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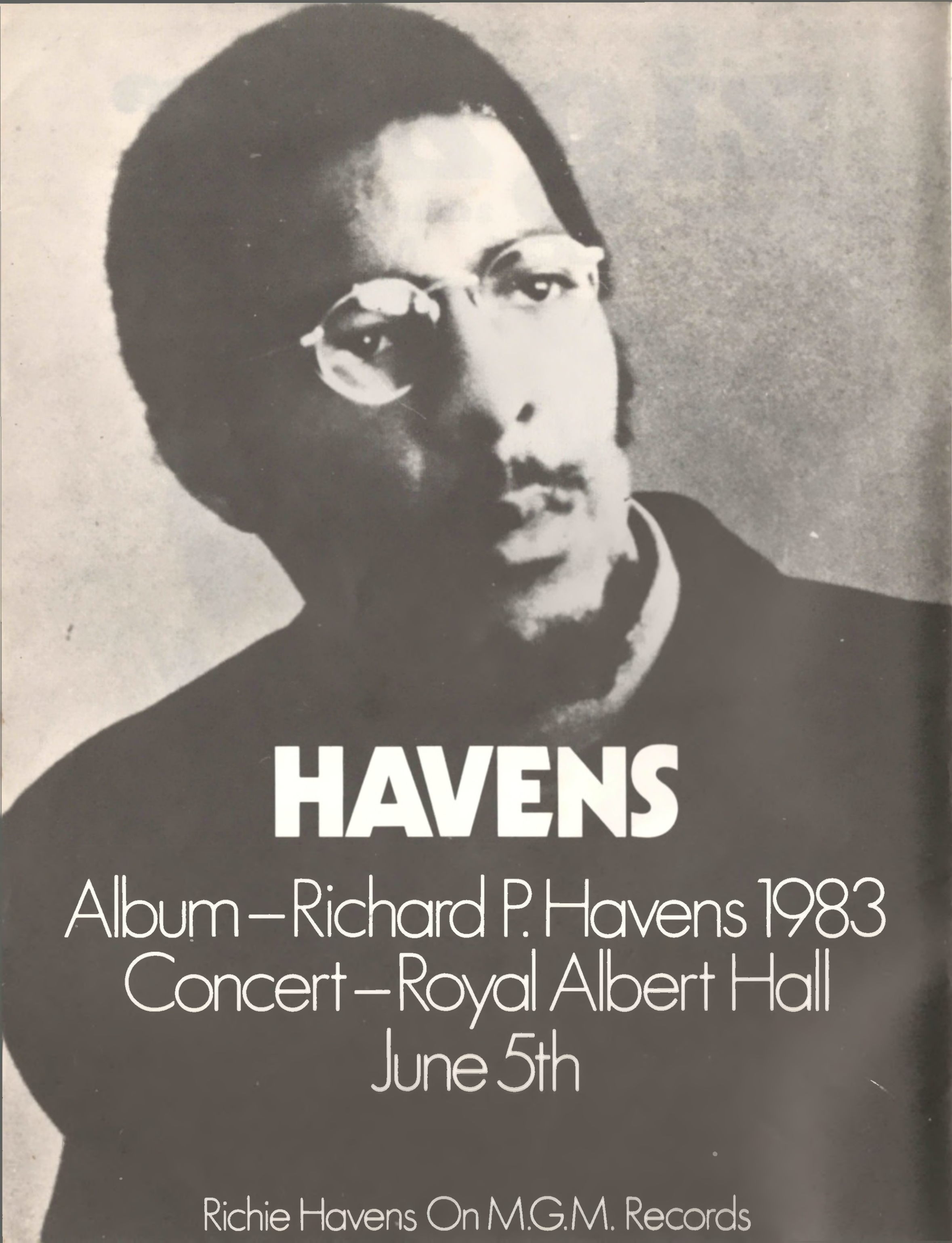
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THE

ROCK

MAGAZINE





HAVENS

Album — Richard P. Havens 1983
Concert — Royal Albert Hall
June 5th

Richie Havens On M.G.M. Records

ZIGZAG

the rock magazine

No2 June 1969

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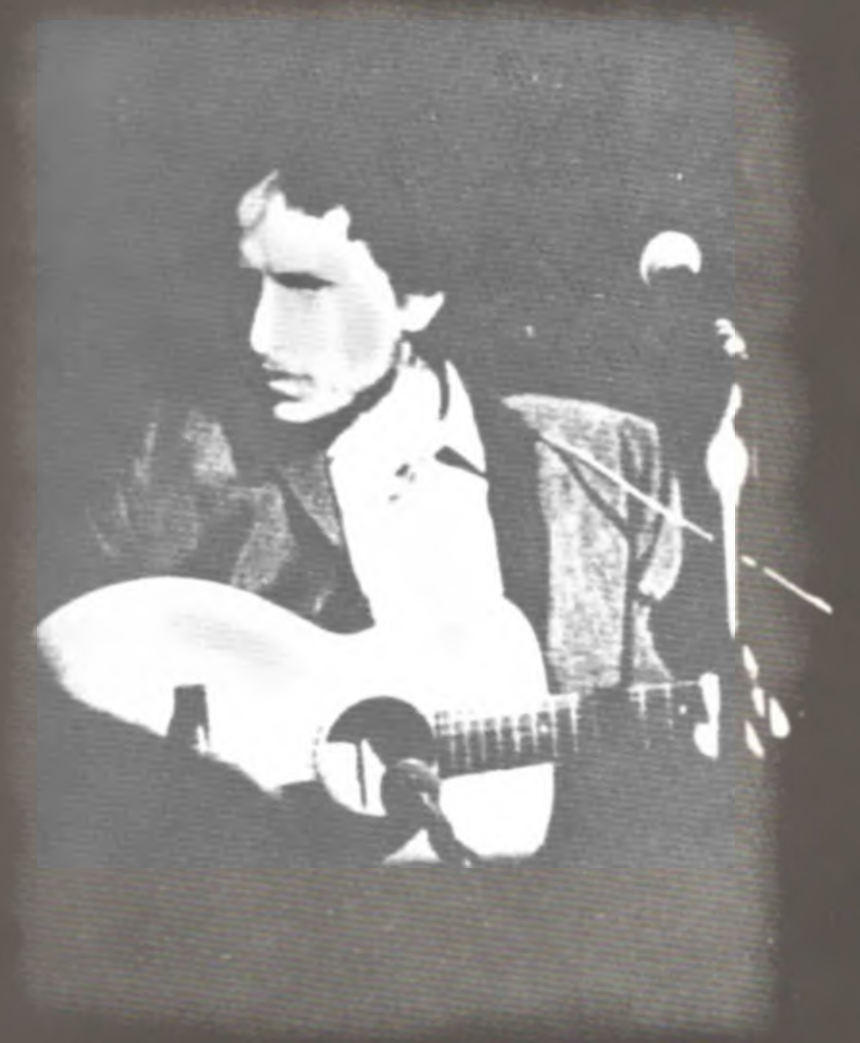
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BOB DYLAN

NASHVILLE SKYLINE & THINGS by ian mann

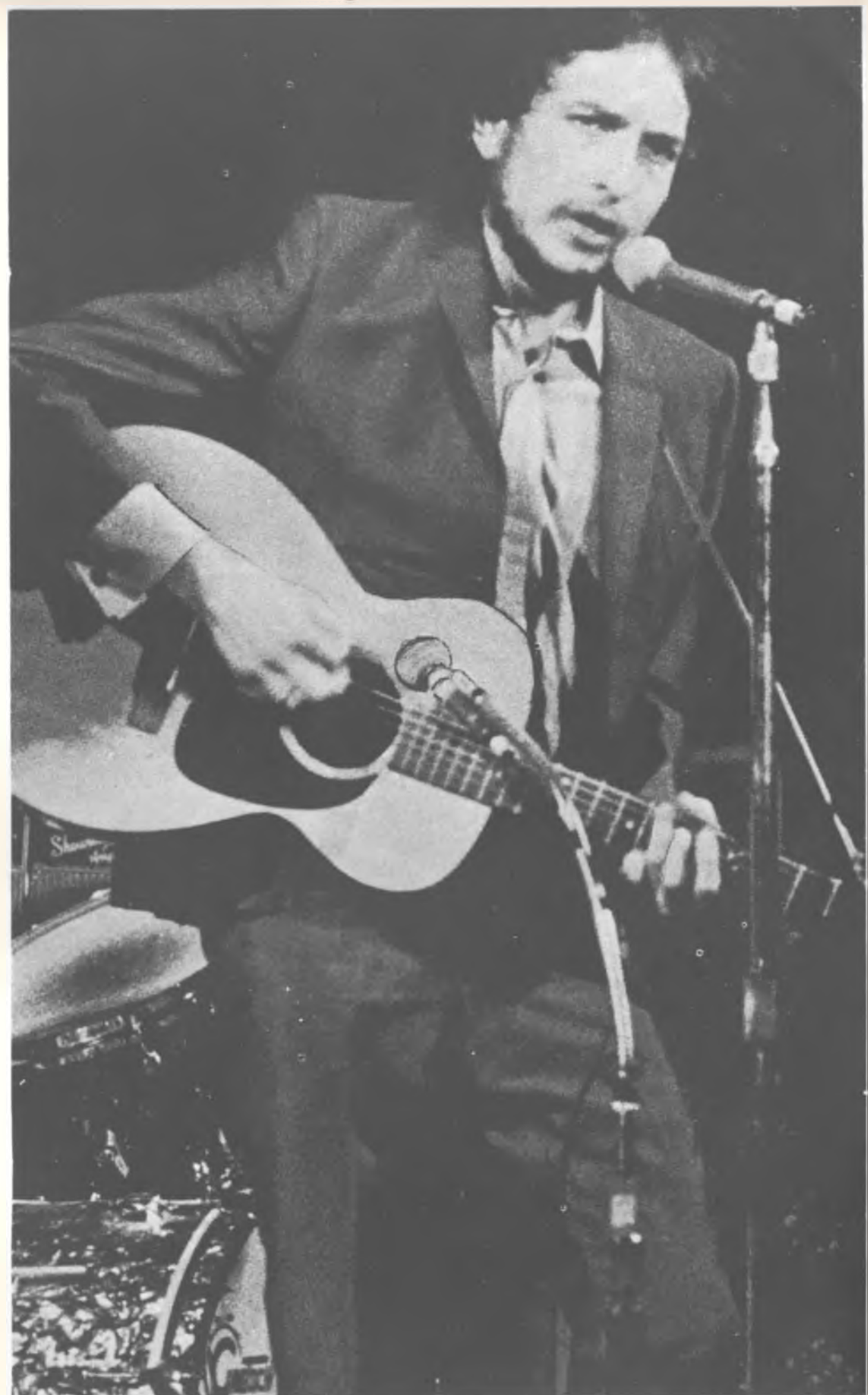
In the Palace of Congress, a shiny building within the chunky walls of the Kremlin, I relaxed during the interval of a colourful, footstomping folk-ballet based on a poem by Pushkin. The sad-eyed girl sitting opposite, who was either from Slough or Novosibirsk, I don't remember clearly, flicked back her well-trained hair, tore her gaze from her ornate Armenian ice-cream spoon and told me, half ashamed like a girl who avoids your eyes when caressed, that although she was enjoying the ballet almost to the point of visual orgasm - whatever that is - she didn't think it was much good if judged according to "objective criteria". Feeling high and medium rare after a few shots of Stolichnaya, I allowed myself to go down with hoot and chortle.

