

## Section: The Kinks0

Context: In 1973, Ray Davies dived headlong into the theatrical style, beginning with the rock opera *Preservation*, a sprawling chronicle of social revolution, and a more ambitious outgrowth of the earlier Village Green Preservation Society ethos. In conjunction with the *Preservation* project, the Kinks' line-up was expanded to include a horn section and female backup singers, essentially reconfiguring the group as a theatrical troupe. Ray Davies' marital problems during this period began to affect the band adversely, particularly after his wife, Rasa, took their children and left him in June 1973. Davies became depressed; during a July gig at White City Stadium he told the audience he was "fucking sick of the whole thing", and was retiring. He subsequently collapsed after a drug overdose and was taken to hospital. With Ray Davies in a seemingly critical condition, plans were discussed for Dave to continue as frontman in a worst-case scenario. Ray recovered from his illness as well as his depression, but throughout the remainder of the Kinks' theatrical incarnation the band's output remained uneven, and their already fading popularity declined even more. John Dalton later commented that when Davies "decided to work again ... I don't think he was totally better, and he's been a different person ever since." *Preservation Act 1* (1973) and *Preservation Act 2* (1974) received generally poor reviews. The story on the albums involved an anti-hero called Mr Flash, and his rival and enemy Mr Black (played by Dave Davies during live shows), an ultra-purist and corporatist. *Preservation Act 2* was the first album recorded at Konk Studio; from this point forward, virtually every Kinks studio recording was produced by Ray Davies at Konk. The band embarked on an ambitious US tour throughout late 1974, adapting the *Preservation* story for stage. Musicologist Eric Weisbard: "[Ray] Davies expanded the Kinks into a road troupe of perhaps a dozen costumed actors, singers and horn players. ... Smoother and tighter than on record, *Preservation* live proved funnier as well." Davies began another project for Granada Television, a musical called *Starmaker*. After a broadcast with Ray Davies in the starring role and the Kinks as both back-up band and ancillary characters, the project eventually morphed into the concept album *The Kinks Present a Soap Opera*, released in May 1975, in which Ray Davies fantasised about what would happen if a rock star traded places with a "normal Norman" and took a 9-5 job. In August 1975, the Kinks recorded their final theatrical work, *Schoolboys in Disgrace*, a backstory biography of *Preservation*'s Mr Flash. The record was a modest success, peaking at number 45 on the Billboard charts. Following the termination of their contract with RCA, the Kinks signed with Arista Records in 1976. The song "Father Christmas" has remained a popular track. Driven by session drummer Henry Spinetti's drumming and Dave Davies' heavy guitar the song "Father Christmas" has become a classic seasonal favorite on mainstream radio. With the encouragement of Arista's management they stripped back down to a five-man core group and were reborn as an arena rock band. CANNOTANSWER

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STUDENT: **What theatrical style did Ray Davies begin with?**

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STUDENT: **Were there any problems during this time?**

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STUDENT: **How did it affect his work?**

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STUDENT: **Did Davies recover?**

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STUDENT: **Did this cause problems with the bands' fame?**

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