PHONOGRAPH RECORD MAGAZINE

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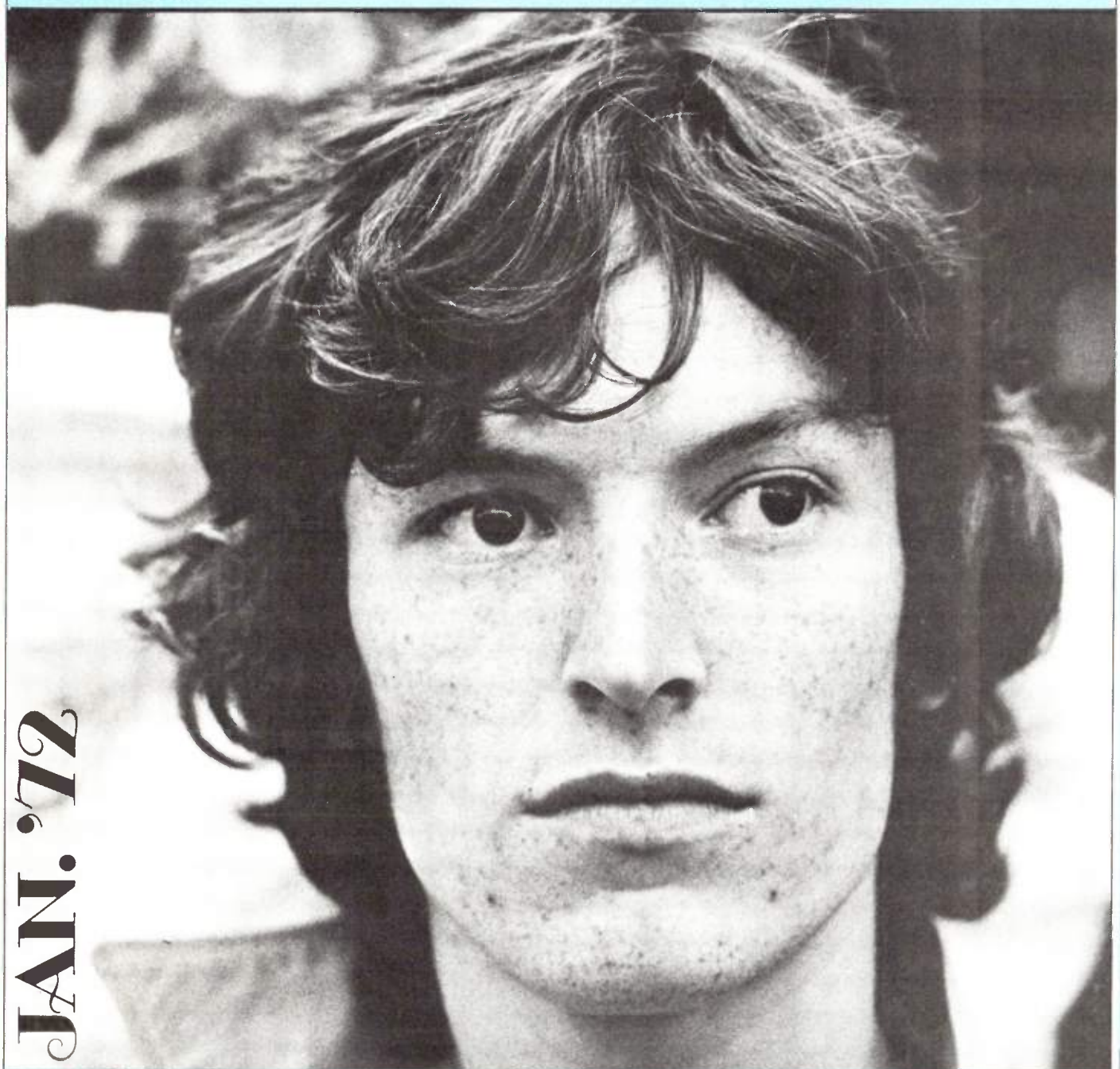


JAN. '72

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE BYRD'S RECORDINGS.... AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FACES....IS DAVID BOWIE THE DARLING OF THE AVANT GARDE?....THE SLOWING DOWN OF TRAFFIC....CALIFORNIA 99: TOWNSHEAD OR SAN ANDREAS AT FAULT??.....

Get To Know Family/One wishing to argue in behalf of the theory that there's no justice in this world could do worse than to start with the point that Family, one of the most intriguingly unusual "rock" bands afoot, are familiar in this country only to a relative few, and to those few mostly for having been the first group produced by Dave Mason (who did their Music In A Doll's House album) or for having contributed Rick Grech to Blind Faith.

It has been theorized that such would not be the case had not Bill Graham, who at the time of the group's first tours of this country America's most influential promoter, taken personal offense when lead singer Roger Chapman flung a mike-stand in his direction during an especially heated moment during Family's first Fillmore East performance.

Chapman, it should be noted, meant nothing by this gesture, which is typical of the sort of thing he does quite without malice when the music gets to him.

Which tendency, combined with his possession of the strangest voice ever captured on vinyl—an unearthly vibrato- and soul-laden bleat—has so endeared him to English audiences that they voted him third-best male vocalist in this year's prestigious Melody Maker poll.

Roger's cronies—guitarist John Whitney, drummer Rob Townsend, multi-instrumentalist Poli Palmer, and bassist John Wetton—fling few mike-stands, but set no few ears to glowing with their authoritative playing of intricate and intriguing variety of rock derived from a variety of influences. As is evidenced by Melody Maker's readers having voted Family the seventh best band in Britain—ahead of such stellar company as Jethro Tull and Faces.

Family's latest album, Fearless, can only increase the group's popularity, if what the critics have written about it is any indication:

Sussex Express/"FEARLESS is a beautiful album that's full of surprises—musical twists and turns that catch you right off guard, and the odd touch of ribald Family humour. It's witty, crude, bizarre, polished, and just occasionally tender. And above all it abounds in unashamed originality."

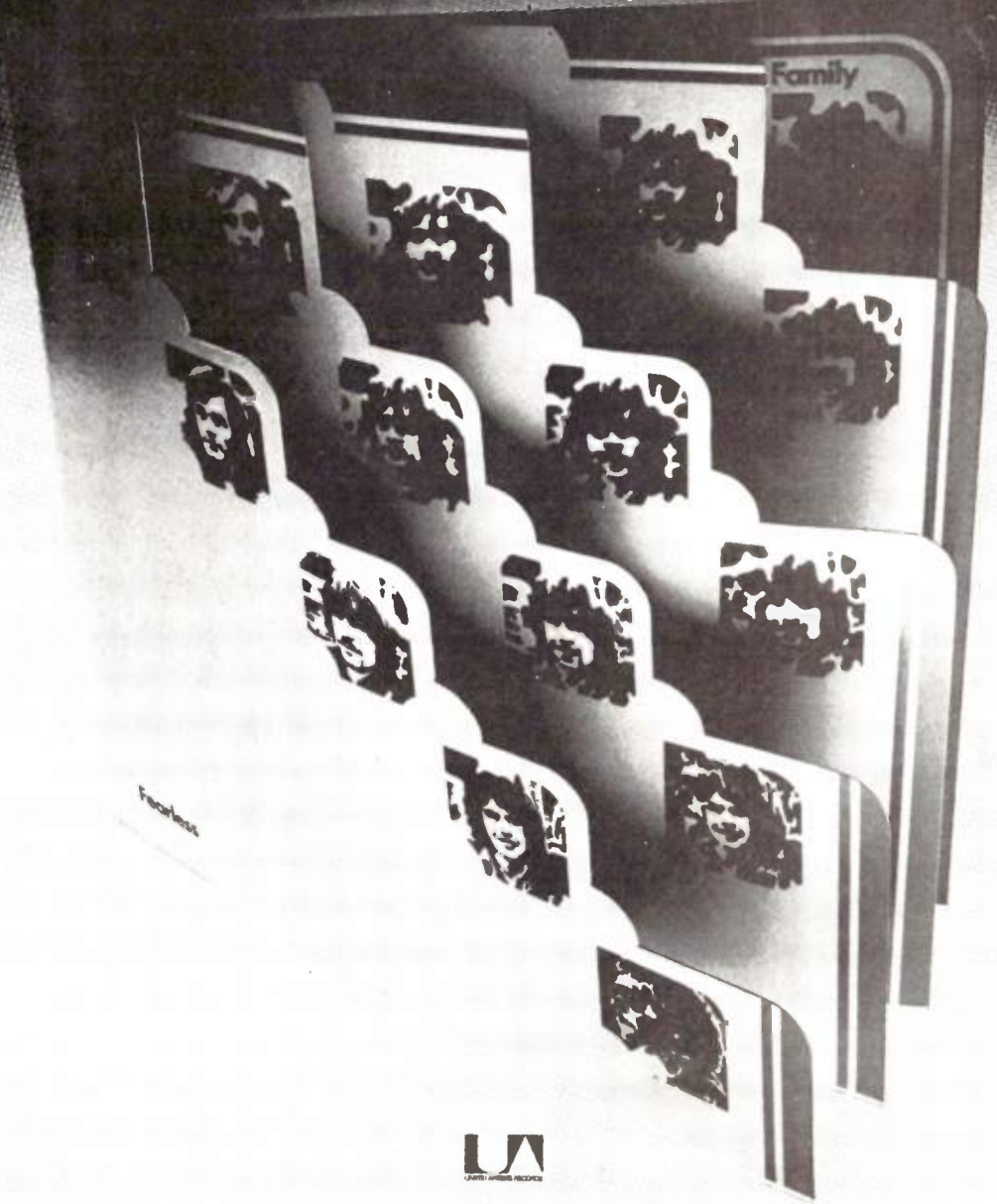
Record Mirror/"It's with the emergence of an album like this that all the stories about how so-and-so knew Family were going to be a monster band three years ago will emerge. It's the kind of album that makes you feel puffed up to have liked them from the days of Doll's House."

New Musical Express/"Ever since Doll's House Family have been threatening to produce a classic rock album. FEARLESS could well be the nearest they've yet got to achieving that long-promised goal."

Melody Maker/"It's goodtime, it's as funky, as rolling, as fresh as they've ever been. FEARLESS is the best thing they've done since Doll's House."

Obviously, the time for you, the listener on the lookout for the thrilling and unusual, to get acquainted with Family is right now.

On United Artists Records & Tapes.



JANUARY '72

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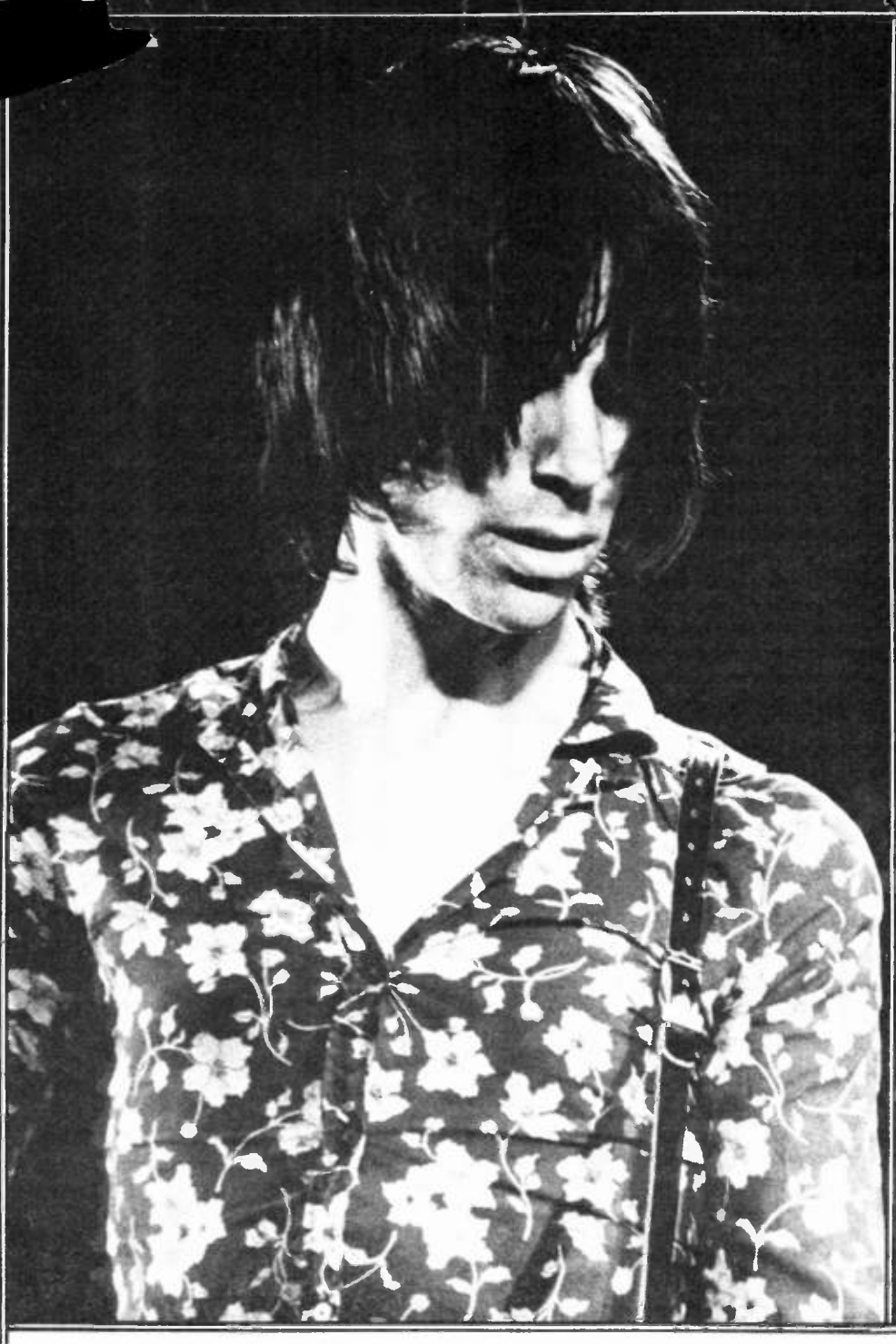
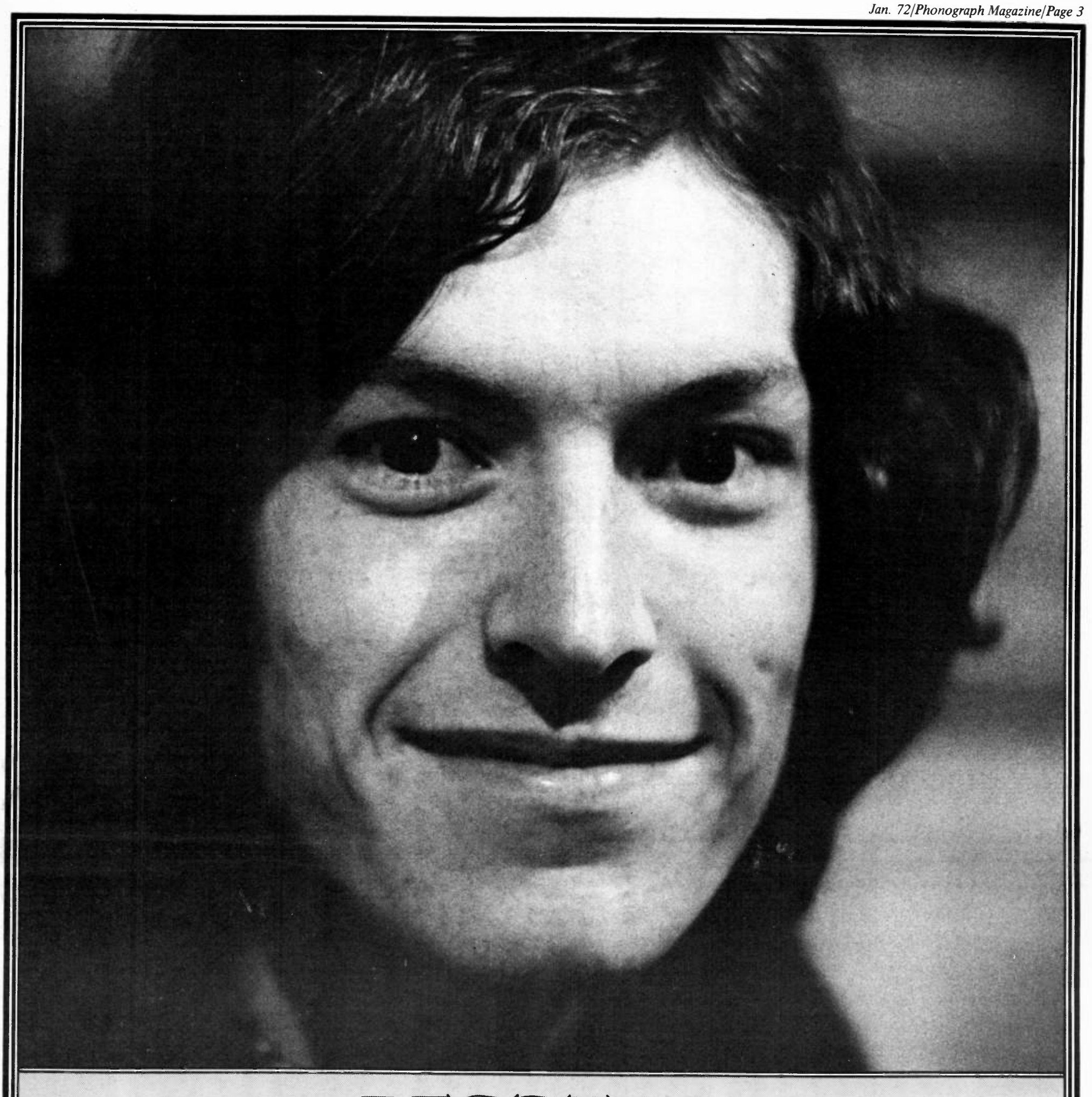


Andy Perl

Colman Andrews

Dion at L.A. folkie haven "The Troubadour." Bottom left: Jeff Beck in concert at the Long Beach Arena, California. Bottom right, Miles Davis at the Belgrade Jazz Festival.



LETTERS

Dear Sir:

In his otherwise smashing account of "San Francisco on 2¢ a Day," the irrepressible Lester Bangs says some curious things about "Blue Nun Wine." It is, he writes "imported from France . . . $7.50 a pint . . . and . . . like dew drops from a sweet Child bride angel's cloud." Charitably disregarding his celestial metaphor it should be noted that this alleged wine, in fact, comes from Germany, is not available in pint bottles, and is absolute swill. Blue Nun—however irresistable the title might seem to Mr. Bangs—is the Black Sabbath of white wines.

Sincerely,
Colman Andrews
Los Angeles, Calif.

Just read Mr. Ingham's article on Sun Records and when I got down to the last paragraph I found you didn't even mention the name of the group. They're the *Gentrys* just in case you've forgotten. And it's beyond me why you think they're an imitation of Grass Roots and Johnny Winter. I just don't see how. The Gentry s have a sound of their own. To me they're one of the best groups out today, who don't get much publicity and air play because the program directors want to play the original versions of songs like "Cinnamon Girl" and "Wild World." I think the Gentrys versions of these songs by far are better than *Mr. Young* and *Mr. Stevens.* But we all have our own opinions. I happen to have the album you were talking about and its on the top, or near the top, of my record collection. Since that album has been recorded, only *Jimmy Hart* remains in the group. I must admit the new group is better. I have seen the Gentrys perform four times and they get better each time. I also know Jimmy Hart, their lead singer, we've become friends through his concerts in Augusta, Ga., but if I didn't know him, I would still think the Gentrys are a great group.

And you said they should have kept to "Keep On Dancing." Back then, that was great, but a song like that wouldn't make it today.

Everyone knows the albums on Sun are great for record collectors, they were a great company back then, but I think that's one of the Gentrys' problems, Sun Records. They just don't do the job of a real record company, in my opinion. But I didn't know much about all that business.

All I know is the Gentrys are one of my favorite groups and wanted you to know someone out in the world is a great fan of theirs.

I still wonder why their name wasn't mentioned? Was it a typing error, a misplaced paragraph or what? Oh well.

I really like Phonograph Magazine and have a subscription to it.

Thanks for the *interesting* articles.

Thanks,
Peace,
Steve Andrews
Jackson, South Carolina

Hey,

I just wrote to say what a bunch of goddam worthless bullshit the majority of album reviews in your magazine are, I'm referring to the November issue. First of all, the review of "Trafalgar" was poetic, but it didn't tell us shit about anything on the album or anything the group is doing. Who wrote it—Shakespeare? Next, we come to a review of "Sonny and Cher Live." You call that piece of barf a review?!! When somebody writes a review, we expect him to at least mention the record. But all this jack-off did was cut down Sonny and Cher. I don't think they're too hip either, but by the same token a dick like that shouldn't be reviewing them. Ugh!!!! Now to the real prick. The asshole who reviewed "Great Festivals" doesn't know a goddam thing about rock music. This dude says the Allman Brothers are lacklustre. Hell, I wish more groups were *that* lacklustre! The statement about "Mountain is a bit ambiguous"—what in the *Hell* does it mean?!! And how can anyone devote that much time and praise to yesterdays archaic Beach Boys who have both the worst lead guitarist and drummer in the world. Sometimes I just don't know. Anyway, hang in there.

Rufus
Portland, Oregon

Dear People,

I just wanted to let you know I enjoy reading *Phonograph Record* very much and really can't wait for the upcoming issue to arrive.

I feel that the articles written are different and give information that the *majority* of people want to hear, especially where reviews and concepts are concerned. The stuff really keeps on going.

Another thing of equal importance is the photography. It has the greatest set I've ever seen. Really clear and perfect. The work is very nicely done and I consider it to *be truly unique.* Pictures make a magazine and yours are great. Keep up the good work.

Thanks again,
Roxanne Savino
Flushing, N.Y.

Performances

JOHN PRINE
The Troubador
Los Angeles

Everybody'd been talking about this guy Prine, how he was Kris Kristofferson's boozin' buddy or something, and since I like Kristofferson's Kerouacian American romanticism I decided to go down to check the dude out and scarf up some free vittles and gin.

It was a bust on all counts.

From the marquee he had the same doughface as Kristofferson, but I'm not prejudiced against people on face value. I didn't even care that he had the same denim outfit as K the K. What did offend me was the food they expected us to be digesting while musing the minstrel's talents. It was pure organic slop of the type that people who think nothing of taking strychnine will feed themselves because they think it makes them healthy: brown rice, lettuce, brown bread and carrots all smothered in some vile juice. I could've eaten it if I'd been in jail; but as it was I just wanted to make it out of there as soon as Prine was finished and find a Jack-in-the-Box.

But I suppose it's petty to run down the food when you can run down the music. Prine is a likeable guy—he kept making jokes about booze, which is a lot better than the aren't-we-cool snickers of head humor—but his guitar playing is mediocre, almost amateurish. He joked at one point, playing some really monotonous two-note finger picking thing, that "This's a real hard 'un," which is the oldest folkie-country yuk riff in the world. The trouble was that the joke was too close to reality, since any imbecile with a minimum of manual dexterity could've mastered, not only played, that riff, and most of the stuff Prine played that night.

Of course, one who digs it when the Stooges blast out repetitive two-note riffs in fuzztone, as I do, possibly has no right to complain about Prine's guitar playing if the man's got some songwriting talent or ability to project a persona with some sense of magic.

Prine's persona, though, is likeable, as I said, but far from new and not even an exciting reconstitution of something old. The most you can say is that he seems like he'd be a good cat to get drunk with, and that's just not enough. His voice is okay too but not that distinctive, so the crux of the whole matter and the reason for his growing following has to rest on his abilities as a writer.

It doesn't bother me that most of Prine's songs have a sameness of structure and sound—the effect of this sameness in performance is to make everybody in the audience dummy up and listen real intently for the words because they know anything this static has gotta have a *message* as the payload. Either that or they fidget. I saw this spade sitting near the stage looking up, with a solemn, pensive expression on his face, rubbing his chin all the while. Never trust a concert where people sit rubbing their chins, because it means they know they're supposed to be paying attention, they're supposed to think, because this is deep and profound and will be good for them.

Me? I just fidgeted, and made snide comments to Marty Cerf. I wasn't making them loudly or anything, but somebody two seats down tapped me on the shoulder and Shhh'ed me anyway. Which oughta give you some idea of just about how low-key, not to mention laid-back, this Prine dude was.

But only a fascist would call lowkey laidbackism a crime; the thing that'll always cause the music to rise above the relative blandness of its presentation is an aptitude for writing great, catchy, universal tunes. People will put up with a lot of stasis and excelsior to hear a real *song*. Prine *can* write 'em, too, but he's got a ways to go and problems now.

One of his problems is that much of his writing exploits the most oppressive current cliches. He'll get you going for a couple of lines, recapture your attention with the feeling that he's building up to something, then totally blow it with a line that just makes you groan. "Your Flag Decal Won't Get You Into Heaven Anymore," far from the worst offender, qualifies by title alone—isn't that kind of like beating a dead honk, not to mention being smug—"Illegal Smile" lays some good lyrics on a bullshit idea, and reminds me of the Godz singing "Since when did they outlaw a song?" on *Third Testament*.

But the real grabber is "Sam Stone," a song about a guy coming back from Vietnam on junk, a subject also currently being flayed by Mountain, and everyone else in sight. And it's an important subject, but "He's got a purple heart/And a monkey on his back" just doesn't say anything about it. It's too easy, just as it's too easy for people to sit there and nod (no pun intended) with those goddam solemn expressions on their faces. Addiction is a sufficiently dire spectre that any song about it should either appall people or make them realize how easily they identify with it. Lou Reed's "Heroin" did both, and if you can't handle it on that level you'd best just leave it alone instead of writing lines like "There's a hole in daddy's arm where all the money goes." It's the "You Better Sit Down, Kids" of junkiedom. Jesus Christ also makes an appearance in this song, which figures since he's been getting his fucking mug in everywhere lately, so you might as well invoked him as if all people strung out on smack had to do was to go to a Billy Graham or Jesus Freak rally and make their Big Decision. Either that or the "What did Jesus really die for?" bit is totally gratuitous, like in James Taylor's "Sail on home to Jesus all you good girls and boys" exploit chart.

Prine also had a couple of lighter numbers. They're the kind of bullshit that has been written and tittered over by folkies for years. Prine called one of them "a rock 'n' roll song," and said that it was for the people who got tired of listening to all the serious stuff at his concerts. I don't know if he thinks of rock 'n' roll as comic relief or what, but it really doesn't matter because it wasn't rock and roll at all, just a lame-ass bit of awkward writing and singing with cute lyrics. And later there was another one about how he went to the beach and saw Jesus walking on the water, and said hello and Jesus said hello back.

If Kim Fowley wrote a song like that they'd call him an asshole. (Larry Yurdin sang me some songs he wrote in 1963 one night while we were riding from another Troubador press party to trade some Blood Sweat & Tears tickets for a free admission to see *Performance*, and they were just as good-humoredly nonsensical as Prine's. Yurdin's the news director for KMET and he lives in Los Angeles if anybody wants to give him a contract.)

Prine has more talent of course, but talent alone doesn't make it. I guess it's too much these days to expect stars to have fascinating personalities, but ability without a vision to bring it together is simply not enough. Dylan had a vision. Kristofferson has a vision. Even Donovan had a vision once upon a time. John Prine has no vision yet, and at present is not what his record company and the writers and nascent supporters, so desperate for a new figure fitting the proportions of the Minstrel Sage, have insisted he is.

It may just be that he has been snapped up and hyped prematurely, and will come into his stride in the process of dealing with all this hoopla and synthetic heroism. It's happened before, though not often.

—Lester Bangs

THE KINKS/MANHATTAN TRANSFER/FANCY
Wesleyan University
New Haven, Conn.

Poison Ring Records recording artists FANCY opened the show with their joy-evoking rock 'n' roll which is always something that I'm immediately susceptible to. If you can imagine tasteful gut-level raunch, that's it; most of the songs are composed and arranged by Vic Bernadoni (the drummer) and sung by his sister Christine, who packs a below the belt, mean punch. Doug Schlink's guitarwork continues to amaze me, as does Paul Ossola's bass-work, and Bob Orsi's vocals and harmonica playing were a real crowd pleaser. Fancy's music has really matured over the past eight months—their first album wasn't much of anything to these ears, but they've gone farther into rock (rather than riffs), and even more recently, into jazz/rock experimentation. Fancy's new album (out in a few months) is quite excellent, and hopefully will pleasantly surprise everybody.

The Manhattan Transfer were more of a stage act than anything else, with their Sha-Na-Na/Dan Hicks type stuff getting a sizeable audience reaction. I myself was not particularly impressed—we've seen it all too many times.

However, the Kinks were worth bearing thru all the dogma. This was the first gig of their U.S. tour, and although the lack of alcohol might have depressed them a bit, I would never have expected such sloppy playing from Ray Davies and company under *any* circumstances—it was great! Dave Davies messed up every song with his banal note-bending guitarwork, and he succeeded at proving nothing except his lack of ability (ah, how refreshing). The road manager/sound man for the Kinks was on a bit of a destructive sweep; he mixed Ray's guitar and voice almost totally out of the picture, and generally added to the lack of professionalism exhibited by the band—such quality, what can I say. Dave Davies did *"Strangers"* exceptionally badly after two aborted attempts (he forgot the lyrics). *"Apeman"* came off well, unlike just about everything else played that night (ho hum, can't win 'em all). *"Shangri-La"* and *"Lola"* were plain disasters—a treat to behold. The only thing that saved the show was Ray Davies' entire sense of stage beauty—prancing about like a Limey fag of sorts, his accent, et al—what we live for. They left the stage after a 40 minute set hoping for an encore, didn't get one (the people began leaving), but returned to the stage anyway for another fifteen minutes. I only wish they could've been as drunk as everyone in the audience, thus they would have had a lot of fun being bad. And, oh yea, their new album is supurb.

—Jon Tiven

At left Billy Preston on stage at LA's Troubadour—too often he settles for songs from the mawkish and maudlin "we-gotta-get-it-together" school of music. At right Ray Davies of RCA's newly signed "Kinks" at Weselyn University, New Haven, Conn. "Dave Davies messed up every song with his banal-bending guitar work and he succeeded at proving nothing except his lack of ability."

BILLY PRESTON/CHARLIE STARR
The Troubadour
Los Angeles

It's not easy to be uncompromisingly religious in a den of drugs, drink and iniquity like the Troubadour, but Billy Preston has both the Power of Faith and the gift of music, a combination that, in his gifted hands, quickly becomes downright irrestible—in spite of some less than worthy material.

His impact owes as much to his spiritual fervor as it does to his endless talents, and he brings it all off with his ability to tread thetenuous line between overbearing preachings and pseudo-soul revivalism without a misstep. He makes you respect his belief because it is, clearly, a truthful and honest reflection of his outlook, and he has the artist's ability to make the listener believe through the power of his own intensely expressed belief.

There is something ceremonial about the way he sits, priestlike, behind his keyboards and effortlessly draws from them his flawless and varied music. His rapture, his complete absorption in his music and in his message make it all come out so easy and natural, but the things he does are anything but simple or lazy.