As I see it; any judgements of an art-form are purely personal and subjective assessments. All criteria are subjective, but this label is changed to "objective" when they are accepted by majority opinion. To postulate objective criteria is to affirm the existence of sheep. There are a lot of people in the world, a lot of whom like music. Music - or any other art-form, from murals to matchstick sculpture - has many characteristics; therefore, enough people will coincide in their approval of some of these characteristics for generalisations to be made, generalisations which try to conceal their vagueness behind the nonsense-phrase "objective criteria".

All this might appear to have sweet F. A. (Oxon) to do with Dylan, but I believe it has. Many comments I have read and heard about Dylan betray the schizophrenic split displayed by the ice-cream and ballet fan above. Some advance the thesis that Dylan's songs are verbal collages, floods of sense impressions. Très bien. But then in the same lungful of air they start expounding "what Dylan

means" or is "searching for" in a particular line or verse. Or they opine that they would like a particular song much more if they could be sure that the writer was "sincere" (a particularly inappropriate word to apply to a verbal collage anyway). The idea is too prevalent that Dylan has put into each of his songs one single thread of unity and underlying meaning, that this thread is present even in his more chaotic pieces, and that it is just a question of finding the right needle and the darned listener can unwind the haystack and re-stack it in an orderly way. An obsession for order, an obsession usually found in those whose psychological development came to an abrupt halt at the stage of anal fixation. For such thinkers it must be a great relief to hear the Beatles' "Revolution 9", several minutes of real healthy chaos held together by the easily identifiable unifying thread of Lennon's somnolent intonation of the beautiful phrase "number nine". Well, what's the meaning of "number nine", as judged by "objective criteria" of course? Who really wants to know anyway? And who believes that "number nine" was meant by the authors to have any great moon-shaking significance for its audience?

The whole point is that once a songwriter has penned a song and exposed it to the public ear, it's completely out of his hands. It is now subject to the light and shade of its environment, and in Dylan's case the environment ranges from stately homes to stinking holes. Each individual interprets the song as he wishes, and it doesn't matter a snort if no two interpretations coincide. This is above all relevant when, like Dylan, the writer declines to comment on his own work. Whether or not a writer is "sincere", or even if he's puncturing the urinary tracts of his faithful followers, the song exists and will be heard. You can like the song



without liking or even knowing anything about the author. Man, I even (reluctantly) found myself liking some aspects of "Eloise", without harbouring a secret love or even the slightest flicker of affection for the twins who conceived and nurtured it.

Taking further this view of a hyper-personalised outlook, I admire Dylan amongst many other reasons for certain lines to which I attach very specific interpretations. And the more people who disagree with me and consider me at the very least a misguided goolie, the better I'll feel. It'll give me a cogito-ergo-sum feeling of identity, plus confidence that the world consists of individuals rather than of woolly bleaters.

Here are a couple of examples:-
 "If I don't make it, you know my baby will". ("It takes a lot to laugh but it takes a train to cry"). For me, this line expressess, concisely, the idea expressed repeatedly in Shakespeare's sonnets, that is, that a child is the extension of its parent and what the parent fails to achieve will be achieved by the child. In this interpretation I ignore the myriad possibilities encompassed in the word "baby", taking it in its literal sense, rather than as an alternative to "my darling little cherub" or some other lover epithet. And I consider

"A world that just don't exist" (To Ramona) to be the unreal world created in the minds of impressionable consumers in a high-pressure consumer society. No doubt, I hope, Dylan's inter-

pretation, if any, of these lines would be completely different.

It was once said in an advertisement for a Dylan record something like: "Nobody sings Dylan like Dylan". This could be the starting premise of a linguo-philosophic thesis, a straight advertising cliché or even the plain truth. Whatever its foremost meaning, it's certainly applicable to "Nashville Skyline", Dylan's ninth album, yet another which, in spite of its apparent simplicity, has complexities, ambiguities and inconsistencies sufficient to provide the theoriser with a month's pleasing work producing subjectitized interpretations for his own consumption. Some would, in view of 'Nashville Skyline', like to extend the phraseto: "Only Dylan sings like Dylan, Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and others according to mood or caprice". Admittedly, one of the most apparent things on first hearing is the change of voice quality, a change which has already provoked many long-thought-out hypotheses on the reasons for this, most of them too wild for me.

The most likely explanation for this is perhaps contained in the following lines from an earlier song:

"I wish I was on some Australian mountain range.

I got no reason to be there but I guess it would be some kind of change".

Some kind of change Maybe he just felt like a change of voice and instructed the recording

engineers to achieve this. After all he has several different voices on this album. It is not as if he has undergone some endocrino-glandular change which has thickened or trimmed his vocal chords.

The blue and green grass and herbally-enveloped country and western backing is the other facet which has attracted disproportionate attention. The move to country and western was made in November 1967 with the velvet advent of "John Wesley Harding". In endowing "Nashville Skyline" with more elaborate and varied backing texture, Dylan has made not a foolish but at least a predictable move, a cyclical repetition of previous progression. "Another Side of Bob Dylan" marked the first departure from the harp and acoustic guitar set-up, with the inclusion of a happy piano on "Black Crow Blues". In "Bringing it all back home" and "Highway 61 revisited" this was expanded to the jingle-jangle band effect later demonstrated in shining cherry-blossom perfection in "Blonde on Blonde". The simplification represented by "John Wesley Harding" was a return to an earlier stage in the cycle and "Nashville Skyline"'s mixture of musical complexity and simplicity is a natural progression from this.

The first track, a re-version of "Girl from the North Country" . . . itself vaguely derived from the Yorkshire ballad of "Scarborough Fair" . . . sets the dominant mood of loving tenderness, in togetherness, or across time and or distance, a mood varied only by the happy-go-chunky "Nashville Skyline Rag" and the beans-for-breakfast "Country Pie". The eight love songs present at least statistical equilibrium, four dealing with apartness and four with togetherness. In "I threw it all away" ("Once I held mountains in the palms of my hands") the tenderness is rendered more poignant by self-imposed separation, in "Lay lady lay" by the physical proximity of a "big brass bed", (maybe a bed so big and wide that it can simultaneously symbolise togetherness and separation). Gentleness all through, but in none of the songs is it easy to capture the mood in a word, however many syllables or hyphens you put into it.

Sadness and happiness are hurdy-gurdied into conflicting patterns, sometimes a sad phrase in

a happy voice with non-committal instrumental noises, sometimes a happy thought enshrouded in a mournful cadence. You could not say it was an optimistic album nor a pessimistic one, but then its theme, love, is also a mystic and indefinable phenomenon.

Ambiguity is also present in the ostensible simplicity of the words. Ostensible. Dylan, the essential chuckling obscurantist still lives. Some non-sense-lines from the enigmatic "Peggy Day" may on many rehearings attain possibilities of interpretational stabs in the twilight . . . already the euphonious phrase "futility of all human endeavour" chimes in my mind. (They always said at school to use your imagination.) And the mere title "I threw it all away" could be seen variously as a comment by Dylan on his own life, a hitherto unpublished quote from J.H. Christ or from a child standing over a drain with an empty milk bottle in his hand. Time will, or then again, may not tell. Each listener will listen and think whatever he wishes to think.

So many elements, Dylanic or otherwise, echo through the passages of this musical package, that one with retentive cerebral ears might be tempted to deride it mildly with the understated accusation: "derivative". Yes, I am reminded by this album of many good and varied sounds that I have liked, but to combine them all in a harmonious blend along with many others, is a feat of genius rather than a subterfuge to hide a lack of originality. So were I to use the word "derivative" I would have to change its emotive shades, from pejorative to laudatory in one quick nudge of the semantic pendulum.

Faced with "Nashville Skyline", the recommended behaviour is as follows:- keep intact all the ideas you ever had about Dylan and listen to the record continuously until you have them confirmed or are forced to change them. The ideas aren't really so important. The important thing is to keep listening. What it means . . . or does . . . to you while it pumps away in your ears is your business; it is you, the listener, who is silhouetted against "Nashville Skyline".

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The Traffic's Last Exit

by rod yallop

The new Traffic album, which was put together posthumously, gets off to a fine start with a Dave Mason song entitled "Just For You". This track was originally released last year (WIP6032) under Dave Mason's name. Dave Mason was also credited on the single label, with the production of the track. The fact that it is difficult for the listener to discern between the production techniques of Jimmy Miller and Dave Mason is the highest tribute one can pay to their individual abilities. Jimmy Miller once had the following things to say about his role as producer of Traffic: "Dave and I are sort of co-producing because when Traffic are on the road Dave and I quite often get together and he'll play me a song that he'd written ... but we'll generally get Traffic in to back him because he knows that the musical backing he's going to want can come from no better people than Traffic". "Just For You" is a fine example of just how together Traffic were. Some nice strident acoustic guitar lays down the rhythm which Chris Wood embellishes with his accomplished flute playing. There is a vague Indian feel about some of the intervals and harmonies which is made more apparent by the string phrases in the chorus line and the introduction of tabla towards the end of the song.

