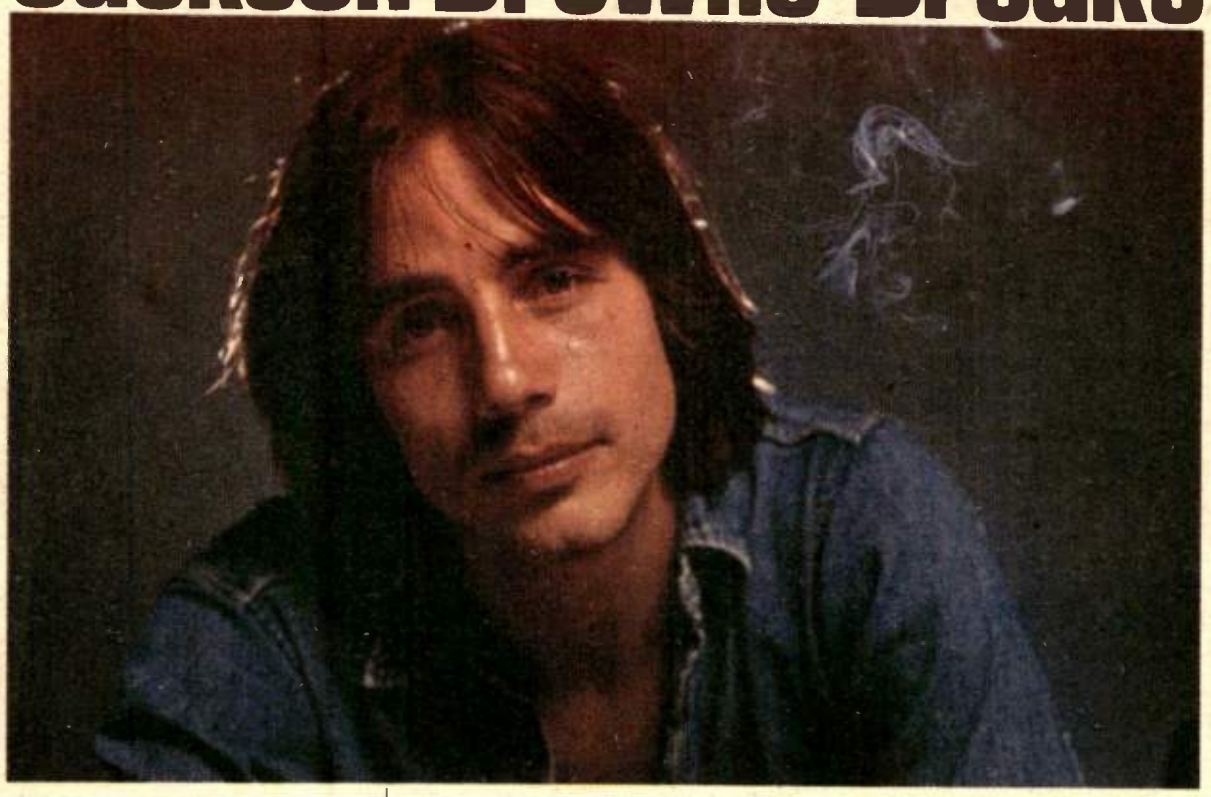
THE SAN LUIS OBISPO

PHONOGRAPH

FREE FROM KZOK

#73 November, 1976 "All The News Tha

Jackson Browne Breaks Silence



By MITCH COHEN

CHARLOTTESVILLE VA.—Jackson Browne sat relaxing in a dingy locker room beneath a domed hall at the University of Virginia. It had been a particularly successful college date; by all accounts the best so far on this two-month national tour.

It hasn't really happened yet for Browne. Although he is among the most revered recording artists of our time, and a consistent earner of gold records, somehow he never made that final step.

However, the new LP, *The Pretender*, will probably be for Jackson what previous albums have been for his Asylum musical contemporaries; his *Court and Spark*, *One of These Nights*, *Heart Like a Wheel*—the one to bring him a mass audience. On the eve of its release, Jackson spoke candidly about the record and its relation to his troubled existence over the past two years.

BOSTON: Fastest Selling New Act of the Decade

By JAMES ISAACS

CAMBRIDGE, MA.—On a cool, overcast evening in late August, Boston's rock press, deejays, record store owners and personnel, rack jobbers, and sundry grafters climbed aboard the *S.S. Peter Stuyvesant* to celebrate the debut LP of a five-piece band that was named for, but had never played, "the Athens of America." Listening to the group Boston's fledgling album, one observer nonchantly commented, "The key to their music is that it's totally selfless without a lot of studio technique." Their sources are impeccable; I head bits of Bowie from Ronson, Stealer's Wheel, and Todd. I suspect they'll sell millions of records."

Less than two months later, by which time Boston had made their initial concert appearance before the hometown fans, it was clearly apparent that the observer's half serious soothsaying was more than a little prophetic—the *Boston* disc had sold nearly a half-million copies, and the single, "More Than a Feeling," was closing fast on the national Top Ten.

Though many popular music observers have hence speculated that Boston's sudden emergence might be in part accountable to their sounding like a number of prominent groups, Tom Scholz, group leader, claims to have never even heard most of Boston's supposed influences. "I used to love Joe Walsh," he said, "and years ago I listened a lot to Beck's *Truth*. But I was pretty isolated for the past three years; I worked at Polaroid, then played live music at night. I didn't listen to the radio much either."

Ozark Mountain Daredevils Dollar Concert Series Hits U.S.

By ROBERT DUNCAN

NEW YORK CITY—Fourteenth Street is just about the sleaziest, most run down thoroughfare in the whole of Manhattan Island, about as far from the goodness of nature as one can get. The Ozark Mountain Daredevils are here, though, spread out around a huge table at a touristy German-gothic restaurant, taking a breather from an extensive "one-dollar-a-ticket" national tour to promote their latest album, *Men From Earth*.

The Ozarks. Aren't they that hillbilly band? Wrong. They're the band that did that Todd Rundgren song about the girl on drugs, "Jackie Blue." They're that band that's supposed to be made up of all farmers from Kansas and Missouri, but it turns out that's not true either. It's all very confusing. But then again, that seems to be the nature of the beast.

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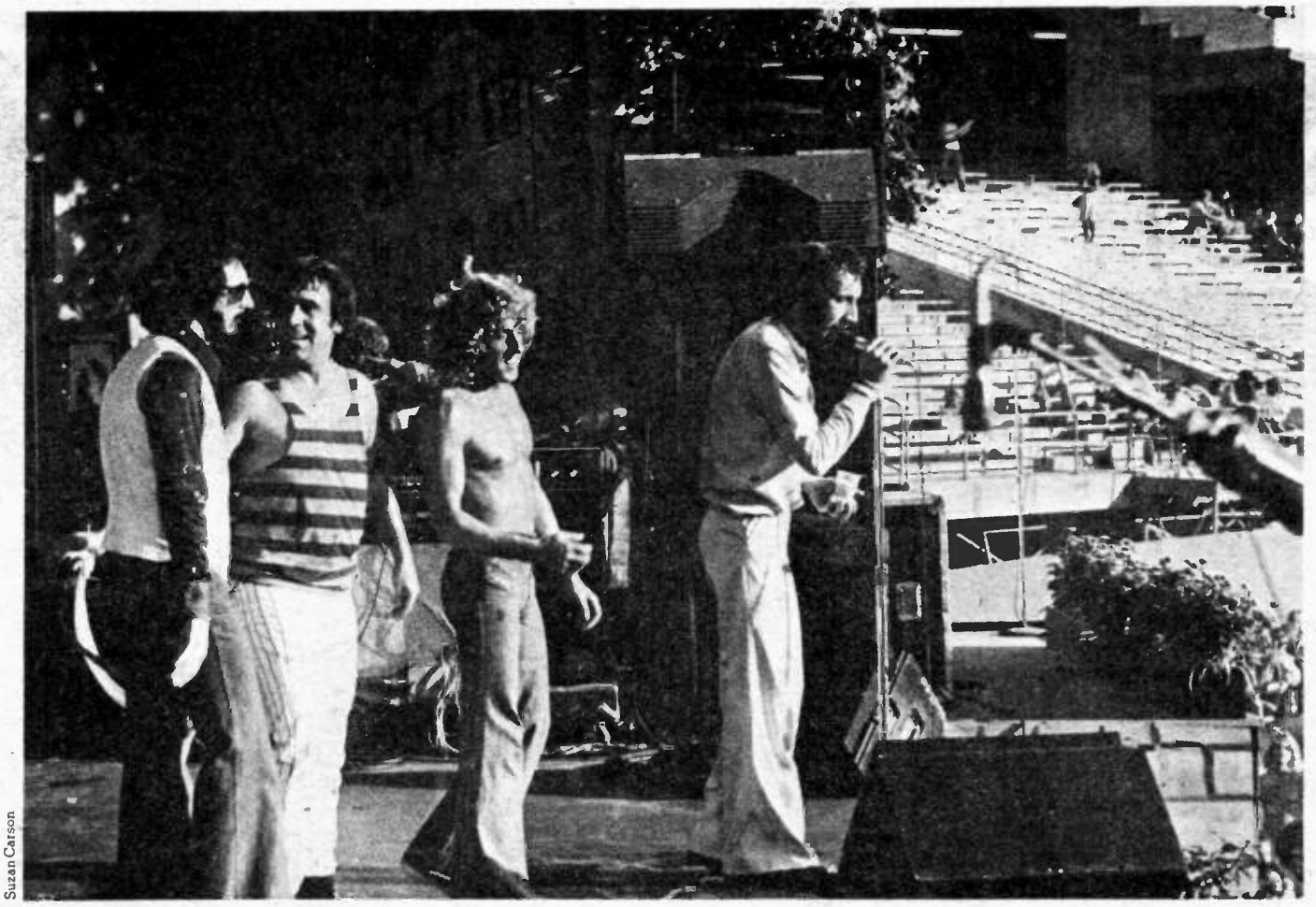


Suzan Carson

Performances

THE WHO
THE GRATEFUL DEAD
Coliseum Arena
Oakland, Calif.

By TERI MORRIS

While Wavy Gravy stalked the press section of the Oakland Coliseum Outdoor Arena handing out flyers for the Nobody for President kick-off rally, the Grateful Dead strolled through a three hour set that showed only a few signs of the spaced-out excesses so characteristic of their past performances. A noticeably greying Jerry Garcia led the band through "Mississippi Half-Step Uptown Toodeloo," taking the kind of economical guitar break one hardly expects from anyone connected with the Dead. Still, playing at 11 o'clock in the morning to a crowd of at least 50% Who fans, they knew they would not be indulged if they launched into one of their customary hour long jams. With the exception of "St. Stephen" (which included a good portion of "Not Fade Away"), the Grateful Dead showed remarkable restraint, varying tempos, singers, and styles with deceptive casualness. Skillfully guiding the audience up to a proper energy level to anticipate the Who, they closed with a rollicking "One More Saturday Night."

By the time the Who had finished their set with "Won't Get Fooled Again," the sun was shining directly into their eyes. Roger Daltry had shed his Fillmore East jersey, and Peter Townshend's scissor leaps and twisting jumps came less frequently than they had when he'd started over an hour before with the snotty-nosed chords of "I Can't Explain." In top form for "Baba O'Riley," Keith Moon showed no signs of repeating his performance of a few years ago when he passed out and was replaced by a member of the San Francisco audience. As usual, John Entwhistle remained the band's cornerstone, singing "My Wife" (introduced by Daltry as "the most horrible of all" his songs) and accepting birthday congratulations with a reserve that complimented Daltry's microphone slinging and Moon's wild-eyed races around the stage. If the public's love for the Who is cooling, the 97,000 who attended their two Bay Area dates gave little indication.

Between sets the audience was dosed with a heavy shot of mid-sixties rock over the P.A. Perhaps "Tell Her No," "You Really Got Me," and "Not Fade Away" were intended as a time reference—some way of suggesting to those who cheered loudest for "Squeeze Box" and the *Tommy* songs that the Who were somehow linked to those snappy 45s and the years in which they were made. Though the Grateful Dead's attraction depended equally on the audience's memories, it was a sense of community and common experience that Jerry Garcia's straining voice stimulated with "Back to Tennessee"—not rock and roll history. Bay Area fans treat the Dead as long standing friends with whom they have shared many good and high times. Elbow to elbow, the seven members of the Dead achieve a family reunion status unduplicated by any other rock band in the world, and it's their hominess that makes the nostalgia palatable and their meanderings acceptable. For the Who, the task was much more difficult, and the songs and performances were more the key to their success or failure. A harsher criterion for judgement met the Who, and the fact that the Greatest-Band-in-the-World label has been pasted on them with too much enthusiasm too many times did not make matters easier. Nobody considers the historical implication of any Dead lyric the way they do "The simple things you see are all complicated, I look pretty young but I'm just back-dated." But every time a greedy, excited crowd screams 20 minutes for an encore they never get, you know the Who has scored one more victory over the changing tastes in rock and roll.

SEA LEVEL
The Cellar Door
Washington, D.C.

By DAVID HELLAND

The latest addition to the Capricorn stable isn't just another Southern-boogie band but the jazz-oriented Sea Level, who have an LP due early next year. This quartet started in early 1973 as We Three, a jam band that Allman Brothers Band drummer Jai Johnny Johanson put together to keep himself and the other members of the rhythm section—piano player Chuck Leavell and bassist Lamar Williams—busy when the Allmans weren't touring or recording.

This year, as it became obvious that the Allman Brothers Band would probably never get back together, the trio casually auditioned guitarists with a mind toward being a band until something more substantial came along. But a few days after Jimmy Nalls (he'd played with Leavell in bands backing Alex Taylor and Dr. John) showed up in Macon, they decided they in fact had something.

The core of Sea Level's act is its instrumentals—six of the nine tunes, more than three-quarters of the hour long sets—which take off into the realm of fusion jazz. At the Cellar Door, the group's set began with Leavell's "Tidal Wave," which alternately surged and soared, then became soft and smoothly fluid. This was followed, "for all the Allman Brothers freaks," by a reworked "Hot 'Lanta" with Leavell supplying fills, riffs and a diverse range of keyboard voices not found on the original.

The band had stated the theme twice and begun taking apart the song's components and rearranging them before many in the audience realized they were listening to Paul Simon's "Scarborough Fair Canticle." Sea Level celebrated the Bicentennial in the same way. Jai began a march rhythm on his snare followed by three blasts on a referee's whistle, the signal for the band to move into "Patriotic Flag Waver." The band twisted and turned through a medley of "My Country Tis of Thee-Dixie-Yankee Doodle Dandy-The Star Spangled Banner-America the Beautiful" before Jai resumed his high school marching band drumming and another whistle blast to end the song. It was fun and funky.

Besides playing a lightning fast jazz-rock style guitar and a solid groove-style rhythm, Nalls is also excellent on slide. Backed by a rock solid rhythm section, he and Leavell are given plenty of room to stretch out and in four shows—two crowded the first night, two SRO the second—they proved they are able to creatively fill up that space.

VICIOUS DIRT, RUMORS and SCANDALS from HOLLYWOOD

by Rodney Bingenheimer

"If it's trendy I'll print it"

Rodney was recently ravaged by week-long visits by his three favorite pop bands, the **Bay City Rollers**, **Led Zepplin**, and **Kiss.** They arrived here virtually simultaneous, making enormous demands on my time and good humor, and as a consequence, I unnecessarily lost five girlfriends in one week—an all-time high. Anyway, the week left even me too pooped to pop. All I could think about was sleeping and new girlfriends to conquer. Along with the inevitable scars that love lost brings, my precious body also got bruised on a more physical level. I witnessed actual Rollermania at the taping of the New Year's Eve Midnight Special. Unfortunately, the swelled crowd got out of hand, and sparked a mini-riot, which resulted in the hospitalization of several tasty, young girls with fairly serious injuries [yum]. You will be able to spot Rodney on that show; right in there with the NBC pages holding back the throngs—I'm the one with **more** black and blue marks than the scantily clad little dish who was all tied up in the recent Rolling Stones print ads. Come to think of it, this might be a way of convincing Mick to put **me** on the cover of the next Stones album. I, of course, did grace one of their more outrageous jackets. Remember?

The Rollers' show, incidentally was the best T.V. show taping I've ever witnessed [that's up to and including Jimmy O'Neil's **Shindig**], still in all it was merely a prelude to what happened later that same week.

The Hollywood premiere of the Led Zepplin movie "The Song Remains the Same," had admittedly just a **touch** more class than the spectacular Rollers' taping. The movie, probably my favorite since "Woodstock" and "How to Stuff a Wild Bikini," was followed by a big "do" at **Le Bistro**. And since **I** do whenever there is a "do" in this sleazy town; I did! The bash featured a surprising turnout of this city's rank-and-file press. I tried ever so hard to ignore them, though one particularly obnoxious brat kept grilling me as to "what's happening?" I wouldn't give the nurd **Brian Wilson's** phone number if my life depended on it. I gave him Linda Blair's number ...on the condition that he ask her why she never returns my calls.

Also at the rather cheaply catered party [Stauffers level], were several Rainbow Bar & Grillers, the crowd that is usually 86'd pronto from such in-crowd gatherings. Looks like someone finally caught on that 30-year-old sex-starved secretaries, bald-headed sex-starved film distributers, and sterile record execs do not a party make. Nor do they nake a party for that matter. Frankly I doubt they make it with anybody.

My ex-girlfriend Debby and I mingled and exchanged pleasantries with **Tommy Bolin**, **Marty Bolin's** ambitious brother, **Joey Molland**, **Peter Asher**, **Joni Mitchell**, **Glen Hughes**, and my old Hollywood pal, **Linda Ronstadt**. **The Rolling Stones** album cover was not the only time I appeared with a 12-incher. Remember me on the **Stone Poney's** album cover, Linda? Some people think that was also me sitting with Linda on the cover of **Silk Purse**; which is of course just silly.

When the actual Zepplins finally arrived, **Plant** circled the room displaying a very special preference for his lady, Miss Pamela. Later, Robert trotted around the room with her piggy-back in grand kinky form. **Michael Des Barres** went even further—Percy picked him up off the ground and hugged him passionately with malice aforethought.

Percy subsequently allowed **Terry Reid** a lengthy audience—Reid by the way, was the original Zep's choice for lead singer until the lads spotted that tighty, brum boy Plant. Manager **Peter Grant**, **Jimmy Page**, **Bonzo Bonham**, and **John Paul Jones** held a 'private' audience in a back room with **Ron** and **Chrissie Wood.** Naturally I eavesdropped on the entire conversation, but journalistic integrity prohibits me from divulging the juicy moments. [Next issue of Groupie News will carry all the lurid details however, photos also]. Incidentally, look for Bonzo's forthcoming solo LP debut—Jimmy Page produced. Also coming up on the active Swan Song roster are lawsuits, big ones, between Zep and ex-Swan Song V.P. **Danny Goldberg**. Look for the explosive unveiling of some of the dirtiest pop laundry this side of Cleveland. For the first time in all the years **Led Zepplin** have been coming to Los Angeles, tearing Hollywood up and vice versa, their atrocities are Family Hour by contrast to LA's new deviate kings—that's **Kiss**. The Prince of Pop must declare **Kiss** undisputed Kings of this city. Their recent appearance on **Paul Lynde's** Halloween TV special brought unprecedented hysteria. It was, beyond a doubt, the best television show I have ever seen. When it comes to Radar Love, count **Kiss** in for a double dose of the stuff. My ex-girlfriend Nancy Tyndall and I ventured to the Rainbow one night after Tommy Bolin's smash Santa Monica Civic appearance. Another of Tommy's brothers, **Bolin' Jack**, opened the show. Anyway, I rendezvoused with **Gene Simmons** of **Kiss** at the Rainbow. Is that rock royalty or what. What is Gene anyway? All the kids ask me if he is really part computer and part iguana. Not being that intimate with Gene, I can't say for sure, but besides from being 10 feet tall, he's just plain folks. He has a word for everyone who comes his way. Few people have been nicer to me in all the ten years I've been in Hollywood. **Kiss** gave me 50 tickets to their recent Anaheim Stadium concert—it paid my rent for weeks. I can say without reservation that their upcoming **Rock and Roll Over** album is the best album I've heard.

One final note. Looking at the trade charts, I see **Jeff Beck** is selling better than ever this season. His **Beck Comes Alive** continues to be one of the largest and most consistent catalog titles of all time. My sources at Columbia inform me the record is moving-in fast on the all-time best pop seller, Carole King's **Tapestry** [Johnny Mathis notwithstanding]. Look out for Jeff's follow-up, another double live album, this one with the Jan Hammer group. Tentative title: **One More For the Road**. Oh yes, and where would we be if there wasn't a **David Forest**? I realize it's impossible but there ought to be a **Fun Productions** in every town. Nevertheless, I wasn't invited to any of their happenings this month, but if this issue reaches 'em soon enough, maybe I will be for the next.

Kathy Clary

Abba: Mamas & Papas of the '70's

By KEN BARNES

LOS ANGELES—The hottest group in the world recently flew into town, but only a scattered few knew they were even here. It's claimed that Abba have actually sold more records worldwide than any group except the Beatles. Other boasts being bandied—Abba's current American hit "Fernando" has been #1 in well over 20 different countries, and they're reputed to be Sweden's biggest export next to the Volvo. Admittedly, it's hard to get an accurate picture of exactly how huge globally Abba really are. But all over Europe, their singles go Top Five in a matter of days. In Australia, they've had five records in the Top Ten at once (shades, again, of the Beatles) and in England, their "Dancing Queen" recently completed its seventh straight week at #1.

In the United States, though, Abba are still essentially an unknown quantity, which explains why their Los Angeles stopover was hardly front page news. They have had hits here—"Waterloo," the wondrous "SOS," "Fernando,"—but it seems as if people are just discovering that this one Swedish quartet is responsible for all of those records over the last two years. In America, Abba are...not quite faceless, but nameless (the group moniker ABBA is an anagram of the members' first initials, Anna, Bjorn, Benna and Anni-Frid, who goes by Frida).

One reason for their invisibility is that they've never played live in the States (and rarely stage concerts anywhere). Benny Andersson, however, said that Abba wants to tour—"We are preparing a tour now for January, February, and March, playing in Europe, England and Australia."

What about America?—"When the time comes," he says. "We'll wait until there's a demand from the audience. We could come here as a supporting act, but it takes so much money and so much time to do it the way we want (a 13-piece band and *no* backing tapes)...We can wait," he concludes just a little smugly, an implicit reminder that Abba can manage to keep up the car payments without the U.S. market.

They are concerned about their relative invisibility, however, and to that end were taping six L.A.-based TV shows (*Dinah, Tony Orlando & Dawn,* etc.). For *Midnight Special*, Bjorn and Benny mimed guitar and piano while Anna and Frida sang "SOS," "Mamma Mia," "Fernando," and the upcoming follow-up "Dancing Queen." Attired in complementary white kimono outfits with embroidered plants and cacti and so forth, they looked like sort of a Nudie's High Karate Marshal Arts ensemble.

Another problem: A fresh-faced European pop group who makes bright and bouncy records that are played on AM radio is hardly calculated to warm the image-conscious hearts of America's powerful progressive FM programmers. And in America you need FM radio to sell albums; elsewhere Abba's album's go to #1 as fast as their singles, but here their LP sales lag far behind.

I tentatively broached the topic to Benny, asking him whether he was at all concerned about FM acceptance. He had his answer ready—"To start with, the main thing for us to do is the music *we* enjoy. If you like it you buy it, if you don't, forget it. We try to change every number—we don't do another one the same as the last one. We'd love for everybody in the whole world to love our music. That's what we're aiming for."

Already, Benny is doing much better than he could have dreamed when he was slogging up and down Sweden's outdoor rock circuit in the 60's with the Hep Stars. "I joined them in 1963—they'd been going for a year. Not one of the first bands, but the most popular. One of the reasons we became popular is we played good old rock & roll while the other bands played Beatles and Hollies stuff." The Hep Stars were Sweden's biggest band (they had a couple singles out here), and their catalog includes intriguing artifacts like "Farmer John," "Surfin' Bird," "Tribute to Buddy Holly," and the Beach Boys' "Hawaii." "I'm a Beach Boys fan. If we come close to what they've done I'd be happy."

Bjorn Ulvaeus, meanwhile was in a folk group called, appropriately enough, the Hootenanny Singers. "The Kingston Trio had their hits, and we were inspired to form a group...near the end of it we tried a little folk-rock." But mostly it was Swedish-language folk music, an album of which was released in the States as the Northern Lights.

Bjorn and Benny met while touring and decided to write together. "Then we stopped working," says Bjorn. "I think it was by the end of the Hep Stars, 1969 or 1970." They called themselves, appropriately enough, Bjorn & Benny, under which name a few singles came out on Playboy here—but after Abba had already been formed. Anna and Frida were both well-known singers, again mostly Swedish-language material (early Abba singles were recorded in both Swedish and English, but not any more). Bjorn continues, "We met with the girls on tour, we used them for backing. We wanted to do songs like we're doing now, and they wanted to do that, so we joined together to see what happened."

