

zigzag

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two shillings

THE ROCK MAGAZINE



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Fairport Convention photographed at
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Centrefold:- Zigzag poster of the month
No 1. Ginger Mills, the legendary Wild
Man of St Albans. Photo by Fudge

THE FAIRPORT CONVENTION

When you go and see the Fairport Convention, you can't go wrong - they always impress. Their singing and playing falls between categorical stools, but lands on a wide, luxurious musical carpet. They're like a growing city, phagocytically swallowing the peripheral satellite towns - they are always adding to their already rich anthology by absorbing adjacent styles, but allowing them to retain their own identity, a sense of locality if you like.

They just stand there, visually comparatively unappetising - no frenetic leaping or cavorting - but they seem to be haloed by an air of precise infallibility. Sandy Denny waits reticently, her hands clasped coyly as the introduction is played, but when she starts to sing, her personality and vocal succulence ooze over the song like melted chocolate, running through the articulated textures of Richard Thompson's guitar work, and subtly insinuating their way into the listener's mind.

The ecstatic plaudits I expected to see when their album came out never appeared. Inexplicable. To my mind the record towers like an aardvark in an ant colony compared with all 1969's other releases (except possibly the Family's which I haven't





really had time to engulf myself in yet).

Any other English group attempting such variety on one album would find themselves stumbling through a musical minefield. But the Fairport, an eclectic group (their stage act ranges from traditional English folksongs to Muddy Waters and way beyond), but one which manages to do more than just invoke memories or comparison, come through on this their second album with almost unparalleled magnificence.

Joe Boyd, who turns up treasures like a beachcomber finds shells, discovered this cabal at the beginning of commercial underground activity in England, nurturing them through the days of the Electric Garden etc, and in the meticulous production of this record has yielded his masterpiece.

Ex folk club singer Sandy, who wrote the title track of Judy Collins' new LP, joined a few months ago and brought much of her background with her. It wouldn't be accurate or fair to say that she is the group's main strength, but her beautiful voice is certainly the outstanding feature of this album. She wrote 'Fotheringay',

with an engrossing historical setting (I never imagined that a song about Mary Queen of Scots could get me going), and sings it exquisitely against an attractive lacework of acoustic guitars and harmonised humming which simply seeps warmth and folk nostalgia into the listener. (And those autoharp wisps - perfect!). She does an equally fine job on the two traditional tracks, 'Nottamun Town', which features an open tuned Indian influenced solo over Simon Nicol's sawed violin, & 'She Moves Through The Fair', a song exemplifying her ability and knowledge.

But the pilot of their conglomerate genius is lead guitarist Richard Thompson, who steers the group with a film director's vision. His songwriting accomplishment has leapt to match his instrumental excellence, which spans from butterfly delicacy on 'Fotheringay' to the crunchy rotundity on his own 'Meet On The Ledge', a superbly structured piece about dormant muses and flagging creativity. Here, as on most other tracks, Sandy's voice is complimented by Ian Matthews (who has since left the group) and they are both joined in the chorus by

Simon, who's raucous edge gives the song its intensity. This track with its harmony, piano links and bass lyricism best sums up the polished achievement of the Fairport.

Thompson also wrote 'No Mans Land', an exuberant accordian dominated romp, which, despite the despondent lyric, conjures up visions of leathertrousered dancing Germans spilling beer, (nice clapping in here too), and 'Tale In Hard Time' - vaguely Byrdian, but with a pumping harpsichord. Very nice.

'Book Song', straining the seams of familiarity, is a very pleasant cut. Delicate, dreamy and beautiful, with the congruous inclusion of Clare Lowther's tender cello. It also pinpoints Tiger Hutchins' bass technique. I have never heard such imaginative, inventive and lyrical bass playing anywhere - I found myself literally gurgling with delight on each track as I listened through the phones to the way he slid the riding embellishments and bubbling patterns into the music.

American listeners may be forgiven for misinterpreting the lyrics of the rumbustious 'Mr Lacey', written by Hutchins, as thinly disguised pornography - the sleeve reference to Prof Bruce Lacey will mean little to anyone outside Britain. He is a legendary underground figure, an inventor of radio controlled hominoids & strange gadgetry (some of which whirrs like power drills over the solo), and has

Do you have
the guts of
Gutbucket? LBX3



appeared in all manner of happenings, including that theatrical extravaganza 'An Evening of British Rubbish'. In the song he is romanticised, not as the odd eccentric crackpot that many consider him to be, but as a leading pioneer in the field of mechanical invention whos greatness will one day be universally recognized. All this is conveyed in a cascading blues form.

'The Lord Is In His Place' is very strange - half send-up, half inspiration seeking. Sandy Denny's hymnal humming sounds as if it has been superimposed on a tape of John Fahey experimenting on a knife version of 'Those Faraway Places' in a billiard hall. The whole thing ends up like the title music to a TV documentary on the Deep South.

It looks as if they are going to make a habit of including examples of the more obscure works of Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan. (On their first LP they did the Ben Carruthers styled 'Jack of Diamonds', written by Dylan, and two unrecorded Mitchell songs). Good. 'I'll keep it with mine', a Dylan song leaving bags of room for listener empathy, was recorded 3 years ago by Judy Collins - whos version



THE RASCALS

HEAVEN

584 255





photography by Rod Yallop



by comparison now sounds as crude as cast iron, and has been resuscitated into a major piece. A perfect vehicle for the Denny voice, which slides out of an envelope of gentle acoustic guitar, and brings out her superb control, inflection, understanding, restraint and force. She must be England's finest girl singer.

The Joni Mitchell song, full of descriptive instrumental imagery, is 'Eastern Rain'. When they use second hand material, they really get inside the song and rework and shape it until the whole is as fresh as dawn rain. (Witness how they do 'Suzanne' and 'Dear Landlord' etc in their act).

The album closes with rhythm guitarist Simon Nicol, whose acoustic work is

beautiful throughout, playing 'End of a Holiday', the reflective simplicity of which is so pretty and apt.

