

# STEVE MILLER BAND

YOUNG HEARTS COMPLETE GREATEST HITS



THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION CONTAINS 22 DIGITALLY REMASTERED SONGS

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TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN • ABRACADABRA • ROCKIN' ME • SWINGTOWN  
THE JOKER • LIVIN' IN THE U.S.A. • SPACE INTRO • FLY LIKE AN EAGLE  
THRESHOLD • JET AIRLINER • SPACE COWBOY • JUNGLE LOVE  
SERENADE • CRY CRY CRY • SHUBADA DU MA MA • WIDE RIVER  
WILD MOUNTAIN HONEY • THE STAKE • MY DARK HOUR • WHO DO YOU LOVE  
I WANT TO MAKE THE WORLD TURN AROUND • DANCE DANCE DANCE

“There’s no mystery here. It’s just a good time.”  
Steve Miller, Rolling Stone

The best always make it seem easy, and so it is with Steve Miller.

But in this milestone year — the 35th anniversary of the Steve Miller Band’s recording debut, the 30th year after release of their landmark album and single *The Joker*, the 25th anniversary of their 13-times-platinum *Greatest Hits 1974-1978*, and Miller’s 60th birthday — it’s hard to find anyone who has done it as long, with such consistent excellence, as Miller and his group.

It’s even more difficult to pinpoint any artist of such varied background, whose music drew from Chicago’s Southside clubs as well as San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury experimentalism and then transcended those roots en route to a sound that’s wholly distinctive and yet enormously influential on its own.

In fact, each stop on this ride, from gritty licks learned at the feet of T-Bone Walker through the impressionism of Sailor and on to the style that Rolling Stone insists “virtually defined good-time American AOR rock,” captures something greater than the evolution of this musician and his band. Taken together, they present a soundtrack for our era, rich with history yet fully tuned to the contemporary pulse.

That soundtrack is the music of Steve Miller Band *Young Hearts – Complete Greatest Hits*, the definitive portrait of the Steve Miller Band, a unique and enduring phenomenon of our time.

#### At the Feet of Giants

The story begins on October 5, 1943, with Steve Miller’s birth in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His mother, Bertha, was a jazz-influenced singer who enjoyed playing piano and harmonizing with her two sisters; their three brothers were active as performers on guitar, banjo, and violin. And his father, Dr. George Miller, mixed his successful practice as a pathologist with a deep interest in music, from the technical as well as artistic perspectives.

Shortly after World War II, Dr. Miller invested in a Magnacorder, an early pro-quality tape recorder, and set it up at home. A frequent customer at local jazz clubs, he struck up friendships with many of the headliners as they passed through town. Some of Steve’s earliest memories are of his father bringing a succession of musical giants — Charles Mingus, Tal Farlow, Red Norvo — home for dinner and an informal recording session.

One visitor would make an especially important impact. When guitar innovator Les Paul and his fiancée Mary Ford were first putting their act together, they got to know Dr. Miller when he offered to record them during their six-week run at a Milwaukee nightclub. During their visits to the Miller home to check out these recordings, Paul offered to show Steve some chords on a Gibson guitar that Steve’s uncle Dale had given him. Just five years old, the young acolyte proved eager to learn.

This encounter would cement a friendship that exists between the Millers and Les Paul to this day. Dr. Miller served as best man at Les’s and Mary’s wedding in December 1949, and even now, whenever he’s in New York, Steve makes it a point to drop by and sit in on Les’s weekly gig at the Iridium jazz club.

In 1950 the Miller family moved to Dallas. For Steve, this relocation marked another next step in his musical awareness. His father took him out to hear different kinds of performers than typically came to Milwaukee — country luminaries like Okee Jones, Reilly Crabtree, and the immortal Hank Williams, as well as Chuck Berry, the Clovers, Carl Perkins, and Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, the first of the rock & roll vanguard.

More importantly, Dr. Miller kept inviting musicians over for evenings of conversation and recording. As a budding guitarist, Steve was particularly drawn to T-Bone Walker, the father of Texas-style electric blues. Wisely, Steve’s father let him stay home from school one day to watch Walker lay down tracks. This experience left a permanent

imprint; from this point, the blues would insert itself into everything Steve played and chart the course of his development on guitar.

A year later, in 1955, Steve formed his first band, the Marksmen. Inspired by Ricky Nelson’s performance at the end of each weekly Ozzie and Harriet episode, and especially by the backup wizardry of guitarist James Burton, he enlisted guitarist Bob Hayden and drummer Barron Cass, then taught his own older brother Buddy to play bass, partly to make sure he didn’t have to ask his mother to drive them to gigs. They built their sound and set list from assorted sources, spanning the soulful vocals of Ray Charles and challenging harmonies of the Four Freshmen. Having learned his lessons from Walker, the twelve-year-old bandleader was already a showman, capable of spinning into a split or whipping his guitar behind his head at the peak of a solo.

