



The Best Albums Of 1970

[Jeffrey Lee Puckett](#) posted 8 days ago.

1970 was a tumultuous year in world history, with global politics dominated by the Vietnam War and the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Protests against the Vietnam War raged in major American cities and across college campuses, most notably leading to the deaths of four students at Kent State University when the Ohio National Guard opened fire. Palestinian terrorists committed a series of airline hijackings that commanded the world's attention.

Some of the turmoil surfaced in popular music. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young released "Ohio," a response to the Kent State shootings, within a week of the massacre. The music world suffered its own losses with the deaths of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, and the breakup of The Beatles.

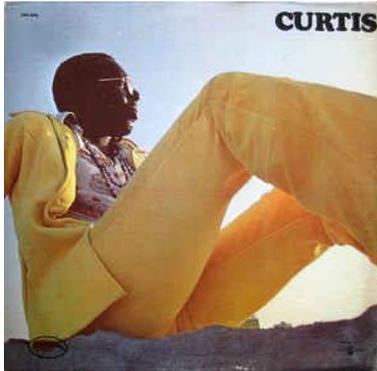
The albums released in 1970 represent a rich tapestry of rock, jazz, and soul, including some of history's most important and game-changing records. Black Sabbath arrived, taking heavy metal to the (black) masses, the seeds of punk rock were planted by The Stooges, and Miles Davis was singlehandedly changing jazz.

Discogs has mined the abundant data available from the collections and wantlists of its users to compile this list of the most wanted/most owned albums from 1970. Anyone just getting into the world of collecting music could simply buy everything on this list and be good to go. We'll be doing this for the first year of every decade through 2020, and 1980 clearly has its work cut out for it.



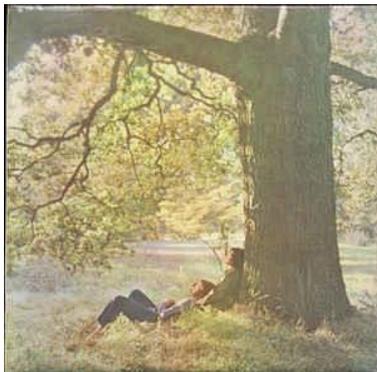
#25. The Grateful Dead – American Beauty

The Grateful Dead released two albums in 1970 and no one would be surprised if “Workingman’s Dead” came in at No. 26 on this list; they’re companion albums that fit together seamlessly. “American Beauty” finds the band at the top of its songwriting game and is loaded with standards: “Box of Rain,” “Ripple,” “Friend of the Devil,” “Sugar Magnolia.” If you’re looking for a place to start your Dead collection, you just found it.



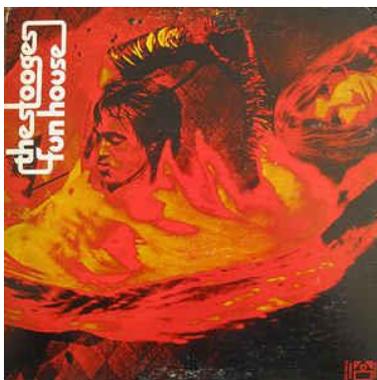
#24. Curtis Mayfield – Curtis

Curtis Mayfield’s debut solo album, coming after a decade of leading the Impressions, announced him as a vibrant voice for black America. The songs expertly fuse funk, soul, old-school R&B and racial politics, setting the stage for a spectacular run of Mayfield albums throughout the first half of the 1970s that explored difficult issues with compassion and positivity.



#23. John Lennon / The Plastic Ono Band – John Lennon / Plastic Ono Band

The emotional rawness of this record is sometimes tough to take; there’s never been a more heart-piercing song than “Mother,” which abandons all pretense of poetry as Lennon unflinchingly shares his deepest pain, and that’s just one song on an album that’s essentially a therapy session set to music. This record is crucial to understanding Lennon as a man and artist.