What happened was the refinement of perhaps the archetypal pop sound of the 70's. Bjorn and Benny, who write and produce the material draw on the production techniques of Phil Spector and Brian Wilson among others (Bjorn: "To be on the safe side we have people in Stockholm to whom we read the [English] lyrics to check details that might slip by us"). What they've added is the unique front-line unison vocals of Anna and Frida, which contribute an icy clockwork cast to the music, never mechanical or stilted, but attractively alien. Bjorn and Benny are also grand masters of the AM hook, as "Waterloo," "Mamma Mia," and that unforgettable chorus on "SOS" attest. Their albums are full of similar delights (as well as the occasional clinker, like the diabolical Connie Francis-styled "I Do I Do I Do I Do I Do").

Lately, Abba have branched out into new areas. "Fernando" is an enigmatic Latin-tinged tale of revolution and romance. Says Bjorn: "It's supposed to be puzzling—it's to create an atmosphere." "Dancing Queen," out here in January, could be their biggest hit yet. It's a frighteningly commercial song—the ghost of a Bo Diddley beat merging with the subtlest suggestion of Silver Convention strings creates a most captivating discoid number.

Abba seem quite content with their super-pop image. They're relaxed, assured, level-headed, and supremely confident that they'll reach their goal of conquering the world musically. Penetrating the FM barrier remains a stumbling block, but with their music—frothy enough to meet the lowest-common-denominator requirements of AM radio but internally fascinating enough to appeal to the most demanding pop connoisseurs—they may not even need FM. It looks as though Abba are, at this point, unstoppable.

Dave Edmunds Records for States? - Zeppelin's Plant says 'Of Course.'

By ROBIN KATZ


Kathy Clary

Dave Edmunds, more legendary in elite rock music circles than in actual charted pop mileage ("I Hear You Knocking," 1970) is giving up all he holds sacred. The multitracked Spector styled extravaganzas from Rockfield Studios, the maze of perpetual productions for other artists, and a long enduring attachment to elaborate gizmos which stretched the recording of a single track to months) are *distant* history.

The multi-instrumental Welsh equivalent to Stevie Wonder is down to merely three guitars, piano, and drums. He's writing his own songs, producing them, and releasing *Get It*, a brand new album with thirteen cuts. Characteristic of the LP is "Here Comes the Weekend," a frantic rockabilly number sung in perfect Everly Brothers' harmony which clocks in at 1 min. 58 sec. Is this any way to reinstate the perfect single as an art form? Dave Edmunds thinks so.

Edmunds made his first major musical move out of Cardiff circles in the late-sixties. His group, Love Sculpture, obliterated the British charts with their speedy version of Khatchaturain's classic "Sabre Dance." The group never followed up their success, however, and soon broke up. Edmunds cycled his profits into converting an old stable into a recording studio. He expanded the Rockfield Studios, located in the deserted Welsh countryside, and began churning out perfect replicas of old Sun recordings using ultra modern studio equipment. The critics called him a genius for his technique of reproducing Elvis, Chuck Berry and other vintage heroes so faithfully, but the general public continued to listen to the original versions, unaware of the charisma associated with musical forgery.

As Edmunds spread out, his studio exercises gained more notoriety. "The Rockfield Sound" was his distinctive invention of multi-layering guitars to sound like speeded up banjos, trembling voices, and tinny pianos. In addition to his solo success with "I Hear You Knocking," the introverted producer/engineer worked for Man, Brinsley Schwartz, Del Shannon, Foghat and the Flamin' Groovies, among others. Rockfield prospered and Edmunds went on to perform much of the music for the film *Stardust*. He continued to rank unchallenged as the definitive musician's musician.

This Spring, as his contract with RCA neared its expiration date, the company sent Edmunds to Los Angeles to clear his head out and hold a long-planned meeting with ex-Beach Boy Bruce Johnston. It was there that the much heralded axeman was blinded by the light.

"It always worried me," said Edmunds, speaking in gentle tones, "that I never stuck with one thing long enough to be identified with it. Even though diversity can sometimes come in handy, I still confuse people. On one hand it was very flattering to find hard core fans listening. Commercial success, though, can make you very paranoid. But I don't want to remain obscure forever. There has to be a happy medium.

"The first step was to stop producing. It was also the most frightening aspect. But you can't spend six weeks in a studio with someone and then have the energy to go in and cut your own material. I knew if I stopped producing, I'd have to face up to myself as an artist. If I had lost it, then I would have lost everything. But I also knew there was no way I was going to get a deal continuing as a producer. I had no incentive and no ideas."

[*cont'd. on pg. 21*]

JACKSON BROWNE, WINNING.

BY MITCH COHEN

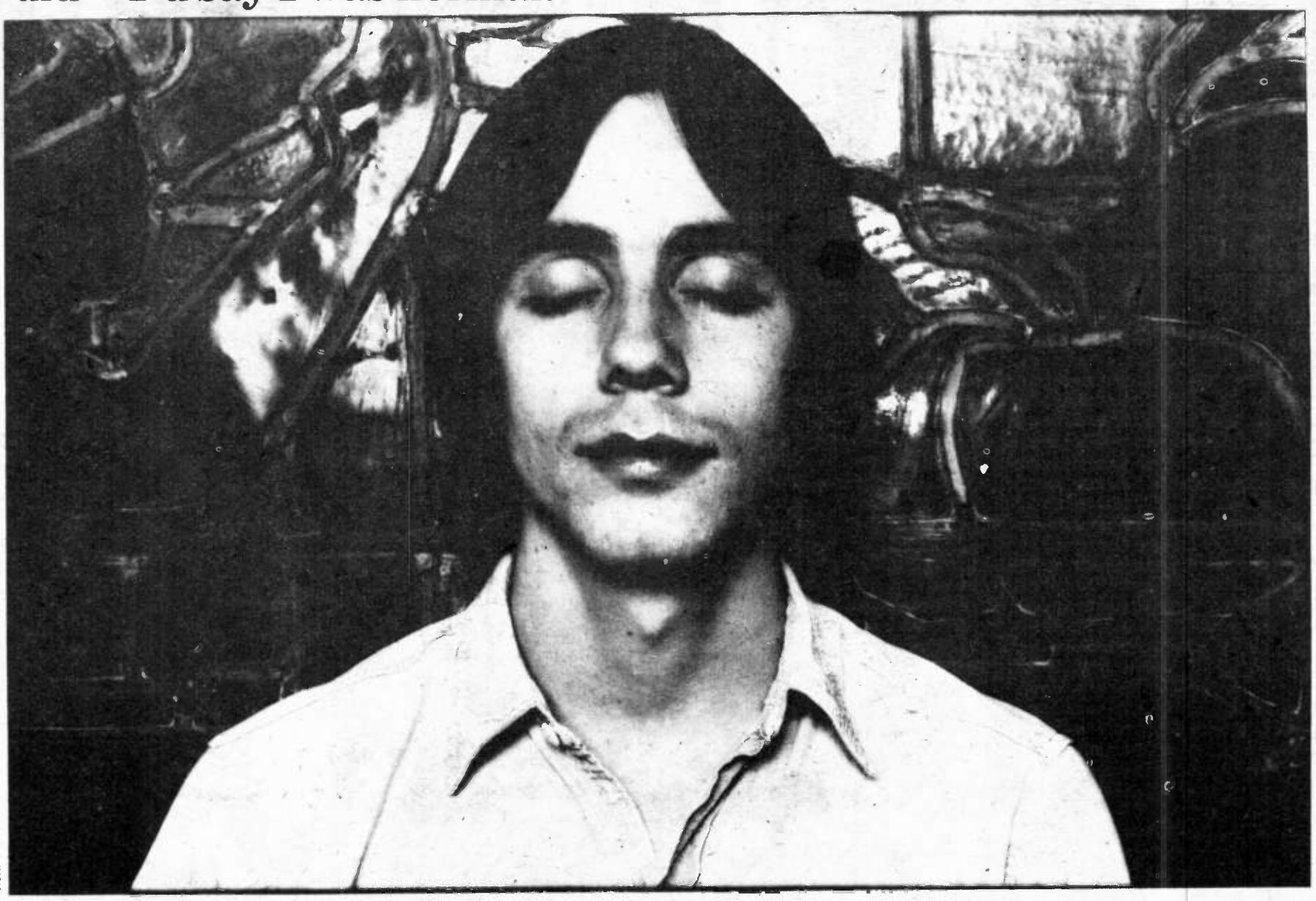
Jackson Browne sat in a locker room beneath a domed hall at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. It had been a particularly successful college date; by all accounts the best so far on this still-young concert tour. Following the second encore, guitarist David Lindley was positively jubiliant. "Does everybody remember what they played on 'Walking Slow'? Because that was *it*!" Down in the depths, Jackson seemed to be both exhilarated and exhausted.

After a two-year lay-off—probably the most traumatic and, yet, eventful period of his life—Jackson Browne is apparently ready for the big numbers now. His latest album, *The Pretender* is the one that they've been waiting for.

Even though his songs are self-revealatory, and the top-ten notwithstanding, the core of Jackson Browne remains elusive. Sometimes he seems like a fatalistic prince with an inherited curse hanging over him. A heartbreak Casanova with the quintessential features of the sensitive singer-songwriter: the lean bluejeaned physique, the wide eyes and almost pretty face. His main concern as articulated in his songs is how to reconcile his romanticism with his instinct for disaster. The elements, the realities of his daily world seem to be conspiring against him. But where did this conflict come from and how did he become so attuned to it?

also: Yoko, The Band, Grin, The Sweet, Lou Reed & the Velvets and Iggy on David Bowie!!

Growing Up:
I went through everything that everybody else did—I'd say I was normal.



Norman Seef

He has rarely spoken of his childhood or early adolescence, so to draw him into his early years, I requested that he respond to a quote by filmmaker Francois Truffaut, who said, "One works with what happens in the first twelve years of life, and this base is inexhaustible."

Jackson paused for a few moments, then answered, speaking in quiet, measured tones. "I'd make this one annotation to that—and I really dig Francois Trauffaut's work—I'd just say that most people go on living the first twelve, or maybe fifteen, years of their life. When they're forty and talking about something, it could just as easily be about something that happened to them when they were ten. In literal terms, though, I've never talked about anything that happened to me before I was fourteen or fifteen. I've answered questions about myself for years, answering every question that was put to me, but the fact is that most of them don't apply. Most of them aren't very illuminating. I don't avoid anything. In my songs I just choose to talk about certain things, and so yeah, there are some aspects of my character and personality that don't come out.

"There's nothing to say about those things. I think I went through everything that everybody else did. I'd say I was normal. Like high school. Everybody enjoyed some of it and didn't enjoy a lot of it and everybody had problems and everybody had memorable experiences. What I remember most is at one point spending a whole lot of time playing my guitar.

"I could tell you something that anybody else'll tell you, which is that school was incredibly inadequate as far as an education goes. That they centered on things that I believed were designed to keep you from discussing human and political issues. Instead of approaching the issues that mattered, it would be whether you were allowed to wear your shirt tails out, how long a girl's skirt could be. I remember it as being an incredibly limiting experience compared to what kids are capable of doing. School was a drag."

The last time he played the University of Virginia, it was in a little campus club with wooden walls and a door barely wide enough to get the equipment through. Tonight there were thousands of students looking down at him, and Jackson, lit by amber and lavendar spots—sitting at his piano or standing behind his microphone—sang his songs about elements in turmoil. It hasn't really happened yet for Jackson Browne. Although he is among the most acclaimed recording artists of our time, and a consistent earner of gold records, somehow he never made that final step. After *Late for the Sky*, instead of cashing in, knocking the last runner home, he retreated.

But *The Pretender* will probably be for Jackson Browne what previous albums have been for his Asylum stablemates; his *Court and Spark, One of These Nights, Heart Like a Wheel*—the one to bring him a mass audience. It sounds, well, the word that comes most to mind isforceful. How did this progression from the folk-oriented balladeer-to an introspective rocker come about?

"I give Jon the whole credit for that," he said softly, crossing his legs under him on the bench. "You know, he was a rock and roll writer, and so we had occasion to meet several times and we became friends. This was about a year and a half before he produced Bruce Springsteen. Before we began my record, Bruce's record was out about six months. We'd been talking about it for a while, and one reason I wanted to work with Jon was that he was around while we were recording Warren Zevon's record. His influence is there, too.

"An artist is always gonna be his own producer in some way. Always. I mean, I didn't do anything different on this album than I did on any other album I've made. The difference is adding a person. This is the first time I've worked with a producer who wasn't also an engineer. You see, I had just finished doing the first record I ever produced that I wasn't an artist on, and I just got an idea of what producing could be. There's never been a producer, there's only been artists and engineers on my records. There were quite a few times I was really glad to let Jon take the floor and talk with the drummer or work with the engineer to get a certain

[*cont'd. on pg. 16*]

Barry Schultz

"He's a fantastic artist, a great writer, and he's one of my best friends."

sound. And I had that function on Warren Zevon's album."

Zevon's LP was one project that kept Jackson busy during his hiatus from performing, a hiatus that included a long stay in Europe. "I went to France," he said, clearly bored by the subject. "But that was really, you know, it's funny. In the absence of any kind of activity at all, one or two little remarks about France, and Random Notes and people will focus on that. I did a lot of things. Private things. So there's nothing to say about France. I was just on a vacation."

Jackson was far more talkative and enthusiastic on the subject of Zevon, and how he became an Asylum recording artist. "I would modestly say that I had everything to do with it," he grinned. "I just said, 'hey, lemme make this record with Zevon,' and they said o.k. I think Warren's a fantastic artist, a great writer, and he's also one of my best friends. They knew about Warren. Before they let me make a record with him, they signed a publishing thing with him and kept him on salary for a long time. Asylum only wants to make so many records, and things take priority. Asylum's really a small label. Elektra was always a small label. At a certain point I think that each of them has expanded a little farther than their means, but they always come back to a core of people. One nice thing about them is that they knew about Warren for a long time and were interested, but waited for a time when they considered they could do a good job on him. It's a huge responsibility to take somebody who's never recorded a record, whom they admire, and they don't want to blow it.

"It's true," Jackson admitted after prompting, "he had an album out, and it was produced by Kim Fowley, on Imperial. We don't even refer to that. Imperial was sort of an extension of Liberty, and Liberty was like a non-label. They had Jackie DeShannon. The only thing that was going on that anybody considered happening at all was A&M, Elektra and Warners in the late sixties and early seventies. And of course Columbia always had some great people, but a lot of people also got lost out there."

Those artists that have wound up on Asylum—Mitchell, Ronstadt the Eagles, Chris Hillman, as well as Browne and Zevon—form a sort of loose California-consciousness community. I asked Jackson if he believed there was such a thing as an 'L.A. sensibility.' "That's a good phrase. I don't know. We're all from L.A. There is a definite sort of unified sensibility there, yeah. If you include Jack Tempchin and the Funky Kings, and include Danny O'Keefe and Tom Waits, and a lot of people. J.D. But there are many threads, because there are so many of us."

The Pretender is filled with threads that have run through Browne's work. "The Fuse" is a natural culmination of the apocalyptic themes from his earlier albums. "Your Bright Baby Blues' is an explicit mining of his R&B roots. "Here Come Those Tears Again," written with his mother-in-law, sounds like a hit single. And the four songs that make up side two of the LP form a nakedly personal suite about subjects close to Jackson: his son, his father, his wife, his own doomed romanticism.

"The whole album is a cycle. Because more happens on the second side it's more obvious that there's a continuity. That's only because the first side is preparatory. Like without having "Your Bright Baby Blues" where it is, then "Sleep's Dark and Silent Gate" wouldn't mean as much if you didn't have it there. The things discussed on the first side really come to a head on the second side, so it appears as if the second side is more connected, but it's not really. If you turn the record after 'The Pretender,' 'The Fuse' happens naturally."

Getting the album in shape was an extraordinarily long process, and I asked him about his writing and working methods to get some feel of its developments. "Well, I began writing 'The Fuse' during the time I was making my first album. And the song for my father I was writing in 1968. These things are like fragments, pieces, and you put it aside because you know that you're not going to get down to the heart of it in the next couple of months, and you write something else. If they're not finished they're not finished is what I guess I mean. I might come back to it. They have a way of just sitting around.

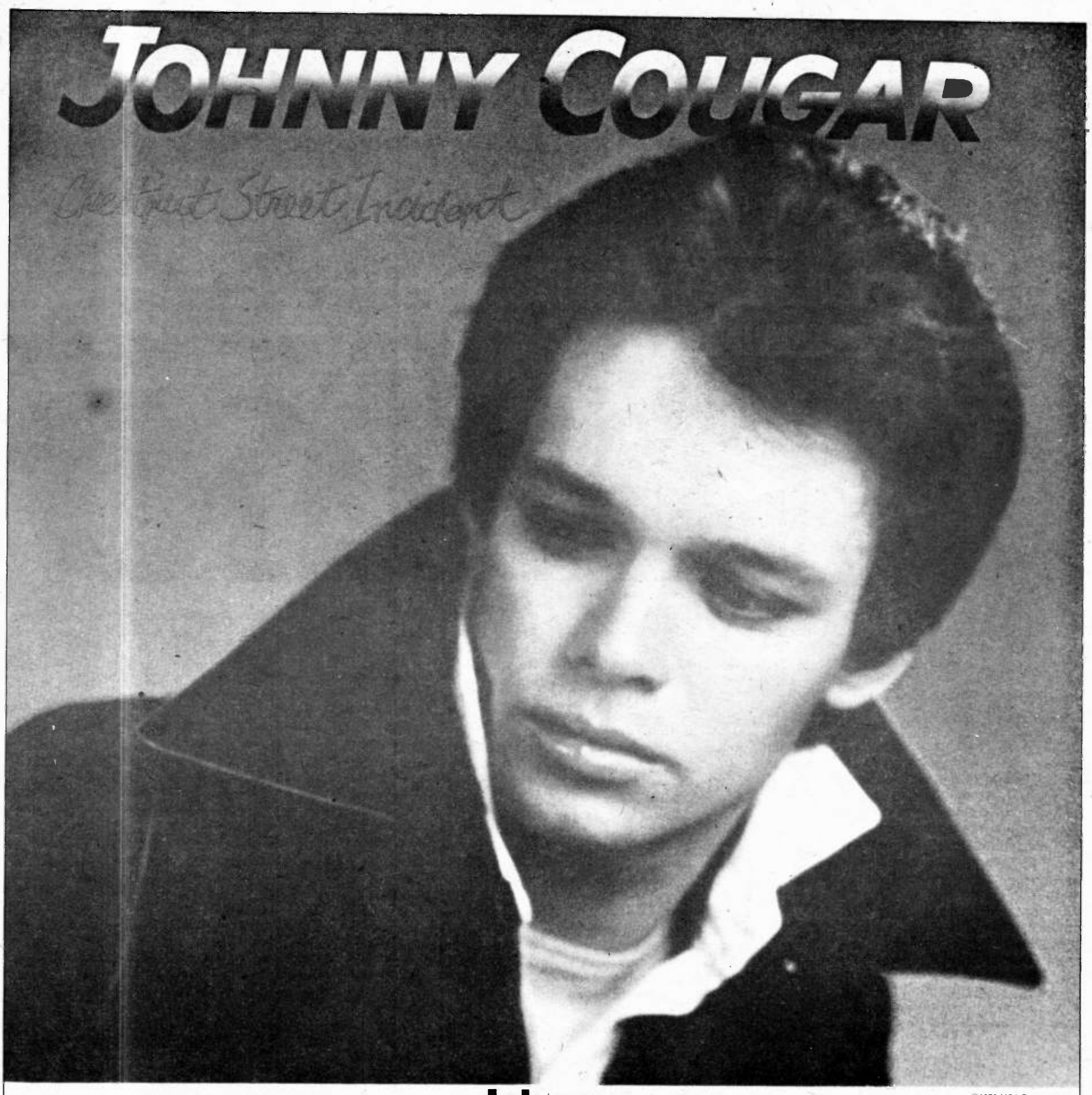
"I've spent longer on albums. *For Everyman* took longer. I've been in the studio since November. *Late For the Sky* took six weeks. *For Everyman* took nine months. Sometimes you're gonna be sitting there in the studio wondering what the hell you're doing. You may take several shots at a song over a period of months. You may have something you really like and decide you're gonna have to do it again, or add a verse. So in spite of the fact that many of these songs were begun five or six years ago, and others in the past year—'Here Come Those Tears Again' and 'Linda Paloma'—I don't think any of the songs were finished when I went in to cut them."

One other precedent being broken with the release of *The Pretender* is the inclusion for the first time of a lyric sheet, an addition bound to please the LP's purchasers. "I'm gonna do it this time. My producer told me I should do it and I took his advice. Before, I thought that they should be heard as sound as well as words, and the idea, the prospect of somebody reading along to the record...But I began to realize that there were some instances in which some words could be mistaken. And also on this album there are a lot of counter-parts. There are a lot of things being said at the same time as the lead vocal and I didn't want to lose it so I took the precaution. I guess all they have to do is read it once or twice and they know what those words are for sure. It's not like they're gonna sit down and read the words every time. Also, I'll tell you the truth, in writing them out I felt better about having done it because maybe more than many other songs I've written, all the songs on this album read well. I enjoy reading them."

While Jackson and his band were on stage that night in Charlottesville, in nearby Williamsburg, Virginia, in another college auditorium, the final Ford-Carter debate was being held, which brought to mind Jackson's brief role in this year's campaign, a role he felt needed some clarification.

"Don Henley called me up and said, 'do you wanna do this benefit for Jerry Brown?' Henley Kissinger we call him sometimes. The long and the short of it is, I'd rather do benefits to save an area of the California Redwoods from being logged, to save the San Francisco Peaks of Flagstaff, Arizona from being developed by ski resort people, or to get money for an Indian school. We did a lot of work for Proposition 15 in California , which is a thing that is maybe the most important issue that has arisen in hundreds of years, and probably the most important one that will arise for many hundreds of years, if there are hundreds of years left.

[cont'd. on pg. 18]



Presidential Politics? "I think it's really a jerk-off."

Phil Ceccola

[cont'd. from pg. 16]

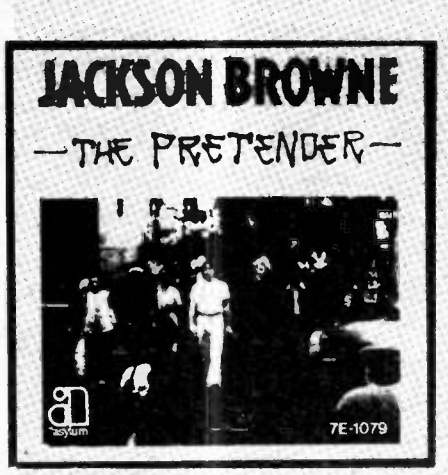
"I just think that a candidate is more fallible. I don't feel very happy supporting candidates, and it took going down there to see what a slimy thing a presidential race is. The Eagles and Linda went to a dinner with Jerry, and I wasn't aware of the fact that he had like a non-stand on nuclear issues. So at the time, I told Don that I'd do it. I sorta figured like I owed them one, and my feeling was, well, anything you guys wanna do I'll do it with you. As far as Brown being the Governor of California, I like him. I don't like candidates and I don't like presidential politics at all. I think it's really a jerk-off. You can quote me. That machine will eat anybody. I don't think it takes a bad man or a good man to be President. I don't think a good man will survive any better than a bad man. The office is a man-eater. I didn't vote in this election."

There are subjects that Jackson would, perhaps understandably, prefer not to be queried on. Some because he's talked about them too much in the past and doesn't feel he can shed any new light on them, some because they're too personal. Despite at least two questions designed to lead tactfully into a discussion of his wife Phyllis' recent suicide, he never picked up the cue, referring to the matter only once in the most oblique terms as one reason for the new album's delay. With a clumsily transparent ploy, I tried to get him to talk about his oft-rumored romances at an early age with some of music's more luminous belles, his rep as a flaxen-haired teenage Lothario. Jackson, being no fool, didn't fall for it, and expressed his displeasure unequivocally.

"You've opened up a whole topic and I'm just gonna skip it. I'll just say that Warren Beatty is rumored to have said once that fame is a collection of misunderstandings which surround a person. And that would be one of them."

The Charlottesville concert was supposed to finish with rock and roll, the leave-'em-on-their-feet songs like "The Road and the Sky" and "Doctor My Eyes." Another song was demanded, however—foot-stomping and a semi-circle of flickering matches—so the band filed back on stage. The last number was the new album's title cut, a song that finds its hero "caught between the longing for love and the struggle for legal tender." And the crowd was stilled as they heard about a person who "started out so young and strong, only to surrender." "Say a prayer," Jackson sang, "for The Pretender." You could almost hear a collective "Amen" as the house lights came on.

"Jackson has further narrowed the gap between direct experience and poetic translation, investing these songs with a passion matching their intelligence."



THE PRETENDER
Jackson Browne
Asylum 7E-1079

By SAM SUTHERLAND

Jackson Browne's fourth and best album draws its power from a stunning tension of opposites: he continues to revise and refine many of the same musical and poetic elements explored on earlier records, yet he dramatically transforms his recorded style; his new songs sustain a high seriousness that inhibits even brief flashes of the wry humor that provided relief on past albums, yet he achieves a musical immediacy rivalling the most infectious pop singles; his perceptions strip away the mythology of romance from his new dramas, yet his performances are the most passionate of his career.

