

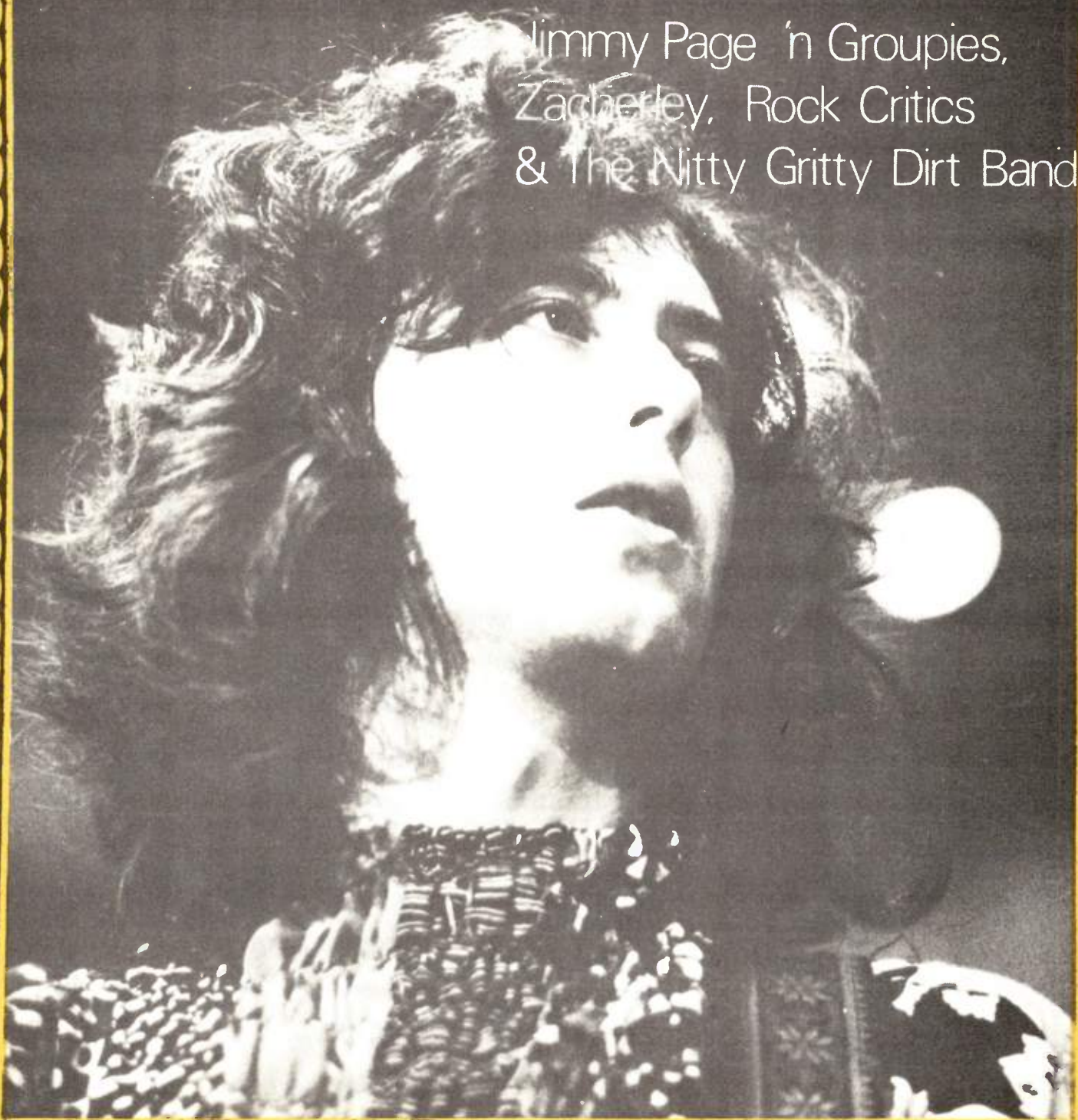
# PHONOGRAPH RECORD MAGAZINE

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feb 71

inside:

Jimmy Page 'n Groupies,  
Zacherley, Rock Critics  
& The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band





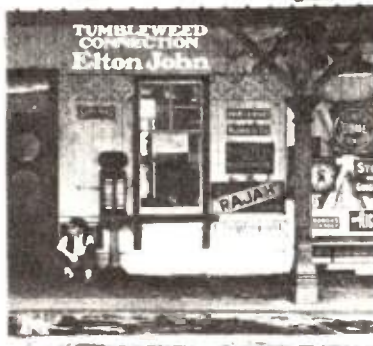


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David Bowie



Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

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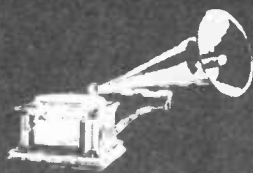
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Cat Stevens at the Troubadour



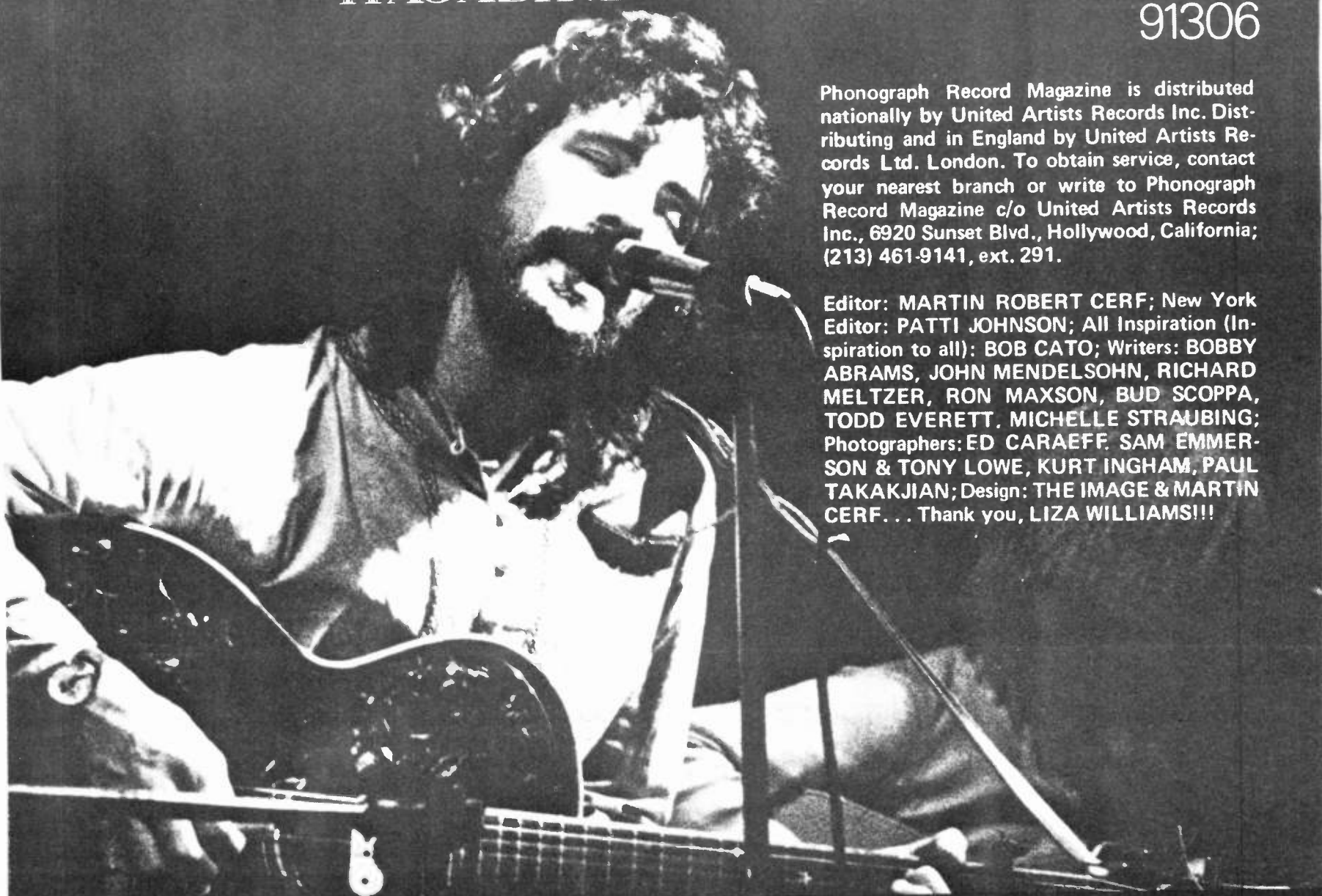
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kurt ingham



paul takakjian

Sweet Pain at the Whiskey

Cover Photo By: EMMERSON/LOWE



## PACIFIC

### BALLIN' JACK

The world debut of Dave Mason's new group, featuring Cass Elliot, was a noteworthy occasion in more ways than one. For second billed was *Ballin' Jack* a group showing considerable promise, and third act was the return of P.F. Sloan, composer of "Eve of Destruction."

Sloan, whose reputation as a composer (many Grass Roots records, for instance) and guitarist (session work for most Dun-hill groups), seems vastly overestimated, was onstage for only about five numbers. His own current material tends to ramble quite a bit, and his guitar playing was distinctly mediocre. He did, however, choose to sing "Spanish Is a Loving Tongue," a nice leftover from the Folk Music era, and "Nervous Breakdown," a really obscure but nice old Eddie Cochran number. Extra points for taste, then.

At the end of Sloan's set, the requisite obnoxious disc jockey M.C. came out, shouting "The cat's really got it back together—if you know what I mean." In view of his performance, I'm not really sure that I do.

*Ballin' Jack*, coming down from Seattle to hit the big time in L.A., may well do so. Columbia's hype says that some groups refuse to share a bill with the group; that may or not be true, but they could probably headline a show pretty easily right now. Their set, again rather short, was met with a standing ovation...fairly common hereabouts, but a compliment nonetheless.

Tight and well-rehearsed, *Ballin' Jack* consists of five musicians including two horn players (sax-flute-clarinet and trombone), a drummer whose orientation seems to be largely in the area of jazz, a guitarist of average ability and a dynamic bassist who also sings lead. Their main weakness seems to be in their material—all original, for the set played. About the only thing I can remember for sure is a Chicago-ish number that breaks out into a great Dixieland sort of thing. *Ballin' Jack* seems to be the equal of any of the major bands using horns. The only other group I can think of to get an audience so stirred up is Buddy Miles. If they can just get some more powerful material, *Ballin' Jack* may be The Next Big Thing.

