

Creedence Clearwater Revival



Creedence Clearwater Revival — occasionally shortened to **Creedence** or **CCR** — was an American rock band popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The band consisted of lead vocalist, lead guitarist, and primary songwriter John Fogerty, rhythm guitarist Tom Fogerty (John's brother), bassist Stu Cook, and drummer Doug Clifford. Their musical style encompassed the roots rock and swamp rock genres. Despite their San Francisco Bay Area origins, they portrayed a Southern rock style, singing about bayous, catfish, the Mississippi River, and other popular elements of Southern iconography.

Creedence Clearwater Revival's music is still a staple of American and worldwide radio airplay; the band has sold 26 million albums in the United States alone. Creedence Clearwater Revival was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993. Rolling Stone ranked the band 82nd on its list of the 100 greatest artists of all time. Their musical influence can be heard in many genres including southern rock, grunge, roots rock, and blues.

Before Creedence: 1959–1967

John Fogerty, Doug Clifford, and Stu Cook (all born in 1945) met at Portola Junior High School in El Cerrito, California. The trio began playing instrumentals and "juke box standards" together under the name The Blue Velvets, also backing singer Tom Fogerty at live gigs and in the recording studio. Tom joined the band, and in 1964 they signed with Fantasy Records, an independent jazz label in San Francisco that had released *Cast Your Fate to the Wind*, a national hit for jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi. The record's success was the subject of a National Educational Television special, which prompted budding songwriter John Fogerty to contact the label. For the band's first release, Fantasy co-owner Max Weiss renamed the group the Golliwogs (after the children's literary character, Golliwogg), apparently because a wave of popular British bands had similar names.

Band roles changed during this period. Stu Cook switched from piano to bass guitar and Tom Fogerty from lead vocals to rhythm guitar; John became the band's lead vocalist and primary songwriter. In Tom Fogerty's words: "I could sing, but John had a sound!"

Early success: 1967–68

In 1966, the group suffered a setback when John Fogerty and Doug Clifford were drafted into military service. Fogerty enlisted in the Army Reserve and Clifford in the United States Coast Guard Reserve.

In 1967, Saul Zaentz bought Fantasy Records and offered the band a chance to record a full-length album on the condition that they change their name. Never having liked "the Golliwogs," in part because of the racial charge of the name, the four readily agreed. Zaentz and the band agreed to come up with ten suggestions each, but he enthusiastically agreed to their first: Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR), which they took in January, 1968. The name's three elements come from the following sources:

- Tom Fogerty's friend Credence Newball, whose name they changed to form the word creed (as in creed);
- a television commercial for Olympia beer ("clear water"); and
- the four members' renewed commitment to their band.

Rejected contenders for the band's name included Muddy Rabbit, Gossamer Wump, and Creedence Nuball and the Ruby, but the last was the start that led to their finalized name.

By 1968, Fogerty and Clifford had been discharged from military service, and all four members had quit their jobs to begin an intense schedule of rehearsing and playing full-time at clubs. AM radio programmers around the U.S.A. took note when the song "Suzie Q" from their self-titled debut album received substantial airplay in the San Francisco Bay Area and on Chicago's WLS.[citation needed] A remake of a 1956 song by rockabilly singer Dale Hawkins,[8] "Suzie Q" was the band's second single—its first to reach the Top 40 (No. 11). It would be CCR's only Top 40 hit not written by John Fogerty. Two other singles from the debut were released: a cover of Screamin' Jay Hawkins's "I Put a Spell On You" (No. 58) and "Porterville" (released on the Scorpio label with writing credited to "T. Spicebush Swallowtail"), written during Fogerty's time in the Army Reserve.

Peak success: 1969–70

After their breakthrough, CCR began touring and started work on their second album, *Bayou Country* (1969), at RCA Studios in Los Angeles. A No. 7 platinum hit, the record was their first in a string of hit albums and singles that continued uninterrupted for three years. The single "Proud Mary", backed with "Born on the Bayou", reached No. 2 on the national Billboard chart. The former would eventually become the group's most-covered song, with some 100 cover versions by other artists to date, including a hit version in 1971 by Ike & Tina Turner. John Fogerty cites this song as being the result of high spirits on gaining his discharge from the Army Reserve. The album also featured a remake of the rock & roll classic "Good Golly Miss Molly"[8] and the band's nine-minute live-show closer, "Keep On Chooglin".

