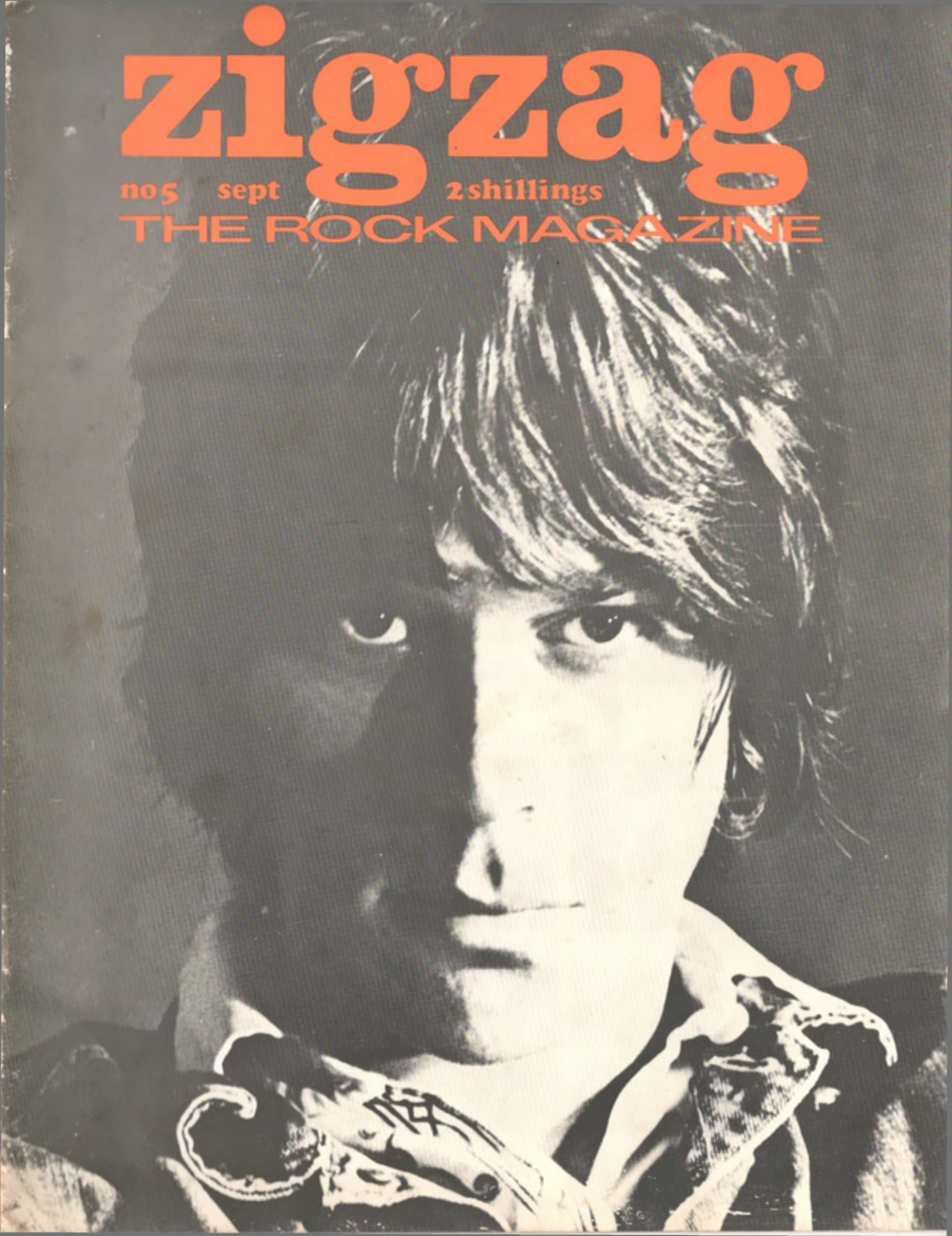


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So You Want To Be a Rock and Roll Star

ZIGZAG INTERVIEWS JEFF BECK

Z. Can we start with your pre-Yardbirds days, which was about 6 or 7 years ago I suppose.

J. Yeah - I used to play at Eel Pie Island down in Twickenham, which I expect most of the old looners will remember, and I used to just play amid a wash of beer and smelly cigarettes. We used to have a really good time - it was our weekly job... the rest of the week we spent doing nothing. We didn't have a name or anything, we just used to get up on the stage and jam. And then all of a sudden, people started turning up in droves - there were 900 one week, which was apparently a record. I thought 'That's it, I'm a star, I'm a star', and it reached the stage when we were withdrawing the Yardbirds who were appearing at the Crawdaddy in Richmond. Then not long after that, I had an offer to join the Yardbirds... but there was nothing really interesting before I joined them... not that I can remember anyway. I just did the usual things every group member must go through.

Z. And you stayed with the Yardbirds for quite a while.

J. Yes, for about 2½ years I was with them, and then for 6 months I didn't touch the guitar - I just packed up playing altogether, why I don't know, and when I came to play again I was hopeless. After a while I did some session work with Jimmy Page - God knows what records we were on... it was just doing backing tracks for some junk or other.

Z. Then you got your own group together.

J. What happened was that Mickie (Most) came up with 'Hi Ho Silver Lining' and insisted that I do it because he reckoned it would be a hit whoever did it. So I agreed, may as well get on the hit wagon... I didn't dislike the tune. And I tried, you know, but what's the use... trying to play my style across a song like that just doesn't make it. However, it just took off - got to No 8 on the charts - and I was a star again! On television and all... but I thought 'This is a joke' - it wasn't my scene at all, so I

got Rod Stewart, and we started tramping around the clubs doing the usual run of the mill jobs.

Then about 14 months ago we went to the States for the first time with our own band, and it was phenomenal. It was planned as a big joke - like at the end we were going to try and buy a box of chocolates with the profits... but it wasn't like that at all, it was really good. And then the offers started pouring in, the money kept going up, and we were booked everywhere. The Truth album came out half way through that tour.

Z. Yeah, Al Kooper caused a bit of a furore when he put that down in Rolling Stone didn't he?

J. Well he's a real big head - that's my opinion of him anyway; from the articles of his I've read, he talks out of the back of his arse. But he came up to see us when we were playing six nights at the Scene in New York, and he said 'Sorry about that criticism. Now I've seen you, it all ties up. I admit that I was wrong'. But I didn't care, I'd rather he had stuck to his guns than crawl. Then he found that Nicky Hopkins, who he liked, was joining us and we were the best group in the world after that.

Z. Beck-ola got good reviews in the American press, but they seemed to think it was Jeff Beck and his backing group. Do you consciously promote yourself as the star of the group?

J. No, I don't want that. I'd been playing for the past 6 years or so, so that I could have my own group, but without being the singer and doing a Hendrix, swiping the whole show. Rod and Nicky would probably sound different on records if they had their own groups - I mean, I don't think that superstars necessarily make supergroups. One of the reasons Nicky joined us was that he saw how groups were getting on and realised he was missing out to a certain extent... I mean, he was just sitting there doing session work, reading the dots on the lines, when he could have been out having fun as well. There's no comparison between studio work and live performance - you want a bit of glamour with it as well. Glamour, huh!



Z. I suppose you get much more acclaim in the States.

J. Well over here you get a handful of people turn up, and over there it's 50,000.

Z. I imagine it's difficult to find places in England where a group of your stature can perform anymore.

J. Yeah - you're the first person that's realised that. You see, the set up in America is so different...you can get a place that holds an enormous audience, fill it for three consecutive nights and get much more money too. In that way, you do, say five gigs, but give 15 performances. There's nowhere in England - I couldn't think of a worse place than the Albert Hall. The Saville Theatre, now that was terrific...I saw the Who there once, and didn't they go! Unbelievable! But outdoor concerts are really nice - in good weather - what's better than lying on the grass, lazing around to good music?

Z. But you'd rather be here than in America.

J. I don't mind working there, but it's such a long way. I certainly couldn't ever live there - it's bad enough just visiting for a few weeks, let alone buying a house and living in the middle of all that rubbish. It's just so uncool over there are the moment...the vibes we got when we first went over were tremendous - we almost enjoyed being there - but now they're so critical, and even in the street you get the feeling of violence. I'm frightened to think what it would be like if they didn't have music over there...kids would go mad.

Z. They seem to have a fascination for lead guitarists, don't they?

J. I don't know why, but they are bent up on them.

Z. It seems that the most popular guitarists are English and the bassists and drummers American.

J. As a matter of fact I'm getting a bass and drummer over from the States - but I can't tell you who they are at the moment. But they rang me when I was in the States last, said they were splitting up, and asked if I was interested. So, after nearly fainting on the floor, I said yes. (Here followed a lengthy but unsuccessful attempt to prise their names from the unrelenting Mr Beck).