Mason and Cass, though, may not be The Next Big Thing. Or not at the rate they're going. Live, they sound pretty much the way you'd expect them to—like the Dave Mason album with Cass singing backgrounds and an occasional lead.

But Mason is one of the finest musicians and writers around, and his singing isn't bad either. Cass Elliot has a tremendous voice which has been used almost criminally on such schlock as "New World Coming." And the band (Brian Garofalo, bass and vocals; Russ Kunkel, drums; and Paul Harris, organ and electric piano) is certainly tops. This was their debut performance, and things can only get better. If, that is, they can stay together long enough to let things happen. They might not be The Next Big Thing but they could well be one of the most respected groups around. And make money too.

Todd Everett

### SWEET PAIN

A kind of pain that doesn't hurt. In fact, it feels good! That's Sweet Pain, a new country-rock group, who performed for a week of exciting dancing and listening pleasure last month at LA's famed Whisky A Go Go.

I saw these guys at a press party a few months ago, atop the new Hollywood Holiday Inn. And they were very good; but unknown. That anonymity should cease soon.

The Chicory Productions sixsome previously played Southern California gigs at the Golden Bear in Long Beach, and at Pasadena's Ice House. "Sweet Pain" is their initial album, out this month. Look for it.

You'll hear several Sweet Pain songs that were performed well at the Whisky. "She Comes to the City" is a fine example of the groovy beat the five electric guitars (one acoustic) and drums put out, with three of the members vocalizing. Like all their selections, "The Lover," "Lay on Your Back and Admit It," and "Chain Up the Devil," Sweet Pain didn't come across with the unnerving loudness which is of-

## PERFORMANCES

ten the case with bands at the Whisky. (Recently, Buddy Miles came on so strong I had a ringing in my ears all the next day that kept me answering a silent phone). Sweet Pain: music without an "ouch!"

Especially enjoyable in Sweet Pain's songs was "Berkeley Lady", inspired by the lead guitarist's past romance with a married gal. The ballad had an infectious rhythm, which accomplished the mood of the repeated lyric, "you're in my soul."

However, the capper of Sweet Pain's dynamic evening was a number of incessant "Joy." Boy, this one was so sweetly frantic, it seemed they would never stop; a most together tune, with maracas and wa-wa wows, really deep! You can't hurt yourself with Sweet Pain.

Elmer Pasta

### AL KOOPER

Making his first Southern California appearance as a single after three previous attempts, Al Kooper proved that the wait wasn't worthwhile. Whatever his stature is in the New York power structure (sort of an East Coast Leon Russell, apparently), he simply doesn't cut it as a performer.

Dressed, and with hair cut, in an approximation of Elton John, Kooper took turns at piano, organ and guitar, all of which he plays with equal lack of grace and imagination. His singing is of sub-"Amateur Hour" quality, and his borrowed material is routine. During the course of the performance witnessed, for instance, his repertoire included James Taylor's "Country Roads," an Elton John number, his twenty minute freakout of "Baby Please Don't Go" and the like.

On the other hand, I wouldn't really discourage a person from seeing Kooper perform at least once. To have as little talent as the man does and still have the sheer nerve to get up on stage deserves some kind of wide-eyed attention. And the man does have a certain degree of stage presence. His chats with the audience between numbers were low-keyed and sometimes amusing, and he seems to have a pretty good idea of his own limitations. And one of his original songs, "The First Time Around," I believe it's called, is quite resourceful in its dramatization of Kooper's thoughts upon losing his virginity (some years ago, I presume). But a headline attraction? Hardly.

Todd Everett

## ATLANTIC

### LAURA NYRO

Once there was a young songstress who peddled her songs on the street corners of New York with two Puerto Rican chums for small change. They were delighted when some passer-by stopped to listen for a moment, pulled a handful of assorted change from his pocket, and handed them a nickel or dime. Then someone discovered Laura Nyro and musicians and critics began to pay her homage. Blood, Sweat, and Tears, and the Fifth Dimension recorded her songs and turned them into Gold Records, and that began a demand for her to make her own. So Laura recorded and performed her bitter-sweet city songs with that embarrassingly open emotion that germinated around her a cult of dedicated admirers.

It was an emotional experience to listen to Laura's records, hear her soar to those chilling highs or reach those ardent depths -- listen to her dissonant poems of love and sadness and feel comfortable in the thought that she really understood being a woman. It was easy to get caught up in her intensity and feel like an integral part of her intimate plight. There were the Columbia albums, *Eli and the Thirteenth Confession* and *New York Tendrberry* and, where, where could the next one be?

Eventually, there it was, *Christmas and*



paul takakjian

### Buddy Miles

*the Beads of Sweat*, and upon first listening it was a disappointment. That lady of contemporary ladies vanished into near anonymity as the needle traveled from cut to cut: no fluctuating dynamics, no wrenching sobs -- only a consistent level, like a buzz . . .zzzzz .....

Perhaps, well, put it down and listen again later. It wouldn't be the first time a record and I had to have a little time to get acquainted. Bury it at the bottom of the listening stack and before it resurfaces the lady will have performed at the Fillmore and I'll be convinced.

Tickets went fast for that Fillmore Christmas Eve show. The theater was filled with devoted fans, there with gifts of flowers and jewelry for their Laura. She floated on stage, black hair flowing over her ~~gaudy~~, satiny, red. Keeping at arms length, lest one of her fans touch her and discover that she's indeed, not real, she gathered up their gifts of love and quite ceremoniously and dramatically nestled them under the large Christmas tree that shared the stage with her. Settling on the piano bench, Laura began to pour out all the wonderful tunes that make her records such enchanting pieces of vinyl. And the myth of the woman, Laura Nyro, began to crumble in her illusions of understanding, warmth and compassion. Her attitude toward the children who filled the room was obviously one of condescension.

*Eli* and the other records have been removed from my stack of favorite-to-listen-to-records, now, They're spoiled for all time by the memory of an incredibly pretentious performer who performed at the Fillmore with a Christmas tree by her side.

"Let's go to better times and happy places".

The rest of the season was all that Christmas ever promises to be, and more. It was filled with adventurous new experiences and nostalgic encounters. Second billed to Laura Nyro on the Christmas Eve show at the Fillmore was Jackson Browne: Jackson, the Orange County boy with the fragile voice and the delicate lyrics; Jackson, who wrote "These Days", "Shadow Dance Song" and more; Jackson, who influenced Nico and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. His guitar, like an old friend who responds to his gentle treatment, and his soft-voice tip-toed through a set of image provoking songs. He sang of old friends and old times, ending his set with the most upbeat tune of the day, a sort-of-Christmas song, "Jesus in Three-Four Time". The set was bland especially for members of the audience familiar with the wonderful, magical lyrics and melodies of his other material. It's suspected that this was partially due to the fact that Laura's management had control of the set, and Jackson's emotions might compete with the lady's. But it was good to see him all the same, and with the rumors of a recording contract (with Atlantic?) flying around, next time he'll have a show of his own. Now that he's been discovered, the quiet, poised composer/performer from Southern California will be a star.

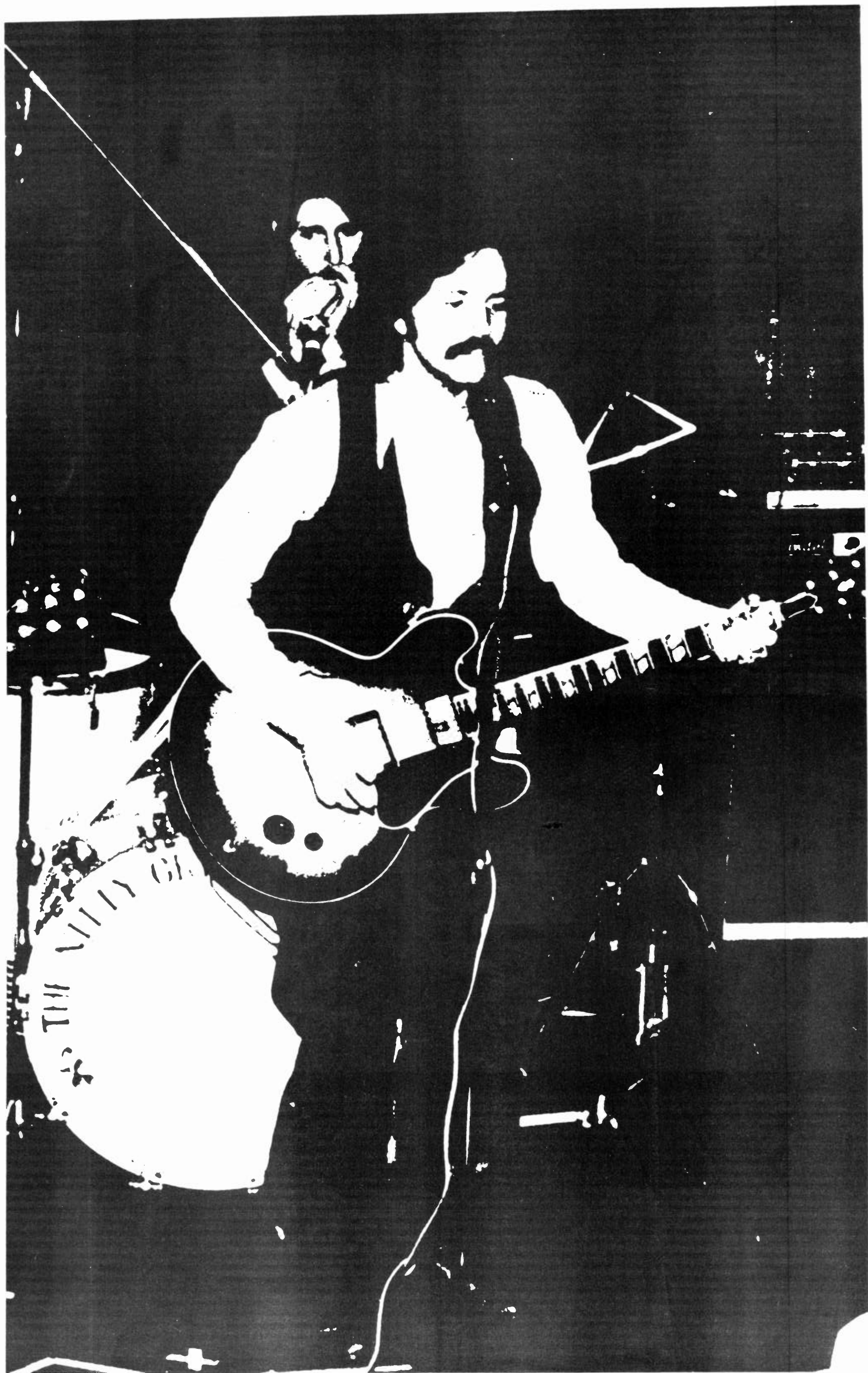
Another journey several thousand miles and a few years into the past helped make the yule season even more special. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band proved that they