Weeks later, in March 1969, "Bad Moon Rising" backed with "Lodi" was released and peaked at No. 2. The band's third album, *Green River*, followed in August 1969 and went gold along with the single "Green River", which again reached No. 2 on the Billboard charts. The B-side of "Green River", "Commotion", peaked at No. 30 and the band's emphasis on remakes of their old favorites continued with "Night Time Is the Right Time".

CCR continued to tour incessantly with performances at the Atlanta Pop Festival and Woodstock. Their set was not included in the Woodstock film or soundtrack because John Fogerty felt the band's performance was subpar. (Several tracks from the event were eventually included in the 1994 commemorative box set.) Stu Cook, however, held an opposing view, saying "The performances are classic CCR and I'm still amazed by the number of people who don't even know we were one of the headliners at Woodstock '69." The band complained that they had to take the stage at three in the morning because the Grateful Dead had jammed so far past their scheduled time that by the time CCR began playing, many in the audience had gone to sleep.

"Creedence Clearwater Revival, which disbanded in 1972, were progressive and anachronistic at the same time. An unapologetic throwback to the golden era of rock and roll, they broke ranks with their peers on the progressive, psychedelic San Francisco scene. Their approach was basic and uncompromising, holding true to the band members' working-class origins. The term 'roots rock' had not yet been invented when Creedence came along, but in a real way they defined it, drawing inspiration from the likes of Little Richard, Hank Williams, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, and the artisans of soul at Motown and Stax. In so doing, Creedence Clearwater Revival became the standard bearers and foremost celebrants of homegrown American music."

—Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

After Woodstock, CCR was busy honing material for a fourth album, *Willy and the Poor Boys*, released in November 1969. "Down on the Corner" and "Fortunate Son" climbed to No. 3 and No. 14, respectively, by year's end. The album was CCR in its standard form, featuring Fogerty originals and two reworked Lead Belly covers, "Cotton Fields" and "Midnight Special". Both of the latter songs had also been performed by actor Harry Dean Stanton in the movie *Cool Hand Luke*, suggesting a subtle non-conformist theme to an apparently tradition-oriented album.

The year 1969 had been a remarkable chart year for the band: three Top Ten albums, four hit singles (charting at No. 2, No. 2, No. 2, and No. 3) with three additional charting B-sides. On November 16, 1969, they performed "Fortunate Son" and "Down on the Corner" on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

CCR released another two-sided hit, "Travelin' Band"/"Who'll Stop the Rain" in January 1970. John Fogerty has said that the flip side was inspired by the band's experience at Woodstock. The speedy "Travelin' Band", however, bore enough similarities to "Good Golly, Miss Molly" to warrant a lawsuit by the song's publisher; it was eventually settled out of court. The song ultimately topped out at No. 2. The band also recorded its January 31, 1970, live performance at the Oakland Coliseum Arena, which would later be marketed as a live album and television special. In February, CCR was featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, although only John Fogerty was interviewed in the accompanying article.

In April 1970, CCR was set to begin its first European tour. To support the upcoming live dates, Fogerty wrote "Up Around the Bend" and "Run Through the Jungle"; the single reached No. 4 that spring. The band returned to Wally Heider's San Francisco studio in June to record *Cosmo's Factory*. The title was an in-joke about their various rehearsal facilities and factory work ethic over the years. (Drummer Doug Clifford's longtime nickname is "Cosmo", due to his keen interest in nature and all things cosmic.) The album contained the earlier Top 10 hits "Travelin' Band" and "Up Around the Bend" plus highly popular album tracks such as the opener "Ramble Tamble".