"Shanghai Noodle Factory" - the next track was also released on a single - as the 'B' side of "Medicated Goo" (WIP 6050). It begins with a Davy Graham like guitar phrase and features Chris Wood again playing flute. Try listening to this track on stereo headphones and dig the ace piece of acoustic guitar playing.

"Somethings got a Hold on Me" is an instrumental featuring a double-tracked electric guitar tour-de-force. The two guitar tracks have been separated on to the left and right channels which makes for quite exciting listening, especially on phones. This is the sort of number which, like the Cream's "Cats Squirrel", I would expect to find its way into many lead-guitarists repertoire.

"Withering Tree" was originally released on the 'B' side of "You can all join in" (WIP 6041) which was only available over here on import from Sweden. The mystical quality they create on this number is very reminiscent of "Forty Thousand Headmen" on the second Traffic LP.

The last track on this side is "Good Old-Fashioned Medicated Goo" which features Stevie Winwood playing guitar, bass, organ, piano and vocals is a touch of Traffic humour in the vein of "Hole in My Shoe" and "Berkshire Poppies". The approach they use to this sort of number is so

light, particularly the tongue-in-cheek sax playing of Chris Wood, that one's initial reaction is to dismiss the music as being inconsequential. This is a mistake because, although the words of the song may be flippant, Traffic still inject their unquestionable professionalism into the music.

Side 2 of 'Last Exit' consists of two tracks recorded live on one of Traffic's American tours at the Fillmore West. Both the tracks were recorded on a friends cassette tape recorder and the balance is terrible. The tonal texture of the recording, however gives Side 2 a sort of presence that is quite often missing from recordings made from far more sophisticated mobile recording units. It is interesting to note that one of these small, battery-driven cassette recorders was also used by Jimmy Miller on "Their Satanic Majesties Request".

The eleven minute version of the Lesley Bricusse/Anthony Newley song "Feeling Good" is just too much. For nearly a year now I have been waiting for Traffic to bring out a recording of this number. The first time that I heard them perform it was at Kempton Park last summer. It had been one of the hottest days of the year, the sun had just sunk below the horizon, the moon had just risen and Stevie Winwoods voice came over the p.a. singing the words, "A new dawn, a new day, a new life for me". Too, too much.

For those listeners who missed the fantastic experience of hearing a live performance from this group, side 2 will be quite a revelation, and for those of us who have heard them live it provides an opportunity for a deeper analysis and appreciation of their individual and complementary abilities.

Stevie Winwood's playing and singing has been acclaimed since the days of the Spencer Davis Group. There is very little that I can add except to concur.

Jim Capaldi; solid, dependable. The only other drummer who produces anything approaching his power is John Densmore of the Doors although the musical ethos within which Densmore works does not encompass nearly so much as that of Traffic.

If Stevie Winwood and Chris Wood are the magicians, the "Mr. Fantasies" of the group, then Capaldi is the castle wherein they practice their charms.

Chris Wood: his role is one of many facets. Sometimes he is the embroiderer, illuminating the patterns that the others are weaving. Some-

continued on page 34

ROCKIN' RONNIE HAWKINS.

THE HAWKS & THE BAND

by wild little willie

Just recently, the names of Richard Manuel, Levon Helm, Robbie Robertson, Garth Hudson, and Ricky Danko have been in the British charts. The road to fame is long and hard, and so it was with these former rock men.

The man who put them all on the way was born just two days after Elvis Presley, on January 10th 1935 - his name was Ronnie Hawkins. Whilst Elvis was the first of the rock-a-billy greats, Rockin' Ronnie was the last to find commercial success, this being around Hamilton, Ontario in 1958. From then, Ronnie has not looked back, scoring hit after hit: "Forty Days", "Mary Lou", "Southern Love", "Carl Chessman", "Bo Diddley", "Bluebirds Over the Mountain" and "Home from the Forest", the latter being as recent as January 1968. Ronnie has been on the road now for seventeen years, and has had, so he tells me, seventeen different bands. Buddy Knox commented only last week, "I shall be going to see Ron Hawkins this week, he always has a good band".

It was with 'The Weight' and the 'Big Pink' album that one of these bands - in my opinion only the second best Ronnie has ever had - found chart success. One man, drummer Levon Helm, hails from way back in '56; a wild drummer, who was certainly one of the best rockin' men ever to pound the skins. Levon was on Ronnie's first disc, "Hey Bo Diddley/Love me like you can" released in '58 on Canadian Quality K1827; a savage piece of rockin' wax, if ever, as this was recorded in a garage, and had all the rawness and spontaneous originality that a classic should have. Levon's unique bongo styled thumpin', not unlike, I guess, Preston Epps, can be best heard on Ron's first two albums for Roulette; "Ronnie Hawkins" R25078 and "Mr Dynamo" R25102, Levon's rumpling rolls being the highlight of many a track, but none more so than the old Chris Kenner/Fats Domino rocker 'Sick and Tired' on the later album.

In 1960, sixteen years old Robbie Robertson joined the Hawks, first as bass guitarist, and later as lead. It was he who wrote the Band's hit, but his song-writing efforts started as far back as 9 years ago, when he co-wrote "Someone Like You" and "Hey Baba Lou" with Ron.

Robbie was one of a great number of Hawks lead guitarists. The first had been Jimmy Ray Paulman, better known as Jim Luke (ex Conway Twitty in '57), who hit some great solos on so many of Ron's rockers - "Oh Sugar", "Red Hot", "Forty Days" and so on. Jim quit - to join Dale Hawkins, Ron's first cousin, and later went solo - recording rockers on Razorback R104, Kris 284, and for the Big C label. (Another great lead, Roy Buckanon, also later joined Dale and was the ace guitarist on "My Babe" - Checker 906). Fred Carter stepped into Jim's shoes, taking over as lead on the "Mr Dynamo" album, but was more interested in song-writing and now writes for Sanford Clarke among others.

It was at this point that Robbie Robertson took over, and he admits having lifted his style from Fred. Certainly he developed his unique, hard, rockin' sound, by moulding what he had learnt playing bass under Fred. It was Robbie who got that wild, wailing, rockin' guitar in Ron's fantastic version of Bo Diddley's "Who Do You Love" R4483, and right through that solid album "The Best of Ronnie Hawkins" R25255. He is also the guitarist on two tracks only recently released by Roulette, though they were cut in '63 - "Matchbox/Susie Q" (which can also be found on the album "Mojoman" R25390). Roulette were in dispute with Hawkins and ran short of new material to issue, hence they used these two tracks and a number of previously released ones to make up this album. Showing just how desperate they were to release another album, they included two tracks which featured only the Hawks - the Band's first solo attempts, with vocals by Levon Helm. These were "What a Party" (really '19 years old' - wrongly titled) and "Further Up the Road" - both being good

Wild Little Willie is a very well known figure in Rock'n'Roll circles as well as being the acknowledged English authority on Ronnie Hawkins. Besides being a close friend of the man himself, he organised his appreciation society for a number of years.



The Band; (left to right) Rick Danko - bass, Levon Helm - drums, Richard Manuel - piano, Garth Hudson - organ, Jaime Robbie Robertson - guitar.



rockin' white blues, with some great Robertson guitar.

In 1963, this band of Hawks left Ron to try to make it on their own. (Though the above tracks were only released in '68, they were recorded in '63 whilst they were still with Hawkins). Blues singer, John Hammond cut two Vanguard albums - "So Many Roads" and "Mirrors" using Helm, Hudson and Robertson. The former was issued here on Fontana TFL 6059.

In 1965 their first single "Leave Me Alone/ Uh-uh-uh" was issued in Canada only on Apex 76964. Both titles were Robertson written, the former being a Chuck Berry style rocker, and the latter heavily featuring Levon's pounding drums - and with him and pianist Richard Manuel on vocals. Following this, they changed to the Atlantic label and released a single "Stones that I throw/ Little Liza Jane". This, again two Robertson songs, was put out here on Atlantic 4054.

Around this time they were backing up the late Sonny Boy Williamson and Robbie even played with Billy Lee Riley. But mostly they were appearing as Levon and the Hawks, and it was during the summer of 1965 in New Jersey that Bob Dylan caught them and was so impressed. He got them to join him as his band, and, with the exception of Levon, they appeared with him on his last tour of England. (They back Dylan on the live version of "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues", the flip of "I Want You" CBS 202258).

Robbie told me, at the Albert Hall, during that

tour, that it was Ronnie who made him practise till he thought that his fingers would drop off, pushing him from bass to lead - and although they are now a modern band, he reminisced over the old rockin' days. "When Ronnie used to rock and rush about like a great big gorilla - he used to knock me out!"

It was not long after this that Dylan broke his neck, and they were all out of work whilst he recovered. Certainly, they were around whilst I was living with Ronnie in Toronto in '66, though I only got to see Ricky Danko, the bass player.

On the road once again with Dylan, and with their own Capitol successes, they have re-arrived as a mod group, and so my interest in them wanes. However, they do get up to jam with Ronnie and his present Hawks, who's lead guitarist is now John Till - only last December they drove up from the well known West Saugerties house for a visit. Most of their time is now spent on new songs with Dylan and Tim Hardin - that's when they're not smashing up cars. (Ricky Danko is only just out of traction, and Levon recently turned over a corvette).

Rockin' Ronnie is still rockin' and at the moment digging the work of fellow Canadian Gordon Lightfoot, whose songs he describes as being "simple as horsedung at a rodeo". On April 4th, his fearful ten year Roulette contract ended and he has been offered terms by Dylan's manager, Al Grossman, as well as that group which owns Apple. So what comes next, I shudder to think!

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TIM BUCKLEY

—

BEAUTIFUL DREAMER

by PETE FRAME

"When you're in a recording studio, you have time and money, so you go into this dreamland", says Tim Buckley.

And that's exactly what he does.

Into a peculiarly vivid and enveloping dreamland. A land at once intensely personal and totally beguiling to the listener. Tales of love, of war, and feelings, and mornings, and more love; told in words of sophisticated, soft, satin magic; in musical settings elevating the sometimes tempestuous, sometimes so gentle songs, to works of breathtaking beauty.