The Fairport Convention work on an elastically wide canvas, but don't cover it by throwing buckets of paint. Everything is steeped in imagination from the vocals to the tasteful appropriate drumming of Martin Lamble, who sometimes has the bass drum motif blanching and other times is so gentle that only an almost imperceptible cymbal is heard. They don't put a foot wrong - lavishing care on each song (with particular attention to introductions and closes) so that each is a superbly arranged and polished entity, and yet an integral part of a most satisfying whole. ■ ■

everything is everything

WITCHI TAI TO VA 1

This really is a beautiful single - enjoyable on so many levels. The song is based on an Indian peyote chant and is one of the best of the esoteric-drug-reference records but also superb as a production and for the purity of its superficial effect.

The restrained gently simmering organ, finger cymbals, the harmonies, the hypnotic suitability of the repetitive verse and the lavish lyricism of the saxophone really do get inside one's head. It's as near to perfection as you can get. So nice.

Everything Is Everything were formerly the Free Spirits, who I first read about in March 1967 when they were appearing at New York's Balloon Farm (now renamed the Electric Circus). Their line-up then included Larry Coryell, who has since left of course (and is at present involved with Jack Bruce's latest schemes), but the other members remain - Jim Pepper, Sax, flute and vocals (who also wrote the single), Chris Hills, bass, Bob Moses, drums, and Chip Baker, guitar - I think.

This is the first Vanguard single released here, and was produced by Danny Weiss for the independent New York company, 10th Street Productions.

Well worth getting hold of. Really.

ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

A good thing to subscribe to is the Elektra newsletter 'Revelation', which is free if you send 3 sae.s to Sylvia Knellar at Elektra Records. It's full of fascination if you like their stuff. For instance I learnt that it was Robby Kreiger, and not Jim Morrison, who wrote 'Light My Fire' and 'Love Me 2 Times'.

Who wants to write a nice long article about the dreaded Sgt Pilcher for us?

Dave Van Ronk (who used to make all those folk albums with the same photo of his face grimacing as though he were receiving an enema) has recorded an LP with his group the Hudson Dusters. The album is not scheduled for release here, but everyone should hustle Verve to put out a single of the two best tracks :- 'Clouds'/'Romping through the swamp'. Two really incredible performances.

27 points to anyone who can sort out the historical intricacies of the Blues Project/Blood Sweat & Tears/Sea Train tangle for me.

Leonard Cohen recorded some of his poems on Folkways 9805 - they'd sound very nice on Night Ride.

There's nothing like being a master of your subject; Goof of the year prize to Stan Reed of the Evening News for this valuable information:-

Janis Joplin, who left the Mothers of Invention to go solo, was in the audience. She was so moved she went on stage and sat in with the group.

My Back Pages.....

...Dave both from
Grisman found the Warlocks to be the best rock-and-roll group he heard in California. He especially liked a song written by their lead guitarist, Jerry Garcia, titled "Bending Your Mind." Sing Out, late 1965.

Says Dylan of Donovan: "He can't play and sing as well as a lot of people in the United States, but he does have something. He's groovy."

With new imports on both Vanguard & Takoma, there's plenty around for John Fahey fans - but apparently, some years ago, he released an album on the U.S. folk label Bullfrog. Does anyone know anything about this?

I wonder if artist Norman Rockwell, who often gazes blandly off the back of Marvel Comics, had ever heard of Al Kooper and Mike Bloomfield when he was approached to do their sleeve.

What does the Cream title 'NSU' mean?

an interview with CHRISTINE PERFECT of the chicken shack

Recorded above the saloon bar bedlam
at the Fishmonger's Arms, Wood Green.

ZIGZAG:- The first time that
I heard of you was at Windsor in
1967. I saw a car window sticker
saying - "CHICKEN SHACK ON BLUE
HORIZON". What led up to this?

CHRISTINE: What happened was -
before I even joined the band, Mike Ver-
non discovered the Chicken Shack as they
were then, which was a trio - Stan, Andy
and another drummer who fell by the way-
side about a year ago. Mike reckoned they
were very promising, but needed a pianist.

This was in Birmingham?

Yes - around the Kidderminster area.
It was Richard Vernon who saw them
first. He was scouting the country at the
time, and he told Mike about them - but,
as I said, thought they needed a pianist.
So they wrote to me. I was in London at
the time, window dressing and getting
bored from doing nothing in particular.
I had known them from a long time ago,
and they asked me if I fancied playing
piano with them. Of course, I said yes.

About a fortnight after I left my job,
we went to Hamburg. I couldn't play
piano at that time at all. I could play
classical music, but I wasn't any good
at all on blues or anything modern, and
a month at the Star Club really gave me
a chance to develop my style.

You were doing a sort of Bea-
tles bit?

Yeah - that's right, same sort of
thing, on and off the stage about 5 times
a night sort of business.

That was when?



About April/May 67.

Which was still a few months
before your London debut?

Yeah. We came back from Hamburg
and at that time, Mike hadn't even seen
me. We rang him up when we got back
and he came up with his wife to see us at
Andy's house, where we did an audition
for him. He liked the band and we did a
couple of bookings for him. But the big
break was the Windsor Jazz and Blues
Festival - he knew the organisers quite
well, and he got us on that. We went
down really well there and from that
point, began to get well known.

The so-called folk boom in 65
and the recent Rock n Roll revival
were provoked largely by prole
journalists and moneymakers, and
their predictions came to nothing.
A few weeks ago, hundreds of pages
were being written about the "Blues
Boom". Is there in fact a boom?

Yes, I think there is, I really do.
Obviously its got a lot to do with what is
the most profitable current music - you
know - you've got a handful of bluesbands
that are doing very well and so other groups
managers, and promoters etc start think-
ing about blues.

Not so very long ago, a very
good group - Dr K's Blues Band -
tried to run a club at this very
place, but couldn't muster enough
local enthusiasm. The size of the
audience at this present club is
relatively huge - this would tend
to substantiate your point.