Cosmo's Factory was released in July 1970, along with the band's fifth and final No. 2 national hit, "Lookin' Out My Back Door"/"Long As I Can See the Light". Although they topped some international charts and local radio countdowns, CCR never had a No. 1 *Billboard* Hot 100 hit. Their five No. 2 singles were exceeded only by Elvis Presley and Madonna with six each and tied with The Carpenters. CCR also has the odd distinction of having the most No. 2 singles on the *Billboard* charts without ever having had a No. 1. Curiously, on WLS, the band had three No. 1, four No. 3, two No. 4, but no No. 2 singles.

Other cuts on the "Cosmo's Factory" album included an eleven-minute jam of the 1968 Marvin Gaye "I Heard It Through The Grapevine" (a minor hit when an edited version was released as a single in 1976), and a nearly note-for-note homage to Roy Orbison's "Ooby Dooby". The album was CCR's best seller and went to No. 1 on the *Billboard* 200 album charts and No. 11 on *Billboard*'s Soul Albums chart.

Decline and breakup: 1970–1972

CCR in 1972, after Tom Fogerty's departure; John Fogerty, Stu Cook, Doug Clifford

The *Cosmo's Factory* sessions had seen the stirrings of tensions within the foursome as the incessant touring and heavy recording schedules took their toll. John Fogerty had taken complete control of the group in matters of both business and artistic output, to the chagrin of Tom Fogerty, Cook, and Clifford. Fogerty resisted, feeling that a "democratic" process would threaten their success. Other issues included Fogerty's decision at a 1970 Nebraska gig that the band would no longer give encores at its live shows.

Pendulum, released in December 1970, was another top seller, spawning a Top 10 hit with "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?". John Fogerty included Hammond B3 Organ on many of the *Pendulum* tracks, notably "Have You Ever Seen the Rain?", in recognition of the deep respect and influence of Booker T and The MG's, with whom the members of the band had jammed. The single's flip side, "Hey Tonight", was also a hit.

Tom Fogerty decided he had had enough of his younger brother and resigned from CCR in late 1970 during the recording of *Pendulum*; his departure was made public the following February. At first, the remaining members considered replacing Tom but ultimately continued as a trio. Tom Fogerty later stated on an Australian television broadcast that no new member could endure being in CCR.

In spring 1971, John Fogerty did an about-face and informed Cook and Clifford that CCR would continue only by adopting a "democratic" approach: each member would now write and perform his own material. Fogerty also would contribute only rhythm guitar to his bandmates' songs. Cook and Clifford, who had wanted more input in CCR's artistic and business decisions, resisted this arrangement. Fogerty insisted they accept the new arrangement, or he would quit the band. Despite the dissension, the trio put its new work ethic to the test in the studio, releasing the Top 10 single "Sweet Hitch-Hiker" in July 1971, backed with Stu Cook's "Door to Door". The band toured both the U.S. and Europe that summer and autumn, with Cook's song a part of the live set. In spite of their continuing commercial success, however, relations among the three had become increasingly strained.

The band's final album, *Mardi Gras*, was released in April 1972, featuring songs written by Fogerty, Cook, and Clifford and a cover of "Hello Mary Lou" (a song Gene Pitney had originally written for Ricky Nelson). The album was a critical failure, with Rolling Stone reviewer Jon Landau deeming it "the worst album I have ever heard from a major rock band."

The sales of *Mardi Gras* were weaker than previous albums, ultimately peaking at No. 12. Fogerty's "Someday Never Comes", backed with Clifford's "Tearin' Up the Country", also cracked the U.S. Top 40. The album was also notable for featuring songs written by all three members of the band, with the writer singing their song. The album had a disjointed feel, with only the Fogerty-authored songs having the identifiable CCR sound.

By this point, Fogerty was not only at direct odds with his bandmates, but had also come to see the group's relationship with Fantasy Records as onerous, feeling that label owner Saul Zaentz had reneged on his promise to give the band a better contract. Cook—who held a degree in business—claimed that because of poor judgment on Fogerty's part, CCR had to abide by the worst record deal of any major American recording artist. Despite the relatively poor reception of *Mardi Gras* and deteriorated relationships among the remaining band members, CCR embarked upon a two-month, 20-date U.S. tour. However, on October 16, 1972 — less than six months after the tour ended—Fantasy Records and the band officially announced the disbanding of CCR. The band never formally reunited after the break-up, although Cook and Clifford eventually started the band *Creedence Clearwater Revisited*.

