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THE ROCK MAGAZINE



Our second album from Fairport Convention. It may even be better than the first.

A discussion on Fairport Convention and their first Island album, reprinted from Zig Zag No. 1, April 1969.

"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 folk songs 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, and '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, whose 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 Tyger 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 and strange gadgetry (some of which whirrs like power drills over the solo), and has 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 whose greatness will one day be universally recognized. All this is conveyed in a cascading blues form.

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."



The first Nick Drake album, 'Five Leaves Left', available July 3.



The new Fairport Convention, 'Unhalfbricking', available July 3.



The first Dr. Strangely Strange, 'Kip of the Serenes', available July 3.

Like Fairport Convention, both Nick Drake and Dr. Strangely Strange co-produced their albums with Joe Boyd.

Nick Drake wrote all the songs on this first L.P. The unusual string arrangements were played on the session by Danny Thompson, Paul Harris and Richard Thompson.

Dr. Strangely Strange are greatly admired by the Incredible String Band, who have done so much to help them.



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ZIGZAG UNZIPS

FRANK ZAPPA INTERVIEWED BY DICK LAWSON AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Over the last year or so, you have been thrust by the press into a position where you are an 'attitude spokesman' for what is happening in the States, which is presumably why you were asked to lecture at the L.S.E. the other day. What exactly happened?

I wound up speaking to a large number of unfortunately misdirected young people.

Who were expecting something political and sociological to come up?

I gave them something political and sociological. The only problem was, it didn't agree with what they thought the tactics for a youth revolution should be. And I can't buy their tactics because I think they're juvenile.

They were sort of trying to bring the Berkeley thing over here?

Yes, much in the same way as they imported "Flower Power".

In September 67, when you first came over, you were shouting things like "Flower Power Sucks" when half the audience had flowers behind their ears and were cringing in their seats.

Well I don't think I really made them cringe because when a person's really into that, he believes it for as long as it's fashionable and the problem with young people today is that they're not much more developed than their parents, you know. Their attitudes are slightly different in some regards, but the level of their individuality and their sociological development is only slightly better - and they are not, as they imagine themselves to be, the spearhead of some fantastic revolution that's going to turn the planet into some kind of Garden of Eden after they're done, because they're not. The main problem with what they advocate in terms of aggressive revolution and waving signs around in the street and boycotts and violence and all the rest of this stuff is a) it's a fad this season, and b) they don't offer any alternatives or anything better to replace the current situation with when they get done with their revolution. They're into revolution on a carnival level and they aren't thinking in terms of the best things for the most amount of people. You know, they aren't taking into consideration the millions of people who probably don't want to be 'hip and

groovy'. They just want to be comfortable and sit around in their homes and, you know, I don't believe that it's my place or anybody else's place to tell them that they're not entitled to that.

It seems to me that you got very choked off playing and talking about this kind of thing, because you've come through 'Freak Out' and 'Absolutely Free' into 'Uncle Meat', where as you say, it's basically an instrumental thing. I mean, you're much more concerned with the music itself - the jazz...it is jazz isn't it?

No, it's not.

Well what is it then?

It's contemporary American music - American because that's the environment that created it - Los Angeles and New York.

In fact, with 'Ruben & the Jets', it would make one think that any spare time you have, which can't be much, you sit around listening to Del-Vikings and Gladiolas records and stuff like that.

Well, as a matter of fact, I do listen to those sort of records because I have a large collection of them, but I listen more to Stravinsky and Varese than that, you know - almost to the exclusion of all other forms of pop music.

You don't listen to any of your contemporaries - groups and so on?

Outside the groups that I'm producing, during the time that I'm working on their project, no, I don't.

You've recently befriended Captain Beefheart....

I've known him 12 years.

Ah, well you appreciate he is a very big cult figure over here,...

I think they're in for a very big surprise as to what Captain Beefheart is into and where he's at, because the two albums that you've heard over here were, I think, extremely badly produced and Beefheart himself has complained about what they did to him in the studio when he made those two albums because, the first album-it was studio players backing him up to a certain extent, and the second album mixed in a way that was against

ZAPPA



his wishes. There were certain things that he wanted to have in there, and the producer took it into the studio and put that phasing effect all over some of the stuff and turned it into a piece of shit. And so. And there were some interesting things on that album - I think 'Beatle Bones' is really a great song. We sing it on the bus. But the new album that he's just made is a 2 record set and the roots of that music are in Delta Blues and also in avant garde jazz - like Cecil Taylor, Thelonius Monk and John Coltrane and a lot of other things. You can really hear that influence and it's perfectly blended into a new musical language. It's all his. And it bears no resemblance to anything anybody else is doing. And his words are also, you know, like "miles ahead of the field".

You don't find those influences influencing your work?

Those jazz figures? - to a small degree.

I would have thought that Ian Underwood's alto work...

Well, you've got to remember that when 'Uncle Meat' was recorded, Ian had just joined the group at that time and he had been working with jazz groups in New York, and it's pretty much in an Ayler type vein. And that type of music still influences some of his playing but it's foolish to, everytime you hear someone improvise, to assume that it's jazz. One of the main problems we've had all along is making people realise that you can improvise in any given set of themes or chords or basic rules. I mean, is John Cage's music jazz - much of it is improvised.

OK, if that is what you were doing when 'Uncle Meat' was recorded, which was in 68?

'Uncle Meat' and 'Ruben & the Jets' were recorded simultaneously between October 1967 and February 1968.

What sort of stuff are you into now?

Electric chamber music.

And that's what you're going to play to-night.

Yes, quite a bit of it. That's what we've been doing on the tour and some of it's quite new. In fact five of the pieces were written on the plane coming over, and we've been rehearsing them in our hotel with just the bassoon and the flugelhorn and the clarinet.

So in fact, you're introducing new instruments as well?

Yes.

What was your reaction to the Festival Hall audience last year?

I was surprised that they didn't catch on to what we were doing quicker.

They didn't at all, did they?

No, they didn't. They missed the whole point of it. And another thing that's not generally known is that that show cost us 5,000 dollars just to get those musicians to record it, film it, get the costumes, make arrangements with the Hall itself to put on that kind of a show. It cost us money to do that. But I thought it was worth it. We recorded a very good album out of it, which will be our next record - out around July.



I read in Down Beat that you did a 45 minute set with Roland Kirk at a Boston Jazz Festival. Were you billed together, or did you just play together because Kirk was there?

We were on the same show and I met him after he had done his part and I said "Would you be interested in playing with us?" And he said he didn't know. And I said "Well, you've never heard the group before - you don't know what we do. If you like it - come on out on stage and start playing, and we'll back you up". So we'd played for about five or ten minutes and he came wheeling out there



with horns hanging all over him and blew his brains out.

It was completely free - nothing planned.

No, he just came bopping out there and we did it.

Got any plans to record together?

Well, he asked us to you know, but we haven't gone ahead with any special schemes yet.

Recently Kirk came over and played with Jack Bruce, Steve Stills, Buddy Miles and so on, in what many saw as an attempt to revitalise the group scene here. Did you get together have any effect over there?

I didn't see that our meeting had anything to do with revitalising any group scene in the United States which was very sterile to begin with. But people form groups basically in order to get a hit. There is some evidence to the contrary. There seems to be a bit of creative work going into it but there aren't many really creative groups in



the United States. Beefheart is certainly an exception and maybe one or two others.

What do you think of Billy Mundi's group (Rhinceros)?

I saw them live in Canada and I was very impressed with this one they did called "Chickens" but the rest of what they were doing was pretty smooth teeny bop type material. These were tunes they were getting ready for their next album - and this piece "Chickens" sounds extremely like the Mothers of Invention, which is why I like it.

What do you think of the group scene over here. Have you seen any?

Only what I saw down at the Speakeasy a couple of times and I wasn't, you know, exceedingly enthralled by what I saw.

What about the groups that we're currently sending over...like Jethro Tull and the Nice?

I like Jethro Tull and the organist in the Nice very much. I think he plays very well. I also like the Rolling Stones.

What about specific States groups?

I don't pay that much attention. There's probably lots going on but I get pretty involved in my small corner of it.

Who else are you recording apart from Beefheart?

We have Wild Man Fisher, a group called Alice Cooper, Judy Henske and Jerry Yester, we just bought 20 hours of Lenny Bruce tapes, we have Lord Buckley - the police did him under in New York a few years ago - and he was a sort of strange type of comedian - definitely an underground comedian of his time which was the '50s. We also have a documentary album on the Kennedy assassination - the last one - which is very interesting. It's got all the actual tapes of the assassination, interviews with Sirhan in his jail cell, interviews with the witnesses telling what they testified in court and what the police told them to say.

How did you manage to get hold of all that?

A guy named Doug Moody put the album together and offered it to us and we packaged it and put it out.

You were quoted as having Tim Buckley, is it in fact Lord Buckley?

No, we are going to have Tim Buckley - as soon as his contract is up with Elektra - and that'll probably be September.

Well thank you very much - give our love to Captain Beefheart.

JOHN AND WILLIE



by DANNY McGANNAN

John Koerner came to England in early 1965 on a working holiday, charging £6 to sing at folk clubs. He returned two years later, (charging £25), which was when I last saw him - wearing a peculiar segmented cap, a harmonica harness and enormous stomping boots - thrashing at an 8 (not 7) string guitar and producing music which was delightful in its novelty but palled rapidly. He played most of his stuff in the same key, with the same high nasal vocals, a virtually unvaried rhythm and one suddenly got very bored - I did anyway. Then I didn't hear from him until an American friend wrote; "Have you heard the John Koerner/Willie Murphy record? It's a honey!" And yes it is.

Let's dig around and find out about them. Willie Murphy, who is 25 but looks 50, was a jazz/blues pianist/bass player/singer working with rock groups. Got to own up - I'd never heard of him. He looks more like a gold prospector who lost his way back from Alaska. (Maybe his donkey died).

