

# PAUL REVERE & THE RAIDERS



<i>Recording years</i>	<i>Main genre</i>	<i>Music sample</i>
<i>1960-1983</i>	<i>Pop rock</i>	<i><a href="#">Kicks</a> (1966)</i>

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*Only Solitaire*

Artist: *Paul Revere & The Raiders*

Years: *1960-1961*

George Starostin's Reviews

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# LIKE, LONG HAIR

Album released:

1961

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**Tracks:** 1) Like, Long Hair; 2) All Night Long; 3) Summer Time; 4) Tall Cool One; 5) Wabash Blues; 6) Concert In "F" Sharp; 7) Beatnick Sticks; 8) Swinging Shepherd Blues; 9) Groovey; 10) The Last Mile; 11) Road Runner; 12) Moon Dawg; 13\*) Sharon (version 1); 14\*) Orbit (The Spy); 15\*) Sharon (version 2); 16\*) Midnight Ride; 17\*) Like Charleston.

## REVIEW

I don't know about you, but every time *I* get to digging around the early biography of Paul Revere & The Raiders, I get a bit of a Monty Python vibe about it. *They have a bandleader, you know. You know what he's called? He's called... Paul Revere.* [Pause]. *Paul Revere... DICK!* [Cue maniacal laughter.]

According to Paul himself, he was bullied in high school because of his *middle* name, but I think he's being too modest. After all, it is not his middle, but his *last* name that his wise manager advised him to drop when it was decided that Paul's group had to switch from «The Downbeats» (a clever, but subtly depressing name) to something more inspiring – so they became Paul Revere & The Raiders, heralds of the New American Revolution to come. Rarely, if ever, has a bandleader's real name given him at birth had a more profound influence on his career than in this particular case.

That said, from what we know, the actual Paul Revere Dick had no more plans of «revolutionizing» the musical trends of his lifetime in his youth than the actual Paul Revere had of being immortalized by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He was an aspiring businessman who had graduated from barber college and somehow, at



the tender age of 21, already managed to own a barbershop and a drive-in restaurant in Caldwell, Idaho. He'd also served in the Army, *and* he was a pretty decent piano and organ player, with some understanding of both the classical forms and of modern rock'n'roll (Jerry Lee Lewis being a particular inspiration). This hobby quickly turned into a parallel career after he'd met vocalist and sax player Mark Lindsay — who, as legend tells us, had a dayjob selling hamburger buns at the bakery that became the supplier for Revere's drive-in. (In between the hamburger buns and Paul Revere Dick, there's *probably* some sort of gross sexual joke to be made, but I really suck at those, so feel free to make one yourself).

Contrary to some unverified Wikipedia information, «The Downbeats» never recorded under that name; already their very first single, cheekily called 'Beatnick Sticks', was released on the small Californian label of Gardena in 1960 under the «Paul Revere And The Raiders» moniker. At that time, the band consisted of Paul himself on keyboards, Mark Lindsay on saxophone, Jerry Labrum on drums, William Hubbard on bass, and I'm-not-exactly-sure-who on guitars; in any case, all through the most interesting part of their career, Revere and Lindsay were the only constants in the band, the rest of the guys usually coming in and going out based on the classic revolving-door principle. Actually, I'm not even sure if Lindsay is there at all on 'Beatnik Sticks' — the entire composition is driven by Revere's barrelhouse-boogie piano, with a little electric guitar solo for distraction. It's nothing too special, but it is worth noting that, although the record probably came in the wake of public appetite for instrumental bands whetted by the success of the Ventures' 'Walk Don't Run', it does not even begin to go in the same twangy, surfy direction.

Instead, Revere establishes his style as that of a somewhat more reserved and disciplined Jerry Lee Lewis — which, if we think about Jerry's own origins, is basically the sound of old school boogie-woogie greats like Pete Johnson or Amos Milburn, only with more modern production. This choice certainly does not guarantee any greatness of the band's early output, but it does guarantee their own identity: pianos and organs as the melodic center of an instrumental combo were practically unheard of in 1960, and even if 'Beatnick Sticks' failed to chart, it still *must* have sounded special to anyone who actually heard it. The same could not be said of the B-side: 'Orbit (The Spy)', by contrast, did employ a twangy guitar riff, part-time Duane Eddy and part-time James Bond, as its main theme, with Lindsay providing a sax counterpart, and although it was certainly danceable, the Ventures did such stuff much better — if only because the Ventures were tighter and more virtuosic as a band, where the rhythm section was every bit as important as the lead players. The contrast between the two numbers also shows how much more natural the band was at sounding «silly» than «spooky».