John Fogerty later commented on the demise of CCR in a 1997 Swedish magazine:

"I was alone when I made that [Creedence] music. I was alone when I made the arrangements, I was alone when I added background vocals, guitars and some other stuff. I was alone when I produced and mixed the albums. The other guys showed up only for rehearsals and the days we made the actual recordings. For me Creedence was like sitting on a time bomb. We'd had decent successes with our cover of 'Suzie Q' and with the first album. When we went into the studio to cut 'Proud Mary,' it was the first time we were in a real Hollywood studio, RCA's Los Angeles studio, and the problems started immediately. The other guys in the band insisted on writing songs for the new album, they had opinions on the arrangements, they wanted to sing. They went as far as adding background vocals to 'Proud Mary,' and it sounded awful. They used tambourines, and it sounded no better.

That's when I understood I had a choice to make. At that point in time we were just a one hit wonder, and 'Suzie Q' hadn't really been that big a hit. Either this [the new album] would be a success, something really big, or we might as well start working at the car wash again. There was a big row. We went to an Italian restaurant and I remember that I very clearly told the others that I for one didn't want to go back

to the car wash again. Now we had to make the best possible album and it wasn't important who did what, as long as the result was the very best we could achieve. And of course I was the one who should do it. I don't think the others really understood what I meant, but at least I could manage the situation the way I wanted. The result was eight million-selling double-sided singles in a row and six albums, all of which went platinum. And Melody Maker had us as the best band in the world. That was after the Beatles split, but still. ... And I was the one who had created all this. Despite that, I don't think they understood what I was talking about. ... They were obsessed with the idea of more control and more influence. So finally the bomb exploded and we never worked together again."

In 1973, Fogerty began his solo career with The Blue Ridge Rangers, his one-man band collection of country and gospel songs. Under his old CCR contract, however, Fogerty owed Fantasy eight more records. In the end, he refused to work for the label. The impasse was resolved only when Asylum Records' David Geffen bought Fogerty's contract for \$1,000,000. His next major hit was Centerfield, a chart-topping success in 1985. On tour in 1986, however, Fogerty suffered complaints over his steadfast refusal to perform CCR songs and suffered with recurring vocal problems which he blamed on having to testify in court. Fogerty's explanation for not playing CCR material songs was that he would have had to pay performance royalties to copyright holder Saul Zaentz, and that it was "too painful" to revisit the music of his past.

With the Centerfield album, Fogerty also found himself entangled in new, tit-for-tat lawsuits with Zaentz over the song "The Old Man Down the Road" which was, according to Zaentz, a blatant re-write of Fogerty's own 1970 CCR hit "Run Through the Jungle". Since Fogerty had traded his rights to CCR's songs in 1980 to cancel his remaining contractual obligations, Fantasy now owned the rights to "Run Through the Jungle" and sued Fogerty essentially for plagiarizing himself. While a jury ruled in Fogerty's favor, he did settle a defamation suit filed by Zaentz over the songs "Mr. Greed" and "Zanz Kant Danz". Fogerty was forced to edit the recording, changing the "Zanz" reference to "Vanz."

On February 19, 1987, at the Palomino Club in Los Angeles, Fogerty broke his self-imposed 1972 ban on performing CCR hits, on an admonition from Bob Dylan and George Harrison (who both joined him onstage) that "if you don't, the whole world's gonna think 'Proud Mary' is Tina Turner's song." At a 1987 Independence Day benefit concert for the Vietnam War, Fogerty finally ran through the list of CCR hits, beginning with "Born on the Bayou" and ending with "Proud Mary". He retreated from music again in the late 1980s but returned in 1997 with the Grammy-winning Blue Moon Swamp. Fogerty still tours frequently and performs CCR classics alongside solo material.

Tom Fogerty

Tom Fogerty released several solo albums, though none reached the success of CCR. Fogerty's 1974 solo album Zephyr National was the last to feature the four original CCR band members. Several tracks sound very much in the CCR style, particularly the aptly titled "Joyful Resurrection" on which all four members played, even though John Fogerty recorded his part separately.