The picturesque backdrop against which he has lurched from comparative obscurity to comparative fame in three years, is almost too good to be true. Tennage in the hip mould of poet ridden Venice Calif, "discovery" by Mother Jimmy Earl Black in a small West Coast folk club, appearances at the legendary star catalyst Night Owl in Greenwich Village, an Elektra contract, unsolicited testimonials from every discerning musician from George Harrison to Frank Zappa and two superb albums.

"Happy Sad" is his third record. A treasure of incredible, rare aesthetic excellence.

Usually when I listen to a record for the first time, I like to lie on the floor, wearing phones or just lying near the speakers, with a pencil and paper nearby so that I can catch initial impressions - so that repeated listening doesn't lose or distort my immediate reactions, which often don't recur. But with "Happy Sad", I was so pre-occupied with the sleeve, that I hardly got a thing down. In a word, it's about the best sleeve I've ever seen. The photograph (by Ed Caraeff) of Buckley, with his mind clambering around in some distant sink of melancholy, is stunning. A finer, more delicately shaded description of the title would not have been possible - it's as if you can see through his eyes and recreate his mood and mental environment. And the lettering - a small detail, but so thoughtfully chosen and executed.



The most frequent criticism of Buckley's live work, is from people who find his melodies too similar and indifferent. Oblivious of the audience, they say, he enters his dreamworld and consequently after a while, his spell weaving palls and provokes a distracting monotony which the lyrical beauty just cannot support. Well. Fair enough. If they don't like him, that's their hang up. But they lose. His melodies are arrestingly inventive, and the settings exquisite, springing from the supremely excellent musical and mental harmony between he and his musicians, particularly Lee Underwood, his bearded lead guitarist, who is so cool, and so competent. Sitting there, - easily, quiet like a shy boy at school, feeling out the arrangements for the softer songs with such delicacy. And on the faster material, like 'Buzzin' Fly', which you know is just off his scene, you can almost feel his tongue piercing his lips in concentration - but he still achieves perfection.

If you saw Buckley at Queen Elizabeth Hall a few months ago, most of the songs will be familiar. 'Love from Room 109' has been haunting me since his visit, and his Late Night Line Up and Top Gear appearances. What a ridiculously fine song. As I listen, I can see him sitting there, hunched over his twelvestring, his plectrum up and down, easing out mellow waves, up and down. And him with his bony face and ragged hair, leaning into the microphone, lip teasing its phallic form, the sinews of his neck taut as he strains and twists, contorting his delivery with lip manipulation, clinging to syllables and wringing out their meanings. The imagery, of love, is simple but intense. Such a thorough feeling of intense sincerity. And in the background, the Pacific Ocean, pacifying. Here is a song which, like 'Sad Eyed Lady of The Lowland', cannot provoke boredom by over familiarity. The more you listen, the more detail is revealed. Really so nice.

There are only six songs, but most are long, and all are beautiful. 'Buzzin Fly', recalling an endless summer which ended, exemplifies Buckley's rapport with his sidemen. "They are aware of the form. Everything is improvisation really, but the form is always there". Instead of easing out gentleness, Lee Underwood pulls out some controlled harshness. He's such an interesting musician, lacking the innovation of some, but setting out and succeeding wondrously in embellishing the song - not protruding at all. He's always on Buckley's wavelength, tickling out his graceful decorations almost.

Incidentally, the musicians on the album are Buckley's usual concert accompanists, and the song 'Gypsy Woman' is Carter Collins' conga drum tour de force. For the obvious reasons of the live/recorded music gap, his ten minute solo is drastically cut, but he sets the decor, creates the atmosphere of caravans, horses, red

bandanas, full swirling skirts, big gold ear rings, and geranium lips. Buckley is very fond of romanticising underdogs ('Morning Glory' for instance). He sees sincerity, attributes and romance where most of us see only dirt. Or maybe he feels an affinity to their nomadic lives. (What are American gypsies like I wonder, or is this another dream - of classical, Romanies?). A very dramatically contoured, furious song; he is screaming in tormented exultation. (Who is this? It surely can't be early Presley. I just cannot place the similarity).

'Strange Feeling'. What a unique voice, tingling with anguish, an almost suffocating desperation - rising, writhing, falling, moaning, strangled, sensuous, but always controlled. Always pure. Always coaxed out with an uncanny precision of pitch. Very distinctive, and very beautiful. An "everything's gonna be alright" song, musically very reminiscent of the Miles Davis Quartet's 'Blue in Green' - lovely vibes playing by David Friedman. This is soul singing. (Not as conveyed by Sam & Dave and their ilk who, ineptly labelled by some ignorant cretin, have little more soul than Des O'Connor, but just a kind of inherent exuberance). Singing from his soul, with his soul. Clinging, soothing introspection - practically exposing his nerve ends, full of hopes and poignancy. Taking you right into his mind when he wrote it.

On his recent visit, he was singing the Fred Neil song 'Dolphins', which he did very well and very differently. It's a real pity it wasn't included here, but never mind. Which reminds me, I once saw Buckley quoted as saying "I don't listen to any of my contemporaries". That was a while ago, since when he has certainly been doing a lot of listening to Fred Neil - but then, which American folksingers haven't? Listen to his vocal inflection on the opening track for instance.

Larry Becket? Yes, what happened to his lyric collaborator of previous albums? I read that, too despondent to accompany his friend on tour, he was remaining in Venice to record a poetry album for Elektra and to write songs for others. But that was months ago.

When 'Hello and Goodbye' was released in America, I used to get long letters from Mac, who was living in California at the time, saying how his most pleasurable hours were those spent engulfed in the album whilst meandering over the words in the fold out sleeve (U.S. version) he had spread before him. This is another record to just listen to. But this is better. It's the kind of record you think you should inscribe the words "for perfect listening conditions only" on. But you know you want to listen to it a lot, and anyway, the opening bars induce a perfect, lyrical, floating state.

The intensity is what particularly spills out
(CONT ON PAGE 34)



JOHN WESLEY ANNIS

SAM SHEPARD

PETER STAMPFEL

STEVE WEBER

RICHARD TYLER

The Holy Modal Rounders expecting to fly

by DANNY MCGANNAN

Last month, Elektra issued a whole stack of their backlog of American releases - the lesser known artistes they record - Nico, David Peel and the Lower East Side, Earth Opera and so on. Of these, the most fascinating album is "The Moray Eels eat the Holy Modal Rounders".

But unless you are acquainted with the turbulent history of the group, even the album title will be totally incomprehensible - so let me try and pick out the saliences.

Exactly six years ago, Peter Stampfel and Steve Weber formed a folk club duo doing guitar/violin/vocal personalised versions of traditional American folk music.

Because they brought unique qualifications to their performances - superb musicianship, a detailed knowledge of their subject built up since early enchantment with folk music, and the ability to convey spontaneous joy and humour - they were very successful, and some of their own songs were recorded by the Lovin' Spoonful, Jim Kweskin's Jug Band, Dave Van Ronk and the Fugs (for whom they were the sole instrumental accompaniment from January to July 1965 - they are on the first two Fugs LPs). In this form they recorded two albums for Prestige and, after splitting, reformed to cut another for ESP - released at the beginning of 1968.

Meanwhile, Peter Stampfel was forming an electric group (around Jan 1967). He played bass, electric violin and sang, with Sam Shepard on drums, Bill Barth on lead guitar and a well known Boston folk singer, Nancy Jeffries doing most of the vocals. They rehearsed, with a succession of rhythm guitarists, under the name of the Swamp Lillies, but fell apart when Bill and Nancy left to form their own group, the Insect Trust. (Listen to their Capitol album - it's a gas).

On to late 67, when his newly assembled crew, Sam, the returned Steve Weber and a pianist - Richard Tyler, decided to call themselves the Moray Eels. The songs they were doing at that time were their own compositions - things with obscure titles like BLACK LEATHER SWAMP NAZI, and they all lived in their Greenwich Village fantasy world.

In Feb 68 they signed a contract with Elektra and the album title was then conceived. At this point they were still the Moray Eels and as such appeared in an off-Broadway play by Sam the drummer called "Forensic and the Navigators".

In April 68 they flew to L. A. where the album and a single, which was never released, were produced by Barry Friedman (who for some unknown reason had adopted the pseudonym of Frazier Mohawk) - some tracks featuring a lead guitarist called Dave Levy who was subsequently "kicked out on his rank ass".

The record gives the impression that Mohawk mooched through the whole business with a kind of dazed disdain (e.g. the lurching, lopped start of "One will do for now"), but apparently he had his work cut out getting any sort of coherent sound from the group much of the time.

They reverted to the name The Holy Modal Rounders (which they now retain permanently), picked up a bass player who replied to their ad in a California music store - John Wesley Annis, and played successfully up and down West Coast - including gigs at the Avalon and Cheetah.

In August 1968 the album was released in the States, whilst they were busy recording a second for Elektra. Eight songs were cut - including "Voodoo Queen Marie", "John the Revelator",

"Hoochy Koochy Koo" and the full version of "The STP Song" - before this Mohawk cat decided to do a Beefheart and retreat to the Elektra backwoods hide and meditate.

At the beginning of this year they returned to New York, (having just previously sung "The Yoyo Song" on Laugh In), and appeared at the Electric Circus, the Scene and all the other East Coast haunts before Sam Shepard left to write the screenplay for the Stones film. Mike McCarty is the new drummer.

The Rounders have been waiting a long time. In many ways they are the last underground group left in America, for while the Fugs and the Velvet Underground have gone on to national popularity, the Rounders have remained largely unknown. Due to their anarchistic lyrical content, many radio stations refuse to play their records, dance halls don't know how to handle them, and suburban teenagers are often confused by the music.

What kind of music is it, anyway? "It's Bar Room Music", explained one young man at a Rounders concert. The Rounders see it as danceable stuff, but people rarely dance to it. It's not any "official" kind of dance music. Much of it has a country flavour.

Their material is mainly written by Peter Stampfel and his chick - Antonia, and Steve Weber, who for some strange copyright reason that I can't grasp, writes under the name of Teddy Boy Always. Most peculiar!