Yes. I think it's like the Trad jazz
boom, when everybody played jazz, list-
ened to jazz, and went to jazz clubs be-
cause it was the done thing. At the mom-
ent, Blues is a very 'in' thing to like.

And it seems as though those
who support the blues clubs are,
as it were, very uniform and ident-
ifiable.

Well yes. Nearly every blues band
thinks, 'Ah yes, there are a lot of blue-
sers here tonight'. They've got a stamp

on them, all those who like, or think they
like blues. You can easily pick them out.

With all this sudden mass
coverage and publicity, do you
think it will survive?

It's very difficult to say. I think the
public likes to hear good music now, and
I don't really think it matters if it's blues
or pop, or soul, or rock...if it's good,
people are going to like it. I'm not going
to say that the boom is going to last - it's
impossible to assess something like that.
You can't say, 'I'll give it 6 months, or 2
years', you just don't know. I think as
soon as the kids start getting bored with
12 bars, they'll move onto something
else. But there'll always be a section of
blues fans - like there is still a section of
trad jazz lovers.

Like there has always been
since the Alexis Korner/ Cyril
Daves days?

Yes - when we first started playing, we
used to get a small body of blues fans, not
very many. But now there are so many,
probably about 50%, who come because
we are a relatively big name now, and not
necessarily because we are playing blues.
They come along and rave because the
people in front are raving, and the ones
in front really are the core - the ones
who really do like blues - they'll always
come. The people at the back - I'm
speaking metaphorically of course, will
probably be following something else in
6 months time. You just can't tell.

The other booms threw up a lot
of bandwagon jumping rubbish; Zoot
Money, for some unaccountable loss
of integrity went 'flower'; the
Artwoods went Bonnie and Clyde etc.
Do you see any evidence of 'bogus
blues bands', so to speak?

Oh yes, there is the bandwagon thing.
I mean - there are endless, endless
bluesbands in this country just lately,
who are never going to get anywhere
because there's only room for good mus-
icians now, unless you've got something

ON TO 16

Leonard Cohen's novel 'BEAUTIFUL LOSERS'

reviewed by IAN MANN

Cervantes thought up his books as he went along. When Quixote first set out, he was alone. So he was sent home again to find a Sancho Panza, an echo, a mirror, a thought vehicle, a pair of ears, a sounding board - someone to talk to, who was in fact an aspect of himself.

In "BEAUTIFUL LOSERS", Leonard Cohen paints a protagonist who is physically alone, but always accompanied by one or more of the three other characters in the book - all dead - whose presence is evoked at will.

The protagonist narrates, remaining unnamed, an old man sitting alone in a tree house, chewing meditatively on his life, unable to spit out the lumps. His life consisted and consists of his life-long friend, guru and fellow queer F, his Indian wife Edith, and Catherine Tekakwitha, also an Indian, who died in about 1680. Catherine Tekakwitha is the object of an aspect of Protagonist's multi-directional love, and the object of his scholarly anthropological research.

These four are joined and separated by threads of infinitely varied texture and thickness which weave a diaphanous veil between author and reader. Through the misty, crepuscular chiaroscuro cast by this gossamer the reader receives recurrent waves of intuitive semi-understanding, with interstitial bubbles and

wedges of complete illumination. Every line is a "raid on the inarticulate", but Cohen manipulates his "shabby equipment" with infinite dexterity. Impressions and images, misty nuances, fog, clouds, all emanate smoothly from the pages, punctuated and punctured by vivid spurts of semen, unguents, all bodily juices and effluents.

F made love to Edith many times, but only tells Protagonist after her suicide. This revelation, along with the suicide, is one of his reasons for beginning to question his life, his identity, a reason for his life to become one big question. F was Protagonist's mentor, confidant, master, adviser and guide. F too dies, and Protagonist is left alone to examine his past, present and future, these three aspects of time and experience being fused into one dimensionless blob of thoughts and near-thoughts, feelings that broke and feelings that never broke the surface, sensations and communications given and received by scrotums, nipples, penises, vaginas, sphinctres, navels, stomachs and many other more and less traditional erogeneous zones. Such tangible realities are necessary to keep at least one foot nailed to the floor in a world of mist and intuition, are a counterbalance to the soaring mind, an oak at the edge of

the whirlpool.

Undulating gently and caressingly through all these so fully human manifestations is Catherine Tekakwitha, the Iroquois virgin saint-on-a-pedestal. Should she remain on the pedestal, or be hurled onto solid ground to be ravished by you, by me, by the Jesuits, by Protagonist himself, by the wind, by the birch trees, by earth, air, fire and water? Is Catherine a previous incarnation of Edith, is Edith Catherine's ghost, are they both a dream, is everything a dream or a haven for aficionados of fellatio and cunnilingus? Or is it an enclosure fenced off by the Roman Catholic Church, where genitals must be left at the door?

Are these questions important? It is not even important whether they are asked or not. Catherine Tekakwitha is a question mark, so is life, so is the book. A question and a search. The book searches, Protagonist searches, the readers search. The book functions.

Protagonist's search is for his fate,

outside the limitations of time and place. His fate as a part of human fate. A something pervading the other. A fusion and distillation of F, Edith and Catherine. A vision projected by the mind. By a universal mind, by his own mind, who knows? Nothing is revealed.

Quixote made his trip through Spain searching for a something. Protagonist makes his through his and others' minds, by physical, spiritual and even verbal communication. Searching for a something. He loses, but he tries. We all search, we all try, maybe we all have to lose.

To call "Beautiful Losers" dadaistic, to compare it with the works of the overpraised Lorca and Joyce, may be in some way correct, but quite inappropriate. Leonard Cohen is Leonard Cohen. His book confounds dimension, is both multi-dimensional and adimensional, so why try to tie it down with overspecific labels? It is a book of life, and one of the Good Books published during our slice of Eternity.



