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**THEY COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN CALLED GOSSAMER WUMP, MUDDY RABBIT OR CREEDENCE NUTBALL. THANKFULLY, THEY DISPENSED WITH THESE LAUGHABLE ALTERNATIVES AND SETTLED ON A NAME COMPRISING THREE WORDS SUGGESTING ZEALOUS INTENT, PURITY AND A FIRM SENSE OF TRADITION RESPECTIVELY: CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL. A MEANINGLESS AMALGAM IN LITERAL TERMS BUT WHICH, DOWN THE YEARS, HAS CONTINUED TO RESONATE AND REPRESENT TOUGH-SOUNDING, BLUE COLLAR AMERICAN ROCK'N'ROLL THE WORLD OVER.**

By the time the four-piece of lead singer and guitarist John Fogerty, rhythm guitarist Tom Fogerty, bassist Stu Cook and drummer Doug Clifford settled on their new moniker they'd already spent eight years playing together, trading under the names as contrived as The Blue Velvets and The Golliwogs – both of which reflected their initial stabs at post-Elvis and post-Beatles rock'n'roll. Christmas Eve 1967 however proved to be a turning point when the foursome played their first gig under their new name. Close to 10 years into a thus-far chequered career, Creedence's appellation instilled a new sense of purpose in the band, both musically and emotionally speaking.

"The most important word [in the name] was Revival," confirmed the band's leader and principal songwriter John Fogerty years later. "It meant a personal resurgence within ourselves."

As 1968 dawned, Fogerty himself had already begun to forge his own distinctive writing style. Despite growing up in El Cerrito, his was not a voice that chimed with the wails of the local psychedelic scene in neighbouring San Francisco during the previous year's Summer Of Love. If anything Creedence appeared to mark themselves out as the antithesis to this freaky outpouring, drawing on their first love of classic '50s rock'n'roll, the taut rhythms of southern soul (most specifically Booker T And The MGs) and a second-hand sense of the blues presumably derived from listening to records released by the legendary Arhoolie label, a bastion of roots music based in their hometown.

The band's synthesis of influences was exemplified by their choice of cover versions: Screamin' Jay Hawkins' I Put A Spell On You, Marvin Gaye's I Heard It Through The Grapevine, Leadbelly's take on Midnight Special and Ricky Nelson's Hello Mary Lou, all of which are included on this collection, all of which would be un-coverable in the hands of less capable musicians. Creedence, however,

managed to make these songs their own. Key to Creedence's development was their cover of Dale Hawkins' Susie Q. Originally a hit in 1957, Creedence resurrected the track 11 years later as they began work on their debut album for Fantasy label. John Fogerty himself was conscious of the band's need to nail down their sound in their opening full-length recorded statement.

"I knew I needed to work on arranging the band so that the band would sound like Creedence Clearwater Revival, would sound professional, mysterious and have their own definition," explained Fogerty years later. "The song I chose was Susie Q. I decided to pick something that existed because I'd be less conscious about doing things."

The result, recorded in one straight take, is tremulous slice of brooding swamp-rock which, while reflecting what Fogerty termed "classic guitar rock'n'roll", also added a deeper, darker groove. Fogerty's unique arrangement also succeeded in producing the band's first hit, the track being picked up by US radio stations upon release in August 1968 and peaking Stateside at Number 11 in September. Creedence were off and running.

While the band's debut album may not quite measure up to some of their later accomplishments, Fogerty had been successfully in confirming the fledgling band's identity, something that in turn engendered greater confidence. Having recorded their debut album for less than \$5000, Creedence had also developed a hugely disciplined approach to their work, using their rehearsal room to full effect rather than relying on studio trickery. As a result the band were immaculately drilled, cutting tracks as live in the studio and in double quick time just as their contemporaries began to get into the habit of sonic over-indulgence. Hence, while the band's debut emerged in July 1968, a mere six months later CCR were ready to release their follow-up, Bayou Country.

Today, the band's second set remains one of their definitive statements, its title once again reflecting the West Coast band's fascination with the all things southern. Opener Born On The Bayou – written following Bobby Kennedy's assassination in June 1968 as John Fogerty watched the news in his El Cerrito apartment while suffering from insomnia – cemented the band's swamp rock sound, drawing on Pops Staples guitar sound and Bo Diddley's hoodoo atm. But the album also boasted another classic track that remains arguably Fogerty's greatest achievement: Proud Mary.

"I can kind of remember writing the chords at the beginning of the song. Believe it or not, I was playing around with the famous riff from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony!" he states, explaining the power of the track's opening chords. Subject-wise, once again the track reflected its author's obsession with the Mississippi. Written as he received his honourable discharge from the US Army (with whom he'd enrolled as a reservist in 1966 and to whom he'd been obligated to for a set period per month even as CCR's star began to rise), Proud Mary's lyrics shake with libertarian spirit, taking the listener on a metaphorical journey on one of those romantic-looking New Orleans stern-wheeler paddle steamers.