While rarely giving the impression of showing off (save for a couple of fine moments of flashy showmanship), Preston coaxes from his instruments an uncanny variety of styles that range from complex jazz to solid, driving r&b, from playful, lilting near-classicism to cosmic space music to his own inimitible syntheses of same.

The only problem is with some of the material he has chosen to express his love of his benevolent Lord. Too often he settles for songs from the mawkish and maudlin "We-Gotta-Get-It-Together" school of soul music, whose over-obvious, clumsily stated and terribly unchallenging lyrics keep things on a superficial level that is completely at odds with his deep, multi-dimensional music.

But more often he brings all of the elements together in a harmonious package. As when, for example, he digs his chops into excellent songs like his own "That's the Way God Planned

Performances

It" or George Harrison s "My Sweet Lord" (which he manages to make sound fresh once more); or as when the Spirit possesses him and he finds a bit of room on the crowded stage to spin and shake in a frenzied dance.

Although Preston is not limited to religous material, he brings a feeling of near-devotion to such secular numbers as *"Let's Go Get Stoned"* and *"Summertime"* (in one verse of which he pays a charming tribute to J.S. Bach and at another point delivers an uncannily imitation of one of his mentor, Ray Charles).

The support of his four musicians (the God Squad) is vigorous but spotty, and the balance is such that they often drown out their leader. But the exciting adventurous musicianship and personal charisma of Billy Preston more than cover up the weak points as he drives things on to a level of nigh-irresistible joy.

Charlie Starr was a last minute replacement for Gary Wright, who was thwarted by the immigration men. On opening night the earthy looking gentlemen from New York got off to a slow start, coming across as a pleasant person and a guitarist of only limited ability. But soon his chunky, driving, highly ryhthmic playing (which he utilizes for such worn but nonetheless effective and enjoyable gimmicks as imitations of drums, bass et. as.) did the job of winning the crowd. Sooner or later that good old beat gets into your feet.

In all, it was one of the Troubadour's better pairings.

—Richard Cromelin

"Helen Reddy ran a smooth show although the back-up band overpowered her a times, especially on Alex Harvey's 'Tulsa Turnaround.' "

HELEN REDDY
The Troubadour
Los Angeles

The emergence of Women as individuals and *artists* is now at hand as evidenced by the recent appearance of Helen Reddy at the Troubadour. It was a short year ago that in achieving success as a "songstress," the female bedecked herself with a Fredricks-of-Hollywood padded girdle, push up plastic boobs, at least three pairs of Maybelline theatrical eyelashes, a rhinestone-studded V-necked frock with slits up to the waist and that crowning of all glories, her very own 27 lb. portable mane that was tinted of course to match her pubic hair. Judging by Helen's appearance, we can safely assume that that day is *forever* behind. Attired only in blue jeans, mind you, not the faded, hip, tight-fitted, studded variety, but the comfortable afternoon at the grocery store type and a simple little shirt, Helen gave a smooth performance displaying originality of style, wit, and grace. It was a pleasure to realize that this performer was presenting herself devoid of the Madison Avenue cosmetic hype and proving that the sexuality of a Woman is in her being, not in her accessories.

She ran a smooth show, although her backup band overpowered her at times, especially on Alex Harvey's *"Tulsa Turnaround."* After listening to her album several times, I was looking forward to hearing *"Summer of '71,"* a light, happy, toe tapping tune that continually leaves me grinning profusely and was a bit disappointed when once again the band got a little enthusiastic and muffled her superb voice.

Helen's version of John Lennon's *"How"* seemed to be the most favored by the audience who gave a long and resounding response (we suggest "How" for her next single), although *"I Am Woman,"* a very definite Womans Liberation song, was received enthusiastically, as was *"Best Friend,"* a composition extolling the virtues of self-love. Both were penned by Helen and suggest that her potential as a singer-songwriter promises success.

Helen's quick wit produced several guffaws from the audience and some squeals of delight among fellow Australians (Lill Roxen for instance). Much of her wit reflects her Australian background. Bravo.

—Kathryn Roberts

TUMBLEWEED: A Colorado Concern

Will Hardesty

Denver has been a submerged talent waiting to surface for a long time. The usual—or, perhaps, more than usual—number of kids get together to form bands which parrot back the Top 40 to other kids trying their wings on 3.2 beer clubs. Some of the best of these bands eventually work up to touring to the Sokol Halls of Nebraska and the quonset huts or slapboard buildings which are the 3.2 clubs in Kansas. The cream of the crop rises to the dizzying heights of being the pre-warm-up-act-warm-up-act at concerts in and around Denver.

Once, a few years ago, Chet and Bill's Family Dog ambled into Denver and opened up a place. But Denver wasn't ready, and the Dog, after over-extending itself was forced to retreat, tail between its legs, back to the Californicated West Coast.

Since then, the Denver situation has improved, but certainly not to the point where Denver is a rock Mecca.

Now on the scene is something which could be the extraordinary elixer Denver needs.

Bill Szymczyk and Larry Ray, long-time record producers who were most recently associated with ABC-Dunhill, have come to Denver and given birth to Tumbleweed Records.

The new label is headquartered at 1368 Gilpin Street in the fringe of the Capitol Hill/Hippie Hill area of Denver. The headquarters is a beautifully remodeled and refurbished old house, with calm and friendly air prevailing from the moment you enter. The whole being of the house and the label exemplify what the New West is about—the friendliness and the humanistic approach to doing things. Bill says he and Larry decided to form their own label in order that they might establish a more people oriented record label. *"We wanted to be more artist-oriented and less artist-users."*

Bill said the duo wanted to get away from the Big Four—New York, Memphis, Nashville and Los Angeles—*"music cities."* Then a business trip brought Bill to Denver and he immediately dropped anchor—all that remained to be done was to work the logistics of moving to the "Mile High City."

Tumbleweed is an attempt to be, as Szymczyk says, *"not-the-biggest-just-the-best-recording facility-ever."* Presently, the label has nine full-time employees, all based at the house. However, the recording and technical work takes place away from Denver—but this will be changed in the near future. Bill and the boys and the girls are looking for some land in Evergreen (a neighboring mountain village of Denver) on which to build a good, fully-equipped studio.

Asked how the Denver atmosphere affects making records, Bill claims, *"It's much more relaxed, less pressure. I really like the fact there aren't a bunch of labels all next to each other in a row on the same street here. I think this lack of pressure makes it easier to get what we want—gem-quality work."*

Tumbleweed is associated with Famous Music Corporation, a subsidiary of the Gulf & Western Corporation. The parent companies won and/or distribute other record labels, such as Paramount, Neighborhood, Blue Thumb and apparently are interested in investing dollars in other such independent production operations. This monetary support has undoubtedly helped Tumbleweed get off to a fine start.

So far, the label has released two albums and has four more in the works. Those still to be released are by Danny Holien, a Denver guitarist-singer; Dewey Terry, one-half of the '50s R&B act known as Don & Dewey (the other half of which was Don "Sugarcane" Harris); Pete McCabe, a Tom Lear-Randy Newman style writer-singer; and Michael Stanley, a guy from Cincinatti of whom Bill reveals, "... *has been writing and waiting and is now ready."*

Tumbleweed's first release, "Arthur Gee" by Arthur Gee (TWS-101) is an incredibly diverse and complicated album. The recording's beautiful subtleties are easily over-looked unless you listen carefully—this due to the extremely fine, cohesive job performed by all musicians on the date and Marc Damerest's engineering.

At top are Author Gee who along with Albert Collins kick off the Colorado based Tumbleweed Record Company, January 1972. Family are below. The group's current album, "Fearless," is acclaimed as the acts best since "Music from a Doll House". *See Tony Gourvish's column.*

The album reminds me of the beautiful and subtle variations a kaleidoscope produces. I am particularly fond of the first three cuts on side two, they virtually blend into a medley, all feature tremendous woodwind work and jazz breaks woven in precisely. Gee's voice is rich and deep in quality. Folky at times, but in some tracks the whole presentation is dressed up enough to call to mind The Moody Blues. The simply-worded, simply-constructed songs with the complex, elaborate backing and counter-melodies are a particularly attractive attribute to say nothing of the fine job of package design by Tumbleweed.

The second Tumbleweed album, "There's Gotta Be A Change" is by Albert Collins (TWS-102). Again, I am knocked out by the superlative quality, but in an entirely different way. Houston-ite Collins is among the best blues guitarists to be heard by any ears. He's in a class with Albert King and B.B. King, however, I prefer *this* album to those of Albert and B.B.'s in my collection. Collins is a young, rock-influenced bluesman. Blues used to be *the* musical medium of an oppressed minority—blues were the sad, sometimes pathetic (in the sense that they were filled with pathos) songs about hard times. I find Collins' playing clean, forceful, incisive, sure and strong. He is relaxed without being plodding. His intuitive execution is often like a puppy—bounding forward one minute, pausing the next. Collins' sense of when to leap, when to pause and when to have a full-fledged guitar break is masterful. With a touch of gravel, a lot of soul and a lot of maturity (in the sense of having been around a lot). Albert's classic vocal ability is no less than impressive. This album sounds like there was a heap of fun had while making it and this happiness and fun-ness comes through and is imparted to the listener.

Tumbleweed: *A Colorado recording concern, concerned with creativity. Welcome.*

BRITAIN
BY TONY GOURVISH

Christmas and the New Year (just to mention them)—1972 is here and the time for my awards of yesteryear and predictions of things to come.

The Special Tiv Award for the best British rock band goes to *Family* (and that's a hype, you betcha, dig it), for if no one else writes about them, I will, which leads me to mention their new LP, *Fearless,* which shocked and surprised many fans here. It still amazes me the success this band enjoys in Europe, yet they're still unknown in America.

Predictions:—Linda Lewis is going to be a smash, so's Lindisfarne, Help Yourself, America (watch for them in your neighborhood soon), Wishbone Ash, and Yes (a lot of British film money behind them). Marc Bolan is being hailed here by the establishment press as the biggest thing since . . . he always wanted to be a star.

Traffic split again with Ric Grech and drummer leaving (no, not Jim Capaldi, he's still there). America very big here at present with a current top ten single "Horse With No Name." The group consists of three young Americans who were brought up over here by their parents who live on air force bases. The Rainbow Theater continues to prosper and names that are promised in the next few months include Pink Floyd, Jose Feliciano, Mountain, Faces, the Byrds, and Curtis Mayfield.

Album design awards have recently been awarded and among covers which won special awards were Faces' *"Long Player,"* Yes' *"Fragile,"* Family's *"Fearless,"* Steeleye Spans' *"Ten Man Mop,"* and the Pink Fairies' *"Never Never Land."* Tony Secunda ex-manager of The Move is now looking after Marc Bolan and a very good job he seems to be doing, that is until Marc decides on another change. Coasters updating of *"Love Potion Number Nine,"* an excellent job. They appeared at the Speakeasy before Christmas and, well it's difficult to review, but they performed all their old hits and were the usual lounge club act type of presentation: Yet another evening of nostalgia and good *"clean"* fun. You must go and see, if you can, more old rock movies. Recently I caught *"The Girl Can't Help It"* and *"Don't Knock The Rock."* Do you remember Alan Freed, Jayne Mansfield (!), Gene Vincent, Little Richard, The Platters, etc., as they were then.

King Crimson's only other original member split last week, light and sound man, Pete Sinfield, which only leaves Bob Fripp who has been spending time producing Keith Tippetts next album. Issac Hayes cancelled all European dates and left many promoters bewildered. You either hate Kubrick's "Clockwork Orange" or love it, depending on when and where you were born; I loved it.

Free are to reform for an English tour and dates in Germany and Japan, however, the official word is that it is only for these series of dates. However, we will find it will be far longer an association than what us mere mortals are lead to believe. At least it made two news stories.

Bell and Arc are having their difficulties and I don't expect the group to last much longer, shame, Graham Bell the vocalist is excellent. Nina Simone is to play dates here in London in February, possibly at the Albert Hall.

Writing this column, I may take too much for granted in what you, the reader, wants. So if you have any queries or suggestions, drop me a line c/o 69 New Oxford St., London WC1.

—Bangla Boom

ELVIS THE BOOK by Jerry Hopkins

There has never been an entertainer quite like Elvis Presley. His life and his contribution to rock 'n' roll have assumed such legendary proportions, which in turn have been shrouded in mystery by manager Colonel Tom Parker, to the point where it's impossible to imagine him as just another human being, with a personality, interests, and problems such as the rest of us share. Parker is one of the shrewdest public relations men in the business, and it's a safe bet that all the things we've heard about Elvis and what he's "really like" have been the hearsay esaggerations of his press releases.

That was the problem faced by Jerry Hopkins when he set out to write his book, the first serious investigative piece of writing devoted to Elvis. Although throughout thousands of miles of travel, dozens of interviews, and years of research Hopkins was never once permitted to see The Man himself, does a thorough and creditable job of drawing a picture of Elvis by filling in all the empty spaces around him.

Quite simply, Hopkins talked to virtually everybody who ever knew or worked with Elvis, going back to his birthplace in E. Tupelo, Mississippi, and even devoting five pages to the details of the town's history. The opening parts of the book are often maddeningly dull, as some reviewers have complained, but, as the story of Elvis' career starts to unfold, the endless detail suddenly becomes fascinating.

Take the section on Sun Records, for example. I have read dozens of articles and a couple of books devoted to Sun, but never before has the feeling of that company as it was in 1954-5, and the personality of Sam Phillips, come alive for me so fully as through Hopkins' interviews with Marion Keisker, Bob Neal and the other people he tracked down in Memphis. He even explains why Phillips' decision to sell the Elvis contract to RCA, something I've never understood, was a sensible decision at the time. The excruciating detail in which Elvis' early days as a musician are explored, the descriptions of every minor tour, quotes from newspaper reviews, etc., paint a picture of a talented truck driver with a new sound based in gospel and R&B struggling to get a start in the unsympathetic country music scene.

After all this has been established, the author introduces the character of the Colonel. Almost as legendary in the music business as Elvis himself, this former carnie and con artist in the grand style of P.T. Barnum was already widely known as the manager of Eddy Arnold and many other country acts when he discovered Elvis. In a matter of months he'd gotten rid of everybody else who had a hand in Elvis' doings, signed him up with RCA, and begun the masterful program of TV, film and personal appearances that were to make Elvis into one of the biggest names in the history of music. The Colonel is brought to life through hundreds of quotes and anecdotes, made to seem at the same time a real person with normal motivations and a somewhat bizarre imagination—an even more impressive figure than he was in our imaginations.

The day-by-day description of Elvis' life continues through his big years, 1956-8, and when his induction into the Army is reached it slows down to an hour-by-hour, even minute-by-minute catalogue of events that serves only to reflect the fanatical attention devoted to Elvis by the press in those days. This sort of detail becomes tiresome in Elvis' post-Army years, expecially those following 1961 when his life became a routine of three bland movies and three mediocre albums per year, and Hopkins, realizing this, eases off and supplies only capsule descriptions of the movie's plots and comments on the gradual increase in Elvis' acting ability.

Elvis *was* becoming a better actor, but the Colonel was not giving him scripts that would challenge his ability, or songs worthy of him either, for that matter So naturally Elvis became bored and restless in the middle-'60's, as Hopkins establishes through more interviews. He had a bunch of old friends from Memphis (the "Memphis Mafia") on salary to keep him company, and the stories of their ways of finding diversion in southern

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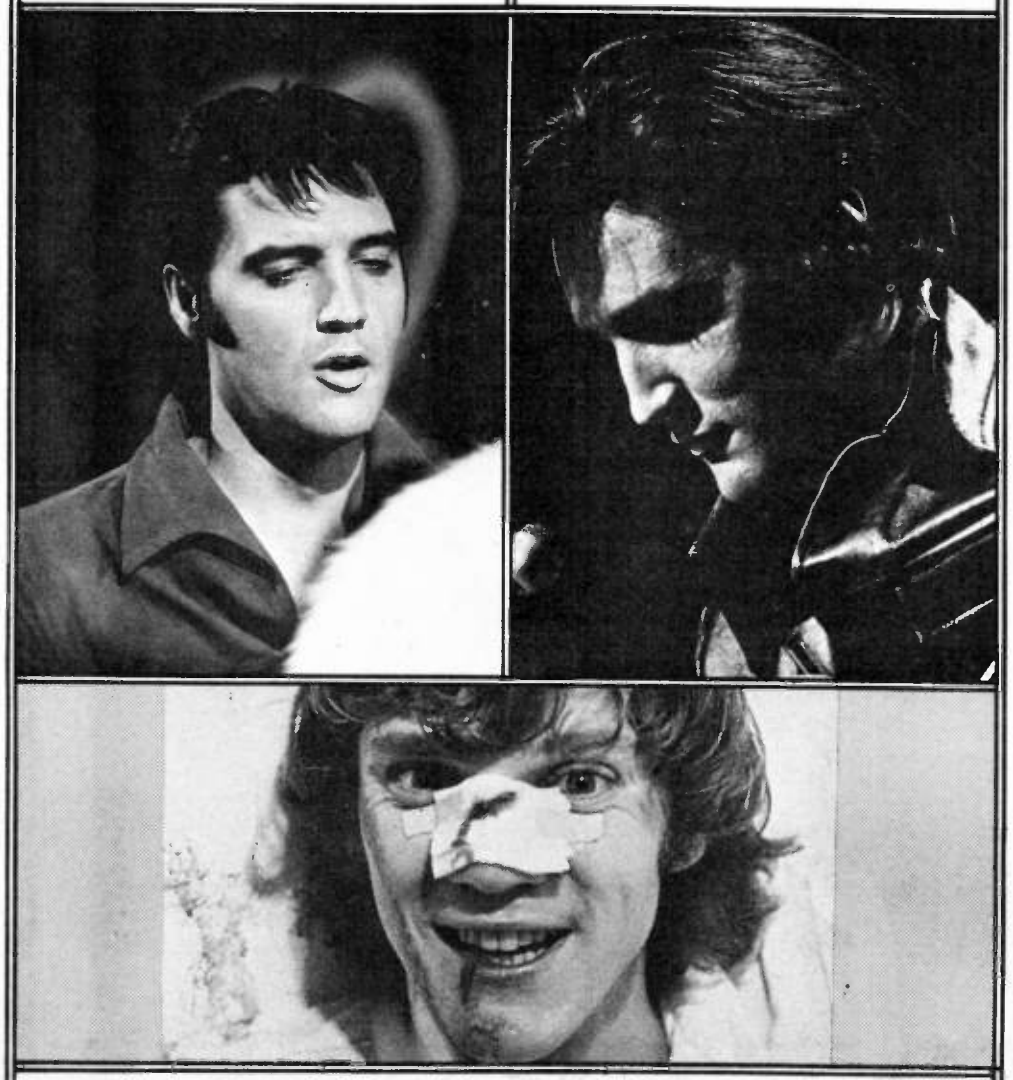

Elvis (pictured top) has met with world-wide acclaim the last dozen years. These years are authoritively documented in Jerry Hopkins' new "Elvis—A Biography." Shown below, Malcolm (Alex) McDowell in Stanley Kubrick's "A Clockwork Orange," a futuristic horror.

A Clockwork Horror

A smashing good night it was for young Alex and his three droogs. What with moloko to drink, exercise, a long drive on the dark country roads and entertainment in the home of friendly strangers, just a bloody smashing good night.

Alex is an English juvenile delinquent, an extension of the young British toughs who for more than a decade have tended to acquire a certain mystique. Despite their violence, the teddy boys, the mods and the rockers and most recently, the skin-heads, have all enjoyed their days of infamy and headlines.

A tale of terrifying proportions, reaching the dimensions of a modern gothic horror novel, was built around just such a gang of punks by Anthony Burgess and titled "A Clockwork Orange." The work attracted the attention of master director Stanley Kubrick and made into an intense stunning film, captivating despite its loathsome narrative.

"A Clockwork Orange" is frightening and fascinating, simultaneously evoking substantial amounts of repulsion and sympathy because the lead figure, a young hoodlum named Alex, is at once hateful and boyish, despicible and charming, malevolent and witty. No matter how foul a crime he commits, there is hope that he might be forgiven and redeemed.

In nearly 2½ hours the story goes through two distinct phases with the second a little faster paced. In the first, Alex is the leader of a pack of scoundrels victimizing society; in the second he is the victim with all of society—even his former thugs—turned against him. In each phase, the same circumstances and the same people appear but the positions of offender and sufferer are reversed. In the end, Alex and society reach a truce, joining in a common assault against humanity.

Set in the near future, the film opens with a disturbing closeup of young Alex sitting in a milk bar. Sinister and silent, his wicked stare is accented by one eye adorned with long black lashes. He is a psychotic-savant who lacks any vestige of a social conscience but is quick, intelligent and a knowledgeable classical music lover.

He and his three friends, droogs and brothers he calls them, form a subculture unto themselves. Alex, Dim, George and Pete dress in white shirts and pants, black boots and derbys, and outsized external jock straps. They speak in slang terms so extensive as to almost be a total dialect.

The city through which they stalk has sunk into an abyss of superficiality and bestiality. A slight veneer barely covers the pervasive degeneracy and decadence. There is little that could be considered natural or sound.

The condominium where Alex lives with his parents, Pee and Em he calls them, has garbage piling up in the Lobby. A hallway door is so flimsy, a few blows spring the lock. Rooms are painted in bright colors which never cohere into anything tangible. Women dye their hair bright yellows and purples. Men are generally brutal or homosexual in a repugnant manner. Mass produced oil-on-black-velvet paintings hang about. Throughout the film, there is nothing that resembles dignity.

From their milk bar base of operations, Alex and droogs venture into the night for their exercise in ultra-violence. After beating up an old drunk, they have a vicious chain, canes and bottles-in-the-face battle with another gang. Stealing a car and speeding into the country, forcing other cars into accidents, they put on masks and trick their way into a couple's home, raping the wife in front of her horrified husband, crippling the man while pinning him down.

But through it all, Alex has pushed his authority and discipline over his brothers too far. They form an entente against him and the next night, while he is leaving a house where he has battered a woman who later dies, Dim smashes him in the face with a full milk bottle and Alex is left on the ground blinded and in pain as police cars draw nigh.

In jail he is beaten and tortured. His former probation officer spits in Alex's face. In no time he is sentenced to 14 years in prison, a sentence supplemented by homosexual advances, brutal guards and other atrocities seemingly common to prison life. But fate comes to his aid. One of the political promises of the incumbent government was to do something about prisons and crime, and that something is a drug-psychological conditioning program designed to fill criminals with fear and sickness should they try to commit further acts of violence.

The reward for submitting to this experimental program is commutation of the remainder of a sentence. Alex submits the experiment works, and having served just two years, he is free again.

Here the situations reverse. Having once abused his parents, there is now no place in their home for him. He meets the drunk his gang had beaten in the beginning of the story and is in turn beaten by the drunk and his alcoholic friends. When two policemen come to break up the melee, they turn out to be Dim and Georgie, and they proceed to drive Alex to the country and beat him with a night stick while holding his head under water to prevent screams. The battered Alex staggers to a home, the same home where two years ago the rape was committed. It turns out that the wife is now dead, the husband a writer and political dissenter.

Where a few days before Alex was good propaganda for the government, as an example of their new prison reform plan, he now makes good propaganda for the opposition because conditioning techniques in the hands of power are potentially extremely frightening. And Alex's conditioning has been a bit too general. He not only can't initiate violence, neither can he defend himself. Be happenstance, he is similarly conditioned against hearing Beethoven's 9th Symphony.

The flaw in the opposition's propaganda campaign is that the crippled writer recognizes Alex as the man who lead the assault against his now dead wife and constructs a system of torture by locking Alex in a room, almost like a jail cell, and playing at high volume the very Ludwig Van that will arouse dread and nausea in the lad. The trail is more than Alex can endure and he leaps from a third story window in a suicide attempt.

Awakening in a hospital back in the hands of the incumbent government, the Minister in Interior who engineered Alex's first conditioning has engineered another program to reverse the original effects. Alex is offered a life of security and ease in exchange for cooperation and the closing scenes show society, represented by the Minister, shaking hands with its former nemesis Alex, in a devil's pact to maintain a particular form of power over the people.

On a cinematic level, this film is virtually faultless. At worst a scene or two is poorly staged and unbelievable. The acting is supurb with Malcom McDowell excellent in every way as Alex. His supporting actors are so universally able and convincing that it is impossible to single anyone out for special attention.

And then there is director Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick is best known to film goers for a steady stream of solid, socially potent films. In a little more than a decade he has made: "2001: A Space Odyssey;" "Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb;" "Lolita," and "Spartacus." In the industry he is known for acquiring and holding ever increasing amounts of artistic control so that he is now in full command of what he creates.

In this latest release his style is resplendent, featuring skillfully composed images, painfully startling sets which are simple extensions of extant modes, and camera work distinguished by the use of super wide-angle lenses. "A Clockwork Orange" is in every technical way masterful.

But in one major sense it is imbalanced and because of that imbalance becomes a free floating fiction with little bearing on any actual circumstances. The world which Burgess has created and Kubrick has nurtured is bereft of any positive human values. There is no dignity, no compassion, no love or trust. Bestial cannot be used to describe the situation because even animals in a pack will exhibit more pleasing instincts.

There is a lack of anything human, and if "A Clockwork Orange" is anything

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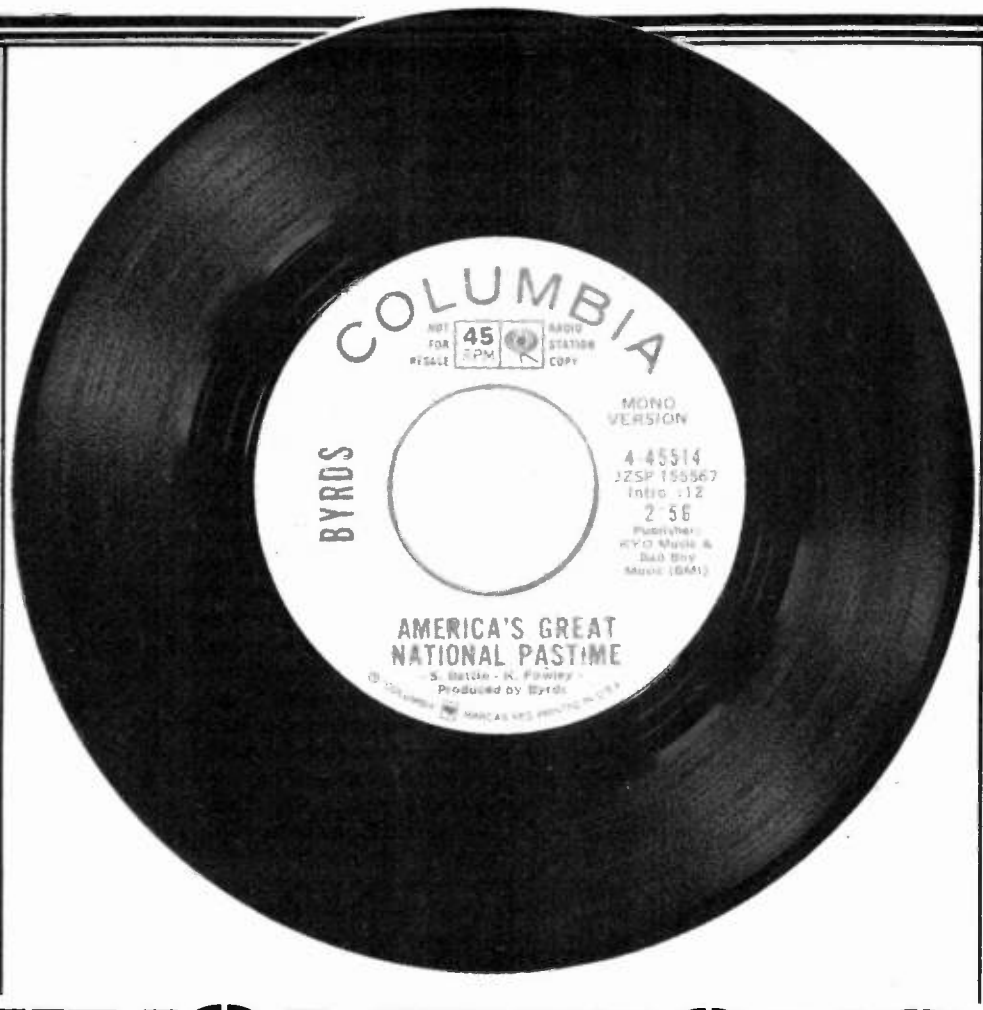
Phonograph Record Magazine, on behalf of this writer, the editors, and the publisher, wish to apologize to Miss Ellen Michaels and her family for any derogatory connotations which may have been imparted by this column in the November 1971 issue.



45 REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE

by Martin Cerf

"AMERICA'S GREAT NATIONAL PASTIME"
(S. Battin/K. Fowley)
THE BYRDS
COLUMBIA 45514
Produced by the Byrds
(no flip information)

Let's see a show of hands. One, two, ten, forty . . . everyone. The whole record industry is out of it's mind. And Kim Fowley is the leader of all the insanity. Here is a life that tragedy touches on the average of twice a day . . . his morning awakening is the first. The other can usually be one of any number of indulgent perversions . . . depending on if sour cream and Jergens is readily available or not.