The new album is quite unreviewable. I am certainly not competent enough to explain just why I dig it so much, but here is what Elektra President, Jac Holzman said about it; "The Holy Modal Rounders might be akin to 'Waiting For Godot'. It was an experiment with a kind of aural theatre. It hasn't done spectacularly well in the U.S. but has been a profitable record for us domestically. It was my opinion that the Rounders were a fascinating phenomenon, that they were a life-style that not too much was known about and that musically they were very solid. I thought the record should be made".

Where is their music headed? "Ideally", says Peter Stampfel, "more hard rock, more Cajun, more African". Cajun is a kind of New Orleans swamp music with strange harmonies and infectious melodies, the kind of stuff that everybody likes to sing loud. A kind of freaky good-time music seems to be where they're headed. They're basically an optimistic bunch, and expect the best to happen with their music. Maybe this time it will.

Starting from our next issue, Peter Stampfel and Antonia will be writing a regular column in Zigzag.

tommy

BY JOHN H.T.

Yes. It's out. At last. After months of appetite whetting by Pete Townshend. And it's a gas. Blasting and stretching the entire sensorium, the new Who double album, "Tommy".

Heavy, almost Lalo Schiffrin theme music with dashes of '3 Steps to Heaven' heralds 'Overture', which is reminiscent of the Blood Sweat & Tears track 'Child is father to the man' in as much as it briefly previews several of the pieces. The scene is set in a fairly quiet and literate passage surrounding the birth of Tommy, and his father's unexpected return from the dead after the First World Stupidity.

Tommy, too young to express emotion, has witnessed the clandestine development of his mother's affair and the violent impact of his father murdering her deprives him of his speech, sight and hearing. His physical stupefaction is reflected in 'Amazing Journey' which is full of turbulent insistence. Keith Moon's drumming here seems to surpass any of his other work..... until the next track 'The Hawker', written, they say, by Sonny Boy Williamson, who could scarcely recognize it were he alive today. A riff begins on one channel, then the other, and these are suddenly bisected by Moon's explosive eruption.

'Christmas' starts side 2. The time to consider those less fortunate than ourselves - rather an un-Townshend song. "Tommy, can you hear me?", screams the hysterical father - and the pleading voice of the child says "See me, feel me, touch me, heal me." That must sound pathetically sick, but the deep sincerity is completely apparent to the listener. Roger Daltry's emotion is real.

John Entwistle's first song drives home the serious aspect - here we encounter cousin Kevin, the school bully we all remember. With no friends to play with, he tortures Tommy with burning cigarettes, and thrusts him downstairs - a very illuminated description of a wings-off-a-fly puller.

Enter the Acid Queen, personification of, in this case unsuccessful, hallucinatory medicaments

- and more violence in 'Underture', a ten minute hard rock, interest laden cut.

Entwistle devised the Uncle Ernie episode, as evil as his previous character. Uncle Ernie is nasty, most unsavoury. Likes to fiddle about... He rapes Tommy.

After acquiring, through touch and smell, complete facility in pinball, he is cured and launches a crusade rejoicing his rebirth and freedom. But his worship is shattered when, after requiring his devotees to cover their eyes and close their ears and mouths, they reject their leader unable to gain equal inspiration from pintables and loss of senses.

To even attempt to discuss a record of these proportions in so short a space is absurd, if not bloody disrespectful. Everybody is aware just how much preparation and forethought went into this production, and Pete Townshend's ability to transpose ideas of such an epic scale musically, is quite remarkable.

The Who initially got onto the scene via much hyping and bizarre publicity - we all remember the union jackets, the "pop-art" and the pop journalists tossing phrases like "autodestruction" around without having a clue what they were talking about. But you've GOT to have that kind of publicity to get started, and I for one am mercifully thankful that the Who's management had the faith to spend that bread in the first place.

Simple riffs in the hands of the Who are crammed with rampant energy. This is first class rock - beautifully performed, beautifully recorded, beautifully mixed (the stereo is crisp and clean), and beautifully presented. The Who is joy.

CENTREFOLD: PETE TOWNSHEND of THE WHO



DEAR MR. FANTASY

by neil spencer

Every generation has its heroes, but times change, and with them the heroes of popular culture. Already Achilles, The Scarlet Pimpernel, and Clark Gable have slid into posterity to be replaced by a new legion of mythical heroes. Bond, The Motorcycle Outlaw (Brando), and the Rock Star are the new giants, with one foot in reality and the other firmly in fantasy.

Standing shoulder to shoulder with these are the great heroes of the comic book; and especially those of the Marvel comic. In the well thumbed pages of a Marvel comic today's generation can find a hero truly worthy of its praise and admiration.

O.K. So what's so special about Marvel? True, Superman started off the whole thing way back in the '30's, and if you like your superheroes fat, flabby and middle-aged you can do no better than to buy DC comics. But superheroes like Superman really are too much (literally) - when did you ever see a DC hero balls up a rescue or a crook-catch? Or get caught with his pants down while changing into his costume in a phone booth (do those shirts never rip?) And those costumes are so corny - Superman still has that big hammy "S" spread across his chest. The DC hero is no longer viable - he has little or no link with the reality of day to day life. Their private lives are scanty and inconsistent, and none seem to have any sort of overt sexlife. Superman's (Clark Kent's) rebuffal of Lois Lane points to a fear of sex whose cause is probably to be found in a well known English rugby song ... Wonder Woman has about as much sex appeal as your games mistress (or master), whilst the precise relationship between Batman and Robin has always been, to say the least, suspect.

How can today's teenager (or older) possibly identify with a cornball like Superman? He and the superheroes that followed his pattern - Marvelman, Batman, Captain America etc. - were the product of a set of assumptions that have become outworn. All are testimony to the great American Dream. They perform their super exploits for the benefit of society,

their super-legal status is taken for granted by citizen Joe Corporate, and they successfully embody all the qualities of moral superiority that Americans believe to be their guaranteed birthright. This sort of superhero may have fobbed off the readers of yesteryear, but nowadays that type of establishment - sponsored brain fodder just isn't good enough. Batman fighting the tyrannical forces of Nippon is high camp simply because it's so bad, and shows what a state the States were in during the war years. It doesn't even fool the kids anymore. (The 1942 children's serial of Batman was recently made into a four and a half hour film and released on both sides of the Atlantic.)



SUPERMAN

Stan Lee, the brain behind Marvel comics, has created a new type of superhero, or rather, anti-hero, who illustrates the gap between American ideals and the state of the Union. Lee had the sense to realise that comics were being bought not only by kids but by college students and a fair number of 'grown-ups'. At first, Lee's comics were imitations of the Superman genre (Captain America), or straight science fiction



PETER PARKER (SPIDERMAN)

tales. You can still catch a few early Stan Lee fables in the 'Astounding Stories' and 'Secrets of the Unknown' series, which are easy to get hold of in this country and some of which reveal a surprising mastery of the standard S. F. themes - time travel, evolution, Ufos etc. After years in the comic industry Lee finally hit the jackpot with his new style Marvel comic.

Marvel comics are not only better drawn than any others (and they were being produced before Lichtenstein), but are evidently the product of a mind intensely in touch with the problems of today's society. Characters like The Mighty Thor, The Amazing Spiderman, Thing and The Incredible Hulk have real appeal for today's reader - they have their problems the same as us. Firstly they don't necessarily LIKE being superheroes. Thing wants to be (and occasionally returns to being) a normal human being; Spiderman finds difficulty in accepting the responsibilities that the role of superhero thrusts upon him; while The Hulk suffers from the psychoses of a society intolerant of the outsider:

"How can a green skinned misfit with paranoid tendencies survive in our materialist society?" Hulk is basically just another Drop-Out it seems. No wonder that Berkely students voted him number six in a 'World's Greatest Man' poll, along with Dylan and Castro.

One of the most potent creations of Marvel's mastermind is Spiderman. Unlike some of Lee's other heroes he falls into the realm of possibility - if you believe in him hard enough that is. Spiderman (or Spidey as he is known to his buddies and fans) is in reality puny Peter Parker, a high school, and later College student who acquires his powers after being bitten by a radio active spider. He can run up walls, has the proportionate strength of a spider, and a tingling spidey sense, as well as being able to shoot webbing from specially designed wrist guns. (Happily, our hero majors in science.) Naturally, leading a double life can lead to psyche troubles - split-personality,



BEN GRIMM REVERTS TO THE THING

lack of confidence in one's 'real' identity, and so on. Being a superhero means a lot of strain on your private life - Peter finds difficulty combining campus social life with web-spinning. His chick relationships are continually frustrated by the need to disappear at tense moments to re-emerge as Spidey and save the day, whilst his long absences and brooding introversion are taken as signs of aloofness by his fellow students. (Oh Lord don't let me be misunderstood.) Like too many of us he is insecure and guilt-ridden - in one collector's piece of an issue he even gives up being Spiderman altogether in an attempt to straighten out his life. In between being Spidey, Peter has to find time to pass his exams and earn money by taking news pics (of Spidey naturally) for a tight fisted newspaperman called J. Jonah Jameson, who has a positive hunk on his shoulder over Spidey. All very ironic and amusing. The biggest drag on Spidey's life is his Aunt May, whom he loves dearly. She worries herself sick about her frail nephew, and is always getting herself into hospital just as Spidey is lined up to smash The Green Goblin, Doctor Octopus, or some other mind-frazzling super villain. You'd think Spidey had enough problems without a lousy home background like that. Let's face it - can YOU cope with your paltry student life without having the responsibility of being a super fighter of crime as well?

For a super hero, Spidey breaks all the rules. He catches colds, gets headaches, breaks his arm, loses his memory, and even loses his Spidey costume and has to hire one from a theatrical agency. He badly needs a P.R.O. as most citizens regard him as a pest. Why, he even LOSES to his enemies and actually has his secret identity discovered in one issue. As he himself remarks - "Some Super Hero".