Z. Who are you keeping from the old group?

J. Possibly Rod Stewart. Nicky's left, Ronnie's gone to what's left of the Small Faces to replace Steve Marriott. Tony'll probably do session work.

Z. What sort of American bands do you dig?

J. I like Sly, I like Blood, Sweat & Tears, and Stevie Wonder just knocks me out. I really dig Tamla - their musicians have got everything that ours haven't. They've got timing, feeling, expression, and complete technical knowledge of their instruments. I mean you listen to the way the English musicians play some of those efforts on the radio.

Z. Yeah, well the BBC buggers most things up. (The furious discussion which followed, on the state of English radio and the meddlings of the Musicians Union, has been omitted in the interests of good taste). Are you in the Musicians Union?

J. Yes, I have to be, because there are so many things I can't do without being a member. Can't go to America, can't record over there, can't do this, can't do that, etc.

Z. I heard that you were livid about Jimmy Page pinching some of your stage act.

J. That's very underground, that one, very underground. He didn't exactly pinch my act, but he did 'You Shook Me' and one or two other things with practically the same licks...and the general approach of the album is very similar to 'Truth'. It was a strong point in our band at one time. (We also decided to delete the vigorous rumination on the techniques, performances and ideas of the Led Zeppelin).

Z. In the States, is it the chicks or blokes that follow you around?

J. Well, being a guitar featured group, it's more usually boys...but the groupies are there of course...they're always around, rain or shine...but the genuine followers with us are blokes.

Z. Can you tell us about that guitar smashing bit in 'Blow Up', which seemed most uncharacteristic.

J. Yeah, that was funny. Antonioni gave us the parts for the scene, and through his interpreter, who could hardly speak English himself, I gathered that he wanted me to make out that there was something wrong with my amplifier, get enraged and turn round and smash the guitar. So I thought 'I've heard this somewhere before' - and I've since heard varying reports that the Who had been cast for the film, blown it or had been unable to do it for contractual reasons, and they had to get the next best violent group. But I did a more thorough job than Townshend was doing at the time...I jumped on it, smashed it to pieces, ripped the neck off and really went mad.

Z. You did a quick change before you actually smashed it though, didn't you?

J. Yeah - any guitar fan will have seen that one shot had me playing my own guitar, but when it got to the smashing bit, I was playing a Hofner. They brought in 12 brand new Hofners in shiny plastic cases, so I thought 'Right!' and really went to town.

Z. What sort of stuff were you playing just before you split?

J. Heavy, heavy, heavy - that's the only word to describe it. Those Elvis songs on the album were just stuck on at the last minute. It was rather tongue in cheek, but everyone liked it.

Z. Does Mickie Most still have any say in the num-

bers you choose to record - I mean 'Love is blue' was a very strange choice.

J. Mickie Most, let me tell you...all he wants to do is make hit records, and all I want to do is play my music. When 'Love is blue' was recorded, he was unbelievably hard to work with - he really let me know who was boss. But when he went to the States and saw us play, and realised just how huge the market was, he did a big swallow and said; 'What have I been doing all this time'...and now he's a lot more lenient as to what material we record. In fact, he's enjoying what we're doing now. He was going to invent an elixir for eternal life - you take a spoonful at breakfast and it makes you last forever. He hasn't invented it yet.

Z. I read that in the States, you stick things like the Beverly Hillbillies theme into hard blues.

J. Not in hard blues, no...it's a very fast boogie that I stick that in. In slow blues I play seriously. But in that, I play so fast that my fingers run away with me and it naturally flows into a Scruggs type thing - just bubbles into it.

Z. I reckon Rod Stewart is singing better than ever since he's been with you. I remember him as Rod the Mod in Baldry's band and so on, and I wasn't too wild about him.

J. Well, I could see his potential. People used to just get the impression he was camp. But I saw

beyond that...he's not camp anyway - campish maybe, but I really dug his gritty voice, which is why I asked him to join me.

Z. Yes...and he's got a really good stage presentation - he's great visually. When these new members come over to join the two of you, will you be spending most of the time in the States?

J. Well they're coming over here for three months and we'll do all the usual places, get established here, and then we'll tour the States.

Z. I saw you reported as saying your first album was just 'thrown together'.

J. It was. At that time, no-one here or in the States wanted to hear us...we were in the shadow of the Cream, of Hendrix, we were completely blown out...nobody wanted to know. So we just sort of threw the towel in with that album.

Z. It seemed that things like 'Greensleeves' were just put in as fillers.

J. Absolutely...just to fill up the time. But it was basically an easy album to make because we'd been playing the tunes for about a year - it's a good way to do it. If you just write things in the studio, you haven't had any time to get them about or experiment - you don't know whether people would like it. With the new group, we're not going to record until we've done live performances, and seen audience reactions.

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CANNED HEAT

by RON HOLBIN & DAVID DASHEV

"Canned Heat, a crack new blues band from LA, opened the show. Their refusal to compromise with psychedelically oriented audiences may yet condemn them to becoming a musicians' group; and one can only feel sorry for the public in such an eventuality." That's what the pessimistic Barry Hansen wrote in *Downbeat* in August 1967 after the Monterey Pop Festival, which as it happens, was a sort of national break through for the group.

They had experienced audience indifference, financial hardships, and ignominious failure, having been breaking up and falling apart since their inception two years earlier. Of the original band who attended the first rehearsals in November 65, only Al Wilson and Bob Hite remain. Fito de la Parra is their fourth drummer, Henry Vestine (who we now learn has been replaced by Harvey Mandel) having met Wilson in an intermediate group called the Electric Beavers, is their third lead guitarist, and Larry Taylor is their third bassist.

Their success they attribute partly to increased audience awareness of, and respect for, blues music generally, but more so to their manager Skip Taylor (also their producer) who initially conceived their personality hype - like calling Hite the bear, and Wilson Blind Owl, and so on - and got the ball rolling via the underground press.

The first album was a straight attempt to combine various post war blues styles, but also using country material going back to the 20s and 30s, as well as their own creations. But by the time they went into the studio for the *Boogie* album they were much more inventive musically, and prompted by Larry Taylor - an ex Monkee musician and studio man - had sussed out the value of (and reconciled themselves to the validity of) overdubbing, through which device they achieved a more spontaneous, though more contrived, feel. For instance, to get the drone quality they were hung up on at the time, Al Wilson plays 6 parts on 'On the road again', & Henry Vestine plays 4 on 'World in a jug'. The third album was a partial reversion to straight recording techniques in that half of it was recorded 100% live.

I have seen criticism (from some of the most erudite of English rock writers) that Canned Heat are too academic in their approach, and the resultant feel is one of sterility rather than the spontaneity produced by natural ability in the idiom. But I tend to feel that much of their strength lies in their encyclopedic knowledge. The pre-war record collections of Vestine and Hite, and Wilson's post war blues library are vast, and their opinions as scholars of all phases of the music are highly respected - Wilson's long analytical articles on Robert Pete Williams and Son House being regard-

ed as among the most important contributions to modern blues scholarship. But though their combined knowledge leads to a thorough appreciation of the music, they have a tendency to pinch licks and ideas from old recordings, intertwine them within their own, and claim authorship. For instance, 'The story of my life' includes whole lumps of Billy Boy Arnold's 'I wish you would', 'The road song' has lyrics by Howling Wolf and Floyd Jones among others, and the flute arrangement of 'Going up the country' is taken straight off an old Henry Thomas record.

Pete Welding, writing in *Downbeat* thinks that "Canned Heat is probably the best band of its type in the world today, playing with a power and conviction, and generating an excitement which have been matched by only the finest of the Negro bands in this idiom. One would in fact have to go back to the great innovators of the genre - Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf, John Lee Hooker, Elmore James, Little Walter and the like - to find groups comparable to Canned Heat in mastery, ease and inventiveness in post war urban blues".

And indeed, in 'Hallelujah' the band really exemplifies its finest assets.

But there are a lot of creeps writing music reviews, and it is a favourite ploy for the most simplistic amongst them to negate or revere a group for everything but the music it produces. Thus, we have the school of cretin criticism that maintains a White band cannot and should not play any blues or R&B material. Naturally, when a group like Canned Heat comes along, they are victimised for attempting to play the only kind of music they know, love and respect. Add to this the acidic damnation they inherit because of their chart singles, and it is small wonder that they haven't been written off altogether. Their latest *Liberty* album provides a suitable point of departure for any assessment of their musical worth, for it is their most complete effort to date.