are, indeed, alive and well at a special press gathering in Aspen, Colorado, where the group was performing at one of the ski resort's finest lodges. They have developed into a top-notch act during the past year, since they seemingly disappeared into near obscurity. There are five of them now: John McEuen, who plays banjo, fiddles like a gypsy, and plays accordion upon occasion; Jeff Hanna who plays guitar and sings the group's latest single, "Mr. Bojangles"; Les Thompson on mandolin and assorted instruments; Jimmy Fadden, on harmonica, washtub bass, etc.; and Jimmy Ibbotson, on guitar, accordion, and supplier of a great bulk of the vocals. It was a fun time for everyone, including the perilous trip back to Denver on a bus, after all flights out of Aspen were canceled due to a blizzard! Their new LP, *Uncle Charlie and His Dog Teddy*, should establish the Dirt Band as a recording group of major stature.

New Years in New York: Time Square, Zacherley at Central Park, Guy Lombardo, all those groovy things, and this is where it happens. Rain, snow, crowds, even the weatherman's promise of a real humdinger of a blizzard couldn't persuade me to miss New Year's Eve in New York. After the ball fell at Times Square, dissolving the problems of last year for the masses who began to cheer and kiss and hug anyone within reach, it was off to the Village Gate to herald in 1971 with the horns of Columbia's Dreams. Plagued with microphone problems and the absence of Mike Brecker, which was conspicuous when a temporary stand-in tried to duplicate his driving solo introduction at the beginning of the group's fifteen minute "Dream Suite", the group was still one of the finest and most innovative of the jazz-rock aggregations on the scene today. Eddie Vernon, lead vocalist, has the ability to remain poised even when nothing apparently is going well. He powerfully and personally contributes his part to the whole jazz-rock election, then steps out of the spotlight and focuses his attention on the rest of the group. It's refreshing to find a lead vocalist who isn't completely motivated by visions of being the star. Randy Brecker, certainly one of the most talented and brilliant young trumpet players around, wasn't at his best, probably partially because of Michael's untimely attack of appendicitis, although his opening cadenza on "Make My Life" showed his incredible creative mastery of the instrument. The group sports a new bassist, Chuck Rainey, a seasoned studio player who adds a lot of personality to the group's backbone.

Richie Havens headlined, with an electric group behind him. Haven's has never played better or sounded better. His electric arrangement of Dylan's "Just Like A Woman" was thrilling. But Havens fell into a trap he is infamous for -- in one hour and forty minutes he did four numbers, regular, short, three and a half minute type numbers, and talked for the major portion of the show. His incessant chatter is not only unbelievably boring, it is absurdly unintelligent, but who cares it's a new year...? Should auld acquaintance be forgot...." Patti Johnson







# NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND

By Patti Johnson

It was 1966 and the spotlight was on Southern California: Los Angeles and territories South. Flower people had listened to the melodic, elliptical music of the McGuinn-Crosby-Clark Byrds and the soft counterpunal harmonies of the Mamas and the Papas and were demanding more of the gentle electric and acoustic sounds. A circle of poetic folk prophets from the Orange County area began to paint their imageful aural canvases for a widening audience. Steve Noonan, Steve Gilette, Jackson Browne, and Mary McCaslin became favorites of the locals, especially that faction of musicians who had converged upon Los Angeles hoping to become a part of this romantic period.

From points East and North, the five who became known as The Buffalo Springfield found their way to L.A. and each other. They borrowed the sentiments of the prophets, electrified them rock style, added piercing highs to their multiple vocal harmonies country style and began to accumulate a dedicated following from their early performances at Los Angeles' prime folk club, the Troubadour.

About the same time, in another part of the city, six clean-cut, freshly scrubbed musicians, dressed in matching grey suits, captured the attention of local critics and romantics with their prismatic vocals, elegant arrangements, and polished, rehearsed patter between numbers. The Association had the musical process to effectively electrify those gentle folk images and the ability to pull off a sophisticated vaudeville show between numbers. Their early performances at the Glendale Ice House were testimony to the fact that in every sense of the word, the Association was an act. Their rapid success led the way for quite a collection of folk-rock acts to invade the scene, and six seemed to be the magic number. A group called the Deep Six, five men and one chick, from the San Diego and L.A. area, appeared, then disappeared after one hit single, "Rising Sun," and an excellent but overlooked LP on the Liberty label. Sometime later, a positive-sounding quintet from the San Pedro area burst upon the scene with their hit single, "Happy." That was the beginning of a series of pleasant but not too attention getting records for the Sunshine Company. And there were more, not as talented, and not as successful aggregations trying to court the dedicated L.A. sound audiences.

Like classical musicians borrowing and extending or varying a theme, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band took the total show concept of the Association et al and extended it. If subtle vaudevillian-type humor had been so successful, then the real zany, camp, slap-stick should really go over well. Dressed in dapper period costumes and equipped with washboard, wash tub bass, megaphone, jug, and other primitive instruments in addition to the other guitars, etc., the six boys from Long Beach began entertaining audiences in the L.A. area. The folk influence was evident, but their light treatment of even the most melancholy theme, their ridiculous appearance, and their insane cavorting made them instantly popular with the locals.

Those were the early days for the Dirt Band, when they numbered six (now they are five): Jeff Hanna, Ralph Barr, Les Thompson, Jimmie Fadden, Bruce Kunkel, and John McEuen. They were six fun-timey guys whose musical talent was sometimes overlooked because they were so humorous, but who, had they been lucky enough to be coupled with a producer who understood their brand of entertainment, could have recorded some fine folk-jug music. Unfortunately they were not so lucky. Their first LP, "The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band" perhaps was a little better than mediocre. All the songs sounded like their hit single, "Buy For Me The

Rain." Over produced, with elaborate strings and horns was this first effort for the Dirt Band and was not at all a fair representation of their act. As fate would have it, the LP traveled across the country before the Dirt Band had even gotten out of the Los Angeles area, putting the group at the disadvantage of having to prove they were musically better than the record. The Dirt Band had the proverbial first strike against them.

"Ricochet," the second album, was released, and with it the hopes that the group had fostered of getting it together with their assigned producer continued to diminish. The band was frequently assisted by a string section, and it was pretty, but difficult to reproduce on stage with an assortment of jugs, kazoos, washtubs, etc. Worse than that, the entire first side of the album (with the exception of Jeff's uptempo, "I'll Search the Sky") was mixed into near anonymity with an absolute absence of fluctuating dynamics. The second side opened with some interesting acoustic guitar work, intricate and crystal clear, on "Truly Right" (The Dirt Band's second single). There was a delicate, balanced meshing of voices and instruments on the Noonan/Copeland composition, "Tide of Love." The trombone slide lazily, effectively on "I'll Never Forget What's Her Name." But the impact that the group was capable of live was lost in the studio.

At some point between "Ricochet" and "Rare Junk" (the Dirt Band's third

LP) Bruce Kunkel left the group and was replaced by Chris Darrow, who previously was with Kaleidoscope. This added a fiddle to the group and thus new possibilities. This album was a more valid representation of the Dirt Band live, positive and funky and mostly them. Jimmie's harmonica virtuosity is apparent in "Mournin' Blues," John McEuen shows the stuff that the banjo players are made of on "Cornbread And Lasses." And in fact, the studio string section appears on only one cut on the entire first side of the record, on the last cut, another of folk hero Jackson Browne's tunes, "These Days." The album is really good-timey, well-recorded, jug band music, mostly. There are two cuts on the album, "Dr. Heckle and Mr. Jibe" and "End of the Line" that are experimental disasters. They inappropriately utilize psychedelic guitar fuzz and wah-wah. Not the stuff that folk-jug or country-folk are made of.

By that time, The Dirt Band had logged an impressive number of miles, playing clubs, theaters-in-the-round, and occasional campuses across the country. But they were apparently caught in that twilight zone that lies between success and failure. Groups that were launched at the same time, same place, had either made it big or were forever gone. The Association had scored five consecutive gold records and were still making a pretty penny on the road. The Deep Six, after one hit record, had dissolved to become fractions of other groups that also had become ob-

scure: Hearts and Flowers, Stoned Country, Dunn and McCashen, etc. The Buffalo had split up and gone their separate successful ways and had become a legend. While the Dirt Band maintained an absolute constant momentum.

Evidently, the realization of their plight came while they were in the wilds of Baker, Oregon, filming Paramount's "Paint Your Wagon." The weather was lousy for a while and they were confined in a small hotel which is part of a miniscule community that probably isn't even on a map. Upon completion of their portion of the film, they decided to split up, unfortunately not before they recorded their "Alive" album at Los Angeles' Troubadour. Inappropriately named, "Alive" exhibited the Dirt Band's mounting ennui, or was it indifference. The cuts are banded together by inane childish patter, (i.e. Jeff talking to himself when he hears the record) One of the finest cajun tunes around; "Alligator Man," is reduced to an unlistenable shrilly level. "Crazy Words, Crazy Tunes" is performed at 16 2/3 RPM, certainly a treat had it been recorded on video cassette, but not very enjoyable to merely listen to.

Like many of their contemporaries; individual members of the defunct Dirt Band worked as studio musicians, or packing other performers. John McEuen performed with the Andy Williams Orchestra in Las Vegas. Jeff and Chris backed Linda Ronstadt on a few tours—it must have been good for all of them because when they were tremendously improved, professional musicians.