Over the next couple of years the Marksmen built their business throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth territory, then expanded to dates throughout Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. Their high-water appearance was at Lu Ann’s, an outdoor venue in Dallas, as blues legend Jimmy Reed’s backup band. By this time two singers had joined the band as well; one of them, William “Boz” Scaggs, would enjoy a close musical relationship with Miller en route to his own eventual stardom.

#### Schooled in the Blues

Somehow, between playing gigs and developing precocious business chops through booking his band, Miller managed to keep his grades up in school. After graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School he moved up to Madison to begin working on a comparative literature degree at the University of Wisconsin. Naturally, as soon as he arrived in the fall of 1960, he began sniffing around for the top talent in town for his next band.

Soon he had assembled some solid musicians, including future jazz keyboard great Ben Sidran, into a group called the Ardells. Miller, though a new arrival in Madison, once again took over the booking as well as playing lead guitar and singing. (“Steve was a degenerate guitar player,” Sidran would later joke in a *People* magazine article. “He majored in music and fun.”) During Christmas break, anxious to bring his friend Boz Scaggs into the mix, Miller went back to Dallas, showed him a few new chords on guitar, and persuaded him to come up the following spring as the band’s rhythm guitarist.

Over the next couple of years, with the Ardells and also with a group that called itself the Fabulous Night Trains, Miller and Scaggs recreated their Texas successes in the northern Midwest. Eventually, though, a calendar filled with frat parties and keggers began to lose its appeal. After spending the summer of ‘64 writing songs in Dallas, Miller left to spend his first semester as a senior studying literature at the University of Copenhagen. On coming back to the States he took a few days to relax in Chicago. His timing couldn’t have been better: Shortly after blowing into town, he caught the Paul Butterfield Blues Band at a club gig and started to sense the blues in the Windy City breeze.

Though just six credits shy of graduating, Miller was hooked. Leaving the scholar’s life behind, he moved to Chicago that fall and started picking up session work for Muddy Waters, Buddy Guy, Howlin’ Wolf — the leaders of the most dynamic blues scene in the world. In ‘65 he joined with keyboardist Barry Goldberg to form the World War Three Band, which soon became the Miller-Goldberg Blues Band. Working with bassist Roy Ruby and drummer Maurice McKinley, they started playing the same clubs that booked the homegrown legends of Chicago blues. An A&R scout from Epic, won over after hearing them at Big John’s, offered them a deal, and in short order the Miller-Goldberg Blues Band had released a single, “The Mother Song” b/w “More Soul Than Soulful,” and earned a guest spot on the TV hit music series *Hullabaloo*, hosted that week by the trendy “Man From U.N.C.L.E.,” Robert Vaughan.

#### Western Adventures: The Haight & Beyond

The momentum from *Hullabaloo* carried the group eastward, where they replaced the Young Rascals as house band at the Phone Both, a

hot Manhattan nightspot. Miller drank in the sounds and sights of yet another new scene, chasing down sets by Bob Dylan, the Lovin' Spoonful, and other trendsetters on his nights off. The excitement of that gig made it all the more of a letdown when he went back to Chicago to find the blues scene suddenly and inexplicably expired. Looking for answers, Miller rushed to his manager's office, only to find it shut down.

With that, the band dissolved, and Miller went back to Dallas to collect his thoughts. After earning some change as a session musician at a local jingle studio, he drifted to Austin with hopes of studying music at the University of Texas. When his application to the school was turned down, Miller took that as a hint to break completely with his past. Rumors were spreading of something going on out in San Francisco — an emergent music scene unlike any other, based as much on lifestyle as on performance. Figuring he had nothing to lose, Miller sold his books, bought a beat-up Volkswagen Microbus, and hit the Interstate toward the Bay Area.

The Summer of Love was underway as Miller arrived. On his very first day in San Francisco, he pulled out his last five dollars for a ticket to hear the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and Jefferson Airplane at the Fillmore Auditorium. When Butterfield invited his Chicago colleague to jam on a couple of songs, Miller took to the stage and played with an intensity that roused the beatific crowd into an ovation. Impulsively, he ventured over the microphone that he had decided to stick around and join the local action; when this provoked an even bigger reaction, Miller decided this actually wouldn't be such a bad idea.

