

Bass motives: Joe Osborn and Carol Kaye, slightly baffled Crew bassists; (insets) the 4CDs; Tommy Tedesco, with his guitar, and drummer Hal Blaine; the CD pack.



It's a knockout

A four-disc set celebrates one of the greatest backing bands of the '60s and '70s. By **Geoff Brown**.

Various



The Wrecking Crew

ROCKBEAT. CD/LP

FOLLOWING 2008's *Wrecking Crew* documentary, not granted a full theatre release until 2015 due to the cost of licensing the multitude of chart hits recorded by the Wreckers, comes this 4-CD celebration of the hardest-hitting studio Crew on the pulsatingly prolific Hollywood circuit.

Although director/producer Teddy Tedesco, son of Crew guitarist Tommy, had been working on the documentary "for decades", *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*, Paul Justman's excellent 2002 tribute to The Funk Brothers, the Detroit label's crack Hitsville studio team, beat them to the screen. Thanks to the curiosity of music journalists and fans, interest in unearthing the identities of who was actually creating the music behind the groups and singers on Motown, Stax, Atlantic and Chess hits had been rife since the late '60s and '70s.

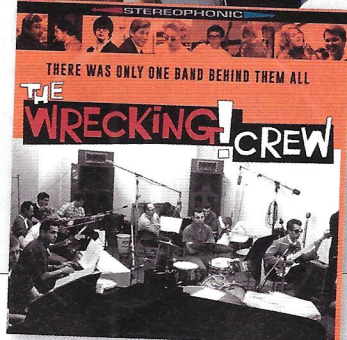
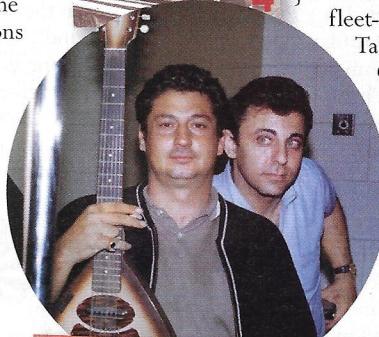
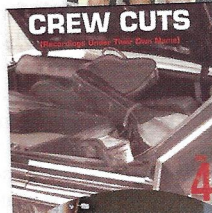
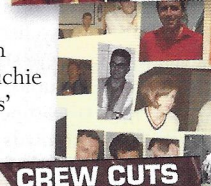
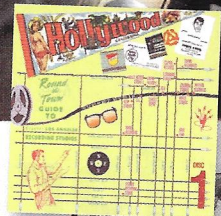
The *Wrecking Crew* were harder to pinpoint because they worked for so many artists across so many labels that had less definable 'house' sounds and used several Los Angeles studios – Capitol, Sound Recorders, Western, United and Gold Star among them. But over time, prompted by the distinctive creations of Phil Spector, for example, the suspects were unearthed.

The records the Crew made were

informed by musicians already experienced in hitmaking and speedy recording – the drummer Earl Palmer, for one, had already played on a mountain of Little Richard, Fats Domino and others' hits as rock'n'roll was born at Cosimo Matassa's studio in New Orleans, and now fired up Richie Valens' *La Bamba* and The Routers' *Let's Go*. Another drummer, Hal Blaine, became ubiquitous in the '60s notably for his work on thunderous Spector hits like The Ronettes' *Be My Baby*, as well as wider pop smashes like The Byrds' *Mr Tambourine Man*, The Mamas And The Papas' *Monday Monday*, The Beach Boys' *Good Vibrations* and *God Only Knows*, all heard here.

"There was only one band behind them all," the subtitle asserts, and it's sobering to hear the 48 familiar yet extraordinarily varied tracks on the first three CDs. To those mentioned above add The Monkees, Sam Cooke, Cher, Paul Revere & The Raiders, The 5th Dimension, Harry Nilsson, Herb Alpert and more. Interspersed among the music, jokes by musicians and interviews add yet more colour.

The fourth CD, *Crew*



Cuts, features solo recordings by the players. The Crew member who most profitably stepped out front was session guitarist Glen Campbell. After 1967's *By The Time I Get To Phoenix*, he outsold many of the artists he'd been backing. He's represented here by another atmospheric Jimmy Webb song, 1968's *Wichita Lineman*. (Leon Russell, the Wreckers' other graduate to solo stardom, is absent.)

Crew Cuts starts with Blaine's *The Beat Goes On*, a not unexpectedly percussive version of the Sonny & Cher

hit pitched somewhere between the Buddy Rich Big Band and The Piltown Men. Mostly, the Crew let their hair down in relaxed yet lively jazz settings: Tommy Tedesco's

fleet-fingered *Walking And Talking*; drummer Frank Capp's sprightly swing on Neal Hefti's *Cute*; vibist Emil Richards' *Ciao Bella*, for a taste.

Many of the Crew have ceased to Wreck, but this set's booklet ensures their timeless musical wisdom lives on.

Tedesco: "There is no money beyond the 5th fret"; Blaine: "Friend don't let friends clap on 1 and 3". In addition to the 4-CD pack there is also a double vinyl LP with 36 tracks, but it loses the interviews and solo projects. The movie is also out on DVD.