John Koerner has been around for 7 or 8 years. He used to be a third of Koerner, Ray and Glover, who did urban "blues, rags hollers" and made a lot of good (now deleted) records for Elektra - joyfully ransacking the old blues literature as well as writing and performing their own stuff - full of exuberance, foot bashing and yelling. They started off very together, but their styles diverged and as a group they lost their fire (and a lot of their audience as the original bluesmen now being rediscovered - Son House, John Hurt, Skip James etc. - began to squash the appeal of the white interpreters), and they decided to split as the US folk boom unboomed, clubs closed and work got scarcer. Dave Ray formed a group, Tony Glover took up the sitar and now does a lot of very good journalism, and Koerner apparently wandered - don't know quite where.



At some point in his travels, Koerner bumped into the mysterious Murphy and together they re-arranged a lot of John's old material, wrote new stuff and it all came out as "a really strange fusion of jazz, blues and rock". "Our two musical bags really came together", exclaimed a satisfied Willie, who's piano sounds like a cross between the "Gold Rush" soundtrack and a pilled-up Russ Conway.

Their record, named after Dick Lester's crazy film, is called "RUNNING JUMPING STANDING STILL."

This album was made at Elektra's backwoods studio/rest centre, the brainchild of producer Frazier Mohawk, where artistes can take it easy and record in a "peaceful natural atmosphere as opposed to the white fluorescent clock on the wall studios".

Every track is a gas - life is one big laugh, so dig it. Songs about "singing and dancing all night long"; some really effective and most uncharacteristic ballads from Koerner; lots of skippy/happy piano playing and clapping; raucous rampages; silly songs; wild and crazy songs; lots of fragmentary lyrics whose only cohesion is the big coloured ball of chaos they are wrapped in; and a ridiculous final track - 'Goodnight' - where the singer, knackered by some insatiable chick, is trying to resist further demands and get a bit of sleep.

WAHOO! Happy rock is back.

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JEFFERSON

If you were there that Friday night, you'll know what it was like. The Round house floor is as cobbly as a 19th century street, and about as comfortable to sit on. But we sat there, lay there and wriggled there - and waited. Stretched our cramped legs into gaps, apologised to the prostrate bodies we kicked and jostled. Listened to Jeff Dexter and Pete Drummond playing 'Street Fighting Man' and 'Laughing Stock' for the first time. And still we waited. While the people hassled over who would perform first.

The Doors came on. Grudgingly pandering to the ITV lot who wanted to get home. And they played well. Very well. As beautifully as anyone could have expected them to. But with TV spots zooming like searchlights, and cameras shooting up and down and getting in the way, the performance lacked perfection. To me it did, anyway.

More records. And then the Jefferson Airplane.

And I was literally transported, enraptured by atmosphere, nostalgia, dream-worlds and god knows what else. For years I'd been reading of the rumblings in San Francisco and though the scene was all but dead there now, it really didn't matter - the Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Owsley's acid, the Family Dog,

the Avalon, Haight Street, the posters, the head shops, the Trips Festivals, the whole idea - and I was buried in the psychedelic superstructure of the Fillmore, awash in florid colour and swirling sound. Grace was screaming "Wouldn't you like somebody to love", Jorma - in enormous puffy sleeves and hair to match - was stretching his euphonic phrases all around the volcano with the best acid-rock guitar ever heard there. And Glenn Mackay and his Headlights, simply the most staggering and intricate light show I'd ever seen, filling the place with whirling, floating colour from six projectors, all hung with spinning, segmented wheels.

And there they were, with a slide saying that "Jefferson Airplane Loves You" pulsing on the backcloth. It was a tremendous, intense, awe inspiring thing.

That was in early September 68, and though I'd seen Country Joe & the Fish some 5 months earlier, this was the first time that I really felt the live music of the West Coast. It took over three years

JEFFERSON AIRPLANE	left to right
JORMA KAUKONEN	lead guitar
MARTY BALIN	vocals
GRACE SLUCK	vocals
PAUL KANTNER	rhythm guitar
SPENCE DRYDEN	drums
JACK CASSADY (seated)	bass

AIRPLANE

by Mac Garry



to get to England.

As Paul Williams said in *Crawdaddy*, exactly two years ago, "The several aspects and influences of the San Francisco area have created a community; out of this community has come a feeling, an attitude; and it is this attitude that has imparted a unity to the music coming out of the Bay area, it is this attitude that is most commonly reflected in the San Francisco sound". And now this attitude has been punctured and deflated by time, commerciality and fad; and the famous ballrooms became induction centres for the curious kids, the would-be hippies; and then they got closed down. But while it lasted, the hippie thing nurtured some fine creativity, and unified rock music, light shows and the head community. And the Jefferson Airplane, which flew as the vanguard, flies on as the living prestige of that area and era.

Their first album, "Jefferson Airplane Takes Off" was not released here, but of it Paul Williams says; "The San Francisco sound on records begins with the first two notes of 'Blues from an Airplane', and a more noble beginning would not have been possible. Regardless of how many better albums have been recorded since, that record still glows in the beauty of the first trip, the birth cry of a new era in music".

The "Surrealistic Pillow" (their 2nd album) put out here was an amalgamation of tracks from the American album of the same title and the "Takes Off" record; and a serious fault is the omission of 'White Rabbit' (the psychedelic anthem which was fortunately released on a single), which epitomised their current music more than any other song. As Richard Goldstein says in his book "The Poetry of Rock", "When Grace Slick quotes the dormouse's advice 'Feed your head', is she really encouraging youth to turn on? Yes, in every sense. Rock is subversive, not because it seems to authorise sex, dope and cheap thrills, but because it encourages its audience to make its own judgements about social taboos".

I found their next album, "After Bathing At Baxter's", a disappointment. There was too much going on in there, and despite several claims that it was the best thing they'd done, I couldn't get into it. The reason for this was probably a combination of its complexity, lack of easily identifiable structures and the fact that I never actually owned the record and consequently failed to appreciate its finer qualities. I think its one of those which to be appreciated must be listened to over and over.

"Crown of Creation" came out at the time of their tour here, and contains some of their finest work - even though the quality is uneven. 'Triad' a really lovely David Crosby song, was one of last year's best tracks - and Grace Slick really knows how to sing that song. The Marty Balin song 'If you feel like china breaking' is beautiful for its structure and its build - the rhythm is set, joined by drums, then spurts of staccato wahwah



lead and finally the bass bounces in, grunting like a rampaging warthog, after the first verse. Make love flying - real joy.

And now (at last) their live album "Bless Its Pointed Little Head" is released, and does its best to capture the live vitality of the group, the density where voice and instrument merge. There is no background and foreground to the music as such, but plenty of drama and turbulence, and it's interesting to see how some of the earlier songs have evolved - 'Somebody to Love', while still clinging to its original frame is vastly different from the studio version, and even more remote from the Great Society recording.

Joking, smiling and generally being happy, the group looks loose and disorganised on stage, but the music is together and their enjoyment pervades everything they do. But whilst they exude this warmth, love, natural excitement, taste, unity and art, these qualities suffer in this medium, and though the live album is a good compromise, it is no substitute for having the live music swirling over you, whirling through your head, complimented by all the visual excitement and elation of an actual performance.

After the studio albums, this is like a reversion to their brash early stuff which was, as they said, "like a virgin forest, unchannelled and full of wildlife" - and they are certainly at their best doing this kind of rock - blowing free, exercising ideas, whooping it up around a central spine. Raucous and gushing, very round and very full.

Controversy surrounds Grace Slick. Jan Wen-

ner, in pre-Rolling Stone days, assured us that she would "turn into one of the three best non-operatic female singers in the world". Others contend that her voice is too cold and detached for lovesongs, too cynical for sincerity. What do you think? I've never heard anyone sing her songs better, and in person she is too much - and her laconic song links, unfortunately dropped from this album, are a gas. And she fits so well into the Airplane, with Hopalong Cassady's soaring bass, the rushing energy of Jorma's guitar, and Marty Balin's screaming counterpoint.

I can't say that Paul Kantner on 'Fat Angel' is a world class singer (it's a difficult song and Donovan is probably the only one who knows how to handle it) but the track is very musically satisfying, building and driving, and Spencer Dryden flailing and bashing away with what feels like abandoned, carefree exactitude. Captain High at your service.

Though lacking the precision and invention of their previous albums, this is an excellent contemporary rock record as well as an emphatic reminder of the San Francisco of a few years ago - before the hippies skipped out, flipped out and tripped out to take their stand in front of the Time Magazine cameras; when police turned a blind eye... as Bill Graham said "What can they do? To see a cop in Haight, its like the English invading China. Once they own it, how are they going to police it?". When musical ideas were passed from group to group like a joint.

Remember what the Dormouse said.



SUMMER IN THE CITY

Blackhill's enterprise and everybody's
blind faith bring out the sun

by Pete Frame

I nodded at the sky and commented on the perfection of the weather.

"Clapton must've arranged it", this cat replied.

Clapton must have arranged it - that seemed to be the general feeling about Clapton. We've all seen 'CLAPTON IS GOD' written on walls in clubs, bogs and the underground, and this was reinforcement of the theory - Master of the Elements. That's how a lot of people think of him, and that was the kind of feeling which inflated the pre-concert anticipation to a colossal certainty that everyone would be returning home with his senses stupified, his mind blown apart like never before. The stage was set.

You didn't need unique powers to feel that something special was in the air. We had driven, Rod and I, through the pre-dawn morning on our way back from the Lyceum, and met a constant stream of young people walking through the night, unable to hitch lifts from the suburbs where they had been dropped by lorries and cars from the north.