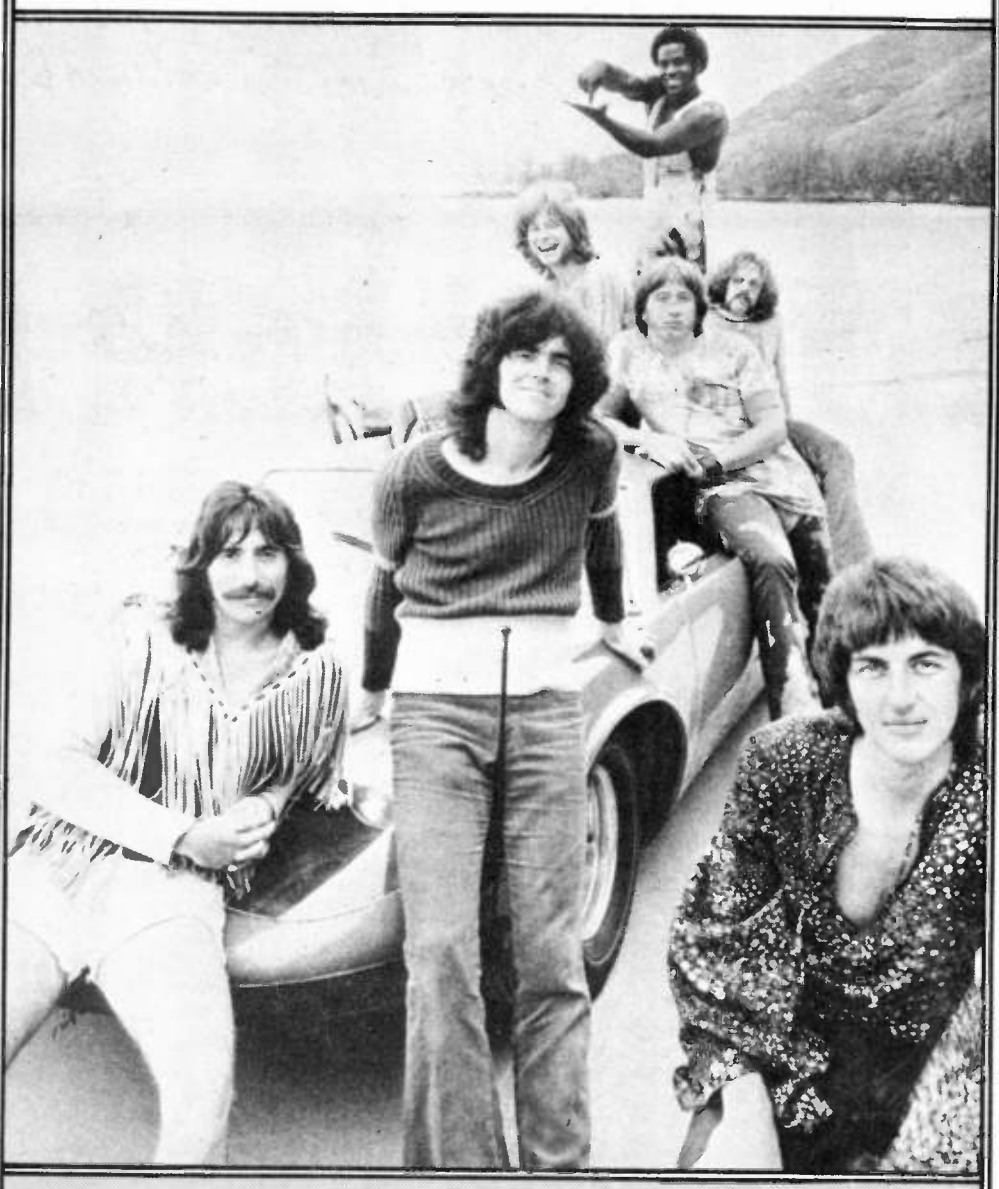
I remember a time when he got hold of this virgin from Sharron, Penna., and brought her up to his dirty "dog hole" (that's the way he chooses to refer to his flat) and proceeded to prance her in front of an audience of four extremely horny upper-crust record industry executives. All these greasy honchos were urging Kim on, like dogs in heat, as if he needed to be provoked, and with every suggestion from the peanut gallery another jar of gooeyness was rescued from the refrig and emptied on the sacrificial ornament. At first the midwest college dropout was repulsed, but fifteen minutes into the operation Kim had her screaming, "I love it, I love it . . . "

Meanwhile, all of the brave "men" in the gallery, who were obviously trying to get away with something behind "the wife's" back, were cooing, as delinquent drool eliminated from their mouths. At this point the room began to smell of all of Heinz 57 varieties. Kim invited the higher echelon execs to join in the rumpus, however amidst her cries of sublime withdrawal only one accepted the heated invitation, and he only got off on her beefy bazooms . . . ho hum, this industry's not what it used to be . . . all talk, they're all a bunch of fags I bet.

Anyway, this is what Kim means in his tune where he says, *"One of America's favorite pastimes is cutting the grass, grabbin some ass, livin' too fast"* . . . much truth. It probably won't be a hit 'cause the lyrics are so risque and the Byrds treat the side sloppily. If you can't see puttin down a cool four bucks for the LP or even a buck for the charisma of the Byrds
single just for the nostalgic, mid-sixties charisma of the Byrds (in which case you hold with my feelings) go to one of those music stores that let you play the record before ya buy it; put on *"America's Great National Pastime"* . . . it's worth at least two listens if only for the lyrics Fowley is a master of street language, *"One of America's favorite pastimes is its worship of speed."* If you've never heard the LP's Fowley recorded in the past for Imperial, Tower, Mira, etc . . . do yourself a favor and continue to pick up on the opportunity to miss them.* They're naughty. That is, as recordings they fail, but again, his lyrics are untouchable. Like his last single (on Original Sound), *"Born to Make You Cry"* . . . you know it's gotta be great just from the title. Here for the first time Kim shows promise of becoming a real performer&writer and the tune and its execution are totally above board (even though the melody was stolen from the Rugby's *"You I")*.

As for the Byrds, they would have done well to fill their entire LP with Kim Fowley tunes. His win, if only by default. In any case, they're a lot of fun if you don't take them seriously. Just like Kim. Just like the Byrds. Just like the nifty hot-shot record execs . . . It's all very teen-age, the record business, one of America's favorite pastimes!

*Kim, by his own confession, is neither a performer or recording artist but rather a "legendary songsmith."



Above are Three Dog Night—"Ya gotta own up to the genius of a Richard Podler production. He reminds one, in a sense, of the Phil Spector of yore."

NEVER BEEN TO SPAIN
(Hoyt Axton)
THREE DOG NIGHT
Dunhill
Produced by Richie Podler
(flip Piece of Mind)

Ya gotta give it to these guys . . . they sure know how to pick 'em. In the past the strongest point in Dog LP's were the singles. I never really had much respect for their albums, attributing the majority of the material within to the filler category. And it's true, or rather, it was true. Their new LP, Naturally, is the exception to the rule . . . every side a treasure to be sure. And for what reason do we make mention of the group's LP here. No, we're not the baffoons you might believe us to be, nor are Three Dog Night. Ney, the reason is, every cut on the Naturally LP is a proverbial single.

The group has claimed they've never recorded specifically for the purpose of producing a single (except in one case when they cut "One Man Band," one of their lesser hits), but rather prefer to record an entire program of hopeful candidates for 45's and let the public choose. None-the-less, Naturally is a collection of Top 40 single gems. "Never Been To Spain" (written by Hoyt Axton, the man responsible for "Joy To The World," (the group's most successful record ever), and the only author to be graced with two recordings by Three Dog Night, has more anxiety, more exuberance, more raw pleasure than even "Itchicoo Park" by the Small Faces or "California Girls," by the Beach Boys. Gimmicky and out-of-date lyrics are welcome here ("I never been to England, but I kind of like The Beatles") and are gravy to the exquisite recording.

We gotta own up to the genius of a Richard Podler production. He reminds one, in a sense, of the Phil Spector of yore; consistently coming up with tasty, original ideas that the masses can enjoy. I think D. Hutton is letting it hang down once again. Now if they could only get out of those trendy threads and supposed positions we always see them in . . . God forbid, they ever look like somethin' middle class like John Prine or Steve Goodman or something equally as real.

For the record, the B side, "Peace Of Mind," deserves to be a Top 40 smash as well, although I liked it better the first time in 1969 by Nancy Wilson. We already know about Naturally's *"Old Fashion Love Song"* (written by that pudgy fat midget) but have ya heard *"My Personal Life . . ."*? it's *reeeallly* fine. Another group has it out as a single, The Blue Rose (Epic) but compared to the Dogs version, it's a demo. A decent suggestion for the next single would be *"My Impersonal Life"* backed with Stevie Wonder's *"Never Dreamed I'd Leave In Summer"* . . . God bless.

THAT'S THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT CHA
(Bobby Womack/Joe Hicks/John Grisby)
BOBBY WOMACK
United Artists 50847
Produced by FREE PRODUCTIONS
Time: 5:03
(flip—Come L'Amore)

How often is the occasion you can be mesmerized? What frequency? How many recordings have you heard recently that has brought you that certain magic that only good dope or a great lay can . . . not many, I'll bet. All these laid back clits have been hustlin our ears and beatin off our psyche with how funky North Carolina is . . . what the shit, North Carolina was never funky, just a bunch of hard hat, hippie punchers and horny marines and only very rarely a tasty milk-maid . . . screw 'em. Let's get back to some rude rock . . . vulgarity, that's what we need, if only by way of suggestion. Ah, the prestigious tit, the meaty flesh, the punk love affair. The majesty of the console up your rear. Crudeness—that's what all this laid back stuff is about.

All those horny servicemen are waitin for the good olde days when the pop tunes went like *"Ah, I'm itching, and I don't know where to scratch, come here baby, scratch my back"* . . . Sweet trembles down my spine. That's what we all gotta hear. Who's gonna give it to us, who's gonna put a welding torch in James mouth?

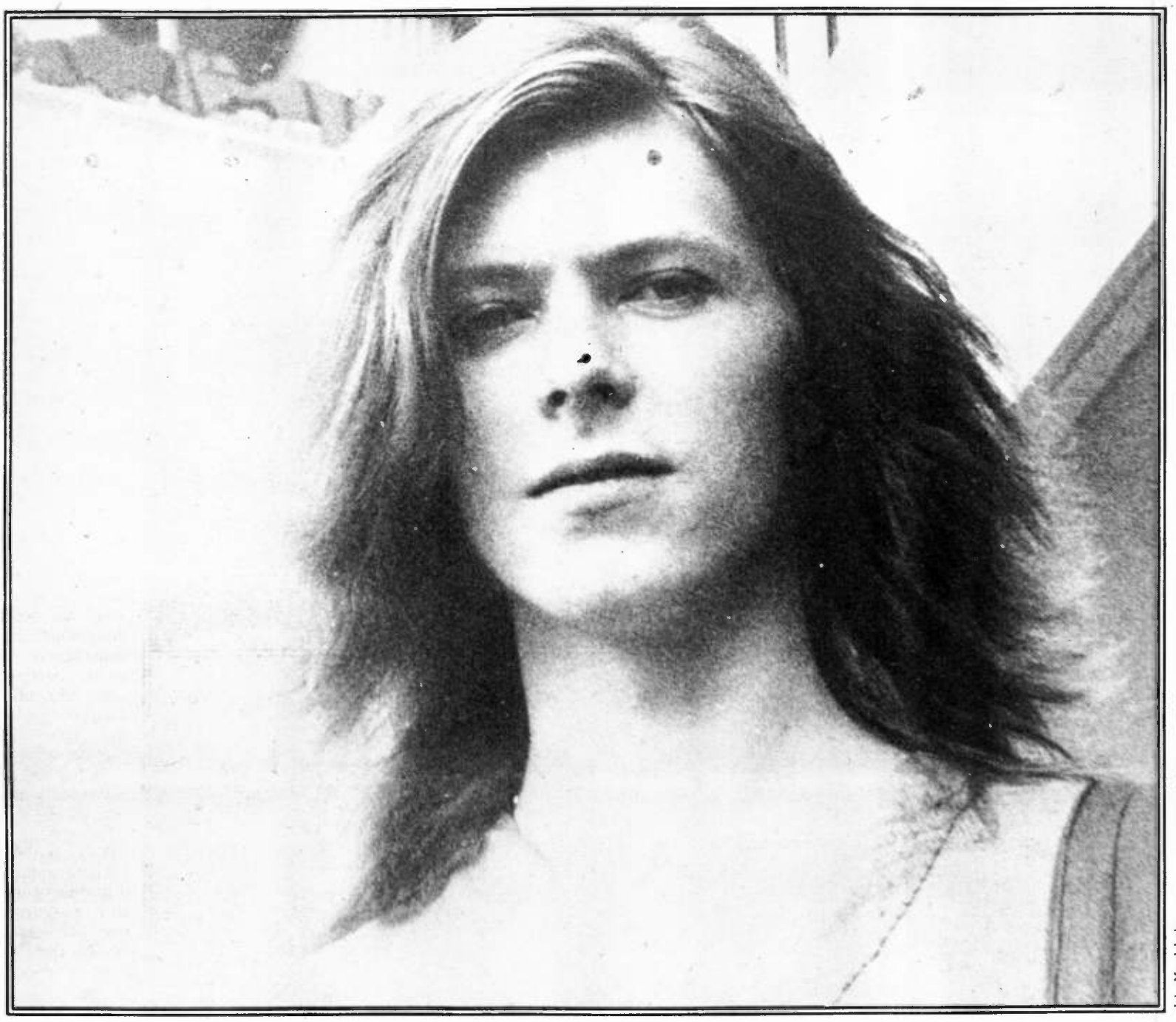
Anyway, if you're not already balling to Womack's "That's The Way I Feel About Cha," you're working too hard. Get it up and put it on . . . this be no less than the beginning of the end for James, Carole, Cat, Dog, Mouse, North Carolina. So if you're lookin for a tune that is for real, not a honky fantasy of some lame hermaphrodite, check into the situation. Bobby Womack has checked out more flesh and been laid further back than any of those phonies ever since the days of the Valentinos when Bobby was doing tunes like, "It's All Over Now," (The Rolling Stones hit) and "Lookin For A Love" (J. Geil's current hit) . . . Hit 'em again.

"That's just the way it is. Listen. Don't take my love as a sing of weakness."

Tell the ladies to watch out, Womack will scoop them right up, just like that. But it's alright, he lays 'em down *reeeaal* easy. Womack brings back the kind of pleasure only Sam Cooke could ever produce, and he's as welcome as a good hit and we all should be so lucky.

THE DARLING OF THE AVANT GARDE

DAVID BOWIE



John Mendelsohn

BY RICHARD CROMELIN

Is this frail-looking young Englishman with the delicate, birdlike features, arresting Capricorn eyes and page boy waves of sandy blonde hair indeed destined to become the Darling of the Avant-Garde? Will his eye makeup and wardrobe of full-to-semi drag and the kinky campiness of his bearing and his associations with the likes of Andy Warhol, Michael Garrett, Ultra Violet, Lou Reed and Iggy Stooge vault him to that coveted throne?

Or will he settle for simple pop stardom, the recognition that doubtless will accumulate when (and if) he ever harnesses his extensive theatrical experience into the ultimate rock 'n roll spectacle? Or even for critical recognition of his words and music and singing as interesting, or intriguing, and other standard critical words and phrases?

Perhaps, should none of this come to pass (an unlikely circumstance at this point), he will be content to just live out his role of anonymous outrage, a theatrical gadfly in the midst of a ticklish suburbia, continuing (for he certainly couldn't stop) to perform on the stage of his neighbors' front walks—Pierrot in Beckenham.

Never, despite the forbidding fact that he is married and now a father (Angie is the wife; Zowie the wee one), will he go the way of Paul McCartney and become a domestic marshmallow. His unpredictability notwithstanding, there are, after all, limits.

David Bowie makes it hard to tell which of these (if any) will come to pass, continuing his tradition of keeping a rather erratic rein on the course of his career: leaving his first groups because of artistic dissatisfaction; departing entirely from the music scene after his first album to learn mime; later dropping out altogether to study Buddhism; devoting his energies to non-musical projects following the success of his "Space Oddity" single; failing to receive a performing visa for America after the release last year of *The Man Who Sold The World*, et. al.

Yet through it all, and through all the ups and downs his psyche has ridden, he has managed to come up, fairly regularly in fact, with a product. The reason is simple: Bowie has the gift for translating his states of mind into musical artforms without bogging down in obscurity or self-indulgence.

"I had a depth of understanding on the satrical level
that the other kids hadn't achieved at the age of 13."

Born David Jones 25 years ago in London, Bowie's first memorable encounters with the arts were seeing *The Defiant Ones* (at 11) and reading Kerouac (at 13). Then came music:

"The first person I ever really listened to was Acker Bilk. Acker Bilk was a jazzer, when there was a boom in Trad Jazz; and Acker Bilk led it all. I was playing tenor sax at that time – well, actually I bought a little white ebonite one. Have you seen one of those? I think Coleman Hawkins used to play one . . . And they're very cheap and they're very good. It was an alto, and I played that.

"And then Little Richard came along. Actually Little Richard didn't come along until after John Coltrane came along. So that was quite a jump (I never really understood Coltrane at that age). And I played in a modern jazz group, and also played in rock bands – intermixtures of anything: rock'n roll and anything that required a saxophone except dance music. I played extreme music – it was either rock 'n roll or jazz."

Upon his graduation, at 16, from the prestigious Bromley High School for Boys, Bowie plunged into the world of commercial art with a Bond Street advertising firm, only to leave after one disillusioning year: "It was diabolical. I never realized that to be an artist meant buckling under so much."

He had now decided to get into showbiz, and so he continued on with his rock 'n' roll groups (which included David Jones and the Lower Third, later changed to David Bowie and the Buzz) until a combination of ingredients – including his penchant for falling behind or pushing ahead of his mates on rhythm guitar and a mounting dissatisfaction with performing the material of others – convinced him to strike out on his own with nought but his 12-string guitar to keep him company. In due time he was signed, along with Cat Stevens, to launch the new Deram label in 1968. As David says with a rueful laugh, "Cat won."

He also says of *Love You Till Tuesday* (the English title): "It's a strange little number. I sound like Tony Newley. I sound more like Tony Newley than Newley." While most of the album (Deram DES 18003) has not worn particularly well with the passage of time, there are, here and there, hints of what would soon emerge as a distinctive Bowie sensibility (not to mention the liner notes of one Kenneth Pitt, who enthusiastically marks David's progress as an avant garde innovator: "Why, he was even photographed in 1964 wearing a military jacket!").

Interspersed with some poppish, overarranged inconsequential songs in which David's voice sounds most uncomfortable are things like: "Uncle Arthur," a jaunty Kinks' English ditty whose pleasant tune and clever lyrics make it a worthy opening track; the Bonzo-ish "Rubber Band," which marches along like "Equestrian Soldier" and touches on everyone's fear of lonely afternoons; "Little Bombadier," about a man who learns to stop fighting and love children, only to be persecuted by those who suspect him of really *loving* the children; "She's Got Medals," the story of Mary, who changes her name to Johnny, joins the army, then deserts after winning her decorations; and the chilling "Please Mr. Gravedigger," a quietly obsessed little *a capella* chant

set against the sounds of a rainstorm and scraped dirt, full of dead little girls, golden lockets and murderous intentions.

After Cat hit and David didn't, he temporarily abandoned the musical scene to devote himself entirely to one of his longstanding interests, the study of Tibetan Buddhism. Soon thereafter he was to come upon one of the most important periods of his professional, artistic and personal lives.

"I met a guy called Lindsay Kemp, who was a mime in London. He was holding a one-man show and he played one of the records I'd made during the break as mood music. And so I went to see him backstage. We were kind of pleased to meet each other, and he said would I write some more music for his things, and I said "If you teach me mime."

"And so he took me on as a pupil, and I started taking ballet and mime, and eventually I got into the company. I eventually started writing the plays with him, which was good. It was even better because I think he must be the leading mime in England, and possibly his reputation has spread to Europe. So it was very good training . . . "

"Lindsay Kemp was a living Pierrot. He lived and talked Pierrot. He was tragic and dramatic and everything in his life – theatrical. And so the stage thing for him was just an extension of himself. There's a lot of material from his private life that would beat any script. But we utilized the figures of Columbine, Pierrot and Scaramouche, what have you–traditional figures. We used some Genet–Lindsay was very fond of Genet–and we used some Oscar Wilde, some Joyce."

In time, Bowie broke off from the Kemp company and formed the Turquoise Mime Theater. The financial situation was difficult, and he found himself in folk clubs, with his 12-string, singing songs from the show to keep the troupe solvent: "But it never held together and eventually I was just on my own with the songs. And I found I was a folksinger. I didn't want to be; I just found it was the way I was making money."

"The first album was written in Beckenham and on the road. The second album was written in London. I think therein lies the difference."

The "first album" is actually his second, *Man of Words/Man of Music* (Mercury SR 61246). "The difference" was occassioned by the relative placidity of Beckenham, and, consequently, a state of mind that, if not on the brink of Nirvana, was not as yet rended by psychotic upheavels: "I was substantially happy at the time of writing the first album. I had a teriffic social conscience and I really wanted to sort things out in the world."

As he attempts to do in "Space Oddity" (here a different version from his hit English single), wherein astronaut Major Tom (a wonderful name) just can't bring himself to return to earth–"I think my spaceship knows which way to go;"

"Or in the deliberately naive "Memory of a Free Festival," a tender treatment of a time that now seems incredibly remote, wherein the potentially sticky is rendered genuinely touching.

The album's two most ambitious cuts, "The Cygnet Committie" and "Wild Eyed Boy from Freecloud," touch, in a manner alternately obscure and graphic, on a theme that still occupies much of his writing: the younger generation as progenitors of a New Man; the hardships that must be borne; the corruption and failings of which such a revolution is subject. Bowie usually outdoes himself when dealing with this subject, giving it an air of timeless, quasi-religious mystery.

It is on this album that Bowie's distinctine musical style begins to assert itself, effectively sustaining the impact of these pieces despite occassional lyrical lapses. He sings forcefully now, and his brittle voice is immediately recognizable, though it has not yet acquired its later anguished metallic edge. His ability to compliment his words with subtle vocal nuances, his gift for writing melodies that are loose and free and yet always to the point, the mood of science fiction dreaminess and his subdued intensity (cf. the crisp, jagged litany in "Unwashed and Somewhat Slightly Dazed") all work strongly to his advantage.

He is bolstered by some big names–Paul Buckmaster providing the string arrangements (which sometimes get pretty lush); two cuts produced by Gus Dudgeon, the rest by Tony Visconti; mellotron and electric harpsichord by Rick Wakeman. A notable album in all, though marred by some love songs, one line from which–"So I've been writing just for you"– concisely describes his inability to bring the listener into the two-way relationships he sketches.

Man of Words/Man of Music appeared in 1969, and its moderate sucess, combined with that erate success, combined with that of the single, provided Bowie with the opportunity to realize a long-smoldering project:

"I started a thing with a friend of mine called Mary Finnegan, who was one of the chief writers for *The International Times* in its beginnings. We decided to try and create some kind of interest in the New Culture in suburbia, because we were both living in the same area in Beckenham. And we wanted to know and see how we could fight suburbia, and so we started what was called the Arts Laboratory, on the lines of Jim Haines' Arts Laboratory in Drury Lane.

"The idea was to get a piece of property that could be used as a total environment, and it just became a place for people to meet on their own terms. And it succeeded in the beginning. We had a lot of great interest from all kinds of painters and sculptors, and people turned up who we didn't know existed in Beckenham–tremendous!

"And then it started to deteriorate, because we found that the mass percentage of the people that came just came to be entertained. The participation element was gone–the wave of enthusiasm that the whole thing captured in the beginning. It gradually became just another place to go. In fact the only place to go in Beckenham."

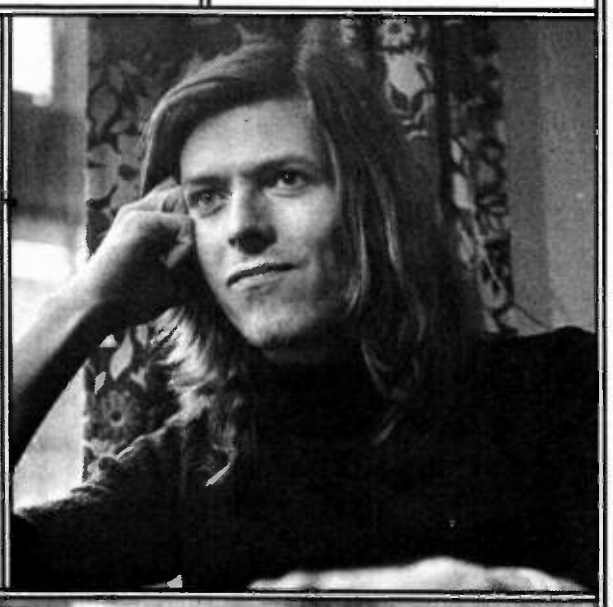
At the same time: "With the popularity of 'Space Oddity' I started getting the wrong kind of gigs. I was getting ballrooms and things–everything that goes with chart success. And the intimacy of some of the performances I had been doing was lost completely."

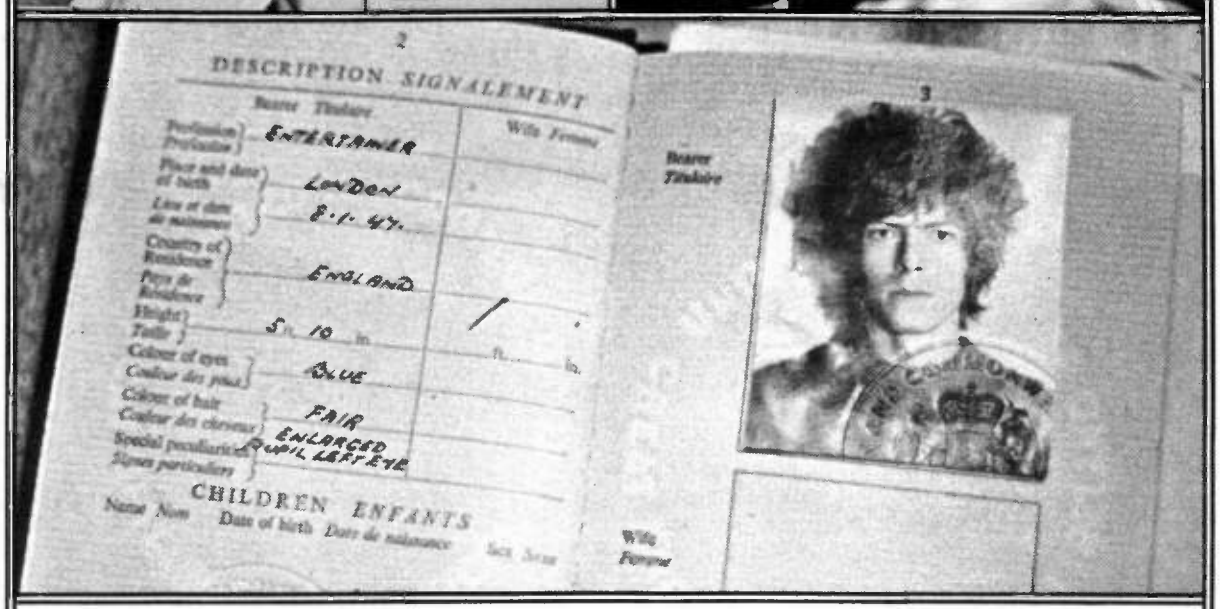
All of which, in combination with events like his father's death and the continuing inability of his mother's family to deal with the world, spiralled to a shrieking head that exploded in an album, recorded two years ago in London and released a year later, that turned a lot of heads in the direction of David Bowie–*The Man Who Sold The World* (Mercury SR 61325).

"I used to have periods, weeks on end, when I just couldn't cope anymore. I'd slump into myself . . . I felt so depressed, and I really felt so aimless, and this torrential feeling of 'what's it all for anyway?' "

"A lot of it (the album) went through that period, 'Width of the Circle' was definately that–I went to the depths of myself in that. I tried to analogize the period of my life from when I left school to that time–to the making of that LP. Just for my own benefit, not really for any listener's benefit. I very much doubt whether anyone could decipher that song correctly on my level. But a lot of people have deciphered it on their own levels. That's fine–that's what a song does."

He struck the ground a covern appeared
And I smelt the burning pit of fear
We crashed a thousand yards below
I said "Do it again, do it again"
(Turn around, go back)
His nebulous body swayed above
His tongue swollen with devil's love
The snake and I, a venom high
(Turn around, go back)
Breathe, breathe, breathe deeply
And I was seething, breathing deeply
A spitting sentry, horned and waiting for you
–from "The Width of the Circle"





"I used to have periods, weeks on end, when I just couldn't cope with it anymore . . . I felt so depressed, so aimless–and this torrential feeling of 'what's it all for anyway?' "

Of what is possibly the album's most impressive cut, Bowie says: " 'All the Madmen' was written for my brother and it's about my brother. He's the man inside, and he doesn't want to leave. He's perfectly happy there –perfectly happy: Doesn't have to work, just lies there on the lawn all day, looking at the sky. He's very happy.

"He comes out occassionally. and we have him at home for a bit. But he gets in the way. He says 'Well, I think I'll go back to —" and he goes back, and we don't see him for a few months. We go every fortnight, we go for the weekend and we take a hamper of sandwiches and apples and things, new shirts and fresh stuff, and take his laundry. And he's always very happy to see us, but he never has anything to say."

Day after Day
They send my friends away
To mansions cold and grey
To the far side of town
Where the thinmen stalk the streets
And the sane stay underground . .
Don't set me free, I'm as heavy as can be
Just my librium and me
And my E.S.T. make three . . .
Day after day,
They take some brain away
They turn my face around
To the far side of town
And tell me that it's real
Then ask me how I feel
'Cause I'd rather stay here
With all the madmen
Than perish with the sadmen
Roaming free
And I'd rather play here
With all the madmen
For I'm quite content
They're all as sane as me.
Zane, Zane, Zane,
Ouvre le chien
–from "All The Madmen"

In *The Man Who Sold The World* David Bowie does more than coherently and effectively express the nature of the state of mind that inspired its themes. Through his use of simple, solid rock melodies and clever but basically sound song constructions, by setting his songs in a numbing blast of sheer uncompromising hard-rock intensity, he has provided an energetic alterternative to the reactionary troubadour/soft-rock sounds that leave anyone who was teethed on people like Chuck Berry and the old Who and the Kinks *et. al.* a little less than satisfied in the parts of the body where solid rock 'n' roll hits hardest.

Not only is Bowie's outlook expressed with intelligence, humour and emotionally compelling passion, but the support he recieves from Mick Ronson on lead guitar and Woody Woodmansee on drums ("Two stout Yorkshiremen who were Jeff Beck fans"), as well as from producer Tony Viscounti on bass, is nothing short of incredible: They immediately supercharge things up to a jarring level which they never relinquish, translating into disquietingly, spastically forceful music the emotions Bowie has so graphically painted.

Bowie is certainly not "in command" of his material; he rides along on it like a cowboy on a brahma bull. But he rarely falters, and his singing, which has now matured into a powerful disturbingly metallic instrument with an anguished, razor-sharp edge that lets it slice with a vengeance through the thick mix, emphatically conveys his inner turmoil.

If as soon after its release as last February Bowie was maintaining that he could no longer relate to the album because he found its energy level uncomfortable, and if he once again felt closer to the first Mercury album, *The Man Who Sold the World* nonetheless stands as a most impressive achievement.

* * *

I'm the twisted name in Garbo's eyes
I'm living proof of Churchill's lies
–from "Quicksand"

Last winter David Bowie visited America, and though visa problems prevented him from performing, he did find time to cavort about the country, camp about in the streets and hotels ("A couple of dresses I bought in London . . . The people seemed to be very offended. I looked *very* presentable."), write songs destroy the sensibilities of hip FM jocks in radio interviews, and offer the following:

–"I didn't believe it till I came here, till I got off the plane. From England America merely symbolizes something, it doesn't actually exist. And when you get off the plane and find that there actually is a country called America, it becomes very important then . . .