#22. The Stooges – Fun House

The Stooges are considered by many to be the godfathers of punk and it’s tough to argue otherwise. “Fun House,” the Michigan band’s second album, is a monstrous slab of brutal, heavy rock and roll that takes no prisoners and will leave you drained and bruised. In a good way.



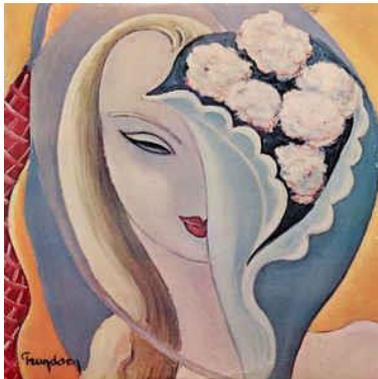
#21. The Who – Live At Leeds

The Who remains history's only rock band that essentially had three lead instrumentalists — Pete Townshend, John Entwistle and Keith Moon — and the glorious cacophony they made is captured perfectly on this record. Some hits are here, including an epic 15-minute "My Generation," but the covers are just as good, especially a blistering "Young Man Blues." Look for a first pressing, which comes with a cool packet of bonus materials such as photo and copies of show contracts.



#20. The Velvet Underground – Loaded

The final Velvets album was a bid to finally score a hit because even iconoclasts need to pay rent. That didn't quite work out, but fans got enduring classics such as "Sweet Jane," "Oh! Sweet Nuthin'," "Head Held High" and "Rock & Roll," a perfect distillation of why rock and roll changed the world. Lou Reed finally solved the hit problem with his first solo album and "Walk On the Wild Side."



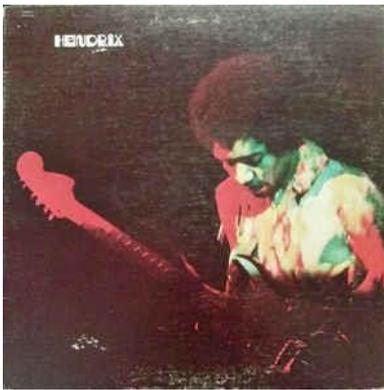
#19. Derek & The Dominos – Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs

This record may be the only argument in favor of heroin. Eric Clapton was so strung out and heartbroken over his love for Pattie Boyd (then married to George Harrison), that he exorcised every demon with this record. Duane Allman matches him step for step and the result is unfiltered pain, sadness, and resignation. Writer Dave Marsh once said that hearing "Layla" is like watching a murder or suicide. Accurate.



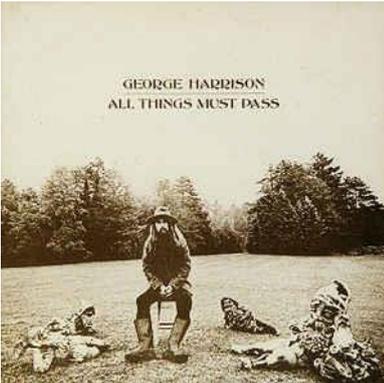
#18. Cat Stevens – Tea For The Tillerman

A template for the singer-songwriter movement, "Tea for the Tillerman" has lost none of its emotional impact. An underrated singer, Stevens gets under the skin of songs such as "Wild World," "Miles From Nowhere" and "Father and Son." If anything, this record gets better with each passing decade. If sound quality is a priority, look for an early Island UK pressing with pink label.



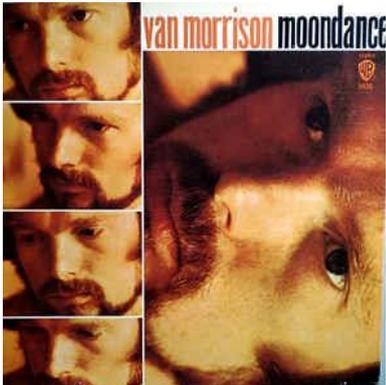
#17. Jimi Hendrix – Band Of Gypsies

Jimi Hendrix never sounded more loose and free than he does on this live album recorded at Fillmore East with bassist Billy Cox and drummer Buddy Miles. The music sounds like funk on a codeine drip, stretched out and dreamlike but still hard and capable of grabbing you by the throat. For guitar fans, there may be no more impressive solo in the Hendrix catalog than on “Machine Gun.”