By the time we got back to London on Saturday afternoon, the pathways in Hyde Park looked like Threadneedle St at five - except that the convergence was on the lakeside concert area, and the clothing more bizarre. Not the florid kaftans and beads of a couple of years back, but a reversion to the denim/gypsy/beat, generally drab apparel that preceded the flower era. And there they were - droves of them, swarming in the general direction of the Cockpit.

We picked our way through the strewn bodies, those who had given up the jostle and settled for listening in comfort, their naked flesh being warmed by the sun. People peeked out of high tree foliage, stood on van and car roofs. Some cat had a stepladder. But most jammed the gentle slopes, and crammed and stretched on the rim.

The mellow harmony of the Third Ear Band, immaculate in its tranquility, relaxed the tension and everybody listened in silence. These cats have wiled away many a day just playing and

experimenting and have really acquired an original direction.

Edgar Broughton nearly caused large scale rioting with his calculated hysteria inducing demon exorcisms. "On your feet everybody", he screamed, his red, perspiring face surmounted by a big black Uncle Lubin hat, his guitar slung across his back, and his hands throttling the mike stand, "Out Demons, Out". His brother Steve, looking for all the world like Fagin, his teeth gritted and his face contorted, sledge-hammered the drums as the throngs chanted, but thankfully remained orderly.

The spectacular Richie Havens inspired gentle amazement, together with his accompanists Paul Williams ("He's happy - he really is"), and Daniel Ben Zebulon ("He's groovy"), whilst a dancing Donovan had appeared backstage and was providing much more excitement for the straight photographers.

In a guest spot, Donovan sang three songs :- 'I want to be there on the island', which failed to draw the audience response he asked for, a soft ballad, and in answer to "something we know", did 'Colours'. Still incredibly popular.

The compere, a very patient and very cool Sam, had managed to calm everybody down by the time that the unheard, but already mythical, group walked to the stage, preceded by Robert Stigwood.

Ginger, in big boots, looking as wild and hoary as ever; Stevie, youthful and neat, like a well scrubbed public schoolboy; Eric, with his usual, unintentional imperious look; and Ric, not exactly nervous so much as a bit dazed and bashful.

As they prepared to play, the audience settled down with quiet expectancy, for their confidence to be confirmed, the myth to be embodied.

Last minute adjustments and then quiet.

1,2,3,4...they started playing. "What? Buddy Holly B-sides?" They start with 'Well...alright', then 'Waiting in our boats to set sail', which really stretched Stevie's throat, 'I'd rather see you sle-



eping in the ground' - a straight down-the-road-I'm-going country blues. The audience, though appreciative, were still waiting for the ignition point, the inevitable explosion.

'Under my thumb', done slower than the Stones or the Who, preceded 'Can't find my way home', and 'Do what you like', with its stuttering, choppy rhythm overlaid with floating organ work, giving Ric Grech the chance to prove his dexterity to those who had never heard of him a few weeks ago, and Ginger Baker's solo, which produced the greatest audience awe of the day.

'I have finally found a way to live' was the only song during which Eric Clapton gave any kind of substantial solo, and that was a very characteristic, very fine piece of playing.

After 'Means to an end', they finished with a lovesong, the title of which I couldn't catch. "Thankyou", said Stevie, "see you sometime, - may be quite a while - but that's O.K."

I have deliberately copped out here by not going into the music in any detail. For one thing, I couldn't hear it as well as I wished, and also, the nine songs they did (the titles of which I may have got wrong), will probably have been released in an album by the time this is printed, and I'm going to reserve my opinion until I hear their record.

Some things made an immediate impression

on me - the introduction and verse link guitar/drums arrangement on 'Well...alright' really delighted me, as did the song 'I have finally found a way to live'. The words of this number are cliché ridden and the melody is not particularly original or strong but it has an indefinable beauty about it which makes it a really good song. A great song even.

I was trying to figure out who they reminded me of, but after my list had reached a hundred or so - including bits of Booker T and the MGs, the Band, the early Merseybeats (?), Traffic, Bo Diddley, etc - I realised I was wasting my time. It seemed to me that the sound was an original amalgamation of familiar traces, many of which I couldn't put my finger on.

Most people left the park preparing to reinforce the group's stature in letters to the Melody Maker, but a lot of others were left feeling dissatisfied and puzzled. Where was the dazzle, the 'Steppin' Outs', the stagefront domination?

Most disappointed people attributed their failure to be left reeling to the build up of the press and imagination, considering the afternoon a somewhat unspectacular culmination to all that anticipation and conjecture. Wanting the ostentatious virtuosity of Cream, they got professional immaculacy - flowing, solid, tight, good music. They wanted familiarity ("I wonder how they'll do 'Mr



Fantasy? I've been thinking about that for a long time.") and received over an hour of new material.

The entire staff of Blackhill Enterprises should be decorated for the precise organisation and forethought they put into this artistically monumental event. They originated and pioneered the Free Concert concept in England (an idea now slowly spreading to other parts of the country) and this, the first of this year's Hyde Park series, attracted contingents from every part of Britain, plane-loads from Denmark, Germany and other parts of Europe and even special visitors from the States.



Estimates of the audience size varied from 90 to 150 thousand (I think we can discount the Evening News article which stated that 7000 turned out to see the farewell appearance of the Cream), and it was a joy to see the straight press's incredulity at the absence of any violence or ugliness. The only discourtesy I saw was in the press area, which seemed to contain a high percentage of belligerent thugs. Even the Hell's Angels in the front row displayed the decorum of moped riders.

Yes.

It was such a pleasant afternoon.

It really was.

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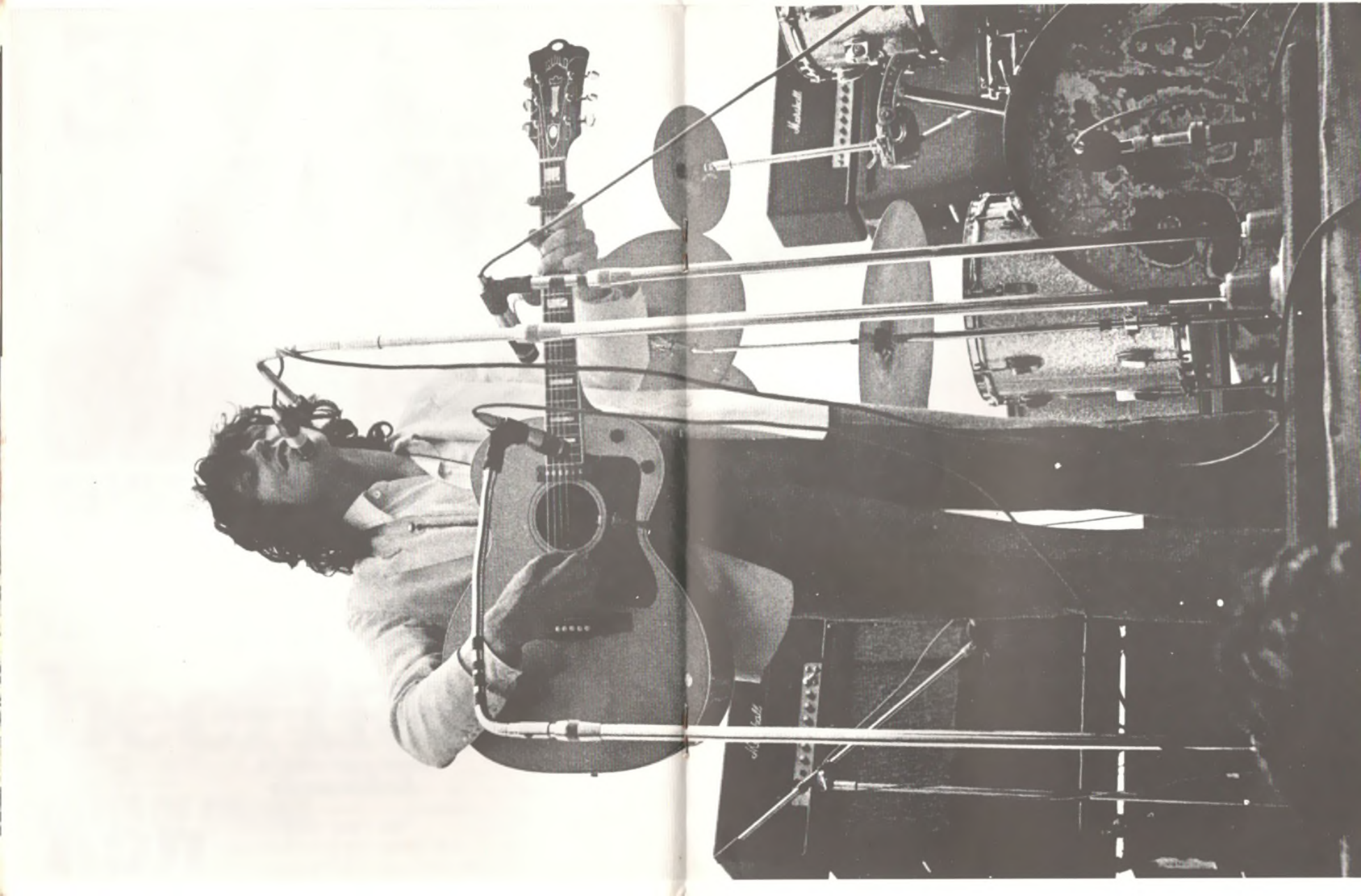
"Go Your Way"

c/w "Keep Out Cos I'm Dying"

RCA 1854

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RCA



JOHNNY WINTER

Half million dollar hype, or the next great blues guitarist?

by John H.T.