When they did reorganize they became five. Ralph and Chris are still out there in the world (trying to make it alone). By adding Jim Ibbotsen (a preacher's kid from Philadelphia) to their number, they gained a tremendous amount of vocal and instrumental versatility.

Time has a way of mellowing and changing people. The Dirt Band is no exception. With their reformation came a renaissance. No longer are they a jug band, relying on primitive instruments, and those acoustic guitars are mostly electric now. They're playing soft electric-country now, and cajun, and bluegrass, and occasionally some pure unadulterated and undiluted rock. It's honest music, its success doesn't depend on gimmicks and fads. All of them have become better on the instruments they used to play, and they've added some. John has taken up the fiddle (he plays like he's been doing it forever). Jim alternates between guitar and accordion and sings a third of the band's material.

Back in the studio, under their own terms with their manager/producer Bill McEuen, the Dirt Band has delivered a hit, "Mr. Bojangles" (the Jerry Jeff Walker classic.) In my opinion, it's the finest version of the tune cut to date (and Mr. Walker has been paid one of the greatest complements a writer can be paid.) Their album, "Uncle Charlie and His Dog Teddy" is a trophy to be prized by the group. Every selection on the record is alive and treated apart from the rest. The dynamics fluctuate from the gentle, lyrical "Some of Shelly's Blues" to the bold Buddy Holly rock classic, "Rave On: with equal expertise. It's all music, each cut listenable, and without the help of studio musicians or wah-wah.

The group is on the road again, playing clubs, theaters-in-the-round, and an occasional campus. But this time it's different. They don't have it made, not by a long shot. The stigma of three years and four passable LP's will take a while to overcome. But the press and radio people in each of the markets they play are being wined and dined in an effort to make them aware of the Dirt Band they'd dismissed as gone or worthless. A lot depends on the next album.





**“...John Fogerty hasn’t heard a thing until  
he hears Tina do ‘Proud Mary.’  
The spoken introduction done over  
guitar and Ike singing the song  
in the background is perfect.  
The pick-up from the slow portion  
of their arrangement  
to the up-tempo one is done  
with precision and flash.”**

**Jon Landau in ROLLING STONE**

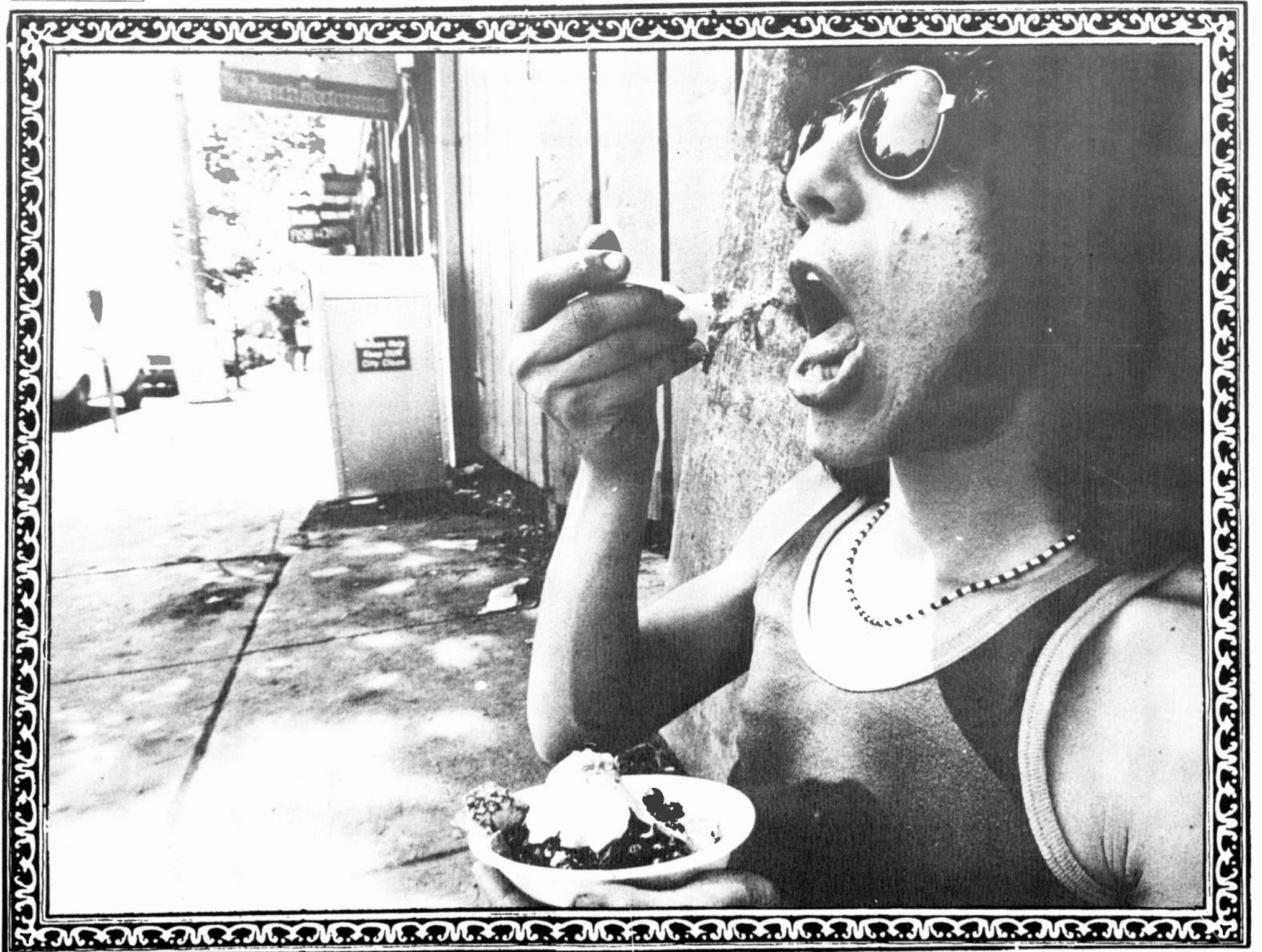


**Ike & Tina Turner on Liberty Records & Tapes**





# ROCK CRITICS



John Mendelsohn

A STATEMENT AND A COUNTER-STATEMENT BY

RITCHIE YORKE & JOHN MENDELSON





# ROCK

## RITCHIE YORKE

There is no more contemptible or unconstructive group of hangers on within the pop music industry than so-called rock critics. With very few exceptions, they are conceited, frustrated, feeble-minded, fidgeting and hopelessly boring.

They are also the bitchiest, phoniest bunch of creeps you could ever dread to meet, and have little real appreciation of pop music beyond indulging in egotistical essays on what such-and-such unsuccessful band does to their minds, which are usually hopelessly splattered by a wide assortment of hallucinating drugs.

The petty jealousy and catty slanderings about their competitors is worse than a class of 15-year old girls clamoring for the attention of some tall, guitar-playing athlete, and working in such circles can be tediously depressing. For all their declarations of hipness and affectations of the avant-garde, the average rock critic is about as aware of pop's real goings-on as Spiro Agnew.

If you doubt my word, ask the opinion of John Lennon, producer Jerry Wexler, Steve Stills or Eric Clapton. These are the people who are directly responsible for pop—they are the ones who enrich and encourage and physically produce rock's progression into the most significant musical form since the classics, and none of them would give you two cents for almost any rock critic now writing in North America. Stills and Lennon have all but given up on doing any interviews these days, so bored are they with being misquoted, misrepresented, and subjected to endless paragraphs of total tripe of no relevance outside being the writer's current thoughts.

Prior to late last year, I hadn't given the subject much thought. I'd naively assumed that the continual array of arrogant specimens called pop writers were merely typical of the unpleasant element in every profession.

Then, while being involved for a short time with John and Yoko Lennon's peace campaign, I had the opportunity to view the sickly scene from the other side. And God, it was horrifying.

All these snivelling flag-wavers calling up and begging for a private "audience" (that's how one of them described it) with God, i.e. John Lennon. In they'd come, full of apologies and accolades, pleading for every crumb, secretly jotting down personal phone numbers that Lennon was passing on in their hearing to colleagues. Back they'd trot to their typewriters, whereupon they would proceed to rip off every misleading or ugly phrase they could conjure up. It was, as I said, a real bummer.

If these writers were doing anything for the overall benefit of the art form, you could pardon it. If they were contributing towards its cultural

growth, you could disregard it. But when they do such damage to artistic morale and inflict such lame, self-indulgent junk on the public, there can be no excuses.

There is one critic in Los Angeles (who incidentally, thinks he is as important to pop as Paul McCartney) whose regular heapings of garbage are known as the "Comic Strip" by the music industry. His track record includes moronic reviews in Rolling Stone of the two Led Zeppelin albums, and a recent treatise in the Los Angeles Times completely rubbishing the Guess Who. Very hip! Very in! Very ingenious.

Rolling Stone is one of the worst offenders in this mediocre cult of the hip. The editorial staff at Stone practices a rare form of chronic ego-worship. Public popularity, musical expertise, interesting background—it doesn't mean a damn if your group isn't in. The Stone people don't like English blues groups. So, no large feature stories on Led Zeppelin, Jethro Tull (a blues group?), Savoy Brown, Ten Years After, Spooky Tooth.

Likewise, no coverage of groups who make it with singles—the Guess Who, Three Dog Night, Tommy James etc. And all copy at Stone is butchered in the style-moulding machine. The entire scene there is so dismal that no self-respecting writer could continue to have his efforts published by them. Thank inefficiency and amateurism that its circulation is still well below 200,000.

There are various kinds of rock critics, the common denominator being that they are generally all purveyors of puny prose.

There's the pseudo-intellectual critic, who takes you through fields of shallow boredom without ever reaching any degree of understanding. There's the impossible-to-comprehend critic, who figures that you think that anything you can't understand must be brilliant. There's the anti-capitalist critic who figures that success inevitably breeds loss of direction and lack of quality. The reverse is usually the case. There's the conceited critic, who thinks he is responsible for pop's new routes. Plus, of course, there's the rip-off critic, who tries to make a name by putting things down, including particular fellow-writers.

Quite a sorry bunch. Enough to make you want to quit and take up farming. But I must admit that in eight years of writing on the subject, I have never considered myself a rock critic. Observer, reporter, commentator...yes. But critic, no. I have this theory that artistic criticism is passe anyway, and I have many qualms whenever I have to sit down and write a review of a concert or record. Who am I to condemn anyone's artistic endeavors? They are beyond condemnation and criticism. They are merely there

for you to hear.