Throughout the last months of 1966 Miller assembled a band whose sound would be as eclectic as anything else in San Francisco, but whose professionalism owed more to the real world of hard-core gigs than from the addled aesthetic of psychedelia. He summoned guitarist James "Curley" Cook and drummer Tim Davis, whose bands had battled Miller's for jobs in Wisconsin, brought in local bassist Lonnie Turner, took them all into a basement beneath the Architecture building at UC Berkeley, and started rehearsing. When not leading them through arrangements of songs he had been writing in Dallas that summer, Miller grabbed some shuteye in his van or, on especially cold nights, in an attic at a friend's house, and then rose the next day for another round of practice.

Finally, the group was ready in every respect but for their name. What would it be? Another spew of hippie glossolalia? Not at all. At the suggestion of his old Chicago pal Buddy Guy, Miller decided to keep it simple, and the Steve Miller Blues Band was born.

They unveiled the act toward the end of the year, at the Matrix in San Francisco. In January 1967 they played their first night as headliners at the Avalon Ballroom; for many months to come, they would return to perform for an increasingly enthusiastic following, sharing the bill with acts like the Doors and the Quicksilver Messenger Service. In April they made it into the sainted Fillmore, opening on three consecutive nights for Buffalo Springfield. Two months later they appeared at the historic Monterey Pop Festival, sandwiched between Quicksilver and Butterfield. And just ten days after that they were called to back Chuck Berry at a series of shows that would later be released under the rock guitar godfather's name as *Live At The Fillmore*.

As the pace picked up, Miller repeated his own history by sending the inevitable postcard to Boz Scaggs, who once again answered his friend's call. As Scaggs arrived, Cooke departed to launch Curley Cooke's Hurdy Gurdy Band, and keyboardist Jim Peterman, who had sat in with the band for the first time during their April gig at the San Francisco State College Folk Festival, signed up. Realizing that all this new talent would considerably expand their sound, the group adopted an even more abbreviated and elegant handle: the Steve Miller Band.

By this time, the buzz about these guys was rattling throughout the music industry. Asked to contribute to the soundtrack for a bit of period cinema called *Revolution*, the Miller Band caught the ear of Jann Wenner, a young local scribe who was just getting his new magazine out the door. In the fifteenth weekly issue of *Rolling Stone*, Wenner skipped past songs by Quicksilver and Mother Earth to single out the Miller Band's three tracks as "the best stuff on the album."

Following these clues, Alan Livingston, president of Capitol Records, made it clear that he saw even greater possibilities ahead for the group.

Miller also knew that he had a good thing going and, having already paid business dues as a pre-teen band booker, he knew how to make it even better. After some serious negotiation, the Steve Miller Band signed a contract with Capitol that was way ahead of its time in terms of artist rights and remuneration: In exchange for a five-album commitment, they would receive an unprecedented advance of \$50,000 from the label while retaining complete ownership of publishing and artistic control. Capitol was only too glad to oblige — in fact, they didn't mind the full-page ad in *Rolling Stone* in March 1968 that ran a portrait of Miller beneath the headline: "Capitol Records paid him \$50,000 and you probably don't even know who he is."

Soon everyone did. Though the staff at Capitol Studios in L.A. relegated these "San Francisco freaks" to the after-midnight slot in their schedule, the Steve Miller Band made its first recording there in October 1967 with a Barry Goldberg tune, "Sittin' in Circles." Three months later, they boarded the U.S.S. *United States* and sailed to the U.K. to complete their first Capitol album, *Children of the Future*. George Martin, the Gandalf of British record producers, had agreed to oversee the sessions, but because the Beatles needed his services for their Sgt. Pepper's and Magical Mystery Tour projects, he passed the baton to Glyn Johns, whose engineering for Chris Farlowe, the Small Faces, and the Rolling Stones had put him on the studio fast track. Working at Olympia Studios in London, Johns and the Steve Miller Band — abetted by Ben Sidran, who coincidentally was pursuing studios at Brighton — conceived *Children of the Future*, their LP debut. It would be this album that radio innovator Tom Donahue would play to introduce the underground FM format on San Francisco's KSAN that May.

The band's return to the States for a promotional tour marked the first step into a storm of activity over the next few years. In July, just one month after *Children of the Future* was released to critical acclaim, the band brought Johns in to L.A. to work with them on their follow-up. Recorded at Wally Heider's new studio, *Sailor* hit the stores in October; this time the public as well as the media responded, as the album climbed to No. 24. By January 1969 Miller was able to leave for England with master tapes to do final mixes for their third album, *Brave New World*. While there, he ran into Paul McCartney, who agreed to contribute bass, drum, and vocal parts for an upcoming Miller Band single, "My Dark Hour"; the Beatle bassist's identity was thinly disguised in the credit line "Paul Ramon" — "Paul" as in "Paul," and "Ramon" as in "on the McCartney album Ram."