Other Marvel Heroes have similar problems, although none suffer to the same extent as Spidey. The Mighty Thor is in reality a crippled doctor who is in love with his nurse, and she in love with Thor. Iron Man has a weak heart, and just about everyone has a



DR STRANGE

THE HULK

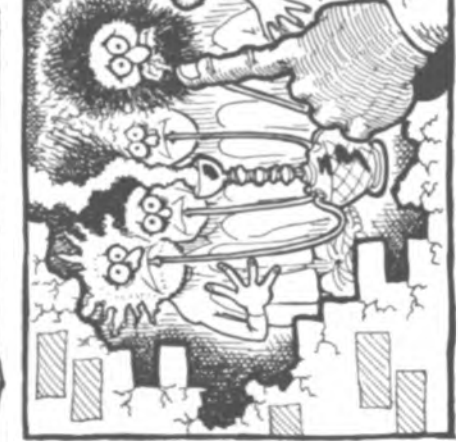
secret crush on someone else. The whole kaboodle is rather like a Woman's Own serial in comic form, but with tongue firmly in cheek and intensely more exciting.

Other Marvel Heroes are less parochial, zooming round the Universe with ease. Dr. Strange, a cross between Tony Curtis and the Dalai Lama, has mastered the esoterics of the spiritual world, and trips lightly from dimension to dimension encountering unthought of evil beings, against whom he battles with white magic and the power of pure Mind. For the astral minded he is no doubt more appealing, but the lack of any personal life, and the constant necessity to find new and even more bizarre dimensions for his encounters somehow weigh against him. Far more successful is the Silver Surfer, recently elevated from the ranks of the Evil Mutants (in the X-Men comics), and given his own series. The Silver Surfer is a reconnaissance man for the cosmic being Kragar, searching out planets which can be safely destroyed and their energy appropriated for Kragar's continued existence. Uncertain of mankind's true nature - shall we ever recover from the Fall? - but impressed by our planet's beauty, the Surfer finds himself unable to permit Earth's destruction, and is consequently exiled here. After escaping a witch's spell, the Silver Surfer cruises round the planet, mistaken as an evil mutant by man, and torn between his desire to help humanity, and to wreak vengeance on our heads. More truly cosmic than other Marvel heroes, and invested with a Hamlet-like nobility of spirit not found in them, the Silver Surfer seems the most promising thing to yet emerge from the Marvel Mythology.

Possibly, the shape of things to come is not to be found here, but in a new character not from the Marvel shop. I speak of WONDER WARTHOG, probably the ultimate in superheroes. Wonder Warthog (just plain Wonder to fans) is mean, tough, ugly, simultaneously attractive and repellent, and often comes a little too

near the truth for comfort. The nearest thing to him, by way of comparison, are the Mothers of Invention. Wonder lives inside a seedy journalist by the name of Philbert Desanex, who is the sort that only changes his socks when he buys a new pair of shoes. At crucial moments, like when there is an insuperable national crisis, Wonder breaks out his shell to put wrongs to right. Although Wonder has all the chauvinism of the early DC heroes, he is only in it for the money - "Americans, why pay fifty billion dollars a year on defence, when for only half the price you can have the Hog of Steel?" Fearlessly, Wonder disposes of arch-villians like the Masked Meanie (complete with Meanie Mobile), and smashes the Mafia, but for the right amount of money he will beat up his alter ego, Philbert Desanex. Wonder is the logical outcome of the superhero syndrome - a grotesque parody of the Superman figure which also allows satirical comment on the American social ideals which the superhero originally embodied, and on which his popularity was built. Wonder Warthog comics are very very difficult to get hold of in this country - the C. I. A. are trying to prevent distribution - and the reproductions you see here are themselves quite valuable.

I suppose that we would all like to be superheroes - fearless fighters and daredevils (how often have you wished you could fly?) - but deep inside we know that we're chicken, or that we'd goof the whole thing. It's reassuring to know that Spiderman and the rest aren't immune from everyday hangups either. The superhero has become a figure to identify with; a modern day myth, and the next step would seem to be to create a superhero who fights against the System. In America, Stan Lee has been christened the new Homer by college students, whilst in France, where they take their comics seriously, Spiderman has been called 'The first Dostoyevskian superhero'. Powerful stuff. One word of warning - like all myths the superhero is addictive, and once started it's difficult to stop.



LOS ANGELES COUNTRY ROCK

"Country music is here to stay", sang Ferlin Husky on a ten year old single. Maybe it did stay - but it stayed within the same old confines. It still got pumped out of those Southern U.S. radio stations, it still got the odd off-peak half hour on the BBC, it still got churned out in pub rooms around the country by hackneyed Johnny Cash imitators, and it even got into the charts and Family Favourites via the deliberately commercial rubbish of Jim Reeves and his ilk. But as far as growth of popularity or innovation were concerned - the expansion was negligible.

And now we're on the edge of what the Melody Maker will undoubtedly call "the Country Boom" - it seems a logical successor to their bogus folk, Rock'n'Roll and Blues Booms. (Hey, I can just imagine it - the same old bands that two years ago were doing "Knock on Wood" three times a set; then "Shake Rattle and Roll" and now "Dust My Blues", will soon be doing "Hickory Wind" instead). Admittedly there has been a marked surge of interest in country music lately, but most of it has been the same old trite spew.

The only place (apart from Dylan's Nashville work) where anything new seems to be happening in country music is Hollywood of all places, where country-rock (for want of more precise terminology) is in its infancy, having been born by the Byrds and a handful of others (see our attempts to untangle the complexities in the chart which

follows).

These days you get the impression that Hollywood is like a country music staff employment agency. You envisage Roger McGuinn phoning "Can you send me a new bass player?"

But you can't help thinking that, professional though it all is, the whole she-bang is based on a rickety set of fairly dubious premises. Some of the people involved are from country music areas (for example Byrd Clarence White has always been into country and Gene Clark was a farm boy from Missouri) but the others have hardly gone back to their roots.

To contradict my own argument, I, if asked, would have leapt to defend the early Stones who were also playing music which wasn't indigenous. e.g. Route 66, when they probably hadn't been on a longer road than Oxford Street. It's of little consequence, as long as the people involved are really in to it.

In this country rock thing then, they are going back, not to their roots, but to the roots of American music. Almost and sort of. If you see. Drugs to Scruggs. In a way. Using a very derivative originality, if that's possible.

As head Byrd Roger McGuinn said - "If you want to get into the psychological reasoning behind it, it's sort of a backlash from the psychedelic scene, which I'm personally saturated with".

sorted out
by pete frame
& dick lawson

MARSHA HUNT



DAVID BAILEY

walk on gilded splinters

604 030



BYRDS

formerly the Jet Set
 & the Beefeaters
 JIM McGUINN gtr
 DAVE CROSBY gtr
 GENE CLARK voc
 CHRIS HILLMAN bass
 MIKE CLARKE drums
 MR TAMBORINE MAN
 TURN TURN TURN
 Gene Clark leaves
 50
 YOUNGER THAN
 YESTERDAY
 GREATEST HITS
 Dave Crosby sacked
 NOTORIOUS BYRDS
 KEVIN KELLY replaces
 Mike Clark on drums
 the following also join:-
 GRAM PARSONS gtr, piano
 DOUG DILLARD banjo
 SNEAKY PETE steel gtr.
 McGuinn now calls himself
 ROGER McGUINN.
 SWEETHEART OF
 THE RODEO

INTERNATIONAL SUBMARINE BAND

RECORDED ONE ALBUM ON
 LEE HAZELWOOD'S LHI LABEL
 - CALLED "SAFE AT HOME" -
 AVAILABLE ON IMPORT ONLY
 FROM MUSCLAND. (LHI 12001).
 THE INTERNATIONAL SUB-
 MARINE BAND WAS ONE OF
 THE FIRST CITY/COUNTRY
 GROUPS & SPLIT UP EARLY
 1968.
 GRAM PARSONS rhythm, keyboard, vocals
 JOHN NUESE lead
 IAN & MICKEY

BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD

DEWEY MARTIN drums
 STEVE STILLS gtr
 NEIL YOUNG gtr
 RICHIE FURAY gtr
 BRUCE PALMER bass
 later replaced by
 JIM MESSINA bass
 albums:
 BUFFALO SPRINGFIELD
 AGAIN
 LAST TIME AROUND*
 RETROSPECT
 * now as yet released here.
 THERE IS STILL A GROUP
 OF THIS NAME BUT ONLY
 DEWEY MARTIN IS LEFT
 FROM THE ORIGINAL.

HEARTS AND FLOWERS

TWO ALBUMS ON
 U.S. CAPITOL -
 BOTH AVAILABLE
 ON IMPORT ONLY.
 ST 2762 & 2868.
 they played a very
 derivative form of
 country / folk rock.
 DAVE DAWSON
 BERNIE LEADON
 LARRY MURRAY
 DAVE JACKSON
 group split up last
 year & 2 members
 now play for Dill-
 ard & Clark.

FLYING BURRITO BROS

THIS GROUP WHICH WAS IN EX-
 ISTENCE AROUND 1967/1968,
 APPEARS TO HAVE NO CON-
 NECTION WITH THE PRESENT
 GROUP OF THE SAME NAME.
 IT CONSISTED OF TWO MEM-
 BERS OF THE INT. SUB. BAND
 - IAN & MICKEY, AND TWO
 MEMBERS FROM THE BOSTON
 ROCK GROUP BARRY & THE
 REMAINS.
 I HAVE ALSO SEEN REFERENCES
 TO "The Mexican R&B group -
 the FLYING BERRIDO BOYS."

FLYING BURRITO BROS

GRAM PARSONS gtr & keyboards
 CHRIS HILLMAN gtr
 CHRIS ETHRIDGE bass
 SNEAKY PETE steel gtr
 MIKE CLARK drums
 album just released on A&M
 THE GILDED PALACE OF SIN
 ALL EXCEPT ETHRIDGE, WHO
 PLAYED WITH A VARIETY OF
 ARTISTES INCLUDING JUDY
 COLLINS, ARE FORMER
 MEMBERS OF THE BYRDS.

DILLARD & CLARK

DOUG DILLARD banjo
 GENE CLARK vocals
 DAVE JACKSON bass
 BERNIE LEADON gtr
 possibly KEVIN KELLY drums
 first album on A&M -
 THE FANTASTIC EXPED-
 ITION OF DILLARD &
 CLARK.