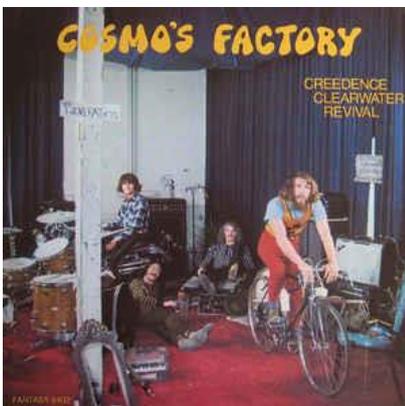
#16. George Harrison – All Things Must Pass

The quiet Beatle was pretty annoyed by the time his band split up, tired of banging his head against the Lennon-McCartney wall while trying to get his songs on Beatles records. Harrison had released a couple of experimental records while still in the Beatles but “All Things Must Pass” is his official solo debut and it’s absolutely loaded with classics such as “My Sweet Lord,” “Isn’t It A Pity,” “What Is Life” and “If Not For You.” Many still consider this the finest solo album by a Beatle.



#15. Van Morrison – Moondance

Morrison’s most commercially appealing album is also a majestic work of art. That isn’t an easy thing to achieve. Side one plays like a greatest-hits collection with “And It Stoned Me,” “Moondance,” “Crazy Love,” “Caravan” and “Into the Mystic” — that’s insane! Anyone who doesn’t like this record has serious issues.



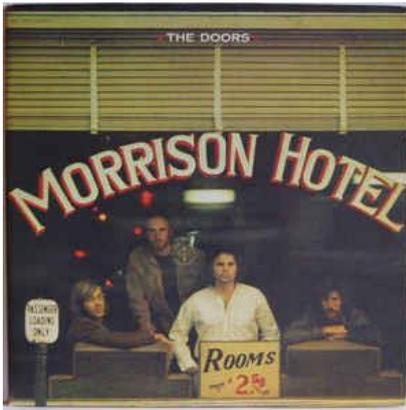
#14. Creedence Clearwater Revival – Cosmo's Factory

John Fogerty famously had an insecurity complex because he felt the songs he wrote for CCR weren’t on par with what his peers were doing. He was wrong. This massively popular album is the epitome of pop/rock songwriting, topped by “Travelin’ Band,” “Who’ll Stop the Rain,” “Run Through the Jungle” and “Lookin’ Out My Back Door.”



#13. David Bowle – The Man Who Sold The World

Bowie found his artistic footing on this, his third album, and the songs here point toward later records such as “The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars” and “Aladdin Sane.” The guitar-driven music, thanks to huge contributions from Mick Ronson, is heavy, trippy, theatrical, and critical to any complete Bowie collection.



#12. The Doors – Morrison Hotel

The Doors album that even Doors haters have to admit is pretty good. “Roadhouse Blues” is an undeniable jam with some of Jim Morrison’s most unaffected singing, and it sets the stage for an album that reins in the band’s more art-damaged aspects in favor of harder, blues-based rock and roll.



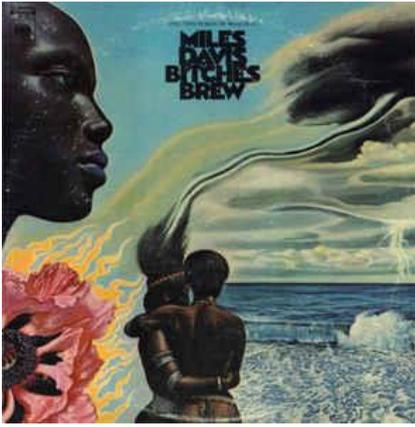
#11. Santana – Abraxas

Building on the sound of its first album, Santana kept its improvisational spirit but worked hard to condense its ideas into four- and five-minute nuggets of percussive Latin rock anchored by Carlos Santana’s evocative guitar playing. “Black Magic Woman,” despite being played to death for 50 years, never sounds less than great.