Tom Fogerty died of an AIDS complication in September 1990, which he contracted via a tainted blood transfusion he received while undergoing back surgery. Tom and John never reconciled before Tom's death, and in the eulogy he delivered at Tom's funeral, John said, "We wanted to grow up and be musicians. I guess we achieved half of that, becoming rock 'n roll stars. We didn't necessarily grow up."

Stu Cook, Doug Clifford

Junior high school friends Doug Clifford and Stu Cook continued to work together following the demise of CCR both as session players and members of the Don Harrison Band. They also founded Factory Productions, a mobile recording service in the Bay Area. Clifford released a solo record, *Cosmo*, in 1972. Cook produced artist Roky Erickson's *The Evil One* and was bassist with the popular country act Southern Pacific in the 1980s.

Doug Clifford also produced *Groovers Paradise* for former Sir Douglas Quintet and Texas Tornados frontman Doug Sahm. Both Clifford and Stu Cook played on the album which was released on Warner Bros. in 1974. Clifford continued to perform and record with Doug Sahm through the 1980s.

Following a relatively lengthy period of musical inactivity, Cook and Clifford formed *Creedence Clearwater Revisited* in 1995 with several well-known musicians. *Revisited* toured globally performing the original band's classics. John Fogerty's 1997 injunction forced *Creedence Clearwater Revisited* to temporarily change its name to "*Cosmo's Factory*," but the courts later ruled in Cook's and Clifford's favor.

Fantasy Records

After CCR, Fantasy Records released several greatest-hits packages such as 1975's *Pre-Creedence*, a compilation album of The Golliwogs' early recordings. Fantasy also released the highly successful *Chronicle, Vol. 1*, a collection of Creedence's twenty hit singles, in 1976. Several years later, the label released a live recording entitled *The Royal Albert Hall Concert*. Contrary to its title, the 1970 performance was recorded in Oakland, California, not at the Royal Albert Hall in London, England. Subsequent issues of the original 1981 album have been retitled simply *The Concert*.

The success of CCR made Fantasy and Saul Zaentz a great deal of money. Indeed, Fantasy built a new headquarters building in 1971 at 2600 Tenth Street in Berkeley, California. Zaentz also used his wealth to produce a number of successful films including Best Picture Oscar winners *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Amadeus*, and *The English Patient*. In 2004, he sold Fantasy to Concord Records. As a goodwill gesture, Concord honored the unfulfilled contractual promises Fantasy made nearly forty years earlier, finally paying the band a higher royalty rate on their sales.

One decision made by John Fogerty rankled his bandmates and would leave all without most of their hard-earned money and facing legal and financial problems for years. Without the other three band members' knowledge, Fogerty agreed to a tax shelter scheme proposed by Saul Zaentz and his lawyers in which most of the bandmembers' assets were transferred to Castle Bank & Trust of Nassau, Bahamas. Zaentz and his associates withdrew their assets before the bank eventually dissolved — along with the savings of the four CCR band members. A series of lawsuits began in 1978 and eventually ended with a California court awarding \$8.6 million to the band members in April 1983. Despite this legal victory, very little money was recovered.[c

John Fogerty, seeing that Zaentz was no longer involved with the company, also signed a new contract with Concord/Fantasy. In 2005, the label released *The Long Road Home*, a collection of Creedence and Fogerty solo classics. After *Revival* came out on the Fantasy label in October 2007 but before his following album *Blue Ridge Rangers Rides Again* was issued in 2009, Fogerty switched from Fantasy to Verve Forecast Records.

Reunions

The original CCR lineup rarely reunited after their breakup. All four members jammed together at Tom Fogerty's wedding on October 19, 1980. John Fogerty, Cook, and Clifford played at their 20th El Cerrito High School reunion in 1983, but as their original incarnation, The Blue Velvets. In the 1980s and 1990s, new rounds of lawsuits between the band members, as well as against their former management, deepened their animosities. By the time CCR was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993, John Fogerty refused to perform with Cook and Clifford. The pair were barred from the stage, while Fogerty played with an all-star band that included Bruce Springsteen and Robbie Robertson. Tom Fogerty's widow Tricia had expected a Creedence reunion, and even brought the urn containing her husband's ashes to the ceremony.