Maybe that's why I recently ceased writing for Rolling Stone, because I'm sick of the hypocrisy and empty super hipness. Maybe that's why I'm shrinking more and more from writing what I think of a record rather than what the artist himself thinks. Maybe that's why I can find no enjoyment or inspiration at all from more than a handful of today's self-confessed rock experts. Maybe you too feel the same way.



# ROCK CRITICS

## JOHN MENDELSON

How I, mean, self-indulgently snide, and misanthropic John Mendelsohn, who (at least Rolling Stone suspects) "would give God a bad review," reviews an album: true confession containing lots of infrequently coherent asides on rock criticism in general.

Uh, well, first as will perhaps impress you as obvious, I listen to the album. The number of times I repeat this step depends upon (a) how long it takes me to become confident of my understanding of what exactly the artist is up to, and (b) the visceral/emotional effect of the work on me—as you'll doubtless appreciate, I won't inflict on myself an album that bores or repels me more than once.

Hopefully relevant here is the consideration that, (appearances possibly and reputation certainly to the contrary) I infinitely prefer writing about something that delights me, that inspires me to attempt to communicate the joy it has evoked in me, to laboring at a "fair" critical appraisal of something that does nothing or less to me. Yes, I'll grant you that, owing to certain sorry imperfections in my temperament, I can occasionally quite enjoy pissing on something whose stature in my humble estimation far exceeds its worth, like the Moody Blues or Led Zeppelin. Anyway...

Having intellectually digested the work in question, I ingest, inject, or inhale whatever consciousness-altering drugs may be on hand in my dark den and get down to the heavy business of putting my perceptions into some vague semblance of order, instruments that facilitate this process being an electric typewriter, a red Pentel felt tip pen, scissors, and Scotch tape.

I want my reviews to function in several different ways. Most obviously, I want them to communicate as cogently as possible the nature and impression on me of the album, to thus serve as a guide to which those few perverts whose musical tastes resemble my own may refer when deciding whether or not to plot the acquisition of the album. I want to give the artist who's knocked me out a heavy buzz in gratitude and, conversely, to discourage the artist who's bored me or offended me from ever doing so again—you see, the only real advantage of being a rock critic rather than simply a member of the audience is that you have slightly more hope of making this a better world to have ears in.

Additionally, I want my writing to be pleasurable reading on its own terms (that is, apart from being criticism), something that's as exciting in its own way as the music it's about. Why, I always want to ask those who find the obvious

attempts at outrage in my writing so deathly offensive, shouldn't rock criticism have the option of being just as fast and flashy and flamboyant as its subject? How does it benefit anyone to respond to a boring act or record with an equally boring stiffly objective piece of writing? Long live Nik Cohn, and get out of the way, Chuck.

Maybe approaching something a bit meatier, what does it really matter anyway? I mean if you're a rabid Pink Floyd maniac, is your affection for them going to be diminished as a result of discovering that hot-shot John Mendelsohn thinks they're a very boring case of technology replacing art? Should every rock critic in the universe conclude that Grand Funk Railroad is sheer unadulterated excrement, will it render Grand Funk noticeably less large in the legend of its admirers any more than universally vitriolic reviews of Jacqueline Susann impeded sales of "Valley of the Dolls?"

Very probably not, right? Really, there can't be more than ten rock critics alive in this country with sufficient influence to make even the slightest difference in a commercial sense.

Which I think is quite rightly so, it being the case that there are very few more than ten rock critics alive in this country worth reading. Besides Lester Bangs (my own favorite), Ken Emerson, Ben Edmonds, Dave Marsh, Jon Landau, Robert Christgau, and one or two of the New York people, how many can you think of who consistently display style, sensitivity, and expertise?

And if the number of unerringly readable rock critics is small, how would you describe the number of rock critics whose tastes correlate closely enough with your own that you can confidently pursue or avoid on the basis of their recommendations? Will miniscule do?

Now what I think I'm trying to get to is that if he isn't already, everybody ought to be happy: if you're clever enough to realize that only very few rock critics have anything to tell anyone to begin with, that all critics, like all normal folks, have their own peculiar idiosyncracies of taste, and that such idiosyncracies can always be detected and allowed for, you're also sufficiently clever to make optimal use of rock criticism (e.g. to allow the good critics to lead you to splendid unfamiliar things you would otherwise have passed up with nary a listen, to articulate your own objections or approval). Conversely, those lame enough to trust a lame critic's judgement probably are incapable of distinguishing the trifling from the sublime in the first place, and thus won't even notice that they're being led astray anyway. Sure, there are a lot of perfectly dreadful people writing in widely-circulated pub-

lications, but won't you agree that anyone so dim as to pay attention to them deserves exactly what he's led to and discouraged from?

This is such a nicely-ordered universe.

Now to spew briefly in response to Ritchie Yorke's very far-out article on rock critics in Jazz & Pop.

After uttering such incisive stuff as, "...They are the bitchiest, phoniest bunch of creeps you could ever dread to meet, and have little real appreciation of pop music beyond indulging in egotistical essays on what such-and-such unsuccessful (*italics mine*) band does to their minds, which are usually hopelessly splattered by a wide assortment of hallucinating (*sic*) drugs," Ritchie concludes, "I have this theory that artistic criticism is passe anyway...Who am I to condemn anyone's artistic endeavors? They are beyond condemnation and criticism. They are merely there for you to hear."

I won't dwell on the obvious resemblance of Ritchie's prose to Max Rafferty's, nor will I succumb to the temptation of giving the obvious answer to his "Who am I...?" query. I'd rather talk about what I find to be a very appalling cynicism in his remarks:

Is it not the case that a critic of any artistic medium is in fact simply a member of the audience with a slightly more fully developed faculty for literate articulation? And, consequently, is recommending a suspension of the critic's power of discrimination not tantamount to calling for an audience of undiscerning zombies? Isn't it obviously true that everyone is in his own way a critic, insofar as everyone knows What He Likes? How noxious is the idea that music is "merely there for you to hear," and not to respond to, positively or otherwise.

And is it not true that to declare a moratorium on criticism is to necessarily imply a moratorium on praise at the same time? Do you, Ritchie Yorke, perceive rock and roll and its creators as so flimsy that they will be destroyed by criticism?

Really, as grateful as I am to Ritchie for devoting a whole paragraph in his article to my own crimes against nature (like not liking Led Zeppelin or The Guess Who), I have to admit that I can't think of a better example of a perfectly dreadful apology for a writer selling himself to anyone who'll read him as an Influential Commentator than Ritchie Yorke. Say hello to John and Yoko for me, will you Ritchie?

If you want to treat yourself to about 200 pages of the best rock and roll criticism ever coughed up, get hold of Nik Cohn's "Rock From the Beginning." If you can't afford that, make a point of reading Pete Townshend's monthly column in "Melody Maker."

Same to you.





## Zacherley-WNEW-FM

R. Meltzer

Like a beacon in the darkest tent, Zacherly stands out head and shoulders above the whole pack of New York FM people. It's not really that hard to do it because New York FM is far inferior to New York car radio AM. But just the same, Zacherley is on it so that alone is enough to give it merit. And when you get down to it that's the only merit it's got.

Zach, whose birth certificate reads John Zacherley, wasn't always a radio guy. He used to be a television guy back in the early days of rock and roll. He had this show that did all the old lousy monster movies. Just the lousy ones like "The Cat Creeps" and "To Each His OWN" and he'd come on every few minutes dressed in the same costume as the movie and have a couple of good lines. But the pictures were always monster movies and he was always better than them and a better monster too. He wore real good makeup on his cheeks and around his eyes and he wasn't even Mick Jagger. It was dark lines to make him look gruesome and that was his class. He had a wife named Isobel who lived in a coffin and somebody else around named Gasport who lived in a burlap bag.

One Friday night—he was on Friday and Saturday during late movie time—he had the slobbus amoebus on. The slobbus amoebus was a couple thousand strands of spaghetti in a plastic bag and the operation went real good and in the end he had to mop up the whole mess on the floor. Everything gravitated to the floor all the time and he took off his shoes and rolled up his pants and mopped it up.

The gravitation bit came to play once when he dug for the center of the earth and he got it and it was about the size of a marble and it wasn't very interesting once he got it at all. That's the way the whole show used to get towards the end of the season, dull. There wasn't much left to do and it was mostly kids who were gonna go away to camp who watched it so they were getting bored just hanging around the scene anyway. So why'd he have to bother being exciting until next year? He didn't and he didn't.

He had this thing when they were real stinkeroos of the history of celluloid that he was gonna take them along with him to the Transylvanian Film Burning Festival. Some of those pictures are still around

and get shown now and then but too bad he isn't around to kick them across the floor.

He isn't around there because he's somewhere else—not better, not worse, just somewhere else—doing the radio. Which is as good a place as any for his talents. The music's the same whenever you listen to it and wherever you listen to it on FM, except maybe the Johathan Schwartz Show on WNEW-FM. Which happens to be the most rancid overstatement of pre-rock and roll sentimentality ever to survive 1955. This guy rants his way through hours of monologues used for filler in the Barney's Boys Town annual catalogue, it's really yummy stuff.

Well one time Zach (who happens to be on the same station) was sitting around porked on rotgut with Richard Robinson and Scott Muni. They were sitting around during station hours talking about the big activities going on in the street at that very moment. Like Jonathan Schwartz standing in line waiting for tickets for his latest fave rave Broadway show. *Shows*, can you imagine that? Too much, huh? Well shows aren't Zach's bag, no sir. Ditto for Richard and Scott and double ditto for Zach. Jonathan's problem is his pop is the famous show personage writer and composer Arthur Schwartz, after whom so many people on the East Coast have been named. Pops was okay in his time but poor Johathan's still busy kicking a dead horse which is regrettable and is also a stumbling block to the progress of FM etc.