Mark Lindsay took his first lead vocal for the band on their second single, 'Paul Revere's Ride' (later re-released as

‘Midnight Ride’), which does indeed retell the classic story of Paul Revere to more or less the melody of ‘Johnny B. Goode’, thus starting the band’s novel, but funny tradition of bridging the gap between the mythology of the American Revolution and modern pop entertainment. If there was anything sonically special about the song, though, it was probably the sharp, nasal, «mocking» tone of the youthful-as-heck lead singer — which strikes me as carrying a very distinct Sixties attitude as opposed to the Fifties and their typically deeper, more «adult» rockabilly voices. If you tried to deceive somebody into thinking that ‘Paul Revere’s Ride’ was actually recorded by the likes of Herman’s Hermits, you might very well be successful at that. In all other respects, it was a trifle whose lyrical gimmick was not enough to ensure commercial success (in fact, I might cautiously suppose that any teen-oriented pop song starting with "*Listen my children and you shall hear...*" would automatically be a no-go for all those poor schoolchildren fed up with Longfellow).

Falling back on the instrumental circuit, the band finally struck gold — or, at least, some other, more modestly valuable chemical element — with their next instrumental. The syntactically odd and semantically provocative title (‘Like, Long Hair’) was already intriguing enough; but what really distinguished this overall fairly generic vocal-less piece of boogie-woogie was its intro and outro sections, with Paul banging out a brief piano chord sequence that totally mimicked the structural and atmospheric properties of a Beethoven / Schumann / Grieg romantic concerto (I do not think it was a direct quotation from any of those, though). To the best of my knowledge, no modern pop/rock artists ever tried that before, even if most of the young piano players must have had at least a tiny bit of classical training — from that perspective, ‘Like, Long Hair’ could easily count as the first ever «progressive rock» song, or, at least, the great-grandmother of all those quirky classical-meets-rock exercises like ELO’s version of ‘Roll Over Beethoven’ or ABBA’s ‘Intermezzo No. 1’ or all the jokey-lightweight numbers by Emerson, Lake & Palmer.

(For the record, "long hair" refers here to a slang term for classical music lovers rather than kids from the British Invasion which hadn’t even started yet. Also for the record, there are rumors hanging about that it was actually a young and ambitious Leon Russell playing piano on the tune rather than Paul Revere himself, but they have never been properly substantiated, though Leon *did* play with the Raiders a bit while Paul was busy proving to the U.S. Government how much of a conscientious objector he really was.) Anyway, the performance itself is fun, but nowhere near as wild as the average Jerry Lee Lewis piece of boogie: Revere and his pals were clean, cautious, disciplined players, strictly observing a certain level of energy boundaries, and neither the piano nor the lead guitar on here ever strive to break through. My ear doth tell me that the classical influence does not *fully* stop on the border between the intro/outro and the main body of the composition; at the very least, Paul’s broad-stroke manner of attacking the keyboard betrays the approach of a spirited classical

pianist rather than a barrelhouse banger (just try to imagine the same tune played by Jerry Lee and you'll end up with a completely different sound in your head). Whether that's actually a good thing or not is a decision that fully depends on one's personal philosophy of rock'n'roll. But yes, it was a little different from the usual pattern — different enough for people to take heed, appreciate, and even put it into the Top 50.