Browne has set dangerously high goals for the eight songs that comprise *The Pretender* in pitting an unflinching, almost pitiless candor against his richest and most adventurous melodic ideas. Such grave ambition would seem lofty enough for a songwriter viewed through the late 60's art song mien of his earliest interpreters, yet Jackson himself raises the stakes further by refusing to record these songs in the low-keyed, thoughtful style their subtlety would seem to suggest. Because he grew up with rock 'n' roll as well as folk music, he still seeks pop energy as well as poetic depth, and the best songs here attain both: simply put, you can dance while you cry.

This critical balance between passion and introspection is measured by a number of departures from past works. His strongest suit has always been the ballad, and here Browne uses this as the basic unit of measurement. Yet don't assume the album inevitably follows a gentle, moody pace, for while there are no flat-out rockers like "The Road and The Sky" or "Redneck Friend," the overall tone is tougher and more rhythmic than any previous set.

The primary source for that momentum is Browne's new approach to ballad form. He still shapes his melodic ideas from generic roots visible in his first album—folk, rock, hymns, gospel and blues—but now he grafts these elements together with a striking directness. "The Fuse," which opens the album, summarizes the approach, slipping from brooding, minor-keyed introduction to pensive, major-keyed melody, building gracefully through the overlapping dialogue between singer and chorus (a vocal technique Browne uses increasingly here), and then shifting unexpectedly into an exuberant gospel shout. Jackson's vocal stylings measure similar stylistic transitions throughout the album, fusing elegant romantic melodies with plaintive blues phrases. At the same time, the instrumental settings parallel singer and song by encompassing swing horn choruses, r&b bridges or abstracted improvisations to alter the songs' emotional landscapes.

Browne's themes, like his melodies, are also explicit extensions of his earlier work, yet here too he achieves vivid new effects. At the heart of his writing is an ongoing dialogue with the self that translates even the simplest lines into potential questions: intimations of mortality, premonitions of apocalypse, meditations on meaning itself are root forms drawn from an existential base line. In evoking "the resignation that living brings," as he qualified this perspective on his last album, he has further narrowed the gap between direct experience and poetic translation to invest these songs with a passion matching their intelligence.

"The Fuse" diagnoses a central Browne malaise, alienation, through an image of a "long distance loneliness rolling out over the desert floor." That locale is a careful image, not a stock bit of country-rock scene setting; Jackson's desert is an archetypal wasteland amplifying the song's initial sense of alienation. Yet here lyric, like melody, undergoes a startling shift in tone to serve as both perceptual link to earlier Browne visions and a measurement of change: "For every... living thing time runs like a fuse/And the fuse is burning," sings Jackson, triggering the song's transition into a driving, determined gospel of apocalypse. The deluge forecast at the end of *Late For The Sky* is still a certainty, yet the singer's quiet strength in the earlier song has evolved into triumph, the deluge itself perceived through "The gentle sound of the waters lapping on the higher ground."

The song's sense of transcendance can be seen as a major feature of the entire album. These are Browne's most painful, bitter encounters, that gentle humor in earlier songs is survived only by oblique, cryptic mannerisms that imply a new, cynical cast to certain lines. Yet the album's final spirit is tough and triumphant. In assessing family ties, matching fatherhood ("The Only Child") with his own parental conflicts ("Daddy's Tune"), or testing the limitations of love ("Here Come Those Tears Again"), the victory is cathartic, gained only after harrowing pain.

"Your Bright Baby Blues," one of the oldest songs on the album (and clearly one of the most moving), explores that darker side through a classic blues metaphor, the highway. The singer's journey is described with an offhand simplicity that belies the richness of Browne's imagery. As he moves from the road itself to other possible escape routes—a lover's "sweet tenderness," or a "friend's dubious offer of artificial ecstasy—he reshapes the melody phrase by phrase, transforming a weary blues into a surging hymn. Although the final verse is charged with ambiguity ("...lead me to the hole in your garden wall/And pull me through"), the sense of release is explicit. The song's spare, moody setting perfectly frames the vignette, with Lowell George paring away the ornate grace notes that are his trademarks to provide a backing vocal and slide guitar that are simple, brilliant evocations of Browne's emotions.

The album's last two songs form an emotional coda that restates this painful process in larger terms. "Sleep's Dark and Silent Gate" follows "Song For Adam" and "For A Dancer" as a concise meditation on death, eclipsing those earlier songs through an elegiac melody that mirrors the raw emotion of the lyric. Browne's vocal performance is emotionally devasting, reinforced by a rich chorus that echoes the opening line of "Your Bright Baby Blues" to suggest that the singer remains trapped by the highway.

The final song is "The Pretender," an ambitious anthem which continues Browne's earlier parables of social collapse and redemption. In that respect the song points back to "Before The Deluge," "For Everyman" and "Rock Me On The Water" in its underlying concern for a sense of social responsibility nurtured by 60's idealism. Unlike those songs, the frame of reference is first-person, and the narrative begins with

I'm gonna rent myself a house
In the shade of the freeway
And then I'll pack my lunch in the morning
And go to work each day
And when the evening rolls around
I'll go on home and lay my body down
And when the morning light comes streaming in
I'll get up and do it again.
*Amen.**

It is a modest middle class dream, easily rejected in the confident idealism of that earlier epoch. But the next verse challenges our assumption that Browne's vision is satirical: he witnesses the passing of those earlier goals ("Were they only th fitful dreams of some greater awakening?"), and that perception alters the impact of the chorus dramatically. "Caught between the longing for love and the struggle for the legal tender," the singer ultimately casts his lot.

To detail the decision would be spoiling the effect. But the final impact of the song again relies on a sense of strength seemingly inconsistent with the song's bitter climax yet explicated by Browne himself: "Say a prayer for the pretender," he asks, asking, in effect, that we say that prayer for ourselves as well.

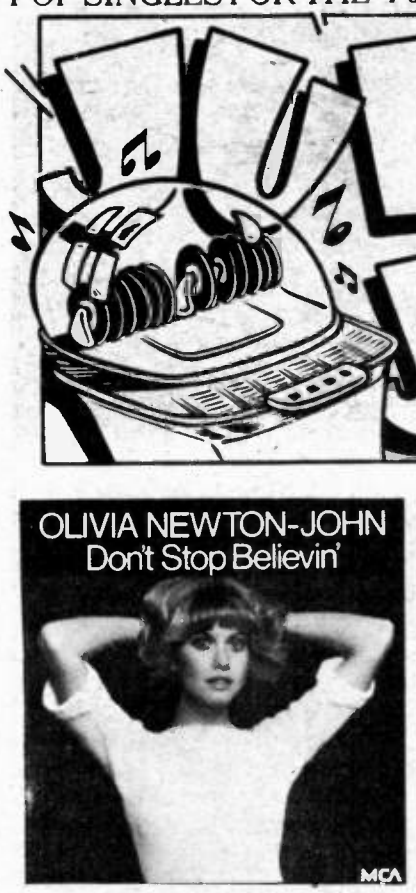
Browne and producer Jon Landau frame these songs with a broader pop style than past albums while adhering to the spareness of basic rhythm arrangements needed to showcase Browne's voice and lyrics. By using familiar West Coast studio musicians in place of Jackson's band, Landau frees Browne to really concentrate on singing, and his vocal performances here are his most dramatic and assured. As for the players, they forge a more focused yet flexible ensemble style that vindicates the decision to risk the lifeless sheen studio polish that sometimes mars such essentially intimate music.

The rhythm sections—drummers Jeff Porcaro and Jim Gordon, and bassists Lee Sklar, Chuck Rainey and Bob Glaub—are especially impressive, minimizing extraneous flourishes to set up a powerful backbeat crucial to Browne's precarious synthesis of ballad form with a harder rock pace. With keyboards and guitars similarly reined by the need for economy, the basic instrumental style clearly builds on the keyboard-based approach Browne has gradually favored. To that format, Browne and Landau add more dramatic production effects—string choruses, horn sections and even a Mexican string band—yet the album's production scale is matched by the power of the songs.

POP SINGLES FOR THE '70s

JUKEBOX JURY

By Greg Shaw



OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN
"Every Face Tells a Story"
MCA 40642

My hands-down favorite this month, and no one was more surprised than me when the announcer came on and revealed who was responsible for this lusty, hard-rocking pop masterpiece. Olivia! I still can't get over it. It sounds like whoever put the bomp in the Bay City Rollers' sound has taken charge of the girl, throwing out all tradition and overdubbing her voice until it burned with the surging power of a young Ronnie Spector of Dusty Springfield. It's the best thing on the air right now...

SWEENEY TODD
"Roxy Roller"
London 244

NICK GLIDER
"Roxy Roller"
Chrysalis 2115

Sweeney Todd is a Canadian act whose version of "Roxy Roller" is a classic in the early Sweet/mondo glitter tradition. If you liked anything about that period, you should love this record, which has been out for several months, flirting with becoming a breakout, though it probably won't take off. You'll also want the competing version, by the guy who co-wrote the song, even though it's almost identical, save for a slight Sparks influence.

WHEELS
"Skateboard U.S.A."
Atco 45-7062

I'm not sure I understand *why* this record exists...granted skateboarding is a huge trend, but didn't UA reissue "Sidewalk Surfin'" twice without causing so much as a wave? Ah, but this is different. While hanging onto the California vocals and harmonies, the Wheels have substituted a Bay City Rollers beat in an effort to reach the disco generation, and who know, it could work. A fine record for the cultists, in any event.

FLO & EDDIE
"Elenore"
Columbia 3-10425

A new version of an old favorite, not really updated, just a bit smoother and less blatantly bubblepop. A timeless song that ought to be just as big this time around.

RUBINOOS
"I Think We're Alone Now"
Beserkley B-5741

I shouldn't have to say that this was always one of my very favorite Tommy James records, (though not an easy choice with so many brilliant songs to choose from). I like this one because it reminds me of the Beach Boys (I always thought they could do a killer version) and the Rubinoos take it more in that direction than Tommy did. I kinda miss the throbbing bass, but the harmonies almost make up for it. I approve.

MARY KAY PLACE
"Baby Boy"
Columbia 3-10422

I loved this song when I first heard it on "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" and it's still a winner, though I wish it had come out at the time it was current. Doesn't this industry know how to jump on a trend anymore? Even if none of the Fonzie records made it, this could be a hit.

* * *

A rather slow month, otherwise. A number of disappointing releases from artists who could do better. "Susie Cincinnati" (*Reprise 1375*) is a poor choice for the new Beach Boys single, it's failed twice before and is 6 years old anyway. Leo Sayer is the latest to sell out to disco with "You Make Me Feel Like Dancing" (*WB 8283*). Doesn't anybody have artistic integrity anymore, or is that an irrelevant question? I think there should be some sort of exchange program: for every British act who releases a disco record, Gamble & Huff should be required to produce a surfing record or glitter anthem. That seems only fair, don't you think?

An authentic reggae record is not easy to find these days, but I'm happy to see Island has reactivated the Mango label and put out "Police and Thieves" by Junior Murvin (*Mango 2002*), a must for lovers of the real, primitive root music of Jamaica.

"Moonlight Lady" (*Epic 8-50277*) is Albert Hammond's best in some time, a light, hummable pop tune from his new album. Speaking of new albums, Burton Cummings (ex-Guess Who) has one, the first on CBS's new Portrait label, and the label's first single is his "Stand Tall" (6-7001), one of its best tracks. I've always found his voice irresistible, and this song is a real showcase for him, the same way "All By Myself" was for Eric Carmen, though Eric had the better song.

Good to see the Mushroom label expanding after their success with Heart. Latest release is "California Girl" by Chilliwack (*Mushroom*

group. A solid Lou Reed riff powers the latest by Earth Quake, "Hit the Floor" (*Beserkley B-5742*) a strong commercial outing that could be the hit they need.

The Dynomiters have been knocking around for years, now they've finally got a record out, produced by Jimmy Ienner no less. "Rock and Roll President" (*Epic 8-50296*) is a cute idea (novelty records are always welcome) executed in a simple, make that simplistic, style reminiscent of Brownsville Station. What's missing is any melodic or dynamic hook, theme development, or the stamp of any personality. Alice Cooper did the same thing better 4 years ago...

A surprise from out of the blue is "Roxanne" by Peter Foldy (*Polydor 14344*), a Canadian singer who sounds like Davy Jones backed by Pilot: teen-pop all the way, exquisitely produced and utterly pleasant.

LOCAL RECORDS: Another from San Francisco, "Clowns" by La Rue is a riff-rocking J. Geils type song with glitter overtones, available from Box 31424, San Francisco 94313. From Cleveland, "I Love That Feeling Still" by Quadron (*Ricochet 6102*) has a slight Todd Rundgren feel with a heavy funk arrangement (send $1.50 to Gary Dickson, 2723 Green Rd., Shaker Hts, Ohio 44122). A smooth, lushly-produced tune in the Carpenters/James Taylor vein is "Never in My Life" by Babyface (*ASI 1009*), available from 711 W. Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55411. And lastly a dynamic new sound from the weirdly-named group, $27 Snap On Face, whose "Let's Have An Affair," (*Heterodyne 0001*) is reputedly tearing up the teen clubs and palsy telethons in northern California. They sound like a vintage, blues-based San Francisco group with New York underground vocal inflections and a Detroit mentality. It's good, basic hard rock, and available from David Petri, 11740 Occidental Rd, Sebastopol, CA 95472. If *your* group has a local record out, send it to P.O. Box 7112, Burbank, Ca 91510 and we'll give it a spin!

DAVE EDMUNDS

[*cont'd. from pg. 11*]

Johnston and Edmunds cut a new version of the Tradewind's "New York's a Lonely Town" and Edmunds cruised L.A. blasting his car radio from one end of town to another. He returned to London, allowed himself a manager, and began to study friend Nick Lowe's prolific output of four or five songs a week. "I got to realize how a song is written," said Edmunds, genuinely amazed at his own discovery. Life in London continued to have its influences. Lowe and Edmunds penned "Here Comes The Weekend," on cigarette paper backstage at a friend's concert. They cut the song in three days at Pathway Studios. Within days, they knocked out another five songs. Edmunds prepared to sign with Rocket. Then, music fanatic B.P. Fallon talked himself into going up to Rockfield where Edmunds was cutting a powerful rendition of the old Dion and the Belmonts' hit, "Where Or When." Fallon obtained a cassette of that song and one of "Here Comes The Weekend" and passed them onto Robert Plant.

Plant called Edmunds at Rockfield and arranged a meeting. Eight days later the contracts with Swan Song were signed. "I promised myself I'd get the album done by the end of August," grinned Edmunds. "But the vibe just took me. We were finished by the end of July."

The resulting *Get It* album includes the Gene Vincent title track, "Here Comes The Weekend," "Where Or When," Bob Seger's "Get Out Of Denver," Graham Parker's "Back to School Days," an obscure Brinsley Schwartz track called "Ju Ju Man," and a self penned George Jones style twanger called "Worn Out Suit, Brand New Pockets." The artwork will make the album look as if it's been through every second hand record shop in England. It's back to basics.

But Edmunds is no punk rocker. He dislikes the stuff immensely. "The idea of deliberately playing badly doesn't appeal to me. If this batch of groups doesn't turn out its "My Generation" within six months, the whole fad will be over," he concluded.

Get It, he summarized, "is a good rock and roll album with the thing that's been missing from my last few albums—continuity. Where my other albums sounded like a bunch of tracks put together in a messy kind of way, this sounds like an album."

Pirelli's by Mark Shipper

With the flood of new albums coming out lately, I've been forced to spend the entire month indoors listening to them in order to keep up. I've had these headphones on for so long that my ears are about an inch lower than they were during the summer. Which is OK, I guess, in that it enables me to hear short people a lot better. But what about all these new albums, you ask? My intensive investigation has revealed the following:

KGB, Motion (*MCA*):

I like the concept of this band, as a place for musicians to work while waiting for their solo contracts to come through from other record companies. There's a rumor going around that the group was formed by the first five guys in line at the Hollywood unemployment office one day about a year ago, but I haven't been able to find anybody who can confirm this. One good song here: "Treading Water," written by Carmine Appice, formerly of Vanilla Fudge and Beck Bogart & Appice. I'm not sure, though, if he's a member of KGB. But he probably will be at some point in the future, so it's good that he's contributing songs now.

.O, A New World Record (*UA*):

Here's an interesting concept: a rock & roll band with a top-notch writer (Jeff Lynne, formerly of the Move) links up with a symphony orchestra for a whole new pop music sound. Could be big.

RICHIE HAVENS, The End Of The Beginning (*A&M*):

We all remember Richie from the film "Woodstock" wherein he prepared the hundreds of thousands of festival-goers for the rains that came later by spitting all over the first ten or fifteen rows during his opening set. Richie has this unique talent of taking great songs by other writers and transforming them into something completely different: bad songs. Here he does it to Steely Dan, Van Morrison, Bob Dylan, and many others.

ERIC CLAPTON, No Reason To Cry (*RSO*):

Once in a while you find an artist like Clapton who despite the demands and expectations of his audience decided he had to change his style in order to be true to himself. I, for one, admire this kind of courage. Three albums ago, Clapton made the decision to become boring and dispensible, and he hasn't wavered an inch in his course. If anything, he has become *more* boring by seeking out musicians who have made similiar decisions, like Bob Dylan and the Band, both of whom appear on this album. A perfect gift for any of your friends who are into either Clapton, boredom, or both.

MANFRED MANN'S EARTH BAND The Roaring Silence (*Bronze*):

For the past twelve years since "Do Wha Diddy Diddy," Mann's kept his name in the public mainly by doing interesting cover versions of Bob Dylan tunes. With an eye towards the future, he's dropped Dylan in favor of doing Bruce Springsteen songs on his last album and again on this new one. Problem is, his Springsteen covers (like this album's "Blinded By The Light") aren't as good as his Dylan covers were. So unless Dylan quits writing drivel like "Mozambique" or "Hurricane," Manfred Mann's career is in jeopardy. It's an interesting problem, but fortunately it's not one that you or I have to concern ourselves with.

ELTON JOHN, Blue Moves (*Rocket-MCA*):

This double album is a perfect example of what I'm saying. A few years ago, Elton's plastic pop was just the antidote for all the self-important singer-songwriters who were around. But today who has the time for 4 sides of the cute songs that rich guys dream up because they have nothing better to do with their afternoons?

CHER, I'd Rather Believe In You (*WB*):

I had high hopes for this one considering that Cher had the good taste to do a new version of "It's A Crying Shame," Gayle McCormick's great-but-forgotten hit from the early 70's. Cher, unfortunately, isn't half the singer that McCormick was, and the indistinctive production here doesn't help either. Looks like we'll have to wait for her next effort, already underway and being produced by hubby Gregg Allman. Those who've heard it say that Cher's disco version of "Whipping Post" eclipses both the Allmans and K.C. & The Sunshine Band at their finest.

Dan Hartman Images

including:
High Sign/On The Telephone/Hear My Song
Can't Stand In The Way Of Love
Party's In The Backroom

DAN HARTMAN, Images (*Epic*):

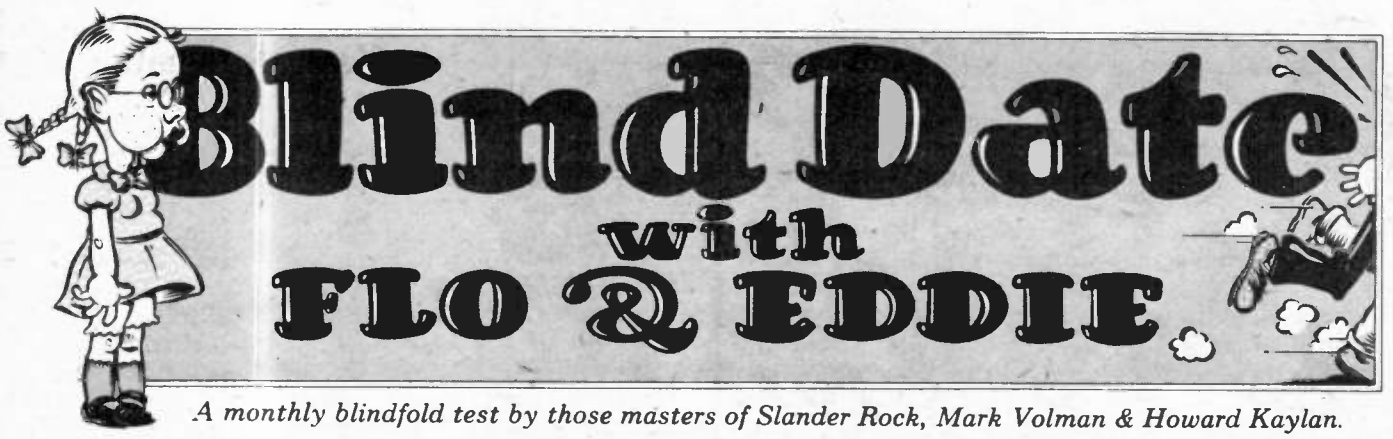
Hartman wrote "Free Ride" which I guess is reason enough to be entitled to make a solo album nowadays. This album is full of the lightweight pop music that would have been welcome two or three years ago when there wasn't enough of it to go around. Today, however, with disco music dominating the scene and filling the quota for dumb music quite nicely, thank you, what we need is music that means something. Music that says something. And if we're not getting it from Bob Dylan, we sure ain't gonna get it from Dan Hartman either.

THE QUICK, Mondo Deco(*Mercury*):

Kim Fowley is going to bring back teenage-pop music even if he becomes an old man in the process. If anybody can do it for him, it may well be his latest proteges, The Quick. Their lead singer, Danny Wilde, sounds like he could fit in equally well with the Runaways, but he really shines on a new version of the Four Seasons' "Rag Doll." Everything on this particular track stands out, from the inspired guitar lead to the clean 70's production. If the rest of the record doesn't quite meet these standards, it's still a welcome change from the tired old groups who dominate FM radio.

HALL & OATES, Bigger Than Both Of Us (*RCA*):

Stylish white soul music at it's best. These guys share a pretty sizeable audience with Boz Scaggs, who incidentally, was going to jam with Daryl and John at a recent LA concert, but unfortunately, they didn't have an extra jumpsuit. As for this album, side one is better than anything they've ever done and side two is worse than anything they've ever done. Speaking of which, I'm done for this month. See you soon. Keep those cards and letters coming...



A monthly blindfold test by those masters of Slander Rock, Mark Volman & Howard Kaylan.

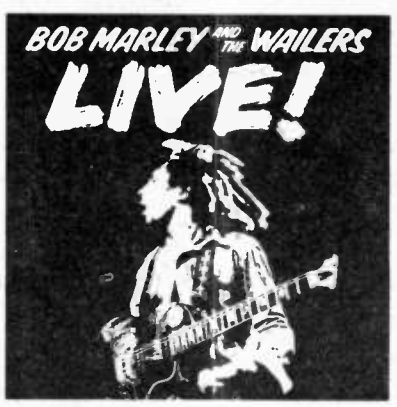
Edited by KEN BARNES

You'll recall last month we printed Flo & Eddie's scurrilous rumor that the Reparata of RSO recording artists Lady Flash is not the real Reparata of Delrons fame. It turns out that FLO & EDDIE WERE RIGHT, partially, at least. Seems the current Reparata did sing with the Delrons when they had their 1968 British hit "Captain Of Your Ship," but was not the lead singer on their immortal 1964 chartbuster "Whenever A Teenager Cries." Knowing that Flo & Eddie fans could not put their minds to rest until this mystery was resolved, we've now cleared the air—yet another truth-in-packaging public service from America's favorite mass-appeal rock column...


Bruce Osborn

Excerpts—*Part 3*
KC & Sunshine Band (*TK*)

Disco! How'd we guess? Just lucky. Dr. Buzzard's Culture Vulture Band. Boz Scaggs. The Ritchie Family. Ritchie Havens, Ritchie Furay, Ritchie Perry, Ritchie Carpenter....This is KC and the Sunstroke Band, right? We got it! These guys are good, for disco. I mean they're good for disco, they've improved it considerably. I'd like to *bump* to this! I'd like to bump this off! Did you know that disco is bigger than movies or records? That's what they say anyway—at Disco Conventions. Scary, isn't it? I can hear it now. When you hear disco, duck!



Excerpts—*Live*
Bob Marley/Wailers (*Island*)

Stevie Wonder? Reggae! Toots! Whatever happened to Toots? He fell off the same cliff as Jimmy. Steve Harley & the Wailers! Marley. Sorry. Natty Dread! Did you hear Garcia's doing a reggae album with the Grateful Dread? You didn't? I hear applause. Is this a live Bob Marley album? Is he smoking a joint on the cover? Sometimes they have to play lying down on the—I like the guy with the white bowler. No, not Chick Hearn, I mean the white bowler hat! He's cool. What do you call that hair, dreadlocks? Strike talks between Jamaica officials and Trenchtown dissidents were reported dreadlocked after three days of heavy smoking. I don't think this will be Bob's big follow-up.