Unlike many presumptuous blues groups, Canned Heat doesn't attempt to "do" or sound like any primordial giant long neglected by an insensate listening audience. Canned Heat has too much respect to indulge in that fatuous artificiality. Their respect goes beyond individual personalities and is more a respect for the entire idiom. They know the blues better than any current group and that knowledge has made them aware of the organic nature of the music. You cannot manufacture and package the intensity from which the blues is born, and any attempt to do so is doomed from the start.

Listen to Bob Hite's vocals and you will hear the highly internalized eruption of something you cannot learn, imitate or improvise. (He's good -



good enough not to have to use his cod line protestations that he has a right to sing the blues because "My old lady left me back in Cleveland, and I've been kicked out of restaurants for having long hair" - delivered in dramatic fashion, as Henry Vestine attempts to conceal an involuntary smile).

Guitarists Al Wilson and Henry Vestine avoid inappropriate and cliched phrasing, the result of which is a series of bridges that evolve from the music itself rather than the tired licks many would be players graft onto songs in order to deliver the pregnant pauses.

Bassist Larry Taylor establishes himself as a player not content to dawdle along the horizontal lines that are home to a legion of blues bassmen. Instead he strikes out on a linear exploration that is at times lyrical, at times funky, but always right and always there.

Fito de la Parra consistently plays drums instead of marking time as do so many of his peers. Indeed the entire rhythm section seems symbiotically related to the material of the moment and it is

from the particular song being played, not the virtuosity or vagueries of the musicians that the piece develops.

I have purposely avoided individual analysis of the songs on this album because to do so would be to engage in a meaningless dissection. The record should be listened to in its entirety and then appreciated in much the same way as one savours a good meal.

I think that Phil Spiro, writing in *Broadside Magazine* hits the nail on the head: "Canned Heat are the finest white blues band around; they are currently better than 95% of the Negro bands, and have the potential to be better than any or all of them."

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(Part of this article originally appeared in the Los Angeles Free Press).

The CHARLATANS

ANNOUNCE THEIR ARRIVAL

by Alan Lord



The San Francisco bands are different. There is something, the motivation, the feeling, a mysticism that sets them apart from bands from other parts of the world, and even from those as near as Los Angeles.

The Charlatans are, in many ways, typical of the feeling of San Francisco and are considered by many to have been responsible for starting the rock revolution in the city.

George Hunter, a local artist, formed the group to play at The Red Dog Saloon in Carson City, Nevada. The Saloon was based in gold-rush country so it required a band that fitted the feel of the place, hence the Charlatans, who George Hunter selected firstly by the way they looked and then secondly by the way they played. The group that he got together was certainly a colourful one, looking like a bunch of renegade extras from a Western film set.

The original band consisted of the following: George Hunter - vocal, Mike Wilhelm - guitar, Richard Olsen - bass, Michael Ferguson - piano, and Dan Hicks - songwriter and drummer, and it was this line-up that created the fore-runner of the San Francisco dance-concert. Michael Ferguson and George Hunter were also in the forefront of poster designers, and Ferguson was the owner of a Haight-Ashbury hip store called "Magic Theatre For Madmen Only". The Charlatans developed their music through 65 and 66 playing many dances for The Family Dog at the Avalon Ballroom and other local venues such as the Longshoreman's Hall, a large

waterfront building. The music itself is best described in George Hunter's own words "It was 1920's country-folk music with something done to it".

After the "San Francisco Sound" had become established as a commercial proposition, like many other local bands The Charlatans signed a recording contract. Unfortunately for the group their particular contract with MGM did not turn out to be anything like the success of their fellow San Franciscans and after being moved from label to label they ended up on the then successful (financially) Kama-Sutra label with the Lovin' Spoonful's producer Eric Jacobsen. The group completed an album with Jacobsen but this has never been released in any form. A single was released but even this was not the one which the group wanted (John Peel thinks it may have been '32-20' a Big Maceo blues track). Needless to say the band's relationship with MGM became somewhat strained and ended with the band refusing to cooperate with the company and obtaining a release from the contract.

After this experience they started on a period of re-organisation with at one stage, a supposedly "secret plan to attack the market" but it was some considerable time before any evidence of an "attack on the market" was discernable.

Recently the band has signed with the US Philips label and their first album was released in June this year in the US (due for UK release in October)

please turn to page 33

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THE WAKE OF A WAKE

MICHAEL OCHS

In the wake of Newport '69, which in itself was a wake of sorts, it has become apparent that rock has finally gone truly underground, six feet under. Oh no, not another obituary! Aren't all those Age of Rock books enough of a tombstone? The body cannot rest in peace; although creativity has died, the musicians must go on. But where? Well, the East Coast omnipotents knew that there was going to be a major blues revival, while the West Coast knew the trend was to country and western. Turns out they were both wrong. The critics can well afford to sit back predicting the next fad, (gospel, NO; folk jazz, NO; mescaline rock, NAW) but the artists have to keep producing. So rather than waiting for the next creative urge, why not go back to that nostalgic, used-to-work in the old days, good old rock and roll?

So the new musical trend turned out to be Frankenstein Rock, created from the dismembered bodies of prior innovators. How logical, rock n roll, a revival by default. So far Cat Mother, The Electric Prunes, The MC5, Jeff Beck, and even Jimi Hendrix have jumped on that same parked bandwagon. But you can never really go home again. Pop music reflects the times, and fifties rock reflects a time before Viet Nam, before the war came home; before the new morality, before love became a salable commodity, before the pill (birth control, as well as the others) and even before stereo.

The rock n roll revival will not bring back white bucks, the jitterbug, continental slacks, duck tails, drive-in cruising, or the submarine races; but it should dig up a few roots which, if replanted, could grow again. Roots like Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, and Sam Phillips, the man who discovered them and revolutionized the music industry in the process.

April, 1953, Memphis, Tennessee: Sam Phillips sets up recording equipment in an 800 square foot store building and starts Sun Records. Sam had previously been a radio announcer and a producer of such artists as Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King and Ike Turner. With his experience and ability for spotting talent, it didn't take Sam long to get Sun off the ground. In '53

he signed Little Junior Parker, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley; and, in '54 he discovered Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis and Johnny Cash.

In addition to Sun's fantastic artist roster, the Sun sound was totally unique. Even in '54, Phillips thought that recordings were much too clean and technical, so he always tried to get an earthy sound by just having a good strong bottom with the singer clearly in front. As Sam says it, "The musicians would respect the singer and play TO him. To get the sound I wanted the musicians had to be biting at the singer's ass." Necessity was the mother of invention for Cash's different sound. Cash wanted to use strings and steel guitar on his sessions like all the Nashville artists were; but Sam couldn't afford the extra musicians, so he talked Cash out of it by claiming that just using guitar, bass and drums would give him a more original sound.

Unfortunately Sam had more ideas than money. In fact, he released a very few albums because of his low budget. After trying Elvis with some pop songs, he had him do some rhythm and blues numbers. As Phillips says, "He took R & B and made pop of it. That's when the white man put rhythm to the blues. The Negro had known it for years, but Elvis changed the whole music industry." As Elvis was becoming a national phenomenon, Carl Perkins cut "Blue Suede Shoes." Sam knew that this was the strongest record he had ever produced, but he owed back royalties to most of his artists and had no money to promote it. So Sam sold Presley to RCA for the "fantastic sum" of \$41,000! \$35,000 in cash and \$6,000 that he owed Elvis in royalties. With the money Sam promoted "Blue Suede Shoes" all the way. It sold a million and a half copies and was the first record ever to be number one simultaneously on the country, R & B and pop charts.

In 1960, after a number of successes and a number of misfortunes, Sun Records closed its doors, leaving behind a record of hits that may never be surpassed. But the musical seeds Sun planted have continued to grow. Johnny Cash, now on Columbia, is at the zenith of his career with his own television program and the incredible albums he is releasing.

Jerry Lee Lewis, now on Smash, is number one on the country charts with two of the best country and western albums ever done. Roy Orbison had about ten hits in a row. Which leaves Presley and Perkins and finally gets to the original intent of this article—reviews of their new albums. Wait a minute, only a paragraph ago Perkins was left back there in 1956 with a number one record. As part of the rock revival, it's only fair to bring him back to the present.