When the name Johnny Winter is mentioned, instantly the publicity man's description "cross eyed albino" comes to mind. That in itself is a drag - the fact that a sort of 1969 Ben Turpin image has been propagated reflects no credit on anyone. Not that he's worried probably, having made a fortune out of his face, but surely, in these enlightened days, the appearance of musicians should mean little or nothing - it would be nice to think that their music said enough without physical disfigurement being emphasised as a selling point. The greater pity is that without this "handicap", Winter would probably have just remained a promising but largely unknown artist, and wouldn't have been afforded the latitude to promote the vast talent he obviously possesses.

The fleecy haired Texan, who as long as eight years ago was described by Bloomfield as the best white blues guitarist he had ever heard, has just had two albums released here. Andrew Lauder of Liberty has grabbed, from Sonobeat, "The Progressive Blues Experiment", recorded at an Austin, Texas ballroom called The Vulcan Gas Company. In the States, this record, originally pressed in a very limited edition, became a collector's item after Columbia signed the almost unknown Winter for an astronomical figure (reportedly over half a million dollars). (It has now been re-released there on Imperial). The CBS album is called, "provocatively" as John Peel would say, "Johnny Winter".

I suppose it's inevitable that the two records will be compared, so let's try and sort out the obvious differences. Both have two very capable backing musicians - Johnny Shannon (bass) and Red Turner, called Uncle John on CBS (drums). On the later album, assistance is also given by Willie Dixon and Winter's identical twin Edgar, who has played tenor and piano for his brother for years.

Some of the material on both albums derives from Chicago (for example on the Liberty are Sonny Boy's 'Help Me' and Wolf's 'Forty Four', and on the other - 'Good Morning Little School-Girl'), but Winter reveals himself as a competent blues writer as well as a powerful interpreter, and a guitarist of outstanding ability. (It says

on one of the sleeves that he lived with Bloomfield, and the experimenting they did has rubbed off both ways).

On some of the early tracks, especially those on which he plays his National Steel, he sounds too much like the white kid trying to get caught up in the blues - and a bit too reminiscent of the second division British R&B groups during the early Stones era. And then there are the tedious Elmore James riffs (did he ever play a different one) and the even more inevitable word changing to achieve personalised versions - but he does play so well.

It's about this point that one realises that the vocals have either been badly balanced or else Winter is one of the least powerful and most overstrained singers in the world - he could do with a Butterfield or Mayall to shout the blues for him. The guitar, however, just gets better and better the more you listen (like the first Butterfield) and the backing musicians are totally superb - the bass unobtrusively picks its way through pleasant changes of rhythm with all the little jumps and breaks we hear too little of. The only thing that detracts slightly is the aimless channel switching.

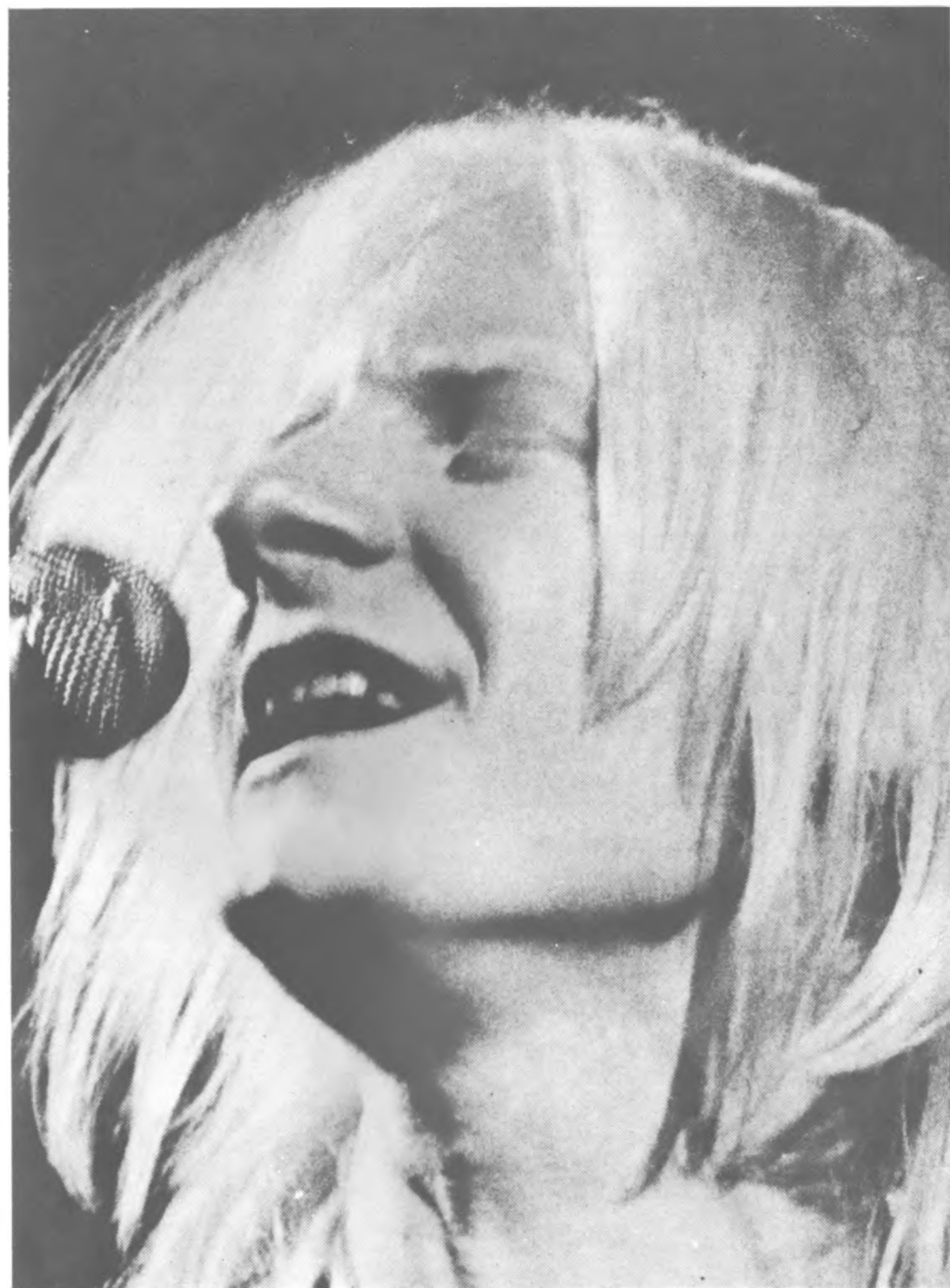
'It's my own fault' is a good track to sample if you anticipate its purchase.

Then the later album. This was recorded in Nashville, and in production technique and quality, is instantly superior - though considering the enormous resources of Columbia, it's not so much better than the Sonobeat job. It is also definitely double tracked on guitar and guitar - a very worthwhile refinement used by a number of perfection seekers, Clapton, Townshend and so on.

If I could hear him play his solo on 'I'm yours and I'm hers' live, I'd eat this record. Other superb tracks include 'Mean mistreater' and 'When you got a good friend' and we again hear the pyrotechnic guitar runs, which are even more explosive in their improved clarity.

Listen to both albums. I prefer the Liberty by a shade - the other seems a little too hastily got

(turn to page 22)



together, as if it were rushed out to satisfy the sudden demand.

Even though his sudden jerk from the obscurity of Texan bars and dance halls is due to excessive promotion, Winter is definitely going to be a 'superstar' in the States (though it seems doubtful that his status will bridge the Atlantic); but he mustn't lose Shannon and Turner who, unobtrusive in their power, are an incisive compliment to his astral guitar work.

Time Magazine recently saw fit to spread Winter across a whole page - "his electric guitar", they said, "crackles with a kind of voltage that can only come from the gut, not an AC outlet."

Anyway, it's good to see the promotion men hustling something worthwhile for a change, and as Johnny's brother Edgar said, "Johnny always said he was great - he just wanted other people to know it too."

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BOOKS

One afternoon when we were in the Track office, David Ruffell gave us three American books which are worth mentioning.

ROCK & OTHER FOUR LETTER WORDS is published by Bantam at \$1.25. This book purports to have text by J. Marks and photos by Linda Eastman, but much of it consists of already familiar press handout photos and terse, out of context quotes from various artistes and critics. It seems to me as though it were designed merely to make a fast buck (and a quarter) out of the US rock generation.

Some of the photos, however, are good - Tim Buckley, the Springfield, the Doors and Moby Grape for example, but others are dreadful - one of Jimmy Page particularly. I've seen this on sale here in various bookshops for 10/-, but wouldn't go overboard to recommend its purchase.

THE WORLD OF ROCK is a Fawcett Gold Medal book costing 75c. This, by John Gabree, who I believe is held in some esteem in American Rock circles (I may be quite wrong) gives capsule descriptions of just about every rock figure you can think of from Alan Freed to Frank Zappa. Once more the photos are old hat, and the writing lacks the fluidity intended by the author. The subject is altogether too vast to encompass in 175 pages - for example, Donovan is dismissed in 6 lines, the Airplane in 14. A veritable pot boiler and con.

THE POETRY OF ROCK is really too much and I am entirely grateful to David for having drawn my attention to it. It's a Bantam and costs \$1. As well as being a very informed and clever writer (although often using aggravatingly hip phrasing), Richard Goldstein - who used to do the pop column in the Village Voice - has selected some of the past decade's finest lyrics to discuss, from 'Maybellene' and 'Long Tall Sally' to 'A Day in the Life', 'Suzanne' and 'Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands'.

I've seen criticisms of the author as being "like Frank Zappa, simply too smart for the subject matter he has chosen to hustle", but this book is required reading for anyone who gets a tingle out of "That's why I go for that rock'n'roll music, any old way you choose it". As he says at the beginning of chapter 1, "How could we have faced the fifties without Chuck Berry?"