Zach has no such problems with his father so he's got it all together. He even does the best newscasting in the United States today. There's a big pile of papers there and every paper has something on it that has to be read, or so they tell him. But who's to tell him what order he has to read them in? Nobody because he's a star. So he reads them as he sees fit and usually the weather gets read not last but in the middle. If that isn't a breakthrough in the whole concept of news nothing is. There's lots of rustling and crumbling of papers too, no use in keeping them quiet, papers were made to be noised up a bit. He even reads the stuff with really good weird emphasis on strange words here and there, like "In making its study the SEC division of trading and markets...staff focused on the 28, no that was thirty-eight biggest of 140 unregistered investment



partnerships (yawn) commonly known as hedge funds... or "Muhammad Ali also known as Cassius Clay successfully knocked out Oscar Bonavena in 15 rounds at Madison Square Garden."

Oh yeah who can ever forget when Zacherley was a rock and roll star himself, back when he did "Dinner with Drac." There was a part I and a part II and part II was the bigger hit. It was one of those vintage Cameo-Parkway things at the same time as "Silhouettes" by the Rays, which was a good song before Herman's Hermits got to it. Those were good days and when he appeared in full costume on the Dick Clark Show one Saturday night he was the best they had had in weeks. There were lines in it like "A dinner was served for three at Dracula's house by the sea, the wolfman was there, the something or other was there, and the only normal person was me." Also something about spaghetti with "broomstraws from a witch named Betty" and "blood is much thicker than water" with lots of great hideous laughs to spice it up.

Now these days Zach goes around without his makeup most of the time but he uses it once in a while to emcee a show or something. For the kids, he's always done a lot of stuff for the kids. Now he's got himself long hair with a little grey in it and a big chain of keys that hang off his belt. Dungarees and a dark blue shirt, he's the best dressed ghoul in town. And he's at all the press parties at Ungano's and the Bitter End for all the groups, no matter how worthless. He was there for Hard Meat and he was even there for Alexander Rabbit. He applauds like he's really concerned about up and coming groups not having so hard a time of it. He's even one of the only two people in New York radio to play "What Is Quicksand"/"Arthur Comics" by the Stalk-Forrest Group, no mean feat. He even wanted to know how they were doing, was getting a band together tough, how much does it cost to live, etc. What a swell guy!

The food at press parties can get pretty gruesome, not too far a cry from the open-faced spider buns that he used to demonstrate on his old show. The Seals &

Crofts party at the Sign of the Dove even had glazed eggs with little round black things on them to make them look like eyeballs. That's what they looked like.

Once he emceed an event in Central Park that was free in the fall of '68. Traffic was supposed to be the headliner act but it was a thousand years before they got there and in the meantime there were such dandies as the Smubbs and the Elephant and it was getting colder and later and everybody was getting impatient and leaving and coming back but still no Traffic. That's when Traffic was in the country for only about the second time and people were pretty hot for them. Whenever Rosko—another WNEW-FM stalwart—emceed that sort of stuff he just got up and said all sorts of short pre-arranged stuff with nice meter and maybe even a rhyme. But Zacherley was a heck of a lot more lively and he never stopped smiling and joking and laughing and smiling and (actually) having a good time. He knows how to have a good time. If you were him you would too. Lisa Robinson was gonna have a Halloween party and invite him to it all dressed up but she didn't have the party, it would have been a good one.

He once had a show on UHF television called Zacherley's Disco-Teen and it was not half bad. As far as those kind of kiddie things go where they have the kids parade around like fools to music (the latest singles) and win prizes and do fun and games, as far as they go his was the best hands down. Lots of other deejays have tried, Cousin Brucie for instance, but they were all highly unpalatable day after day. But not his.

Same goes for his current show on FM. Like what can you expect to hear on the radio anymore? Not much but sometimes you even get much on his show. That's right and even when you don't you at least get him. When was the last time that was true? Alan Freed? Well that was a long, long, long time ago. Richard Robinson was okay too but he's not on anymore so John Zacherley leads the pack. That's right.



# JOY OF COOKING

LAWRENCE + ADELE LOVETT, ROUTE 1, CASHTON, WISCONSIN, PLAYED THE ALBUM IN THEIR GARDEN. THIS WAS THE RESULT...



THINK WHAT IT CAN DO FOR YOU.







# PHONOGRAPH RECORD REVIEWS



## PENDULUM/Creedence Clearwater Revival/Fantasy

Don't let 'em fool you. Pendulum is as distinctly Creedence as "Proud Mary" or "Lodi." And that, I think, is good; Creedence music is one of the few things we can count on; it's like the seasons in its inevitability. And superficial changes such as the addition of keyboards or sax or the predominance of three-minute-plus tracks, don't greatly alter the fabric—in fact, the changes are hardly noticeable in relation to that automatic and intrinsic statement contained in each track: "THIS IS A CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL SONG." It's strongly reassuring that, even when they try really hard to sound different, it comes out just the same.

In contrast to the romantic sensibility that pervades rock practically from top to bottom, Creedence is strongly classicist both in concept and execution. The ties with vintage rock'n'roll, emphasis on technique and form, steadiness and caution, attention to detail, and concentration on each song as an entity all strongly suggest classicism, a values system clearly unique in the context of 1970's rock. Is Creedence an anachronism, or is Creedence music ahead of its time? The answer, most likely, is both. Beyond that, a band that plays rock'n'roll and puts the priority on form(!) must really value simplicity. Because of Creedence's treatment of the song as a structure, the band's music often seems as emotionless as it does precise. In "Good Golly, Miss Molly" or "Travelin' Band," for example, the emotion is implied (by the close relationship of these songs to Little Richard's obviously visceral performances) but not really present. However, when Fogerty has something to say, the tone changes substantially. Green River (the third album) was the closest Creedence has come to a strongly felt, unified statement, and that includes *Pendulum*.

Even without benefit of content (in the sense of an expression of some idea or feeling), Creedence music is always at least interesting because the form itself is appealing. When Fogerty actually has a thought to communicate—as in "Wrote a Song for Everyone," "Lodi," "Fortunate Son," "Who'll Stop the Rain"—the music becomes near-flawless rock, and valid art, in its three-dimensionality.

Bud Scoppa

## CELESTIAL EXPLOSION/Don Bikoff/Keyboard

Down by where the castle waves hit the castle wall, a bottle tossed from crest

to crest. Over by the rainbow bridge, formed by the erosion of many dreams, a shaggy dog scampered across. Under the bridge a waterfall. Upon a melon seed the water hit, creating.

In a fairy land, only the triangles are true. A primrose on a billow of clouds. The dancing master and the tarot jester. A man stumbles by. Further down the beach, a red and white balloon floated between bodies.

The devil fought the battle and the intensity was joined. Fiercely. Rindler at first did not understand. Soon the transformation into a butterfly. It was expected. Hammering on.

Sitting on a bench, a princess appeared. He made love under open skies on crystal cream bedspreads made of velvet asphalt. And if you touch her she may shatter or maybe it's your mind.

Carried by a breath to the paradisaical land of Planting Fields, green grassies and flower fragrances, sky blues and orange suns. The tune fades; Planting Fields sleeps.

Bathing gently with my love to recapture the days. Lulled by the quietude, none can reach us, not even the far-off lighthouse. Kuranos, the star that lies just beyond, illuminates the pathways. We run with joy up and down the fretboard.

In the next village over, it is written that one may not kill a cat. Upon the peak of the mountain, an ancient sits, glassy-eyed for he has seen the vision. Could it be that you could bottleneck your way out of this sullied earth to the Earth of Love, juxtaposed in that hidden dimension alongside the lakes of Frangipani.

In the early morning, the poles for breakfast are already set. The trout fishermen will be back soon and the smell of bacon permeates the hearth. My love and I did ride the night, and now we'll slide on icicles past the edges of the ocean.

I built a spaceship out of popsicle sticks and flew beyond the Tanarian Hills, searching for Ooth-Nargai. All I found was the roseate and cerulean splendor of the abyss. Somewhere in the vast middle, a lake with no streams.

Sometimes you're running down a street, the highway, anything, even sitting in a crowded room as you wanna scream, scream so it will explode. Music is such a scream.

Don Bikoff is simply the best guitarist I have ever heard, and the extent of the field is more than Eric Clapton, encompassing Django Reinhardt, Segovia, Chet Atkins, Sandy Bull, John Fahey and the many others that space precludes mentioning. It is a shame, but descriptions by necessity are made in comparison. *Celestial Sounds* begins where Fahey left off

maybe five years ago. It is electric Fahey not in the sense of an electrical guitar but in the sense of electricity conveyed by the music. Bikoff has effected a most successful fusion of the disparate sixties. There is as much J.R.R. Tolkien as Charlie Patton, H.P. Lovecraft as Robert Johnson. It is his varied use of texture and dynamics that make Bikoff the better of his predecessors.

Music for many musicians is a search, often elusive and ineluctable. For Fahey it is the search for Blind Joe Death; for Robbie Basho, the Quest for the Grail and the Lotus; and for Don Bikoff, the voyages to the Earth of Love and the Lakes of Frangipani.

Bobby Abrams

## YELLOW RIVER/Christie/Epic

There is something to be said about two-part harmonies. After the slick four-part-folk-group era ended about 1963, Ian & Sylvia captured their listeners with the purity of traditional musical arrangements and divergency of creative two-part intervals (i.e. "Greenwood Sidie" and "Drowsy sleepers"). Later on, Jim and Jean came along to first mutilate other people's songs and then their own insipid compositions (i.e. Phil Ochs' "Changes" and their "People World").

By way of this extended introduction we can discern that Christie, unfortunately, comes on with a Jim and Jean type vocal in "Inside Looking Out" and "San Bernardino." That which would otherwise be a successful mixture of solid folk-rock arranging, vibrant guitar work, and ever-so-tasteful drum technicianship is distracted by forced elocution and banal harmonies. It shouldn't bother anybody that these cuts are getting a lot of airplay because they're certainly representative of Christie's full instrumentation and powerful rhythms. The up-in-the-air endings (c.f. Chrysalis' "What Will Come of the Morning?") get the mind-picture across on the wings of high-register guitar trills: the song experience in both is, ultimately, uplifting.

But what makes it so amazing is that all this has been accomplished by a three-man group, three being synonymous with thick-textured noise a la Cream and Tin House. Through everything that had Cream's name on it stood the voice of Jack Bruce: playing an instrument never interfered with his singing. Everybody in Christie is able to do both and without a loss at either end.

It's not readily visible, but this album is also another fine "concept" album. The title, the cover, even the shirts they wear all contain yellows and off-yellows.