"I haven't enjoyed myself so much for years–that must be some indication. I suppose I like it very much. It's a vulgar pros-

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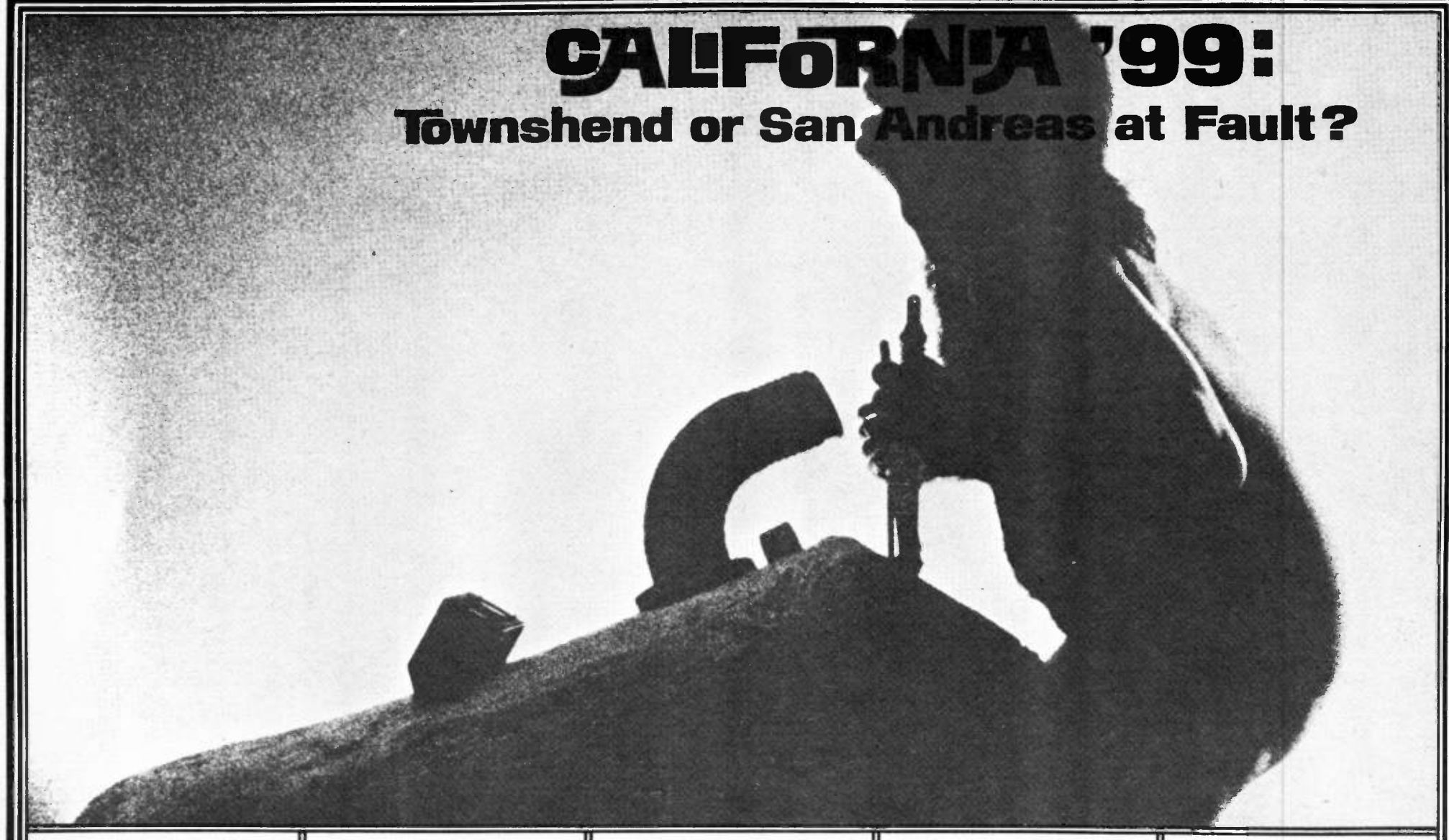
CALIFORNIA '99:
Townshend or San Andreas at Fault?



BY LESTER BANGS

You know, it's really the Who and Pete Townshend we've got to blame for all this aggravation. First it was *Tommy,* after the "Quick One While He's Away" dry run, which was of course fully realized, vast in scope, a musical masterpiece, blah blah blah. *Tommy* wasn't "My Generation," in fact it took about two dozen times as long to say much less than that song did in three minutes, but it got a lot of people excited just like *Sgt. Pepper* with the old Gee-isn't-it-fantastic-rock-is-rising-from-it's-humble-origins-to-respectable-levels fit. Whoopee. It wasn't as apparent back in '68 as it is now that rock almost invariably turns into pretentious drivel when it deserts its "humble origins" for the tuxedo valhalla where the hoary ghost of "real music" stumbles around. But it's still Townshend's fault—anybody with the intestinal IQ to write "My Generation" shoulda known better.

But he didn't, so hot on the heels of *Tommy's* disorientingly outsized success came a veritable monsoon of Rock Operas, generally having about as much to do with rock as Van Cliburn with Memphis Slim, each more bloated, arty, gauche and heavy-handed than the last. People seldom thought in subtle terms when laboring at that old saw The Pop-Classical Fusion anyway: from Gershwin to Deep Purple's *Concerto For Rock Group & Orchestra* it was all Cinerama eyewash, so when they happened on the Opera riff things could only get more slow and bulbous than ever, opera being in its original nature a form prone to pomp and excess.

For awhile every punk band in the land with a producer prone to grandiose fantasies was busy stapling all the songs on their latest album together, writing some putty prose to fill the gaps, and calling it a Rock Opera. Remember *S.F. Sorrows* by the Pretty Things? Not many people do. And the Pretty Things were just a good raunchy-ugly British r&b crew gone bad. But the virus was mightily contagious. The Kinks were strong enough to survive it, even though playing *Arthur* back-to-back with *Kink Kontroversy* is an object lesson in who kayo's who when it's Art vs. Trash. And there were countless duds like *Beggar Julia's Time Trip* by Ekseption that sunk beneath the tides of pop history before they even broke the surface.

From producers with egos run wild it was just a paradiddle to Broadway and Tin Pan Alley and the more recognizable mechanistic music vectors. *Hair* came before *Tommy,* but such arcana as *Salvation* and *Your Own Thing,* which sucked off Shakespeare, were cousins to Townshend's Folly even if they did owe more to the Broadway musical comedy tradition than anything Chuck Berry or Little Richard ever touched.

The straw that broke the dike and ushered in the first fast *renaissance* of Rock Opera was *Jesus Christ Superstar.* Oh my sweet lord, what a godsend, why didn't *we* think of that before they did? It's so obvious it was invisible that the only thing more boffo than a plain garden variety Rock Opera about Everyman's tribulations is one about Jesus Christ's! Even Bible Belt parents who send their kids to the big bonfires with their Beatle records would bite this one! What's more popular than Jesus? Not rock 'n' roll. John Lennon notwithstanding. So we've slugged through *Godspell* and *Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Truth of Truths* and it ain't waned yet. Though it may have peaked.

It is my considered opinion that the people who make these records should all be hamstrung in the marketplace and forced to listen to Sir Lord Baltimore until their drool congeals. Or at least put in detention camps. It's not so much that they're ripping off some "people's music" as that most of the product is unprecedentedly aggravating to Christian and philistine alike.

Meanwhile, though, as a permissive regime allows them to run wild creating great double-record Graf Zeppelins at will, sub-genres of the virus have sprung up. One is the mostly unstated-as-such but seemingly parody of the form, as represented by Mercury's stupefying *The Naked Carmen* project (if you think I'm a mite intolerant, consider that I haven't even entered into the matter of how much money, which somebody must need, all this is wasting).

Another is the Science Fiction Rock Opera, a comparatively young idiom which will, I'm sure, be fleshed out by future opuses. It's presently represented mostly by Paul Kantner's *Blows Against the Empire* which, especially on its second side, reveals itself as a rock opera in cocaine rush political tract drag. Also there was one album by a group called Julian's Treatment, a unified story about astral travel and extraterrestrial intrigue, which was so mediocre I can't even remember its name even though I reviewed it once.

All of which brings us to the, er, creation at hand. *California 99* is a hybird of rock-opera-as-self-parody and R-O-as-Sci-Fi that surpasses all previous efforts in outrageously excessive attention paid to pointless detail. It is like *Gone With the Wind* mounted on a *Gilligan's Island* soundstage, a vast, shapeless, baroque blob with loose ends falling into empty space everywhere. It comes out of the etherous void where lots of other recording projects originate, that primal schizophrenia peculiar to the music industry wherein rafts of talented people can collaborate on something they have no comprehension of whatsoever, and not even find a unity of labor in the process. And it's bound for that great and better known void where all records familiarly referred to as stiffs find their peace at last.

California 99 was the brainchild, as it were, of Jimmie Haskell . . . to give you an idea of what you've got instore if you're planning on playing this bomb, get a-lode of this guy's background: It's as inconsistant as the record. Haskell's either produced or arranged Ricky Nelson, Pat Boone, Simon & Garfunkle, Ed Ames, Delaney & Bonnie, Don Ho, Laura Nyro, Frankie Laine, The Grass Roots, Morgana King, Tommy Roe, and Al Martino—a pretty confused list/LP anyway you look at it. People who make rock-opera albums like "California 99" should be "hamstrung in the market-place and made to listen to Sir Lord Baltimore." *Here, here!!*

It was first announced at the famed ABC-Impulse convention held in San Francisco last August; not that it has anything in common with the music of John Coltrane or Archie Shepp or anybody else you'd expect to find on Impulse. But then, neither did that gathering. Even so, Saturday morning, right after the ritual speech-playing-applause unveilings of new albums by Trane, B.B. King, etc., a genial gentleman named Tom Gamache got up and announced that the fall line would also feature an album on ABC of unique nature. It was, he said, a science-fiction rock opera based (sort of) on *Tommy* and dealing with the California Earthquake. It would feature both originals and songs derived from already existing non-operatic sources, including The Band's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" in a new sci-fi rendition.—

What would *you* think if somebody told you of such an album, assuming you retained enough faith in their sanity and veracity to believe? You'd reel and stagger and pound your ulcerated frontal lobes and ask yourself again and again what sort of world this is, what's in the minds of people in the record biz if not oatmeal, how could such a Trojan Cow of an album ever come into existance?

The story, derived complete with non-attributable quotes from sources deep in the aortic bivalves of ABC, is that prolific producer Bill Szymczyk (B.B. King, etc) and protean composer-arranger-conductor Jimmie Haskell (credits to follow) came by divers meditations and excursions to conceive a sort of recorded off-the-air radio show called *The Whale Oil Hour.* It was supposed to be an experiment, a free-form recorded program featuring good music by several famous artists interspersed with satiric "newscasts" and "commercials" by famed Nashville DJ John R. According to one extremely prominent producer at ABC, whom I can't name except to say that he had much to do with bringing black jazz innovators to wax in the last half of the Sixties, *"It changed my whole approach to making records."* How? Well, it's hard to explain at this dingy juncture in history, but it was supposedly that rare thing in the world of commercial music, a truly New Idea, utilizing such techniques my inside informant could best describe as being *"edited like a movie."*

Okay. He's a sane man of some accomplishment, and I believe him. But *The Whale Oil Hour,* great as it may have been, never saw the light of racks. At some point Szymczyk freaked out, and started going around posing Sphinxy lines like, *"What kind of a hook can we hang it on?"* The paranoia, and it spreads fast in the biz, was that nobody Out There would be able to relate to this thing or understand it because it wasn't anything like much that they were used to. And that's poison, I guess. So anyway, a whole lot of money had apparently already been spent and their ass was up for grabs if they didn't figure out *something* to do with it, some form of plastic surgery to make it palatable to me and thee, so amidst the general executive hysteria the aforementioned Tom Gamasche, deejay and composer of pragmatic bailouts, dropped into the office to tell everybody that he'd solved the problem.

Gamache's idea was pure genius! Take the thing, hack off hocks here, graft and splice up ragged edges there, and turn it into a futuristic *Pilgrim's Progress.* The latest and most ominous San Andreas boogaloo had just hit Cal, leaving great slabs of concrete busted up and strewn across the freeways of L.A. and occult oddacres muttering into their sleeves all over the place, with even the most staid elements of the populace beginning to yoyo around with notions of apocalypse and the long promised Altantean break-off and sinkage into the Pacific of all or at least a large chunk of the state. So the subject had a built-in audience hook; the execs said *"Might work, might work"* with bland pokermugs and heaved pathetic sighs of relief behind their sideburns. So Gam-

ache poured *The Whale Oil Hour* into his miraculous machine, grated, chopped, cleaned and refined it, and came up from his murky lab with this shining slab of product: *California 99.*

The story is almost as crazy-quilty as its musical content, but don't think it's just the erratic meanderings of someone with the background of a primadonna and the yearn to wander, as Gogi Grant once said. Nope, the musical skeleton (and that's exactly what it is) of this behemoth was wrought by a fellow named Jimmie Haskell, who has a roster of accomplishments such that you expect him to be writing the music for the movie of the decade or conducting the premiere of the last great unearthed work of Stravinsky with the New York Philharmonic in Lincoln Center. Anywhere, in fact, but hacking away at a carcass like *California 99.*

But then, Mark Twain did write crank tracts on nutrition. Haskell, according to his own special ABC hypesheet, produced eight million-sellers for Ricky Nelson in a row. He won a Grammy in 1968 for producing Bobby Gentry's original version of "Ode to Billy Joe," and another one in '69 for steering Simon & Garfunkle across dat ol' "Bridge Over Troubled Water." He also produced their album of that name and its predecessor, *Bookends.* Both incredible beyond-gold sellers. He arranged and conducted Laura Nyro's *New York Tendaberry* album, and has done wonders and made millions for folks like Mama Cass Elliot, the Grass Roots, Tommy Roe, Dean Martin, Al Martino, Pat Boone, Jimmy Rodgers, Bobby Darin, Ed Ames, Frankie Laine, Morgana King, Delaney & Bonnie, Don Ho and the Lettermen. He once made an album for Dot, that schlepp of a label, with the unlikely title of *Jimmy Haskell's French Horns.* It's still selling like whale oil in Alaska. Not to slight the needs of the public sector in the process of forging this monolithic success story of our times, he also penned "Walking on Wilshire," which is the official theme of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. And, not to neglect piteous pleas for aid from the world of video and the silver screen, he directed TV specials for Andy Williams, Jose Feliciano, and John Davidson, scored "Ozzie & Harriet" in the Fifties and the Doris Day Show 10 years after, and composed and conducted the soundtracks for movies by Bob Hope and Elke Sommers and more Paramount "oaters" (cowboy flix) than we'll ever count, including the hip oater Zachariah. So he's got his finger on the pulse of the c.c. (counter culture) as well as on Doris Day's dimple. All this experience pays off, too, because right now he's on the Board of Governors of the Hollywood Chapter of the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences.

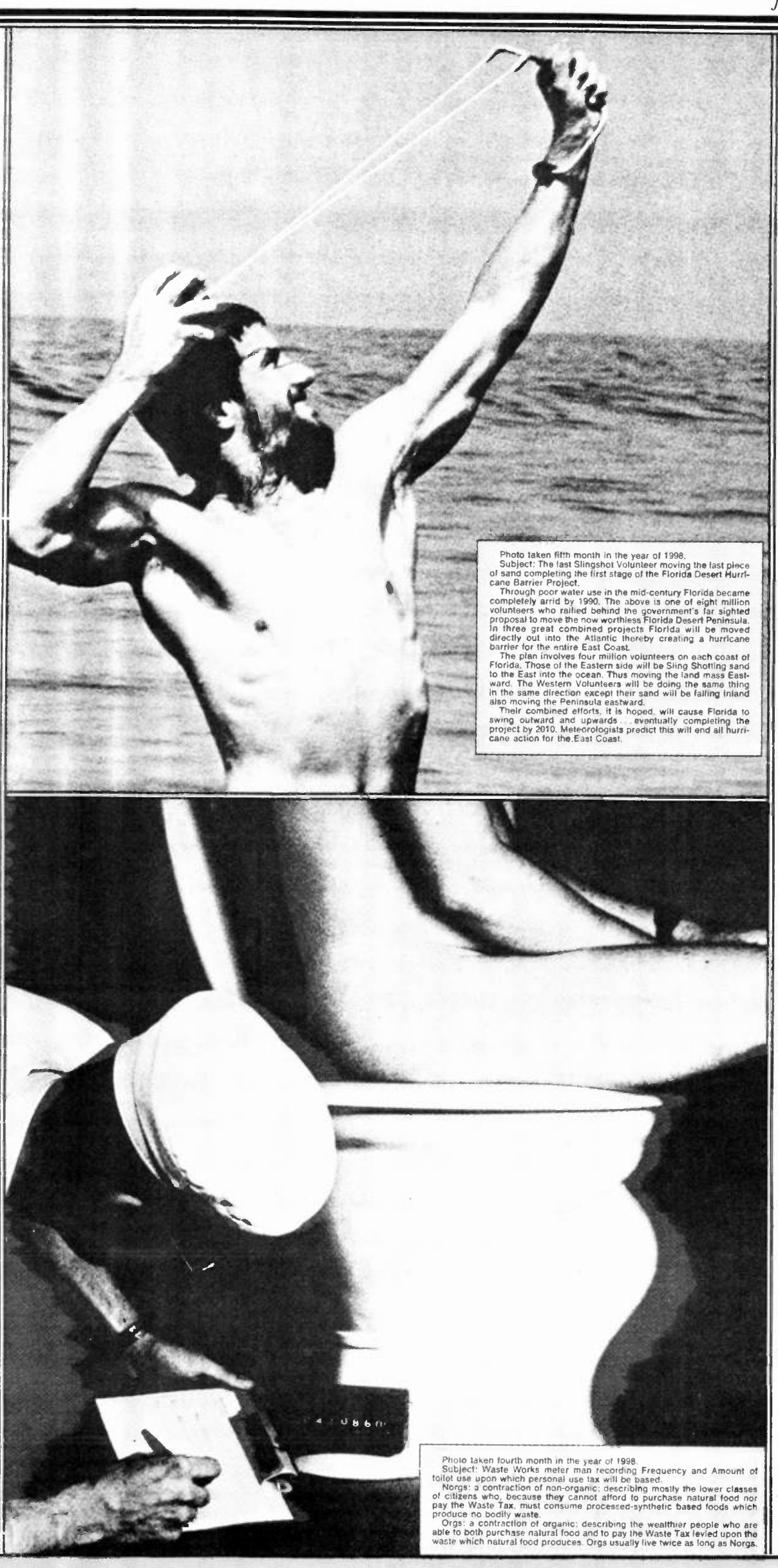


Photo taken fifth month in the year of 1998.
Subject: The last Slingshot Volunteer moving the last piece of sand completing the first stage of the Florida Desert Hurricane Barrier Project.
Through poor water use in the mid-century Florida became completely arrid by 1990. The above is one of eight million volunteers who rallied behind the government's far sighted proposal to move the now worthless Florida Desert Peninsula. In three great combined projects Florida will be moved directly out into the Atlantic thereby creating a hurricane barrier for the entire East Coast.
The plan involves four million volunteers on each coast of Florida. Those of the Eastern side will be Sling Shotting sand to the East into the ocean. Thus moving the land mass Eastward. The Western Volunteers will be doing the same thing in the same direction except their sand will be falling inland also moving the Peninsula eastward.
Their combined efforts, it is hoped, will cause Florida to swing outward and upwards . . . eventually completing the project by 2010. Meteorologists predict this will end all hurricane action for the East Coast.

Photo taken fourth month in the year of 1998.
Subject: Waste Works meter man recording Frequency and Amount of toilet use upon which personal use tax will be based.
Norgs: a contraction of non-organic; describing mostly the lower classes of citizens who, because they cannot afford to purchase natural food nor pay the Waste Tax, must consume processed-synthetic based foods which produce no bodily waste.
Orgs: a contraction of organic; describing the wealthier people who are able to both purchase natural food and to pay the Waste Tax levied upon the waste which natural food produces. Orgs usually live twice as long as Norgs.

Hail, Caesar. Every potentate has a hobby, some trivial pursuit, that somehow seems miles beneath him. Nero, recall, fiddled. Henry VII played jax. Hitler took belladonna and jerked off. So maybe *Cal 99* is Proteus Haskellus' musical dalliance?

Nope, he says: *"California 99 is the culmination of all my experience to date,"* and nods and smiles when the hype sheet further maintains that it's his most ambitious work, *"a composition unique in the annals of American music."* In fact, the blurb blabs on that *"it is arguable that California 99 is the most innovative modern score since the day that the Rhapsody in Blue first 'Made a Lady out of jazz.'"*

Right! Let's argue about it. First let's ask what *Cal 99* made out of rock. On second thought, let's not, and avoid sexist invective dealing with harpies and whores and such. Let's just pull up our trousers and wade into the marsh itself, which it sez here is *"a 40-minute work for full symphony orchestra, jazz and rock musicians, Moog, chorus, soloists, and speaker."* Is anybody out there, to paraphrase Lenny Bruce, still not exploited? Well, don't worry, because odd as this contraption may be and however dire its subject, it ain't no Cassandra of RO's, nah, every porthole spews sweetness and light: *"Through the ingenuity of its writing and the strength of its realization, California 99 is in no way downbeat. It is fatalistic but never melancholy. The work is unabashedly romantic, full of rich, soaring melodies and sharp, exciting rhythms."* Not only that, the integral pristineness of its conception makes it so tight that it sweeps all past efforts in the genre, untogether and unwieldy as they are, out the slammer to entropy: *"Other works have presented mixtures of symphonic and pop music, but heretofore one was always aware of the separate parts to the disparate whole (sic). For perhaps the first time in music, a work has here been written in which symphonic, jazz, rock, and even Greek Bouzouki music has been seamlessly welded together into one entity."* And it's as futuristic in implications as thematic material: "Its success (?) opens the door to a completely new music, in which there is no necessity to label the content classical, pop, etc., but rather a free-flowing fitting of all musical thought into one perfect amalgam. . . 2001's music today.

Far out. Enough. *California 99* is probably the penultimate stiff in the history of ABC records. Almost an accident, qualifiedly a mess, it symbolizes everything that's awry and fantastically unreal about the recording industry. Like Governments dumping tons of wheat in the sea when their own citizens are starving, record companies

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An Interv

The F

by Jonh

As far as America is concerned, the Small Faces were notable for one single, "Itchycoo Park," and one album, "Ogden's Nut Gone Flake;" the former for its funny lyrics about getting high in the park, the latter for its round cover. To the rest of the world, the Small Faces were an institution.

They released their first single, "What'Cha Gonna Do About It," in 1965, with Jimmy Winston on keyboards, who left shortly after ("None of us could really play our instruments at that time, but he was really bad"), to be replaced by Ian McLagen. Hit after hit followed, with hordes of screaming girls idolizing the group, especially lead guitarist-singer Steve Marriott. Although they did many tours, it was in the studio they felt at home. With Glyn Johns at the knobs, they turned out a multitude of tracks, much of it unreleased until the English album "Autumn Stone," last year. In 1969 Steve left to form Humble Pie, and the group seemed to have run its course. Enter Rod Stewart and Ron Wood.

Rod first played professionally in the early 60s with Jimmy Powell and the Five Dimensions, graduated to Long John Baldry's Hoochie Coochie Men and Steampacket, spent some time as Rod the Mod ("I used to be more worried about what I looked like than the music."), joined Shotgun Express with Peter Green and Mick Fleetwood, and finally was vocalist for Jeff Beck. Ron started out in 1964 as guitarist in the Birds, one of the multitudinous groups brought to American attention by the British Invasion, next showing up as a bassist for Jeff Beck. With their addition to the group, the name changed to Faces.

The current Faces have even more vitality and power than the Small Faces. The tightness which was a trademark of the old group has gone, but instead there is a complexity and subtlety that was previously missing. Listen to the Small Faces' version of "My Way of Giving" and the rendition on "Gasoline Alley" to see the evolution.

Most important, the power and vitality is present in their stage act, which is firmly rooted in vaudeville. Ron controls the music, high stepping around the stage as he urges his mates on, crouching over his guitar whenever he executes a particularly florid run. Rod, nattily attired in a leopard skin suit and lace blouse ("It'll make me look tarty"), throws his mike stand like a baton, runs drunkenly all over the stage, dances a soft shoe or two with Ronnie and Mac, and sings his soul out. Ronnie spends most of the time drinking, his excellence of bass playing increasing in direct proportion to the amount of alcohol consumed. Kenny flails at his kit as though nothing else matters. It isn't unusual for him to take two or three solos a night. One of them might be a bit off, but the others are so bitingly good the pandemonium they produce is justified. The overall feeling is some of the lads are out for a good bash. But not just any lads. High class lads.

This tour, the Faces were staying at the Beverly Hills Hotel, a rambling stucco affair, with beautiful grounds, situated firmly in Beverly Hills, a home away from home for lawyers, uppercrust executives, starlets, and the nouveau riche, whose hospitality does not customarily extend to longhairs. The group booked in to utilize the grounds for a photo session which never happened, so for two days they withstood cold stares and gossipy dowagers. "Are you in a rock group? I thought so. My son-in-law is in Steppenwolf. Do you know him? They have five gold records."

The interview took place in one of the hotel's semi-plush rooms, with Ronnie Lane and Ron Wood doing most of the talking. Friends and other members of the group wandered in and out, including a flashy entrance by Rod, displaying his new black high-heeled shoes with red ribbons for laces (matching his red velvet suit), and a fifth of scotch for each member of the band. High class lads out for a good bash.

Jonh: Who started the Small Faces?

Ronnie: It was me and Kenny really. You can't say who formed it, because no-one specifically formed it, but me and Kenny was looking.

Jonh: What year was this?

Ronnie: '62 . . . '63.

Jonh: As the Small Faces?

Ronnie: No, it was all sorts of names. And after a short period of time we got a contract. It was thrust upon us when we'd only been together about two months. We was taken into the studio and made a record and it was hyped—it was bought into the charts, because of the pirate radio stations. You'd pay a hundred quid and you'd have a hit record.

Jonh: This was on Decca?

Ronnie: Yeah . . . 'Orrible company.

Jonh: How did you sign with Immediate?

Ronnie: We was trying to get away from Decca . . . It's such a complicated story. I mean, we got rooked all the way through.

Jonh: With Immediate or with Decca?

Ronnie: With everybody. Since the Faces has been formed it's the first time in five years that we've been working in the business that we've been getting what we earned. It's amazing.

Jonh: Your first records sound a lot like the Who. Was that conscious?

Ronnie: I suppose it was slightly conscious—we dug the Who. In actual fact we had our roots in a lot of the same things, like Booker T. and Tamla/Motown, which was all the rage then. There was a big Mod era, with all the Mods taking pills down at the Marquee, and Tamla/Motown and Otis Redding was what was going down then. It's still our roots now. With this band it's still very much in there in the foundation.

Any particular reason for calling yourself Small Faces?

Ronnie: We were all very small . . . A face then meant one of the lads. It was a Mod term.

Were you any sort of musical spokesmen for the Mods?

Ronnie: Oh yeah. When we started out it used to be all boys that would come and see us, and then as we had hit records the boys petered off because all these girls were turning up and *screaming* and wetting their knickers.

On "The Autumn Stone," on the live cuts is any of the screaming dubbed in?

Ronnie: No, that's real. We never heard ourselves for about two and a half—three years. And then one day the screaming died down and we heard ourselves—it was fucking 'orrible. One of the reasons why the band fell apart was that it wasn't too good, I can tell you.

You were mostly a studio band?

Ronnie: Yeah . . . Well, if you couldn't hear anything, and no-one was particularly listening, the incentive went off the stage shows. We didn't work like this band does. We're all the time thinking about how it sounds on stage, but we didn't have to worry about that because no-one heard a fucking thing anyway.

Why didn't you come to America?

Ronnie: I dunno . . . There was a lot of carve-ups. Steve didn't want to come, so that blew it a couple of times. And other times it just fell through. No-one ever walked through the door and said, "Bang! 'Ere's a contract, you're going to America," It was always just sort of talked about. I'm glad we didn't come now. It made it a lot easier for this band to come together, seeing as no-one had seen us as we was.

Was "Itchycoo Park" aimed at making it in America?

Ronnie: "Itchycoo Park" was a hit here without any sort of promotion . . . It was a send up. Andrew Oldham was a great person for a bit of a grin on the side, and we used to turn out these songs with stupid lyrics just to see him laugh. *Ogdens* was a bit of a send up too. People take it seriously.

How did "Happiness Stan" come about?

Kenny: It was my idea originally. I told the rest of the group and we wrote the story in one day.

Did you write it with the nonsense dialog?

Kenny: No, we told the story to a comedian, Stan Unwin—a really nice old man—who translated it into his own dialect right in the studio.