I fear that it is not available here, but maybe one of the hipper bookshops will import it.

hide out

ON THE FANTASTIC EXPEDITION OF DILLARD & CLARK



SHUV OVER AND MAKE ROOM FOR THE POETS

by Jeff Cloves



PETE BROWN

In the late 40s and early 50s, when KEROUAC, CASSADY, GINSBERG and the rest were hammering back and forth across the North American continent, they were giving birth to the most significant literary movement/life style since the Modern Movement of the 20s. They were the original beats... what Life Magazine christened The Beat Generation. The origins of the word beat are varied... from deadbeat i. e. hobo or bum, to a shortening of Beatitude, to beat in the jazz rhythm sense. Possibly beat in the musical sense is the most valid, because the spontaneous prose outpourings of KEROUAC and the word rhythms in the poetry of GINSBERG, CORSO, and FERLINGHETTI related very closely to, and were much influenced by, jazz - in particular the work of the Bop musicians and CHARLIE PARKER. The other major influence was Zen Buddhism and it becomes clear that the Hippie Movement was only a (less talented, I think) continuation of the Beat Generation, wearing different clothes and listening to pop instead of Bop.

The Beats exploded into an irresistible movement which spread right across Europe, and in America, gave rise to the live readings/happenings/events which took place in the Bars and cafés of San Francisco. With the basic sympathy of the Beats to modern jazz as a foundation, it was almost inevitable that the poets and musicians should work together, and jazz and poetry

fusions began to take place. Early innovators were KENNETH PATCHEN and the CHARLIE MINGUS BAND - their readings were well received from the outset, and since then, poetry and jazz has become an increasingly taken for granted form.

In this country, the pioneer work was done by MIKE HOROVITZ and PETE BROWN. In 1959, Horovitz was instrumental in founding an avant garde literary magazine, New Departures. In 60/61, Live New Departures, a travelling road-show of the arts, began to feature Horovitz and Brown reading with jazz musicians, and the poets were reaching a new audience. Like most innovators, New Departures got scant credit, even though they had mixed media shows on the road five years before m. m. became the in thing. In 1962 the first English poetry and jazz record was released, an EP called RED BIRD featuring CHRISTOPHER LOGUE, and JEREMY ROBSON was another poet strongly associated with poetry and jazz who was in demand at public readings.

At the time that Live New Departures was getting on the road, a seemingly independent live poetry reading scene was becoming established in one or two coffee bars in Liverpool. ADRIAN HENRI was an early face on this scene and SPIKE HAWKINS and PETE BROWN seem to have been involved too. Later, ROGER MCGOUGH and BRIAN PATTEN began to read and founded their magazine UNDERDOG. By this time, the

Liverpool beat music scene was exploding and a new provincial phenomenon called the Beatles were playing at the Cavern. McGough and Patten hawked Underdog around the beat clubs of Liverpool and discovered that the beat fans were also receptive to their poetry... in fact some of the Liverpool poets, Mike Evans for one, were beat musicians themselves. And so inevitably, the Liverpool poets and the Liverpool beat musicians each influenced each other to the point where there is often a great similarity between a Lennon/McCartney song and a McGough or Henri poem.

Poetry and jazz, however, despite excursions into the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, seemed to remain rooted in the south, while the poetry/beat music boom seemed to centre around Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and perhaps more surprisingly, Newcastle, where the Animals suddenly burst on the scene and TOM PICKARD organised readings and happenings at the Mordern Tower.

With the growth of the Folk Music revival parallel to the trad jazz revival, the situation was further set up for the poets to create new audiences for their work; and poets like ADRIAN MITCHELL, BOB COBBING, JEFF NUTTALL and singer/poets like LEON ROSSELSON were increasingly in demand at poetry readings. The advent of BOB DYLAN undoubtedly gave the whole movement a great jolt, and all of a sudden to describe a songwriter as a poet was the acme of praise.

The rest is recent history, and the poetry/music movement has now reached the point where major record companies are prepared to record poets and put their records out with all the attendant hoopla and publicity associated with the pop music business. Yes, the poets have arrived and they've certainly made an impact... I think it is broadly true to say that more thought and care is put into the words of pop songs now than there was ten years ago. That is, if the word pop has any real meaning now.

It becomes increasingly difficult to classify much of the new music in the old terms, and pop/rock/R&B/soul/folk/C&W, except when applied to the crudest possible examples, are labels which are becoming impossible to use. But, though governments continually tell us we are a classless nation, we all use, and have our own definition of working class/Middle class/Upper class etc and, as the most class conscious country in the world, it is unlikely that we shall give up our musical classifications without a struggle. Not that it matters overmuch, since the only important classification is whether the song/singer is any good. There are some performers who defy classification on any of the above terms and must drive the tidy minded pigeon holers round the bend

...such are BOB DYLAN, RON GEESIN, PETE BROWN, ADRIAN HENRI, LEONARD COHEN, to name just a few.

They are people who use any material/influence which suits their purpose and refuse to be tied to any particular style, even though there is probably one major influence to which they continually return. It seems as though I can always hear the echo of Guthrie in Dylan, a strong jazz piano style seems to underlay all Geesin's work and Brown and Henri both seem very close to beat/R&B. There is a myriad of influences in the work of the Canadian poet/singer LEONARD COHEN, and judging by his second LP "Songs From A Room", rather surprisingly, Dylan may be one of them.



LEONARD COHEN

But, above all, there is something very French about Cohen's songs, something of Jacques Prévert and the songs of Juliette Greco, even a little of Edith Piaf - although his songs lack her hopeless bravery. His songs are full of the profound pessimism of the existentialists, even the smallest chink of light is matched against some dark act or foreboding.

Thus:-
"Through the graves the wind is blowing
Freedom soon will come
Then we'll come from the shadows"
(from 'The Partisan')

"We told her she was beautiful
we told her she was free,
but none of us would meet her
in the house of mystery"
(from 'It seems so long ago')

"Sometimes I need you naked
Sometimes I need you wild
I need you to carry my children in
And I need you to kill my child"
(from 'You know who I am')

Always he sets up a pretty image, a tender thought... and then the boot goes in. Even in a lovesong his pessimism/honesty forces him to say "tonight will be fine, will be fine... for a while".

His concern with killing children is almost obsessional; in the very fine 'Story of Isaac' he sings... "when it all comes down to dust, I will help you if I must, I will kill you if I can".

Cohen's songs are difficult, their meanings not immediately obvious. It's very difficult to know quite where he stands; what his commitment is. I played the record many times before I was sure I liked it, but now I'm certain that, apart from a couple of makeweights on side two, the songs are outstanding. The backings could be better, I think (no credit to the musicians on the sleeve), but 'Bunch of Lonesome Heroes' - a beautiful, mysterious song, is a completely successful fusion of poem and music, with the lead guitarist bending into some chilling notes at the end of each verse. I seem to be alone among Zigzag contributors in regarding the latest Dylan LP as totally mediocre and I hear in the Cohen record all the things that I used to listen eagerly for in Dylan. "Songs from a room" is outstanding amongst the bunch of records under review, and Cohen is a force to be reckoned with.

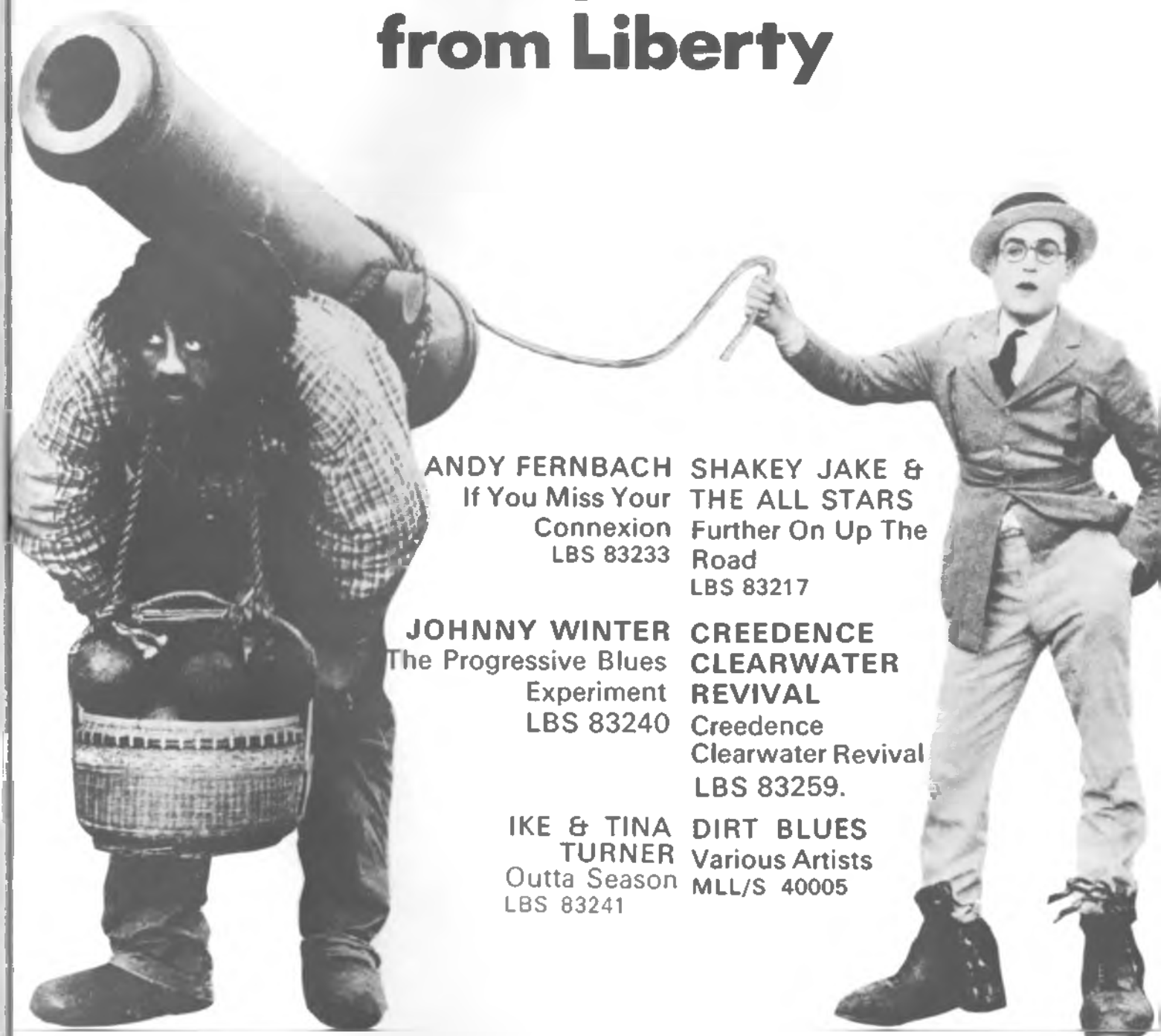
"The Incredible New Liverpool Scene" is an LP (released some time ago now) featuring the poems of HENRI and MCGOUGH and the guitar accompaniments of ANDY ROBERTS. Most of the poems appeared in a book called "The Liverpool scene" (which I first read in 1967) and I find that most of them have palled, and in retrospect the talent seems fairly thinly spread. The recording has a rather self-conscious air about it and despite having friends in at the session, it lacks the atmosphere these poets always create at a live reading... in fact where these poems might work in combination with the likeable personality of the poets and a warm audience, they fail over the speaker of me Phillips Disc-jockey.