Just like at the Parkway Restaurant in New York, their favorite eating spot when they're out east. The river is not just the flow of music or ripples in a brook, but the steady stream of beverage available at the Parkway (it's a Rumanian place and they do broilings). And what street is it on? Christie Street, naturally.

R. Meltzer

## HAPPY AND ARTIE TRAUM/Capitol

On the back of the new Happy and Artie Traum album, Artie Traum has written the following thought . . .

"We are all, all of us, alienated and afraid of this monstrous, billowing junk heap: music thrives on our energy, draws our hope, purges and soothes us."

The essence of their music is very much involved in this awareness. They have lived in the city with the soot, the violence, the hectic pace. They see man's lack of touch with nature . . . and see how man is being ripped off in such places as the gambling halls of Reno, Nevada. They see greed about them . . . an avarice that prompts men to disregard the consequences of having what they want.

Happy and Artie Traum are aware of these problems as their notes on the back of the album cover suggest. However their music draws its inspiration from other sources and other times . . . ironically achieving a very soothing effect.

The cruel history of the Southwest where the constant struggle between life and death reigned, inspired Artie Traum to write "Brave World." It comes off initially as a light cheerful song with an interesting instrumentation including tom tom and rattlesnake. There's a good beat and a lively melody. But the more one listens to it, the more one realizes the seriousness of the lyrics and is strangely comforted by the hardships of Brave World.

"Hey saltseller give me some salt to keep my horse alive."

One of their most beautiful songs is Artie Traum's "The Hungry Dogs of Mexico." Done in a minor key with a harp and fiddle playing out a beautiful melody, Artie Traum tells the story of a man who gets ripped off in the gambling casinos of Reno only to afterwards be again taken by the woman he is with. Interspaced between this story are verses about the wolves of New Mexico. The constant is quite effective. This is a sad song yet it's a mind-sticker.

Happy Traum's songs derive their inspiration from much quieter, more peaceful sources such as the Catskills and Woodstock. As Happy Traum says, "After living in the mountains for a few years one begins to understand the stuff that ballads



and lore are made of." His songs have a feeling of loneliness about them with which one can really empathize.

The lyrics are heightened through the accomplished instrumentation of the Traums on acoustic guitar and harmonies, Eric Kaz (on harmonica and piano) Michael Esposito (on bass), and most of the Area Code 615 people on fiddle, dobro and steel.

Happy and Artie Traum play polished, professional folk music and as a duo are one of the best around. Their lyrics are anything but "Hokey," dealing in images that are quite profound . . . stark at times, but strangely comforting in the end.

There's something distrubing yet something about Happy and Artie Traum's music that makes you "come around."

Elizabeth Walker

FOR YOU Jeffrey Cain/Warner Brothers

Jeffrey Cain's album is warm, gentle, generally benevolent, and positively reeking with good vibrations. If you like the Youngbloods (who perform variously on the album and who have released it on their Raccoon semi-label), songs that put down racial prejudice and Ronald Reagan, and covers lettered by Rich Griffin and adorned with pleasantly domestic photographs, you'll probably like "For You." On the other hand, if you object to being expected to like an album for reasons such as these, as I do, you'll want to pass it by.

Young Mr. Cain's voice can be quite pleasant; he vaguely echoes Tim Buckley (in his pre-Leon Thomas days) on several tracks, and on one, gets so carried away with his mellow vibrato that he sounds like Buffy St. Marie. There are delightful lyrics too, here and there, as when he sings "I was walking my doggy/And the night it was foggy/And the benches were wet/And the grass it was soggy/And I couldn't remember/If It was May or December/I'm just paying my dues/So I can still be a member." But far too much of what he is singing is almost touching but ultimately, disconcerting in its naivete and its banality. He uses a San Francisco-style Delta blues to admonish California's chief executive, saying "Mr. Governor, Mr. Governor, I don't have no answer for you/I

have been playing around, separately or together, in the Boston area for a number of years. It's rumored that this is the third album they've put together for Atlantic, the first two not having been released. Whether or not that's true, this album is worth the wait. It's also worth dropping everything and running down to your local record dealer, and special-ordering if necessary (at the moment, the record company isn't pushing it, particularly).

As far as style or feeling is concerned, the closest I can describe this album is what the first Stones lp should have sounded like. It's sort of Chicago blues-ish, but the members of the band seem to be more interested in having a good time than they do in being "authentic." The recorded sound is terrific.

Raving on like this isn't particularly fun to read, so I'll just get on with the details and trust you to come up with your own hysterical toutings as soon as you've heard it for yourself. The band consists of Geils on lead guitar, Seth Justman on keyboards, Magic Dick on harmonica, Danny Klein on bass, Stephen Bladd on drums and Peter Wolf on vocals. They play right, they sing right and they look right (varying from English superstar to early pachucko). The material on the album is largely original, partly from others ("Serves You Right to Suffer," "First I Look at the Purse" and Albert Collins' "Sno-Cone"), and all great. Buy it.

Todd Everett

ROCKIN' 50's ROCK & ROLL/Crickets/Barnaby

The past year or so has been the revival or attempted revival, of a number of stars of varying magnitude from the 1950's rock and roll era. The most notable is Elvis, of course, who's never been exactly gone, but has never been so popular as he is today. Fats Domino came back a while ago with a decent single ("Lady Madonna"), a nice album ("Fats is Back") and nothing worthwhile to follow. Gene Vincent's tried twice on record so far, once disastrously and once pretty well. And so on, until we get to the Crickets. Like Elvis, the Crickets have been

Sue," "Raining in My Heart," "Think It Over" and "True Love Ways" is just a collection of Holly's greatest hits, done up in pretty much the original arrangements (credited this time around to Glen Hardin, who's also Elvis' pianist). And with almost no degree of spirit, enthusiasm, or guts. Or, one might say, redeeming social value. "Well All Right" almost makes up for what Blind Faith did to the song, but only because it sticks closer to the original than did Winwood. At least the Beatles knew enough to let their Holly song ("Words of Love") pretty much alone.

The reason for all this griping isn't to put the Crickets down; they're competent performers, and Curtis, especially, is a fine songwriter ("The Straight Life" and "I Fought the Law," for instance.) It's more of *that* that should be on the album, and less dependence on somebody else's past triumphs. While I'm writing this review, I'm listening to Buddy Holly's first album, in mono. I suggest that you make every attempt to do the same.

Todd Everett

THE ART OF THE IMPROVISERS Ornette Coleman/Atlantic

In the early 60's the musical legitimacy of Ornette Coleman was so widely discussed the Esquire Magazine published a major feature article in which several dozen well-known musicians and composers, jazz and otherwise, took sides—in some cases quite passionately—for or against this brash young man with his plastic saxophone and his enthusiastic disregard for chordal improvisation. Those partisans of his music who assigned to him, in Esquire and elsewhere, the historical importance of a Coleman Hawkins or a Charlie Parker were not far wrong, apparently, for, in the past decade, he has proved to be one of the most influential, instructive, and inventive musical personalities in the history of jazz. From the first, he has not only sought a future for his music, but has shown others how to look for futures of their own. Joe Goldberg to the contrary (ef. his album notes to Ken McIntyre's "Stone Blues" lp), there were indeed "Post-Ornette saxophonists" a mere two years after Mr. Coleman's first recordings were released. The speed with which his authority was recognized (if sometimes uncertainly) is

slavery (the urban and the rural varieties) and made them into hymns of liberation, which start to free by the very fact of their performance.

These seven unfamiliar cuts are from the same period (and in most cases from the same sessions) that produced such classics as "Ramblin'", "Free," "Lonely Woman," "Una Muy Bonita," and "RP DD." Ornette sounds...well...younger, less sure, than he does today. He also sounds more passionate, more impulsive. His tone of voice is unperfected but unfailing-exciting; I think the afterhours men at Minton's would have been stirred by his music, even if they didn't understand it (and I think they might have understood the musical sense of things like "Just For You" and "The Legend of Be-Bop").

Don Cherry plays trumpet on all the tracks, matching Ornette's wit conversing and then sometimes reversing what is said. The drummers are Billy Higgins and Ed Blackwell; Higgins certainly has no trouble keeping up with the goings-on, but Blackwell is far more inventive, far more musical. (Listen to his contrapuntal near-melody, played without snares, against Ornette's improvisations on "The Fifth of Beethoven.") The bassists are Jimmy Garrison and Scott La Faro (on one track each) and Charlie Haden. La Faro's track bears the recently-added title "The Alchemy of Scott La Faro;" like the alchemists of old, La Faro plays with bass mettle. He certainly needs no further eulogies at this late date (he's been dead a decade), but his relentless energy, his undisguised enthusiasm, and his inspired intelligence have seldom been equalled by jazz string-players of any sort. The only trouble was that, sometimes, his fiercely independent "accompaniment" was so compelling that other soloists were lost to the listener. There's no such problem with Charlie Haden. In Ornette's liner notes for "Change of the Century," he says "Charlie Haden is from Missouri and he has a lot of heart." His solo on "Ramblin'" confirms both his internal substance and his down-home origins; so does his work on most of "The Art of the Improvisers," as when he works sly variations on an old-time Curtis Counce-style walk (on "The Legend of Be-Bop") or answers a Monkish quote by Don Cherry with a sudden series of high-pitched punctuations (on "The Fifth of Beethoven"). Above all, he



Christie

wouldn't let Jesus hear me, goin' 'round talkin' the way you do;" he sings a pre-teen freedom rider-type dream about a time when "Nobody thought about color/ And nobody thought about race/or cared about the color/of the other fellow's face;" worst, he intones a meagre bit of verse for his friends which is so sugary sweet it makes you almost queasy. In short, this is an album characterized by overstatement, platitude, and youthful excess, saved only occasionally by a clever lyric or a pretty vocal passage. Jeffrey Cain could turn out to be a very fine singer and songwriter, I suspect, and I'll eagerly await his next attempt. Meanwhile, "For You" is not for me.

Colman Andrews

J. GEILS BAND/Atlantic

Various members of the J. Geils Band

around most of the time, cutting an album with Bobby Vee that wasn't too bad (after all, wasn't Bobby Vee Buddy Holly's replacement until Tommy Roe came along?), and doing a lot of studio work individually. Why they're together now, using the old name, is anybody's guess.