Even Scaggs' and Peterman's departures couldn't break the band's momentum. As *Brave New World* rose to No. 22 on the album charts in 1969, session stalwart Nicky Hopkins came on board as Peterman's successor, and the Miller Band disappeared into the newly opened Heider recording facility in San Francisco, emerging in November with *Your Saving Grace*, which would hit No. 38 on the album charts. They returned to the same studio just after that, but disagreements among band members hastened the departures of Hopkins and bassist Lonnie Turner early in 1970. Undeterred, Miller recruited a new bassist, Bobby Winkelman from the band Frumious Bandersnatch, and took the new lineup to Nashville to resume recording, this time at Cinderella Studios. With additional parts contributed by harmonica player Charlie McCoy, fiddler Buddy Spicher, guitarist Wayne Moss, and other Music City aces, *Number Five* would make its appearance in July and quickly reach No. 23 on *Billboard's* Hot 100 listing.

All throughout this regimen, the Miller Band kept an exhausting concert schedule. High points were many: the Northern California Folk Rock Festival in May 1968, on a bill with the Doors and the Grateful Dead; appearances at the Fillmore West with Sly and the Family Stone in December '68 and with Chicago in May '69. Miller also pursued his first project outside of the band late that year by joining the powerhouse duo of organist Lee Michaels and drummer Frosty on "Going to Mexico." Experiences ranged from the sublime to the bizarre, including one incident at a show in Philadelphia where a member of Jimi Hendrix's retinue pulled a gun on Miller and ordered him from the wings, where he had hung out after opening the show, only weeks before the guitarist's death.

The manic pace may have hastened the unpleasant circumstances surrounding the Miller Band's next album. Recorded early in 1971 at Funky Jack's Studio in San Francisco, *Rock Love* featured a number of songs cut live, with minimal attention to production, even as a Capitol executive hovered nearby for the rough tracks. The moment the band had finished its first mixes, the label executive grabbed the tapes and rushed them to L.A. for pressing. To this day, *Rock Love* remains the only Miller Band album not approved for release on CD.

### Recovery and Rebirth

Later in 1971, a reconstituted Miller Band, featuring keyboardist Dickey Thompson, bassist Gerald Johnson, and drummers Gary Mallaber and Roger Alan Clark, cut yet another album, *Recall the Beginning — A Journey From Eden*, with Ben Sidran producing. Busier than ever, Miller cut out from the sessions early, allowing Jesse Ed Davis to overdub guitar solos on his behalf, and prepared to fly to Europe for promotional appearances. But fate intervened as another car slammed into Miller's en route to San Francisco Airport. Though he emerged feeling essentially okay, a subsequent checkup revealed that Miller had suffered a hairline fracture of the vertebrae in his neck. When hepatitis set in shortly after that, it became clear that his nearly four years of nonstop work had come to an end.

For the next eight months, Miller stayed at his parents' home in Dallas. During this period of reflection, he felt himself drawn toward a fresh musical direction. As *Recall the Beginning* and the double album *Anthology* were released in '72, Miller began writing a new crop of songs. And on completing his recovery and gathering Thompson, Johnson, and drummer John King into Capitol's Studio Bin March 1973, Miller opened the door to a dramatic shift in style for his band.

In only 19 days they completed *The Joker*, the first album produced by Miller himself. Before the end of the year it would be certified as gold by the RIAA. Early in 1974, the title cut also racked up gold sales, just one day before dislodging Jim Croce's "Time in a Bottle" from the top of the singles charts. Packed with concise, catchy material, and sharpened by a residual bluesy edge in both writing and performance, *The Joker* marks the Miller Band's move toward a more economic, modern sensibility, one that would pay off through more massive fan support than ever.

But first, Miller allowed himself another period of self-examination. For 18 months, from 1974 into '76, he would work at his new eight-track home studio, putting together a total of 24 songs that would surface on the band's next two albums. Only one live gig — an appearance with guitarist Les Dudek from Scaggs' band, former Creedence drummer Doug Clifford, and ex-Miller Band bassist Lonnie Turner at the Knebworth Festival in England — interrupted his routine; at that event Miller introduced a song, "Rock'n Me," that would soon become one of his most successful singles.

Finally, with Turner and Mallaber, Miller entered CBS Studios in San Francisco and recorded all 24 of these songs during a marathon two-week session. For six months after that he carefully added and polished overdubs, and then wrapped up the project by doing final mixes with former Stax/Volt engineer Jim Gaines at Seattle's Kaye Smith Studios. In May 1976 the first fruits of this labor were released as *Fly Like an Eagle*.