ADRIAN HENRI has gone on to form a poetry/music group called (surprise, surprise) THE LIVERPOOL SCENE and their "Amazing Adventures of..." is a far more successful and interesting record. The group has a guitar/bass/tenor/drums line-up and features poems/songs by Mike Evans, Mike Hart and Henri. They are dead professional, coping with all sorts of material with an enviable competence. Mike Hart's songs are good, very Dylanish, but something of his own as well; Mike Evans' poem "Tramcar to Frankenstein" is a really successful fusion with music - full of Hammer-horror movie effects and some effective free tenor from Evans; and the whole presided over by the benign and often underrated talent of Henri. There are some blues-based things, a touch of the old Eastern promise and a terribly precious song about hamsters.... Nothing outstanding, but a pleasant record.

The amazing PETE BROWN turns up with his BATTERED ORNAMENTS on "A meal you can shake hands with in the dark" and I hardly know where to begin. Pete, like Adrian Henri, is best seen live and some of the performances on this record are so rough they are almost painful. But in the general wildness and anarchy of a Brown performance on stage, they would probably pass by un-noticed. And this is a wild, wild record - much freer than the Liverpool Scene, sometimes sounding close to the Cream and sometimes like the old Cyril Davies/Alexis Korner band, and even the Yardbirds at their freakiest. Pete is a very rough singer and conga drummer and an even rougher trumpeter and the band is not completely together yet. BUT, something really comes through on this record, which is lacking on the Liverpool ones, and that's a sort of knockabout gutsiness and musical surreality more to do with the Goons and the Alberts than the beat generation. And anyway, I'd forgive Pete anything in return for his magnificently spluttering and hilarious diatribe against the 'Politician'.

Some of the smaller and 'underground' record companies are putting out straight poetry readings by the new poets, and it's on these that you are much likelier to hear poetry of lasting quality. But at the moment, the poetry/music groups are an interesting addition to the scene. Where they go from here is difficult to say. My guess is that they will merge imperceptibly into the 'new music' and we will cease to think of them as poets at all.

heavy music from Liberty



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LBS 83263

Sea Train

1976-1977

the group

by Peter Stampfel & Antonia

Sea Train is now Andy Kulberg on flute and bass, Teddy Irwin on guitar, Red Shepard singing, Bobby Moses on drums, Don Kretmar on bass and sax, and Richard Greene on electric violin and sax. Jim Roberts writes their lyrics and Andy Kulberg writes most of their music. We talked with them after a recent performance at the Café au Go Go in Greenwich Village.

Their music is uniquely their own - it sounded somewhat "classical" to us but they deny any such influences, saying none of them has a classical background. They come from jazz, blues and folk music and say their music is rock and roll. True, it has a good beat but aside from that, any resemblance to "traditional" rock and roll songs is purely accidental. It is a genuine new music.

Some of them were in the old Blues Project which mutated into Sea Train over a year ago. Red Shepard and Don Kretmar started as rock musicians long ago - Don used to play bass for Chubby Checker. Teddy Irwin has played in society bands, on country records, just about everything except rock. Bobby Moses was always into jazz, playing with the Free Spirits and Everything is Everything, so this is his first rock experience also. Richard Greene has played with Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys and the Jim Kweskin Jug Band.

Sea Train has this amazing ability to improvise - they can all play lead if need be, and can all play backing. This seemingly results from each of them having a specific role in terms of the group and is apparent in speaking with them. Whose-ever role fits the question best is unobtrusively pushed forward by the others to answer, and the others stand back and let him speak his piece.

Their musical aims vary. Richard Greene, for example, wants to popularize the violin - change its image. When he was a boy, he carried a violin

case and the other kids threw rocks at him. Someone suggested that he simply redesign the violin case for camouflage, but no, Richard wants to do it all with his music, and with his ability, he should be able to do it, too.

Irwin, Shepard and Moses, new Sea Trainers, who weren't on the record have just hit the point where they've been integrated and Sea Train is about to change again. The lyrics are going to simplify, be more like stories. Jim Roberts, the lyricist, is a part of the band - they travel together.

Most of them have been in music most of their lives and they see Sea Train as a logical extension of what they've devoted their lives to. Where they go next should be a complete surprise to everyone.

the record

by Dick Lawson

Sea Train follows hard on the heels of intensely pleasurable albums by groups like the Insect Trust and the Holy Modal Rounders, as the beautiful result of two current trends in contemporary American music. They rarely write their own lyrics (six out of the eight songs here are by poet Jim Roberts, who travels with the group), and they are an amalgamation of 'serious' musicians from jazz, bluegrass and rock bands, perfectly arranged to highlight the best traits of each field.

This isn't a brilliant album - the production is often indifferent, and John Gregory's vocals weather in the face of such strong instrumental backing - but the arrangements are all exceptional. This is best shown in the instrumental track 'Pudding Street', written by Andy Kulberg, bassist and flautist. Kulberg begins on the basic melody, heavy drums lead into John Gregory's finest guitar solo, the flute returns, now winding round a string accompaniment (here they really sound like Insect Trust), and Richard Greene moves in for a violin solo, bending every note upwards to



meet the climatic surge, then back to the strains of the first few bars.

John Gregory's haunting voice is at its most effective on the next track, 'Portrait of the lady as a young artist', my favourite piece on the whole album. The lyrics cascade over a full rock backing, mysteriously medieval with castles and court jesters; they include one magnificent line reminiscent of 'She comes in colours' - "She walks in a garden wherever she goes", as well as Greene's wildest violin solo. Too good.

The most exciting thing about the group is their absolute musical sympathy with each other. Don Kretmar on sax and Roy Blumenfeld on drums work particularly well together, and Blumenfeld is as much at home in the country setting of 'Let the duchess no' as he is in the hugely emotional climax of 'Outwear the hills'. Every track depends largely on changes of mood, tempo and movements from brass to violin, or woodwind to guitar, and Blumenfeld's drumming is perfectly understated; he pushes along each change with perception and precision. A jazz drummer - and it shows.

The lyrics are strong and pure, well matched with intelligent arrangements and the internal sympathy of the band. Each song has hidden delights which take a while to come out in the open, but they're worth waiting for. The only one that isn't is 'Sweet creek's suite', either a Shadows

put on or a bummer. It doesn't make it as a put-on, so...

Sea Train needs listening to. One inch transistor speakers will never do them justice, so try hearing them at full volume in your local teenage record shop.

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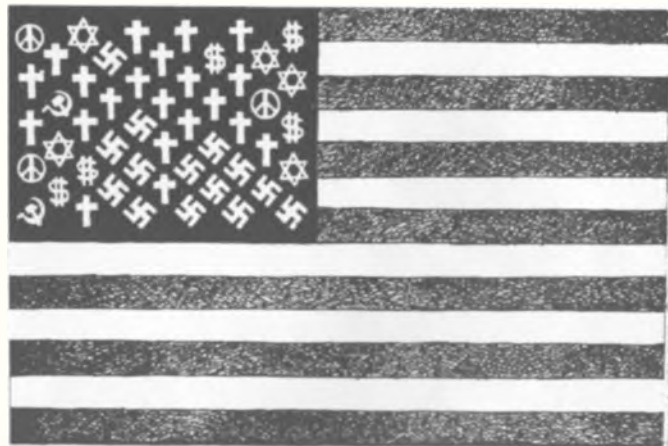
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romping through the swamp

with peter stampfel & antonia

OK, this is New York, June, and Dylan was just on Johnny Cash's TV show - as was Doug Kershaw, an amazing cajun fiddler and songwriter. He wrote 'Louisiana Man'.

We've been listening for weeks, listening hard (& I mean we can be the hardest listeners in the alley), listening to 'Tommy', the Kinks 'Village Green', Fred Neil, the two recentest Incredible String Bands and the Fairport Convention.

Most of our records are still in California. We dearly miss the first two Velvet Underground albums. They are one of the finest of American bands - same class as the Band and the Beach Boys. Velvet were the first Yankee group to tastefully exploit feedback /ambience/ 'tone bending' and their first album, cut in '65, still sounds totally unique and contemporary. The current album, their third, is a joy - less electronic, and they use what sounds like an acoustic or amplified acoustic guitar. Get their 1st album 1st, their 3rd one 2nd, and 2nd 3rd. Brilliant damn communicators - fantastic with words - they do basic rock 'n' roll, and are fine to see live.

