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## ALL TOGETHER NOW

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**An England football song is never going to win a Grammy, in fact it's never going to win anything. But some bands have managed the impossible and made tunes that are, well, actually quite good.**

It's the summer of 1996 and everything's gone a bit strange: England are on the verge of winning something and, perhaps even odder, there's an almost-decent football song in the charts.

Terry Venables' side have reached the semi-finals of the European Championships and the nation is being whipped into a frenzy, drunk on the simple sing-a-long pop of 'Three Lions' by the Lightning Seeds and comedy duo David Baddiel and Frank Skinner - presenters of cult BBC TV show Fantasy Football.

### 'Three Lions'

'Three Lions' - the official tournament song of the England football team - perfectly summed up the country's mood at that time. Britpop was at its peak and London had just been declared the coolest city in the world.

The lyrics spoke of enduring pessimism - England hadn't won a championship for thirty years - but the song captured that English trait of eternal optimism in its euphoric chorus. For a brief, dizzy moment, people started to believe what they were hearing. Alas, England were beaten on penalties by their old nemesis, Germany.

### Hit and Miss

Football songs, traditionally released to coincide with a major tournament, are written with two goals in mind: to unify the traveling fans and to spur the weary nation to fall patriotically behind the team. A 'high profile' band is usually given the honour of performing the song with guest 'vocals' - in the loosest sense of the word - by the national squad. The golden rule is there must be a big, loud chorus that is easy enough to sing in tune, and when belted from the terraces, it can lift a struggling side.

The history of World Cup songs is patchy to say the least. The last two efforts to hit the charts go hand-in-hand with the England team's lackluster efforts in the 1998 and 2002 finals - the Spice Girls' 'On Top of the World' and 'We're on the Ball' by TV variety stars Ant and Dec.

Dare to venture further back in time and you'll uncover the boisterous 'Back Home' by the then World Champions the 1970 England squad.

### 'World in Motion'

Coincidentally, the only times England have done well in a championship have been in the years that topnotch football songs have been released - the aforementioned 1996 and in 1990 and the World Cup in Italy.

That year saw uber-cool Manchester legends New Order take on the mantle of composing the official song. The result was arguably the best football anthem ever - 'World in Motion'.

A timeless classic, perhaps due to the ambiguity of the lyrics, 'World in Motion' was also mistakenly known as the John Barnes Rap, thanks to the surprisingly apt rap by the Liverpool striker.

Paul Gascoigne, who shot to national fame during the tournament, provides almost silky additional vocals. The song ends with the entire England squad singing in a chorus 'We're singing for England, ENGLAND'. New Order still play it live 16 years on.

### 'World at Your Feet'

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The English Football Association recently announced that Yorkshire rockers Embrace are to record this year's official Cup anthem - 'World at Your Feet'. Lead singer Danny McNamara said he hoped his band could repeat the same success as New Order. With any luck, a winning song might just lead to a victorious team. Only time will tell.

*April 2006  
-Ben Lupton*

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