C. P. NOYES

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The second enterprise is "Time Out," which I judge to be the most exciting and admirable magazine launched within the last year. To over simplify, this magazine is a what's-on-in-London for avant-garde, experimental, and electric events

THE GUARDIAN

Although Jonathan Cape published Leonard Cohen's Selected Poems last month, they have no immediate plans to put out "Beautiful Losers" for which they have the English rights. This is a fine novel and well worth obtaining - possibly Indica or Unicorn could import copies, or alternatively it is available in paperback from Bookmasters, 59 4th Avenue, NY, NY 10003, USA., for 95 cents plus postage (maybe a ten shilling note would do it).

Hey, it's hard to realise: It's over 4 years ago that he was high-stooled on Ready, Steady, Go doing 'Talking Pop Star Blues' and 'Tangerine Eyes', and sitting on the trestles of the Cock's barn bar singing 'Stealin'' with Maddy, and kindly filling our folk club for a few bob - singing 'The Fool Is So Uncool' and 'Hard Travelling' with Mac, and heading a nation-wide-package-tour with the cloaked Gypsy doing his kazoo embellishments on 'Keep on Trucking', and getting busted for the usual and uninsured scooter rides, and losing poetry manuscripts in coffee bars, andhey, that was a long time ago.

Remember how he led the 1965 'Folk Boom'? - attacking the journalist created door between folk and the top ten, and smashing it down. And how the expected deluge of followers never arrived? He WAS the '65 folk boom.

They were strange days. In his pinched denim suit, cap, harmonica harness and down at heel boots, he stimulated derisory laughter at what critics considered to be transparent pretensions to originality. They typecast him as an ephemeral band wag-oneer - "the Glasgow Dylan" Sing Out called him. They tried to make his Levi jerkin a straitjacket, and regularly predicted his downfall.

This album's title alone spits in their eyes.

I wonder what they think of him now? Do they still want to dismiss his lyrics as word heaps, his melodies as note stringings, as he fills Hollywood Bowls and Festival Halls - even getting Sunday Times jazz critic Derek Jewell out of Ronnie Scott's for an evening?

You can't review this record as an entity, other than from the historical develop-ment aspect - hence this background. It's simply a pot pourri; familiar, consider-ably ranging reflections of Don's changing vision, his meanderings through an episodic past - folk, childlike enchantments, euphoriants and the much publicised repudiation of same, the Maharishi, Rock, etc. etc; his eras - necromancy, empirical, pastoral, introspective and so on. But it's not another case of dragging out ghosts - it's a very welcome repackaging (stereo and an extravagant folio of photographs) of classics.

An elaborate critique of each track would be pointless- everyone knows them and has his own reasons for digging them. 'Sunshine Superman', the one we had to wait about 100 years for (while profit creamers argued) and finally got from France tog-ether with 'Epistle to Dippy' with it's violins and crys-tal spec-ta-cles. And 'Jen-nifer Juniper' andwell, as I say, everyone knows and loves them.

Some tracks are in fact not his greatest hits. In some cases they are different takes: 'Lalena'.has a sweeter arrangement than the American single and 'Hurdy Gurdy Man' has traces of additional Indian instruments not apparent on the original (though I may be wrong here, having only heard it through the distortion of my l" transistor speaker). 'Sunshine Superman' is 80 seconds longer, though the single was an abbre-viation of the same track.

For copyright, or maybe aesthetic reasons 'Catch the Wind' and 'Colours' have been rerecorded entirely, the subterranean Denmark Street atmosphere having been replaced by the work of Mickie Most's cordon-bleu session men. I prefer the orig-inals (nostalgia) but these resuscitations have their fascination. 'Colours' has a very straight chorus reply and harmony, a nicely picked lead and an organ solo, but what a drag that Don's fine arrangement and playing is, apart from the intro, practically buried.

'Catch The Wind', over 5 minutes long, is taken very slowly - no chunky flatpicking this time - just strummed with a solitary piano floating behind. Very pleasant - until towards the end, a bass flops in followed closely by some dreadfully ponderous drum-ming, which transforms the last half minute or so into a disasterous cock-up.

Nevertheless, it's a fine, very fine, album and Donovan's music must have a ten-ancy in every head.

GINGER by jeff cloves

It was outside Woolworths
that I first saw you.
Hunched by the swing doors
showing off
for two leatherclad Lolitas
you caused quite a jam
of prams and shopping baskets.
And that nice young manager,
anxious,
lurking by the weighing machines
peered through the plate
and wondered whether to ask you,
very politely,
to move on.

Yes,
that was it
outside Woolworths.
And every time I came here
I saw you.....somewhere.
Up at Jacks Caff
or listening to Caroline
excitedly stuttering from
Dave Johnson's news stand by the Post Office
and down the park
posing for photographs
- a provincial pin-up from a muscle mag -
with two girls on each arm
and the lake in the background.
And later
when we came to live in St Albans
we saw you padding through the market
and heard you
bawling your swaggering immortality
from the front row of the pictures
as world war three crashed across the screen.
And Liz waited with you
at the Labour Exchange.
Now we see you everywhere.
In your sheepskin jerkin
and fringed leather jeans,
you wear your beautiful clothes
like a nomad from the steppes
or a red Indian from North America
and your tattoos and earring
like a landlocked sailor
and that great medallioned belt
like an Edwardian prizefighter
and your charms and crucifixes
like a wild outrageous priest
of some exotic cult.
But no sense of menace
of threat
or fear
surrounds you
and a meeting on the pavement
is an encounter
with the strange
but not the terrible.