In '56 there he was, the second record he ever cut was number one. He was 24, good looking, and he could write, sing, and play guitar and had the titles "The Hottest Sound of the Fiery Fifties" and "The King of Rock and Roll." Then, on the way to a Perry Como television show, he cracked up his car and was confined to a hospital for over six months. Adding insult to injury, his managers waited far too long to release a follow up record. By the time he recovered, the public had forgotten him and found new idols. Although he continued to write and record minor hit records, he never made it back to the bottom of the rock pile until 1960 when he went on a European tour with Chuck Berry and Gene Vincent (whose only album will finally be re-released by Capitol shortly). And two years ago, Carl joined the Johnny Cash road show and is still with him.

However, Carl has just put out a new album on Columbia called "Carl Perkins Greatest Hits." These are not the original Sun recordings, and the feeling is not the same as the original hits. Carl has mellowed, but neither his voice nor his guitar picking has suffered from his twelve year absence. His singing is a vibrant merging of country and rock. Listen especially to "Turn Around." The album also includes "Blue Suede Shoes," "Honey Don't," "Boppin' The Blues," "Matchbox" and "Daddy Sant Bass," all of which he wrote. Carl's guitar picking is still clean and snappy especially on "Restless" and "Boppin' The Blues." The backup musicians are good, but it would have been a vast improvement if they were "biting at his ass" a little more. This album is more than just a nostalgia trip as it is exceptionally good and happy rock. And it even passes the fifties rock test... while playing

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ing it you will get this fantastic urge to get up and dance.

Perkins' misfortune in the fifties was only exceeded by Presley's good fortune. Colonel Tom Parker managed Elvis brilliantly. When Presley was drafted, it cost the treasury half a million dollars in lost taxes. "I shall consider it," said Parker, "my patriotic duty to keep him in the 90 per cent tax bracket." While Perkins was in the hospital losing his following, a Cincinnati ironworker shot his own wife for being overly fond of Elvis records. Before Perkins could follow up his number one record, Presley had six million sellers. And since this, Presley has earned nearly fifty gold records, done twenty-three films, and his recent television special broke all television records.

Speaking of records, Presley's new one is called "From Elvis In Memphis." He finally left the seclusion of his mediocre money making movies and made a good album. "In The Ghetto", one of the best singles of the year and a radical departure for Presley, is currently number one in the country, and the album should do the same. His version of Jerry Butler's "Only The Strong Survive" is perfect and once again proves that Elvis is the best rock singer in the country. Stand-out cuts on the album are "Any Day Now," "True Love Travels On A Gravel Road" and "It Keeps Right On A Hurtin'." His singing on these cuts is so great that it is amazing the musicians remained so technical and uninspired. Despite this drawback, it is still a powerful album and definitely a major step forward for an artist who already has come an incredible distance.

With pop music's current lack of creativity and its redundant retreat to the past, at least some genuine talent has returned to the foreground. Johnny Otis, Fats Domino and Dion are all recording again. Perhaps it has nothing to do with the rock revival at all; but, Sun Records, inactive for nine years, has just been purchased by the Shelby Singleton Corporation; lock, stock and old tapes. And Sam Phillips is going to produce for the new Sun label. It is quite a coincidence that Sun Records, one of the founding forces of rock n roll, is being reactivated at this musical juncture. Maybe Sun never will set on the rock empire.

Good luck Sam...

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The first person we've got lined up for this task is John Peel. John Peel, we feel, has taste and integrity. He also has his own record company, so, as you can imagine, if he gives an Island album a good review it would probably be worth listening to.

But, of course, there's always a chance he won't like one. If he doesn't, even if he thinks it wasn't worth putting a hole in the middle, we'll still reprint every word he says.

Now this doesn't mean we want to set people like John Peel up as Gods.

They're as fallible as we are.

If he doesn't like an album, there's always a chance you will.

And if he raves about an album, you might find it dull.

But whichever way it goes at least you'll have an objective and unbiased opinion to help you decide whether any of our new albums are worth hearing.

This way we'll pay for our own mistakes—not you.



Island Records Ltd. Basing Street, London W.11.

One of Them— the Astral Van Morrison

by Mac Garry

Who can ever forget Van Morrison, slouching around the stage like a freshly imported Belfast road digger, slouching and slurring his way through 'Baby, please don't go'? That was in the 1964 boom days when Them had just come over from Ireland to get their slice of the Beatles' fortune and fame in London. Since then, dozens of musicians have been through the group, which, though totally unrelated to the original band, through the magic and alchemy of management and agency, are still roaming around America as Them (and releasing abysmal records on Tower).

Originally rough and very musically ropery, Them were regarded as thick losers by the English, and the frustration of this image was no doubt one of the factors in their decision to move on again - to the States. But they made some fine records - two very interesting Decca albums, and several singles, the best of which is undoubtedly the rereleased 'Here comes the night'/'Gloria' - both true rock classics. The former is full of Morrison's lovely rasping, snorting gutterality, and 'Gloria', written by him, was the rock equivalent to 'Knock on wood' in as much as every group had to know it.

On to June 1966, and just as they were reaching a peak of musical finesse, they split up. Disenchanted Morrison, looking for freedom but not knowing where to find it, tried New York, and signed with the owner and producer of Bang Records - Bert Berns, who had written 'Here comes the night', and made several hits like 'Hang on Sloop' by the McCoys and 'I want Candy' by the Strangeloves.

His first release was a single... a really incredible single called 'Brown eyed girl', which was actually a US top ten hit, but due to a complete lack of any promotion here, was an unheard failure - which was a tragedy, for despite the somewhat banal imagery of the lyric, this was one of the most atmospherically vital singles I can remember;

"Cast my memory back there,
Sometimes I'm overcome thinkin' 'bout

Making love in the green grass
Behind the stadium... with you,
My brown eyed girl'

Yes! behind the stadium... it looks like crummy grubstreet poetry - but you really want to hear Van Morrison's exuberant recollections of his love, his laughter, and his past.

He followed that with a first solo album which also escaped any publicity. This was probably just as well, because the record was trying too hard. The sleeve looked like a parody, or as if it had been contrived by a 9-5 bread & butter man. It was titled 'Blowin' your mind' and pictured a heaving, sweating Morrison in the process of attempting to do that. The musical content, apart from 'Brown eyed girl', was gaucheely conceived and pretty mediocre... but Morrison reckons it was the fault of Berns, who insisted on smothering the songs with all the trappings of the current psychedelia, using heavy guitars and drums. Entirely disgruntled by its production, Morrison claims to have fought its release.

Soon after, Bert Berns died, and Morrison changed labels again - moving to Warner Brothers. This month, they release his latest album, 'Astral Weeks', over here - nearly a year after it was recorded. The time lag is another story, it's just a shame we've had to wait for so long, but it doesn't really matter. In every sense this is a timeless album, with a depth and fullness of beauty that should never date.

Morrison has collected a bunch of excellent studio players, who really work for his voice, augmenting them occasionally with soft-precise string backings, and has allowed them more freedom than is usually accorded to session men. Their co-ordination and reading of the material defines 'together'... the flute work of John Payne is so inventive, his notes glittering and falling like melted icicles; the drums are always sympathetic and varied, never overstated or unnecessary;

the stand up bass gives a new, relaxed depth; and the acoustic curlings of Jay Berliner's guitar - ooh! Quite apart from the excellence of the musicians, the arrangements are superb - full and vibrant.

So Morrison gets a good start from his accompanists and also his producer, Lewis Merenstein, who succeeds in directing the singer along paths that Berns, with his passion for beat emphasis, would never have discovered. But it's his voice - strong and caressing with occasional glimpses of his inbred guttural screaming, but restrained and controlled. And they are all his songs.

The title track is solid and impassioned, with Morrison calling out "to be born again", and then the true mood of the song - "I'm nothing but a stranger in this world". The plea is still there, even as he lowers his voice to a whisper, to be "in another place... in another time".