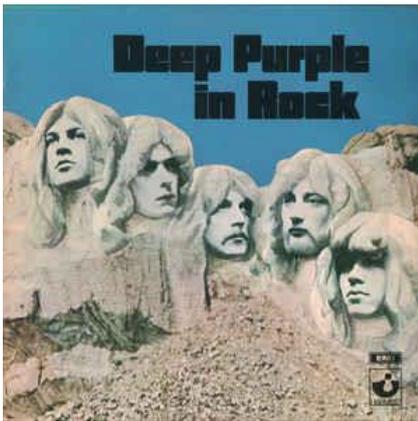
#10. Neil Young – After The Gold Rush

After leaving Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Neil Young responded with this, one of the universe’s most perfect records. Given its competition from the rest of Young’s considerable catalog, it’s tough to call this Young’s best album (but it’s probably Young’s best album). An effortless blend of rock, folk, and country, it’s telling that its most famous song, “Southern Man,” is one of the weaker tracks. That’s how good this record is. Recent reissues overseen by Young are affordable and sound fantastic.



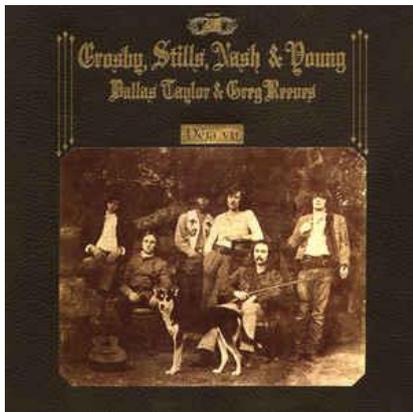
#9. Miles Davis – Bitches Brew

“Bitches Brew” is not for the faint of heart. It signaled a significant shift in not only Davis’ career but in jazz itself, creating a sound somewhere between evolutionary and revolutionary. Jazz, rock, experimental, funk, avant-garde — “Bitches Brew” is all of those things and absolutely its own thing.



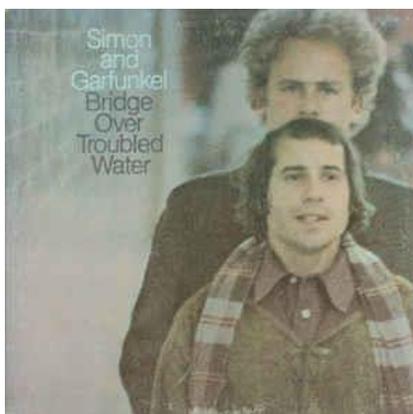
#8. Deep Purple – In Rock

After decades of being dismissed as a classic rock radio dinosaur, Deep Purple has been getting a lot of retroactive love in recent years. This album is a big reason why. It’s as aggressive as any early Zeppelin record thanks to Ritchie Blackmore’s endless supply of towering riffs, but also has elements of progressive and psychedelic rock.



#7. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young – Déjà Vu

CSN&Y was a definitive band of its era and this album serves as a generational soundtrack. Its messages of love, faith, hope, and rebellion galvanized the counterculture, led by “Carry On” and “Woodstock,” even as “Our House” made grandmothers smile.



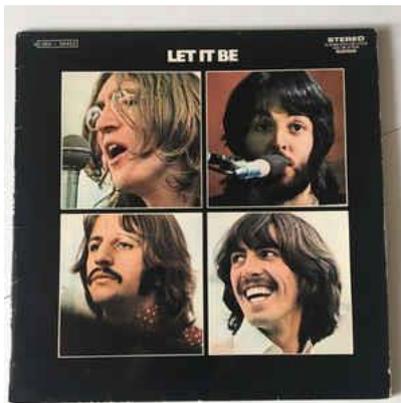
#6. Simon & Garfunkel – Bridge Over Troubled Water

One of history’s best-selling records, “Bridge Over Troubled Water” was the swan song for Simon and Garfunkel as a duo. They sure knew how to end on a high note. The title track is iconic, “Cecilia” remains as fresh today as it was in 1970, “The Boxer” is pure art. If you like singer-songwriters — hell, even if you hate singer-songwriters — this is for you.