In the summer
you are a tourist attraction.
Their illustrated guides
have not prepared them for
The Wild Man of St Albans
with tanned bare chest
and pelt of red hair
and a spangled aboriginal
stomping among the
brittle relics
of Centurions and Abbots
is not to be missed.
But how do you survive the Winter
Ginger?
Do you lay up
in that tent they say is your home,
carving wooden totems
and stalking out
into the still morning countryside
to lift a frosty hare
from your expert snare?
Do you hibernate in your sleeping bag
and dream
you gallop with furry Cossacks
across the Russian plains
and migrate with the hunting tribes
to summer prairies
and run before the trades
in endless tropic seas?
Or do you ride out the Winter
on the dole
crouching each day
over the juke box
down at Jacks,
drearily
awaiting the Spring.

Who can say?

The Town abounds
in fantastic legends
of your deeds
and everybody knows you
and has a tale
to add....
For you are
OUR Wildman
OUR Magicman
OUR Talisman.
But your ways remain
a mystery.

At Dusk
The Wildman slopes by
deep in sleepy shadows,
drifts into the dark
behind close hedges,
flits over fields
under the growing moon,
enters
his own world.
Your own world
Ginger?

No one leaves space
for the likes of you
anymore
and the daily spread
of concrete
pushes you farther back.
When the Builder
bribes
another field or two
from the Farmer
and the country town
expands
no thought is spared
for the tracks
of the Wildman.
But you survive
and so do we.
On the edge of the town
where fields were just
five years ago
we pattern our lives to fit
our raw estate
while you
hack out your weird and
secret life
beyond the rim of our
ordered existence.
Living out your dreams
you dare
where we dread,
but no sense of menace
of threat
or fear
surrounds you
and a meeting on the pavement
is an encounter
with the strange
but not the terrible.



chicken shack cont

else to offer. If you're a good entertainer you can often get away with it - but the kids today are so intelligent - there's a detectable difference. I mean, we know when we've played badly and the audience does too, and we just don't go down as well if we don't play well. But you're right, there are so many "bluesbands" that are going around - they've heard the Cream albums, and they think they are playing blues. They've never heard of the American artistes - almost literally. Because they are emulating Clapton, many would-be guitarists think that that's Blues.

In the 62/63 minor blues boom, which was very geographically limited, the Stones, Yardbirds, etc were into Jimmy Reed, Howling Wolf, Billy Boy Arnold and so on, but in order to gain national success they moved out of the blues. The Mann Hugg Blues Brothers became Manfred Mann, the Stones did Buddy Holly and Beatles stuff etc, while Alexis Korner remained in the idiom and has since received only specialist acclaim. How do you see the future?

You can only go so far playing blues, until you think - Well, what do I want to play and you do it.

Yes, I see - You don't put up pretensions about "we really live the blues" - wringing your hands and going on about hard roads etc...

Yeah, that's the point. I don't think there's a single blues artiste in America who stands there with this pained expression on his face. I mean - Freddy King jumps about in the air, laughing his head off. Every American singer I've ever seen - none of them stands there, looking like they've just been to a funeral. But that seems to be the thing in England, everybody has to look so serious, as if they're about to go into the dentist's chair or something.

Stan was recently described as one of the 4 best blues guitarists in England - what are his influences

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and your own?

As far as Stan goes, he likes Buddy Guy, Junior Parker - there was a time when he was very much pro B.B. King - oh, Freddy King, he likes him too, but he has been tending to get more and more into his own thing in these past few months, which I think happens to most guitarists, most musicians if they've got anything up here (indicates head) or any sort of feeling. You can only go so far and then you start wondering - well what do I want to play? - and that's what's been happening to me lately. I used to follow and be very influenced by Sonny Thompson, Otis Spann and Eddie Boyd - I learnt an awful lot from them, but you reach a point where you just can't learn anymore because you feel so strongly about branching into your own thing. You want to play what you want - not copy phrases from others. • pf

RAMBLIN' JACK ELLIOTT

YOUNG BRIGHAM
Ramblin' Jack Elliott
Reprise RSLP 6284

When I hear some gormless hack come out with the mindless cliché, "Ah yes, for me Frank Sinatra can do no wrong," I reach for my puke basket; but as I was listening to this album for the first time, I was disagreeing with everything I was simultaneously reading in a disapproving review of the record, and I realised that the same sentiments were in my mind. Jack Elliott just can't make a bad record.

Ah, the fantasy world of that black stetsoned, swaggering, ostentatious, world troubadour. That raconteur, that ballspinner, flat-picking rambling buddy of Alex Campbell, Mick Softley, and all. The worshipper turned idol, the copyist turned copied.

Look at the sleeve!. Multicoloured photographs no less - and notes by the trendy Johnny Cash - as pretentious as ever - what dreadful tripe. A far cry from those old 7" and 10" Topics - but of course, he's become a legend since 1956. The disciple and imitator's metamorphosis into the "major creative talent".

In case you don't know, Jack Elliott was one of the millions to fall under the Woody Guthrie spell and spent much time with him, singing and playing, until a lot of people thought he had actually become Woody. "Jack sounds more like me than I do", said Woody. That was in the early 50s, but ten years later Pete Seeger said "When we see Jack on stage now, he is Jack, and no longer an imitation of Woody. He's proven that it's possible to learn an idiom and a style one was not born to, but came to love, and he's proven also that you can emerge from this period of imitation to being genuinely creative on your own".

Maybe one day Bill Yaryan, who seems to be his unofficial biographer, will do a whole book on Jack Elliott and clear up a lot of the rumours that fly around about him. From all the drivel I've heard, you'd think he was an exposed nerve end of alcoholic decay, social injustices and paranoid wanderlust. For a start, what's all that toss on the sleeve about him living in a disused railway carriage?

On with the record, which, though only just released here, was recorded in late 1967. It's called Young Brigham (an irrelevant title - that's the name of



his pony), and he's surrounded by the best folk session men in America - Eric Hord, Pete Childs, Bill Lee, etc - who were all shepherded into the Hollywood studios by producer Bruce Langhorne - acoustic guitarist superieur, famed for his work with the freewheelin' Dylan, the Farinas, Fred Neil, and a hundred others. He does a good job.