BYRDS

ROGER McGUINN gtr
 CLARENCE WHITE gtr
 JOHN YORK bass
 GENE PARSONS drums
 latest CBS album:
 D? BYRDS & M? HYDE
 THOUGH ROGER McGUINN
 IS THE ONLY ORIGINAL
 BYRD - THE SOUND IS
 STILL VERY MUCH THE
 SAME.

CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

DAVE CROSBY gtr
 STEVE STILLS gtr
 GRAHAM NASH gtr
 DALLAS TAYLOR drums
 in recording as yet
 unreleased album for
 Atlantic - they used
 HARVEY BROOKS bass
 & PAUL HARRIS keyboards.
 A permanent bass has
 still not been selected.

NEIL YOUNG

ONE ALBUM ON REPRIS
 RS 6317 - AS YET NOT
 RELEASED IN ENGLAND.

POCO

RICHIE FURAY gtr voc
 JIM MESSINA gtr
 RUSTY YOUNG steel gtr
 RANDY MEISNER bass
 GEORGE GRANTHAM drums
 album scheduled for
 U.S. Epic label - CBS
 in England.
 POCO WAS ORIGINALLY
 CALLED POGO - BUT THIS
 WAS CHANGED AFTER
 WALT KELLY - THE
 ORIGINATOR OF THE
 POGO COMIC STRIP
 OBJECTED

The Flying Burrito Bros

a
n
d

THE FANTASTIC EXPEDITION OF DILLARD & CLARK

When the Flying Burrito Brothers arrive in England, I shan't be at all surprised if they have holes in their faces - where their tongues have pierced their cheeks.

Their first album, just released by A & M, "The Gilded Palace of Sin", is an excellent record. Really nice. But for the life of me I can't distinguish the satire from the sincere. I'm almost certain that the whole thing is parody. Let's have a look.

The sleeve gives the first clue. All the Nashville cats wear bright gear and have their names in ornate lettering all over their guitars - it's the big thing in country music to be flashy and showy. The Burrito's answer is vivid clothes - but in a send up style congruous with their own West Coast environment. For instance, Gram Parsons is wearing a white suit (which seems to have been cut from patterns discarded by Tom Jones's tailor) embroidered with marijuana plants, as he leans there discreetly fingering some unnamed chick's stomach. It's a ludicrous extension of the Grand Ol' Opry conventions.

Let's have a listen. It must be a big put-on. It's as if they had sat in a room and ruminated and discussed the whole country music sphere, collating a long list of the most typical aspects. From this, they compiled the elements of their repertoire.

They sing of a microcosmic World city, the ugliness and sin of urban life, steeped in pathos, drenched in melodrama, dripping with self-pity and the fear of God's wrath - i. e. well used Nashville themes. Their smirks are only covered by their sinister masks.

Even in the songs about girls walking out, the listener is left with the impression that it's not her absence from the nocturnal bed that matters, but who's going to read the family bible, and play hymns on the honky-tonk piano.

The reliance on traditional structures (and therefore limitations), sheer derivation and purposely corny lyrics must substantiate my contentions:

"She's a devil in disguise
You can see it in her eyes
She's telling dirty lies etc".

and the final track, "Hippie Boy", despite having a valid message, is a send up of about 100 Nashville products from Ferlin Huskey's "Drunken Driver" to Red Foley's "Peace in the Valley".

Right. Or wrong as the case may be.

On the other hand, the entire project may be a truly sincere venture. Certainly their motives for doing this would be credible. "Music", said Roger McGuinn in an interview in Sing Out, "always has some sort of sociological implication". He goes on to say that country music has a definite plea for people to live a rural life, "because it is down to earth, and not phony like this frenzied citified life. Back to grass roots, back to the earth, to nature, and what's really true."

Gram Parsons has always been involved in country music, and he's the pin in this catherine wheel. It was he who turned the Byrds on to country. "He wants to be the world champion country singer" says McGuinn. His singing and keyboard work is extremely accomplished and at times exciting, as is the musicianship of the group as a whole, but keeping as close as they do to structures, pre-empts any climaxes or real displays of instrumental versatility.

The standout tracks are 'Dark End Of The Street', where Sneaky Pete's finely tempered and controlled steel guitar arrangement slides and slips from headphone to headphone, and 'Hot Burrito No 2', which is beautiful. Here, the furtive Pete holds every note - buzzing like a sawmill - and on the vocal, Gram Parsons is showing the virtuosity he is aiming for. A track bulging with elevating originality, which could last for 20 minutes without palling. Everyone is into it so solidly.

It's a fascinating album, stuffed with interest, and I urge you to go and have a listen yourselves (and then write to me and let me have your opinion on my dilemmas).

I really must have a very long chat with Messrs Parsons and Hillman when they come over.

"Nashville nixed with a vengeance", screams Bob Garcia's liner note on the Dillard & Clark album (released this month on A&M). Wow, the strange man speaks the truth - this Fantastic Expedition turns up all manner of discoveries. Doug Dillard and Gene Clark have utilised the best of their roots and expanded them in every direction. Produced by Larry Marks, who also did 'Gilded Palace of Sin', the sound here is fuller more vibrant and less hand-tied to traditional structures.

Any album which begins like 'Out on the Side' has got to sell a million. Musical comparisons are the most odious, but Gene Clark's voice is as subtle and flexible as a well-known American singer who made a mint selling songs to the Monkees and didn't get the sales he deserved with 'Kentucky Woman'. (That's a compliment). This track begins with Levi-slapping drumwork, two guitars slip in, and Clark opens the vocals. Somewhere in the background an organist slides around (no credits) and the guitars continue to work as absolute complements (nice stereo) as Dillard joins in. The bass drum starts thundering and suddenly it all ends, fading with the organ. Nearly four minutes, and one of the best-produced acoustic tracks I've ever heard.

After that, anything would be an anti-climax, but 'She Darked the Sun' is very very nice. Steady string bass from David Jackson holds it together, with Dillard opening on banjo and stroking away with a beautiful violin solo. The usual 'lost-chick' story - but no self-pity here. Neat little track.

A surprisingly blues-based harp leads with 'Don't Come Rollin' which sounds like Dylan in his happier days - I almost expected to hear the laugh and 'OK, take two' come over. Nothing great to the lyrics, but do they enjoy it:

"Don't you come a-rollin'

If you think of rollin' over me".

Really happy ('Chasin' that hash') stuff and pretty vital acoustic work too. The final track is almost

standard in idea and construction ('The Train Leaves Here This Morning') but Clark isn't letting a bad scene bug him. 'I lost ten points/Just for being in the right place/At exactly the wrong time'. They really are a couple of Red Barons - nothing brings them down.

Please turn over to 'With Care from Someone' which has a distinct Flat/Scruggs feel to it. Taken really fast, Doug Dillard's banjo-picking is insane, almost too fast, but Gene Clark's vocal smoothes over the jangling instrumental. This is the first of three tracks where Andy Belling offers electric harpsichord to give the track a multitude of tinkling orgasms, balanced by Clark's sliding thumbs and tonsils.

More tinkling on 'Radio Song' which defied me to take notes at the same time as listening. Simple but effective changes of rhythm and harmony and that thumping bass pounding up and down. "Ramblin' on ... easin' troubled minds" and all that, but so beautifully tailored.

'Git It On Brother', written by Lester Flatt (the only track with neither Clark nor Dillard credited) is one the Burritos would like - kicking Satan out and more of the Lord's wrath - and Hillman joins in on mandolin. Incredible banjo with a huge harmonic ending tends to be a little aggravating, but it's never hackneyed.

'In The Plan' is perhaps the least effective track. It seems as if Dillard's getting tired or he recorded the banjo for 30 r. p. m., but Clark manages to pick the track up with a nice harp-chewing solo that lasts about eight seconds. It stops suddenly and leads into 'Something's Wrong'. More Levi-slapping drums, and Hillman's mandolin warbles unobtrusively all through. It hasn't got the punch of 'Out On The Side', but it's another beautifully produced track with everything thrown in and crisp, flowing vocal work. Perhaps it's taken too easily, but if you can get a copy play this over and over again.

An incredible album, and if C and W is your bag, turn on to this, at any price. If it isn't, try it and pass on the word.

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SINGLES by john h.t.

"SOMETHING IN THE AIR" - THUNDERCLAP NEWMAN (Track)

At the end of last year, Disc had photos of groups (most of whom have disbanded now), who they imagined would be the giant killers of 1969. One of them was called Thunderclap Newman and the photo depicted Pete Townshend directing and encouraging three ridiculously incongruous musicians in rehearsal. I would have been certain that Townshend was putting everyone on - except that I well remember seeing the lead guitarist the same time that Townshend must have first witnessed his impressive playing. It was at the IT benefit 24 hour dream and this kid, Jimmy McCullough, was playing lead with some new psychedelic group (don't know their name), whose singer was waving what looked like burning candy floss and singing numbers by Love etc. The staggering thing was that this Jimmy McCullough cat was only 13 and he was bloody good too.

Anyway, he's 15 now and this single, produced by Pete Townshend (who also plays bass on it), is the groups public entrance. But the star of the outfit is old Thunderclap himself - hardly a stereo-type new wave musician, he looks more like a contemporary by W. Haley, Esq. - the sort of bloke who comes to mend the telly. Nice pianist though, coming on like Fats Domino, cutting through the sprinkling strings for a solo (it's got Fats Domino type clapping too - I LOVE records with good clapping).

Speedy Keene (ex Mayall) sings, plays drums & wrote the song, which in construction has vague traces of "Dear Prudence", and in delivery resembles a hip Reg Presley.

It'll hardly "sweep the nation", but it really should be a successful single. When Track do something, anything, they do it well - and this is a good example of what I mean. Yeah, buy it if only so we can see them on Top of the Pops. Such a strange assortment. Can't get over it.

"DEAR JILL" - BLODWYN PIG (Island)

Bloody fabulous.

We went into the work of this fine group in some detail last month, so suffice it to say that this is an excellent representation of their music, and a real appetite whetter for their forthcoming album. 27 cheers for Blodwyn Pig.