Ronnie: A lot of the songs came from sayings of the group. Like "Happydays-toytown" was something we used to say. If you walked in and everyone was larking about you'd say, "Well, it looks a bit happy days toy town." The album was a good idea at the time; doing a story tying all the songs together. It was one of the reasons the group broke up. Well, the Who have just come through the same thing. You donate all your time and energy to a unified project and it's like the pinnacle of the group's career. Then you have to

The Phan

In the photo (below) of The Faces on Top of Th the phantom face and tell who is missing; you Magazine. Send your mystery hero's name to:

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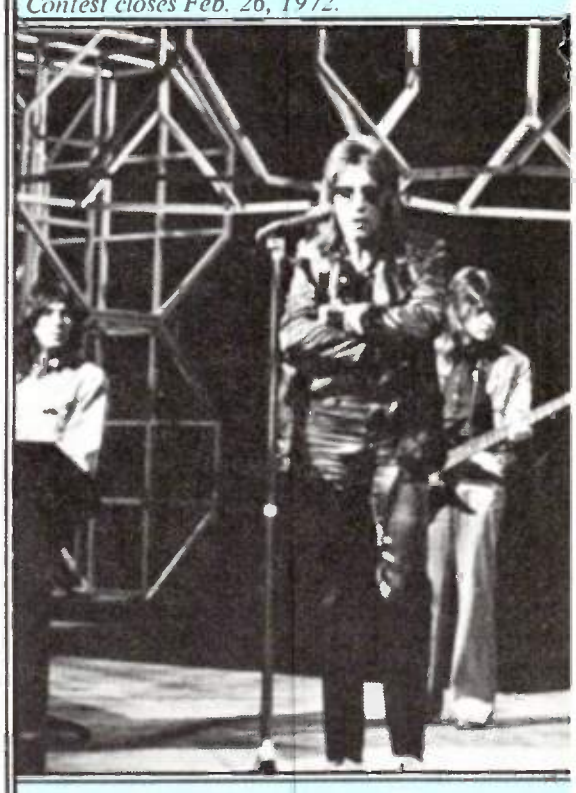

"When we started out it used t see us, then as we had hit rec these girls were turning up knickers"

...iew With Faces

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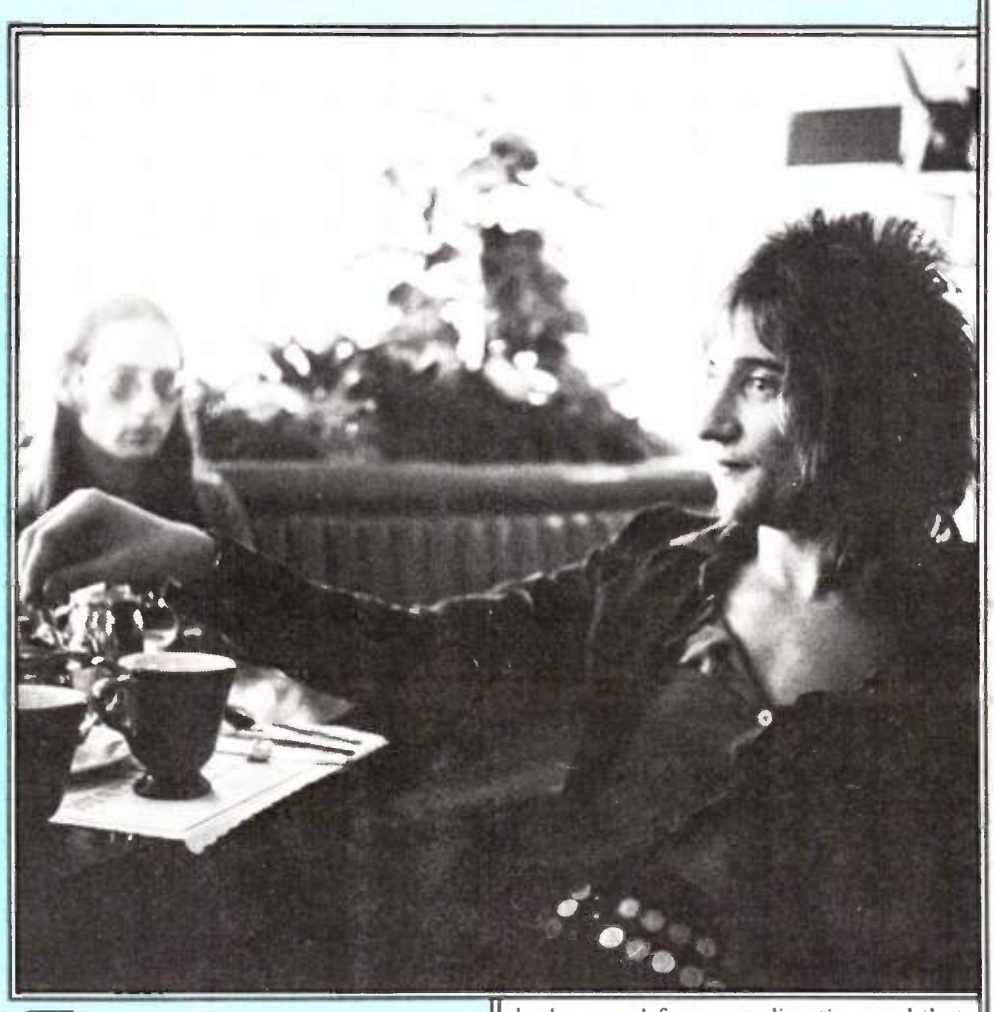


Kurt Ingham

...tom Face

...Pops, there is one face that doesn't belong. Identify ...'ll win a year's subscription to Phonograph Record

...e

...be all the boys would come and ...rds the boys petered out and all ...nd screaming and wetting their

look around for a new direction, and that takes a tremendous effort. We didn't make it.

How did the cover come about?

Ronnie: We knew the title was going to be "Ogden's Nut Gone Flake," so we wanted the cover to look like a tobacco tin. We were working on it when someone suggested a round cover. It seemed a good idea, so we did it.

When did you start using horns?

Ronnie: The live recording on *Autumn Stone* was the first time we took horns with us on the road. We got into using horns about '67, because the Beatles starting using horns, didn't they? I mean you hear something that sounds good, and you think, "Oh, I'll try that."

What do you think of Nik Cohn saying that you pursued every fad, but never quite got the point?

Ronnie: I've read a few things of Nik Cohn's, and I tend to think he's one of these geezers who puts too much on the music. It's probably very true in the way he sees it. It's not the way I see it, and I was in the band,,and I know what was going on. It was just sort of very pleasant really. We were just fucking about and earning our money. We did aspire to do well, of course, and we never really did. But there you go, I don't think you ever do, do you? Really pull it off? I wonder.

Some people have come awfully close . . . Who's idea was it to use horns?

Ronnie: I can't really remember . . . Steve I think. He was very much into Ray Charles . . . and we was getting a bit bored too, so we thought that if we had a brass section it would pep us up a bit. Like the Stones are doing now.

Did it pep you up?

Ronnie: Yeah. Fucking great! The trouble is we'd never have any money. By the time we'd pay the band we'd have nothing. You couldn't afford to do it.

Ron Wood: That's what the Stones are going through now. Carting a great team around with them.

Did you do your own horn arrangements?

Ronnie: On some of the songs.

When you were writing songs with Steve, did one of you write melody and one lyrics?

Ronnie: We worked both ways . . . Things used to bounce off. It's the same as we do now. I never considered writing a song before the Faces formed.

Do you find it very different writing with Ron and Rod?

Ronnie: Yeah, it's easier in a way. If it's basically your idea at least you can keep a bit more control on how it ends up. Sometimes Steve would get carried a bit away, and do a song in a way that you wouldn't really see it. But that works both ways. Sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's bad.

Are most of your songs based on personal experiences?

Ronnie: Yeah. Rod's much better at writing about imaginative and fictitious things than I am. I can't do that sort of thing at all.

On "Long Player" the writing chores are much more evenly divided than "First Step." Is that becoming more common?

Ronnie: Well what usually happens is that me and Ron will find a melody, or he'll find one piece and I'll have another bit and we'll stick it together. That's how "Had Me A Real Good Time" and "Flying" come together. And then we'll sort of look at each other, and can't think of anything to write about, so we'll give it to Rod.

Ron: And he's always bound to come with a lyric. He regards every track that you give him as a challenge, "All right, I'll put some words to this."

Does he take a long time?

Sometimes he takes a couple of weeks, but other times he'll have it finished in a day.

Ronnie: They're very entertaining, his lyrics. They're great.

In the Small Faces, how would you decide which songs you were going to sing?

Ronnie: Steve would tell me. He used to moan at me every now and then to sing a song, because I never really wanted to sing.

Do you now?

Ronnie: I wouldn't mind, but I think it's a bit stupid while Rod's around. I should think people would far rather listen to him.

How long have you know the Faces?

Ron: I've known them for years and years. Funny enough, I used to know Steve best. I'd knock around with Steve quite a lot, and meet Ronnie on the odd occasion. Kenny was a very rare thing to me, and the same with Mac.

How did you come to join the group?

Ron: It was a natural progression for me; it wasn't for them. Things were getting really stale with Beck. He'd decided on a new rhythm section, and he'd gotten rid of me and Mickey (Waller), and then he rang up from the States in a desperate sort of thing to get me back, and I went back on my own terms. That really finished it off with the Beck band. During the time I'd been back in England I'd called up Ronnie, and said, "Let's have a blow." That's how the Beck band got started. I called him up and said, "Hi Jeff, I hear you've left the Yardbirds. Why don't you come on over and have a blow?" It turned out so well, the band got together. — Anyway, Kenny gradually came down, and Mac, and Rod used to pop down on the odd occasion and sit upstairs in a little office and listen to us play. And he wouldn't dare come down, because he was so embarrassed.

About what?

Ron: Just about sort of appearing to muscle in.

Did he want to join?

Ron: Yeah! But he didn't quite know it himself. He wanted to know what I thought as well. Eventually, all it took was for one of us to come out and ask him, and Kenny actually said it. And he just said yeah. He was only waiting to be asked. But as far as I was concerned, I had to prove myself, as they had to prove themselves to me and Rod. It was a mutual sort of thing.

How did you meet Rod?

Ron: It was at a rehearsal for the Beck band. He just walked in and said, "Hi face," and I said, "Hi Rod." And ever since then – hey, he said, "Hi face!"

Were you in any groups between the Birds and Jeff Beck?

Ron: A little European group called Creation. The rest of the time was sessions.

How about before the Birds?

Ron: It was the same bunch of guys with a different name. They were called the Thunderbirds.

Were they very big in England?

Ron: We had a little following. It was a sort of underground underground following.

Ronnie: There was some great publicity though.

Ron: We'll leave that out . . . Just because I took my trousers down on stage.

I heard around that time that you were sued by the Byrds because of the name. Is that right?

Ron: No, we sued them. That's what Ronnie was trying to bring up. It looked like we sued them, but we were only a young bunch of guys, and we didn't want to sue the Byrds, because we used to like them. It was our manager – it was a big trick. A big publicity thing.

You started after them?

Ron: No, before them. We did have the name, it's just that we had no claim to say, "Why are they using it?" They had a stronger thing going.

Ronnie: We were a bit naive and gullible in those days.

Is there much smack among English musicians?

Ron: No. It's pretty remote.

American musicians are getting into it quite a bit.

Ron: There's a few lessons going to be learned out of that. It's a matter of knowing when to draw the line. There's so many lessons to be learned from Hendrix and Morrison . . . Janis. Mind you, Janis worries me a bit, because we drink more than she did.

How long have you been playing pedal steel guitar?

Ron: Well I've actually owned one about six or eight months, but I've played on it about five hours. I just don't get any time.

Are you after a particular sound?

Ron: Yeah, I want to get a very basic approach to it. I can listen to Buddy Emmonds or that and they just blow my mind, but I just want to get a very melodic tuneful thing out of it.

Do you want a countryish sound out of it?

Ron: Yeah, but not old country. Sort of country-rock and roll-new era type of thing . . .

Do you plan to play it on stage?

Ron: Yeah, I've done about five gigs with it. The thing is, it's so difficult to tie in. If you want a smooth running show . . . I use three guitars as it is, and if you're going to keep swapping around and getting sounds it's going to be a hell of a wait for the audience. It's a bit of a hang up with "Sweet Lady Mary," because I used it in that . . . I think I'll have to reach a compromise and play normal guitar and just bring that in at the end.

Do you prefer playing guitar to bass?

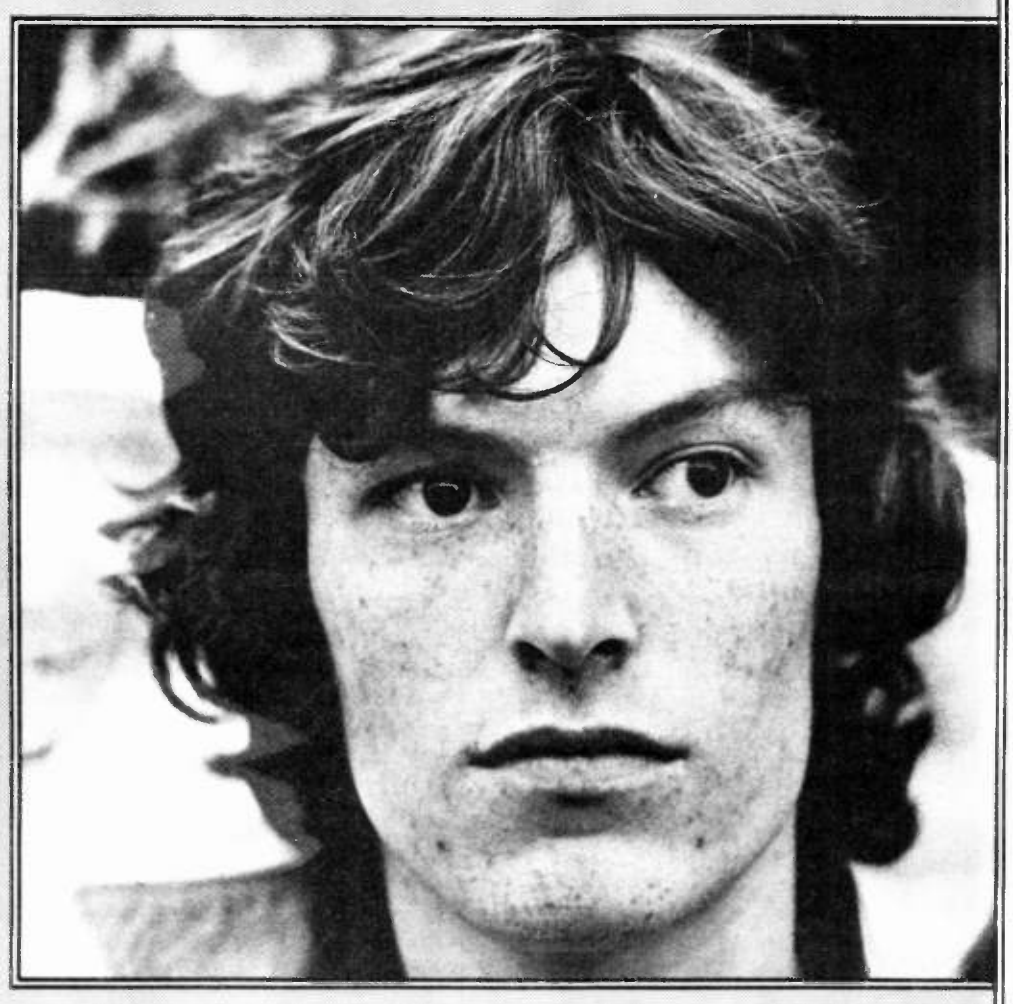
Ron: Yeah! Definitely. But, while I was on bass I never had such a good time. It's a great instrument.

What kind of musical directions are you heading towards now?

Ron: We're working on a progression of what we've done before. We see it through different eyes now, because we've got a lot looser. And it gives us a much looser view on things. If we see a number in our heads and start to play it, we're getting the direction in which to play it now, rather than messing around with it and throwing in different beats. We very rarely have problems with numbers now.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

THE LOW MARKS OF WELL HEELED BOYS



SOME NOTES ABOUT THE SLOWING DOWN OF TRAFFIC

by Colman Andrews

Nothing fails like success. It's not so much a matter—as it's often said to be—of people believing, or even becoming their own legends. It's more the sad old human fact that people tend to do only what they have to do, and tend to get away with anything they can. Why should a performing, creative artist (the sort of person we are presumably concerned with here), for example, expend maximal energy—in performing or in creating—when he will be bought, praised, and loved quite enthusiastically for a less taxing expenditure? To put it another way, once you've reached the top (or once you've reached some comfortable plateau that feels like the top), you may well have to work a little bit to stay there but you no longer have to worry about the uphill climb.

Long-distance psychological speculation isn't my forte, so I'm obviously not in a position to assess the motives and methodologies that have guided the various members of Traffic in their recent musical endeavors, but I know that their last two albums have been a prefunctory, not-particularly-inspired re-telling of old tales (in one case) and a nice, inoffensive little collection of background music (in the other), and I know that a group of the same name and with the same heart once produced some of the most excitingly inventive music of the 60's. Something is wrong with them and I suspect that, among other things, it's that so much has gone right for them.

* * *

Bobby Abrams, intrepid researcher that he is, has come up with the fact that Steve Winwood's father and Jim Capaldi's father once played together in a part-time dance band. This was in Birmingham, the Northern England industrial city that combines the scenic beauties of, say, Pittsburgh, with the cultural amenities of, for instance, Union City. I have no idea what the band was into musically (though I like to think impossible dreamer that I am, that once in a while they played "Love For Sale," so that some gin-gullet floozy could get up and sing, as dreary chimnies spewed inky smoke outside, the line "I've been through the mill of love"), but it is recorded—by Mr. Abrams again—that young Stevie, at the age of nine, joined the ensemble. At 11, he moved into a skiffle band, absorbed and imitated all the American blues and r&b performers he could get his ears on (that Ray Charles was foremost amongst these influences is, I hope, a superfluous observation), and, in 1963, together with his older brother Muff and a drummer friend named Peter York, the 15-year-old Mr. Winwood became a part of the Spencer Davis Group. A major part. So major a part of the group, in fact, that etc., etc., etc., and when he left Davis in 1967, he had earned a Reputation. (Rather, he has earned *Several* Reputations, one of which had it that he was a moody, petulant youngster who happened to know a few nice guitar lines and keyboard chordings—see the more catty of the British pop papers of that period for examples—and another of which maintained that he was a budding musical genius of the highest order. One may also contrast Jann Wenner's contention that he had/has "possibly the best blues voice of his generation" with Albert Goldman's trendy dismissal of him as "Super-Whitey Number 1.")

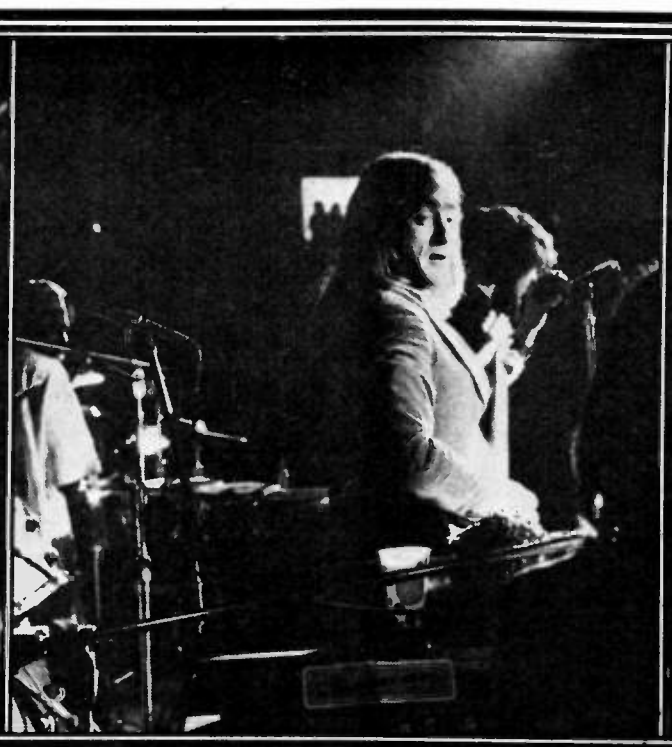
Whilst still with Davis, Winwood had apparently planned, at least informally the formation of a new group with some musicians he had jammed with around Brimingham. These were Dave Mason and Jim Capaldi,who had played with a group called Deep Feeling, and Chris Wood, from an ensemble known as Locomotive. However, his first post-Davis liason was with Eric Clapton, fresh from John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, in a short-lived group called Powerhouse. For legal reasons, presumably, Winwood was known, on the Powerhouse sides, as "Steve Anglo." (Has kind of a nice ring to it, doesn't it? "Steve Anglo, Super-Whitey No. 1"?) *Then* came the retreat, with Messrs. Mason, Capaldi, and Wood, to a country cottage near Berkshire (the tenor of which sojourn is nicely indicated by the good-natured nonsense that abounds in the song "Berkshire Poppies" on Traffic's first album), the release of two singles—"Hole In My Shoe" and "Paper Sun" —and the eventual appearance of a debut album originally released in this country as *Heaven Is In Your Mind* and later re-titled *Mr Fantasy* (UAS-6651) and not, incidentally, *Dear Mr Fantasy*, Jann Wenner to the contrary). Mason's presence on the album (playing sitar and lord knows what else on "Colored Rain" and "Hole in My Show") is uncredited, for some reason, and two Mason songs, "Utterly Simple" and "Hope I Never Find Me There" appear only on the British pressing of the LP (though ours has songs that theirs doesn't, including the splendid "Smiling Phases"). very beginning, Mason has been . . . shall we say . . . unconstant. Having started out with the others, he left before they started the first album, returned when some of it was completed, left again,etc., and has continued to leave and re-join his fellows more times than this poor, overworked writer, for one, cares to count up.

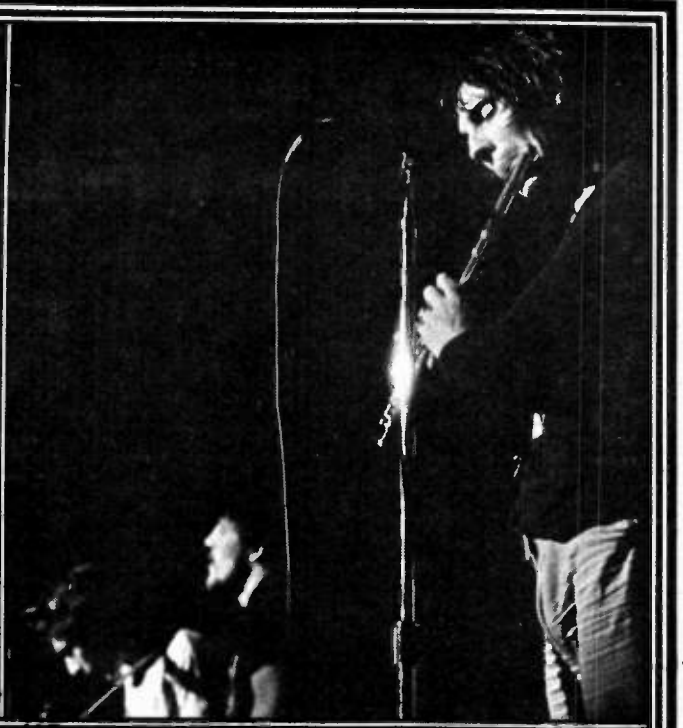
The next album, *Traffic* (UAS6676) gloriously full of Mason, properly credited both as performer and as composer. It's one of the best friends my turntable, for one, has ever had, which is to say that it remains, for me, not only the group's best album but one of *the* best albums of the decade. It's a big, rich, full, colorful record, alternately exuberant, pensive, mock-dramatic, lightly literary. When Winwood says "We are not like all the rest/You can see us any day of the week," or when Mason presented "a little song you can all join in with," it was impossible to disbelieve them; they sounded like a group you wanted to be friends with.

On *Last Exit* (UAS-6702), released after they had announced their immenent break-up, they function for the first time in an extended instrumental context (and funcion damned well, it might be added). Some of *Traffic's* lyric strength, some of its confident intensity, are gone, but still the album (and especially the live-at-the Fillmore side) works into an unusually coherent kind of rock-based improvisational progression that suggests jazz without aping it. (Was Traffic the first jazz-rock group?) There also seems to be a tentative return to what may have been the basic, uncomplicated truths of an earlier musical era. In any case, Traffic was never "psychedelic"; at their best they worked hard toward—even if they didn't necessarily attain—the development of an individualistic structural idiom that was both simple in a back-to-the-roots sense and complex in the sense of integration of elements. They were—and hopefully will become again—one of the most musical of groups.

It is well known that, when Traffic dissolved, Winwood joined another group whose exact name escapes me at the moment, but which Lillian Roxon (whose generous Australian smile can conceal a sharp tongue at appropriate times) has

Pictured top, L to R: Stevie Winwood, Jim Capaldi, Chris Wood, Jim Gordon, Rich Grech, Anthony "Re-bop" Kwaku Baah, David Hood, and Roger Hawkins. The latter two are recent additions to Traffic. Rich Grech exited the group just after the release of "The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys." (The newest Island Traffic release.)





Andy Perl

Joel Axelrad

Traffic at recent LA appearances at the Anaheim Convention Center and the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. (Shots were taken while Dave Mason was on tour with Traffic in December '71).

referred to as "Great Expectations, High Hopes, or . . . Mild Anti-Climax." Mason, meanwhile, made *Alone Together* (Blue Thumb BTS-19), an absolutely smashing solo album (in so far as an album which features the talents of Leon Russell, John Simon, Jim Gordon, Jim Keltner, Chris Ethridge, Carl Radle, Larry Knechtel, Delaney and Bonnie, Rita Coolidge, and one of the two Don Prestons, et al, can be called a "solo" album), which stirred me to write, if memory serves, that is was now plain to me who the real strength of Traffic had been—an opinion which I have had little cause to reverse since.

Winwood, after a short stint with Ginger "Sledgehammer" Baker's ponderously boring Air Force, called his old friends Wood and Capaldi to assist him on a proposed solo album. There are no friends like old friends, of course, and so—the first thing anyone knew—Traffic was flowing once more, and *John Barleycorn Must Die* (UAS-5504) appeared. Its virtues are elusive ones, not immediately apparent to the casual listener, but, like John Barlycorn himself, the album grows on you. It's a very fluid album, more at ease and less restricted by song structure—which isn't necessarily a good thing, though it seems to work pretty well here, especially on the positively Fairport-like title track.

Dave Mason, after a Blue Thumb album with Mama Cass that is very easy to forget was rumored to have returned to Traffic. Or to have left Traffic. Or to have returned again. And then one heard that so-and-so had joined the group (Rick Grech, Eric Clapton, Ferrante & Teicher—take your pick—) or had not joined it. Et bloody cetera. Then came the album that clarified things a bit, even if it did little else.

Because of some contractual hoo-haa or other (which I wouldn't go into even if I could), Traffic's farewell LP for United Artists, *Welcome To The Canteen* (UAS-5550) was not by "Traffic" but by a group with the rather nifty name of "Steve Winwood, Jim Capaldi, Dave Mason, Chris Wood, Rick Grech, 'Reebop' Kwaku Baah, and Jim Gordon."

Since that time, Dave Mason has departed once more (surprise!), but otherwise that brings us around to where Traffic is today. (Grech, of course is the bassist/sometime violinist who was once with Family and then with High Hopes or whatever it was called; Jim Gordon is a junior veteran studio drummer, who has played with everyone from The Everly Brothers to The Fifth Dimension to Leon Russell and who was once described by Charlie Burton as constituting, along with bassist Carl Radle, "probably the tightest rhythm section going these days;" Mr. Baah is a Ghanaian percussionist who has played with jazzmen like Dizzy Gillespie, Roland Kirk, and vocalist Jon Hendricks; and between the presences of Baah and Gordon, Jim Capaldi—who wasn't a drummer to begin with, anyway—now functions as a vocalist, percussionist, and, of course, song writer.

*Any*way, even those of my fellows who do not agree that *Traffic* is the finest album the group has yet produced, even those who do not agree that there has been an unmistakable, measured slowing-down of Traffic with each album since, even *those* seem to agree that the last two albums—*Welcome To The Canteen* and the latest one, *The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys* (Island SW-9306)-are nothing much to get excited about. I've even heard the former album referred to—a bit unfairly—as "Amateur Night at the USO."

The thing is that *Low Spark* is a better album than *Canteen,* and for that very reason, it is even more distressing. *Canteen* fails because there's no new material on it (though there are three songs not previously recorded by Traffic as a group—Mason's "Shouldn't Have Took More Than You Gave" and "Sad and Deep as You" and the Winwood/Spencer Davis tune "Gimmie Some Lovin"—), because the singularly muddy mix obscures whatever valiant attempts Messrs. Winwood, Mason, and Capaldi made at vocalizing, and because there's a prefunctory, let's-get-it-over-with air about the proceedings. (There's an old line about the kind of movies that look as though they were shot with the lunch truck waiting just out of frame. I had the same feeling about *Welcome To The Canteen,* especially in view of the cover art—the feeling that the members of the group couldn't wait to get back to their plaices.)

None of these criticisms are applicable to "Low Spark". The songs are new, it's nicely handled technically, and the whole thing sounds quite leisurely, quite deliberate. There can be absolutely no doubt at all that it is what Traffic wanted it to be.

And what, if fact, is it? It's dull, damn it, and it's a damned shame that it's dull. It's the kind of album you can listen to without even really knowing it. Can you imagine listening to *Mr Fantasy* or *Traffic* or *Last Exit* or even *John Barleycorn Must Die* without really knowing it? Can you imagine a Traffic album without one single memorable song, without one single composition that stands out from the great mass of drab songs that fill the great mass of drab albums released annually by the great mass of drab groups? Can you imagine a group as stylized, as forceful, as unmistakable as Traffic one was adopting a low profile? Can you imagine *The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys* (their feet are cut off in the liner photo so I don't know if they're high-heeled or not, but Traffic's sparks are certainly low).

The stretched-out, laid-back linearity, the long, jazz-like improvisations that made *Last Exit* so interesting are laid back and stretched out so much that they're practically invisible. Like the album jacket, this is music with the corners cut. I mean, you know it's Traffic (Jim Gordon does a splendid imitation of Jim Capaldi's drum style, just so we won't get confused; Winwood plays lots of classic Winwood guitar tracks—listen to the end of "Light Up Or Leave Me Alone," for instance—; Chris Wood is still, as Jimmy Miller wrote on the *Traffic* liner notes, "free of trying to top 'the Bird' or Stitt or Coltrane," but he sure sounds like he's out after Les Elgart's ass); but you also know it's Traffic slowed down, congested, in a jam.

THE LOW SPARK OF HIGH-HEELED BOYS is a record you could give to your dear old Mum. Is that what Traffic ought to be?

I LOVE THE BYRDS BUT...

by Kim Fowley

In almost 1972, the Beatles have broken up, the Stones are husbands and fathers, Sonny and Cher are famous again, Jimi Hendrix is dead, and the Byrds are being called a bad group. There's but one original Byrd left, and he's changed his name. He is a slightly plumper Roger, instead of the slightly thinner, more intense Jim McGuinn.

The drummer of the new Byrds is Gene Parsons. His best work is on records outside of the Byrds, however, as evidenced by his concise, disciplined work on the *Performance* soundtrack. Compared to his sloppy, rushed, performances on the last three Byrds albums, *Untitled, Byrdmaniax,* and *Farther Along, Performance* is a classic.

Gene Parsons, not related to ex-Byrd Gram Parsons, has a predictable habit; he executes slow songs in a bump-and-thud way and his up-tempo approaches fail at matching Ringo Starr-like tastefull fills. The kind we all so adorn. On the plus side, Gene possesses an authoritative lead singing voice with crystal-clear diction and mellow delivery.

Examples of these qualities can be found in *Untitled's* "Yesterday's Train" and "B.B. Class Road" on the *Farther Along* LP. Additionally, Parsons excells on rhythm guitar, harmonica, steel guitar, and five-string banjo. The fact that he related so well under Jack Nitzsche's musical supervision on *Performance* presents one of the dents in today's Byrd armor. A & R discipline and direction is certainly not as evident as it was in the work of previous Byrd formations. The prime victim of the lack of A&R discipline in the studio is bassist, Skip Battin.

Battin possesses one of the most pleasing harmony voices in all rock music, as heard in his performance as one-half of the legendary duo, "Skip & Flip," whose most memorable effort was "Cherry Pie." It's criminal to be sure that Battin's Everly Bros. like harmonies are seldom utilized on Byrds' recordings. Instead, Battin often falls into the trap of introspective singer-songwriter solo performances as on *Byrdmaniax'* "Absolute Happiness" and "Citizen Kane." The two cuts where Battin's solo voice doesn't seem to wear thin, "Well Come Back Home" on *Untitled* and "America's Great National Pastime" from *Farther Along,* serve as proof of his advanced vocal abilities.