In the new technicolour Elliott the old black hat has been replaced by a chic corduroy model and he's got some nice-and-groovy steel-framed eye-glasses, but the music is much the same. The trouble with records of course is that they are only one dimensional - just the aural side, though they try to get some of his personality on as well - not too successfully. Hence, if you don't know Elliott, this is probably not the one to turn you on to him. (Try instead the Topic album 'Muleskinner' where his club manner is conveyed a bit better by his whiskey enlivened introductions - I always get a buzz hearing him drawling about "them 20 mules silhouetted in the California sun"). But if you like Jack Elliott - there's plenty here.

'If I were a carpenter' gets strange treatment. Elliott uses the same broken breathy voice as Hardin but eschews his gentle fluency in favour of peevish intensity - a sort of purposely outrageous delivery. Surprisingly, Langhorne's tabla and bass man Bill Lee's organ lend little to the song - but it gets the Elliott stamp of vitality and gains an extra verse.

'Talking Fisherman' immediately tosses me into Woodyland, where sausage fingered, striding, dungeree-clad workers

eat 10 cent chilli, and women with breasts that Picasso couldn't draw recline in sylvan settings. The song must be about a quarter of a century old, but has lost none of its original magnificence. Elliott is the master of the talking blues and he chops his way through this as if he'd been singing it for 20 years - which he no doubt has.

I must have been an impressionable twit when I first heard 'Tennessee Stud' (via the Eddy Arnold single), when I revelled in the melodramatic cowboy theme - "we jerked our guns, he fell with a thud". On subsequent hearings I realised just what a stupid song it was - "Uncle Fud" included. He's done this before, on a Prestige/Stateside album, but this is a magnificent version and any deprecation of its lyrical value is uprooted by the superb chordant violinwork of Sea Train fiddler Richard Greene. The Lone Ranger rides again. Loads of fun.

The last three cuts on side one are a bit mediocre. He does a glottal imitation of a distant caterpillar tractor, a semi-documentary trail song (which dispels the close harmony cow hands and Gene Autrey campfire celluloid creations), and a breezy reworking of 'Rock Island Line'.

Side 2 is much better. 'Danville Girl' has been sung by everyone (including Jack and Derrol Adams on their Topic), but it's so appropriate for his nasal soarings and flatpicking.

'912 Greens' is a talking blues which isn't - hence greens, and it's my favourite. It's about a trip Elliott made with 26

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL

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I've seen panegyric reviews of this album elsewhere, and I've really got to agree. This is a prodigious record - but unfortunately only available here on import. (Some enterprising English label could clean up by securing the Fantasy outlet).

The whole thing is impressive and pages could be deluged with praises and observations, so I'll just pick out three tracks.

They continue to rework old rock classics; their first album had long versions of old hits by Jay Hawkins and Dale Hawkins, and here they do 'Good Golly Miss Molly' - using a variation of the Lucille/Hippy Shake Fender intro and a double tracked vocal, complete with a pre-vocal scream (not in the Little Richard class). The invading lead has a shrill piquancy, and though the song is less plausible than when shrieked by Mr Penniman, it's full of explosive excitement.

'Proud Mary' is a Mississippi riverboat. A big bugger - all colours and smoky funnels and grainsacks. And Mark Twains and oil lanterns, dancing girls and green baize. Full of great big paddle wheel chords and a middle-Crickets solo - more rounded on this cut. John Fogerty, composer and word shaper, does a first class rock vocal. His diction on "rollin'". Nice chord descensions and some incredible spanner drumming by Doug Clifford - listen through phones to his precise snare snaps. A magnificent track. On top of all this, there is the nostalgia of the piece. To me, a riverboat is as remote as a Chinese junk, but is enveloped in personal romance - nurtured since 'O-level' geography sketch maps by songs like 'Big River' by Johnny Cash and 'Riverboat' by Faron Young, and films like 'The Kentuckian' and 'Cincinnati Kid'. This song really is too much.

The final 7½ minute track is called 'Keep on Chooglin', but whether this is a priapic's invitation to venery, or a reincarnated variation of some long lost Chubby Checker dance, I don't know. Lyrically, the song is half esoteric rant and half like one of those turn-of-the-decade delights by Hank Ballard, where he tossed in verses chocked with the participants' christian names - "Here comes Mary, here comes Sue etc". Sure it's corny, but why not? Anyway it's not the grubstreet poetry, but the sustained intensity of the rhythm and the spontaneous joy that brings this to the shores of profundity.

Once the rhythm is established, (and that means immediately), it bites on with hypnotic insistence - with rhythm guitarist Tom Fogerty thrashing the same chord throughout. (He does venture into a trifling variation towards the end of the middle solo, but soon gets back to his chord - maybe a black look from brother). Similarly, Stu Cook on bass thumps away like clockwork - though he makes a couple of ephemeral sorties into double time and bubbling scale climbing under the harp and after the second vocals. John Fogerty provides all the variety - saw-toothed hard vocals, piercing lead and engulfing harp. His pungent guitar and the juxtaposed deep, solid rotundity of the rhythm trio create torrents of sound.

John Fogerty's arrangements and production of the whole album are superb - the lead vibrato and cymbal clarity on 'Born on the Bayou', the acoustic rhythm and full lead chords on 'Bootleg', etc. Beautiful.

"Wish I Was back on the Bayou,
Rollin with some Cajun queen,
Wish I were a fast freight train
Just a-chooglin' on down to New Orleans"

Get it, get it. •

Jimmy Page and LED ZEPPELIN

Led Zeppelin live is powerful and exciting. The march tempo at the beginning of 'How Many More Times' sent shivers down my spine when they played here at the Boston Tea Party; shivers I hadn't felt since first hearing the Beatles' 'Revolution' last year.

But I couldn't help feeling during the concert that we were watching the end of an era. The supergroup show approach of Cream and the Jeff Beck group was up on stage playing tribute to the revelmaster, and the last of the Art School Generation of 1963 were getting in their final licks before the music will change.