Excerpts—*Mondo Deco*
The Quick (*Mercury*)

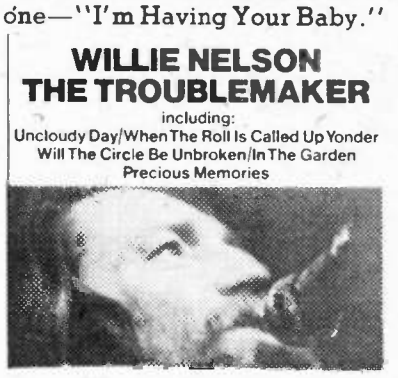
Latest L.A. sensation? Besides us? Candypants? This is the new Sparks record, right? That guy's got one of the most horrible warbles—hey, that's good, horrible warbles, write that down—what do you mean it's not Sparks? Who the hell is it? A fast sort of name...Speedball. Speedy Keen. Fastball. Nolan Ryan. Sprinter—on Dark Horse Records. The Quick? Low Sparks of High-pitched voices? What are you talking about? You're getting obscure. Let's see the cover. *Nice* one, guys. The kid on top looks like Freddy Mercury. The kid on bottom looks like he doesn't know how to eat an ice cream cone. Kim Fowley produced it? They should make a quick one while he's away. Play "Rag Doll." The Four Seasons are safe on that one. "It Won't Be Long," the Beatles song. It won't be long before they're back at the Starwood—in the audience. Just kidding, guys. The Quick. If you're a Sparks fan, it's not bad, but Flo & Eddie fans should stick to Queen.

Excerpts-*Four Seasons Love*
Donna Summer(*Casablanca*)

A Four Seasons album? Funny, it doesn't sound like Frankie Valli. Swear to God! More disco! That's the name of a pharmacy in Glendale? Who *cares*? Your hints are worse than ever! This sounds like a half-Gaynor taking a dive? Note to typesetter: We didn't say that. We don't even get it. Gloria Gaynor? It's not her? Then why did you bring her up? Donna Dummer! The Four Seasons Of Love. *I* get it, seasons, Summer...that Giorgio is a sly old fox. She's really trying to pull off a Marilyn Monroe on the back cover. What do you mean we're skirting the issue? They already *know* what it sounds like. You can imagine exactly what a Donna Summer record is going to sound like. She should take a breather. A heavy breather. Let's hear "Autumn Changes." Well, my mind is going through them Autumn Changes. Where's Buddy Miles' new Casablanca album? He's cutting it lying on the floor of Cherokee Studios? Good, Buddy. A little CB talk for you kids. (Reads) "Many Thanks To the Munich Machine." Remember their big hit "Schlock Schlock?" We didn't say that, either. Thor Baldersson is a name to watch. If you watch it long enough all the "s"" start wiggling and it's midly psychedelic. This was Donna Summer but she's heading for a Fall. That's a real Winter.

Excerpts—*The Painter*
Paul Anka (*UA*)

Barry Manilow's latest—"Mandy, Pt. 5." Former teen idol? Frankie! Ricky! Fabe! The Kenny Dino comeback album! Bobby Rydell's new one. Ral Donner Does Disco Favorites! The Big Ballad Sound of Brian Hyland. Anka! Anka's away, my boys. Is this the one with the cover by Andy Warhol? I liked his banana better (more appealing?). We didn't say that either! The music? What about it? It sounds like Paul Anka to me. Where's Odie Colognie? Having a baby? King Solomon from the Bible should have cut that one—"I'm Having Your Baby."



Excerpts - *The Troublemaker*
Willie Nelson (*Columbia*)

Famous country figure? Dolly Parton. Sorry, old joke. Is this Waylon? Edgar Allan Coe? Red Sovine? Red Allen? Red Octupus? Is this guy an outlaw? Does he throw giant picnics? Does he have a beard and long stringy hair? Is he from Texas? Jerry Jeff Walker. Willie! We knew it! This is a concept album? Willie's spiritual album. He could sing the phone book and it would sell in Texas. Backed by the Yellow Payges. The first phone-ograph record. At the end of each cut the operator cuts in and says your three minutes are up. On Bell Records. He could cover "Ma Bell Amie". Let's change the subject—give me the cover. There's Willie in front of 600,000 people, all pissed off because they bought an album called *The Troublemaker* thinking it was one of Willie's rowdy, hard-drinking Outlaw albums and found out it's all hymns. Just kidding. We love you, Willie. When are you going to change your shirt?

Tom Scholz & Boston: '76 Rock History

"A cross between the Raspberries & Good Grand Funk"

By JAMES ISAACS

On a cool, overcast evening in late August, Boston's rock press, deejays, record store owners and personnel, rack jobbers and sundry grafters climbed aboard the *S.S. Peter Stuyvesant*—a dry-docked vessel that is operated by the adjacent Anthony's Pier 4 restaurant—to celebrate the debut LP of a five-piece band that was named for, but had never played, "the Athens of America." Listening to the group Boston's fledgling album, an observer nonchalantly commented, "the key to their music is that it's totally selfless with a lot of studio technique. Their sources are impeccable; I hear bits from Bowie with Ronson, Stealer's Wheel and Todd. I suspect that they'll sell millions of records."

Less than two months later, by which time Boston had made their initial concert before the hometown fans (opening for Blue Oyster Cult at the sold-out, 4200-seat Music Hall), it was apparent that the observer's half-serious soothsaying was more than a little prophetic—the *Boston* disc had sold nearly a half-million copies and the single, "More than a Feeling," was closing in fast on the national Top Ten.

In a year marked by the out-of-nowhere successes of such previous unknown commodities as Wild Cherry and Heart, Boston, whose current configuration has been together only since the beginning of 1976, was out of the starting gate with the rapidity of Secretariat. If their showing at the first turn is indicative of future purses, Boston could very well net paydays comparable to those of the Triple Crown-winning nag. Needless to say, this would delight the heaviest wagerers, Epic Records and the group's co-managers, Bostonians Paul Ahern and Charlie McKenzie.

McKenzie, who like Ahern was a local promotion man in the New England territory for several major labels (Ahern became head of national FM promotions for Elektra-Asylum and later did very well as an independent promoter out of Los Angeles—he was instrumental in breaking Fleetwood Mac), explained how he happened upon the band: "An acquaintance, also in the record business, had a demo tape that Tom Scholz (Boston's musical *major domo*) had made in his home recording studio. I overheard it one day and my ears, which I think have always had the ability to 'hear commercial,' picked up on it immediately. I found out that Tom had submitted a similar tape to nearly every company in the business and had been turned down everywhere.

"Pretty soon I was in touch with Tom and got a tape, which I played over the phone for Paul in L.A. He felt the same way as I did and I said, 'yeah, but wait'll you *really* hear it.' I jet freighted a copy to him and he played it for Brian Rohan, (one of the most important music business lawyers). Brian took it to Epic and the group was signed late last year.

"Once they were signed, Paul was out laying advance groundwork. He took the tapes to all the FM majors and radio conventions around the country. And by the time the record was released, the stations were panting for it."

As for the band's individual backgrounds, 29-year-old Tom Scholz plays "special effects" guitars, keyboards, composes the bulk of the material, and co-produced the first LP with John Boylan (Scholz also engineered the basic tracks in his Watertown, Mass. home recording facilities, Foxglove Studio). The towering Scholz, who is threatening to become the most celebrated former resident of Toledo, Ohio since Danny Thomas, came to Boston to matriculate at M.I.T. and took his Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from that prestigious institution. His higher education completed, Tom was employed by Polaroid. He worked on their instant movie camera project, among other things, and devoted the after-dark hours to gigging in and around the Hub with various bar bands. One of these ensembles included drummer Sib Hashian, a Viet Nam veteran who rose to the rank of lieutenant. In the course of his travels Tom also got to know guitarist Barry Goudreau, who, according to Charlie McKenzie, "used to be in the auto body biz."

From here, Boston's geneology becomes rather complex, perhaps befitting a unit that is being marketed on the basis of its putatively technological orientation. Suffice to say that bassist Fran Sheehan, a one-time Massachusetts schoolboy luminary on a state titlist team, had worked with or met everyone at one time or another prior to Boston's formation. And lead vocalist/12-string acoustic guitarist Bradley Delp came to the band with six years experience at an electronics firm called Hot Watt.

Despite all the hullaballoo proclaiming Boston as "the first bionic band," the group's approach is firmly rooted in the hook-and-infectious-chorus tradition of high energy pop, at least for the time being. It's an essentially proven formula that is, in the opinion of WBCN announcer Maxanne Sartori, "a cross between the Raspberries and good Grand Funk, enhanced by a very clean, bright recording sound. And the way they use the acoustic guitar lightens heavy metal inclinations."

Charlie McKenzie also theorizes that Boston's sudden emergence might be in part accountable to their sounding like a number of prominent groups (he cited Queen and Todd Rundgren and notes that others have pointed out certain resemblances to Yes and — good heavens! — Uriah Heep). Tom Scholz, however, claims to have never heard most of Boston's supposed influences. "I used to love Joe Walsh," he said, "and years ago I listened a lot to Beck's *Truth*. But I was pretty isolated for about three years there, working at Polaroid and then playing music at night. I didn't hear the radio much, either."

If their tunes are somewhat derivative, their lyrics a bit innocuous and their countenances unremarkable, Boston's attributes are equally obvious. In Delp, the band has a singer with formidable "chops" in the upper register. The musicians are thoroughly capable (especially Sib Hashian who is a devasting, but never grandstanding, drummer) and they inform the decidely upbeat repetoire with bristling vitality. And Scholz's guitar pyrotechnics ice the cake.

Boston has embarked on the inevitable national tour and the album could approach the platinum altitudes before the year is out. Yet Scholz maintains a cautious outlook about the group's image: "We're a band, first and foremost, and we enjoy playing live," he states. "I hope people won't think of us as a computerized Monkees.'

Ozarks: In Search Of The Perfect Non-Identity

By ROBERT DUNCAN

NEW YORK CITY—Fourteenth Street is just about the sleaziest, most run-down thoroughfare in the whole of Manhattan Island, about as far from the goodness of nature as one can get. There are only two excuses for so-called normal people to be hereabouts at night; one is the Paladium (formerly the Academy of Music), one of several major rock venues in the city, and the other is Luchow's, a touristy German-gothic restaurant that's in its 84th year of existence. So, logically speaking, what would the Ozark Mt. Daredevils be doing on Fourteenth Street? Why, playing the Paladium, what else?

Wrong. The Ozark Mt. Daredevils are spread out around a huge table in the back of Luchow's beneath all manner of Teutonic artifacts, seemingly enjoying a string quartet who bill themselves as "The First String Quartet to Play Beatles Music," and whose strains waft in from the brass rail bandstand in the front of the room.

The Ozark Mt. Daredevils. Aren't they that hillbilly band? Wrong again. They're that band that did that Todd Rundgren song about the girl on drugs, you know, "Jackie Blue." But *I* thought they were that father and son high-wire act from the circus. No, no, no. They race in demolition derbys down south. And the Ozark Mt. Daredevils on Fourteenth Street yet.

It's all very confusing. But that seems to be the nature of the beast. To wit; the Ozark Mt. Daredevils—optionally known as either the Ozarks or the Daredevils—is a group of 6 men who, quite naturally, play music. That should be safe enough as a description. But, then again, don't try and count them. When they passed through Long Island's My Father's Place, there were at least 7 of them on stage at any one time, usually an extra synthesizer man (in a hillbilly band?). But, to confuse things even further, they've been known to add a woman here and there on vocals back home in Missouri.

Did I say, back home in Missouri? Well, most of them come from Missouri...Or neighboring Kansas—except that new lead guitarist, Rune Walle, who comes from hardcore hillbilly roots back home there in ol' Norway. He fits in perfectly, since he hardly speaks a word of English either.

Okay. So the Ozark's (or the Daredevils) aren't all from Missouri and there aren't always just 6 of them and sometimes they have a woman and often they have a synthesizer and maybe they aren't a hillbilly band. But they are a bunch of hippies. They all have that long-haired, tee-shirted, barefoot in the green, green grass of home look about them. Yes! They are hippies. "Did you realize," the A&M publicist informs me, "that they were all just farmers out there in Kansas and Missouri who got together every once in a while to play music when Glyn Johns (producer of among others, the Stones, Traffic, Nils Lofgren,—*all* the hillbilly greats) heard their tape? And do you know that when he decided that he *must* record them, he had to come all the way out to the sticks, that they wouldn't come to him? Did you know that?" "No," I reply, "but it sure makes for good copy." "Oh, they're great copy," she tells me "we just have problems defining their image." Later, backstage, over a German beer I ask one of the back country boys in the band, Larry Lee, about farming. "Oh we're not farmers," he replies amiably." But your publicist said... I say. "Oh, we were never farmers. Well, maybe we'd have a little plot of pot out back, but we were never making our living as farmers. We were your basic hippies." Hippies, well it seems to fit with what you see, but that means that somebody is lying a lot or else everybody's lying a little, or everybody's just very confused. I suspect very strongly it's the latter.

In Luchow's I flesh out my theory. Opposite me at the huge table sits Steve Cash, who is, if anyone is, the leader of this motley crew. He writes many of the songs, and on stage stand front and center handling most of the vocal chores and playing the fastest harp east of the Mississippi...or is that west? Anyway, I begin to zero in on Steve,

only to have the publicist say to me that she hopes that I have time to talk to John Dillon who, she says, writes many of the songs and is undoubtedly the creative core of the group. "Did he write 'Jackie Blue'?" I inquire. "No," she comes back, "that was Larry Lee mostly, though Steve helped out." And who sings it? "Well, that's Larry too."

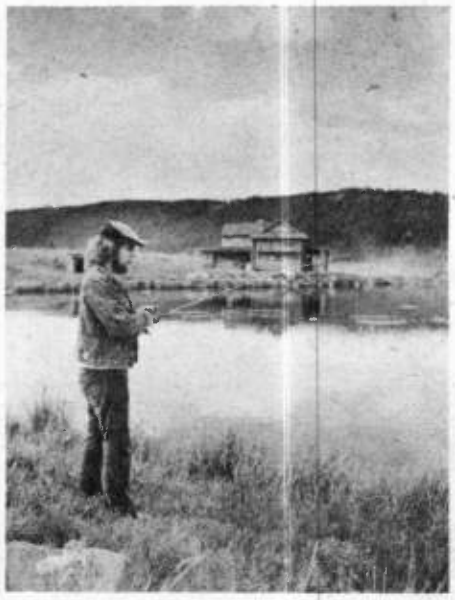
Their manager, a jocular bearded fellow is at the end of the table, talking about how great it is to be back in New York. Stan Plessor now lives in Kansas. He opened a club there some years back; that's how he got involved with the Daredevils, *but* he comes from the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in fact, lived on the same block as the guy who owns the Bottom Line. The manager of a down-home band from the heartland started life on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. That follows.

Finally, I am able to turn my attention back to Cash. His long blonde hair is tied back and he sports a full beard, though sometimes on their album covers he only has a moustache. He's engrossed in conversation with the band's light man. Just then, an attractive young woman with extremely pale skin, natural platinum hair, purplish lip-gloss, and a studied orphan look, sits down at the other end of the table. Whereupon Cash says quietly to his pal; "You know, it has been said that you can tell the color of a woman's labia by the color of her lips." And I think, huh. You know what? You know that in any other rock and roll discussion that same sentence would undoubtedly sound something like this: "Hey, see the chick with the purple mouth? Ya think her crotch is that color?" Labia is not a word they invented for rock groups on the road. Or for hippies, for that matter. But when the discussion which follows concerns itself with Ernest Hemingway and is replete with rare scholarly facts, I know for sure I'm in the wrong place. Taxi!

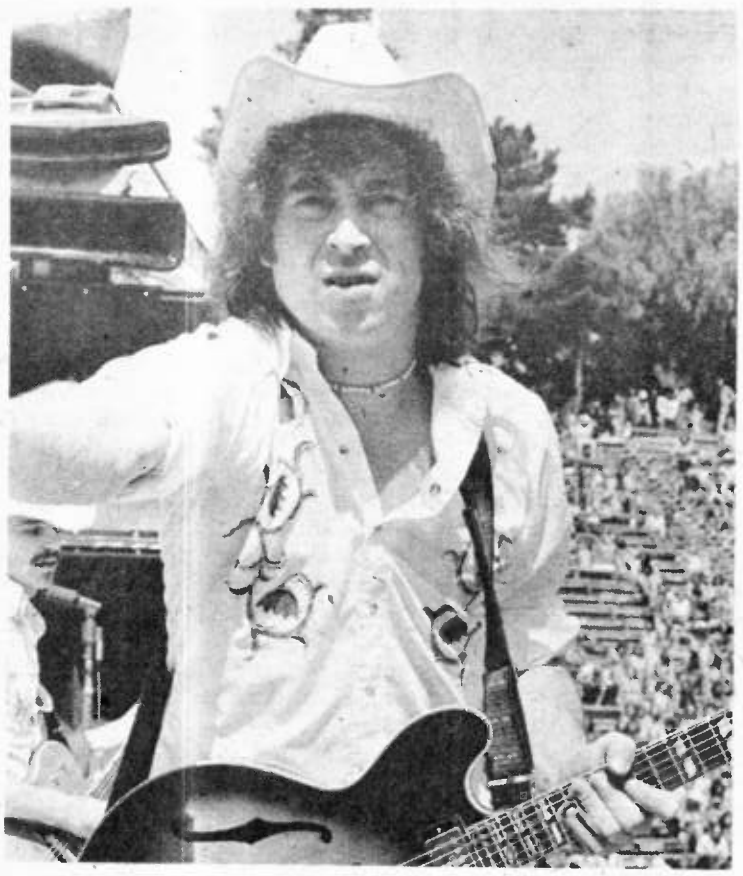
"Is Hemingway your favorite author?", I ask. "Actually, my favorite is Knut Hamsen." Qui??? "Knut Hamsen. He's a Norweigan novelist." (I later discover that Hamsen is a cult favorite among academs in the know.)

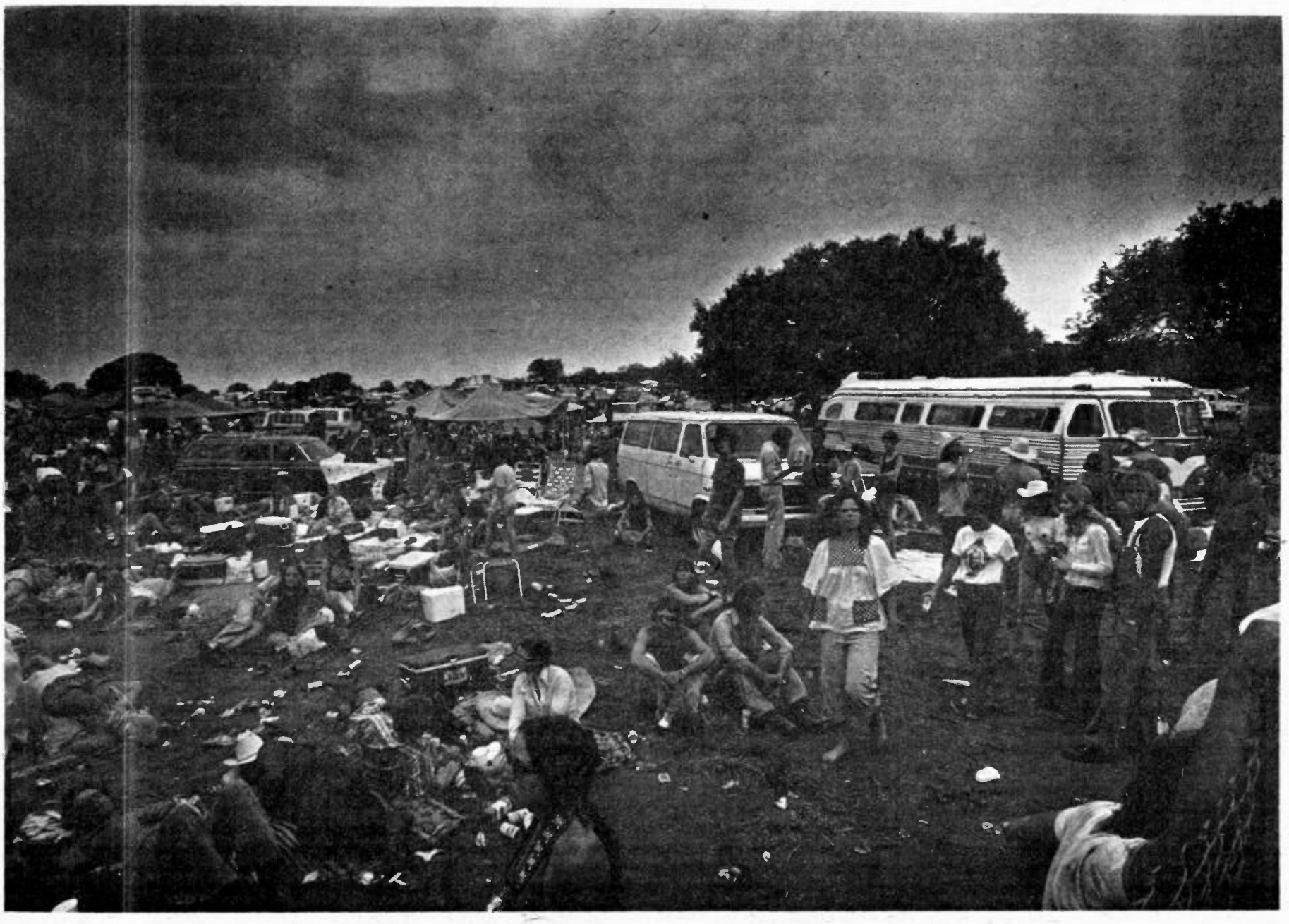
Still, Steve Cash can drink as hardy as any old lumberjack or broke' down rock writer. In other words, he isn't boring by any stretch. He's an excellent raconteur, polite, generous, and sincere. His only problem is that he's a paradox. An intellectual in a hippie rock and roll band, without the pretentions of a Robbie Robertson.

But it all fits. I swear it does. It fits because the Ozark Mt. Daredevils may be the most confusing band on earth. The only time they might be captured is when they're on stage playing or on record. Then they are musicians. But that's all. And whether it be "Chicken Train" from their first of six albums, a chant-like country round backed by Jew's harp and various rustic percussion instruments, or the next song in the set, "Jackie Blue," their synthesized, ocean-blue harmonized hit about a drug casualty, it is good, brother. If you want to nail them down, if you feel you have to, maybe, in order to get behind their righteousness, well go ahead. But remember Jesus when you do...



Willie Nelson's Bash ... Texas Style





Showdown In Austin: Willie Nelson's Last Picnic

By JUDSON KLINGER

In a dust bitten pasture somewhere in central Texas, a hundred thousand or so drunken, semi-comatose cowboys were having a picnic—Willie Nelson's Fourth Annual Fourth of July Picnic. Make-shift concession stands formed a midway through the crowd, several of the booths displaying commemorative posters. One had the Declaration of Independence superimposed over Willie's face. Another bastardized DaVinci's "The Last Supper" with Willie as Jesus Christ. Below the Apostles, "The Last Picnic" was printed in Gothic Lettering.

Willie Nelson is the quintessential hero of the progressive country music scene, a movement of which he is commonly credited as being the founder. The 43-year-old singer/songwriter held his first picnic at Dripping Springs, Texas in 1973 with the idea of bringing attention to his name, and the music scene in Austin. For nearly 15 years and more than 15 albums, Nelson had gone unnoticed as a Nashville-based performer. There he was recognized only as a songwriter, whose classic hits such as "Crazy," "Hello Walls," "One Day At A Time," and "Night Life" enriched other singers' careers. His "Funny How Time Slips Away" has been recorded by over 80 artists.

In 1972 Nelson's Nashville home burned down. He returned to his native Texas, and was followed by a circle of friends—performers and songwriters—who had been similarly ignored by Nashville's musical mainstream. Settling in and around Austin, they became known as "the outlaws" and their music was called "progressive country." They capitalized on the public's attraction to the romanticism of the outlaws and heroes of the Old West; for years, singing cowboys such as Gene Autrey and Roy Rogers had charmed huge audiences with sixshooters and guitars. It was natural for the media which created the hippie in San Francisco to nurture something metaphysical in Austin, calling the scene the "cosmic cowboy counterculture." Austin absorbed anyone with a cowboy hat, a guitar, and an outlaw spirit. More than a singular musical style, it was the prevailing *attitude*

that drew musicians to Austin. This redneck ethnocentric spirit that started in Texas has gained popularity throughout the country. It's known as Hick Chic. And it began with the music.

Over 50,000 attended that first picnic. In three years Nelson has become the veritable sage and master of these wandering masses in Texas, as if at any given moment, he might raise his guitar in hand, profess words that could conjure up the spirits of the Old West, and ascend bodily into Heaven.

* * *

Locals called the area Little New York. The site, an 840 acre ranch near Gonzales, Texas, served as the grounds for the Fourth Annual Picnic. It had been scheduled to be a three day affair in the Texas tradition of bigness, before a local citizens committee stepped in to stop the picnic for moral reasons. In court the issue was shaded with legal overtones concerning health and safety, and picnic promotors were denied the necessary mass gathering permit.

