

1. *Can't Buy a Thrill* (1972) → *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

- **Rationale:** This debut album is eclectic, whimsical, and full of unexpected turns—much like Shakespeare's magical romp through love and illusion. Tracks like "Do It Again" and "Reelin' in the Years" echo the cyclical confusion and romantic entanglements of the play. Both works are playful but tinged with melancholy.
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2. *Countdown to Ecstasy* (1973) → *Julius Caesar*

- **Rationale:** This album is more politically charged and musically ambitious. "Show Biz Kids" and "King of the World" reflect disillusionment with power and fame. Like *Julius Caesar*, it's a meditation on ambition, betrayal, and the cost of leadership. The tension builds track by track, much like the conspiratorial plotting in the play.
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3. *Pretzel Logic* (1974) → *Hamlet*

- **Rationale:** Dense, introspective, and riddled with cryptic lyrics, *Pretzel Logic* is Steely Dan's existential masterpiece. "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" and "Any Major Dude Will Tell You" feel like Hamlet's soliloquies—personal, philosophical, and haunted by indecision. Both works are obsessed with memory, identity, and unraveling truth.
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4. *Katy Lied* (1975) → *Othello*

- **Rationale:** This album is slick, shadowy, and emotionally raw. "Doctor Wu" and "Black Friday" explore betrayal, addiction, and paranoia—perfectly aligned with *Othello*'s tragic descent into jealousy and manipulation. The production is polished, but the lyrics are full of emotional wreckage.
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5. *The Royal Scam* (1976) → *Macbeth*

- **Rationale:** Dark, cynical, and full of moral decay, this album is Steely Dan at their most venomous. “Kid Charlemagne” and “Don’t Take Me Alive” are tales of ambition gone wrong, echoing Macbeth’s bloody rise and fall. The album’s title track is practically a Shakespearean monologue on corruption.
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6. *Aja* (1977) → *The Tempest*

- **Rationale:** Lush, mystical, and musically transcendent, *Aja* is Steely Dan’s sonic utopia. “Deacon Blues” and “Peg” are dreamy and introspective, much like Prospero’s island of illusion and redemption. Both works are about transformation, aging, and letting go of control.
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7. *Gaucho* (1980) → *King Lear*

- **Rationale:** *Gaucho* is elegant but emotionally desolate—a portrait of decadence and decline. “Babylon Sisters” and “Time Out of Mind” evoke Lear’s unraveling: the loss of power, the betrayal by those closest, and the bitter clarity that comes too late. It’s the sound of a kingdom crumbling in slow motion.
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