Speaking of ace basic stuff, NRBQ are real good and do lots of things differently - like Sun Ra numbers etc. Three true longtogether real groups about to crack are CAT MOTHER and the ALL NIGHT NEWSBOYS, LOTHAR and the HAND PEOPLE, and RAVEN. The dub of the new Lothar record, their second, is a staggering, breathtaking glory - the group is one of the best things we have. Lothar is a Theremin, the simplified predecessor the the Moog Synthesiser, and is played by John, who also sings lead. Also very much in evidence are Kim King on lead guitar, Paul on rhythm, Rusty Ford on bass and Tom Flye on drums. And I don't believe those names either. They came together from all parts of the country to form Lothar and the Hand People on January 1, 1966. They make MUSIC. What else can I

say? (Ed: their first album, unreleased here is available at Simon's, the Phonograph, and Musicland on Capitol import SF 2997).



LOTHAR turned on, giving out the vibrations as only a Theremin can.

Lottie Golden! Not sure what label, but she has a record of songs from her year on the NY Lower East Side. How hip, I thought - then I heard the thing. Wow! This earth shaking lady uses structures like Otis Redding out of Nina Simone. Has she got the idea. One number keeps on repeating "Who are your friends?" Yes.

We saw Delaney and Bonnie - they're good. Her singing is incredibly moving; sort of a lead guitar approach to singing. Her sense of feel is perfect. (It's my belief that in lead guitar and singing too, I suppose, feel or touch are as important as emphasis and note choice). Furthermore, Bonnie is unequivocally the best screamer I've ever heard. Their material is structurally very predictable, their chords or melodies don't surprise. That's the only thing that keeps them from being perfect.

Droppings from the Stable...

A couple of weeks ago, a kind friend lent me the June edition of this magazine. As it is one of the best and most informed musical papers, I have read, I immediately rang up and asked if I could write for it.

In April this year, Paul Waldeman of Middle Earth was given three years suspended sentence, for allowing his club in King Street to be used for the smoking and trafficking of drugs etc. Shortly after this Mecca opened the Lyceum in the Strand, from midnight till dawn, to run a "Midnight Court" and presented every Friday night some very good sounds and some of the best underground groups. Unfortunately, the people who sell drugs decided that this could be a good site from which to purvey their illicit goods, and if this carries on, this venue too, will have to close. Why can't you understand that pushing drugs in public places is illegal and endangers the enjoyment of the rest of the people participating in the environment? A number of people have approached me to ask me to run a similar club on their behalf; I would dearly love to get something going but not under the present circumstances. Mecca is also planning to open other venues all around the country, so that you can see your favourite groups in your own areas. But this will not happen and cannot happen if you do not do something yourselves about the pushers. Please help for the sake of others.

I have been listening to an incredible number of records over the last couple of months, and although I would like to give them all long reviews, lack of space makes this impossible. However, all of the records that I am about to mention are of excellent value and well worth giving a listen to. (I have a very Catholic taste in sounds as I have been in the music business now, for about eleven years, and my head has gone through many changes).

I came across a record the other day, which is available from Beacon, called 'Black London Blues'. It is a very fine sound, an almost home from home for me, as some of the tracks refer to the area in which I live, Portobello. All the songs are composed and sung by Ram John Holder, about whom I know absolutely nothing. However, I do like the record, so please try to hear it and see what you think of it. The title describes the album, and the tracks include Brixton Blues, Notting Hill

Gate Eviction, Ladbroke Grove and Wimpy Bar Blues. The catalogue number is BEAS 2.

An album which is due out about this time is 'Turn On Or Turn Me Down', by N.S.U. and is available on the Stable Label. (This label has nothing to do with me personally, although I did suggest the name to the record company concerned; I thought it would make a nice ego trip). The record in question, is by a new group from Scotland, who I saw play live at the Albert Hall and found quite excellent. On this album, they sound at times hard and pointed, as in 'All Aboard' where Ernest Rea plays some beautiful breaks on his guitar, sometimes soaring high into the air, and at other times driving deep into the ground. And some times soft and serene as on 'Love Talk', where Graham Pettigrew is joined by the voices of Sue and Sunny. All the tracks are good and although there have been many versions recorded of Canned Heat's 'On the Road Again', this group's version is extremely good and is an excellent vehicle for Billy Brown to display his tight drumming. The number of the album is SLE 8002 and the price is 37/6d.

John Fahey has just completed a series of concerts in this country and Sonet have released two albums from his Takoma catalogue entitled 'Death Chants One', and 'Blind Joe Death'. As most of his previous work has only been available on import, it is nice that a relatively new company should take it upon themselves to issue some of his lesser known works. If you enjoy straight guitar playing without any vocal accompaniment, I am sure you will enjoy these albums.

Now to one of my favourite albums. It's by the group called Rotary Connection. This album was released in this country in Mono only, and I have been trying to persuade Pye records to re-issue it in Stereo ever since, because it is one of the best recordings I possess. The number of the album is Cadet Concept LPS 312. Though some of the tracks are not original, they are all original interpretations. For instance, Lady Jane, by the Rolling Stones, is introduced with strings on the left channel, while tabla comes through on the right and voices pound through the middle giving it an almost Latin-Indian flavour. Other tracks include Dylan's 'Like a Rolling Stone', 'Ruby Tuesday', 'Soul Man' plus nine originals. If you possess

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a pair of stereo headphones as I do, you will find that this record will often be on your turntable.

A couple of Saturdays ago at High Wycombe Town Hall (I do a discotheque there every week), I saw the Deviants. When I last saw them - at the Roundhouse Fairport benefit - I could only half hear them because of some speakers in my way, but I enjoyed what I heard. Therefore, I was extremely happy when I knew I was doing a gig with them. They were extremely good, and it was a shame that only 300 people turned up. One of their nicest things is that they make the audience participate by getting them to jump and scream and leap about the hall. The climax of their performance was an incredible drum solo by Steve Peregrine Took, of T Rex. If you are ever in the area, come to the Hall - it's only 28 miles from London, and the atmosphere is really nice. (It's not on at the moment - the council are reflooring - but it will return to normal from the first Saturday in August; look for details in the Melody Maker (a very fine paper)).

Next month, Bridget St John has her first album released on John Peel's new label. It's a first-class record and very well produced. Dominic, who plays bongos on a couple of tracks, turned me on to it. The sleeve is double, with pictures of Bridget, and all the words linked by her poetry. Other musicians who assist her are John Martyn and Rick Sanders, who plays with the Occasional Word Ensemble. As I said before, it's a first class record, but as you can't buy it until next month, I will not review it in full until then - this is just to whet your appetite.

I have just been given a copy of the Fairport Convention's new album, which is very nice indeed, and will be released towards the end of the month by Island - and a single of the French version of 'If You Gotta Go', which will be out two weeks earlier.

No doubt you will have heard of a rather large company releasing sounds, called EMI. But EMI Imports at Hayes in Middlesex may not be so well known to you, though your local record shop should be hip to them as they are wholesale only. The first one of their imports on my list is "Right Now" by Charlie Mingus, which was recorded live in the Jazz Workshop. One of the artistes included is John Handy, who has made a number of excellent albums for CBS. This record has only two tracks - 'New fables' and 'Meditation for a pair of wirecutters'. Mingus fans LEAP OUT AND ORDER IT. Cover notes are by Rachel Sales and include a comprehensive list of other albums available in this catalogue.

One of the best sections at Hayes is the electronic division, and this month's 'turn on' is an album titled 'Extended Voices', which includes tracks by Ashley, Cage, Oliveros, and Ichyanagi, who wrote the title track which was composed for Moog Synthesiser. It compares favourably with

George Harrison's 'Electronic Sound', written for the same instrument. The number of 'Extended Voices' is CBS 34/61066, and it is from the "Music of our times" series.

Have you ever watched a chrysalis open to yield a new-born butterfly? The insect gets to its feet, cleans its wings, and flies away into the sunlight. A short while ago, I was involved in such a birth. It wasn't a butterfly, of course, but a new group called King Crimson. Their music can, at times, be described as classical - for instance their last number (as yet untitled) is based on Ravel's "Bolero" - but others call it jazz. Their melotron player also blows a first class alto sax and flute, not unlike John Handy or Jeremy Steig. Ever heard a Spanish classical electric guitar piece incorporated into a rock number? I doubt it; unless of course, you have heard King Crimson's lead guitarist. Vocals are handled by the bassist and drummer and are an excellent addition. Everywhere the group play, they are treated with the utmost respect, and amongst their many conquests have been the Speak-easy, the Lyceum and the Marquee, plus many colleges in and around London. At present, they are just putting the finishing touches to their first album, which should be released in September. Bob Fripp plays lead guitar, Ian MacDonald quadruples on melotron, alto-sax, flute and clarinet, Greg Lake plays bass guitar, while Michael Giles holds the group together on drums. Last but not least, Peter Sinfield, who controls their light show - these are 'trip' lights, based on quickly moving shadows and are very beautiful to watch. If you wish to get in touch with them, their managers are John Gaydon and David Enthoven, and their phone number is 01-564-7507. When John Peel featured them on Top Gear, they had more enquiries than any other group.

A couple of years ago, I used to sell records in a shop in Westbourne Grove, and one of the nicest was an Island album called 'Pakistani Soul Session!'. This is a very beautiful record and contains eight tracks, each one totally different and very pleasant. This is not soul as in Joe Tex, but as in Pakistan; and the instruments used are sarengi, flute, tabla, qotara, alnoza and mandolin.

Amongst the better import albums available at present is 'Lady Coryell' by Larry Coryell, who is joined on some tracks by Jimmy Garrison, Elvin Jones and Bobby Moses. If you possess the previous Coryell albums, you will no doubt find this one an excellent addition, though it is also a good introduction to his guitar work.