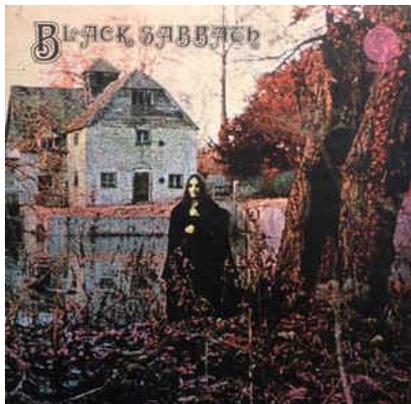
#5. Pink Floyd – Atom Heart Mother

Well, this is a surprise. “Atom Heart Mother” is not exactly compelling Pink Floyd, and there’s a reason it’s among the band’s worst-selling records, but Floyd fans love a challenge. The title track is a side-long conceptual instrumental piece with orchestra and choir, far stranger than anything attempted by the like-minded Moody Blues, while side two is a collection of stray solo tracks.



#4. The Beatles – Let It Be

The final album to be released by the Beatles, although “Abbey Road” was recorded last, this one remains a mixed bag artistically. Some hate Phil Spector’s production, but it’s still the Beatles, and even just a pretty good Beatles album is well worth owning. There are a lot of very fine tracks, including John Lennon’s “Across the Universe,” but most of the attention goes to a pair of Paul McCartney’s over-the-top statement songs, the title track and “The Long and Winding Road.” The most collectible versions of “Let It Be” came in a box set with booklet and a complete package of that first pressing goes for hundreds. But if you’re 15 and starting a Beatles collection, you can find a common copy with little effort.



#3. Black Sabbath – Black Sabbath

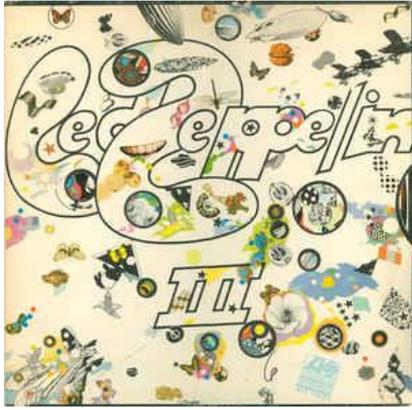
This will come to a shock to some, but “Black Sabbath” is more historically important than “Paranoid.” While the origins of heavy metal will be debated forever, for many this is the record where it all came together, and it’s almost a moral imperative for any lover of rock and roll to own this touchstone. Five decades after its release the opening riff of the band’s namesake song remains the very definition of music as pure, visceral terror.



#2. Black Sabbath – Paranoid

There are few things in the world of record collecting that makes a person’s heart race faster than spotting a Sabbath record on the Vertigo swirl label. Ask 20 collectors about their grails, and at least 15 will have a Sabbath Vertigo on the list.

There’s a reason. Find a Vertigo copy of this album in nice shape and it’s a sonic masterpiece, but the early US pressings on the green Capitol label also sound great and are getting almost as scarce. There’s also the music, of course; any record that rackets side one with “War Pigs” and “Iron Man” is a rager and needs to be owned.



#1. Led Zeppelin – Led Zeppelin III

Led Zeppelin “III,” perhaps the most unassuming album of the band’s most fertile period, is 1970’s most wanted. Is it the iconic pinwheel cover design of early pressings that makes it so desirable? Maybe so. It’s certainly less fun to own one without the pinwheel, but there’s also a lot of essential music.

Commonly referred to as the band’s acoustic album, it also includes the thunderous “Immigrant Song,” easily one of the band’s heaviest tracks, and the epic electric blues of “Since I’ve Been Loving You.” Even some of the acoustic songs are heavy; “Gallows Pole” is one of the few acoustic songs capable of melting faces.

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