The album, on the Andy Williams-owned Barnaby label, isn't too bad. Sonny Curtis and Jerry Allison sing pretty well, and of course they've got all the licks down cold. But that's part of the problem, and why the album isn't very good, either. Even if you discount Delaney Bramlett's overproduction of two cuts, "Rockin' 50's Rock and Roll" falls flat on its face.

Of the ten songs on the album, only the title number is new. And it, one of those "sure is fun t'be out there shuckin' and jivin' just like we did in the old days" numbers, is easily the most dispensable on the album. The rest, including "Peggy

a tribute to the virtue and the accuracy of his bold clairaudience. (Has there ever been another album so accurately titled as "The Shape of Jazz to Come?")

But there's another, equally important, side to his music. The most surprising thing about Ornette's detractors (again, in Esquire and elsewhere), is not that they could have objected at all to a music that was so obviously and thoroughly indebted to several hundred years of American musical tradition. "The Art of the Improvisers," which contains seven previously unreleased tracks recorded at now-near-legendary Atlantic sessions between 1959 and 1961, is a fine, fresh illustration of the conceptual and actual eloquence with which Ornette Coleman and his fellow musicians were (and are) able to translate the rough, strong prose of folk musics like blues and be-bop into poetical visions of times and places not yet realized. It's a neat trick: they've taken the songs of

remains part of the music, reacting to it as much as he stimulates it.

In a sense, this album might seem superfluous. Ornette's early style is already quite familiar, after all, to those who care about his music, and he's already gone far beyond what this album represents (as have Don Cherry and Charlie Haden, for that matter). But that's the danger of considering an historically important figure as having no importance other than an historical one. The fact is that, no matter how familiar (or even old-fashioned) this music might sound today, it's such good MUSIC that its historical relevancy is simply not an issue. And, though this compilation understandably lacks the unity of spirit that has characterized most of Ornette's other records, as far as I'm concerned the folks at Atlantic can release some more "new" Ornette Coleman music any old time they want to.

Colman Andrews



a film  
**GROUPIES**



ed caraeff

"Jimmy Page took out his whip and whipped me-it was great!"...





ed caraeff



By R. E. Maxson

Rock music is probably today's leading international culture symbol of youth. It signifies defiance, sensuality, happiness and innumerable other tangential gut emotions in one raucous package instantly recognizable in any language. Perhaps rock's greatest implicit theme is freedom. The rock surge has helped sweep aside mores in most areas of life, leaving in its wake many new codes of living which are healthier than their predecessors as well as some which might not be.

In the latter category are the groupies, those men and women whose whole lives are tied to following and worshipping rock groups with a fervor rivalling that of Jesus' disciples. Though the fervor of both the groupies and the disciples may be similar, the form of worship decidedly is not. In analyzing what has been written on the subject, it seems safe to conclude sex was not a factor in the disciples' worship, while in contrast sex is unquestionably the chief manifestation of the groupies' worship. And therein lies the rub, as someone once said.

During the past few years there have been furious debates among nearly everyone knowledgeable on the subject as to whether groupies are a horrible aberration of the rock music scene or merely an amusing adjunct to it. Because of a fascinating new feature-length film which documents the activities of groupies (the first of its kind) it is now possible for millions of persons to decide this question for themselves.

Shot over a nine-month period, *Groupies* was done in the cinema verite or "truth film" style, which means there is no narration. Cameras simply follow the groupies around and record their activities. The only time voices other than those of the participants are heard is during a few interviews when the filmmakers ask direct questions of their subjects, but most of

the footage is comprised of impromptu situations and happenings recorded as they take place.

Musical segments feature Joe Cocker and the Grease Band, Ten Years After, Terry Reid, and Spooky Tooth. Most of the film, however, is devoted to how the groupies and these groups interact with each other. Little is left out, which is why *Groupies* is "X" rated. The film is an accurate observation of the groupie life style, and no one with even the slightest sociological/anthropological interest in human beings should miss it.

Groupies Brenda and Dianne serve as bookends for the documentary work, as the film begins with them getting ready to go to the *Scene* club and ends with them leaving it. In between, groupies in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles are scrutinized. Most of them are tough, hard, aggressive, disoriented and/or almost without inhibitions, and many viewers of *Groupies* may not believe their eyes and ears.

Brenda describes an unpleasant encounter: "Guys are always comin' into *The Scene* hassleing groupie chicks, telling us to go home with them and fuck their dogs, you know, that kind of shit. One guy grabbed me by the neck and lifted me a foot off the ground and said 'I'll give you 20 seconds to come with me and fuck.' So I pulled out my can of mace and sprayed him. I put his eyes out, man. As he was layin' and squirming on the ground I said 'You go home and fuck your dog, ass-hole.'"

Later, Linda talks about a member of Spooky Tooth: "He's got no class. Now Led Zeppelin, there's a class group. All the groupies are chasing them. All the groupies chase the class groups, but Luther chases the groupies! It's disgusting. No class. Last night he asked me to fuck. I said 'I wanna fuck Led Zeppelin. I don't wanna fuck you. Why should I wanna fuck you? I already fucked you!'"

In San Francisco, a group-groupie party is recorded. One of the girl groupies goes out of the room to take a bath and the camera follows her as she delivers this monologue: "Wow, Led Zeppelin, is so great, really nice guys, man. When The Experience (now defunct L.A. club) first opened up we went down there all the time with Lord Sutch and Richard. We

put whipped cream on two ceilings in this hotel, man. Really great. There was this far out party and Jimmy Page and Miss Cinderella were having a scene, man, and Marshall (Brevitz, ex-Experience owner) came up and I gave him head and we were giving each other head in the club and on the steps and Jimmy Page took off my dress, I had this real nice dress, and pulled out this whip, man, and whipped me across the ass. Oh, it was great, it was beautiful, good times. He was really good to me real nice guy, what a nice guy, real nice people."

One of the strongest scenes in the film involves a 16-year old male groupie named Chaz. Totally disoriented, he is slugged and ridiculed while his advances are rebuffed by Terry Reid and his drummer Keith Webb. Webb puts Chaz on by telling him Reid's father is famed bluesman Jimmy Reed, but nothing seems to have much effect on Chaz, who continues to express his love for Terry Reid and beg him to touch him. Chaz finally says, "I'm only 16, but when I'm 23 I'll be so hip." The viewer is left with the impression that by the time he is 23, Chaz will be dead.

Cynthia Plaster Caster is a groupie who makes plaster casts of rock idols' erect penises. Her assistant, Harlow, prepares the rock star by fellatio until the proper moment for Cynthia to use her mold-making equipment is at hand. Cynthia, in reference to the groups, calls her casts "a lasting memorial to their art."

Jimmy Page, guitarist for Led Zeppelin regards Cynthia's activities as "pathetic," which is a rather curious value judgement on his part when considering his proclivity for whipping girls. Eventually, we hear Cynthia doing plaster casts of Spooky Tooth while the camera shows some of her completed (and amazingly life-like) "artifacts." Obviously ecstatic while at work, Cynthia murmurs, "Oh, it's turning out so good, I'm so proud, I'm on the threshold of tears."

Joe Cocker is shown performing *Delta Lady*. Although he's sensational to watch, the segment is disappointing because he is seen at no other time in the film, while all the other groups are shown relating with the groupies at length. One suspects the Cocker footage was used only for box-office purposes.

At another party, a groupie is parading around a crowded room shouting, "I am the greatest star in the 'verld' over and over. Brenda says "Let us see your firm, bulging tits," after which she lets her peek at her own breasts and adds, "Can you top that?"

Ha you fool," she replies, and quickly removes her dress. "Ha, ha, top THIS, you fools, if you can! But of course, you can not—I am the greatest star in the 'Verld.'"

"She IS the greatest star in the world," says Brenda. "I'm her manager. After all, I got her to take off her clothes didn't I?"

"Groupies, I have destroyed you all. I have destroyed you because I love you, yes, you know, I love you, because I am by far the greatest star in the 'VERLD!'"

While leaving *The Scene*, Brenda meets a member of Cat Mother and the All Night Newsboys. Upon learning his identity, she hollers out, "Oh, Dianne! Come over here with your vagina, Diana!" He rebuffs them, however. As Linda and Dianne go out the door, they come upon a bum-wino lying in the street and sit on his lap. He hollers "Help!" twice and they get up, giggling all the while. The film's last shot shows Brenda and Dianne walking down the street arm-in-arm, swigging a bottle of liquor, and doing bumps and grinds as they stroll.

In retrospect, those were the film's most memorable moments, although there were many others.

In the midst of all the promiscuous sexual activity, there seems to be no love at all expressed at any time. If any aspect of groupie life is to be considered "wrong," it seems the lack of love is a greater, more disturbing "wrong" than any and all of the various kinky sexual and non-sexual activities engaged in by the groupies. Much more than merely "wrong," it seems tragic. One is left to wonder what is going to happen to the groupies, who is going to take care of them (they seem completely dependent on the groups) when the attractiveness of youth expires as the years advance. It is obvious no such thoughts are ever entertained by them, as they live only for the moment.

Actor Peter Boyle, star of the movie *Joe*, refers to *Groupies* in the following way: "The Mickey Mouse Club grows up and rapes the American Dream."



**D**uring the past six months we have traveled to many cities throughout the world, and in every city we visited, there is trouble ecologically. Smog, waste, and a disregard for the environment seem to be an accepted standard for our country, and seemingly our world. In the past we have felt pretty helpless, knowing that one individual, even five together, can't really affect the situation noticeably. However, when we returned home to Denver this month and experienced smog as bad or worse than any city in the world, we got scared—really scared. We also became motivated to try and channel the creative energy of the rock culture toward a positive goal.

Our planet, this "Spaceship Earth," is a closed system. That is, there is a fixed quantity of resources and available space. We, Sugarloaf, will try to make everyone we contact aware of this fact. That is why we devoted our new album to this ideology. We also feel we can use the power of our position to focus attention on the fact that individuals taking individual steps on a personal level can make a difference in changing the environment. At the site of each and every one of our concerts so far in 1971, we have and will continue to plant a tree. We started this campaign in Denver, January 15th. We hope you will help us when we arrive in your city.

*Sugarloaf*



Sugarloaf "Spaceship Earth" on Liberty Records & Tapes—Album: LST-11010/Cartridge: 9113/Cassette: C-1113

Produced by Frank Slay for Chicory Productions