

SCENE

NORTHEAST OHIO'S ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

Free
SINCE 1970

JANUARY 8 ~ 14, 1998
Vol. 29 ~ No. 1

the
eagles...

head the
class of
1998

▶ Who isn't in
the rock hall
... and should be!

plus: online, comedy & pop culture

class of 1998

by Mark Holan

The Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame's Class of 1998 has a distinctly California vibe to it. The Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Santana and the Mamas & the Papas, though not all from the Golden State, achieved their greatest success as residents of California. The rest of this year's inductees — Lloyd Price, Gene Vincent, Jelly Roll Morton and Allen Toussaint — may not have had the California sun to warm their pens or vocal cords, but the aforementioned "Big Four" will be forever associated with the '60s and '70s West Coast Sound.

All of these artists will be inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame this Monday, January 12, in a ceremony at New York City's Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Last year's ceremony was held in Cleveland, and the hope (and promise) is that the ceremony will come back around to Cleveland (maybe in 2001 after Los Angeles and London get a turn, as it has been reported).

There will also be a definite New Orleans flavor to this year's induction ceremonies. Singer-songwriter Lloyd Price was a major force in early New Orleans rock and roll, and Allen Toussaint was an influential musician in the Delta City's '60s rock and roll scene as a singer-pianist-arranger-producer. Toussaint will be inducted in the "Non-Performer" category. Barrelhouse piano player Jelly Roll Morton, who also made New Orleans his home, will be inducted as an "Early Influence."

With the Eagles and Fleetwood Mac having reunited for massive tours in the past three years, this year's class also is the most high profile of many classes in the last few years. Both groups released live CDs recorded on a Hollywood sound stage, and there are plans for the groups to keep recording based on the reunions' commercial success.

The similarities between Fleetwood Mac and the Eagles seem to go on forever. Both groups achieved their greatest artistic and commercial success in '76-77 with HOTEL CALIFORNIA and RUMOURS. Both groups survived changes in key personnel, and indeed became stronger because of those changes. Intergroup clashes reached a boiling point in '79, with Fleetwood Mac slogging out the relatively self-indulgent TUSK and the Eagles taking two years to record THE LONG RUN. It obviously wasn't too much fun anymore for either group, and although Fleetwood Mac would continue on (with various personnel changes) through the '80s and even into the '90s, the Eagles called it quits in 1981.

THE EAGLES



The Eagles circa 1976: Don Henley, Joe Walsh, Randy Meisner, Glenn Frey and Don Felder (from left)

Perhaps no other Southern California band (other than the Beach Boys) has been so identified with that region as the Eagles. Although the original four members — Glenn Frey, Don Henley, Bernie Leadon and Randy Meisner — hailed from Minnesota, Michigan, Texas and Nebraska, they will forever be considered "a Southern California band."

Formed in 1971, the Eagles originally came together to back Linda Ronstadt but quickly established themselves as country rockers who were well aware of their predecessors in the genre, whether it be the Byrds or the Flying Burrito Brothers. Leadon had played in the latter-day Burritos and had a bluegrass and country music pedigree that can be heard on the group's first two albums, EAGLES (1972) and DESPERADO (1973). Meisner had been a member of Rick Nelson's Stone Canyon Band and later co-founded Poco. Henley played with an L.A. band called Longbranch

Pennywhistle, and Frey cut his teeth as a teenaged backing musician with the Bob Seger System.

With the addition of guitarist Don Felder in 1974, the group was definitely changing its sound from the country rock stylings favored by Leadon to the harder-edged rock assault of three guitarists. ON THE BORDER (1974) and ONE OF THESE NIGHTS (1975) were as much showcases for Felder's guitar pyrotechnics as they were vehicles for Henley-Frey compositions. Leadon left after

ONE OF THESE NIGHTS, with Joe Walsh joining for what was to be the group's peak period — both artistically and commercially.

HOTEL CALIFORNIA (1976) is one of those albums that defines the time it was released and remains a classic to this day. It was America's Bicentennial Year, and the record industry was enjoying a boom time in terms of record and concert ticket sales. It looked like the party was never going to end, and the Eagles captured the excess and the other side of the looking glass on HOTEL CALIFORNIA. With Walsh and Felder duelling it out on the title track and on "Life In The Fast Lane," the group hit its peak as recording artists.

By the time they came down from the high of HOTEL CALIFORNIA, the Eagles had lost Meisner, who was replaced by Timothy B. Schmit (who ironically had been Meisner's replacement in Poco). Considering the afterglow of HOTEL CALIFORNIA, it's no wonder that it took the group two years and a reported \$1 million to record THE LONG RUN (1979). Although it yielded a number of chart hits, THE LONG RUN proved to be the Eagles' swan song. After an extended world tour, the group officially disbanded in 1981. It had been a long journey from "Take It Easy" to "Heartache Tonight," but the Eagles personified '70s American rock.