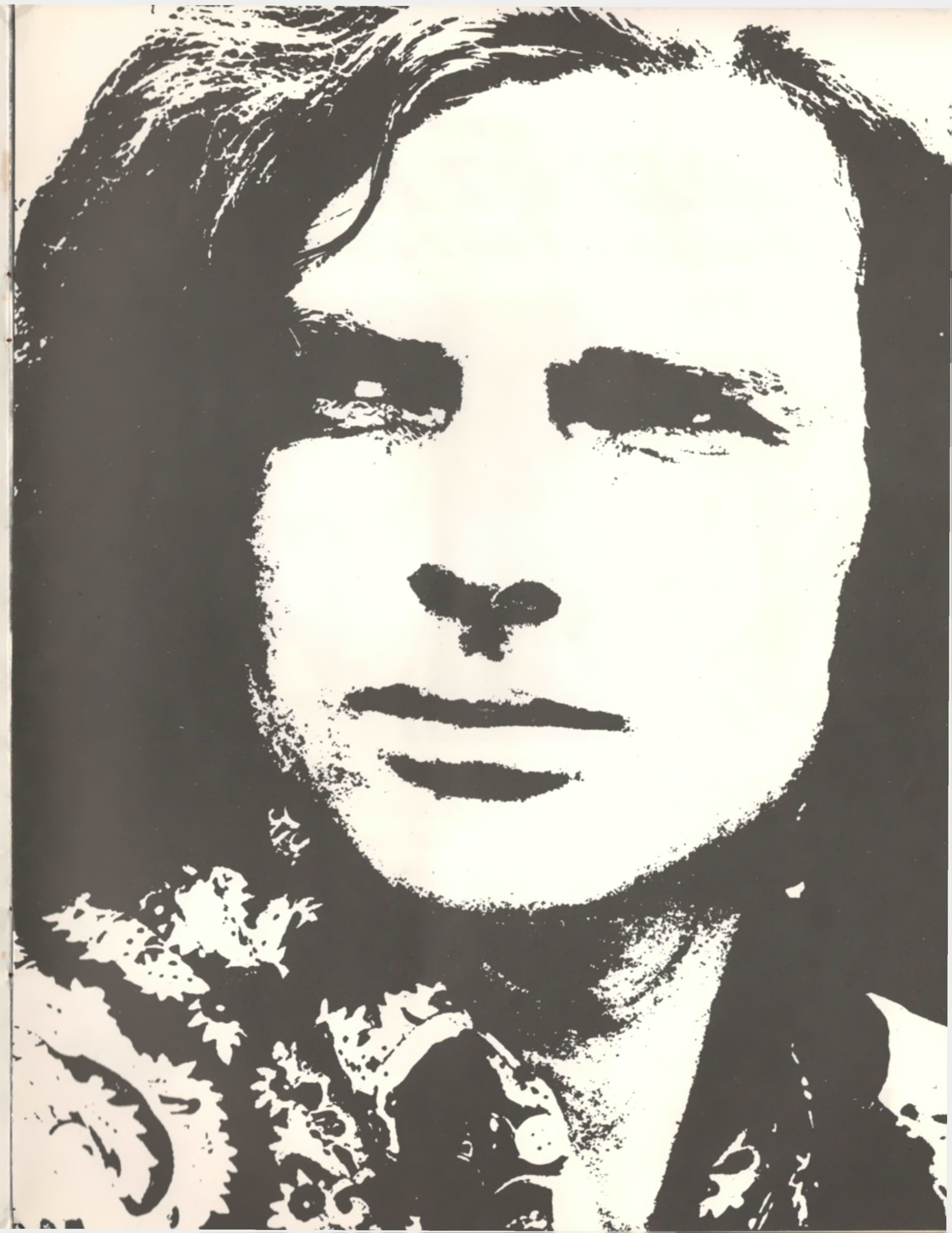
But track breakdowns are irrelevant here - they are all beautiful, except for 'Madame George', which is extra beautiful. It's strong and rich and sadly kind;

"Say goodbye for Madame George
Dry your eye for Madame George
Wonder why for Madame George",

It's difficult to imagine what Van Morrison will do next. This album shows an amazing maturity and artistic development in the last five years... the change is incredible.

Taste, taste, taste. Superlatives, superlatives. He's achieved his wish "to be born again". 'Astral Weeks', a wildly original and totally individualistic album, and to my mind one of the best three released this year, puts Van Morrison "in another place". And, hell, if you don't dig this record, I don't even want to talk to you.

1964 THEM Decca LK 4700
1965 THEM AGAIN Decca LK 4751
1967 BLOWIN' YOUR MIND
London HA 8346
1969 ASTRAL WEEKS Warner WS1768



THE AMAZING WORLD OF GUY STEVENS

Pete Frame talks to Guy Stevens, a producer and art director with Island Records.

Z. The first I can remember of you is writing sleeve notes on Chuck Berry albums. How did you get into pop music?

G. Well, I started buying records when I was about 12 - even then I was fanatical about music and used to run a record club at my boarding school, around the time of 'That'll be the day', 'Short fat Fannie', 'Roll over Beethoven' and all those sort of things.

After I left school I went into ordinary type of things, workwise - but I soon got completely frustrated and split from it, by which time I had started importing a lot of records from America - mostly blues records. This was about the time of the first success of the Stones and the emergence of Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, John Lee Hooker, Jimmy Reed and so on.

Z. I suppose you were aiding Mick Jagger in hustling Pye to release Chuck Berry records, because they were pretty hard to get hold of in those days - he had just gone from London to Pye hadn't he?

G. Yes, and Pye didn't really know what they had, or what they were doing - and I remember trying to hassle them to release 'Memphis Tennessee', but they couldn't see it at all. Then they put it out as the B side of 'Let it rock' and subsequently decided to flip it, when it became a hit - and that was when Chuck Berry started getting back into popularity.

Anyway, I started working for Ronan O'Rahilly at the Scene, playing records on Monday nights, and it was pretty amazing some nights - Eric Clapton, the Stones and all sorts of people used to get down there, and it seemed to be the birth of a lot of things.

Z. Well it was one of the very few places where you could hear Jimmy Reed and obscure rock records.

G. Yes - or any rock 'n' roll really, because rock 'n' roll was like a dirty word even up until about two years ago. Modern jazz was very hip, and if you so much as mentioned Jerry Lee Lewis or Little Richard, you were considered a complete eccentric fanatic. Everyone was down on rock.

Z. You joined Island Records as a result of the Scene, didn't you?

G. Yes - I met Chris Blackwell when I was playing records there, and that's



when I started working for Island. He sent me over to the States to look for material to start up the Sue label.

Z. You must have started producing records soon after your return?

G. The first record I produced was with the VIPs.

Z. Oh yeah, they were Spooky Tooth in pre-Art days weren't they?

G. That's right - it was about four years ago I think, and the record was a single called 'In a dream'.

Z. You'd just picked up techniques by being around whilst other records had been made, had you?

G. Yes... It was basically once again a result of complete enthusiasm - I was so into sounds that it was a natural progression to go into creating them, and I knew clearly the sort of sounds that I wanted to make - and they've never been, and still aren't, orientated to any kind

of commercial consideration. I mean, it's amazing really - I still dig the same type of music as I did when I was about 12. People used to say "You'll progress man, you'll get on to better things" and all this crap, and to me... I mean when I play, say, 'Lucille' by Little Richard, I still go potty - it's amazing - I mean to me, it's the most amazing sort of music there is, because it's so immediate, it's just complete abandon - so wild, and everyone's saying "Yeah - let's go", throwing everything into it. It's amazing.

Where was I? Oh yes, I did a live LP with Larry Williams - in fact that was the first one I did... that was before the VIPs.

Z. I remember that one, he was backed by the Stormsville Shakers. What other records have you done that you particularly liked doing?

G. One record that I really put a lot into for a long time was the first Hapshash and the Coloured Coat album, which was done in 1967, an intense year (that was

when I left Island for a short time). I think the Hapshash LP was the most typical record of that year... It was done in about 4½ hours in the studio, with Spooky Tooth (then Art) doing the backing, and they were the only musicians out of about 35 people in the studio. I'd hired about 20 different instruments, and there were children there, and people wandering in and out just banging things. And half the people were on acid, and the rest were on something or other, and everybody was just going completely berserk from beginning to end. But the amazing thing was that it worked - there were no wrong notes or anything. There's one track which lasts the whole of one side, and the guitarist was Martin Sharp, who did the Cream sleeves, and he'd never played a guitar in his life before - but he played it beautifully. It was amazing; as if there was a light shining into the studio. And I was sitting listening to the speakers, and it was all coming through - and I just couldn't believe it. It was amazing.

Z. And your latest ideas revolve around Mott the Hoople? Where do they come from?

G. They come from Hereford, and we've just finished doing their album.

Z. A lot of people are going to comment on their similarity to Dylan aren't they?

G. Yeah. The record is amazingly like Bob Dylan in places, simply because Dylan is like, in the sky to them. They are completely and utterly on their backs about Dylan. I mean, I've got an unbelievable thing about Dylan myself... we're calling the album Talking Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Disaster Dylan Blues.