In spite of the court's denial, and the show's cancellation, picnic preparations continued. Gene McCoslin (the man Nelson personally appointed to promote the picnic) and people with movie, recording, and concession rights began to scheme. They hired Gonzales District Attorney Houston Munson, and a Willie Nelson benefit concert on Munson's ranch was then scheduled for June fourth, all proceeds donated to a local medical clinic. The Gonzales County Judge who had ruled against Nelson in court was a guest at the benefit. Before the evening was over, a one day permit had been granted.

A large portion of the 100,000 who attended the '76 picnic were still living in the Age of Aquarius. A girl from San Francisco dressed in a sleeveless flannel shirt and cut-offs told me she was "doing Woodstock seven years late." Not that I had expected a green grass prairie of beer-bellied rednecks in lawn chairs, but I was hardly prepared for the redneck-rock army of spiritual panhandlers that arrived on the evening of July third. A security worker and burly good ole boy named Billy Bob said, "All these damn hippies in cowboy hats don't give two shits about country music. They ain't no honest-to-God cowboy rednecks. They're what we call pseudo-rednecks." Motorcyclists cruised the dusty boulevards of the camping area in groups of threes and fours, revving their engines like they were in shitkickers' heaven. Fireworks, *Lone Star* beer, and one day old straw cowboy hats were as prevalent as streetwalkers on 7th Avenue.

For most of the Fourth, the sun played hopscotch behind clouds which occasionally dripped on the crowd. When the clouds tightened up there were two muddy lakes glaring at the sky like brown irises

from the discolored face of the picnic grounds. One swimmer drowned. Behind one lake pranced a calm mare mounted by a nude girl. Photographers drifted between the lakes with their nude swimmers, and the Nude Girl on a Horse Contest. A voice drawled monotonously over a tin loudspeaker, "We're gonna let some ladies get *neckid*! We're gonna let you ride the horse out here in front of the place. And we're gonna let the crowd be the judge. And the winner, we're gonna give 'em a surprise."

"I made a big mistake by not opening the picnic as I always have," Nelson said later. Jerry Jeff Walker and his Lost Gonzo Band had a committment to perform at the Astrodome on the evening of the Fourth, so Willie decided to do a live, promotional, radio broadcast the night before the picnic, rest the next morning in San Antonio, and allow Walker to open the show at Gonzales.

I was walking on a pathway along the bank of a shaded creekbed when Walker began the concert. Just in front of me, a fist the size of a Christmas goose flew out of nowhere and into the face of an inebriated, unsuspecting cowboy. He tumbled down into the water while his hat took a stroll toward El Paso. A Harley chopper cleared a path through the pedestrians. A group of bikers followed on foot, trampling along in their muddy boots and obesity. One wore sparrow feather earrings and *I HATE YOU* tattooed across his chest. He was followed by a Mother Earth type, with red stripes painted on her biceps, and *Alfred* tattooed above the pink champagne sparkle toes of her left foot.

Throughout the day there were numerous stabbings, rapes, and drug overdoses. At dusk one young boy was blinded when struck in the face by fireworks. The heavily outnumbered local authorities who seemed virtually nonfunctional, qualified arrests as being "nothing too serious."

The wildest audience reaction of the day came when Ray Wylie Hubbard and his band, the Cowboy Twinkies, played up to the crowd's nostalgic fantasies with remarkable accurate renditions of Jimi Hendrix' "Foxy Lady" and "The Star Spangled Banner," echoing his performance at Woodstock.

As I approached the backstage entrance, a young blonde trotted beside the chain link fence dressed

only in Fredricks of Hollywood peekaboo panties. She was followed by a staggering cowpoke with his member exposed and targeted toward her behind. The backstage area was approximately eight acres enclosed by a ten foot wooden fence, wherein the stage rose some fifteen feet above the ground. The scene here was no less chaotic than the one in the audience. The area was littered with rocks, loose lumber, hundreds of crushed beer cans, and David Allan Coe. While other performers blended anonymously with the people backstage, Coe strutted around for hours with a couple grizzly looking, shirtless, potbellied companions from the Austin Outlaws motorcycle gang. The fans favorite Victim of Society was dressed in a black shirt that read, "David Allan Coe A STAR." Lapping up quite literally the outlaw label, he was packing a gun in the pocket of his bad ass.

When George Jones' custom touring bus pulled up to the backstage fence, the heavily guarded gate opened wide and without hesitation. His arrival at the picnic signified more than the appearance of a single performer, for George Jones represented the Nashville music establishment, the people who had ignored Willie Nelson as a performer for over 15 years. The middle-aged Jones is a traditional Nashville star and C&W purist, and he looks the part. He wears neatly trimmed hair and finely embroidered suits, shunning the characteristic cosmic cowboy regalia of faded jeans and leather vests, turquoise jewelry and rhinestone studded cowboy hats. People in the immediate area gathered around the bus hoping to get a glimpse of Jones, but he wasn't on board.

Jones was admittedly scared of the audience, and had stayed in San Antonio. He said he didn't know or understand the type of people who would be there. When he finally arrived by limousine, who should greet him at the car but the personification of his uncertainities, Coe. The two shook hands and Jones mentioned his apprehensiveness concerning the audience. Coe replied, "You're Goddamn George Jones, remember that. They will."

As badassed tough as Coe was trying to sound, he was a paper tiger, a dead armadillo, a flat can of *Pearl* compared to the amphetamine-pumped atmosphere of aggression behind the stage. Most of the problems were a result of interpersonal power struggles within Nelson's organization. These cosmic cowboy bureaucrats were carrying on like members of a rodeo mafia, fighting—with their fists at times—for power and ego-satisfying one-upmanship.

An arrogant Neanderthal look-alike named Neil Reshen was the greatest single source of disruption. Reshen, it seemed, resented McCoslin's control of the event. Reshen is Nelson's East Coast based business manager, while McCoslin is a Texan and long-time friend of Willie's.

Reshen was responsible for inviting several hundred members of the press to the picnic, and then refusing to provide them with the necessary passes in hopes that their mistreatment would translate into bad publicity for the McCoslin-promoted picnic. Besides producing hordes of angry writers and photographers, this small-minded display of uncooperativeness at the highest level of the picnic's organization set the behavioral tone for the artists, managers, agents, publicists, concessionaires, and even the security forces. Once when a pair of hands curled its knuckles over the top of the fence, I witnessed a security man quickly pick up a stray two-by-four and swat the fingertips full force. At nightfall two security men kicking each other's brains out on the ground had to be separated and removed by another half-dozen security boys.

Willie Nelson spent most of the day resting in his hotel suite in San Antonio, watching Bicentennial television broadcasts. "It's the best Fourth of July picnic I've had in years," he said.

George Jones kept the engine of his bus running all day to maintain the air conditioning. George can afford it; he still gives his ex-wife Tammy Wynette a new Cadillac for her birthday. His show was well received by the audience and he had regained his king of Nashville confidence and composure when asked his opinion of the Austin-style country music.

"I think it's going to the dogs," he said. Pure and moral, his voice; relaxed, yet condescending. "I just wish them dogs'd start barkin'." The comment drew a chuckle from his friends on board the bus. They knew when George was being funny, when to laugh. "What a lot of these artists are doing is going this progressive country way. They don't seem to love it. To me, country music is a love, it's something you're born with, you want to do it. You don't ever lose it.

"The trouble with this whole business, I think, is that the artist wants to make more money...I wouldn't sacrifice my love of country music just to be rich. What I'm trying to tell you, Willie Nelson can tell you on his records right now. There's no big production, no violins, there's no string section. There's a bass and a guitar, electric lead. If you got the right song, you're gonna sell it to the other people anyhow."

Jones was talking about cross-over hits. They occur when a song by a country artist becomes a hit on both country and pop charts, or vice versa. In complimenting Nelson, he was also criticizing many of Willie's outlaw followers who loosely call themselves country artists while leaning heavily on rock or blues instrumentation. "These people," explained Jones, "are going all out of their way recording this way and that way, trying to sell to more people that are not in their country music field." In contrast, Nelson succeeds as a song-writer combining simple, uncluttered melodies with precise lyrics. He relies mainly on the traditional foundations of country folk, avoiding the heavy-handed productions and saccharine sentimentality of the Nashville formula.

"I emphasize real strongly," Jones continued, "if a song is *there*, I don't give a damn who sings it, it's a seller. If it's there. 'Blue Eyes Crying In the Rain.' Bass and guitar. Simple."

Willie Nelson arrived around midnight to meet a picnic that was eight hours behind schedule. As bands slowly rambled on and off stage, Willie retreated to the trailer provided for him and his band backstage. The once anxious audience grew restless and later weary in anticipation of headliners Nelson and Waylon Jennings. One enervated, fairly representative audience member sat on a cot 50 yards from center stage. He held his head between his knees, face in his hands, as if he were about to tell the ground something about his stomach lining. Anyone who touched him received a punch. At one point, his lady companion poured cold water from a cooler over his head and back. It dripped through his thick black hair to the ground. He never moved until he was carried away by two friends at dawn. The liveliest items to hit the stage all night were bottle rockets fired at performers from the crowd. While the outlaws pestered their guitars with little variation, security guards persisted in scrambling people from one area to the next with little purpose, and couples copulated in the urine-soaked grasses of the netherlands.

The St. Anthony Hotel of San Antonio, with an elegance uncharacteristic of its central Texas city, housed most of the entertainers who appeared at the Bicentennial concert. On the morning of the fifth, limousines deposited their celestial patrons onto the rain-soaked sidewalk at the front door of the hotel. Inside, television sets barked about "the disappointed thousands who left Gonzales when early morning thunderstorms ended the Willie Nelson Fourth of July Picnic before the star of the event was able to appear." The eye-witness news cameras captured the scavengers who grovelled through the pastures of wet debris left behind during the hasty evacuation. The eyewitness news reporters interviewed a few select remaining cowboys disgruntled because they never got to see the man.

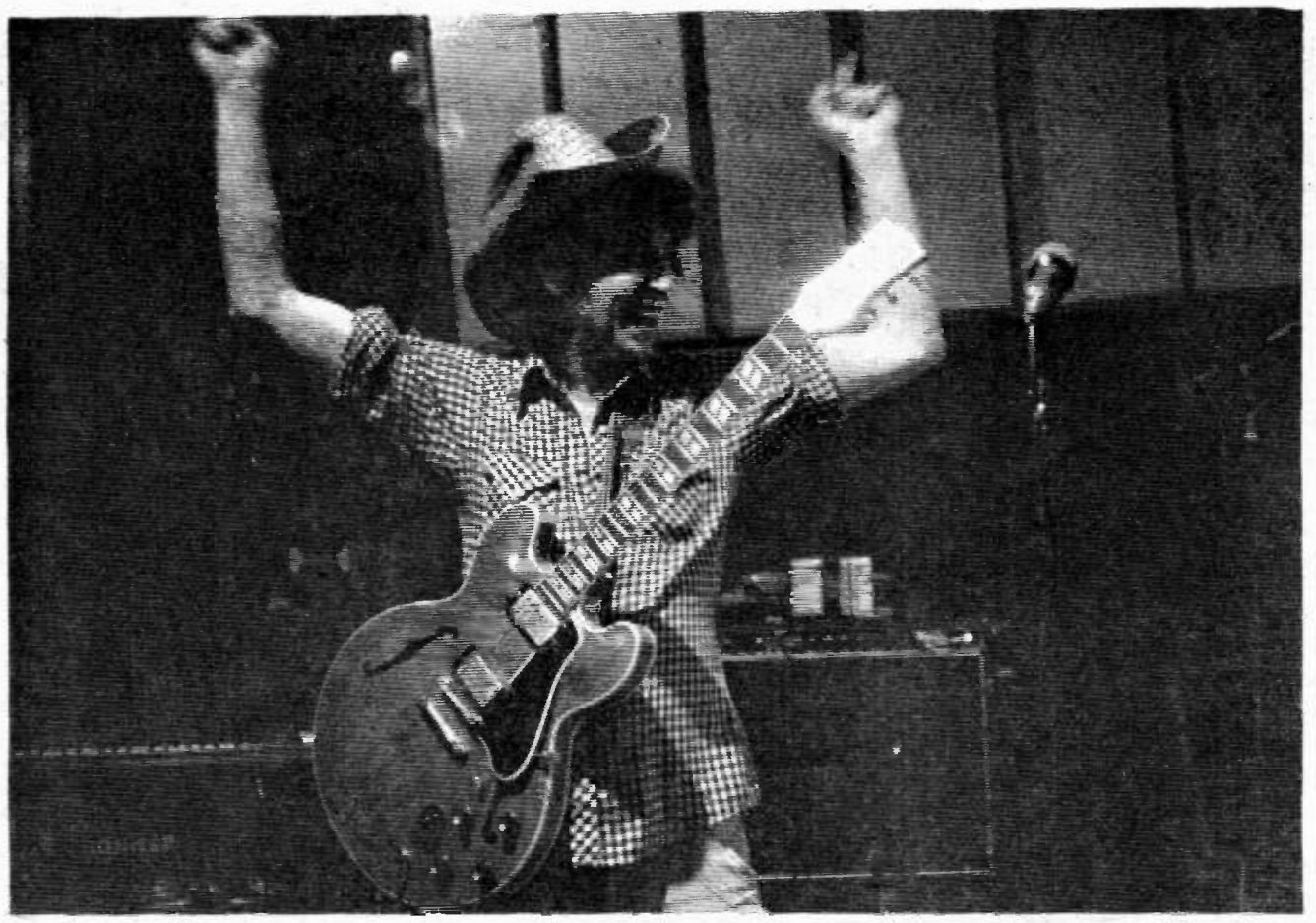
The man—tired, weatherbeaten, and bemused—retired to his suite. "There was a lot of people who had money tied up in the picnic this year," Nelson said, "and I think that was one of the biggest problems. There was too much "money" in talk, too much worry about money, money, money. Not enough worry about music, music, music." His tone suggested a deep resentment, a sense of victimization. "When it quits being fun and they start talking about money, I think it's time to stop it. This year it was more hassles than fun. Money is not what it's all about, really. Money wasn't the reason I put it on to begin with. Some of these people thought they could come in and get rich overnight. They saw the picnic as a chance to make a lot of money."

"How much did you have involved financially?"

"I had everything involved. This is what people don't know. I lost about $175,000 this year on the picnic. The security fell through and most of the people got in free. There were 16,000 tickets sold, and over 100,000 people there. I got unjustly blamed for a lot of things I didn't do, but one of the things I did do was lose a lot of money.

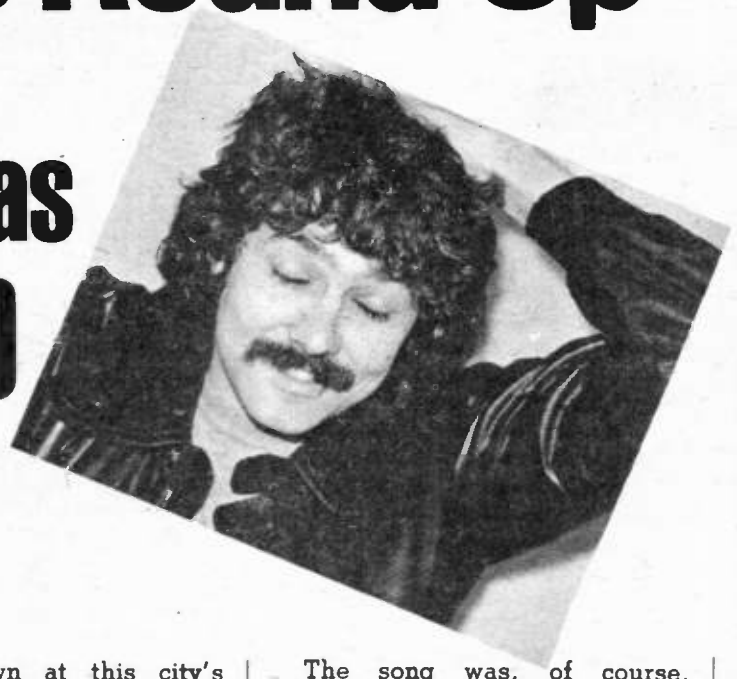
"People misunderstand that it was all my money going down the drain. It was all *my name* being kicked around through the mud and drug through the crap." One thing was certain, there wouldn't be another Fourth of July Picnic in his name.

When I returned to Los Angeles the next day, the ignominious accounts of Nelson's fiasco had already begun to appear. But I noticed the name of the Aquarius Theatre on Sunset Boulevard had been changed. It's now called the Longhorn Theater. Hick Chic.



Elvin Bishop's Big Bucks Round Up

(Mickey Thomas Gets A Raise)



By TODD EVERETT

SAN FRANCISCO—Elvin Bishop isn't really looking forward to discussing the state of his band since "Fooled Around and Fell in Love." Not that he's not proud of what he's done and doing, and he's certainly not (as some have churlishly suggested) trying to hide the fact that it wasn't entirely *his* record. Simply, Elvin Bishop doesn't look forward to discussing anything. Though Chicago college-educated, Bishop remains bucolic to his Oklahoma boots; the kind of person who appears to be wearing bib overalls and sucking at a wheatstraw even when he isn't.

Tracked down at this city's Studio Instrumental Rentals rehearsal hall, Bishop would clearly rather be with his band, getting their licks in order, than upstairs in an office discussing his sudden leap up the charts, after nearly a dozen years' worth of grinding work (beginning in Chicago with Paul Butterfield and what is generally regarded as the first white electric blues band).

"We'd recorded X number of minutes' worth of material for the *Struttin' My Stuff* album, and needed one more song," explains Bishop. "I suggested an old dog that I'd written three years earlier and never gotten around to doing, and we cut it."

The song was, of course, "Fooled Around and Fell in Love," a pretty, elementary ballad of the type found as filler on dozens of albums released by the Stax label during the Sixties. The band cut an instrumental track, that turned out to be in a key too high for Bishop's voice. Bishop called in Mickey Thomas, who had been recruited as a backup singer an album earlier, and whose voice could hit the high notes.

That last-minute, throwaway cut was immediately selected by all who heard it as the album's single release. Previously, the band was thinking of releasing "Hey, Hey, Hey" to the Top 40 stations; not that it made too much difference, as Bishop wasn't regarded by anyone, including himself, as a Top 40 act.

The song and its sudden success took everybody by surprise. Thomas, a young Southerner whose chief professional experience prior to joining Bishop's band was as a member of San Francisco's Gideon and Power, was a star overnight—though nobody knew it. Disc jockeys, following the record label, announced the record as being by Elvin Bishop, with the implicit understanding that it was Bishop singing. Furthermore, Thomas remained, as before, a salaried member of Bishop's band, not participating in the financial rewards of the disc.

"The Bishop band has always had a strong, hardcore audience of about 150,000, who could be counted on to buy our albums," says Thomas. "The single increased that audience by about 200%."

Bishop himself points out that, as composer and publisher of the song, he stands to clear something over $40,000 from sales of the single alone.

"...And there I was," recalls Thomas," driving around town in a broken-down Datsun, with one speaker that doesn't work, and hearing my record announced as being #3 in the country. *Of course*, it pissed me off sometimes. But I knew that eventually good things would work out."

What did work out was a promise that Thomas' name would appear on subsequent singles where he appeared as lead vocalist, and that he and the other players would get a raise in salary for the next tour, now in progress. "That raise is long due," says Thomas matter-of-factly. "Not just for me, either. Some of the guys have been in this band for five years, working hard. They certainly deserve to share in the success, as well."

Perhaps the best thing to "work out" was Thomas' signing to MCA as a solo artist, following the kind of rush for a piece of the action that follows every sign of fire in the record business. "Our manager, David Forest, let it be known that I was available as a solo. We got offers from MCA, Capricorn, and Warner/Curb. I heard that Capitol was interested, too, but they never actually contacted me." Thomas remains with the Bishop organization, though his only contract is with MCA. His dealings with Bishop, and for that matter Forest, are, he says, strictly on a handshake basis.

His first solo album is being worked on "in the spaces" between Bishop's recording sessions and tours. Besides Thomas originals, the album is planned to contain versions of Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers to Cross," Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, Delivered," and the Jefferson Airplane's "Somebody to Love."

Instrumental backing is being provided, for the most part, by members of the Bishop band. "That's fine with me," affirms Elvin. "It keeps them working between gigs, so they're not always having to call and ask me for more money."

Not that there isn't more money. While Bishop worked for years at a scale of something around $3,500 per show—he was probably the most frequently-seen opening act in California—he now commands up to $20,000 for outdoor concerts, and considerably more than $3,500 as a headliner on smaller shows. The money, says Bishop, goes into expansion. The band now contains five horn players, two keyboardists (one doubling on sax), and two girl singers, plus rhythm. Onstage, Bishop is as clearly in charge of the outfit as he is shy offstage; he's front and center, dancing around as he trades guitar licks with Johnny Vernazza, sings, determines the order and length of solos, and so on. Thomas stands discreetly to one side of the stage, coming forward for his lead vocals in a manner rather reminiscent of Marty Balin's with the Jefferson Starship. Thomas sings about half of the songs on Bishop's *Hometown Boy Makes Good*. The relative failure of "Fooled Around"'s follow-up, "Struttin' My Stuff," which Bishop sang lead on, may have had some bearing on that decision.

Bishop says that his new-found wealth will enable him to stay at home more, tending to his cabbages and attending Oakland A's games "I always like to go to see them, because there's never anybody there," states the reclusive sports fan. "Their big game of the year, maybe 3,000 people show up. There's always a lot of room to move around."

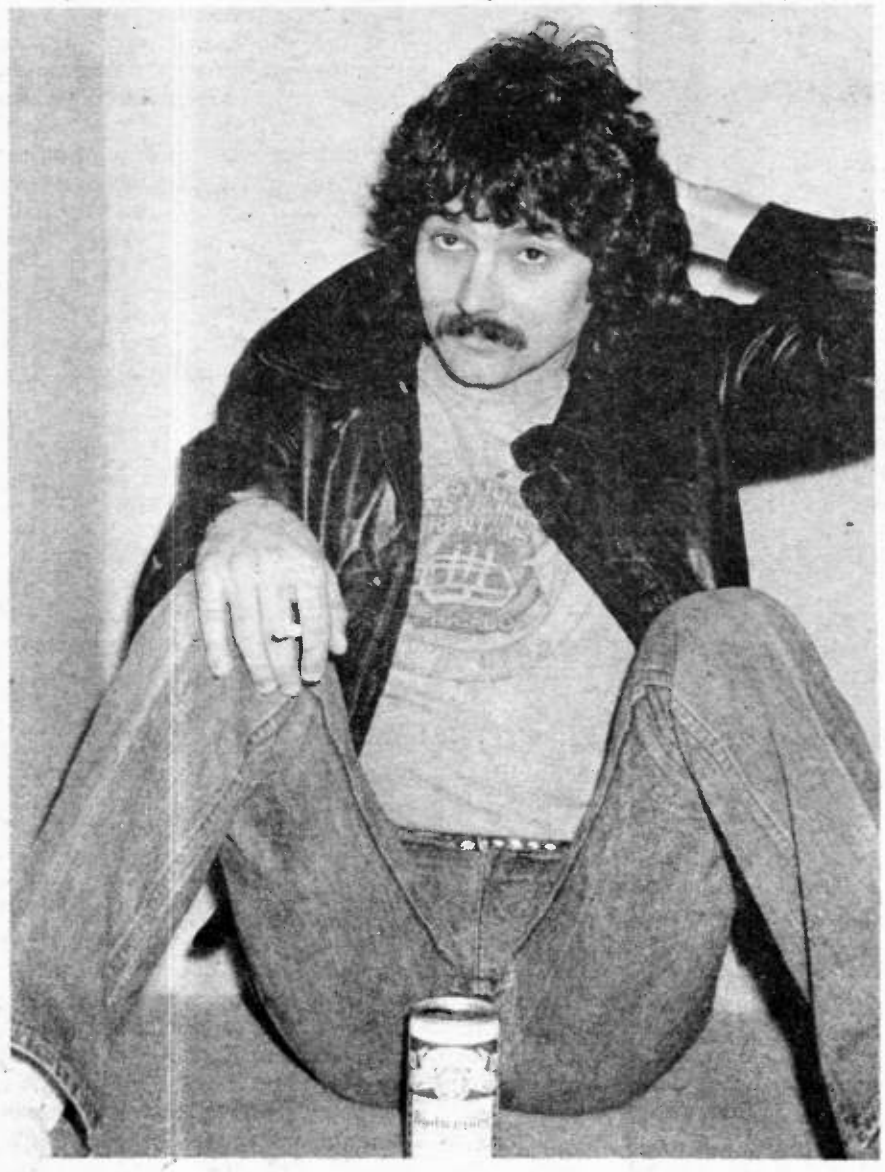
Thomas is aware that MCA will be expecting him to promote his album when it's released early next year, but nobody seems exactly sure how that will be done—by himself, or just be incorporating more Thomas material into the Bishop band's set. "We have always tried to work things out on a friendly basis," says the singer. "But," he admits, "it was a lot easier before we had a hit record."

