

The Romantics Biography

What follows is the story of a bunch of hard working street kids from the East side of Detroit who became one of the most influential and memorable bands emanating from one of music's most important periods.... Formed on Valentine's Day, 1977, Wally Palmar, Jimmy Marinos, Mike Skill and Rich Cole -- the original Romantics -- were tough kids escaping hard work, probably in machine shops or factories, but they weren't punks. They were a response to the nihilism of the U.K. punks.

And The Romantics were simple; the best of their music was a joyful affirmation, epitomized by the chanted "Hey!...uh-huh!" intro to the remarkable "That's What I Like About You," a song that still exists precisely in the moment, without before or after.

While it is true that they took much of their simple thunder from the British Invasion, the band's primary influence was the high energy excitement of the late 60s Detroit scene. The MC5, the Stooges, Bob Seger and The Last Heard, The Detroit Wheels, The Rationals, SRC, The Underdogs, The Up. . . The Romantics took the essence of this scene -- sincerity, irony, spontaneity, volume -- and translated it to suit their own modern experience. Their image was innate; they naturally favored short hair and shorter songs and happened on the infamous red leather suits by chance.

After releasing a single, consisting of the first two songs they had written - "*Little White Lies*" and "*I Can't Tell You Anything*" -- The Romantics traveled east to build a club audience. Bomp Records' Greg Shaw sees them in Toronto and funds an EP. The EP includes "Tell It To Carrie," something of a stylistic matrix for The Romantics' music to come.

The late 70s U.K. punk movement is diluted and misunderstood in America, and The Romantics are, like it or not, labeled "New Wave," a term for the more palatable selling of punk. The Romantics consider themselves well removed from the Sex Pistols' negativity. They don't want rock to go away; they want, as Skill tells a reporter in 1979: "to still have fun with three chords.

After signing with Nemperor Records in 1979, The Romantics released their debut LP, recorded in three weeks. Anchored by "That's What I Like About You," "When I Look In Your Eyes" and a cover of Ray Davies' "She's Got Everything," The album is an exemplary pop-rock period piece. *The Romantics* evoke a youthful portrait, haunting in its innocence, a direct contrast to the tough world they know in Detroit.

A follow-up, *National Breakout*, was released in 1980, followed by tours of Europe and Australia. More influences -- surf music, Motown -- were evidenced, yet the sound was increasingly unique. "Tomboy," "21 and Over" and "Stone Pony" lived up to the post-punk battle cry of "Two minutes or bust." The Bomp material was included on a compilation titled *Midwest Pop Explosion* (Quark 1980), but by the time of 1981's *Strictly Personal*, lead guitarist Skill departs and is replaced by guitarist Coz Canler, only to return one album later, replacing Rich Cole.

The band reaches its commercial peak in 1983-1984 with *In Heat*, a platinum album bearing two top ten singles: "Talking In Your Sleep" and "One In A Million." This should have been the big payoff, but drummer Marinos departs instead as "success" creates division and confrontation between management and the band.

The Romantics, with Dave Petratos on drums, released *Rhythm Romance* in 1985. Other than the 1990 greatest hits compilation, "What I Like About You" (and Other Romantic Hits), *Rhythm Romance* is the last record The Romantics cut for Epic/Nemperor.

In 1987, The Romantics endure an inordinate amount of adversity. The acrimonious fall-out and lawsuit with their former managers slowed royalty payments and prevented the band from focusing on recording and touring. In late 1990, the Romantics added current Blondie drummer Clem Burke to the lineup, and in 1994 they released a 5 song EP titled *Made In Detroit* for Westbound Records, containing fellow Detroiter George Clintons' Funkadelic songs along with three originals. Later that year, The Romantics received an award for Outstanding Pop/Rock Recording Artists from the Motor City Music Awards.

In 1992, when Clem had other obligations, The Romantics enlisted legendary Detroit Wheels drummer Johnny "Bee" Badanjek to perform with them at Rob Tyner's (MC5) Memorial Service.

1995 saw The Romantics settle their 7 year old lawsuit against their former management and regained control of their publishing rights and music catalog. In 1996 Jimmy Marinos, the original drummer, rejoined the Romantics to tour and work on recording projects until leaving the group in 1997. The Romantics were presented with the Distinguished Achievement Award at the Detroit Music Awards in 1999.

The next several years were spent recording and finishing songs for their next album, "61/49". Released in the fall of 2003 and named for the storied crossroads near Clarksdale, Mississippi where bluesman Robert Johnson made his pact with the devil, "61/49" is intended as a tip of the hat to the roots of rock 'n' roll and the nucleus of The Romantics' fervent pop. The album features members Wally Palmar, Mike Skill, Coz Canler and drummer Clem Burke (a founding member of Blondie). They were joined by their original drummer, Jimmy Marinos, as well as drummer Johnny "Bee" Badanjek with a supporting cast that included keyboardists Eddie Hawrysch (Black Crowes) and Luis Resto, among others.

In 2004, due to touring commitments with Blondie, Clem Burke recommended the addition of Brad Elvis. Regaled by both critics and fellow drummers for his precision beat-keeping and showmanship, Elvis is best known as a member of the Elvis Brothers and Big Hello.

Currently, Palmar, Skill, Canler, and Elvis are touring and writing songs for a follow-up to "61/49".