Z. That being a reference to his unrecorded 'Talking Bear Mountain'?

G. That's right, and we're having a picture of Dylan inside the sleeve, because it's all about Bob Dylan. But at the same time, they have a thing of their own.

Z. To the uninitiated, it's Dylan in his Blonde on Blonde era - which was his best period - there's hardly any discernible difference sometimes, but I think it's a staggering LP, I really like it.

G. Well I believe in it. It's very difficult to say much about a record you've produced yourself... but once again, all we did was go in and lay down what we felt, and that's how it came out.

Z. I also like their choice of 'Oldies but Goodies' on it - like I've always dug 'You really got me'; and 'Laugh at me' was a terrific song, but the record was crap because Sonny (of Cher) was such a creep.

G. Yes, the trouble with Sonny was that he was never original. He was always about 3 steps behind someone else and lifted their thing completely.

Z. I particularly like 'Half Moon Bay' - there's so much on that track - the bass player leaping about all over the place...

G. That's terrific you think that, because I have had a lot of doubts because of the similarity to Dylan. I mean, a lot of people have listened to it for about three minutes, put their finger on it, and said "That's just like Bob Dylan".

Z. Well, I first heard it at Friars, where Andy Dunkley was playing it, and I couldn't get over someone doing 'You Really Got Me'; I had to rush and ask him what it was.

G. Hoopling madly!

Z. Yes, that's a strange name. Where did it come from? Someone's stoned mind I suppose.

G. It's a Guy Stevens special - originator of many amazing names!

Z. What were they called before, the Rockets or something?

G. I don't know... I most probably do, but I've sub-consciously erased it. How about Carl Wayne & the Defenders, or the Zebras?

Z. It's a pity we can't convey this exuberance on paper (there was a great deal of hilarity going on at the time).

G. Amazing!

Z. Your label has just signed King Crimson and Quintessence. How come Island gets them when there is so much competition? Is it money, or the prestige of being on a good label.

G. I don't think it's money... in fact I'm pretty sure it's not. Neither Chris nor I have ever been interested in signing anybody just to make money. It's an amazing statement - but we have made money by becoming so involved with the people and artistes that we really like... and that's the only way it can work here. I mean, that's how we work, and none of us could function without being completely involved in what we are doing.

Z. Which is exactly the opposite of some of the big companies.

G. I suppose it is - they're so big, some of the majors, that they have to have loads of departments, full of £20 a week 9-5 people, so it just becomes like an insurance company.

Z. Yeah, and they become mechanics instead of creators.

G. That's the difference. With us it's fun. Spooky Tooth, for example, are an incredibly difficult group to handle, and up to a very short time ago, we were losing an enormous amount of money on them. But we had this terrific faith in them, this amazing conviction... I mean, every time they go into the studio, they do something that knocks us out - so how could we ever think of letting them go? We like them too much. And I think this is the only sensible way to run a record company. When a company is orientated to making money, and selling records like soap packets, the whole thing just becomes disastrous.

I mean, we're prepared to do anything for our artistes - like we were delighted

when Jethro Tull wanted to do that stand up sleeve idea. And I personally feel that the sleeve of a record is as important as the record itself - it's the shop window for the musician. And this is again where so many companies goof - they spend £1000 or £2000 on the record and about £20 on the sleeve, so the whole thing turns out like a piece of shit. It's amazing! We now spend anything up to £500 on a cover, and that's not enough sometimes. I mean, Traffic for instance; I spent so much time on their sleeves, because you've got to live up to the music. It's a terrific strain - but it's so important.

But what I, and Chris Blackwell, and Island as a company, are involved in, is breaking down or rebelling against a lot of the things we think are wrong about society. And that's why we have got involved with the people we have; we tend to support the musicians who think the same way... which is why we've got, say, Spooky Tooth and haven't got the Tremelos. It's not a thing I would go out of my way to state, but I live outside of society in a way, and so does Chris; and that's why there is so much drive and action here. I mean, we don't go waving placards or anything - we're just doing it through covers, through the music, through advertising, through everything we do.

Z. You feel this about society as a whole, rather than the other part of the record industry?

G. Yes. I mean, practically everything is wrong, and the only way to change it is not by violence, but by doing whatever you're doing - like if you are a musician, to do it through music, if you are a record company, to do it through your function as a record company - so that you're going to change society without society even realising it... and we're doing it. For example, Jethro Tull being on Top of the Pops is altering people's attitudes by just that much. Amazing, this... I don't think anyone's going to believe it.

Z. I imagine everyone who reads this magazine will, because they, no doubt, feel the same. I mean, in straight society the accepted standard is mediocrity.

G. Yeah... in everything. In food, in television, in architecture, everything. Society is the abdication of ecstasy - that's why they can't stand seeing anyone being stoned or too happy. That's why we get baked beans, and egg & chips, and all that crap. That's why food is so bad, why television is such deadening rubbish, why the newspapers are such absolute garbage. They're all brainwashed, these people, and they don't realise it. They're all motivated by what they've read, or seen on the television.

So we are trying to set up a whole new medium through Island.

centre pages:
MOTT THE HOOPLE
photograph by Julian Allason





TONY MCPHEE

PETE CRUICKSHANK

KEN PUSTELNIK

The return of the Groundhogs

Tony McPhee, singer, guitarist, writer and arranger for the Groundhogs, talks about himself and the group.

Historically, the original John Lee and the Groundhogs were going around three years ago, and were basically a blues group trying to do numbers the other groups didn't do, because, although there's only a limited number of good blues songs you can do without repeating yourself, we tried to get away from the standards. But the boom which was happening then didn't last, and we found that, to go on, it was necessary to augment the sound with brass and start playing soul music. Not long after that, the group broke up for one reason and another - like you can't pay a 7 piece group when you haven't got much work - and then we went our various ways.

I had been invited to join John Mayall when Eric Clapton decided to go around the world, but at that time, I could only see a bright future for the Groundhogs and declined the offer. Subsequently, when we did break up, I joined a couple of other groups. I played with Truth, of 'Girl' fame, who were doing Tamla stuff - but that fell through and I joined Boz, who was forming a new group. But I soon left them because Pete Cruickshank (our bass player), Mick Meekham (a drummer), and I had decided to form a psychedelic group called Herbal Mixture, and as such, we played the Electric Garden and other feedback clubs. We had a couple of Columbia singles, but broke up when we couldn't get a third record released anywhere - and I joined the John Dummer Band, who I never imagined would progress from the 51 Club every week bracket, because they were so unprofessional. But they did get on their feet soon after that.

Then Andrew Lauder of Liberty suggested I reform the Groundhogs and do an album. So I got together with Pete again and asked Steve Rye (who has since left to continue his studies) harmonica player of Simon and Steve, to join. Then, after a vast search for a blues drummer, we found Ken Pustelnik playing with a Bristol group.

The first album, 'Scratching the Surface' was an experiment really. We were all blues minded, and the boom gave us a chance to get back into playing it, and we cut the tracks only two weeks after our formation. They were done entirely live, without any overdubbing, as we'd decided to play it fairly straight at first and see how it went from there. Like every boom of this kind, however, we knew it couldn't last, and I always had it in mind that we would change and progress... but the first album was entirely blues. It sold relatively well for a blues album - maybe because we differed in as much as we tried to do numbers other than the Dust My Broom type, which everybody was playing, and I think with the name Groundhogs being around for so long, people were curious as to what we were doing now that we'd reformed.

Andrew, Roy Fisher and I also thought of the Groundhog series of albums - basically with the same ideas as Blue Horizon - and we knew a lot of people with a lot of talent; people like Jo Ann Kelly and Andy Fernbach and so on. So we made an album called Me & The Devil, which got a lot of people into the public eye. And we've done this again with a new one we've got coming out called Gasoline, which is a lot more interesting than the first.

Jo-Ann is on it - with electric backing - and its also got a group called Brett Marvin and the Thunderbolts on it. They're a group of students, whose guitarist is very good both as a singer and instrumentalist, and they've got a pianist who plays electric steel mandolin and bottleneck... and each of the members is a good folk/blues club personality. They do blues numbers with odd instruments like trombone, and a thing called a zobstick - which is a contraption incorporating hundreds of bottle tops. So the boom, which could have been a bad thing, has given some very talented people a national outlet.

On our new album, we have emphasised the fact that we are progressing by calling it Blues Obituary. About half the songs are entirely original, and half are, to a certain extent, based on old Blues things which we have revised. We've made a special point of this progression to see if any of the pop papers would pick up on it, because they seem to ignore the lesser known groups to a certain extent. For example we played at the Plump-ton Festival in the Marquee, and none of the journalists bothered even to look in for a number or so. They were too busy watching the main groups, which I suppose is what they're concerned about - they have got to write about the groups people know, so it's very difficult for a group like us, with a record company and albums out, to actually get the break and get in on it.