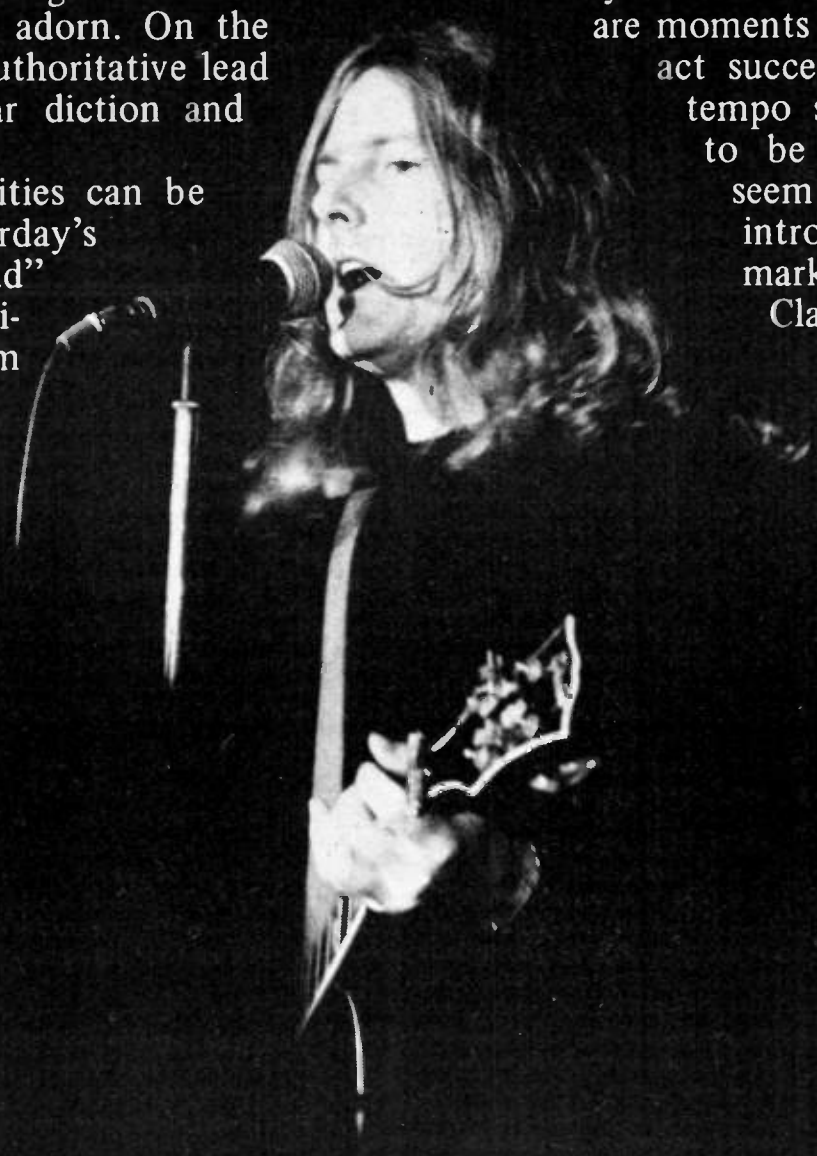
Battin's bass playing is performed consistantly while it's inconsistantly recorded. His freshest musical contribution is as a pianist. He displays a most-pleasing keyboard on "Pastime," (The Byrds current single recording, review on another page).

The guitar sound of the Byrds has always been (and always will be) Roger McGuinn's 12-string guitar genius. But the McGuinn guitar domination has seemingly given way to the country-virtuoso styling of Clarence White. Clarence's work on *Byrdmaniax* and *Farther Along* seemed only effective on the slow and country-oriented cuts.

At a live gig, White is held in awe and admiration by the country-purists, though on record his lack of authority in the rock area is obvious. Though there are moments when McGuinn and White interact successfully on slower cuts, the up-tempo selections leave White appearing to be on unsolid footing. It would seem that the Byrds need to reintroduce Roger McGuinn's trademark in a 1972 setting.

Clarence's vocal harmony is satisfactory, but he falls short when it comes to a solo. The vocal on "Bugler" from *Farther Along* has a comfortable, natural sound. "My Destiny" is a good country cut, but "Jamaica Say You Will" suffers from unclear diction (a vocal Achille's heel of White's). Clarence could develop into a fine country torch singer—a rural Johnny Ray—with improved material and continued persistence in his diction disciplines.

Last, but by no means least, is the Big Byrd, the legend and innovator, Roger McGuinn. His guitar sound and lead voice are Byrd trademarks. The Father of Folk Rock, Captain Video, and the Best Living Interpreter of Dylan Material are some of



Andy Perl

the titles McGuinn has been decorated with.

The McGuinn of yesteryear didn't smile as much as the Roger of today. Perhaps a new marriage is the reason for his sunny disposition. But regardless of the reason, his new "Share The Wealth & Spotlight" policy (as compared to his old bossman, foreman stance) has, as many fans believe, contributed to the apparent lack of Byrd-magic in recent recordings. McGuinn, while producing adequate songs such as "I Trust," "I Wana Grow Up To Be A Politician," and "Tiffany Queen," hasn't made a definitive statement since "Chestnut Mare." "Chestnut Mare" could have been a Byrd classic – were it not for the narrative overkill. It was an emotional statement as opposed to the clear-light, life-style statements which characterized his earlier works. His recent love songs such as "Pale Blue" and "Antique Sandy" are acceptable, but there is a demand in certain quarters for McGuinn's metaphysical and cultural commentary. A lot of folks would like to see Roger act, write, sing and play like a Byrd of previous incarnations, and shape up the current Byrd-ship into a more competitive, flowing and sensitive music monster.

restraint of "Truckin."

The trivial discourse of the preceding paragraph boils down to one stark fact, that simply being a rock and roll institution with a lot of good vibes and colorful references does not make you a vital and virile rock phenomenon.

There are those of you who would excuse the Byrds from not producing world-shaking products like "Mr. Tambourine Man" and "Notorious Byrd Brothers," but their past history and bloodlines *demand* that the Byrds break away from the rock aristocracy and kick out some jams. There is no reason or need for up-start country rock groups to fragmentize the impact and validity of the Byrds.

The Byrds would do well to re-assign singing chores: a tasty balance of McGuinn, two-part Battin harmony, plaintive White, and clear-voiced Parson, would balance out the Byrd's vocal sound nicely. Hey guys, how about some highly developed harmony? The potential *does* exist, you know.

Two areas left to discuss are record production and song content. The Byrds should not forget the initial influence of Bob Dylan; his past and current catalogue are

Ed Caraeff

The Byrds, L to R, Roger McGuinn, Gene Parsons, Skip Battin, Clarence White.

Although they have been knocked for their lack of experimentation, the Byrds continually sell records and fill music halls. They definitely still have a following, but the substitution of a heavily country influenced musical approach for their brooding Dylan interpretations and jingle-jangle harmonies has cost the group many of their old fans. The supporters that have filled this gap are even more avid – especially in the eastern half of the country – but decidedly not as powerful in numbers.

Two groups a lot like the Byrds in category are Jefferson Airplane and Grateful Dead. The meer mention of any of these three rock music institutions playing anywhere, sends ticket buyers running. However, their latest works have all shown a lack of innovation. Some folks may argue this point and insist that the Airplane splinter albums (*Jefferson Starship* and *Hot Tuna*) are musical milestones. My viewpoint differs, it's my feeling that these endeavors are merely preservation exercises; as evidenced by the Dead's directional change from the energy of "Cream-Puff War" to the still valid and, in many ways, untouched. The obvious country and folk backgrounds of the group members could very well yield a wealth of untouched material. My collaborations with Skip Battin have certainly attempted to be experimental in their lyrical content – such as the unique compositions "Citizen Kane" and "America's Great National Pastime." If we as a song writing team can interact more with the Byrds as a whole, the results would be most interesting.

In conclusion, may I state, that when a new band gets together to demolish the world, they leave family, friends, and live gigs, go to a secluded rehearsal room and re-evaluate their position as group members. Perhaps it might be time for the Byrds to hide out with each other on a rehearsal and woodshed level, although it might be difficult since they are an in-demand, working group. However, any sacrifice would be worth the rewards and the pleased involved would be the public, the industry, and even the Byrds themselves.

PHONOGRAPH RECORD REVIEWS

Kurt Ingham

MUSWELL HILLBILLIES
The Kinks
RCA

"Muswell Hillbillies," the Kinks' latest is a holding action. It is not a history *(Arthur)* a match *(Lola vs. Powerman)* or even something else *(Something Else)* but rather a metaphor in the tradition of *Village Green Society*. The album marks a return to the loping sing-songy structure of "Well Respected Man"/"Dedicated Follower of Fashion"—and is laced throughout with a hint of bottlenecking by the self-effacing Dave Davies (Ray: "He's the essence of the group"). Not what you call great songs in the classic sense, but shit, this record turns novelty songs and nursery rhymes into blues and folk music beside which songs, as such, ultimately pale. And so, in a very real sense this *is* Dave's album, and he cools it perfectly in ensemble.

Muswell Hillbillies is a holding action on Ray's part in the same sense as is Lennon's *Imagine*. The last Kink album was overtly metaphysical in the respect that it didn't take place finally anywhere (Ray's skepticism leaves him in limbo—up in the air—on "This Time Tomorrow"), and, as we all know, location is central in Davies' work. Both *"Muswell"* and *"Imagine"* would seem to be interim albums, and in many respects concerned with the same things: Ray's "Oklahoma USA" is John's "Imagine," and Lennon's "Crippled Inside" is Davies' "Acute Schizophrenia Paranoia Blues," and Davies' "Here Come The People in Grey" ("I gotta big fat grudge") is John's "Gimmie Some Truth" ("I've had enough"). Davies has always been a bit more thematic, which is to say no direct exhortation comes from the man who asks: "This time tomorrow, where will I be?"

In the meantime, *Muswell Hillbillies* is a holding action.

—Walter Hitesman

HUNKY DORY,
David Bowie
RCA

The first thing it looks like is that it's a Dory Previn album (I guess it would be her *third*, is that it?) but she don't look like that at all, her hair's different and she has those big eye-glasses. She don't look a bit like Lauren Bacall and neither does David Bowie when you get down to it even if he's supposed to. In fact Paul Nelson once accompanied David to Boston when he was on Mercury and he says David looked kind of like Dylan then and that's kind of what Dory Previn looks like so who knows?

But he don't *sing* like a girl, even if the arrangements behind him sometimes get like the kind of stuff people like Shirley Bassey and Morgana King get to work with. Neil Young sings like Gladys Knight and Aretha and Carla Thomas but David Bowie sings like a John Lennonized Lou Reed with about a ton of additional United Kingdom afternoon tea thrown in. With that in mind the compositions come off like really drawn out versions of *"Happiness is a Warm Gun,"* there's more Beatles on the album than Kinks, a heck of a lot more. And why not draw them out, like what's the hurry? Like if albums are gonna compete with television as time killers/fillers . . . *Abbey Road* started it and Hunky Dory carries on even better than Chad & Jeremy's *Cabbages and Kings*.

And the songs are just damn good. Say you got *"Kooks"* playing, it's all about kooks and who's called them that since beatniks walked around with bongos and berets? Well anyway if you got that playing there's nothing gonna make you take it off unless you discover the Delfonics doing *"Didn't I Blow Your Mind?"* on channel 13, is it channel 13? Jeez, I never would have expected *them* to have anything that good on! Well by the time you're three-quarters thru the Delfonics you might just as well put David Bowie back on and it's too bad if you took the needle off instead of just lowering the volume. One of the bothersome things about the songs on this album is you gotta listen to each one all the way through to get the whole picture cause he puts different stuff in along the way, so if you gotta start from the beginning again, well I don't know . . .

"Quicksand" is a great title for any song, I wrote one with it in the title once so I oughta know ("What Is Quicksand?," The Stalk-Forrest Group, Elektra EKM-45693, but don't try to order it cause they only pressed 200 copies), and David Bowie's "Quicksand" is no exception.

What else? Well he's no Rod Stewart. But neither is Knuckles O'Toole.

So if I haven't said enough good stuff about this album yet I guess now's the time. Um. Let me see, well I guess you could say if this ain't the album of the year (you can even start the year around September '71) then what is? *"Hot Burrito?" "Smash Your Head Against The Wall?" "Happy Just to Be Like I Am?"* John Mayall's *"Memories"* James Moody's *"Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sax (and Flute)?"* Clearly it's none of them so why look any further? This is it, *"Humpty Dumpty"* by David Bowie, whoops I mean *"Hunky Dory."*

—R. Meltzer

At top: Ray Davies. Bottom: The Kinks, 1964.

LIV
Livingston Taylor
Capricorn

"Liv's second album, huh," I mused before I pulled the cellophane from the album. "Okay. No mention of James this time around. The kid's made it on his own, right?"

Well, right and wrong. Mostly wrong, I guess. In order to discuss this album, it becomes not only difficult, but nigh on impossible not to mention brother James, but it isn't because they're siblings. If Liv wasn't James' brother, James would still have to be mentioned, because it was James that broke the ground in this particular folk styled genre, and made it

possible for the Livs and all other sweet baby James to roam the charts and studios today. It's a situation much like that back in '64 when Dylan spawned a lot of little Dylans. James isn't merely Liv's brother. Rather, in terms of product, James is really Liv's father, and like all children, it becomes Liv's role to break free of those particular musical family ties which so readily identify him *(He sounds just like . . .)*, if he is to make it on his own terms. For Liv, it will be doubly difficult because not only is he a product of James' success, but, again (God, he must get tired of hearing this), he is James' brother. Thus, Liv's load is doubly heavy. He carries not only an already refined style, but also a brothers' name.

The saving grace, however, is that Liv doesn't coast on James' coat-tails. He works his own sweet ass off, and has produced, along with Jon Landau at the control board, an album that moves smoothly through the twenty eight plus minutes of calculated mind massage. Often times a bit too calculated. "May I Stay Around" is a perfect example. Perhaps the best cut on the album, it is also the closest to fitting into the cool acoustic Boston Green sound that all America has learned to love, the poignancy of the loner with dark fluid eyes looking for a clean place to rest his weary bones and mind.

It's so peaceful in your town this morning
May I stay around
Yesterday I turned around to face you
With a word or two about the way I am
Kinda crazy, awful lazy, and bound to be unkind
But you've been changing my mind

The images aren't exactly second hand, but the whole evocation is somewhat familiar. The total effect is not dissimilar to the use of the ode. Despite what the poet renders accessible in lyric content, he is still bound by certain rules which identify his work exclusive of that content. Too many odes are nothing more than just that. Odes. Only the great poets manage to not only overcome the trappings and limitations of the genre, but to use the form to give us real food instead of fancy menus. That is Liv Taylor's problem. He's caught somewhere between the two, and is still out in the kitchen cooking something up. We ordered James (well, didn't we?) and for all intents and purposes got him, but with different garnishes, different relishes. Bread and butter pickles instead of sweet gherkins. Boston clam chowder instead of Manhattan style. But as of this album, the meal is still pretty much the same as at James' place. Liv isn't, however, in any danger of losing his present job at the present time, because there is something about his menus and food that smack of better meals in different restaurants in days to come. This album isn't it, but in the meantime, this is more than satisfactory. In fact, it's truly pleasant. Predictable, but pleasant. So, until we meet him again, let's take what we can while we can. Let's eat.

—J. B. Young

Top: Livingston Taylor x 2. Bottom: David Bowie x 2.

UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Alice Coltrane Impulse

John Coltrane was a shadow towering over every corner of modern jazz by 1960. Not only did he maintain that position, but he probed stunningly on until he'd left—in spite of a death as timely as Charlie Parker's—a full shelf of exalted and challenging conceptions. Not only does Impulse have a heartening plentitude of unreleased Coltrane material which they are still putting out once or twice a year (and still at least 2 or 3 years worth left, which is no small consideration since none of the posthumously released material so far has been a whit below the living Trane's standards), but his wife Alice has taken up his cause and spirit (if not, of course, his almost-superhuman level of invention.) With the help of Pharoah Sanders, she is beginning to carve out a unique niche for herself, in a song that doesn't need to resort to the encyclopedia of melodies and sound ideas that were her husband's achievements (even though she would have every right to do so) but rings unmistakably as the own song and sense.

The only mote in the eye of this perfect picture is the question that has existed from the beginning, that of redundances and reliance on certain rather obvious formal devices. The first time I heard her, with John on the *Cosmic Music* album, I was struck by the similarities between her work and much of Charlie Mingus' approach to the piano. You can hear it somewhere on every Alice record, and if you have access to the Impulse *Mingus Plays Piano* solo album go and check it out, especially his "Myself When I Am Real." In both instances there is a heavy emphasis on black chords and modal harmonies suggestive of Moorish folk forms and fluctuating easily between the Spanish and North American forms which they link, and styles of music associated with cultures farther East. And with such sustained interest in various crossbreeds and extracts of all those more of less "exotic" styles, the Spiritual trappings which Alice—like seemingly every other jazz musician recording this year has clothed her albums in—make at least a bit more sense than the sometimes near-pomposities under which some of her colleagues insist on burying already breathtakingly (and authentically, unpretentiously) spiritual music.

Sound-trekking from the *Huntington Ashram Monastery* through Egypt to India, the titles and (on the first) scarabic art of *Ptah the El Daoud* and *Journey In Satchidananda* imparted an almost camp sense to enjoying these utterly serious, introspective records.

The most interesting thing was that the music was in a large part almost as lightly "mysterious" and easy to digest as the garnish. The recurrent prevalence of aforementioned modal strains imparted a simplicity, even a predictability, rare in free jazz. When she really got into the whole venerable business of moving around the scales, she began to touch not only her husband's work (especially the 1962 *Ole! Coltrane),* but all surprising manner of other things. I'm talking about things like the "acid-raga-rock" scales that every teenage guitarist found so easy to riff on in 1965, the long-winded folk-era *"Blends"* of Sandy Bull, recent pop Moog efforts like *Tonto's Expanding Head Band,* even Ernest Gold-Dmitri Tiomkin Hollywood Multi-million dollar Spectacle-soundtracks like *Exodus, King of Kings, El Cid.*

Not that any of that is bad. Alice's redundance is almost as endlessly listenable as cohort Pharoah Sanders', and her rather stereotyped "Orientale" scaling only serves to demonstrate to me that there's no earthly reason why that domain of jazz tagged "avant-garde" has to produce unrelenting storms of metaenergy like Trane's *Meditations* every time out or blast headlong and shrieking into space either. The ability to relax, to make beautiful music within limited goals, (even as bedrock-limited as some of Alice's), is crucial.

And that's why it's such a pleasure to say that Alice's new album is the best she's ever done and one of the most majestic, beautiful works out this year. The Spiritual lineamints are laid on thicker than ever: from the title (and it's getting pretty thick when you receive two records in the same week, one titled *Universal Consciousness* and the other, by Larry Coryell, largely taken up by a 20-minute "Call To The Higher Consciousness") to the picture inside of Alice with the ubiquitous Swami Satchidananda to the liner notes, which are plain imagistic-bizarre and reveal that the Astral Plane or one of the motley totting of cross-cultural deities-in-residence there has rechristened John Coltrane "Ohnedaruth" and Alice "Turiya Aparna" (which is at least not as import-sodden as "Mahavishnu" John McLaughlin.)

Most of the music is as modal-scalar as ever, probably more so than ever before in fact, and even includes a "Hare Krishna" that thankfully sounds very little like the bubblegum ditty of a certain club of street stooges. Some of the material, like the title track, ventures out across key and time, with results that are at once less lullingly lovely and more engrossing. Which is not to imply that Alice hasn't made such moves before, but never quite as interestingly or with textures as complex as here, for which the string arrangements written by Alice and transcribed by Ornette Coleman can claim a large part of the glory.

The most pertinent thing that can be said in the end is that this is an album of dual joys; pristine, deeply evocative background music which is even more satisfying when you really climb in and listen; and an unusually accessible piece of "jazz" that moves as naturally as breathing cross the boundaries of traditional music with none of the harsh histrionics that more intense sets sometimes tumble over into, making it perfect for both anybody who'd like to start getting into post-John Coltrane jazz and everybody who's been there and likes the terrain.

—Lester Bangs

THE BEST OF BARBARA LEWIS ETTA JAMES PATTI LABELLE

Now that Tina Turner is finally a superstar we may be fortunate enough to see a revival of the female R&B vocalist. The girl singer has been a rarity in pop since the Beatles came along, though before their advent the charts had been presided over by such sweetie groups as the Ronettes, Chiffons, Crystals, Orions, Shangri-Las and a hundred more. Now, finally, some of these sounds are starting to come back into print.

Barbara Lewis and Etta James are no sex symbols by any stretch of the imagination, but they can sure belt out a song. Barbara's hits include "Hello Stranger," "Baby I'm Yours" and "Make Me Your Baby," all of which are classics you should be hearing in your head right now at the mere mention of their titles. Her voice is warm, sexy and saffron-smooth as she breathes her way through the songs in a way nobody else has managed to do since April Stevens. It's a shame they had to spoil the effect by putting her picture on the cover. The accompaniment is lush orchestration, and while it's a fine listenable album of its type, it is a bit dated by today's standards.

On the other hand, Etta James is in my opinion excelled only by Tina and Aretha at what she does. Her career has spanned over 15 years, beginning with "Roll With Me Henry" and continuing right into the present, completely and unjustly ignored by almost everyone. This 2-record collection includes all her best material on Chess, ranging from cocktail standards like "Sunday Kind Of Love" to the raunchiest blues. Chronologically, it goes from the early 60s and "All I Could Do Was Cry" to "Tell Mama," released in 1967. I've listened to this album a dozen or more times in the past week and I can tell you truthfully there's not a disappointing cut among the 24 included. As the liner notes say, "Etta James has a voice like a fusion of flaming red molten steel and the grey dullness of a frozen lake in the north country." That's one way of saying it. Another is: she's the last of the great rhythm & blues mamas, and if you don't have this record you've got a hole in your soul!

Patti LaBelle & the Bluebells had one rather large hit in 1962 with "I Sold My Heart to the Junkman" and several smaller ones around the Philadelphia area and the East Coast. They went on to record a couple of fair albums on Atlantic after issuing a dozen or so 45s on several labels. Many of these singles have been collected on this LP, on the budget $1.89 Trip label. Unfortunately, "I Sold My Heart to the Junkman" has been speeded up by about 10% in the process of remastering, the result being comical but not very interesting musically. But the other songs are good examples of 50s R&B girl-group variety, and this record is still a good investment in your musical education for the price.

It takes on slightly more than historical interest now that Patti LaBelle has signed with Warner Bros. and issued her first LP on that label. Producer Kit Lambert (of the Who) has assembled

PHONOGRAPH RECORD REVIEWS (CONT.)

a crew including Al Kooper, Buzzy Linhart and the Sweet Inspirations and chosen songs from Carole King and Laura Nyro to the Rolling Stones in an effort to make this as contemporary an album as possible. Patti's high, piercing, and rather thin voice has filled out somewhat over the years, and her style is more modern (in the Aretha Franklin vein), but this has not been enough to keep her from being overpowered by the arrangements on several numbers. On the successful songs, though, such as "Wild Horses," "Baby's Out of Sight," and "When the Sun Comes Shining Through," where the arrangements work for her, the result is polished and enjoyable.

Altogether, the album's only failing is in someone's idea that Patti LaBelle is Aretha Franklin. Her phrasing may be similar, but she simply doesn't have the lung power to stand out over these loud backing tracks, especially when the gospel chorus is added. As a singer though, she's more than adequate, and we're lucky to have her back. Let's only hope that her success, if she meets with any, will pave the way for the return of more of our old favorites. Wouldn't it be great to have Dee Dee Sharp and Darlene Love back on the radio again?

–Greg Shaw

COMMUNICATION
by Bobby Womack
United Artists

I've met Bobby Womack a couple of times, more or less interviewed him, written things about him, etc. He's so strong and sure that he sometimes scares people a little. But I like him. He's tremendously energetic; to be around him for even a few minutes is to be caught up in the continual conversion of energy-into-mass, mass-into-energy that is forever going on within and without him. He says what he thinks and he has the ability to say things (about communication, commerciality, success, etc.) that would sound phony as all hell coming from most of the self-styled truth-sayers in the music business, but which become the soul truth itself when spoken by Mr. Womack.

The reason for mentioning these impressions I have of him, is that these same virtues have somehow been captured in vinyl on this, his new LP, and, unless the music-buying public is nothing but a pack of cold-hearted, lead-footed cynics, *Communication* should finally establish Bobby Womack (legendary guitarist, songwriter, etc., that he's been for a decade or more) as a first-rate performing talent.

I don't think the album is entirely faultless: material like "Fire and Rain" and "Close to You" is just very difficult for me to take seriously at this point (though I like his reading of "Fire and Rain" better than any other I've heard, with the possible exception of that by Ernie Andrews); and I've never been crazy about long, spoken introductions or monologues–they work wonderfully in person, but after the third or fourth time on record, I start to wish there were some easy way of home-editing one's own LP's–though I have to admit that it's almost worth listening through to the entire "Monologue" just to hear Womack sing/talk the phrase "Music is music, that's how it is."

But these are small criticisms, and obviously highly subjective ones. On the other hand, it's pretty damned hard to avoid being moved by the title song, and Womack's incredible, wonderfully abrasive vocal style. "Come L'Amore," co-written by Leon Ware, one of the most important little-known r&b writers (and performers) around, and "Give It Back" display Womack's ability to mix a mellowness seldom heard this side of Sam Cooke, with that same striking abrasiveness. "Everything is Beautiful" is stripped of the back-seat bounce the composer's (Ray Stevens') version had, and becomes a lot more believable for it. "That's the Way I Feel About Cha," which has done justifiably well as a single, is simply one of the nicest soul laments I've ever heard, surely in a class with that best-known of Womack songs, "It's All Over Now." "Yield Not to Temptation" (not the Bobby Bland song of the same name) ends the album with a feeling of religiousness, but not necessarily churchy religiousness (Womack's ecclesiastical organ-playing notwithstanding). It's more the sort of thing you'd expect to hear from a man who, like Womack, has been able to see some very basic, very oft-forgotten truths about the common bonds between men, about the need to continually strengthen these bonds through faith and hope, and through communication.

Or, perhaps philosophizing like that has nothing to do with the record at all. After all, music is music. That's how Bobby Womack is.

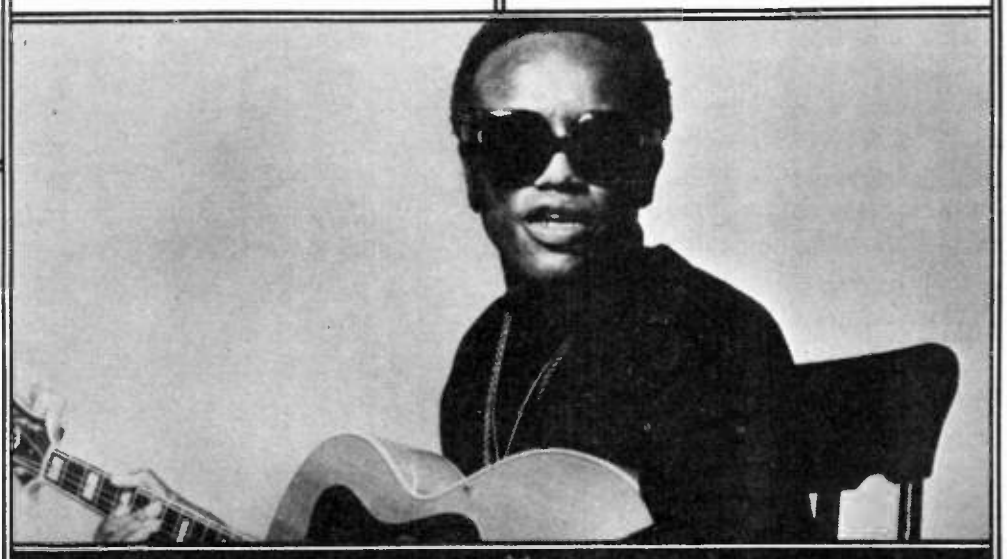
–Coleman Andrews

THE MORNING AFTER
J. Geils Band
Atlantic

Good hard fast kool kat musick is the best kind. Anything without any metaphysical pretentions and with a lot of rebop raunch.

The J. Geils Band's all that and more–1971 slick swashes background harmonies and hot splatters barrooms juke boxes yelling jook in the nite "Cry One More Time" or "Looking For A Love" and the morning after slow grind faded half-tone and "Floyd's Hotel" crooning at the moon "she had juicy red lips" from Route 22 fantastic waves of one-note piano breaks and simple progressions, short songs singing about real things now you see it now you don't. Or "So Sharp" visions of punk slick white truth. Foaming ampersands and Michelin tire ads over & over under the pale moon-*lite*. You either have to or you don't have to under the pale moon-*lite*. The river is flash and sacro-raunch neon heart and the frail earthlings lungs pumping friganza or dead gozlings gently lapping the piers a mile away jook drifting toward whatchimacallit.

–Nick Tosches



Bobby Womack (top) J. Geils Band (below)

COLOSSEUM LIVE
Warner Bros.

Colosseum might finally have done it. After three musically successful, yet financially disappointing albums for ABC-Dunhill, Britain's fine jazz-rock conglomeration may have come up with a product commercially successful here in the States as well as abroad–*Colosseum Live,* a two-record set of electrifying music recently released on Warner Brothers Records.

While the Jon Hisemen-led Colosseum have proven to be a most popular attraction indeed in Europe, for some inexplicable reason their brilliance has never been fully recognized on this side of the Atlantic. If their newest effort doesn't succeed in opening some eyes and ears, then perhaps we all better just lie back and give up the ghost.

Colosseum's fourth has two things in its favor. For one, as the title clearly indicates, the double-record set was recorded live–live at Manchester University and Big Apple, Brighton in March of this year–and live albums always seem to draw more attention, worthy or not. For another, the package contains some of the most exciting musicianship I've heard all year by some of Britain's most adept.

The driving force behind Colosseum, and consequently behind *Colosseum Live,* is drummer extraordinaire Jon Hiseman, Graham Bond-John Mayall alumnus (as is saxophonist Dick Heckstall-Smith). Following his direction, the combined efforts of Dave Clemson (lead guitar & vocals), Mark Clarke (bass & vocals), Dave Greenslade (organ & vibes), Dick Heckstall-Smith (tenor & soprano saxes) and Chris Farlowe (vocals) rock as their songs have never rocked before. From the explosive introduction of "Rope Ladder to the Moon" to the fiery rave-up conclusion of "Lost Angeles" the pace never slackens.

Of the six tracks in the set, three are songs previously recorded by the group–"Walking in the Park" is on the band's debut album, *Those Who Are About To Die Salute You* and "Rope Ladder to the Moon" and "Lost Angeles" are on their second album, *The Grass Is Greener.* The remaining three are "Skelington," a new Clemson/Hiseman composition, jazzman Mike Gibbs' "Tanglewood '63," and an encore of T-Bone Walker's famous "Stormy Monday Blues," a version infinitely more exciting than Mountain's sorry rendition on the Atlanta Pop/Isle of Wight three-record set.

If only one word could be used to sum up *Colosseum Live,* that word would be dynamic, for the albums are as dynamic of sound as they are in musicianship. Given sufficient airplay and magazine promotion, Colosseum's fourth effort won't go the way of the past three. Perhaps they'll even consent to a return trip to the States and honor us with something fresh and alive to listen to for a change. I sure hope so.

–'Turk' Nirkind

MUSIC FOR SENSUOUS LOVERS
Sensuous Records

This is the one you've heard rumours about, the record that's been the focal point of Record Biz talk for the past six months. Some call it obscene, some revolutionary, some amusing, while others say the adjective should be laughable. Regardless of opinion, you should know about this record if you want to maintain your status at the Monday night Troubadour or the Friday night student union.