New LP in the Can, New Studio/Home in Oregon & He's #1 With A Bullet

Phil Ceccola

Steve Miller Celebrates Thanksgiving

"There I was driving around town in a broken-down Datsun...hearing my record was #3 in the country"



By DARCY DIAMOND

MILL VALLEY, CA.—It's been a little more than a year since Steve Miller's last fit of rage; he threw all of his girlfriend's clothes into her fireplace and burned them. The incident was only the culmination of many frustrations that had been building inside of Miller since 73's *The Joker*. The LP, though it spawned the title hit and made Miller some money, didn't cut it critically, and the sensitive musician—swamped with personal and business problems concurrently— temporarily withdrew. He took refuge in the hills overlooking Nova' this time turning burning energy into recording. *Fly Like an Eagle* contained musical elements of his past, but also a new sharp and more contemporary sound. Though the album rose slowly, it is currently nestled comfortably within the national Top Five, putting Miller in an anxious mood to complete his follow-up, *Book Of Dreams*, to be released in early '77.

Miller is the third previously-dormant representative of the San Francisco Bay area to make good this year (Jefferson Starship and Boz Scaggs preceded). "Look at us!" Miller says with a Brian Wilson grin. "All three of us at the top of the trade charts. This year reflects a real shining effort for the Bay Area...and boy, is the time right.

"I'm glad Boz is doing well. Of course, he did move into an entirely different scene than I—horns and all that big sound.

"I taught Boz how to play guitar. We had a band with these sharp-looking monogrammed outfits. We called ourselves—are you ready—the Fabulous Knight Trains. Boy we thought we were cool."

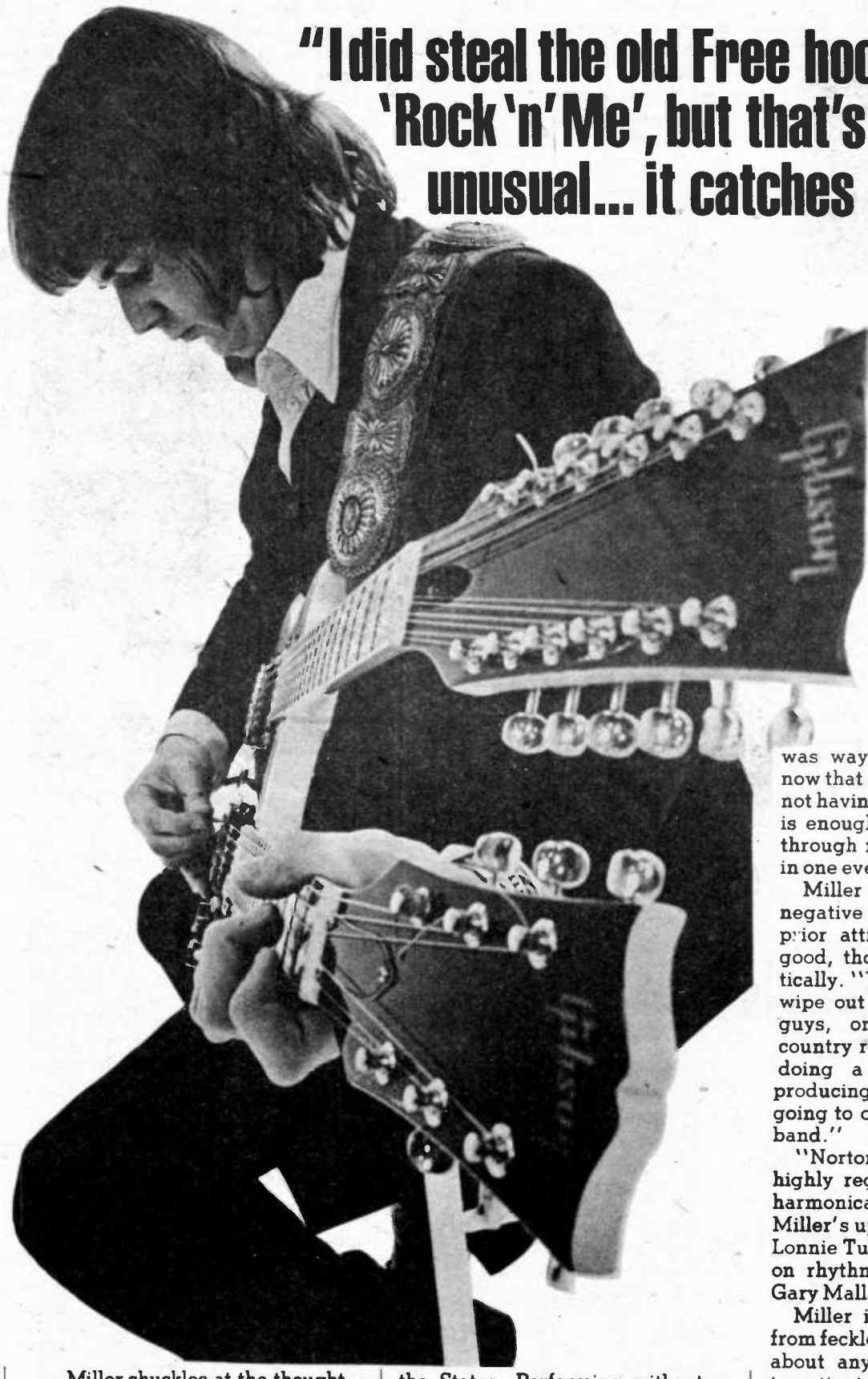
Miller is speaking as he bustles about in his converted garage/office. His current success has obviously bettered his frame of mind as well as his pocketbook. He is planning a move to a larger homestead in Oregon, and is continually pouring over architects' drawings for the house and recording studio.

When Miller first arrived in San Francisco from Chicago in 1966, his business-minded attitude, relative straightness, and devotion to his craft kept him distant from the drug-blown, socialist-oriented community of the day. He went on to sign what is still regarded as *the* ideal recording contract with Capitol Records in '67, but that only further alienated him from his peers. In the past, Miller has been less than kind verbally to those who once shunned him.

"But all that has changed," he hastens to explain. "Still, I'd have to say that all those groups were as dull as butter knives a few years ago."

[*cont'd. on next page*]

"I did steal the old Free hook to open 'Rock 'n' Me', but that's not unusual... it catches attention."



Eight years after the flower power dream became a reality/nightmare, Miller remains very much the straightforward and straightlaced businessman. He phones a contractor regarding hardware and software deals for the new studio, and it pleases him to learn that he will save some money on what is expected to be a $300,000 sound and electronic complex. Still, Miller's face carries the unhurried and unstrained elasticity that results only from sticking close to the pastoral delights of the country. Metropolitan dazzle is no big thrill for him.

"I'll have everything I need in Oregon. My animals, my hay, my studio. I've never been one to enjoy the hassle and the hustle of the big city. In fact, I stay out of them as much as possible...Ah'm a country boah," he drawls langorously.

While his new studio nears completion, Miller is working at the Record Plant in Sausalito, putting "cosmic" touches on the new LP. Later, at the studio, Miller spreads diagrams that he's penciled and charted, and gestures emphatically to the breaks and nuances of the tapes he is transferring. All the fuss is over a cut called "The Stake," which was written by band member Dave Denny.

"I like to give the guys a chance," Miller says, "though I've been criticized for it. I have a great propensity for different sounds. I like variation. I don't see it as a fault. I used all kinds of rhythms and styles on *Fly Like An Eagle*."

One such variation occurs in "Modular Tune" (the tentative title)—the ascending progression is not unlike the cheery-bleeps of the Buffalo Springfield's circular choruses. Miller lays down some vocal tracks behind it with surprising ease for a man who looks more like a lumberjack than a pop star.

"I usually record enough for two or three albums. So when I went in to do *Fly Like An Eagle*, I had 31 tracks down before I even knew it. And so, I'm putting some of that material on the new album as a complement. Everything I do has a logical flow."

Does Miller borrow styles from other musicians? Didn't he, on "Rock 'n' Me," deliberately parody styles made famous by Brian Wilson, Randy Bachman, and Paul Rogers?

Miller chuckles at the thought. "I've been playing rock 'n' roll since 1957. Now if anything, it's those guys who are copying me...I sound like *Randy Bachman*?—that's a new one. I've never heard that before. I did steal the old Free hook to open the song, but that's not unusual. It's simply a standard guitar riff. It catches attention."

Miller was severely criticized for the format of his recent tour of the States. Performing without a supporting act; utilizing his own sound system, lighting, stage set, and a special screen with visual projections—it was obvious that Miller the artist, who also manages himself, had bitten off more than he could chew.

"I know I pushed things a bit," Miller allows, chatting in a leather-smelling booth inside the cool, opaque studio. "The show was way too long. I understand now that I pushed things too far by not having an opening act. Enough is enough. Next time, I won't go through my entire musical career in one evening."

Miller refuses to dwell on the negative reaction, a change from prior attitudes. "Wasn't Norton good, though," he adds optimistically. "You know, that guy could wipe out some of the older blues guys, or for that matter, the country rockers as well. Norton is doing a solo ablum and I'm producing him. Next tour, he's going to open for us with his own band."

"Norton" is Norton Buffalo, a highly regarded but little known harmonica player. Also aboard for Miller's upcoming Winter tour are Lonnie Turner; bass, David Denny on rhythm guitar, and drummer Gary Mallaber.

Miller is a man normally free from feckle, or discouraging words about anyone.but he has grown impatient, weary of the hours spent inside the "mondo bizarro rooms" which comprise this exclusive studio; Sly Stone's former psychedelic haven. He feels cooped up, already longing for his country sanctuary. Having his own studio in Oregon will do him good.

"Two bars in, let's take out that last guitar repeat," he demands of his engineer, somewhat agitated. OK?...Okay? Now, where am I?"

ELO

A NEW WORLD RECORD
Electric Light Orchestra
United Artists LA-679-G

By RICHARD CROMELIN

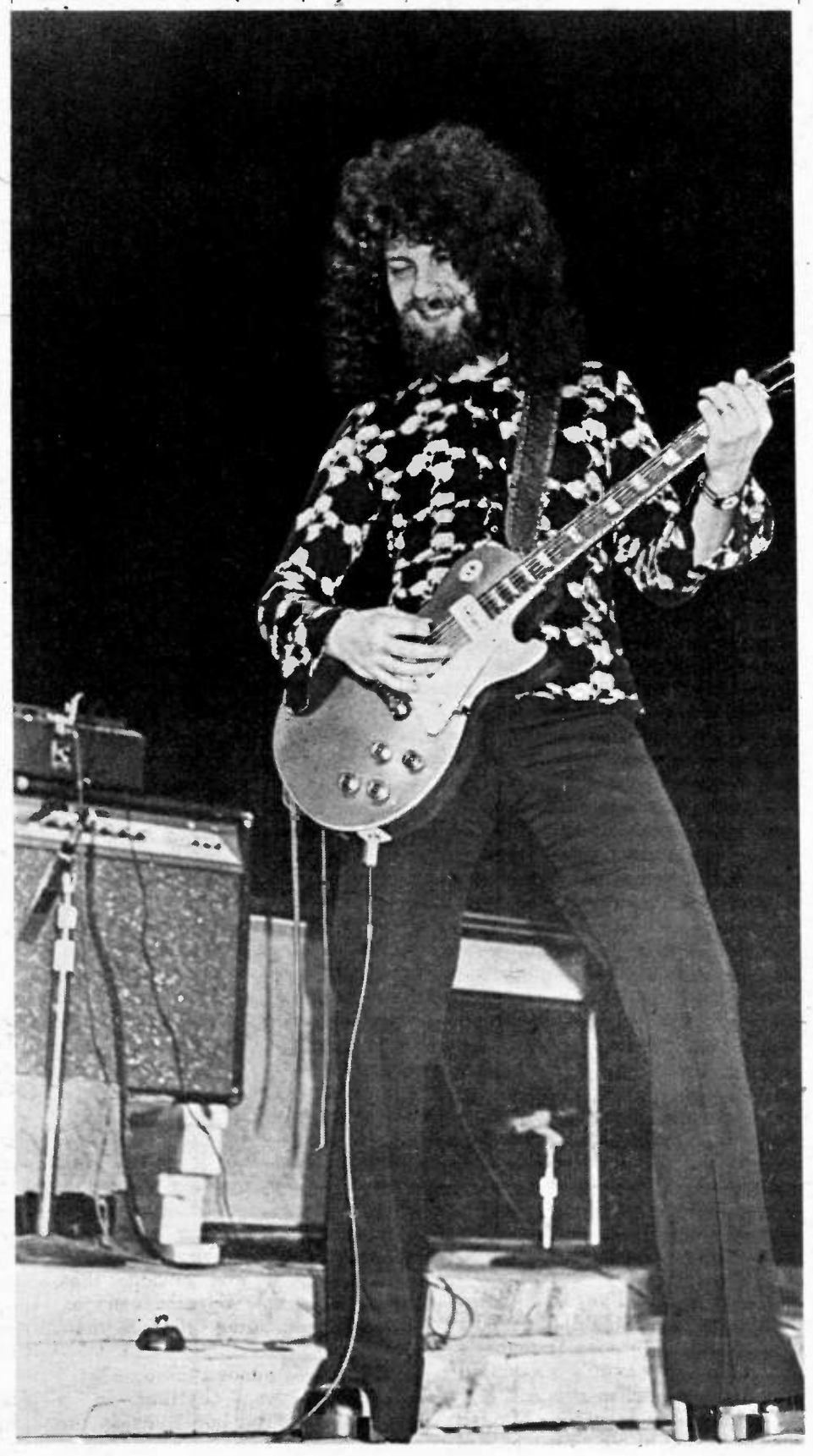
The Electric Light Orchestra was conceived and dedicated toward the fulfillment of a specific musical blueprint, but it's become clear—mainly from the live show—that its primary impulse is good rock 'n' roll fun rather than the proving of a theorem. *A New World Record* presents no radical changes of direction, but a slight shift of emphasis toward the humorous and the celebrative makes it the most well-rounded and captivating of the group's six albums.

Commercial acceptance seems to have heightened Jeff Lynne's confidence in his baby, and his mastery of the distinctive ELO style allows consistently inventive and assured excursions into its many corners. Now there is a loose feel within the reigning discipline. The elegance of the strings-plus-rock-band format is balanced by rock 'n' roll roughness, the ambition tempered by restraint, the techno-progressivism infiltrated by a glorious sense of pop music values.

The album kicks off in typical ELO fashion on "Tightrope," with a miasmic mix of deep strings, winds and eerie chorus. Violins come skittering over the wash, and suddenly we're into an all-out rock setting whose rousing, chugging pattern evokes the Beach Boys, the Who's "Armenia" and the Beatles "Revolution." The resourcefulness with which Lynne treats the singing (ELO's weakest link) is apparent right away. The basic Lynne voice is pleasantly, naturally Lennonish, but by coating the abundant backing choruses and response lines of "Tightrope" with different electric colors and intensities, he's given ELO's vocals a variety and a presence they've lacked.

With a touch-tone beep-beep, they're into "Telephone Line," where ghostly, thin fogs of sound wisp through the music's air in a slow-motion, 10CC-ish atmosphere intro. ELO, resolutely opposed to static, predictable structure, build through a plaintive long-distance love verse (the hook, though, is that she isn't answering) into a chorus that sounds like "All the Young Dudes" as done by the Beatles. Finally, obsession grips the protagonist as, amid "Doo wah doo lang" falsetto vocals, he settles in to "let it ring for evermore."

"Rockaria" is a marvelous rock 'n' roll cartoon in the tradition of "Jailhouse Rock" and "Roll Over Beethoven" (which, by all rights, it can replace as the rave-up in ELO's live act). Recalling the Move's "California Man"-era (slidey-guitar rock, ringing with Birmingham roughhouse roots, delivered with a Little Richard intensity) it stars the rocker and the diva and tells of his attempt to convert her to the earthy stuff. With some great lines ("Now listen here baby she said to me/Just meet me at the opera house at a quarter to three"), Lynne roars on to the finale, where the grinding rock bottom links up with the contrasting longhair passages and, as we fade, "The orchestra was playing all Chuck Berry's greatest tunes/And the singers in the chorus all got off on singing blues." You had to be there.



A high-contrast change of pace, "Mission," wafts into space-rock territory. Conspiring to fascinate are the enticing textures, gorgeous melody, unexpected turns (as when it sifts into a blues-tinged, funky chorus), eerie vocal enhancement and cryptic, religious-tinged lyrics. Still, it's the one track that feels a bit out of step with the rest of the album.

Side two opens with what for an instant sounds like "Hey Joe," but then quickly establishes itself as a new "So Fine." ELO rips into a brisk arrangement that carries an infectious wide-open-spaces feel, supplemented by breezily optomistic lyrics ("Sundowners we'll go on and on/We'll find the land of the midnight sun"). Its totality is an exhilarating mood of big-sky freedom, peppered with exurberant "Whoo whoo" vocal lines and distinguished by a bubbling electro-percussion break.

"Livin Thing" is the first single from *A New World Record*, and it looks like the first of several hits from the album. Its main theme is a return to quintessential Merseybeat, led by a strong acoustic guitar strum and a cute little plucked-strings motif. Lynne's melodic inventiveness is again at the fore, and once more the track travels through a variety of changes (such as an R&B-flavored chorus) before the end.

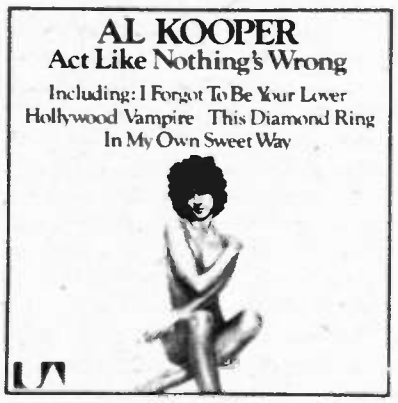
A blues-bent main line set against sweet strings kicks off "Above the Clouds," which then slips into another sterling example of pop melody. The production is something of a homage to Brian Wilson, as Lynne delves into the *Pet Sounds* floating-vocal, multi-dimensional style.

Ever fond of radical dynamic shifts and dramatic contrast, Lynne follows with the Move classic "Do Ya," devastating as ever in the capable hands of his current band. Strings and synthesizer veer crazily above, but down below it's the same fierce block-chording and mad vocal, which come across with even more presence than on the original. This should be the second hit.

The slow, dreamy "Shangri-La" wraps it up on a soft, melancholy note. Again echoing Beatle and 10CC atmosphere, it's a plaintive verse of vanishing love highlighted by a deft Lynne line: "My Shangri-La has gone away/Faded like the Beatles on Hey Jude."

Lynne and ELO score high for refusing to trot out mere reruns of their proven formula. Their perseverance and singleness of purpose contribute mightily to the solidity, confidence and economy of the album, and their clear perspective preclude the intrusion of anything labored or gratuitous. Jeff Lynne obviously picked the right spot to dig for the ultimate classical-rock fusion, and the well that he tapped turned out to be the one gusher in a field of dry holes.

"Kooper doesn't in a sense play music; music plays him."
—Ben Edmonds



ACT LIKE NOTHING'S WRONG
Al Kooper
United Artists UA-LA702-G

By BEN EDMONDS

To preserve what little remains of a once-great dignity, I'm obligated to confess to a blatant conflict of interest in the following evaluation of Al Kooper. Fact is, I'm in it up to my earlobes. See, I wrote a book with Al Kooper, *Backstage Passes*, which Stein & Day is set to unleash shortly after the first of the year. (Too late for Xmas, but it'll make a great Easter present!) Quite a nifty little item it is, too; plenty of good humor and rock & roll illumination collected by Al as he stumbled successfully through the 60's.

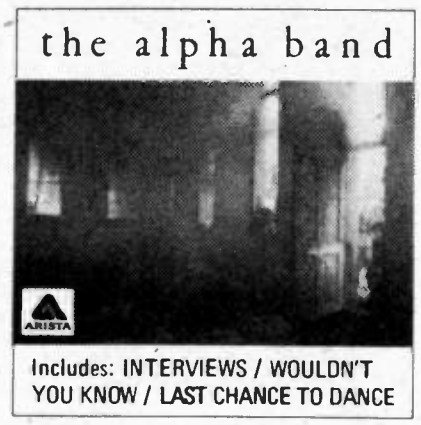
It might follow that I should try and convince you to buy this Al Kooper album in the hope that it might lead you, in turn, to buy the book. Maybe, but if I sweet-talked you into buying what proved to be a turkey album, I doubt that you'd be beating down any doors to get at the book, and where would that leave me? I don't have a piece of the record. So while I can heartily recommend the book, I'll do my very best to treat the record like the piece of plastic it is.

Al Kooper is an eclectic. The reason his face popped up in the midst of so much 60's innovation—his personably awkward contribution to the vanguard electric Dylan sound, bringing the blues to the rock middle-class with the Blues Project, bringing horns to the rock middle-class with Blood, Sweat & Tears, inflicting upon the world the "rock jam" notion with *Super Session* was simply that a person of his passionate eclecticism was routinely opening doors that people of more confined vision never knew existed. But here in the 70's, where it seems that *no* doors remain unopened or untrashed, all we're left to fall back on is our taste. That opens a space for the eclectic in the 70's scheme, and that's where *Act Like Nothing's Wrong* fits.

Kooper's albums have always been like an aural index of what he's been listening to lately, and this one's no exception. It's easy enough to pick apart the influences; he doesn't make much of an attempt to mask them (and in fact even dedicates the album to them). "Hollywood Vampire" opens with chords from the Dave Mason/Joe Walsh school and then progresses to an engaging flirtation with ELO. "One More Time" blows alternately in the direction of Steely Dan and the Beach Boys. "She Don't Ever Lose Her Groove," written by Willie "Little Beaver" Hale (who plays on this album and is somebody you owe it to yourselves to find out about *immediately*) is a Hi-style reworking of TK consciousness. For "Missing You," he even borrows from himself, circa BS&T.

Because Kooper, as a fan of music, understands what makes these musics pleasing, his tributary mutations of them generally retain those same qualities. He doesn't in a sense, play music; music plays *him*. Thus you have plenty of musical variation and proportionately shifting vocal inflections. The concern is apparently not to maintain a consistent identity, but to adapt effectively enough so that continuity is acheived through quality of presentation. This discipline was probably the primary function of co-producer John Simon (a good omen: he and Kooper collaborated on the classic first BS&T album), who succeeded most admirably and further contributed what is possibly the most inspired musical moment on the album, the brilliant string and horn arrangement on "Turn My Head Toward Home."

Although there may not be too much in the way of innovation happening here, there's an abundance of good music. Aside from the above-mentioned selections—all of which display varying levels of merit—standouts include a reworking of "This Diamond Ring," originally penned as an R&B tune for the Drifters before it was clean-cloned by Gary Lewis & the Playboys and returned here to something approximately its original intention; "I Forgot To Be Your Lover," which demonstrates Kooper's penchant for finding and exposing little-known gems; and "Turn My Head Toward Home," probably the most impressive fashioning of his influences into personal style. The only song, in fact, which fails to work on at least some of its intended levels is "Out Of Left Field," an R&B emoter that Al's voice simply doesn't carry. Only one such lapse, however, on an album as far-ranging as this is certainly no great embarrassment. *Act Like Nothing's Wrong* may not be the kind of revelatory album that we'll remember 10 years from now (as we do some of his earlier projects), but as a well-rounded picture of the spot we're standing on now, it is both accurate and enjoyable.



THE ALPHA BAND
The Alpha Band
Arista A14102

By BUD SCOPPA

Stephen Soles is a singer/writer/guitar-picker from NYC; he's the one Dylan kept whispering jokes to during the "Hard Rain" special. T-Bone Burnett is a Texan guitarist who once led a band called the Fabulous B-52s; he played with Rolling Thunder, too. David Mansfield is an ace guitar player and fiddler who comes from New Jersey, just a ride across the George Washington Bridge from Manhattan; he used to play in Quacky Duck & His Barnyard Friends along with Tony Bennett's kids. Together, these three whimsy linked musicians form the core of the Alpha Band, a recklessly loose and witty outfit with a crazily eccentric debut album.

