

DAYDREAM BELIEVERS

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

The Monkees never *supposed* to be a real music group. They were *actors*, hired to *play* a music group on TV and to supply voices for music written and recorded by others.

Nevertheless, the Monkees' first two singles became No. 1 hits. Their first, self-titled album hit No. 1 Nov. 12, 1966 — 60 years ago.

That would begin 31 consecutive weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard album chart for the Monkees.

HEY, HEY, WE'RE THE MONKEES

When Hollywood decided to create a sitcom using the same formula as the Beatles' film "A Hard Day's Night," the plan was to hire four actors to play the group and then bring in a top-notch music producer to create what everyone hoped would be Beatles-mimicking top 10 hits.

And, to a large degree, the plan worked. The guy hired to produce the music, Don Kirshner, generated No. 1 hits with his first two releases — the first of which came out before the show even debuted. And then the TV show itself was an immediate hit.

But then there were the four stars of the show:

- **Michael Nesmith**, who had been working as a musician for several years and who had released a handful of records.
- **Peter Tork**, a guitarist who had performed shows in Greenwich Village.
- **Micky Dolenz**, who had starred in a TV series as a child and who served as lead singer of a small rock band that had released a single.
- And **Davy Jones**, an English-born actor and singer who had played the Artful Dodger in the musical "Oliver!" in London and on Broadway and who had released an album and a single.

Problems arose just four months after the debut of the show, when Dolenz admitted to a reporter that the Monkees didn't play on their own records. Yes, those were the *voices* of Dolenz, Jones, Tork and Nesmith. But they neither wrote their songs nor played on the record releases.

This led to ridicule of the Monkees as the "Prefab Four." The group felt they had musical chops and demanded they be allowed to use them on the albums. Kirshner felt otherwise. In a meeting with record executives over the issue, Nesmith was so upset by Kirshner's refusal that he punched a hole in the wall and yelled, "that could have been your face."

Executives at RCA — which owned the Monkees' label, Colgems — relented. The Monkees — who were already tied up 12 hours a day filming their show — began rehearsing for a real, live concert tour in which they'd play real, live instruments on stage.

The Monkees' first live concert was in Honolulu on Dec. 3, 1966. They went on to play 12 more shows over the next two months. Their frustration became renewed when, while taking a break on tour, they visited a music store and found their second album, "More of the Monkees," on sale. They hadn't been told it was coming out so soon after their first album.

The group held its first recording session as a self-contained band on Jan. 16, 1967. The next month, Kirshner arranged for more singles to be released without the group's knowledge. After a confrontation, Kirshner was dismissed.

The Monkees would release their first self-made album, "Headquarters," in May 1967.

The Monkees would reunite in various combinations over the years. Jones would die in 2012 at age 66. Tork would die in 2019 at age 77. Nesmith would die in 2021 at age 78, leaving Dolenz the group's only surviving member.

THE MONKEES' ALBUM CHART HISTORY

RELEASED	PEAK ON BILLBOARD 200 ALBUM CHART
Oct. 10, 1966	The Monkees — #1
Jan. 9, 1967	More of the Monkees — #1
May 22, 1967	Headquarters — #1
Nov. 6, 1967	Pisces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones Ltd. — #1
April 22, 1968	The Birds, the Bees & the Monkees — #3
Nov. 19, 1968	Head — #45
Feb. 15, 1969	Instant Replay — #32
June 9, 1969	The Monkees' Greatest Hits — #89
July 1976	The Monkees' Greatest Hits — #58
June 1986	Then & Now ... the Best of the Monkees — #21
August 1987	Pool It! — #72
Oct. 24, 1995	Greatest Hits — #14
April 23, 2003	The Best of the Monkees — #21
May 27, 2016	Good Times! — #20

37 OUT OF 60 WEEKS AT NO. 1

"More of the Monkees" replaced their debut at No. 1 on the Billboard album chart.



THE MONKEES' SIX TOP-10 SINGLES



Last Train to Clarksville
ALBUM: **The Monkees**
RELEASED: Aug. 16, 1966
PEAK: **No. 1 (1 week)**
Written by Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart, who were hired to write songs for the Monkees



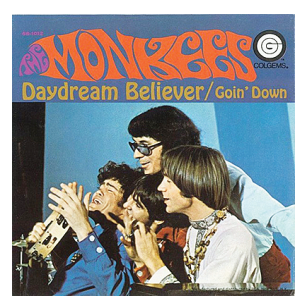
I'm a Believer
ALBUM: **More of the Monkees**
RELEASED: Nov. 12, 1966
PEAK: **No. 1 (7 weeks)**
Written by Neil Diamond, who worked as a songwriter before he became a star on his own.



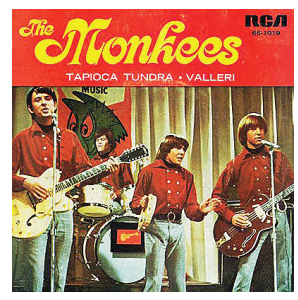
A Little Bit Me, a Little Bit You
ALBUM: **Single only**
RELEASED: **March 8, 1967**
PEAK: **No. 2**
Written by Diamond, who also wrote songs for Jay and the Americans



Pleasant Valley Sunday
ALBUM: **Pieces, Aquarius, Capricorn & Jones Ltd.**
RELEASED: **July 10, 1967**
PEAK: **No. 3**
Written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, writers of "The Loco-Motion" and "Will You Love Me Tomorrow."



Daydream Believer
ALBUM: **The Birds, the Bees & the Monkees**
RELEASED: **Oct. 25, 1967**
PEAK: **No. 1 (4 weeks)**
Written by John Stewart of the Kingston Trio for Spanky and Our Gang — who turned it down.



Valleri
ALBUM: **The Birds, the Bees & the Monkees**
RELEASED: **Feb. 17, 1968**
PEAK: **No. 3**
Boyce and Hart improvised this song on the way to the recording studio.

Sources: "The Encyclopedia of Pop, Rock and Soul" by Irwin Stambler, "The Billboard Book of Top 40 Hits" by Joel Whitburn, "Best Selling Albums of All Time" edited by Michael Spilling, MonkeesLiveAlmanac.com, SongFacts.com, Mental Floss, Biography.com

IMAGES FROM RAYBERT PRODUCTIONS, SCREEN GEMS AND COLGEMS/RCA VICTOR RECORDS