

Level 42



Level 42 was formed in early 1980. The founding members, bassist Mark King, and the two brothers drummer Phil and guitarist Roland 'Boon' Gould, originate from the Isle of Wight, where they spent their teenage years playing in various bands together. Phil Gould and Mark King were both part of the group Reflex and the project 'M', best known for the hit 'Pop Muzik'. In late 1979 Phil introduced his longtime friend Mark King to keyboard player Mike Lindup, whom he connected with while studying at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In July 1980 their debut single 'Love Meeting Love' was fairly successful and brought the band to the attention of Polydor Records. A follow-up single was released at the end of 1980. The band's strong jazz & funk influences, formal classical training and outstanding musicianship have consistently set Level 42 apart from other bands. They quickly built a solid fan base with their superb live shows. Lead singer and frontman Mark King is widely acclaimed for his mastery of the electric bass. Mark started off as a drummer and because of Mark's drumming background, he combined his lead guitar skills with a percussive "thumb-slapping" technique to create the trademark rhythmic style that he is so well-known for. The bass taking the lead over guitar gave Level 42 their unique sound. Boon Gould's funky guitar rhythms and poetic lyrics also defined much of the band's style during the first half of their career. 1981 saw the release of the Top 40 single 'Love Games', which has since become a classic Level 42 recording throughout Europe. Their debut album, Level 42, was greeted with unanimous praise and climbed into the UK Top 20 and Dutch Top 5. The single 'Love Games' launched the band into the Dutch charts. Because of the tremendous success of 'Level 42', 'The Early Tapes' was released containing old recordings from the summer

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of 1980, explaining the demo-like character. In September 1982 the album 'The Pursuit Of Accidents' was released, coupled with an ambitious three month tour of the UK, France, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, Belgium and Germany. The ensuing years saw Level 42's popularity increasing with hits like 'The Chinese Way' and 'Hot Water'. In 1985 the band released the single 'Something About You'. Regarded by many fans as the "flagship" Level 42 track, it topped the charts in the UK, and it earned Level 42 their first American hit, reaching No. 5 on the US charts. Their album 'World Machine' sold over 4 million copies worldwide. 'Lessons In Love' became the first single of the band's biggest selling album 'Running In The Family', which contained 5 top 10 singles including the title track, 'To Be With You Again' and 'It's Over'. In September, during a world tour promoting 'Running In The Family', Boon Gould left Level 42, suffering from stomach problems and exhaustion. A month later, Phil Gould also left the group, reportedly unhappy with the band's direction toward pop and away from jazz and funk. In 1988 ex-Allan Holdsworth drummer Gary Husband joined Level 42, followed by guitarist Alan Murphy, who had previously played on albums by Kate Bush and Go West. Level 42 triumphed again with the release of the album 'Staring at the Sun' ('88) and the hit singles 'Heaven In My Hands', 'Take A Look' and 'Tracie'. Sadly, the new line-up of Mark, Mike, Gary and Alan was not to last. Alan became seriously ill and died of AIDS-related symptoms on Thursday, October 19, 1989. In 1991 fans patiently awaited the release of the next album, 'Guaranteed', featuring studio work by guitar legend Allan Holdsworth. The year ended with a record-breaking 15 nights at the Hammersmith Odeon. The band's line up now included top UK session guitarist Jakko Jakszyk. March 1994 saw drummer Phil Gould back with the band. The album 'Forever Now' and first single by the same name hit the charts. A few weeks later the album's second single, 'All Over You', debuted in the UK charts at No. 26, the first time Level 42 had two consecutive UK Top 40 hits since 1987. Level 42 disbanded in October 1994, although the band's members plan to continue collaborating on future projects. ■



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