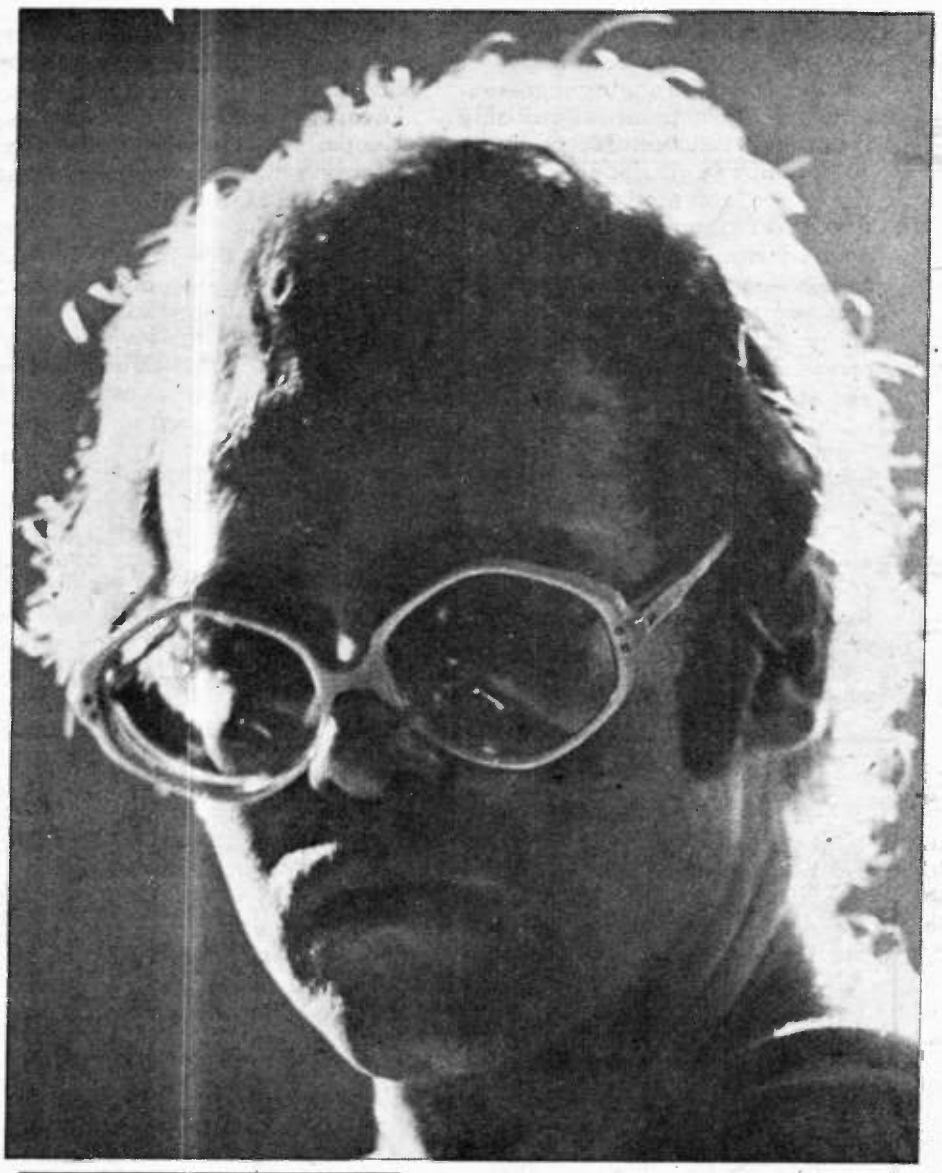
The Alpha Band plays homemade sounding American rock & roll—their musical style is roughly akin to the generous ladling of gravy on mashed potatoes. But while they're throwing the slop around—plunking, pounding, fiddling, and boozily harmonizing—they're also laying out some extremely offbeat lines. Like Burnett's "Ten Figures," which by hidden logic ties together Adolph Hitler and Cal Worthington, and "Interviews" (which Bobby Neuwirth helped write), with its sonic bleeps and lyrical time-tricks:

"...And there were James Brown records sitting in the ground 50-million years ago...
And there were submarines floating in the ocean 50-million years ago...
And there was a Peoples' Republic of China sitting in the ground 50-million years ago...
And there was pendulums and sand and Coors cans sitting in the ground 50-million years ago..."

Naturally, Dylan's shadow looms large over the whole affair—in the songs, singing, and instrumental rollicking. In its zaniness, the Alpha Band is also related—albeit in a looser, more urban way—to the Amazing Rhythm Aces.

But unrelieved zaniness can lose some of its edge over the course of an album, or even a side. A bit more straight talk or sentiment might've rendered the crashing cymbals (there are a *lot* of cymbals on this record) and breathlessly breakneck wordplay more pointed and dramatic. For my money, the best track is Soles' "Arizona Telegram," and it's an unabashed love song, the only one on the album. So the Alphas have the knack for classic modes, even if they choose in the main to be manic.

On the other hand, if you gotta make the choice, you'd probably prefer standing under an avalanche to sinking into a bog. At worst, the Alpha Band trades off its capacity for feeling in favor of exploiting its flair for cleverness, and that seems to me to be a bad trade, if not an unnecessary one. But the band is sharp and strong—and it's intriguing to watch as smart people gleefully roll boulders downhill while so many others are solemnly trying to roll them in the other direction.



BLUE MOVES
Elton John
MCA/Rocket MCA2-11004

By BUD SCOPPA

This isn't so much a review as it is a personally conducted poll. You see, I've been traveling around with Elton (the new album, that is) for a couple of weeks now, playing it for everybody I've run into, including some pretty tough customers.

Like Benton, this cynical guitar player from up in Frisco—Benton likes to listen to *Trout Mask Replica* and "September Song" (the Lotte Lenya version) just before dawn, while he's playing serious backgammon. Benton could care less about Elton. But I tried out *Blue Moves* on him the other middle-of-the-night, right after a Troggs LP. I cued up "One Horse Town" for him, because it's the biggest, hardest track of the entire four-sider. All Benton said the first time through was, "Pretty lame guitar solo." But when it was over, he got up from the backgammon board and played the track again, louder. The third time through, he was taping it onto a cassette, and working out a solo on an imaginary guitar to replace the lame on. By the time the sun had come up, Benton had the whole album on tape, and he'd won $64 in backgammon. The guy never did say whether he like it, though.

Tommy's a record producer who just moved to the States from England. He's a Gene Vincent/Eddie Cochran rock 'n' roller right down to his toes, and he's produced some *out there* hard-rock albums. He's also worked with three of the guys from Elton's band, so the other night, while a bunch of us were sitting in front of a fireplace with a bottle of chianti, I dropped my Elton disc on the stereo. After "Tonight," a heartbreaker that teams E.J.'s vocal and piano with the London Symphony, I looked over at Tommy: he had England coming out of his eyes. So we poured another round of chianti. A few minutes later, midway into "One Horse Town," Tommy and I were atop our Arabian stallions and galloping full-tilt over the cobblestone. I wanted to give that geezer my copy of the album, too, but I figure he can use his connections... nudge-nudge/wink-wink/say-no-more-say-no-more.

Bill & Jan are Angelenos living in Oregon with their two kids. Since Bill's a pilot, they get back to L.A. for an odd weekend, and when they do, they like to check out the new sounds so they'll know what to pick up on their limited record budget. Last time they flew in, they picked up on Boz Scaggs and Steely Dan. This time, I played *Blue Moves* for them top to bottom. I never saw Bill & Jan so excited about a record before. Their fave rave seemed to be "Crazy Water," especially the part where the clavinet jabbers along with the ole-timey Mr. Bass Man vocal while Elton sings about taking out his boat on a Monday morning. I wished I could've given my copy to them and saved them the seven or eight bucks, but I needed it to write this review.

Then there was Bug, who was having her 11th birthday party on Halloween. It was a costume affair intended to lead up to some serious trick-or-treating. Bug has pictures of Elton all over her wall, and a friend of hers showed her how to smile with her mouth wide open and her tongue out of view, just like Elton does in photographs. *Blue Moves* came on while the costumed partiers were consuming their cake and orange sherbet. At first the kids were a bit put off by the fact that they grown-ups in the room were digging the record so much. But by the time "Bite Your Lip (Get up and Dance!)" was playing, everybody—including the Bad News Bear and the Giant Raisin—was bouncing around the room with a tongueless, toothy grin. Bug's dad gave her a cassette machine for a birthday present, and I'm gonna give her a cassette of *Blue Moves*. I hope the Giant Raisin gets one, too.

So Elton has done my friends and me a big favor. By sparing no expense to get the best people (like string arranger Paul Buckmaster, the Reverend James Cleveland, Toni & Daryl, Crosby/Nash, and his own classy, hand-picked combo), by getting Bernie Taupin to write some convincing, direct first-person lyrics, and by singing his heart out like he never has before, Elton has given us a more-than-generous supply of often-breath-taking, often-moving rock & roll to sing along with and ride our ponies to. Theme music for all of us, like we haven't had in ages. Because of the hours, days, and dawns we've spent together, I've come to think of this now-scratchy album as a buddy. So, from Benton the guitar player, Bill and Jan in Oregon, Tommy the English geezer, Bug, the Giant Raisin, and myself, thanks, Elton—have a happy Christmas, and keep smiling that way.

SINGLES
Rupert Holmes
Epic PE 34288

By BOBBY ABRAMS

Singles. Such a hip title for such an unhip album. So right on that I immediately wondered why other albums have not been thusly titled, especially albums that contained twelve good stories, or a collection of songs all capable of hitting the top of the singles charts. Unfortunately, this isn't what our hero has in mind. What is at hand are the most saccharine observations of what it is to be single again, at the end of an affair. It is not about singles bars or singles living; it is about the solitary man crying in his beer at a singles bar.

Songwriters who perform their own material seem to be more personal in their art. Therefore, let us at once deal with the Rona Barret aspects of this album. Rupert, a man with a voracious appetite for love, affairs, relationships, as opposed to the randomness of the one-night stand, has separated from his wife. Whether or not this should be the subject matter of an album is besides the point. For Holmes, it had to be; the trauma of the situation was a personal devil that had to be exorcised. But if so, need it have been for an entire album?

Perhaps I am expecting too much, but if that is true, it is only because his previous albums have been absolute gems of perfection. By comparison, this is more than ordinary or commonplace, it is trite! It is no secret that Rupert would like to break his contract with Epic. Currently he is a hot property as a producer and could probably make a deal with anyone, as long as they could obtain his services as a producer. Therefore, it is said by people close to Mr. Holmes, that when Epic began pressuring him for this long-overdue album, he gave them junk, saving the good stuff for his next outing.

Despite the fact that I believe Rupert Holmes to be one of the most talented performers working today, I think this latest album is unqualified trash! *Singles* is thematically mono-dimensional. Gone is the cinematic vision that made *Widescreen* such an apt title. No longer in evidence is that eclectic feel for humanity that distinguished his second album from the many thousands of pseudo-poetic records released yearly. Instead we are confronted by songs like the forthcoming single, "Who, What, When, Where, Why"—evidence Rupert can still craft a song with a proper hook and catchy melody, approaching TV commercial accessibility. But the overall feeling is of contrived slickness and a superficial approach.

The title cut, "Singles" is probably the worst offender, a boring collection of platitudes set to the background of a cocktail piano lounge. To continue would not be sporting. Suffice to say the thrill is gone, the magic has left; where once the man was cynical, he now is maudlin; once incisive, he now is hackneyed; where once he was special, Holmes is commonplace.

A white rose flutters to the ground; another poet has died. This is, by far, the worst album by an entertainer of talent since *Planet Waves*.

Are you ready for the Country?

By John Morthland

Hank Snow has thrown in the towel, resigned as president of the Association of Country Entertainers, and is threatening to go "progressive" (or at least MOR).

ACE was formed two years ago when Olivia Newton-John won the Country Music Association female vocalist award. Its purpose was to preserve traditional country music, by which it meant the carefully-nurtured Nashville Sound. With Waylon's victory in last year's CMA balloting, Nashville forces found themselves being attacked from the Outlaw left as well as the MOR right. The Nashville Sound is as dead as Minnie Pearl's fried chicken franchise, and Snow has as much as said so.

It's no secret that traditional country artists haven't been selling records lately (Snow is rumored to have been dropped by RCA after several decades as a label mainstay). A number of traditional artists have already made the kind of switch Snow is promising, with predictably mixed results.

What does this mean? Is the silver-toupeed, sequin-suited Snow going to smoke pot onstage at Armadillo World Headquarters, or is he going to change into a tux and croon at Reno? Moreover, what about those people who still *like* traditional country music, as well as the more modern stuff? Are there enough of them to support anyone's career; if so, whose? A few recent albums address this question directly.

George Jones
Alone Again

including:
A Drunk Can't Be A Man
Ain't Nobody Gonna Miss Me
Stand On My Own Two Knees/Her Name Is...
Right Now I'd Come Back And Melt In Her Arms

Many country-fans—including this one—will tell you that George Jones is probably the greatest singer in C&W history. A natural honky tonker, he has, for the last few years, even risen above canned Billy Sherill productions. On *Alone Again* (Epic KC-34290), George has eschewed Sherrill's sweet orchestrations for a sparse, standard country backing that recalls his old days on Starday, Smash, UA, and Musicor. If you want to know what pure country singing is all about, listen to the way he takes songs like "(A Man Can Be a Drunk Sometimes, But) A Drunk Can't Be a Man" or "Stand on My Own Two Knees," and turns them from corn into high drama just by intensity alone.

Leona Williams, who recently became Merle Haggard's singing partner, has her first album on a major label in *San Quentin's First Lady* (MCA-Tally MCA 2212), recorded live at the prison. This woman knows where the real outlaws are, and backed by Haggard's Strangers, she's gone heavy on the prison songs, but included some more standard fare we well. Her phrasing and husky twang make her an unlikely crossover candidate, but I bet she becomes one of country's new female stars anyway.

Moe Bandy
Here I am drunk again

including:
She Took More Than Her Share
If I Had Someone To Cheat On
The Bottle's Holdin' Me/Please Take Her Home
Mind Your Own Business

Moe Bandy, who surfaced about two years ago, sings cheating and drinking songs almost exclusively. He's greatly influenced (sometimes a little too much) by such fellow Texans as Ray Price, Lefty Frizzel, and Jones. But he gets hits consistently, without sounding MOR, Nashville, progressive, or anything else except gutbucket East Texas honky tonk. *Here I Am Drunk Again* (Columbia KC-34285), while not his best, is another solid offering in that vein.

John Austin Paycheck
11 Months And 29 Days

including:
Gone At Last
Closer Than I've Ever Been Before
The Woman Who Put Me Here
I've Seen Better Days
That's What The Outlaws In Texas Want To Hear

For contrast, try Johnny Paycheck's *11 Months and 29 Days* (Epic KE-33943). Paycheck is another Sherrill artist too good to have been completely stifled by that domineering producer, even though for the last four years he's sung nothing but devotional love songs. Now, with his career floundering, he's gone progressive with a vengeance, because as one of his better new tunes explains, "That's What the Outlaws in Texas Want to Hear." He has the credentials: a resonant baritone and a prison record longer than a freight train. The title song, a blues, is unlike anything else in country music today—especially the steel playing. This album is one of the year's big surprises; proof positive that the difficult transition *can* be made with taste, style, and conviction.

America's Only Black Music Monthly: A review of the latest soul & jazz LPs, 45s & performances.

LEON WARE AT MOTOWN

SOUL & JAZZ

CRUSADERS QUARTER CENTURY

RECORD MAGAZINE 7
Nov 76/Vol 3

The Crusaders Defy Time

By BOB GLASSENBERG

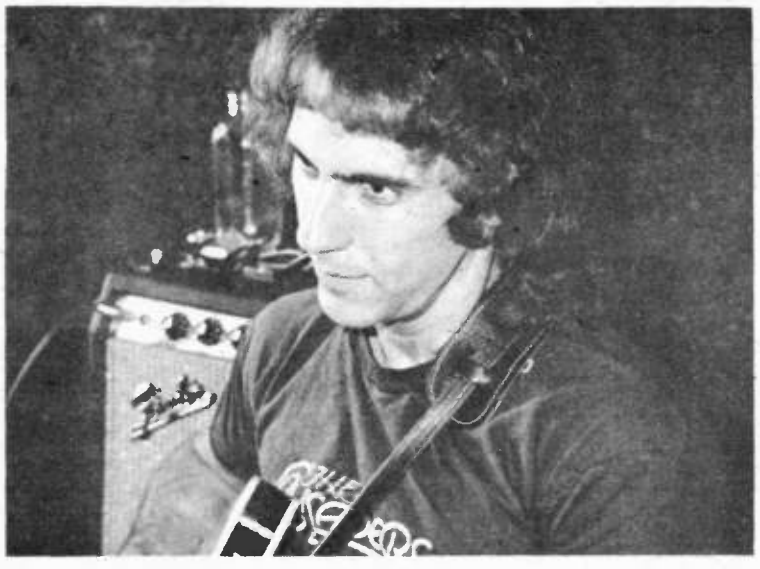
In the course of 23 years together, group members share many diverse experiences. In the case of the Crusaders—formerly the Jazz Crusaders—the changes have not all been pleasant, but they have been enlightening. Although they now function without one original member, trombonist Wayne Henderson, the Crusaders seem stronger than ever. They have recently, for example, started their own production company, and, according to Stix Hooper, the percussionist (who still remembers being called a "drummer"), the professional expanse of the members of the Crusaders continues to grow.

The four original Crusaders; Hooper, Henderson, Joe Sample, keyboards; Wilton Felder, tenor sax and electric bass; grew up together in Texas. It's been a long road from Houston to Los Angeles, but only in terms of growing up, really. Stix explained how the group has managed to stay together.

"We all had a purpose. We all wanted to excell as musicians. We wanted to use that as a general base. We all agreed on that, whether one guy wanted to take a different avenue on how he wanted to play music or not. All of those side things were never stronger than that single purpose.

"We are one of a kind," Hooper continued. "Even though other groups have been together for a long period of time, it just doesn't happen that you get four or five or six musicians together that all play music and all have the same idea without each guy in the group trying to take a position and lead the other guys.

"We are all in tune with each other. So when I'm here talking to you, I'm pretty much in tune with what Joe would have said or Wayne or Wilton says, whatever, it's just kind of a flow of ideas. All of us know what the general purpose of the group is.



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60 cents each or 4 for $2.

"As a group, we get contributions from each individual person. Since we know what our general purpose is and how it is we want to play music, we don't have conflicts. Joe Sample would not bring in anything that would be alien to our thought even if he said this is the going thing...this is the most contemporary thing. But he will bring in things that we could put our label on. Even down to an original composition. I don't bring things in thinking I will become the producer on them. I bring in something the other guys will devour.

"We've gotten over the hurdles of personality clashes and all of these things which, of course, happen when you are young and maturing. We have a singleness of purpose and it's one of those unique things where our heads go in the same direction as far as what we want to do musically," explains Hooper.

And that direction and purpose is apparent on their albums. With their latest, *Southern Knights*, the Crusaders have not re-defined their purpose, but underlined it. They are having a good time and want everyone else to join them.

"We want to play music that we will be able to enjoy," says Hooper. And from the opening cut "Spiral" on the new album, the Crusaders' enjoyment is evident. "We want that universal appeal and we feel that there is something in our music that can reach the broad audience. This is happening all of the time. Our direction and purpose is to have that satisfaction of knowing that the music that we feel has reached people of all levels."

That direction also becomes evident if we stop to think about their recent appearance at the Roxy, in Los Angeles where the Crusaders attracted the likes of Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Eric Clapton and members of the Average White Band. Or we can see the extent of their music appeal from the throngs of people who saw them on their recent first tour of Europe, where they were the first group to appear two successive nights at the Montreaux Jazz Festival.

"All of those people who came to see us at the Roxy give us another level to realize. I mean, it really makes me feel good to know that beyond the layman's acceptance you have the true respect of your peers. It gives you confidence, of course, but it also gives us another level of satisfaction."

In the early part of the seventies, when Blood Sweat & Tears and Chicago began making headlines as "jazz-rock groups," the Jazz Crusaders, had already been making that kind of music. In fact, it was the Jazz Crusaders who helped shape

those musicians in the more popular bands. Stix mentions the Average White Band as a newer group which has been influenced by the Crusader's sound and energy.

"But although we influenced these musicians, we were really kind of watered down," Hooper adds. "I mean, particularly for a black musician to come from the South, one of the greatest respects you could obtain would be to be respected as a player. And it doesn't mean you have to play the blues. It means to play music that has some kind of musical merit, that it is a little beyond what you might expect from a so-called 'black' player, like an R&B player.

"So we tended to water down a lot of the earthiness in our music. Consequently even when those people were influenced by us, they really took our superficial things and played on it. We could have been jazz rock before it was jazz rock. But in those days, you couldn't play "Straight, No Chaser," (T. Monk) with a back beat."

And therein lies another tale. Perhaps that was a contributing reason why jazz musicians remained so obscure to the listening public for so many years. The critics demanded a certain style from the so-called "jazz" musician and tended to make that style of music so cerebral that the normal public tended to stay away from it because of its esoteric outer shell.

"The critics would say, 'That's not right. Maybe on that E flat there should be a change in the progression,'" explaines Hooper. And apparently, many musicians of that era followed the critics as a road to success among consumers.

But Hooper doesn't feel badly about that period. "We wanted acceptance in that way," he points out. "That's where we were coming from, so to hell with it. When you are young, that's part of your maturity and that's that."

After the Crusaders began playing more clubs, they had a better idea of what people wanted. They began to loosen up and even play some Beatles' tunes, and eventually dropped the term jazz from their name. But Hopper remembers that even those Beatles' tunes were sophisticated. "Even if we wanted to play it with a groove or feeling, it was never really raw. There was a certain amount of superficial musicality about it.

"I remember," Stix continues, "that Joe Sample was the first guy to play the electric piano and even the harpsichord on a tune called "Tough Talk," (a pop hit). That was during our real transition period. In 1969, we let it all hang out. That's when we did "Old Socks New Shoes" and incorporated the guitar and went on to the R&B thing and back beat. I began playing the raw feeling. Eventually we fell into our total own. The new album is really a cross section of where we are coming from with the subtleties of the real tender moments to the really raw moments."

We began talking about influences and Stix pointed out some real differences between the musicians of his age and those younger musicians today.

"A player now is hearing a finished product with a lot of overdubs and he goes out and tries to play that sound. He's into sound and really not into playing the instrument like during my era. Then you were influenced by the ability of the guy on an instrument, not by, 'Gee did you hear that new Eric Clapton record or the new George Harrison record?' I mean, not belittling and with all due respect to them as musicians, but when a person hears those records today, he's hearing a sound and a production whereas when we heard a Max Roach record, we *heard* a Max Roach record. There were only four tracks and overdubbing was practically unheard of.

"And I would say that it's an unfortunate thing for young folks today. It's something that they really aren't able to experience.

"In terms of the Crusaders, we have used the electronics, which have really taken over the business, as an expansion and extension of what we want to say musically. We are changing to where Joe (Sample) will be using a lot more acoustic piano than in recent times. I mean its fashionable to use the contemporary means, but never to a point where you get so involved you lose sight of what's happening."

Of course, the audience has a great deal to say in what they want to hear, according to Hooper, who holds great hope for even stronger inroads into the pop market place by strongly oriented jazz musicians, such as George Benson.

"The audiences are becoming more sophisticated in what they want to hear and that's why the, for lack of a better word, jazz-crossover, jazz-rock and more musical things are now happening. People want to hear more. And in relation to the electronic equipment, people have more and better equipment these days and they want to be beyond the hard rock beat and hear the fine points, you know. They want to hear the different colors, the dynamics and the shades. But a lot of artists are not musicians, so when they go on a concert tour, they set off smoke bombs and the hurricane on stage or whatever, the echoes and the whole bit."

Hooper wanted to point out one final hassle many musicians have today. That classification which the public seems to place the musician in when they have heard one or two of his compositions or tracks. "Sometimes you are no better than your last hit," he explained. "You know, you get a label. Fortunately, we've never had a "Disco-Duck" but you hear a musician or a group and people say 'Wow, I never knew Stevie Wonder could do that." And that's a fault particular to this country. The people here label artists, because, of course, they get most marketing potential out of whatever that label is.

"If the listener would give most artists a little bit more attention, they would find out that there is more depth than is heard with a few listenings. But really, don't pass judgement on an artist by what you hear on the radio, particularly because of the labels that exist. They're usually all phony labels anyway.

"A person should listen to music for what it is. People finally heard George Benson but before it was 'Oh, he's a jazz artist.' You know. It's like what happened to Wes Montgomery. And I think it's unfortunate that a lot of artists have gone and passed away and people really didn't know where they were coming from."

IN THE SEVENTIES

Jazz

By LITA ELISCU

Over the last few years, jazz has re-achieved, to use an inelegant word, the enthusiastic encouragement of a new and important audience: people with money (particularly younger people who will be around for a while to support their tastes). After years of 'jazz-rock,' there is growing interest in the actual source of those few, improvised, 'funky' notes.

One of the reasons jazz in concert so often has been unsuccessful may be the difficulty of finding places which have good acoustics, enough space, and an atmosphere which allows for some dancing around. Loft jazz—music made in small living/working spaces—has become quite popular. It's sort of like going to somebody's party, paying a liquor fee, and then meeting new sounds and people. In New York, there's Beefsteak Charlie's. It's just what its name sounds like: a place to get steak-and-brew combinations in an atmosphere of pseudo-turn-of-the-century barroom.

Richard Davis is one of the finest bass players around. Along with Ron Carter, he is one of the most in-demand session musicians in the U.S. and Europe. He has played with various philharmonic orchestras, Benny Goodman, Sarah Vaughan, Igor Stravinsky, Eric Dolphy, Charles Lloyd, Roland Kirk, Barbra Streisand, Janis Ian, Keith Emerson, etc.