An instant hit when it was released in the US in January 1969, it peaked at Number 2 in the States with Bob Dylan declaring it his favourite single of the year. By the end of '69 the track itself had already been covered over 35 times, establishing Fogerty as a genuine songwriting force. A keen collector of 45s, the man himself declared unashamedly "I think in terms of the Top 40" and continued his mission to define CCR's sound through carefully constructed pop nuggets. Three more included here arrived on the band's third album Green River, staggeringly released in August 1969 – just six months after Bayou Country and three months before its successor,

the semi-conceptual Willy And The Poorboys. The three tracks in question are Green River's hard-driving title track, the rockabilly-inspired Bad Moon Rising (which hit the top slot in the UK charts) and the reflective Lodi – the latter written about a city 75 miles away from El Cerrito and which, ironically, John Fogerty used to symbolize the frustrations experienced in dead-end towns despite never having been there.

Fogerty himself has described Green River as his favourite album, but then again Willy And The Poorboys itself maintained the momentum, spearheaded by the likes of the shuffle-funk of Down On The Corner, the acerbic Fortunate Son and two covers of Leadbelly tunes, Midnight Special and Cotton Fields (all included here).

Having released three remarkable musical statements in one year, Creedence continued apace in 1970, touring Europe but nevertheless finding the time to release two albums in 12 months. First came their most consistent work Cosmo's Factory in July (which included Travelin' Band, Lookin' Out My Backdoor, Up Round The Bend, Who'll Stop The Rain, I Heard It Through The Grapevine, Run Through The Jungle and Long As I Can See The Light). Then, in December, the less focused Pendulum emerged (home to Have You Ever Seen The Rain? Hey Tonight and Molina).

Despite the undoubted quality of the music that was being made by the foursome, 1970 proved to be a watershed year for the band. Fogerty's leadership had begun to be viewed as dictatorial, leading to internal friction and a desire for others to contribute to the songwriting. Furthermore, the band's deal with Fantasy records had also been a bone of contention since they'd signed it, demanding as it did a fixed amount of recordings per year in a manner that was increasingly antiquated in a rock landscape re-shaped by Peter Grant who'd manage to shake revolutionary

deals for his charges in Led Zeppelin. Put simply, while Creedence boasted the finest American songwriter since Brian Wilson with a string of multi-platinum albums to their name, their financial rewards remained relatively meager.

Beset by tensions from within and without, the band began to fragment. Tom Fogerty was the first to walk, leaving his brother, Stu Cook and Doug Clifford to soldier on for one more album, Mardi Gras, released in April 1972. In an attempt to engender a sense of egalitarianism six of its 10 tracks were written by either Cook and/or Clifford, a seventh consisted of the cover of Hello Mary Lou and an eighth was Fogerty's final US Top 10 hit with Creedence, Sweet Hitch Hiker. So fond of six month cycles, in October 1972 CCR announced that the band were no more.

Thirty six years on, the demise of Creedence Clearwater Revival remains one of the greatest tragedies in the history of American rock'n'roll. Nevertheless, this 24 track collection serves as a reminder that for four short years they were truly untouchable.

PHIL ALEXANDER  
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- 01 BAD MOON RISING (USFI86900055)
- 02 BORN ON THE BAYOU (USFI86900044)
- 03 PROUD MARY (USFI86900049)
- 04 TRAVELIN' BAND (USFI87000054)
- 05 HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RAIN (USFI87000066)
- 06 GREEN RIVER (USFI86900051)
- 07 DOWN ON THE CORNER (USFI86900060)
- 08 LODI (USFI86900056)
- 09 FORTUNATE SON (USFI86900065)
- 10 LOOKIN' OUT MY BACK DOOR (USFI87000056)
- 11 RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE (USFI87000057)
- 12 I PUT A SPELL ON YOU (USFI86800049)
- 13 SUSIE Q (USFI86800107)
- 14 SWEET HITCH-HIKER (USFI87200112)
- 15 IT CAME OUT OF THE SKY (USFI86900061)
- 16 WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN (USFI87000060)
- 17 I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE (USC4R0816840)
- 18 HEY TONIGHT (USFI87000069)
- 19 COTTON FIELDS (USFI86900062)
- 20 LONG AS I CAN SEE THE LIGHT (USFI87000062)
- 21 MOLINA (USFI87000071)
- 22 HELLO MARY LOU (USFI87200110)
- 23 THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL (USFI86900067)
- 24 UP AROUND THE BEND (USFI87000058)

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## DISC TWO (Live 1970)

- 01 BORN ON THE BAYOU (USFI88000230)
- 02 GREEN RIVER (USFI88000231)
- 03 TOMBSTONE SHADOW (USFI88000232)
- 04 DON'T LOOK NOW (USFI88000233)
- 05 TRAVELIN' BAND (USFI88000234)
- 06 WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN (USFI88000235)
- 07 BAD MOON RISING (USFI88000236)
- 08 PROUD MARY (USFI88000237)
- 09 FORTUNATE SON (USFI88000238)
- 10 COMMOTION (USFI86900052)
- 11 THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL (USFI88000240)
- 12 NIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME (USFI88000241)
- 13 DOWN ON THE CORNER (USFI88000242)
- 14 KEEP ON CHOGLIN' (USFI88000243)

All tracks published by Jondora Music, except 6: Universal-MGB, 12: Screen Gems-EMI Music Inc.

All songs written by John Fogerty, except CD 1 – 12: Jay Hawkins, 13: Hawkins/Broadwater, 17: Barrett Strong/Norman Whitfield, 19: Huddle "Ledbelly" Ledbetter, 22: Gene Pitney/L. Mangiaracina, 23: Traditional\*.

\* CD 2 – 11: Traditional\*, 12: Lew Herman.  
© Work arranged by John Fogerty.