Page's group live is the same as Beck's in form, but not in feeling. There is a mountain of hard rock erupting above the suspense created by their costume and motions. Zeppelin isn't simplifying; they play very complicated music - in an important way, they are a kind of revenge for the declining years of the Yardbirds (who were confusing to people - really wanting to play blues, they did rock to be commercially successful, and although presenting themselves on stage as decadents, Relf's lyrics were very moralising). Led Zeppelin is a clearing up of their musical message, a heavy rock underpinned with Indian drones and ironic words.

When Keith Relf decided he'd had enough, Page was left to improvise a group to meet outstanding contractual obligations in Scandinavia, and chose fellow session men John Paul Jones, on bass and organ, and drummer John Bonham. Later on they tried out vocalist Robert Plant, found he clicked, and changed their name.

The album was cut only 3 weeks after the group's inception and was done, Page says, "in less than 30 hours studio time". He feels the record is satisfactory as to showing basic ideas, but emphasises how rapidly a group outdistances its albums. "On stage", he says, "we try to work out new things between us and if we like them, we keep them". His attitude is typical of so many of the best musicians at the moment, favouring the jam method to develop fresh material.

So it emerges that the Led Zeppelin album is only flight one - a peek inside a musician's mind that reveals why "time is but a cumulative image that one glimpse can overcome". It is hard to tell finally how much Beck has influenced Page and vice versa. Page plays dirty rock (close to blues) and Beck plays clean blues (close to rock). At one point, dirty rock and clean blues hold hands. Whereas Beck attempts - like the bluesman - to achieve the crescendo point in his music with a loudly amplified solo guitar, Page does it primarily with the whole band.

John Kreidl.

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ROD YALLOP

BLODWYN FIG...

Architectural splendour is hardly the hallmark of English dancehalls. More often than not, the music ricochets off hastily emulsified brickwork in a pokey room, converted with maximum regard to the purse, minimum initiative, and a respect for law conformity that would give a fire officer heart seizure.

In fact a purpose built dancehall in England is as rare as a fish and chip shop in Brazil - which is why I was staggered to find that the Hemel Pavillion, where Mick Abrahams's new band was playing, was a spacious, inventively designed ballroom.

"We're quite pleased", said Abrahams, nodding at the acoustically scoll-

oped ceiling and comparing the size with his usual gig. "We thought we'd be swallowed up, but we're going over very well".

Rather than further violate the anachronistic definition of Blues Band, his group, which had been buffeted around the roads by the local Mistral on what must have been the coldest night of the century to make this - only its 7th appearance, is called Blodwyn Fig. (Why? No particular reason - just a spontaneous figment of a stoned imagination). "Blues? Well. Yes. We do numbers that are connected, but not - you know - diddle-dee-diddle-dee (does vocal impression of Elmore James

bottleneck). Not the Jeremy Spencer stuff."

Abrahams is big, effusive and laughing with a mischievous locquacity that fills any audience/artiste gap. He really needs to lead a group and you can feel his exhilaration at being the central figure once more, though he is still introversial enough to hide within the peculiar anonymity of the group name. He comes from Luton, just across the Atlantic from the Mississippi Delta, but wears the faded Levis of the blues singer as naturally as Clapton wears his Gibson, having been playing blues in some form or another since 1963 when I remember him leading a local trio specialising in Chuck Berry derivations. (And when he wasn't playing he was watching the main group - solemnly. Absorbing and learning).

He has just taken a wife into his muddled milieu of distant one night stands - fully booked for months, and he seems tempered to the suitcases, hotels and millions of van miles.

I had wondered (like everyone else) why after "strenuous reconciliation efforts" he had left Jethro Tull, who already national heroes, were on the doorstep of world adulation. Was it severe friendship failure or an extraordinarily high standard of musical integrity? His voluble song links leave no doubt. With bogus acerbity he refers to Tull as "that well known pop group" and "that top ten group". There is no hard feeling - just a showman's spurious animosity; all is well between them, but he just wanted self government and to evade the growing hordes of novelty seekers.

"What sparked it off? Did you get choked at being required to use the

wah-wah on 'Love Story'?" He laughs; "No No. I liked Love Story. Still do. No - I always had the idea of forming a group with my friends and when the time seemed appropriate - that's what happened."

His group, Jack Lancaster (sax, flute), Andy Pyle (bass) and Ron Berg (drums) are all competent, but naturally enough haven't yet developed any personality. They are very much a backcloth for Abrahams' showy virtuosity - which is considerable, both as guitarist and vocalist. He acknowledges finer technicians, but maintains his success is in his suitability to the material - all of which he writes. Its mostly new, but there are one or two left overs from his Tull association. For instance 'Cats Squirrel' is still his tour de force, bent in frantic convulsions over his guitar until you think his heads going to jerk off.

The music is mostly blues based rock of varying hardness - all introduced in casual, almost indifferent, monotones; "This is a blues. I'm playing a bottleneck, so it must be. All blues have harmonicas and bottlenecks." He scatters apocryphal technicalities with the authority of a soap salesman selling sewing machines: "This is in 6/8 with a time change in the middle - or so Jack reckons" or "this is a 7 string guitar. It should be a 9 but I broke 2 last night and it doesn't make much difference anyway".

But if the introductions are flippant, the music is certainly not. Arrangements are ingenious and precise - even at this early stage, and lyrics, though often lugubrious/tongue in cheek type, are good. They avoid any blues band monotony by diversity - ranging from the raucous overload of 'Bloody Mad' to the illusive simplicity of



ROD YALLOP

'Dear Jill', and in 'The Change Song' the guitar has more affinity to John Fahey than Elmore James and its delicately picked zephyrs are set off by Jack Lancasters violin. Lancaster's dexterity on sax and flute may lack the invention of, say, Chris Wood's work, but his style fits the jigsaw so well.