Somehow, Beefsteak Charlie's and Richard Davis have connected. Both parties decided to try out some music in the bar. So Richard and pianist Walter Davis (no relation) sat in the bar's picture window alcove and combined forces to produce some of the most elegant and yet informal jazz I've heard in a long time. Because there were only two of them, they mainly took turns playing extended solos intended to demonstrate the capacity and flexibility of each instrument. If the stand-up bass has always seemed rather monotonous, even boring in its possibilities, this musical adventure proved otherwise. Polyrhythms, polysyncopation, mood and drama, intensity and good humor, time changing its dimensions and held in space without any anchor—all fused in fifteen-minute improvised solos. The basic melodies were 10-note intros picked out by Walter Davis' right hand. There were old chestnuts and well-known hooks from Bachrach songs and the like as well as Ferde Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite, using the few bars made popular by Roy Rogers and Dale Evans' TV show. The two musicians turned straight lines into Spencerian penmanship essays.

It was fun and beautiful jazz. And it must have worked, because Beefsteak Charlie's has decided to keep up the policy.

Jazz also has been featured prominently in The Kitchen, a New York downtown showcase for various arts, especially music and video. The Organic Music Theater appeared there recently. The Theater includes Don Cherry, his wife Moki and John Pierro Promiggiore, with Cherry on keyboards, trumpet, flutes, vocals and ethnic instruments. Moki plays tambura and Pramiggiore plays guitar.

> **" Richard & Walter Davis produced some of the most elegant yet informal jazz I've ever heard."**

Don Cherry gained his reputation in the 1960's as part of the avant-garde movement, when he worked with Ornette Coleman to create a kind of music just now gaining comprehensive acceptance. Cherry has since moved on to other sources and forms. He began to study Indian music, and the Organic Music Theater uses the rhythms and disciplines of Indian and African music, as well as jazz. The result is very pleasurable, warm, and even tender. For the first time perhaps, such exotica as mantras, chants and other Orientalia seem to be within a common and easily accessible folk tradition.

[*cont'd. on pg. 43*]

Leon Ware
LA's Most Important New Writer/Producer/Performer

Jean Radnetter

"I'm looking forward to traveling as many avenues as possible...successfully"

By COLMAN ANDREWS

Leon Ware's songs have been recorded by an almost bewildering array of performers—including Ike and Tina Turner, Bobby Womack, the Righteous Brothers, Kim Weston, Michael Jackson, Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, Merry Clayton, Martha and the Vandellas, Johnny Nash, and Minnie Riperton. One of his best-known collaborations was with Quincy Jones, on the *Body Heat* LP for A&M: the title song was his, as was "If I Ever Lose This Heaven." "At BMI a few months ago," Ware says, "they told me I had about 200 songs in the catalogue, and I've probably written about 1000 altogether. That's a lot of songs."

Ware has also produced a variety of famous artists. He recently worked on Marvin Gaye's *I Want You* album, and has just completed Syreeta's next; collaborating on the songs and production with her husband, Curtis Robinson.

All along, though, Ware claims, "My dream has been to be a recording artist."

To that end, Ware recorded his first album in 1972, and has recently finished his second, *Musical Massage*. Discussing the critical reaction to the album thus far, Ware says, "A friend of mine told me that one reviewer or writer or whatever you call them said 'Leon Ware proves again that he's a good writer and producer, but not a strong vocalist.' Now, I realize that it's *possible* that someone just doesn't like my voice, and they're entitled to their opinion. But I *do* wish they'd keep it quiet! He explodes into a hearty and long-lasting laugh.

Ware—as those who have heard his music would probably guess—is an amiable, low-key personality. He dresses well, sports a trim but serious beard and moustache, and uses words extravagantly, with a loping, appropriately musical manner of speech. And, though I happen to like his voice just fine myself, it's easy enough to see why some others might not: it's so smoothly polished that it almost disappears at times. It doesn't get lost in whispers like some voices (Barry White's, for instance, when he still took himself seriously as a singer); it comes *out* of whispers, instead, though not always far enough. One is almost tempted to say that it is a typical songwriter's voice—better suited to audition rooms than to recording studios or stages.

Ware, a 36-year-old native of Detroit, has nonetheless been singing for a long time—since he was three, the story goes, and won an amateur contest with a rendition of "Caledonia." In high school, he sang in a group called the Romeos, another member of which was Lamont Dozier. Aretha Franklin and Smokey Robinson were at the same school, Ware recalls. He also sang jazz, with people like Barry Harris and Yusef Lateef. In 1959, in New York, he signed with ABC-Paramount; that association "didn't work out" he once told an interviewer.

Meanwhile, he had started writing songs, and he signed with Motown in this context. In 1965 one of his works, "Got to Have You Back," became a hit for the Isley Brothers. He left Motown that year, though, because he "had some offers that gave me more of an opportunity"—he worked as an independent producer and songwriter until 1972, went briefly to United Artists where he recorded that first album, and then, just over two years ago, rejoined Motown—this time as a writer, producer, *and* recording artist.

The long gap between his UA album and his new one for Motown was, he says, "because I haven't felt that I've had the support to do another album as a performer until now. Motown has supported me one hundred per-cent. Whatever isn't there, just isn't there."

What isn't there, as long as Ware brought it up, is very much excitement. *Musical Massage* is a skillfully put-together album, to be sure, but it's also a fairly safe one, and a reasonably under-produced one. Most of all, there's not much dramatic or emotional variation in the music Ware massages us with. There are nice moments: "Instant Love" can almost be imagined as a fine jazzy slow ballad; two tracks arranged by the great Coleridge Perkinson are deceptively multi-layered; the wordless "French Waltz" has the makings of a first-rate MOR hit. But the hackneyed quasi-disco format of most of the music tends to obscure whatever signs of individual personality are present from one song to the next—and also the attractively subtle qualities of Ware's mild voice.

The fault in such a case, one would usually say, lies with the producer. But Ware produced himself....Should he, then, consider letting someone else produce him? *Would* he consider it? "Well, I wouldn't want to limit myself to any particular reaction as far as other producers, but it would probably be far in the future, because I have a lot of ideas of my own which I haven't tried yet. Unless, of course, a producer appeared with an unbelievable, unsurpassable idea or concept..."

Ware says that in the meantime he'd like to produce "just about everybody on the Motown label." Off the label, he names only one: "Natalie Cole. I'd *love* to produce her. I have an appreciation for anyone out there who's doing anything valid artistically, but she's really the only one whose artistic style has impressed me."

Besides producing, writing, and recording, Ware adds, he has other future plans. "I want to act, for instance. I want to avail myself of any avenue there is. Film scores, maybe, and shows—but not in abundance. And it is not my aspiration to be an extremist in entertaining on stage. I might even do some commercials again (he wrote a long-running Clairol theme in the early 70's), as long as they were of a certain magnitude that I could look at and be proud of. I want to try a lot of things. Variety is the spice of life"—his hearty laugh again—"Yes, write that down. Variety is the spice of life. I do love variety. Like I said, I'm looking forward to traveling as many avenues as possible"—a pause and a smile—"successfully."

Billy Taylor

"I've found that I get a certain joy from performing, so I look for ways to do it."

[cont'd. from pg. 41]

Jazz on the street is just that: on the street. There were numerous groups outside Carnegie Hall during the Newport Jazz Festival, when various musicians staged their own 'concert' as a comment on the music offered this year. Some of it was quite proficient. But the most incredible music just wafts through the air and disappears before its maker can be seen. The sound of a tenor sax pierces the evening air, playing some old standard with a personal authority: it's a little like the Paris/France we all carry around in our minds, courtesy of Hemingway.

One of the brightest and nicest aspects of all this informal jazz, so readily accessible, is that there is a whole audience of students who really come to just learn from the players. The rap sessions in between sets is worth the whole price of admission and it is the best idea of 'school' I've seen in a long time!

BILLY TAYLOR

Billy Taylor is another jazz artist actively exploring alternatives in the presentation of his style of music. Taylor is a pianist, composer, recording artist, arranger & conductor, actor, author, teacher & lecturer, radio & TV star. One of his more ambitious projects was the establishment of Jazzmobile, an organization which brings jazz to public schools and to the streets of the city. He has more awards and certificates and medals than most politicians. He has played with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Roy Eldridge, Carmen McRae among others.

"Everything I do involves in one way or another, communication. I'm interested in a lot of things, but that's the bedrock." Taylor speaks easily, his years of public lecturing obvious, but he softens the effect with a genuine smile. "I found that I get a certain kind of joy from performing, so I look for ways to do it."

Many say that Taylor's style is one of the more fluid and virtuoso varieties around. But he has not made an album of his own in some time. He nods at this, maintaining an even tone. The words are not unfamiliar to him, but that does not make them any sweeter. "The music business seems to be geared in directions different from what I'm doing currently. Many people who have heard the live performances and the response from the audiences just have not considered that it is something they can sell on records.

"Record production is one area I'm looking into very seriously now, because it is one area of communication that I have failed dismally in. I don't consider it a personal failure because I've also done a lot of radio, and I know the other elements which go into a record being successful, or even available."

Taylor wrote a tune, "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free," a song made famous during the 1960's during the first glimmers of black consciousness. The song appeared on an album which is now a cut-out. "I could record it again, but I liked the album it was on—I produced it, too—and I don't *want* to cut it again. I liked that version!

"I used to think of the music industry and the record industry separately until I realized how much the people are alike everywhere. I've gotten a rather unique look at the business of culture, and there are just as many leeches, as many phonies, and as many opportunists in the creative areas as in the record business. And it is *much* more tragic for a dean or teacher at a school to misinform a student—tell him he's going to replace the first violinist in the Philharmonic, train him for that alone—because that student is much more likely to become disillusioned and bitter than the guy who can use his abilities for different outlets, even play different instruments.

What would be your advice to aspiring young jazz musicians, then?

"To think in terms of what he wants to say musically—and I'm saying 'he', not 'she' consciously. I'll explain in a minute. 'He' has to be aggressive; let people know what he does; broaden the range of his activities. The great need is to develop one's own voice before tackling the major markets. A lot of guys coming up now are good readers, they can play whatever you put in front of them. They have it over the guys of a few years ago, who could play equally well but could not read well. Now, a young musician has a better chance of earning a living playing music rather than washing dishes or driving a cab."

"Now the women...I don't know what the psychological reasons are, but I know so many talented women who should be a much greater part of the jazz scene than they are. There are so few, given the amount who graduate from schools, who write and play well. Other than vocalists and pianists, there are so *few*, so their problems are greater even before they start."

The 'jazz life' seems to have always been associated with disillusionment and bitterness, the need to turn to drugs and other escapes...Billy Taylor frowns, pushes his glasses up.

"I really don't want to talk anymore about drugs and the 'jazz life.' I don't think drugs are that central to the issue...I have heard that to be a creative person in this culture is so dehumanizing, many artists have chosen suicide instead. I find this totally unacceptable. You can point to any number of people in any number of fields, not just jazz, who suffer. Many people are not given the recognition, financial or personal, that their talent *screams* for. The question, though, really should be, 'Why is it possible for so many people *not* to go the route of disillusion?' For every jazz musician you name who became disillusioned, I can name five who did not. I think of the Don Byases, Art Tatums, and John Coltranes who found that other things got in the way of their creativity.

"I had a lot of help starting out. When I came to New York as an impressionable youngster anxious for approval—I can't tell you how many times I was literally pushed out of the bar, told to get out, by various musicians who did not want to see me go that route. I was not led down the garden path as so many others have stated happened to them."

How do you define jazz?

"It is the one American musical form which gives a self—or conservatory—trained musician an opportunity to say something in a *traditional* way, in the way that I think music was meant to be presented. If I try to reach you with the music and don't, then it is my fault, not the music's. And this is true for jazz more than for many other performing arts because jazz is based on individual interpretation."

Currently, Taylor is at work on a piece of music for Judith Jamison to dance to with the Alvin Alley Company. Alley has made frequent use of Duke Ellington's music of late, so it was hardly surprising that Billy Taylor was obviously proud of the assignment. He is also composing the music for a play written by a Nigerian, to be presented on Broadway next year. He is also keeping a full performance schedule, and during the time we talked, at least three different gigs were arranged, calls made to musicians and others. His desk was piled high with papers, and he grimaced, explaining that they would all get cleared off some time that day. When I left he was on the phone, finalizing arrangements for various projects all designed to make jazz accessible for everyone.

SOUL & JAZZ SINGLES

By JOE McEWEN

Lots of good news this month but first let's clean up last month's business by amending two serious omissions. Thelma Jones' "Salty Tears" (*Columbia 10403*) is one of those real weepers that probably owes its inspiration to "Misty Blue." A bing-bong production effect and some earthy wailing keep me coming back for more. Automatic Man's "My Pearl" (*Island 6301*) is even more of a sleeper: a buzz-saw Hendrix-inspired guitar, fashionably phased vocals and a snappy little hook make this one of the prominent releases of 1976. If you can find the single (the LP doesn't have as much to recommend), you'll no doubt be pleasantly surprised by the sleeve. It's my favorite since the Stairsteps "From Us To You" package.

Warner Brothers followed my advice and released "Trick Bag" (*Reprise 1372*) as the new Meters single. The song is an old New Orleans classic by way of Earl King and the Meters certainly do it justice (King even makes a guest appearance as the Father-In-Law). It sure beats "Disco Is the Thing Today." One-time Chairman of the Board General Johnson, who already is on this year's Top 20 list with "All In The Family," has what is probably the only answer song to David Ruffin's "Walk Away from Love"—"Please Don't Walk Away," (*Arista 0203*) is what most of us would have realistically said in that situation. "Walk Away" is mid-tempo and relaxed, but the General sure sounds like he means it: "Kick me, cuss me, slap me/But please don't walk away." Ouch! Lamont Dozier inspired a generation of Detroit singer-songwriters, General Johnson included, but the latest Dozier offering, "Jump Right On In" (*Warners 8240*) sounds like it would have been a better vehicle for Johnny Mathis. Lamont is a lot of things, but not an after hours crooner.

Kool and the Gang continue to persevere. "Open Sesame" (*Delite 1586*) has most of the familiar Gang accoutrements: pile-driving beat, non-sensical hook and those horns. Sometimes it even sounds as if their arranger is stuck for ideas. The same can't be said for the production team of Chuck Jackson and Marvin Yancey. On the heels of success with Natalie Cole and Ronnie Dyson, the Chicago duo have worked their magic on Midwest Franchise and "I'll Be Around" (*MCA 40629*) has that sparkling gospel piano that marks their best work. A rough voiced male-female lead and some tasty arranging make this happen. The melody offers a slight hint of Diana Ross' version of "Ain't No Mountain High." Willie Henderson, a venerable Chicago arranger/producer, has been conspicuously absent from things of late. He's back this month, though not as auspiciously as we might have hoped. Essence's "I Ain't Much, But I'm All I Got" (*Epic 50293*) has a classy title, but is a bit too slavish a Spinners imitation for my tastes, and "Doing the Feeling" (*Dakar 4559*) by Alvin Cash (and where has *HE* been?) is one of those stomp-stomp Bohannon type things with Alvin spouting the same "*whoop it baby*" lines he used to great effect on "Twine Time" and "Unwind the Twine." Another tarnished Windy City comeback is Billy Butler's "She's Got Me Singing" (*Curtom 0120*), plagued by poor production and a dearth of ideas.

The interesting remake of the month is "Stubborn Kind of Fella" by Buffalo Smoke. This is Lou Courtney's group and his arrangement of this Motown standard has about three distinct parts. Somehow he ties them all together and it works. It certainly isn't the standard type of disco remake. Sir Mack Rice produced "You Ain't Playin' With No Toy" (*Mercury 73838*), one of those tough-talking Southern groove numbers. The lead singer reminds me of Phoebe Snow oddly enough. The song is highly recommended, as is Tommy Tate's "If You Ain't Man Enough" (*Koko 723*), a gritty and uptempo number.

D.J. Rodgers is one of those singer-songwriter types who seems destined to break through someday. "On the Road Again" (*RCA 10802*) is a nice little tale about a performer on the road. D.J. sounds a lot like gospel king James Cleveland (very throaty and harsh) which may be no accident—Rodgers was at one time a member of Cleveland's choir. Akines, Bellmon, Drayton and Turner used to be a Philadelphia singing group called the Formations. Now they write songs. "Girl [Love Everything About]" (*Delite 1585*) by the Philadelphia Ambassadors is bright and bubbly with a Teddy Pendergrass-type lead, while the Norman Harris-produced "Ooh Cha" (*Soul Train 10792*) from the Soul Train Gang is creamy, an improvement over everything on their last album. No Philadelphian with any real affection for the city's music scene could forget the estimable Billy Harner ("Homicide Dresser"), but his first in several years, "Two Lonely People" (*Midland 10783*) is an MOR-styled ballad that has Billy sounding like Joe Cocker. Still it's nice to have him back. Better luck next time.

"Bad, the girl is bad" opens the Funkadelic's "Undisco Kidd" (*Westbound 5029*), a funk-classic celebrating lethargy and slothfulness. George Clinton might have had Jackie Moore's "Disco Body" (*Kayette 5127*), in mind a song about a hard dancing lady. According to the Funks: "*She was babbling about how bad she could do the bump/The kid said on the real side of things, 'Bertha, you got too much rump to bump.*" And what about King Floyd, whose "Body English" (*Chimneyville 10212*) says "Let your body do the talking."

Reviews

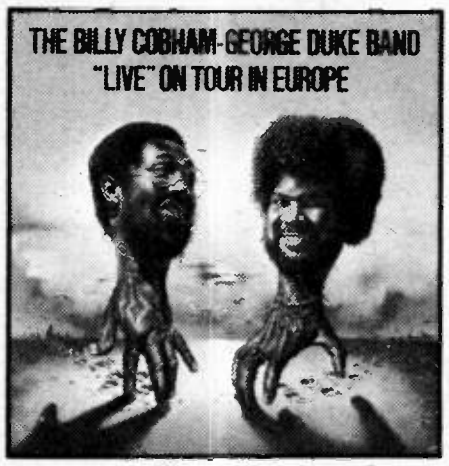
WHOPPER BOPPER
Jr. Walker
Soul S6-748S1

By COLMAN ANDREWS

Jr. Walker is the king of disco jazz—its founder (or at least its major inspiration) and one of its most active exponents. And, for my money, he's damn near the only disco-jazzman worth listening to, or even dancing to. His saxophone style is at once mellow and rough, playful and funky, sensual and cool. Walker certainly has limitations conceptually—he's hardly the world's greatest improviser, at least based on what we can hear of him on record—but he is strong and sure in what he does, and never ventures further than he can safely travel. He is also a first-rate R&B vocalist, full of honest, unrefined power; one of the things I like least about Jr. Walker LPs is that, on them he usually doesn't sing enough.

Whopper Bopper Show Stopper offers approximately the usual mix of originals, R&B hits, and schlock ("My Love" by the McCartney-ettes in this case), and one particularly good vocal, Barrett Strong's "I Could Never Love Another." Walker's playing is everything we have a right to expect it to be. I'm not crazy about the muddy rhythm section sound Walker has been playing against lately, but at least it's relatively unobtrusive and allows him plenty of room to blow. Still, I can't help thinking, wistfully, of the days and the kinds of music in which the front line and the rhythm section actually played off of one another and led each other into or out of musical ideas.

Walker breaks no new ground here, but I like the choice of material and the spark of his playing better on this album than I have on the last two, and at least this is music that can be treated with a little bit of respect—which is hardly true of so much of the idiom these days.



LIVE ON TOUR IN EUROPE
George Duke/Billy Cobham
Atlantic SD 18194

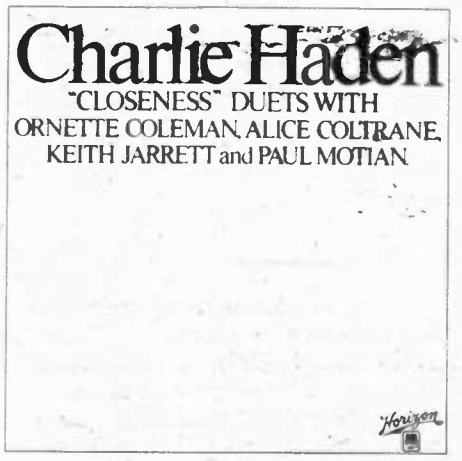
By SAM GRAHAM

Most of us have at least once savored the dubious delights of a McDonald's "Filet 'O Fish" sandwich, a blight on anyone's self-respecting tastebuds. The new Billy Cobham and George Duke band's debut record may be the musical counterpart to the filet o' fish. Call it the "fusion o' funk," if you want; but don't waste your time trying to digest it, because it's just as tasteless.

The outlook for this partnership was pretty auspicious. Billy Cobham (along with Tony Williams) was one of the few originals in the new generation of super-drummers, wielding awesome technique with the force of an elephant gun. And though Cobham's leadership and composing chops on his various solo efforts are hardly brilliant, keyboardist Duke *has* made some fine albums on his own and is fresh from a stint with Frank Zappa. They even brought along Alphonso Johnson, one of the best in a line of superb Weather Report bassists, and limber guitarist John Scofield. But instead of inspiring each other, they've diluted most of the creativity they might have originally possessed—a cliche-ridden exercise in disco-funk. "Hip Pockets" and "Do What Cha Wanna" are the kind of music that must play in the elevators up to the "Soul Train" studios, while "Juicy" and "Ivory Tattoo" are standard jazz-rock fusion numbers.

Amidst this mediocrity are some truly embarrassing moments. The prime offender is "Space Lady," Duke's space-age fairy story/narration that is simply jejune nonsense, a stoned-out gag that should have stayed in the rehearsal hall. Close on "Lady's" heels is "Almustafa the Beloved," where guest Jon Lucien mimics Herbal Essence commercials as he intones such weighty thoughts as "*Almustafa had to depart to carry his majestic feeling of the story of life to other lands...*" George Duke's former employer best described this sort of rot when he called it "cosmic debris."

Perhaps this band will eventually put the potential of such fine players to use. For the time being, however, Cobham, Duke and company have proved themselves deserving of nothing short of instant oblivion.



CLOSENESS
Charlie Haden
Horizon [A&M] SP-710

By COLMAN ANDREWS

There aren't very many acoustic bassists worth listening to as soloists—unless one is particularly impressed by empty technical facility. Haden is one of those rare exceptions. He's certainly an accomplished technician, but he chooses to use his technical talents very modestly and carefully. He never lets flash get in the way of music. And he is profoundly musical, with an extraordinarily deep understanding of the roots of jazz (though he plays the blues as much as anything, it sometimes seems).

Closeness presents Haden in the perfect context for a good bass soloist—a series of duos. The duets, all original Haden compositions, are with Ornette Coleman (alto), Alice Coltrane (harp), Keith Jarrett (piano), and Paul Motian (percussion). Coleman sounds fresh, well-rested, and bright, and Haden—who knows him so well musically—matches and pushes and drinks power from him. Jarrett is in a calm, lyrical mood, and leaves plenty of room for Haden's pensive, descending figures. I can't get particularly excited about Coltrane's harp; she seems to be doing little more at times than copying Haden's phrases, but the bassist's own playing on the Coltrane track is superb. The Motian track is "For a Free Portugal," and includes a recording of Haden dedicating a concert to freedom fighters in Mozambique and Angola, and some pieces of Angolan music. Haden's playing is appropriately firm, and Motian is tight, understated, and precise.

Though Haden is no Buell Neidlinger, he proves on this record that the solo bass can be more than a mere tool for accompaniment in jazz.

LIVING INSIDE YOUR LOVE
Earl Klugh
Blue Note BN-LA667-G

By SAM GRAHAM

This twenty-two year old guitarist comes equipped with good credentials: stints with George Benson, George Shearing and Chick Corea (in Return to Forever between Bill Conners and just-departed Al DiMeola). Influenced by Chet Atkins and Laurindo Almeida, he plays a nylon-string acoustic; by applying the traditionally classical instrument to Latin-oriented or jazzy charts and melodies, he's moving into an area largely unexplored except by Almeida and Charlie Byrd. But instead of molding the possibilities into a style of his own, Klugh loses his individuality in a wash-out of chic-funky Muzak. Like Benson, he substitutes accessibility for distinction.

In this case I suspect Dave Grusin may be the culprit; as arranger, occasional composer, conductor, co-producer and keyboardist, he obviously exerts considerable influence on the sound. Like Bob James, his CTI counterpart, Grusin has strong commercial tendencies and little genuine feel. He takes pleasant if not spectacular tunes like "Felicia," "Living Inside Your Love," and "Another Time, Another Place" and coats them with a ruinous veneer of Percy Faith-strings, female soul choruses and/or disco beats. Klugh would have to be Django Reinhardt to stand out against such lush, saccharine backgrounds, and plainly he isn't. Not that he gets much of a chance—he's consistently overwhelmed (volume-wise) by the accompaniment, especially on Grusin's "Captian Caribe." By contrast it's a pleasure when Klugh performs alone on the Bacharach/David song "April Fools," displaying his nimble fingerpicking to good advantage.

The influence of George Benson extends beyond the record's overall style to Klugh's playing, where echoes of the former's trademarked chordal fills and melodic ideas are readily apparent. That's not so bad—Benson is a monster, a brilliant player who will undoubtedly effect many young guitarists to come. But unlike him, Earl Klugh can't carry an otherwise uninteresting record with virtuoso playing. Benson's incredible surge in popularity may have opened the door for many albums like *Living Inside Your Love*; but unless a musician of his caliber comes along, it will be a new age of boredom.

Elton John
Blue Moves

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