The B-side to 'Like, Long Hair' was another self-penned vocal number: 'Sharon' was a sort of Ray-Charles-meets-early-Roy-Orbison pop-R&B hybrid with a kiddie attitude and annoyingly high-pitched backing vocals with chipmunkified frequencies. (There is also an alternate version available on some CD editions, guitar-based rather than piano-driven and without the ugly backing vocals — which, of course, still does not reveal any particular compositional genius). But a B-side it was, and not a very good B-side; therefore, when the success of the A-side got the Raiders and their record label thinking about an LP, all sides ultimately agreed that the album should be completely instrumental, in the spirit of the Ventures and other «silent» bands of the era. So Mark Lindsay switched from singing to blowing (the sax, that is), and the boys started to get it on — sometime in early or mid-1961, I do not know exactly when (data on these early sessions are practically non-existent, unless you somehow got access to Gardena's work records).

In addition to 'Beatnik Sticks' and the title track, the album featured only three more original compositions, credited to Lindsay and Revere. Of these, the pretentiously titled 'Concert In F Sharp' is a minute-long musical joke that switches its tempo at least three times, as if parodying the idea of sonata form; 'Groovey' is a generic surf-rock instrumental without any idiosyncratic redemption whatsoever; and 'The Last Mile' is a bit of slow, plodding blues that perfectly matches its title, as the entire group sounds spent and out of energy. In other words, the album does absolutely nothing to prove the Raiders' talent as masters of composition — but at least it does show a limited sense of musical humor, though certainly not enough to turn the Raiders into some sort of instrumental equivalent of the Coasters.

Out of their own ideas, they turn to other instrumentalists (and more) for inspiration, but fail on most counts, though the failures themselves are occasionally curious and instructive. Thus, 'All Night Long' used to be a great showcase for sax player Joe Houston's ability to harness and amplify the power of simple repetition: [the original version](#) from 1954 plays out like a bona fide advertisement for the rock'n'roll capacities of the saxophone as the player diligently demonstrates, one by one, all the stock musical phrasing of the instrument while somehow managing to keep things exciting and even lay on extra dynamics with each new verse. Listening to the Raiders' version, though (which I heard before the original), I don't even manage to get that point — though re-listening to it *after* the original does show that Lindsay is actually trying to emulate

the same vibe. But with the Raiders, it just sounds like regular dance entertainment. Maybe it's because the production pushes the sax too deep into the background, so as to give more sonic space to Revere's piano. Maybe it's because the sax tone is higher and whinier, or because the blowing is messier and sloppier. In any case, I would probably never have heard Houston's original without this LP, so thanks for that at least.

You'd think that with Revere's solid piano playing, they could have at least made the Wailers' ['Tall Cool One'](#) into a better proposition than the minimalistic lo-fi original — but they only inject so much professionalism to water down its scruffy seductive amateurishness, yet not enough to make it jaw-droppingly astonishing from a technical point of view (again, Lindsay with his half-assed sax playing is more to blame than Revere with his piano parts). They fare a little better with 'Road Runner' from the same band (it is at least reassuring to see how much of an influence The Fabulous Wailers were on the Raiders), but the problem remains the same: by making the sound formally fuller and richer, they rob the experience of its direct, in-yer-face minimalism without compensating with extra rock'n'roll energy.

This is not to say they do not understand the essence of the music they are playing — I mean, even when they decide to cover 'Summertime' (because everyone has to cover 'Summertime' sooner or later), Lindsay does a credible and dutily emotional sax imitation of the vocal part. It's all reasonably fun and perfectly listenable, it just doesn't really hold up in your head, I think, because they can never think of how to go the extra mile with any of these recreations. The same applies to their follow-up single to 'Like, Long Hair': called 'Like Charleston', it was probably intended to prolong their genre-mashin' gimmick by a rock'n'roll interpretation of the swingin' Twenties vibe this time — and it's still a little meek, meeker, I'd say, than the actual charleston compositions as played by the likes of Rube Bloom & His Bayou Boys thirty years earlier.

Still, it is hard to deny the important legacy of the title track, just as it is hard to deny that in the overall «starved» context of 1960–61, these instrumentals may have offered a straw of hope to many a desperate whippersnapper looking for a few minutes of pure rock'n'roll fun. And they are also intriguing in the overall context of the legend of Paul Revere & The Raiders — after all, few bands out there that happened to make a big name for themselves *after* the Beatles turn out to have actually been alive and kicking way *before* the Beatles, right?