The folks at Sensuous Reocrds undertook this project with the highest of scientific motives. Placing discrete ads in the classifieds of select underground papers, hundreds of applicants were carefully screened until the two with the proper star qualities were selected: he of the strong silent type, she of every American male's perfect fantasy.

The next stop was at Sunset Sound, where an intimate studio had been decorated in tastefully sensuous trappings. The two lovers were wired with various electrodes, taking pulse, temperature, energy expenditure, and sweat readings, then told to "go at it." Various members of the Esso Trinidad Steel Band and the Baja Marimba Band wandered in from studios down the hall, and were so impressed by the project, offered to donate their time. They were immediately ensconced in front of a 16 track and, cautioned to be demure, told to "go at it."

Moog wizard Dick Hyman was then called in on this momentous recording, employing his artistic vision to take the readings from the various electrodes and run them through a computer, feeding the results into his trusty Moog. This was mixed with outakes of Paul Mauriat, combined with the Esso and Baja tracks, the whole thing being delicately and sensitively combined with the tapes of the two lovers.

It's been part of Record Biz humour this past year to play with the record listings of Side one and two, calling it This Side and That Side, My Side and Your Side, A and B, and in some cases not even listing a side. Not to be shown up as "square" and "not with it," Sensuous Records called the respective faces on their platter Climax One and Climax Two, One clocking in at 13.50, and Two at 12.07. Considering that the woman achieves three climaxes a side, an average of one orgasm every 4.26 minutes, this is the most enjoyable quickie on record. Whether the male ever makes it is unknown, since apart from a groan or two, some maniacal laughter which might be taken as an expression of passion, and the loudest lapping of a lady's labia ever heard by this reviewer, he remains steadfast and silent, his partner's pleasure his only concern.

The two lovers get to know each other on Climax One, so communication is kept to a tactile level, but his silent prowess and understanding is great enough to force her to admit her agapaic desire 3.21 into Climax Two, when she sighs, *"I love you."* A grin and a grunt is his only reply. Obviously, it's One for those who like their love to come in silence, and Two for those enamoured of the verbal app-

roach, matching the ebullient cries of *"I love that," "I'm going out of my mind,"* and, *"Whatever you do, don't stop."* There is a moment of confusion however, when shortly after the latter sigh the coltured lass gasps, *"Don't–that hurts."* Confusion turns to lucidation when shortly after her gasps of pain turn to gasps of pleasure, and she widens her horizons to include the joys of sado-masochism. Proof once more that education is where you find it.

Reviews of this record have appeared everywhere; it has been the source of numerous talk show topics; the verbiage has been mountainous. Some have gone so far as to call "Music for Sensuous Lovers"–*"The best fucking record ever!"*

–Jonh Ingham

GROOTNA
Columbia

One of the most invigorating things about rock and roll is it's unquenchable banality. Sometimes your expectations about a prospective group are so low that the slightest display of style can win your affections. On other times a group can be so totally inept that their very presence on stage can completely disarm you. Grootna has the rather uncomfortable position of residing somewhere between these two positions, having neither the benefit of a distinctive style, or the balls to be as wretched as the early Stooges.

Grootna is from San Francisco, and has the services of two celebrated recently retired gentlemen of note, Marty Balin and Bill Graham. How many other out of work locals had a hand in the production cannot be determined, unless you take into account some fifty-eight people listed on the back cover. (There is also a mention of fifty-three dwarves.)

The name itself, Grootna is taken from the latin. 'Groo' means group, or more specifically, a string sextet, as was commonly used in old Roman times to seranade the spectators at the start of the Olympic games, when the eternal flame, usually a burning Christian, was passed from runner to runner, while the groos played religious chants. The word 'tna' is of a more interesting etymological derivation. It is taken from a delicacy that was eaten during the festivals. It consisted of lobworms found in the volcanic soil of Mt. Etna, and marinated in honey. Therefore, Grootna means sweet singing, or the chants of worms.

Grootna plays a brand of middle of the road blues that backs the singing of Anna Rizzo, who often sounds uncannily like Janis Joplin. On some songs she is backed by a female chorus that only seems to fill some dead spots in the mix. The lead guitar is a very subtle, finely faceted influence that should be given a greater chance to stand out in the group's sound. The rest of the instruments, however do not seem to be doing more than perfunctory runthroughs, aside from the nice, well mannered and largely wasted piano of Richard Sussman. Grootna also indulges itself in the record by including a brace of horns, strings and woodwinds.

Perhaps Grootna was just roped into recording too soon. The record just seems to be full of undeveloped musical ideas, and pressed into vinyl by some of those "friends" mentioned on the back. Whatever the reason, it's a shame for the group, and for the public. If a group lacks direction, then no amount of premature production will help it's career. If they had the patience to wait, they might have done something as good as Commander Cody's recent release.

So this, for better or worse is Grootna. It doesn't have anything that resembles sweet singing, and if it reminds one of a can of worms, then that is just the chants you take.

–Rob Houghton

E PLURIBUS FUNK
Grand Funk Railroad
Capitol

It's time to admit we were wrong about Grand Funk. Oh, we were right too, but wrong just the same. Those three or four (I forget, having long since given them away) albums that came before *Survival* were pretty bad, there's no question of that. But we should have recognized that this band had that special something, that original sound everybody tries for. The thing was, they just hadn't perfected it yet, or learned to employ it to maximum advantage.

On *Survival* they showed just how effective their droning, overamplified bass and monophonic guitar sound could be, by removing all embellishments from "Gimmie Shelter" and reducing it to its stark, urgent, basic skeleton. The feeling they give is that it really *is* "just a shot away" and you better look out, kid. No time for Ry Cooder and Merry Clayton.

To pull this off as well as they did required a superb understanding of dynamics–the way energy builds and affects the audience in a song, and how the interaction of the instruments within the structure of the song accomplishes this. It also calls for a flawless sense of timing. With this new album, Grand Funk shows that they have got both lessons down. Not as well as a group like the Stones, the Yardbirds, the MC5 or many others, but well enough to begin thinking of themselves in terms of such company. Of course, they may not be interested in the rewards of true musicianship, when they've already placed themselves outside and beyond all other groups, in a class all their own, through their public relations campaigns. But it's nice to know their popularity is at least justified, on some level.

Like I said, this new album's a killer. If you can get over the resemblance of the cover to Blue Cheer's first LP, *Vincibus Eruptum,* you'll find inside a collection of music every bit as revolutionary. Starting with "Footstompin' Music," an organ and bass dominated rocker that could be confused with any of the great organ bands from Mitch Ryder's to Alan Price's in a blindfold test, we are carried into "People, Let's Stop the War." This song opens with a few tense moments like those at the beginning of "Gimmie Shelter" and moves into a sledgehammer riff highlighted by Farner's driving guitar. The lyrics are not exactly heavy ("if we had a president that did just what he said, the country would be just alright." George Wallace?) but the arrangement and solid instrumentation give the song a feeling of resolute conviction that gets the message across perfectly.

Many of the other songs are fillers, but all have their interesting points. "I Come Tumblin' " is a good energy workout. It has the token lyrics about "let's teach our children to love each other" but basically it's just a showcase for instrumental prowess. The drums tumble through the cut in fine fashion, there's plenty of high-volume guitar and bass action, speedy-finger runs, etc. In short, just the sort of thing Cream was once noted for.

"Save the Land" is solid, but doesn't really take off as a structure or a song. The lyrics, as with every song on this LP, reflect the political platform represented by their coinage of the Grand Funk Nation. "Let's get together and kill this fear," "with just a little more understanding the whole world will get by," "we need each other to live in peace and harmony," "we don't need a leader to tell us what's wrong," "we can't live without controlling our birth," "we must replace what we took out of the ground," "with love there's nothing to fear," and, inevitably, "let's get together." Those quotes are taken from all six songs but they might as well be from one, the message and tone is so close. Save the land, stop the war, get together and love one another as brothers, and then we can all stomp our feet and have a good time.

Not such a bad program, when you think about it. And presented through such good, powerful music it can hardly do Grand Funk's listeners any harm. It might rankle the MC5's fans to see these guys succeeding with political rock, and the injustice of it bothers me too, but let's be thankful for what we've got. *E plurbis Funk:* out of many, Grand Funk. It could've been much worse.

–Greg Shaw

Baron Robbins

Mark Farner of Grand Funk (top) T. Rex (bottom).

PAUL ANKA
Buddah

Do you have trouble thinking of Paul Anka as anything but a greasy Italian dork from Brooklyn who whined his way adeniodally through a series of high camp 1957-60 hits like "Put Your Head On My Shoulder" and "Puppy Love" (with fake Johnny Ray tears yet)and, if memory serves, had a well-publicized nose job somewhere along the line? Yeah, I've got the same problem. In other words, it's hard to take this guy seriously.

He did have his share of fame, fortune and hits, leaving ABC-Paramount in 1962 after a string of flops to land on RCA where he continued making records right up to just a little while ago. RCA must've kept him for the 'prestige' value of his name though because the records all stayed pretty much on the south 50 of the *Billboard* Hot 100, and, like Bobby Vinton and Bobby Rydell, he was one of those "imagine that, all those corny teenage records back then and now he's a respectable singer you can see right at the Copa or maybe even President Nixon's Valintine's Day Pary!" guys.

Of course Paul was no imbecile–he always knew he was a better songwriter than singer–and sometime back in the late '60s he took up writing seriously, on his own and with Bobby Gosh, who now has his own album too. The songs he wrote were recorded by some really Big Time people, the kind you see on the Mike Douglas Show and sometimes even Dean Martin. So lately Paul's been turning up on the talk shows, looking back with a mature sneer on his days as a teenage idol, boasting of what a big success he finally is, with Frank Sinatra doing his songs and all. And at the end the host always says, "That's really marvelous, Paul. Can we hear a couple of your songs now?"

Which brings us to this album. There he sits on the cover, in his faggoty *gaucho* hat, his Hollywood mod shirt open casually at the top button, trying to look cool like Carole King at a dude ranch. On the record, it sounds like they set up the mikes right in front of the string section of Joe Harnell's band and told Paul to go to the other end of the stage and sing. That still wasn't far enough away though, cause you can still hear him sing, or attempt to.

That's the main problem with Paul Anka: the nose job which removed his excess cartilage also removed the snotty nasal quality of his voice, leaving nothing between us and the fact that he *just can't sing.* His voice is weak, flat and uninteresting. A song like "She's a Lady," which Tom Jones transformed into one of the finest AM singles of the month, loses all its strength and believability in Paul's limp hands. And his sentimental treatment of "Les Filles De Paris" is not likely to give Vic Damone any sleepless nights. Most of the other songs are about as bland as the filler on an old Crew Cuts album, straining from one forced, artificial climax to the next.

The high point of it all, of course, is "My Way," the song on which his claim to importance is actually based. What he doesn't go out of his way to tell anybody is that all he did was translate it from the Italian. It's not a bad song at all; I liked Sinatra's version, and I once saw Brook Benton absolutely tear his guts out with it on the Andy Williams show. But Paul Anka . . . well, it's not quite as comical as the Partridge Family might sound doing it, and after all he couldn't have put this album out without including it. His association with the song is probably the only reason he was allowed to make another album, and who can blame him for not admitting he didn't really write it? At least, you can say this much for him: He did it *his* way.

–Greg Shaw

ELECTRIC WARRIOR
T. Rex
Warner Bros.

Well, this is *the* group rock and roll fans. I feel it is important to impress on you the ingenuity of these two young Englishmen who have somehow, ingeniously, constructed a rock album that will enter the annals of rock history as one of the most original sounding, unusual sounding, obtusely, cleverly and creatively written albums ever. The sound could only be accurately pegged as "mystic boogie." Marc Bolen and Mickey Finn are the two dinosaurs involved here. Bolan does all the writing, singing, and plays guitar. Finn takes care of the percussion end of things. The rhythms this unique duo create, with the help of various session musicians (who play saxophone, flugelhorn, bass and drums) are devastating.

This is the group's second album on the Reprise label and fifth album all together. They were originally on Fly Records in London and later on Blue

PHONOGRAPH RECORD REVIEWS (CONT.)

JANUARY'S BEST

1. HOT ROCKS	THE ROLLING STONES	LONDON
2. FRAGILE	YES	ATLANTIC
3. FEARLESS	FAMILY	UNITED ARTISTS
4. HUNKY DORY	DAVID BOWIE	RCA

JANUARY'S WORST

1. SINGS THEIR HITS FROM THE GLEN CAMPBELL SHOW	MIKE CURB CONGREGATION	MGM
2. NICE FEELIN'	RITA COOLIDGE	A&M
3. VERY YOUNG & EARLY SONGS	CAT STEVENS	DERAM

Thumb where they came out with two albums: "Unicorn," and "Beard of Stars." Tony Visconti has produced all the albums and on "Electric Warrior" he has coupled the T. Rex sound with an orchestral accompaniment: strings, cellos, bowed string basses which creates a sound so penetrating as to be awsome. But the paramount beauty of T. Rex lies in Bolan's singing and writing. His voice is hauntingly trebly, wierd to the extent of being quite beautiful. His style is so unique as to resemble something non-human—cosmically science fictive if you will. His writing draws upon stunning allusions and brilliant juxtapositions in words and thoughts. There is a duality to what he writes/sings/plays in that a listener can cruise along with the throbbing electric bass and resonant, moody drumming, or he can pay close attention to the lyric and reap a harvest of new insight from what Bolan has to say. At first his lyrics appear nonsensical but, upon a few listenings, one begins to understand the clever, highly individualistic description of reality the writer wants to convey. Bolan's rhyme schemes and word choices are solely unlike anything I have ever heard in rock and roll. He creates his own very special approach to rock that only few, highly creative artists have done. It is almost as though Bolan has managed to establish a concept so "foreign" to standard rock and roll while still employing the artifice of the musical genre. He is avant-garde but in a very captivating, understandable and inviting way.

"Jeepster," "Mambo Sun," "Cosmic Dancer," "Girl" and "Lean Woman Blues" highlight the 11 cuts on this album with lyrics that are inescapable.

"Jeepster": "You move so fine, with bones so fair, you've got the universe reclining in your hair . . . Girl I'm just a Jeepster for your love . . ."

"Cosmic Dancer": "I danced myself right out the womb, Is it strange to dance so soon? . . . What's it like to be a loon? I'd liken it to a balloon . . ."

"Mambo Sun": "Beneath the bebop moon I want to croon with you. Beneath the mambo sun, I want to be the one for you."

There you have a sampling, but without the music integrating with the words, mere reading does not do the group justice. With better promotion and a few American tours under their belts, T. Rex are, without escape, destined to become the very next super group of our heretofore doggerel-ridden rock and roll "universe."

—Jay Ehler

RORY GALLAGHER
ATCO

"Rory Gallagher, formerly of Taste, is now on his own and happening." That's what the ads say, but what do they know? Well, something about the first part and nothing about the last. Because this is one of the most positively moribund albums to come down the pike since *Frank Zappa's Greatest Hits.* And that was sheer novacaine. What we have here, though, is a placebo.

The scam is that once there was this fairly jiveass-hotsy Irish bluzroc trio called Taste. Their first album on Atco had a couple of songs with titles like "Blister On the Moon" but didn't live up to them and when you saw an 8 minute version of "Catfish" listed on the backside you knew you didn't wanta fork over your hard earned shoe shekels anyway. But about a year later they released this album called *On the Boards* which had some nice bluesy neo-toned-down Led Zep, smidgens of appealing "jazz" sax and Wes Montgomery-Szabo-isms and really good writing and the whole project sounded pretty good especially if you got it promo gratis. And Gallagher wrote all the songs and played lead guitar and sax and voice and was fairly impressive on the level of an Isles demi-Creedence without the claustrophobic *American Heritage* fixations. Almost concurrent with the album's release, though, you began to see little items in the pop papers about how the band was splitting up and Gallagher was dissatisfied with the "limitations" of the format and the two other cats were saying things like he picked up the checks and paid them at rigid scale like one-nighter Chuck Berry sidemen or something. So now a little over a year later we have this album. Rory no longer weighted down by decision and his fat ego flying free and it's one of the more noticeable vacuous releases of the season which is paradoxical enough to signify something I guess but still no fun to hang around. And even if whatever Rory want Rory gets he's basically a fuck up because primadonnas always are and we got enough asbestos airconditioner music already. Or, by Michael Ochs, Twelve Years After. Except that just like their recent output it resembles when divested of its Sir Lord Baltimorean amphetamine sizzle nothing so much as a stale washrag. And Rory and nobody else is on it this time.

—Lester Bangs

NOD IS AS GOOD AS A WINK TO A BLIND HORSE
Faces Reprise

The original Small Faces were quite a band in their day, and although before this album I had my doubts, I have now answered the question of whether or not the new band can equal the old. The Small Faces, good as they were, are in every way matched or surpassed by Rod, Ron and company, who feel disposed to rock out a lot more than they used to.

I mean, *First Step* was excellent in spots ("Nobody Knows," "Three Button Hand Me Down") but a weak album on the whole. Those instrumentals were often pisspoor, things that you just skipped over when you played the album. Shortly after this album's release, I was fortunate enough to see the band perform (twice), and was knocked flat by the sheer energy and raunch release of Mssrs. Stewart, Wood, McLagan, Lane, and Jones, but tightness was noticably absent. At one point in the "Plynth" jam, Ian went into "Wicked Messenger" quite unexpectedly, and although I thought it a bit clever, Roddy Stewart was not at all pleased. In fact, backstage there were some heated squabbles, with Rod doing most of the yelling.

The next time I saw the band (a few months later), they seemed to be wearing a bit more polish (and alcohol), but performed basically the same set of songs. I was slightly ticked at this; the spontaneity seemed less present and all that, but it was an enjoyable concert.

Their second album, *Long Player*, had some surefire knockout cuts on it, but was weighted down by much filler material ("On the Beach"), and the extended live instrumental jam didn't do a heck of a lot for me. However, on this third return to the United States, the band was much tighter, friendlier, drunker, raunchier, and just plain better. I saw them twice on this tour, and they seemed to be a lot closer as friends, which naturally made them a better band. They did all kinds of neato stunts like pass out bottles of Mateus to the audience, which is certainly a good thing for a band to do. They were also the top name on the bill.

A lot of things have happened since then, most notably the making of Rod Stewart into a superstar with his hit singles of enormous popularity and all. Rod doesn't have to worry about monopolizing things anymore with his solo album ventures, so he can lay back a bit and let the two Ron's (Lane & Wood) take over.

And that's why the new album is so stupendous. Ronnie Lane has always been a favorite of mine, but his rock 'n' roll ventures have never appeared on record (His tunes've always been quiet and beautiful ballads with pretty words.) Not this time, my friends. Good old Plonk has given us a few rockers, and they're tops in my book. In fact, "You're So Rude" ranks with the top English bawdy numbers, including all those great ones that our friend Steve Marriott (an ex-Face himself) wrote for Humble Pie.

"Memphis" features some knockout vocal delivery by Rod the Mod. not to mention a cooking guitar-through-Leslie intro by Woody. "Stay With Me" and "It's All You Need" are my favorites on the album, I guess, with the latter's fine, fine bottleneck guitar.

The Faces have finally reached a level where not only are they capable of writing and performing good material, they know which tunes *not* to do. The band has waited until they got a full album's worth of great songs, so there's no need for fillers. I wholeheartedly recommend this album to anyone with ears not yet shattered by Grand Funk . . . the Faces have proved to me that they can save rock 'n' roll with their music, and not act as merely a backup band for an exceptional vocalist. Hot diggety doggie!

—Jon Tiven

GOODNIGHT EVERYBODY
Mary McCaslin
Barnaby

On the crest of a mighty wave of Carole Kings and Queens of Soul and any number of Simonized Nyrotic Melaniesian and Mitchellesque chanteuses, the time seems right to register a rather belated plug for Mary McCaslin. Her only album was released in the summer of '69, to a critical/consumer reception of tumultuous apathy; but much more receptive conditions prevail nowadays, and attention should be called to her, the sooner the better.

Meanwhile, *Goodnight Everybody* is an excellent album. Miss McCaslin ostensibly does not write (although the first and last cuts, "Every Day Of My Life" and the title track, may be hers under pseudonyms), but she most definitely sings, and her choice of repertoire is for the most part quite nice. The instrumental backup is kept simple (guitar/bass/drums/keyboard/occasional strings), in a kind of pop/country vein, but always tasteful and sometimes exquisite. And her singing is superb, a wonderfully clear, refreshing tone, unlike any of her currently fashionable compatriots but better than most, with the rare ability at times to provoke uncontrollable shudders of awe/pleasure—really quite exceptional.

Her material ranges from pleasant to beautiful (mostly the former)—nice versions of "Blackbird" and "Help," a dispensable treatment of the country chestnut "Satisfied Mind"; and a whole raft of semi-obscure tunes, most with a pronounced country flavor, the best of which are "Goodnight Everybody" and "Jamie." But the two standout cuts, the ones that make this album such a gem, are the Bee Gees' "With The Sun In My Eyes" and Holland-Dozier-Holland's familiar "You Keep Me Hanging On." Both feature the sparsest of instrumental backgrounds, allowing Miss McCaslin's voice to command the forefront; and her vocal performance is nothing short of brilliant, particularly on "You Keep Me Hanging On." The desperate freneticism of the Supremes' rendition is replaced by a mournfully slow tempo with a lovely acoustic guitar arrangement, creating a mood of pervasive hopelessness; and the vocal, in combination with that mood, is guaranteed to make you shiver, inexorably putting you through an emotional wringer—an unforgettable experience.

The album is definitely worth having for "Hanging On" alone, but as a whole it's thoroughly pleasant, and if you ever spot it languishing in some used records stack, grab it without fail. And let's hope some eminent record mogul gets hep soon and records Mary McCaslin again—she's one of the finest female singers we have.

—Ken Barnes

WILDLIFE Wings
(Paul & Linda McCartney)
Apple

It's not immodest of me to say out front that I am singularly well qualified to write about this latest record by the indefatigable Paul MacCartney. My qualifications are based on the fact that I have not heard any Beatles record released after *Magical Mystery Tour.* Sometimes an individual song would waft its way into my attention on the wings of some past edition of the Ed Sullivan Show, or on the air waves of the top forty radio stations. At times during half forgotten parties someone would play a side of *Abbey Road* but the music would never be enough to affect my conscious equilibrium. As the years passed I casually noticed various packages with charming names as *McCartney, All Things Must Pass, Beauchamps of Blues, The White Album, Let It Be, Hey Jude, Abbey Road, Dear Abbey,* and *Is Everybody Abbey* moving into and out of my vision, never disturbing my state of blissful unconcern.

However, Paul's new group gives evidence that his ambition is to become the Jackie Gleason of rock and roll; the bandleader, not the comedian.

This is music that no one can really dislike. Paul knows just how to give the right emphasis to a musical phrase that will bring out beautiful and haunting effects on the largest number of people. In the process of his musical development, he has pretty well alienated the hip rockers and self consciously 'aware' people, but has gained the ears of everyone else. He was, after all the artist whose musical inclinations made the Beatles accepted by even the most intransigent of the older generation. The song 'Some People Never Know,' is sweet enough to be played on the Lawrence Welk Show, or at your friendly neighborhood bank. And people love it!

There is a little instrumental break between 'I am Your Singer,' and 'Tomorrow' that sounds better than whole songs by other self-proclaimed guitar virtuosos. 'Dear Friend,' is in a pensive mood with the occasional crashes of orchestral punctuation that McCartney has always loved. It's not rock and roll, but it is listenable, nice pop music.

'Mumbo' is rock, and a great example of just how limited Paul's singing is when he puts it to the crunch. It's presence on this album is mere tokenism. Paul doesn't really like this kind of music all that much, and its inclusion in this album was probably to forestall any criticism from the fans of John Lennon. 'Bip Bop' is a little contrived, but with a catchy shuffling quality.

'Wild Life' is the best song on the record, with the most sustained intense feeling that Paul has managed to produce in a long time. The startling thing about this song is that Paul McCartney has never been known for the depthness of feeling that other singers have strived for, preferring rather to aim for the slick, show biz, broadway character of his music. But here, suddenly he gives a beautiful performance, and promise of even better things to come.

On the whole, Wings first album sounds as if Linda, Paul and the boys really didn't expend too much effort thus far in their association. They don't seem to have sweat on the album, and the listener won't sweat too much when hearing it. But it's nice, it doesn't last long, it's just a record, and that's a relief.

—Rob Houghton

JAZZ

BY COLMAN ANDREWS

(Last month I reported on the jazz festival scene in Europe, with special attention paid to the Milan Jazz Festival—which held for me the incredibly pleasant surprise of seeing and hearing Gato Barberi in person for the first time, as well as the rather intriguing spectacle of Johnny Griffin playing the avant gardist with Barre Phillips and Stu Martin. This month, instead of presenting another fairly staright-forward festival account, I'd like to give my column over to a kind of loose transcription of parts of my notebooks from Belgrade, Yugoslavia, where I attended "The Newport Jazz Festival," which is to say a four-night concert series (two shows a night), featuring members of George Wein's formidable touring company—Duke Ellington, The Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Miles Davis Gary Burton, Ornette Coleman, and the "Giants of Jazz," Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Stitt, Kai Winding, Thelonious Monk, Al McKibbon, and Art Blakly.)

** * **

OCTOBER 31. Light snow in Belgrade. A month early at least. (It doesn't last the night, and does not return.) Belgrade's name means "white city," but it's more grey than white when it's not snowing. There are *Playboy* centerfolds in every news kiosk window, Pierre Cardin shirts in the quality department stores, a friendly prostitute or two in the better hotel lobbies. At the Dom Omladine, or Syndicate Hall, Duke Ellington opens the festival, as cool and light as the falling snow. "Perdido," "C-Jam Blues," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Rocking in Rhythm" and more. Russell Procope punctuating Paul Gonsalves' warm, sleepy solo on "Happy Reunion" with a rogueish "Aha!" Ellington introducing "Afro-Eurasian Eclipse:" "Harold Ashby has been inducted. into the task of scraping off a little of his chinoiserie immediately after the piano player completes his rickey-tickey," and later mercilessly tickling Ashby, Gonsalves, and Norris Tunney as they finish "Triplicate." Joe Benjamin's bass solo on "La Plus Belle Africaine," so tame and slow compared with the technical wizardry of our younger bassists. Vocals (why?) by Nell Brokshire and Tony Watkins. A questionable "tribute" to Louie Armstrong with Money Johnson playing (and singing) the part as Duke calls out "Louis Johnson, Money Armstrong." Harold Minerva, formerly with Ray Charles, sounding very, very good in the good-sounding Ellington reed section. Between shows, a perky young blonde from the Belgrade television station was asking Gonsalves what his name was, what instrument he played.

NOVEMBER 1st. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band—playing a kind of music I can't really comment on. Fun. Foot-tapping. Surprising enthusiasm from the audiences, especially (and perhaps most surprisingly) from the younger members. A very controlled ensemble. "Roll Out the Barrel," for a few bars anyway, sounds like "Lara's Theme" (or vice versa, more appropriately). Alas, the sets end with "When the Saints Go Marching In" (which tradition and old-timey spirit aside, ought to be relegated along with "Hava Nagila," to whatever hell awaits kitsch that doesn't know when to quit). And, alas again, Kid Thomas Valentine, whose clear, clean trumpet leads the band, ends the tune by trumpeting up and down the aisles dressed in a bandana and a long white shirt, presumably evoking Lord knows what. Does he do this in the U.S. too? Does he dare?

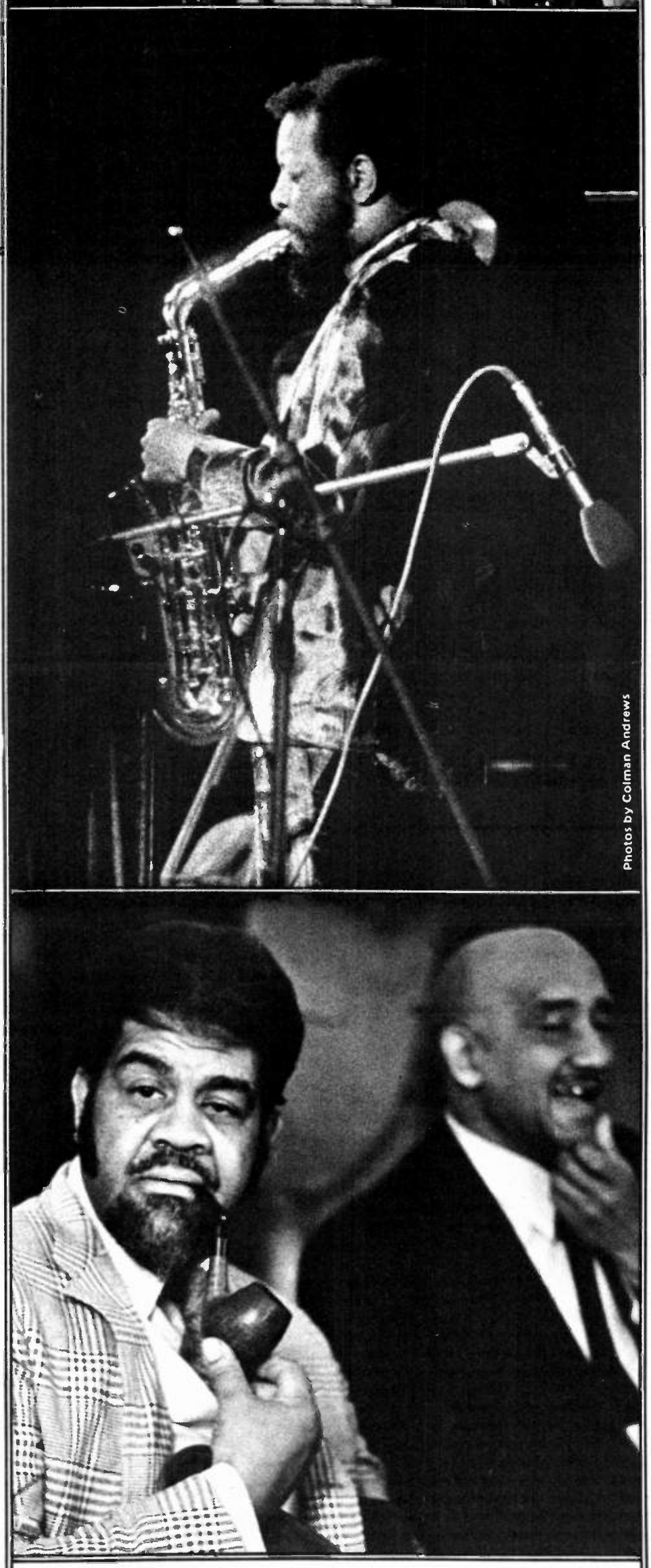
NOVEMBER 2nd. Gary Burton, first show only, playing solo vibes. Calm impressionistic landscapes. The vibest as the most delicate of bell-ringers. Tunes by Keith Jarrett and Steve Swallow and himself, and "No More Blues." The audience absolutely rapt. The slightest sound shushed up. Then the Giants. But what have they done to Monk? Comping behind Kai Winding, for Christ's sake? No hat? No dancing? He doesn't solo very much. But when he does, Wow. A brilliant, idiosyncratic approach to harmonic improvisation. The hands hovering over the keys. Alighting only for a second, just long enough to strike devastatingly. Diz says, "You don't know what it *is* to be on a bandstand with *these* cats behind you." A regulation repertoire: " 'Round Midnight," "Woody'n' You," "Night in Tunisia," "Don't Blame Be," "I'll Remember April," "Tour de Force," "Lover Man." The Boulevard of the Revolution might just as well be 52nd Street. Stitt sounds *good* still. Strong without being hard, soft without being flaccid. Blakey's been passed by, by one or two (or three) waves of jazz drummers, but he's still one of the most reassuring, stylistically unique drummers there is. The vivid traditionalist, Winding should have been J.J. Johnson, of course. Diz should have been, and thankfully is, Diz.