In a July 2011 interview with the *Calgary Herald*, John Fogerty admitted that he would at least be willing to consider reuniting with Cook and Clifford:

"Years ago, I looked at people and I was so full of some sort of emotion and I'd say, 'Absolutely not!' ... But I have to admit, people have asked me more recently, and even though I have no idea how such a series of events would come to pass, I can tell that there isn't the bombast in my voice, in the denial, in the refusal. It's more like, 'Well, I dunno.' Never say never is I guess is what people tell you. In this life, all kinds of strange things come to pass. Realizing that it doesn't really kick up a big firestorm of emotion, it kind of suggests that at least if someone started talking I'd sit still long enough to listen."

When asked again in October 2011 about the prospect of a reunion, Fogerty said: "I'm saying it's possible, yeah. I think the call [laughs] would maybe have to come from outside the realm. Somebody would have to get me to look at things in a fresh way."

However, Cook and Clifford both stated in the February 2012 edition of *Uncut Magazine* that they are not interested in a CCR reunion. "Leopards don't change their spots. This is just an image-polishing exercise by John. My phone certainly hasn't rung," Cook said. Added Clifford: "It might have been a nice idea 20 years ago, but it's too late."

In May 2013, Fogerty once again said he would be open to a reunion, but he does not see Cook and Clifford being willing to change their stance. He told Charlie Rose on *CBS This Morning*: "From time to time, I'll say something and it'll get in print that maybe that will happen, and then immediately I'll hear back stuff that doesn't sound like it's possible. ... I think it's a possibility in the future, you know. It's not something I'm actively seeking, but I'm not totally against the idea either."

Legal rights

CCR's catalogue of songs has frequently been used or referenced in popular culture, partly because John Fogerty "long ago signed away legal control of his old recordings to Creedence's record label, Fantasy Records." Fogerty objected to what he regarded as a misuse of his music in an NPR interview:

"Folks will remember *Forrest Gump* and that was a great movie, but they don't remember all the really poor movies that Fantasy Records stuck Creedence music into: car commercials, tire commercials. I'm remembering a paint thinner ad at one point, the song "Who'll Stop the Rain". Oh, boy. That's clever, isn't it?"

Of particular interest was the use of his protest song "Fortunate Son" in a blue jean commercial. In this case, the advertiser eventually stopped using the song, as Fogerty related in a later interview:

"Yes, the people that owned Fantasy Records also owned all my early songs, and they would do all kinds of stuff I really hated in a commercial way with my songs. ... Then one day somebody from the L.A. Times actually bothered to call me up and ask me how I felt, and I finally had a chance to talk about it. And I said I'm very much against my song being used to sell pants. ... So my position got stated very well in the newspaper, and lo and behold, Wrangler to their credit said, 'Wow, even though we made our agreement with the publisher, the owner of the song, we can see now that John Fogerty really hates the idea', so they stopped doing it."

Discography

Studio albums

- *Creedence Clearwater Revival* (1968)
- *Bayou Country* (1969)
- *Green River* (1969)
- *Willy and the Poor Boys* (1969)
- *Cosmo's Factory* (1970)
- *Pendulum* (1970)
- *Mardi Gras* (1972)

Members

Years	Line-up	Releases
1967– February 1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Fogerty – lead vocals, lead guitar, harmonica, keyboards, saxophone • Tom Fogerty – Rhythm guitar, backing vocals, piano • Stu Cook – Bass guitar, backing vocals, keyboards • Doug Clifford – drums, percussion, backing vocals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creedence Clearwater Revival</i> (1968) • <i>Bayou Country</i> (1969) • <i>Green River</i> (1969) • <i>Willy and the Poor Boys</i> (1969) • <i>Cosmo's Factory</i> (1970) • <i>Pendulum</i> (1970)
1971–1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Fogerty – lead vocals, lead guitar, keyboards, harmonica • Stu Cook – bass guitar, lead and backing vocals, keyboards, guitar • Doug Clifford – drums, percussion, lead and backing vocals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mardi Gras</i> (1972)