The overall sound is still very much 'son of Jethro Tull', understandably, since he was their driving wheel, and there is bound to be a transition period. But he is projecting his own ideas now and playing what he wants, how he wants and he's laughing.

pf

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... & THE VILLAGE

Usually, to see a national group at a provincial venue, it is necessary to arrive late, or endure the diluted soul of an ear piercing local semi-pro outfit - the musical equivalent of the cinema's 'Look at Life', but we were treated to a group of equal stature. This was the relatively new trio, The Village, led by organist Pete Bardens, who played electric piano and harp with pioneer R&B group the Cheynes, before joining Them on organ, and then, for a while, leading the Shotgun Express. Another respected instrumentalist finding distress in his musical environment and forming a group built around his own ideas.

The Village, a nexus of several styles, is one of those groups which has shaved the former iron curtain separating pop and jazz to a hymenal membrane. Their music springs from blues, but stretches penetratingly into modern jazz territory - with thoughtful translations of works by Jack McDuff (Jive) and Miles Davis (Milestones), and a long instrumental variant of 'A Day in the Life', using the original tune only as a skeletal base on which to hang the elaborate embellishments, the spiky bubbling and strident chords.

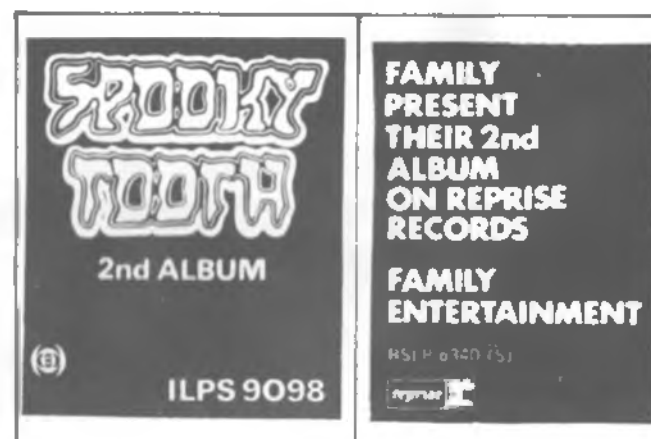
Bruce Thomas, ripping at his 6 string Fender in the stoical stance of the traditional bassman, sang numbers by Albert King, Al Wilson and Richie Havens (among others), which, despite the roadie's manipulation of calibrated knobs on a master amp, were practically inaudible - although the fact that he had only hours earlier had a tooth extracted from his still lop-sided face may have been a major contributory factor.

But their main strength lies not in vocals, but subtly rhythmmed theme expansions. With Red Garland and Roland Kirk as his muses, Bardens' organ work, technically brilliant, sometimes ethereal, sometimes rigorous, sometimes an amalgam of memory wisps - Booker T, McDuff, and even a vague whiff of Telstar (honest), integrated well with the bass fluency and the lighting fisted life injection of drummer Bill Porter on material as diverse as Holst's 'Mars' and the oriental 'Homage to the God of Light'.

I was only distressed that I hadn't seen them in the intimate confines of a small club rather than at 8.30 pm in the coldly impersonal Pavillion, where they worked hard for audience connection, across a vast polished floor, illuminated like a shopwindow. It must be bloody difficult to reach listeners' emotions under such conditions.

This month, Head Records release their first single and an album. I shall be an early customer. ■

dm



David, on the left, plays organ and sings.

Pye, next to David, plays guitar and sings.

Richard S., on the right, plays bass, and sings.

Richard C. plays drums and doesn't like being photographed.

They are going to America soon because a lot of people there have been asking to hear them.

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ramblin jack elliot cont

Frank Hamilton and Guy Carawan to the home of blues banjo player come folk-singer/writer Bill Faier, who lived at the other house in New Orleans - 912 Toulouse Street. It's full of personal nostalgia, but it's an interesting, albeit minute, chunk of autobiography and with its soft humour and gently fingerpicked accompaniment, it's a gem. "Did you ever stand and shiver, just because you were looking at a river".

Next is the 27,000th variation of 'Dont think twice' and its a mistake. It's nice, but adds nothing to the original except that its Jack Elliott.

'Connection' was specially written for him by Mick Jagger and Keith Richard. It wasn't really - it's on 'Between The Buttons' - but the way he sings it so naturally, you'd think it was. Good dobro playing too. A real gas track.

The final song is 'Goodnight Little Arlo', written at the turn of the 50s by Woody for his son, who Jack has known since he was in rubber pants. It's got a folk club intimacy and humour, and everyone in the studio joins in on the



choruses. Not one of Guthrie's finest creations, but topical in the light of big Arlo's emergence, and it is solid Jack Elliott - especially the introduction - "Arlo. Can you hear me? I'm out here in California!"

The legend continues.

pf

Zigzag Wanderer had a Zigzag Child

If you think this magazine is a bit tattier than you would have liked, we agree. The columns are wonky, there are typing errors, and the whole thing is smaller and a lot less polished than we wanted.

The trouble was getting enough bread together to get the thing on the road at all. Not many felt disposed to buy advertising space (understandably) until they had seen an issue and similarly, most of those that I approached to contribute articles wanted to see what it was all about first. Necessarily then, this issue is a bit skimpy.

To cut a long story short, we would welcome articles, photos, letters, advertisements, criticism, drawings etc for subsequent issues. (Phone Pete Frame at 01 405 9222 ext 6243 or Jackie at 0582 27717 or write).

Notes:-

- 1. It's called the rock magazine for identity - the criterion for what we discuss is whether or not we like it. As you can see, the range is Peelian. It's one of the few underground magazines not to use the word.
- 2. We only publish from this outpost in the South Bedfordshire wheat-fields because we have no money. If by some miracle we acquire some, it is our intention to move to a more suitable environment.
- 3. The first person to write with 27 good reasons for calling the magazine ZIGZAG will receive a polystyrene bucket full of Stampfelian amplifier sweepings.
- 4. Being a monthly, it is an inappropriate vehicle for news - so will contain mainly comment and information.

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