Public reaction was swift. The album shot up to No. 2 in the U.S. and, for the next 97 weeks, refused to leave the Hot 100. It was also the Miller Band's breakthrough release in the U.K., where it peaked at No. 11. The singles achieved equally impressive numbers: "Take the Money and Run" would hit No. 11, "Fly Like an Eagle" would soar to No. 2, and "Jet Airliner" lodged at No. 8. *Book of Dreams* followed in May 1977, to another enthusiastic reception. The album quickly soared to No. 2 in the U.S. and No. 12 in the U.K., and was certified gold by the RIAA just one week after its release.

Riding this wave, the Miller Band returned to the concert world with a vengeance. At this point they were a stadium-level draw, pulling 100,000 spectators to the Oakland Coliseum in May 1977 on a bill with

Heart, the Eagles, and Foreigner. Miller raised the bar at these shows by introducing innovations — rear-screen projection, quad sound, laser sculptures — that later became standard practice at rock extravaganzas. By the end of 1978, the Miller Band would rack up more than nine million album sales and deliver some 300 shows throughout North America and Europe in just a little more than a year.

### The Long Haul ...

The force of their explosive success in the seventies propelled the Miller Band toward that status achieved by only a few in this business: a kind of perennial success untainted by any loss of credibility. Their story from this point is one of undiminished productivity. Some of it pursued a streamlined pop orientation, as on *Abracadabra* in 1982; lauded for its "effervescent melodies" and tagged "pretty damn irresistible" by Allmusic.com, it peaked at No. 3 and broke the platinum barrier as the title cut soared to the top of the singles chart. Other more experimental projects would reflect Miller's ability to expand on the core of his band's sound without blunting its impact. Some of these efforts stirred less commercial response than others, but even these would document Miller's willingness to take risks, if there were artistic reasons for doing so.

Case in point: "Macho City," an ambitious 18-minute kaleidoscope of meditations on Vietnam, Afghanistan, designer fashions, and other concerns, tumbled through a funk-flavored rhythmic context on the 1982 album *Circle of Love*. Although the album rose to No. 24, and the single "Heart Like a Wheel" would earn gold status, there were critics who took issue with this departure from the tight, radio-friendly format that had become a trademark for the band. Miller himself acknowledged the negative press but insisted on his obligation to do what he, as an artist, felt necessary: "I got beat up so bad on [that]," he told *Rolling Stone*. "Everybody can't make the transition from commercial pop albums to mood pieces, [but] I'll continue to do whatever feels right."

Other projects represented Miller's return to the repertoire on which his parents had raised him. Born 2B Blue, released in September 1988, featured Ben Sidran at the keyboards and in the producer's chair, with all-stars like Milt Jackson and Phil Woods joining in on tracks drawn from the jazz catalog. This time the media took positive note, in the form of praise from jazz sage Leonard Feather and in comments from Bill Milkowski, who observed in down beat that "Miller's intimate vocals recall the tender, breathy stylings of Michael Franks." The blues, too, were lauded by the band on *Living in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, their 1986 release, which included covers of classic blues songs and contributions from guests whose presence would seem more (James Cotton) or less (Kenny G) predictable.

Overall, though, the Steve Miller Band legacy, as established throughout the late twentieth century and up to the present, is one of enduring currency. They continue to draw large and loyal followings at landmark concerts that have included one before 74,100 fans at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas for the Texas Special Olympics in 1990; a sold-out show at Spartan Stadium at San Jose State University in 1991, with ZZ Top, Extreme, and Eric Johnson, that chalked up more than a million dollars in gate receipts; an Earth Day benefit at the Hollywood Bowl in April 1993, at which Paul McCartney persuaded Miller to collaborate on his upcoming *Flaming Pie* album; and a memorable set at the San Francisco Blues Festival in 2002, for which Miller organized a Chicago Blues Reunion with Charlie Musselwhite, Elvin Bishop, Barry Goldberg, Harvey Mandel, Nick Gravenites, and Marcy Levy.

The public would keep buying their CDs as well: *The Joker* would rack up platinum sales, *Fly Like an Eagle* would break the quadruple platinum barrier, and *Greatest Hits 1974-1978*, which went platinum within one month of its release in 1978, has since been certified for a mind-boggling 13-times-platinum sales.

So this train evidently still rolls. After all, Miller did once confide to *Rolling Stone*, "I don't think, as a musician, you really hit your peak until you're about 60."

All aboard ...