Ornette in top form, brash and sharp as ever, blues roots showing through even more than usual. Dewey Redman's tone has matured impressively since, say, *New York Is Now* (Blue Note BST-84287). Ed Blackwell, the old New Orleans hand, looking more like a part of the Preservation Hall crew than Ornette's drummer. Playing with an old-fashioned Baby Dodds barbarity, recalling the days when the drums were the thing. Charlie Haden becoming, at one point, the bassist as oud-player (with Blackwell sounding far more nocturnally Tunisian than Blakey had). An absolute mother-fucker of an arco solo on his own composition "Song for J." A few walkouts and cat calls—especially at the end as Ornette plays trumpet and violin—but surely he must be used to that by now. The university students in the audience loved him, absolutely *loved* him. Unheard by most of them before, he becomes, overnight, almost a hero.

NOVEMBER 3rd. Miles Davis. I've reviewed him so often in this column in recent months, I shouldn't really have to say anything further. But it comes to me in a blinding flash of light. Honest it did. With all due respect (and a lot is due) to some other keyboard artisans, who have played with Miles in recent years (like Joe Zawinul, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea), Keith Jarett is by far the most unusual, the most original, the most consistently fascinating, the most irresistible. One is almost tempted to say that he has re-defined the keyboard's role as surely as Miles has re-defined the rhythmic bases of the new jazz. Jarrett matches phrases with Miles. Not "trades" *matches* . The first set is a bit subdued. But the second set! Suddenly, out of nowhere, an exploding nova of music. Everything works, everything flows, everything flares and blazes. They are capital-O On. (In an interview he gave to a local newspaper, Miles later says—somewhat cryptically but emphatically—that he has discovered a new sound for his horn at that concert.)

The "Festival" could hardly have ended on a healthier note. Though the thought occurs that it was not so much a festival as a panoramic history of American jazz, from (almost) its beginnings to its furthest firm reaches. **

(Next month, in a final European column, I'll talk about the state of jazz in Romania—and how esoteric is that?—about the splendid jazz presentations that Daniel Humair is organizing in Paris, and, briefly, about jazz available on record in Europe. I'll also pass along a translation of the above-mentioned Miles Davis interview—which has a surprise or two in it—and, hopefully, deal at least superficially with some of the many American jazz records that have come out during my absence.)



Photos by Colman Andrews

SKETCHES FROM BELGRADE: Top: Duke Ellington, sartorically elegant and thoroughly cool as always, adds his faultlessly-paced applause as Nell Brookshire and Tony Watkins vocalize and Harold Ashby consults his chronometer; Center: Ornette Coleman in concert; Bottom: Al McKibbon, veteran bop bassist, on tour as one of The Jazz Giants, poses thoughtfully as Alonzo Stewart from The Preservation Hall Jazz Band ponders in the background.

DAVID BOWIE

FROM PAGE 11

titute, isn't it? America in three or four words. I wrote a little poem about it yesterday: "A bell tolled in San Francisco/And three buses went through a green light" . . . I just thought up those two lines, out of my own head."

—that his association with Mercury Records was a disheartening experience, itemizing such inefficiencies as miscrediting (e.g. they called George Underwood's painting on *Man of Words/Man of Music* "Depth (rather than "Width") of the Circle," and changed the title of Mick Weller's cover painting on the next album from "The Metropolist" to "The Man Who Sold the World," thus alienating Bowie and the artist), not to mention their unforgivable refusal to allow David to appear in his Lauren Bacall drag in a double-spread Unipak.

—that his marriage to Angie (who is, according to reliable sources, as unconventional in her habits as David is in his) and the (then) imminent birth of Zowie (rhymes with Bowie) have served as immensely stabilizing factors.

—that the Velvet Underground, and particularly Lou Reed, are nearly God, and that Iggy and the Stooges are next in line.

All of which have played parts (implicit or explicit) in the formation of his new RCA album *Hunky Dory* (LSP 4623). Two seconds into the first set it is apparent that the ragged, the schizophrenic and the psychotic have given way to a much mellower, more stable outlook—distinctive, sparkling production, a restrained (but certainly not soft) approach, a clear, unfrantic pace, and delightful integration of some tasteful, near-campy pop devices, It impresses not by its solidity and singleness of purpose, as did its predecessor, but by its ability to shift from one style to another without losing its direction or unity.

There are songs like the marvelously indulgent "Kooks," a musical equivalent of flashing snapshots of the kids to friends that contains revealing lines like "Don't pick fights with the bullies or the cats /'Cause I'm not much cop at punching other people's dads." And the bouyant "Fill Your Heart," a Biff Rose song that is so tough to handle that only Tiny Tim (besides Bowie) has been able to make it work.

There are some disappointments as well: the lack of conviction that surrounds "Song for Bob Dylan" reflects the fact that it is about what Bowie's friends think of the former Mr. Zimmerman rather than an expression of his own opinion. "The Bewlay Brothers," a "confession" piece about himself and a friend and their many transformations of identity, remains too obscure and aloof, never really relating to the listener. "Queen Bitch," aside from an amusing LouReed style vocal, is forgettable.

But to more than make up for such lapses, he gives us: "Changes," a joyous blend of words and music that starts and stops and rolls and rocks over an underpinning of controlled intensity; the rapidly escalating, Sinatra-based "Life on Mars," and what is possibly his best song to date, "Quicksand." Written on the American trip, it opens with his plantive voice over his supply and sensitively strummed 12-string. As the other instruments join in, with intensities rising and falling, he combines mundane and media-based imagery with cosmic resolutions until his desperation finally finds a way out in the subdued chorus: "Don't believe in yourself/Don't decieve with belief/Knowledge comes with death's release."

The emphasis in *Hunky Dory* is placed on melodic strength and refined arrangements rather than on rock 'n' roll power. Ronson and Woodmansee are back, and Bowie has coaxed them out of their white power-blues bag long enough for them to contribute some very tasty lines (note Ronson's solo in "Life on Mars"). The real musical lead, though, is taken by the ever-more-illustrious Rick Wakeman (late of Strawbs, now with Yes), whose keyboard work is strictly sensational. And David finally gets to play saxophone on record.

Since his return to England, David Bowie has been: watching Zowie grow, recording a singer named Rudy Valentino, who was "good," but decided to return to designing clothes; recording *Hunky Dory;* completing yet another album, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars,* which returns to the hard rock sound; rehearsing with his band (Ronson, Woodmansee and Trevor Bolder), catching Alice Cooper's show (he was disappointed, having expected transvestites and instead finding "these very butch guys"); and eagerly anticipating visits from Lou Reed and Iggy Stooge.

He is currently on tour in Europe, tightening things up for a performing tour of the States which should commence in March. And he says that his head is, at the moment, a lot happier, because "it's emptier."

It's not out of the question that David Bowie could become one of the more important figures of the 70's, not only in rock but in all the related performing arts. First, his gift for and training in the theater could mean that, though he is still vague about the nature of his show, he may be the one to give a much needed shot in the arm to the rapidly expiring art of rock-as-theater.

More important though—even more important than his rapidly diminishing avant garde pretensions—is the possibility that, if he handles it properly, he could brings a significant measure of sexual and artistic liberation to a scene too little concerned with the freedom which its best music so eloquently implies.

This potential is founded in the fact that he is willing, even eager, not only to be known as a sexually aberrant personality, but to brazenly (yet unpretentously) incorporate that dimension into his *image.* He may thus expose as blatant nonsense the fleeting curiosity that many of your questionable but desperately cocksure rock 'n' rollers seem to want to perpetuate about themselves, as well as challenging the shameful sexism that is as pervasive in rock as it is in suburbia. Of course he could just as easily be booed off the stage, but at any rate it is bound to be an intriguing confrontation which in itself will be a most welcome relief from the rumbling pile of cliches that rock has recently begun to unleash upon its audiences.

David Bowie was recently asked if he had yet achieved his goal of becoming Darling of the Avant Garde.

"No," he laughed, *"I'm not even the Darling of Beckenham."*

CALIFORNIA 99

FROM PAGE 13

will plow Scroogian bins of money into albums like this when the Archie Shepps contracted to them actually have to pay out of their pockets in front, not even billed on royalties, every time they want a copy of an album on the label. That's the truth.

And it's somewhat true also that the companies operate so not out of malicious or mendacious intent but, just like the governments, purely and simply because they have no choice. Because they honestly don't know a better way, or even how to locate the right shortcuts to more efficient practice. You shouldn't buy this album, because it's terrible, but if you're one of the many people who gets floods of albums without having to pay in front or any other way simply because you write about this stuff, or if you find it in a cheapo rack someday as you most assuredly will, you might want to pick it up and file it as an artifact of a most peculiar age, a white elephant monument to the transcendental absurdity of the music biz.

The ads are calling it "a fairy tale of the future," and saying that *California 99* is *"What Comes After 1984,"* but in reality the story concocted by Gamache and laid on the music like a mattress on a bottle of wine comes across like the kind of stuff sci-fi mags regularly reject, with a touch of Erich Segal.

Into the midst of all the environmental upheaval and social dislocation described on the jacket comes our wandering hero as the "story" begins.

The hero's quest is fused by the governmental injunction that he either spend the next decade in the army or find a love-mate and make babies who'll be snapped up at birth for state conditioning schools and labor centers. Naturally he opts to seek poontang over a stint in the serve lasting 10 big ones, but the whole thing is complicated by the fact that in this cybernetic-ised, overpopulated world most good citizens think love and fuck are for the birds, if not downright treasonous.

So, since he's gonna buck convention this way, Uncle Sam or whatever you call him now poses a challenge: *"You are directed to love 3 females simultaneously,"* and even tells him that their names will be Jessica Stone.Claudia somethingorother, and Barbara somethingorother (Barb and Claud aren't related, they just never tell their last names). The hero ponders all this out loud over a soundtrack (rottenly produced to my ears) of fuzzy electronic beeps and whooshes oozing all over the place. The "Overture," written by Haskell and strongly derivative of Tommy, has just finished its 4:28. Gawd, is this a boring album.

The cat ventures forth musing things like *"My lectroball teammates always talked about how intelligent black girls were, maybe that was where I should start"* and *"As a child I had always dreamed about Greek women — lusty — powerful — so I began looking in their Segrasector."*

Keep your toupee on, though, it don't mean a thing. This ain't no Redd Foxx album, unfortunately. All it signals is a dreary stretch of Haskell MOR mush vaguely derived from Greek music and called "Appopopoulisberg." The sound-tracks from *Never On Sunday* and *Zorba the Greek were better* — what am I saying? They were Classic *masterpieces* compared to this slush. But pretty soon the dork's back burbling again about how now "Love is almost penalized." It doesn't make much sense until you realize Gamache is just doing some rather awkward juggling to accomodate a piece of the original record: *"My father and mother, back in '80. They lost control of the 3 railroads which had been in the family for generations . . . the family had been pretty well off. But not any more, we're now one of the little people. It's all over for us. My father says that my great-grandfather saw it coming when he was still working on the railroad in 1865."*

And then comes the aural highlight of the album, Jimmy Witherspoon's rendition of "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." Your great-grandfather was black? And lived in 1865? And what's Jimmy W. doing singing about taking a rebel stand? That seems pretty ironic, if not exploitative, but according to my incognital informant at ABC, Witherspoon was as thrilled with the idea as everybody else there. Which suggests something about the malleability of old blues singers in the hands of Withit producers that I can't say because I'd be called a racist.

In any case, this version of the song stinks even worse than Joan Baez', it's rotten and lugubrious, and it's followed by another monologue about how all the musiclocks have stopped or something (I don't wonder), and sketchily chronicles how he met Claudia at the Great Snore Festival, which is but another cheap trick to lead into another transplanted song. This time it's a surprise: "To Claudia On Thursday," half of which was written by Mike Fennelly of Crabby Appleton when he was with a group called the Millennium, and which first appeared on the Columbia album of the same name. It sounded better there, and naturally it has nothing to do with this story.

Next is Jessica Stone, whom he meets during *"My monthly billboard memorization tour."* Haskell wrote the song with her name as the title, and it's a true dud. But after it comes our little punko Candide's sad epiphany: *"In the light of my failures with Claudia and Jessica, I was glad that I didn't care, because I was now sure that the Government was fixing it . . . so that I couldn't succeed and would have to do my army time besides . . . What had happened to all my freedom? What had happened to California?*

I get it: California as a metaphor for freedom! I'll buy that, and go listen to Carole King sing about it on her new album. But right now we're sitting through another Haskell confection called "California Fairy Tale." Zzzzz.

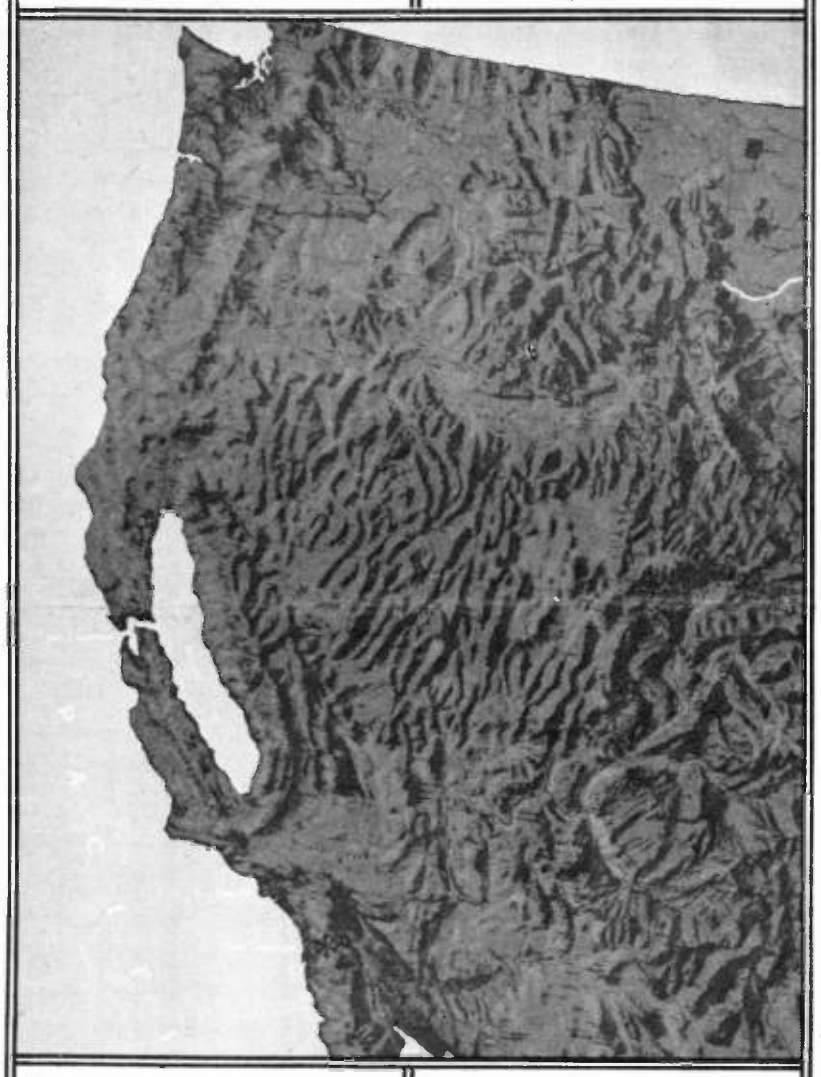
Just like "Dixie Down" on Side One, there's an intermission from the cluck's dull tour here too. It's a newscast, complete with items on stolen smog snorkles, vandalization of government sex machines, and the tidbit that Russia has renamed itself Berlin, and if you think the humor evidenced on the cover falls mostly flat as a spatula in the grooves you're right, although this sorta makes it: *"There are fewer masses celebrated in California than ever before according to the 'put the mass back in masochism' survey. Five thousand ex-Catholics were asked if they would return to mass if the ceremony took a more masochistic true-to-life turn . . . 91% of those polled gave God the nod."* (Which is also the source of a great bumpersticker promoting Cal 99 that you can get from ABC if you're persistent which sez "GIVE GOD THE NOD" and makes a perfect junkie backlash against the Jesus freaks.)

Barbara is the only chick of the three the *schlemiehl* is supposed to find still unfound, so sure enough the next thing is a Haskell song about her. Then she makes a speech, wising the cat up and clearing the air and tying the whole spaghetti-strew of a plot up neat as a lump of reconstituted Play-Dough for all of us: *"You can't escape the military. It's been planned since the day you were born . . . Claudia and Jessica were both agents, as I am. I'm Barbara, and now you're one of us (who?) . . . Why am I telling you? Well I sort of pity both of us . . . myself, because I can only think of myself, and you, because you believed in love . . . Please don't hate the state. Don't hate me. But be careful not to love either."*

Deep. The record ends with a version musiclocking in at just under four minutes of the "Underture" from *Tommy*, and the words, printed on the "libretto" "FLASHBACK EVEN FARTHER." Out.

California 99: reflective, one way or another, of our times. It may be that these are neither the best of times nor the worst, just the most excessive, the most pointless in their multiplicity.

Oh, I almost forgot. A film is being made of *California 99* by Paramount. The part of Jimmy Haskell will be played by Robert Preston.



A CLOCKWORK HORROR

FROM PAGE 7

of a warning or prophecy, it is either premature or not well founded. If neither it is an ugly tale beautifully told but when the beauty dims there will be little left but abstract horror and dread.

—Hal Aingar From the Nighttimes—

ELVIS: THE BOOK

FROM PAGE 7

California, some of them told by groupies who were as young as 13 at the time, restore some interest to the narrative.

In one chapter of such stories, the reader is made to understand the nature of life for Elvis through six isolated, artistically empty years. Through it all Elvis was apparently too polite and humble to complain, but quotes from those close to him reveal an interest in finding a more satisfying direction for his art. Here the Colonel makes his appearance as the Bad Man, keeping Elvis chained to inane material of proven saleability. Only when Elvis' box office success began to fall off around 1968 was anybody able to push him in a new direction, and the behind-the-scenes story of his TV special that year is an engrossing chronicle of a few men's attempts to help Elvis toward achieving his full potential. The special was a great success, as were Elvis' attempts at 'relevant' records ("In the Ghetto"), and Hopkins tries to end on an optimistic note by implying that Elvis' plans for increased touring and new efforts to regain teenage support would be equally successful. Yet his last chapter, titled "Now," is merely a catalogue of Elvis' various holdings and contracts, as if to reassure us he'd never want for money no matter what he did.

As a biography of Elvis, this book could hardly be better. It *could* stand some editing in spots, for though we'd all admit that exhaustive detail helps to round out the picture, I don't think many people really care about how somebody who once worked for Elvis parts his hair. But all such petty criticisms aside, Hopkins does a masterful job of collecting and editing the millions of second-hand facts known about Elvis' life, and synthesizing a biography out of them.

The only real criticism I could make is that he sometimes, in the midst of all the attendant detail, leaves important loose ends hanging. For instance, he quotes Marion Keisker regarding Sam Phillip's sale of the Elvis contract: "Sam gave Victor all the out-takes. There must have been—easy!—fifty or seventy five cuts," yet later states that while Elvis was in the Army, RCA used up the last of the tapes they had in the can. Since it is known—and stated by Hopkins at one point—that only four or five unreleased Sun tracks ever came out on RCA, that leaves a lot of inconsistancies to be puzzled over.

It's also interesting to note that Hopkins fails to add or subtract anything significant to/from Elvis' well-known image as a nice wholesome boy who loves his family and respects everyone. Apparently, from the overwhelming weight of first-hand reports, he really is an extraordinary person. Yet surely there are peccadillos, embarassing stories, personal weaknesses and excesses such as all stars of his magnitude seem to abound in?

Elvis' sexual appetites are alluded to a few times—an early quote that he likes to "lay girls" a lot, and a couple of carefully-shielded inferences in the later chapters healing with his doings in California—but if some of the more shocking stories in circulation (such as those dealing with his alleged taste for pre-teen pussy) have any validity, either Hopkins never heard them or felt its better not to bring them into the picture. Not that he can be blamed—there must have been incredible pressure on him from the Colonel's office, and when dealing with the Colonel discretion is the better part of plain good sense.

Less forgivable, in the opinion of many, is the author's failure to take a firm position aesthetically. Other biographers of Elvis, such as Hans Langbroek, have done this—and ended up writing about nothing but his Sun period. Certainly it's hard to draw the line, but I think most rock fans would agree that Elvis did little of value after returning from the Army. Yet a biography has to concern itself with the good as well as the bad, and to his credit Hopkins at least doesn't claim any merit for Elvis' later work in a rock 'n' roll sense until he reaches the 1970 Las Vegas appearances, only hinting several times that the Colonel's policies were responsible for holding him back.

Many would say that Elvis Presely simply doesn't rate a book this long (448 pages, including appendixes and discography), but here is one point on which Jerry Hopkins and I agree 100 percent. If anything, Hopkins has underrated Elvis' importance, his influence, his effect on the course of popular music. As rock's third generation continues the music's conquest of the world, it is unquestionable that future scholars will find this book to be one of the indespensible classics of rock history—no matter where Elvis goes from here. Greg Shaw

FACES INTERVIEW

FROM PAGE 15

Do you go into the studio knowing what you're going to do or work it out in the studio?

Ronnie: 50-50 in a way.

Ron: We're going to know what we're going to do on the next album.

Ronnie: To an extent. We still want to maintain a bit of spontaneity—

Ron: Oh yeah! It's the whole key.

Ronnie: It's still nice to discover a few things in the studio. I think we'll probably go in with the general idea this time. We don't really write too much in the studio anymore – it's too expensive. The old Faces used to do that. Phenomenal bills we used to have then.

Ron: We're using Glyn Johns on the next album, and we stand a lot better chance of going in and getting a spontaneous thing. We won't have to worry about the sound.

Did Glyn Johns produce any of the Small Faces records?

Ronnie: He should have got co-producer's credit, actually. We should have realized that. We didn't even think of it for awhile. He's definitely a good man.

Are you going to do a completely live album?

Ron: The album after next or the album after that one. We want to prove ourselves in the studio first.

Do you record all the concerts you do now?

Ron: We should, but we don't. It's a hell of a lot of expense.

Ronnie: If I had the mobile together it wouldn't cost us anything, because we'd just cart it 'round.

You're building a mobile studio?

Ronnie: Yeah. I've got a mini-van and a Sony cassette.

Sounds adequate.

Ronnie: It's one of Rod's lines in the British newspapers last week.

Ron: Yes. Ronnie's really trying with his thing, and Rod went and blew it on him.

How long were the Faces together before First Step was recorded?

Ronnie: About eight months. Because we had so many business problems to overcome. Rod was signed to Mercury, and that was one thing. We were still signed to Immediate, and no-one would come hear us.

Immediate was still in business?

Ronnie: Oh yeah. They were still going strong – they had Humble Pie and all that, and were building a big building. They were throwing money left, right and center. It was their last fling.

Ron: We had so many contractual ornaments.

Ronnie: It's quite true what the young man just said there. It took about eight months to sort it all out . . . eventually Warners came and took it all over. They really saved our bacon.

How long did the album take to record?

Ronnie: About two weeks. One of the things that was wrong with that album was that we'd all been playing those numbers for quite some time.

From what I've seen, most people don't seem to like the English cover of Long Player.

Ronnie: Yeah, but I really like it.

Ron: Oh, it's great. It would have been on the American cover but it was ballsed up somewhere.

Ronnie: I hate that American cover – I can't take it. When I was about 13 in Art lesson I was given a chocolate box to design, and it was something very similar to that. And it was really 'orrible then.

Ron: It won the Gruesome Award of the year.

What about the lack of information on the American cover?

Ronnie: Yeah, there's been a lack of information all round, as far as our albums have gone. We really ought to try and give the people a little more information about our albums. It's just that it always seems to be a rushed thing at the end, and you can't keep hold of the rate, and all of a sudden you're told that the thing's been printed, and they can't possibly chuck it into the sewer.

Do you give them ideas for covers?

Ronnie: That last one was our idea. It was supposed to look like an old '40s record cover with a hole in it and really dodgy printing. I don't know who designed our American one – they ought to put him to sleep.

Ron: Oh, Stan Cornyn wouldn't like you to speak like that.

Ronnie: They didn't even put credit on it!

Friend: Yeah, you oughta put credits on

Are most of your studio recordings taped live?

Ron: It's as live as possible. We try and do it all in one, and then maybe I'll put a slide over it.

Do you think spontaneity is coming back into studio recording now, rather than perfection?

Ron: Things are really drifting away from the big studios; in England anyway. People are getting things together around their houses. I've even got a mixer, and am setting up a remote.

Is it very expensive to build your own studio?

Ronnie: It's fucking expensive.

Ron: I soundproofed it myself, and bought the mixer, which cost nearly 3,000 pounds.

Ronnie: My gear cost me so much money I can't buy a house to put it in.

Friend: Warner Brothers can get you a lot of the stuff really cheap probably.

Ronnie: No, I tried that. A lot of the stuff's built, and you can't do it.

Friend: Neil Young just did it through Warners. He got a 16 track machine.

Ronnie: Flash bastard. (Laughs)

Ron: But my house is only a little house – what would I do with a 16 track?

Ronnie: Have a good time.

Ron: I suppose so . . .

Ronnie: The nice thing about having your own studio is that it's great to be able to do things at your own leisure. If things are taking a lot of time it won't cost you a lot of money. Which is a drag. It does tend to lay on your mind sometimes about how much a thing is beginning to cost. For the first couple of weeks you don't give a fuck, you just do it. But after that you begin to realize what the bill is and you're still nowhere near finished.

How much did Long Player cost?

Ron: £10,000 - 12,000.

Ronnie: But there's a lot of stuff that we never used. And never will be.

Ron: Of course that was spread over recording on our own, in England, the Fillmore . . . There's "The Mariner," which we never used.

How much does the Stones Mobile cost?

Ron: That's what I call expensive, may I use that word.

How much was it?

Ronnie: 200 quid a day. But that's a whole day.

You were in Mick's house?

Ronnie: Yeah, but I don't think you can do that anymore. Some neighbour complained to the Council about all these rock groups driving across the fields at all times of the day and night.

Do you see the studio as an environment to be used for all its capabilities, or just a place to record what you do live?

Ronnie: Now, we use it just to record what we do live.

With the Small Faces it was to get whatever you could out of it?

Ronnie: Yeah . . . it was a bit gimmicky . . . it was interesting. We'd never done it and there we were. We had a really great studio and we just got carried away with it. Unfortunately, we could never reproduce anything on the fucking stage. And seeing how everyone was screaming anyway, we never tried.

How do you find girls screaming at your concerts now?

Ronnie: Now?

Ron: Screaming?

Yeah. When I saw you there were all these girls screaming, "I love you, Rod," taking pictures like mad. It was just like Beatlemania.

Ronnie: I know what you mean, but it's not like the old days. It's not like "yaaah!." it's more, "Hey, you bastards!"

It's more than you see for any other group.

Ron: That's good old rock and roll for you, isn't it? . . . We played a little gig in England just before we left. It's called the Fillmore North, in Newcastle, and Rod got frightened. He's never had any screaming before. It's always been blues and a bit of this, that and the other – generally mature audiences. And now we're getting popular in England, and he's going through the same bit of the lead singer, Rod Stewart, and all that, and we got on stage and all these little girls are going, "Rod!!!," and he's up at the back of the stage, because they were all running forward. He really got frightened.

Ron: Ooh yeah, it's really frightening, those little girls. They're really hard. They're like 16 year old boys. You get eight of them on you and it's the end of the line.

What about the rumours that you wreck all the hotels you stay at?

Ron: It's a bit of an exaggeration. That's what used to go on, now it's just a reputation. They all expect it, and get security guards turning out. We've only wrecked about four on this tour . . . The biggest gathering this time was in Toledo, Ohio, where we were staying at Howard Johnson's. The police came as soon as we arrived and said, "Look, we haven't come to talk. The next time we come it'll be to beat someone's head in." Everyone was passive, looking around, sitting in the corner. People were sleeping on the lawn in the morning –

Ronnie: There were about 400 people there, and they were all quiet. As soon as anyone made any noise, everyone would go, "Shhh, you want to get your head beaten in?" They were for real those police; they nearly dragged me off. I was trying to explain to them that it was all going to be all right and they grabbed me and said, "Oh, he'll do."

How do you find it in the Midwest?

Ron: It hurts when you see the police reaction on audiences. Last night even, in Houston, some little guy came on to pat Rod on the back, and Rod was sort of, "Yeah, great." The guy turned around, and the police got hold of him and smashed him off the stage. Rod turned 'round and oooh. He's had a go at the police about five times this tour.

Ronnie: He'll come unstuck one night.

Does Rod plan his albums out much in advance?

Ron: He knows exactly what he wants. He suddenly goes into a shell, and you can't talk to him, and you think, "What's wrong with Rod?" And he comes out a couple of weeks later and the whole album's planned, and he's back on the booze again. You go to his house for a couple of nights and get a few things together and then bang into the studio and you get the spontaneity.

Is he still going to produce David Ruffin?

Ron: No, there's too many legal ties. It's a shame.

Do you relish the thought of becoming "superstars"?

Ron: No, it frightens me. You tend to lose your communication with an audience – and people in general – when you start getting too big. When we first came over here we had some lovely times, and you could talk to some really nice chicks. But now you get so many little groupies . . . it's terrible.

Fats Domino

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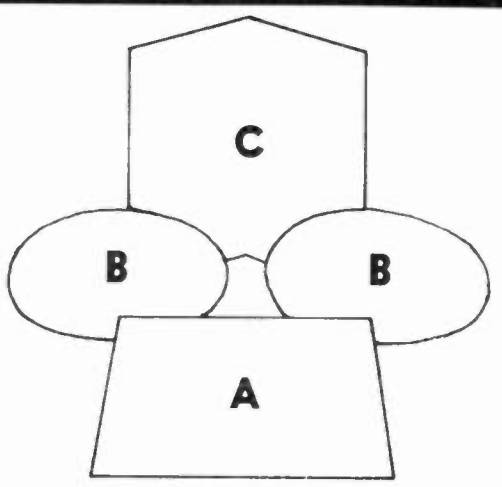

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