If you dig Rock 'n' Roll music, there is a good import available by the McCoy's on Bang; tracks include 'You make me feel so good', 'Drive my car', 'Smoky Joe's Café', 'Stagger Lee' and 'C'mon let's go'. An excellent album for parties and discotheques.

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JOTTINGS FROM JOHN

Samplers, being disjointed and often inconsistent in quality, don't often appeal to me, but there are a couple out at the moment that I do like. The first is "Begin Here" on Elektra. It has several examples of the more obscure people on that label, but more importantly contains stereo mixes of the last recorded works of Love - 'Laughing Stock' & 'Your mind and we belong together'.

The other, the first of a series on Track, has several tracks by the Who - including a previously unreleased Mose Allison number, 'Young man blues'. Also 'If I had a ribbon bow' by the Fairport Convention, and 'Desdemona' by John's Children, Marc Bolan's old group. The next one in the series has 'Summertime Blues' by the Who.

I went to see the Groundhogs recording their new album, which is altogether different from the last one. Two particularly good tracks were 'Times' on which Tony McPhee makes some incredible guitar sounds, and 'Light was the day', on which Ken Pustelnik played ridiculous drums. The tracks really reflect the group's digression from straight blues.

Two other albums that I'm spending a lot of time listening to, are an import by Billy Joe Becoat, and the latest Earth Opera, which is such an improvement on their first one that I thought it must have been a different group. So many ace records around at the moment!

ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

Anyone who has seen Jethro Tull lately (forget TOTP) will know that the group is playing a bunch of new songs from their forthcoming album. And they're insane. Rush out and advance book your copy now. Make Ian "Spiderhead" Anderson a REAL pop star.

Got to admit it, I was surprised by the quality of the NSU album. Scotland doesn't seem to contribute much to the progressive music scene - an Andrew Oldham group called the Poets had a knock out single 'We're through' some years ago, and a group called Writing on the Wall caused a lot of hooah around the beginning of the year - don't know what's happened to them. I'm going to ask NSU about their name.

We got a lot of letters as a result of mentioning Revelation, the Elektra newsletter, in No 1. Sylvia Knellar, who used to run this interesting (stuffed with valuable information) broadside, has now left Elektra, but her successor Lis Christopher is going to carry on this invaluable service. Send 3 foolscap s.a.e.s (for the next three issues) to her at Elektra Records, 17-19 Stratford Place, W1.

The new Track group, Bent Frame, were not, let me emphatically stress, named after me, but they sound pretty good from the acetates we've heard.

Both Alan Houghton, who keeps us in touch with what goes on around Manchester, and Mac, have greatly renewed interest in John Mayall's ideas lately. Alan, who does light shows around the Mersey area, is also sending screeds of stuff in about a hardrock/blues group called Calabash Blues, who he reckons are one of the very few really creative groups to come out of Lancashire for years. His praise has attained such proportions, that I almost feel like paying a special visit to see them.

Creedence Clearwater Revival have apparently taken over as the prestige San Francisco group.

We are all waiting for Mick Jagger to appear as Dr Feelgood, and Keith Richard as Captain Speed.

Our American friends are recommending Poco, who grew out of the Buffalo Springfield and seem set to achieve the respect commanded by that sadly missed group, who, like many artistes, were better loved after their death.

John Kreidl, editor of our "sister paper", says that the rock scene is all on the west coast again, Los Angeles being as important as San Francisco, and that the east coast is throwing up a lot of imitators, such as a half English, half American bunch called Pound Sterling. Boston rockheads, he says, dig the Gun's album.

I found an ancient ad for the Mothers' Freakout albums in an old magazine, which gave a straight dictionary style definition of "freaking out", and mentions - as emphasis of their ridiculously biz-

arre extremes, that "one wears beads!"

We get to hear lots of rumours. Loads about new supergroups with ridiculous personell; one about a questionable relationship between a certain journalist and a well known pop figure; loads about Captain Beefheart; some about IT - it's going to become a music only publication, it's going to become a radio station, etc; preposterous reports about the Abrahams/Tull split (which was undoubtedly amicable, and provided us with two superb groups instead of one). Keep those rumours coming in.

We have entered reciprocal article pinching deals with Sounds of West Germany, Superlove and Wheel of Denmark, and Young Power of Finland. Only trouble is that none of us can speak the relevant languages. Between us we can must-er fluent Spanish, Russian and French but not German or Danish. Never mind - they have nice pictures.

Very sad. The Everything is Everything album has a very inferior take of 'Witchi Tai To', which, compared with the original single version, is nothing short of tragic. Why?

Yesterday the first single by Head group, the Village, arrived. Very, very good. We really like the Village, who are a very creative group and well worth seeing live. Head are taking their time getting their album out - no doubt they are perfecting the mixes and designing a really good sleeve.

The sooner Middle Earth gets back on the road, the better. There are a lot of very unsavoury people making a fortune out of the "underground". Tough bouncers, oppressive atmosphere etc. Not much sign of efficient organisation either. We'll have to build a Caddington Fillmore.

Favourite tracks at the Zigzag "offices" at the moment are; 'Kow Kow' by Steve Miller Band, 'Rondo' by Sea Train, 'The Politician' by Pete Brown, 'Red Palace' by Koerner/Murphy, all of the It's a Beautiful Day album, 'Clouds' by Joni Mitchell, Joe Cocker's album and a million others from Hank Ballard to Neil Young.

Someone who calls himself Flag has written in praising Poet and a One Man Band. Apparently it was he who stood up and proclaimed "WHAT a band!" at the Havens concert. Don't worry, man. We plan to do a thing on Poet very soon.

This was going to be a forty page issue, but due to the proverbial pressure on the purse, it had to be trimmed to thirty six. Consequently, a few articles have had to be dropped temporarily, and we apologise to Pete Wilby and his friends, Arol, Bob Brooks and Brian Hogg. Hope to be 40 pages or even bigger next issue. We are still looking for a millionaire - know any?

Don't follow leaders, watch the parking meters.



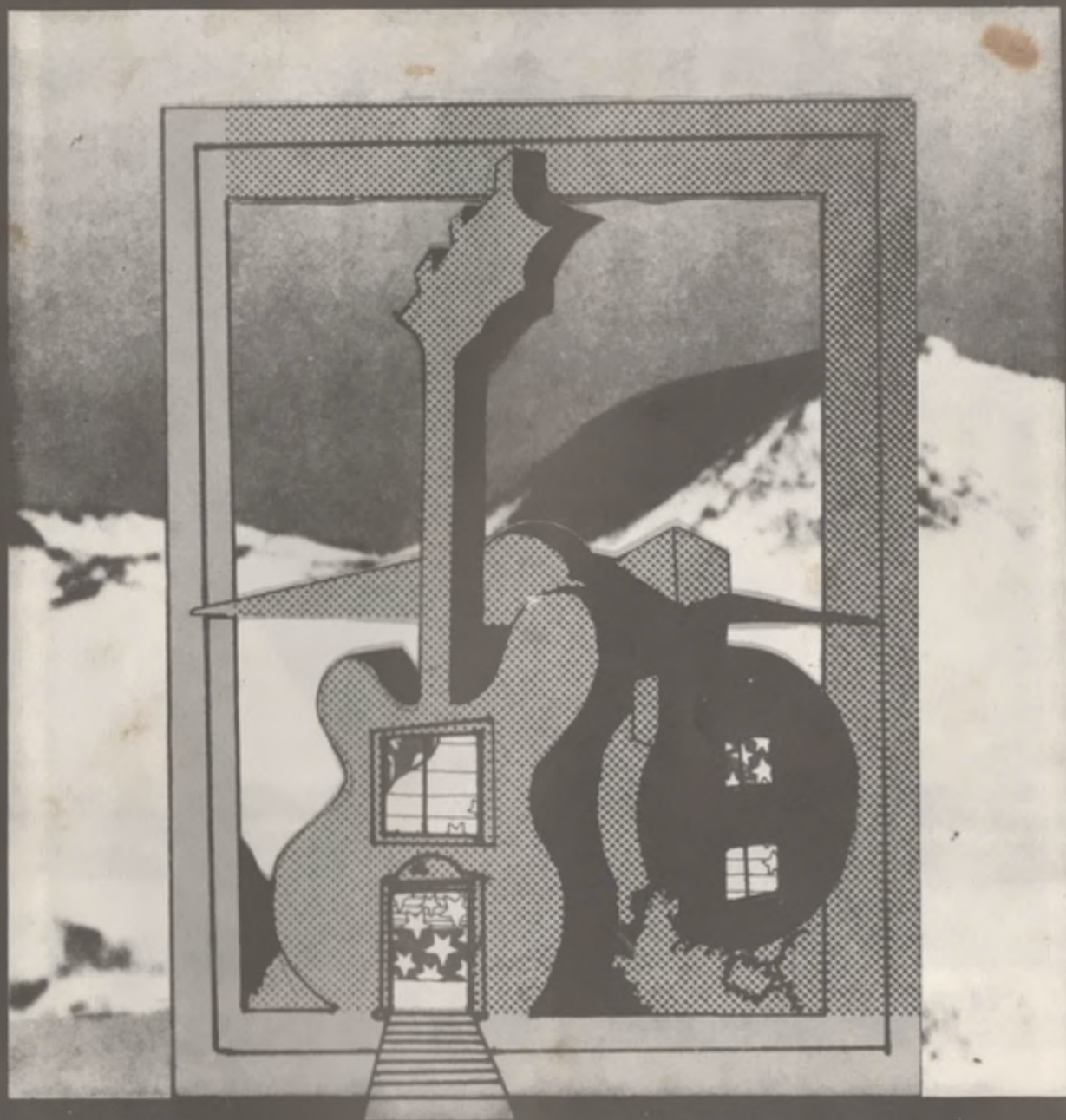
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