleo” means “old” or “ancient,” and caveman rock is Paleolithic in nature, relating directly to that prehistoric time period. Today things “paleo” have become quite trendy. (de Saint-Pierre 2015) Check out the whole series of paleo cook books, the new clothes fashions in New York labeled “paleo,” and even the niche magazine, *Paleo*, straight from Bend, Oregon. (Williams 2014) So get with it, get out your old vinyl record player, set some of these artifacts on the turntable an’ go rock it like we used to do.

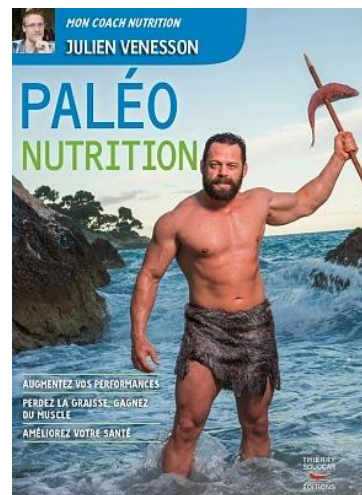
As for paleo music you have it in bunches on this website. Not only in this rock music section with the caveman songs, but also in the contemporary art music section under the speleolithophonic music subdivision where several recordings use prehistoric instruments such as bone flutes & whistles, rhombes, and sonorous rocks. A speleolithophone, by incorporating the word lithophone, indicates a stone percussion instrument in a cave that when struck emits musical notes or sounds and speleolithophonic can be defined as speleothem percussion music obtained by tapping or striking cave formations to obtain musical notes and sounds. The speleolithophonic albums also appear in this discography under the [recorded in natural caves](#) section because by definition this music was performed in caves.

Our prehistoric ancestors during the Paleolithic period were painting and engraving on cave walls. They also found that they could play music on calcite formations. In some caves, like the Grotte de Niaux in Ariège, France, broken stalactites were found in “virgin” cave passage that was certified to not have been visited since Paleolithic times. French prehistorians, Michel Dauvois and others, have theorized that these stalactites in Niaux were damaged by prehistoric man while playing music. (Dauvois & Boutillon 1990 & Clottes 1997)

Ref: American eBay postings, 2009 & 2010

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