WALK ON GILDED SPLINTERS - MARSHA HUNT

Marsha Hunt is walking on sacred splinters, messing with Dr. John Creaux's music. She better be careful or he'll upset her pirougue as she forges through the bayous of life, or else put gris-gris on her doorstep. Dr. John is, of course, an outrageous fake but his first album is one of the decade's masterpieces.

Marsha can't capture the misty swamps and cajun magic of the Night tripper's eight minute version (maybe she forgot to put any boss fix jam on her breakfast), but the excitement is there, plus a big helping of sex, in this compelling adaption. A very good record.

If you've seen the good lady herself, on stage, or when she threatened to drop out on Top of the Pops, you'll know the kind of feelings she generates - and when she's finished her present activities, she would do well to conglomerate a few good musicians, a couple of backing chicks and go out and break all the attendance records.

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Richie Havens

by mac garry

In his press photo he resembles one of those devoted doctors who do incurable disease research in TV films - staring into the distance with resigned optimism. Dedicated and kind. And that's how he comes across on record - essentially humanitarian, with a responsibility to replenish and do good. Everything about him gives the impression that he is one of the earth's very nice, very gentle people.

He hasn't always made his living from music. He used to push the moulds for dolls heads into a baking oven in a toy factory. (You don't get valuable information like that in the Melody Maker). But inbetween such temporary post college drop out jobs, he was into jazz and choral singing, and he was a struggling folk singer when the dreadful synthetic folk boom exploded its ugly seeds all over Greenwich Village and left a lot of really significant singers buried in a spew of clean cut campus kids making fortunes out of hard travellin'. But this ocean of mediocrity served to emphasise the strength of Havens' contribution to folk.

It was largely because of his interpretative skill that he has become one of the most popular singers in America - filling a void left by talented singers, who were too busy performing their own songs to interpret those of others. Havens takes a familiar song and approaches it from new angles. For example, he put what he calls "the intonations of America" on 'Eleanor Rigby', attracting new dimensions from the song.



On his latest album, Richard P. Havens 1983, half are his own songs and half were written by others. Glancing down the titles, I thought he must have gone mad to attempt works like "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Lady Madonna", but I had underestimated his strength in handling the stuff, his energy control. It's a lovely set (double album) full of fine songs, but the backing musicians are pretty useless on some tracks. He uses 26 different session men, including the inevitable Steve Stills, not to mention some cat playing a Vikormat FTN and another playing a hammer, but most of them are playing so distractingly simply (for instance - John Ord's organ is not far off sounding like Sandy McPherson on some tracks) or else without any real direction. Fortunately the strength and maturity of the Havens voice transcends this irritation.

His experience as a jazz musician is evident - his chordal lead guitar style is unique. Somewhere between a flat pick and a strum - played, because he had no formal tuition, in open E tuning (EBEAbBE), open E7 or open Em. (This information is included because about 97% of the people I know tinker with a guitar).

Havens seems to be jumping with passive vitality (if that's possible), transmitting compelling assurance. His songs on the Great American Bias, Vietnam, internal upheavals, poverty and so on, are observations and memory joggers, presented with style and dignity - he's not trying to chop down the Statue of Liberty with his guitar. But there is a sense of diary jottings, autobiographical reflections throughout his material. Hard yet relaxed, strong yet gentle, his music shows him exacerbated by his environments, tender but assertive, and always touching the nerve.

He admits to having been influenced by Fred Neil, Dino Valente and Len Chandler, but there's no evidence of

his leaning on their discarded crutches. His style is his own. There is no sense of urgency - easy going is the key. Take life seriously, but take it easy.

For over a year now, Havens has just been giving concerts rather than doing the small clubs he started in, and feels that he has a hard time communicating anymore. With this in mind, I played the first of the live tracks on the album. Um, not bad, I thought, but I wasn't exactly writhing in orgasmic delight. When it ended, the audience of the Santa Monica Auditorium in Los Angeles exploded in rapturous, frantic, voluminous applause and I was frankly taken aback. If this isn't communicating, I don't know what he's expecting. I played it again - very pleasant, yes, but I couldn't understand why the multitudes were going so wild. The clue

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obviously lies in this quote by Ralph J. Gleason - "He has one of the most effective stage presences I have ever seen", which is further substantiated by Newsweek - "Havens' great quality is his perfect empathy". Right. I shall be at the Albert Hall.

Listen to "I pity the poor Immigrant", Just above my hobby horse's head", "She's leaving home" and "Wear your love like heaven" - but better still settle down and listen to the whole thing.

There is also a "new" Richie Havens album out on Transatlantic made in 1965, before he got there. It's mainly old folk favourites, (done in what was then a daring setting - backed by a group - lead guitar, bass, drums and harp), written, though not credited, by Dylan, Buffy Sainte-Marie and others. The Dylan pieces "Oxford Town" and "Spanish Boots" are done well, and although it is no reflection of his present ability, I like the other songs too.

This record was obviously released for commercial motives - but Transatlantic can't expect to make a fortune from it, and they are catering for a specific, grateful minority. They have also delighted certain sectors (including me) by releasing old classics off the American Prestige catalogue - Ric Von Schmidt, the Holy Modal Rounders and so on, and also putting out stuff that other companies are chicken to handle because of controversial content. Good.

DISCOGRAPHY:

The Richie Havens Record (1965)

Douglas SD779 - import.

Electric Havens (1965) TRA 187

Mixed Bag (autumn 1966) S/VLP6008

Somethin' Else Again (winter 1967)

S/VLP6005

Richard P Havens 1983 (1969)

S/VLP6014.



tim buckley FROM PAGE 14

of the record, and this is where its beauty lies. So acutely and delicately. I could quote lyric snippets, but unclad in their music and Buckley's voice, they would mean so much less. But just listen to the sincerity of the man; the truth of his emotional and sexual thinkings. Happy in dream and memory, sad in present recollection, restlessly wrestling with hopeless voids.

Listen to it. A love record - to absorb in solitude. To just lie and listen to. Over and over.

"But all I have to give, are my dreams".

Tim Buckley
Goodbye and Hello
Happy Sad

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traffic FROM PAGE 8



times his saxophone dances around within the composition like a firefly on a summer evening. Occasionally he is the imp, the humorist and at times even the practical joker. At times he may nudge the music into certain directions but he never forces it in any obvious or vulgar way, always doing his particular thing with great taste and subtlety.

And now it is finished, the Wheel of Fortune is broken, but what a beautiful band they were, really.

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ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

ON THE ROAD

Yeah. We missed out May (for various reasons) but we shall definitely be monthly from now, having ironed out most of the hangups except those concerning bread. Plans to move to a miniscule office in London have temporarily fallen through but we're reckoning to get that together soon.

We had hoped to start a correspondence page this issue - but at the last minute we decided against it - we don't want to start another "Bert Weedon has a more technically precise fretting action than Hendrix, and the nodal impact of Dave Clark's polyrhythms makes Ginger Baker sound like a child with a tin drum" thing. Anyway we received deluges of letters and answered each one. Keep writing, we love communication.

In 1965, Rod and I were trying to fight youth apathy in Luton (we were wasting our time) by running a folk club and one of the groups we featured was the Strawbs. They were doing blue-grassy stuff then as the Strawberry Hill Boys, but have now grown into that branch of avant garde music for which no prole journalist has yet thought up a categorical pigeon hole name. They've got a new album out and from the couple of tracks I've heard, it sounds very fine.

Gary, one of our high pressure queue salesmen, just came back from Germany with a copy of "Crimson and Clover" by Tommy James and the Shondells. Astonishingly, it's a really nice single. I never heard it on the radio, but if Caroline had still been floating it would have become a proverbial smash.

Liberty have scooped by getting UK rights to the American Fantasy label and have released Creedence Clearwater Revivals "Proud Mary". If you read Zigzag No.1 you'll know of our enthusiasm for this classic.

We've already found that pop music is full of unwholesome people. Fortunately these are overwhelmingly outweighed by the really enthusiastic and genuine ones.

A cat called Ashley is organising a Blues festival in the Swindon area to help finance a commune in Wales. It will be held either August or September and any groups who would be willing to gig for expenses should contact Ashley at 6 Surrey Road Swindon Wilts.

The new Harvest label has certainly reaped the best of the rest. Among the artists they've gathered are Pete Brown's Battered Ornaments, Michael Chapman, the 3rd Ear Band, Buffy Sainte Marie - and Edgar Broughton's Band which is one of the most improved groups I've seen lately. If their album captures their live vitality it must be a stone gas.

If any top flight group wants a magnificent bass player/singer - phone Mac Macleod 56.64273. Mac used to lead the Danish underground group Hurdy Gurdy, and his virtuosity is staggering. You can read about him in IT No. 32.

Jeff Cloves, who wrote the Ginger poem in No.1 and the Poetry and Pop article in this issue, leads a poetry/jazz theatre group called Poetdoos, who perform at Universities, Colleges and Concerts. Anyone who would like further details can write to Jeff c/o Zigzag.

If you want an import cheaply, and don't mind waiting a month for delivery, write to Pippin at Gates of Dawn Imports. He's a very nice cat and knows everything about his subject (see page 6).

One criticism we had was from people who thought we should put down certain groups and have more destructive criticism generally. Well, that's not what we're after. We want to convey the joy which lies in all good music and we'd rather not discuss stuff we violently dislike than pull it apart.

If you like Zigzag, you're bound to like FREAK-WENCY, which is published monthly by UMAS, 2 Kingsmead Avenue, N.9. It costs one shilling and is stuffed with informed writing on everything appealing to the "underground minority taste in music". Last month they had articles on the Third Ear Band, Free, the Fugs, Dylan, Elvis(!) Blue Cheer etc. They also have a comprehensive schedule of which groups are where and regular columns by such legendary figures as the illustrious Jerry Floyd, D.J. of renown. No. 6 came out at the beginning of June and you can get it at our favourite London shop, Musicland.

Our next issue is out in the first week of July. It will be bigger still, but will remain at the same modest price. Write and tell us what you'd like us to feature in future issues.

Anyone wishing to contribute articles, reviews, drawings or photographs, or to help in the distribution of Zigzag - please write or phone 0582 27717.

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THUNDERCLAP NEWMAN

'SOMETHING IN THE AIR'

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