It's so much easier to sell records if you sound like something that's gone before, but we are hoping that the new one, by being different, will break through and create more interest. JHT



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Mick Hawksworth, Ian McLane & John Cann

photo by Eric Hayes

A-PLUS FOR ANDROMEDA

Among the turbulent mass of new English and American bands flung to the greedy public, eager to find fame for themselves and cash for all bread-head promoters and agents, few - luckily - will do either. Again luckily, the same greedy public seems to have developed a barrier to the old 'they are going to be bigger than the Beatles' bullshit. So, at last, the good and original new bands are filtering through... and one of the more interesting sounds comes from a trio formed (finally) only in march - Andromeda.

The group only came together on stage after recording a demo single. Less than a year later their first album is released by RCA, they've had a number of broadcasts, and are just beginning to find a live audience - mainly through a few tight

sets played at ICA and Implosion. Their music is gentle and melodic, even when searing to galactic heights in slicing rock tunes. This is the touchstone, certainly of their live performance, the ability to play hard freaky numbers with cogency and intelligence. Sometimes they recall early San Francisco groups, taking their time to build to a climax while never being mundane, being near it two or three times, then finally getting on top and making it.

Two of their best numbers (both are on the album) 'Return to sanity' and 'When to stop' have this type of construction. The first begins and ends with parts of Holst's 'Planets', freaking wildly in the middle section, while 'When to stop' begins on catchy folk rock lines interspersed

with beautiful rock guitar and rippling bass riffs, and ends with a dulled Flamenco rhythm. The arrangements on all the numbers are their own (mainly by guitarist John Cann and bassist Mick Hawksworth) and apparently change about as regularly as they play. Even 'Walking on nails' - the Szabo number brought closer to many via the Insect Trust - has little in common with the original.

A favourite number, both on record and live, is 'The reason', where Mick takes over vocals and the band sounds suspiciously Cream like. Bass and Ian McLane's drums are constantly together holding up the heavy structure, while the lead guitar rasps along, hanging over the edge. It's tight and well controlled.

It might sound like they play cool worked out sets, and in some ways they do. But Andromeda

are still changing constantly, and by the reaction of a typical Roundhouse audience, they really get across. From the too-quick listen I had to RCA's one acetate they seem to lack on record a little of the heavy excitement they cause on stage, but the overall balance is good, and it's a well thought out album. It could have been much longer (though the two sides work out to over 50 minutes) because half of the tracks could go on forever. They could have been boring, but they're not. The arrangements are clever and the playing is sympathetic, on the fierce rock lines as well as the cool swaying numbers. Try and hear them live - gigs are just getting together - or listen to the record. It should be played at well above room temperature and at full volume. That should bring Andromeda home.

Dick Lawson.

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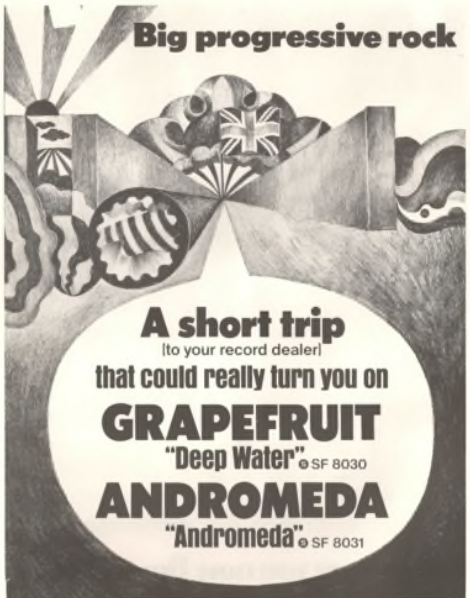
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These albums are really going high
-care to join them?

RCA

easy rider

An American film (actually worth seeing and hearing), scheduled for general release, reviewed by Ian Mann.

Phil Spector (yes!) inserts a spoon in his nostril, ingests a gram of fine white powder and goes happily bleary. Money changes hands and Spector, playing a tweed hatted pusher, disappears in his Rolls. And there the film ceases to be about pushers. The quick sale has provided freedom in the form of money, the whole thing is condemned by the sound track song of that moment - "the pusher don't care if you live or die" - and the action moves forward without any more explicit moral judgement having been passed. The money from the sale provides the central figures, Wyatt (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper, who also directed the picture), with the cash to live their lives as they please, and the source of the money becomes unimportant. Seeing them in the next scene, tooling along on their Harleys, you forget that they have been a link in the chain that binds unfortunate junkheads into their misery-ecstasy life patterns. No... they're just a couple of cats with "no particular place to go".

They head for the Mardi Gras at New Orleans, because it should be nice down there, and why not float in that direction anyway? (And Fats Domino sang about it once, so it must be good.) Churning along on their guttural monsters from Milwaukee, close to the smells and colours of horny Mother Nature, freed from the grip of society by an act against society, released from city clockwork by the ceremony of hurling their watches into the dust, the two riders reveal themselves as aimless heads, innocuously enjoying life in all its simplicity. Their ride derives a most agreeable atmosphere from a mixture of inspired photography and a well-inform-

ed choice of music. The blend of scenery with music is so skilfully achieved that "Top of the Pops" should never dare show its face again. The landscape seen to the accompaniment of Steppenwolf's "Born to be wild" and the Byrds' "I wasn't born to follow" exactly corresponds to every phrase and chord. Whoever did the editing and synchronising should be awarded a pair of platinum scissors.

The trip down to New Orleans involves a visit to a commune peopled with youthful tillers of the earth and an amazing number of unattached females; then a meal at a farm run by straights, but they're Nice People Close to the Earth, and simple. So on to the south, where it is the duty of every white man to be a short-haired loudmouth, and finally to the Mardi Gras and a high to outmindblow all other drug inspired scenes filmed to date.

At times the insistence on nearness to nature seems extreme. On the commune everyone goes around looking dazed and filled with awe, as if their harvest is wondrously sprouting out of the ground at the rate of three inches per minute. But this is counterbalanced by some moments of pleasing artistry, as in the scene of a puncture being mended while a horse is being shod, a striking contrast which makes you wonder who is hip and who is straight. Similarly, a lawyer who Wyatt and Billy meet in jail turns out to be perhaps hipper than they are in his attitudes, and definitely more perceptive. And their trip to a whorehouse is uncharacteristic, whatever the motives, and adds to the ambiguity of the protagonists.

However corny it may sound, the film is mainly concerned with freedom, the freedom to think and dress and wear your hair the way you want to, even if the fact that you look different makes others feel insecure and doubt the validity of their scale of values and divinely conceived morality. Wyatt and

Billy are busted for "parading without a permit", an illustration that US law is so constructed that the authorities can always jail you if they happen to take a dislike to you and the only imagination they have, is used to think up the charges.

But the film is not just a harangue against authority's attitudes and power. It is a debate. The case for soft drugs is neither helped nor hindered - the drug scenes are open to any number of interpretations, and so are in effect non-committal. The outright violence which occurs in some scenes (not connected with drugs) is the act of people so obviously sub-normal that it hardly enters into any argument about right and wrong. The protagonists, though in the main sympathetic, are ambiguous and inconsistent; often it is easy to identify with them, but for much of the time they look like a couple of losers who've just read the 1967 edition of the Dictionary of Acceptable Hip vernacular. And who is not going to have some doubts about the veracity



AMERI KAKA!

Howdy, friends across the sea, it's revelation time! And this month's big revelation... I am often wrong! (or, as they say in 'Little Darlin' - wronga).

Um, golly - two issues back I said Lotti Golden was a cross between Nina Simone and Otis Redding. (Reject)(Does not compute)(error)(wronga).

Let me rationalise my mistake, OK? I am poor - or as they say here, piss-poor. Despite my country's bounteous riches, I am constantly needing about 20 more albums than I have. Need! For religious purposes! NEED!

But alas, no got... so I try to suss a disc from one or a few torn listens on the radio. Aha, but you know what happens then? You see, the first handful of listens my queer ear puts on a record, it bends, twists and alters. Perhaps this is a universally true thing that the human ear can do.

For instance - Tyrannosaurus Rex? Twice my old lady and I heard them on the radio. They both sounded to both of us like they were in a foreign (besides English or Yankee) tongue. "No no" says logic to us, but our queer bent people ears are led way astray anyway.

So we innocents hear Lotti Golden and automatically audiolion hallucinates that it's far better than is actually the case. Heh, heh, sorry. Don't buy the Lotti Golden record anyway.

For you fans of abnormal psychology, we frequently get it backwards too. At first Jethro Tull & Spooky Tooth sounded not too good to our dumb ears. Then we saw Jethro and heard more Tooth, and oboy - once more our ears tell us falsehoods.

Newest Nilsson album is 'Harry'. We've been touting this boy since 1967. He's got taste, he's got style, he's got balls, he's got a sense of pretty, and he communicates. Let your ears give him head, and do a nice on everybody.

The vast vacuum left by Otis Redding. God, nature and the spirit of Otis Redding abhor vacuums. Perhaps Howard Tate can fill the sad space. He's brilliant, he's black, he's from Philadelphia.

of characters with names like Wyatt (Earp?) and Billy (the Kid?) in a film which largely derives its storyline from westerns?

Columbia's Sue Mailins supplied the following list of songs used in Easy Rider:

'The Pusher'	Steppenwolf
'Born to be wild'	Steppenwolf
'Wasn't born to follow'	Byrds
'The Weight'	Band
'Bird Song'	The Holy Modal Rounders - this song was written by Antonia, and is sung by Peter Stampfel - both columnists in Zigzag.
'If six was nine'	Jimi Hendrix
'Don't Bogart me'	Fraternity of Man
'Kyrie Eleison'	Electric Prunes
'Flash Bam Pow'	Electric Flag
'It's alright Ma'	Jim (or Roger) McGuinn
'Easy Rider'	McGuinn, who co-wrote the song with Bob Dylan.

with peter
stampfel
& antonia



And now - at last - the Official Jeff Beck is God column.

Yes, Jeff Beck is God. Everybody knows that, so I'll just go on to why.

First of all there's the matter of his imagination - you can't outguess him. Phenomenal. He can take the dullest three chord blues structure and turn it purple with kaleidoscopic wonders. He's all over the place, and you never know where he'll turn up next. And it never degenerates into mere showing off. It's all music and that in itself is a good trick. Most blues guitar playing is copying licks from elsewhere.

Almost as prepossessing is his sense of humour. Beck's music abounds in a black, wry humour, directed at the music, lead guitars in general and himself. Listening to his lines, you find yourself thinking 'Is this guy for real?' Who knows? It's an interesting question though.

Then there is his technique. This is just fine. There's nothing more I can say.

So, here I sit, eating Pizza Spins and listening to the radio playing something heavy. Pfu! Aren't you tired of that heavy shit - most of which isn't even music?

Outside is a thunderstorm. New York has been pouring rain and thunderstorming for a week - giving me dreams of the Brazilian rain forest, replete with shiny dark green foliage, hibiscus blossoms, and brightly coloured lizards scurrying about underfoot. Sometimes I am a lizard, and I move like a stop action picture. Zoom, skitter, skitter, stop.

We believe in communication; if any of you want to reach us, here we are:-

Peter Stampfel & Antonia
Apt 7P 350 West 55th St
New York NY 10019 USA

Good thoughts to you all. (Aside to certain musical 'black magicians' out there: Magic comes back on you three times you know).



THE DEVIANTS

Mick Farren, singer with the Deviants, talks about the group.

To begin with, basically we were a community band, because in 1967, the entire underground was being run by about 25 people. I was working at IT and UFO, and we were in this band, which did things every now and then - it was a total assault thing with a great deal of inter-relation and interdependence. That went on for a while - there was me and some other guys - then Russ, our drummer joined, and I suppose, in a pop context, we became a 'semi-pro' group, but it didn't really work like that.

There were Russ and me, and the others were paid pop musicians - but, with the amount we could pay them, they weren't that good. We soon broke up - the Social Deviants as we were then - because it was getting such a drag, and Russ and I were wondering what to do, when we met this 21 year old millionaire cat and he lent us about £700. So we produced an album, pressed it (it wasn't very good but what do you expect for that amount - it had an amazing cover, but the record wasn't too amazing), went through all the manufacturing and into sales. It actually sold about 7 or 8 thousand - it was on the Underground Impressarios label and was just sold through IT and Oz and mail order and book shops and so on, though Decca have subsequently re-released it.

Soon after that we changed bass players, so that then, there were actually three of us in the trip, and we went on with this lead guitarist for about six months - he wasn't any good, and we just drifted apart from him. Then we met Jamie, who started doing the management end of the deal, and he knew Paul from Vancouver, who he cabled to come over. He subsequently turned up in February with just 2 guitars - he'd decided to dump his clothes at the airport because his instruments took up his luggage quota.

So then there were 4 of us, and we gave ourselves 3 months to get it all together, doing occasional gigs. Then, having got Paul integrated into the group, we extricated ourselves from a deal with Stable Records, which wasn't altogether satisfactory (we'd made a record with them which was very cheap and pretty bad - we really don't like it at all), and worked out a deal with Transatlantic, with whom we're doing an album which should come out in mid-September. Paul has caused a sort of major revolution in the group - like Sandy, our bassplayer, was more or less feeling his way until Paul came, and he's brought very much more musical content into the thing.

We used to be heavily political, but the validity of that sort of statement coming from a rock 'n' roll band is becoming somewhat questionable... it's OK if you are in a band which is very closely allied to the community, but the community has become so diverse that it's impossible for a group to be that much a part of it. Like the underground, as such, has become very factional - it goes from "Hello sky, hello trees"/Marc Bolan things, right across to us at the other extreme. At the moment, the only community project I'm really closely involved with is a fund raising scheme we're working on with the Hells Angels chapter that's just starting up here.

Their members are mainly grease, who have slowly come to the realisation that the world didn't actually stop in 1958 after all. They've graduated from Eddie Cochran to Dylan, but they could do with some working on - not in a teacher/pupil relationship, but they've got some things to lay on us too - like how to take care of themselves with cops. I mean, the average hippie has no idea how to do that - most of them get busted basically because they blow it at the wrong time. But Hells Angels have a sort of built in rocker cunning when it comes to cops and authority. But they're also starting to get turned on - taking acid and smoking dope - and I think it's rather unfortunate when you have a section of the sort of old time road hippie who thinks he's a bit too good to talk to them.

But we aren't attempting to identify with the community as a whole... in fact, I think this super left thing that's being put on in England is somewhat phony - you know, like on all levels, the time is just not right for violent revolution, just on the strategic manuals of revolution, like Guevara, Mao, Zhukov, and Michael Collins even. I mean you can read any of their books on violent revolution, but the situation is not yet reached when it could happen here... and preaching these ideas without any information is just like chanting slogans - it's just not on. There are a lot of people just going around the place mouthing Marxist catchphrases, but the time is not right. There just isn't a cohesive minority group that could stay together under pressure. The only thing the Deviants are interested in, in any quasi-political way, is keeping the audience together... by trying to create a good time, party atmosphere at the venue. I mean, when the audience start to dig themselves and each other, then they are in a position to start to resist pressure. But at the free concerts in the park, the reverse is happening - the audience

stretches for about half a mile, but the front 500 are probably the only people who are aware of what's going on. I mean there are so many different things happening, tourists taking photos and all sorts of things like that, and that prevents the audience coming together as a cohesive unit. The Stones audience could have taken over London, just like that, but that's not the problem. If Broughton had been in the position the Stones were, he could have got them to take over London. That's great, but the problem is, how long could they hold it? There's no point in putting a defenceless mob in control of some piece of geography, unless they have the assurance that the groundwork has been laid so they can keep hold of it. It's like the Barcelona Syndicate, who took over and then realised that no-one had told them what to do. I don't know the way to get a cohesive audience, but I certainly don't think it'll be done by political catchphrases.

If revolution became fashionable, a lot of people would be selling gift wrapped rope and lamp-posts, and I think that Rolling Stone is into this... the fact that they can have a huge feature on the American revolution one week, and then next week Jane Nicholson stands up and says "We are not an underground paper, we are a pop music paper". That's just bullshit baby! If you're going to start talking about revolution, and screwing, and drugs - then you are either the News of the World or an underground paper - because there's nothing between the two. It's like Germaine Greer said about the Underground - it's not just some sort of scruffy club you can join, you're in or you're out... it's like being a criminal.

Morrison is interesting in this respect. The new Doors album is very odd - it's as if, as Jamie reckons, he's gone over the hill into that pleasant land that we're all trying to get to. But the first two albums, Morrison is very strange, because he mixes his political sloganeering with strong sexual overtones. It's typical of this because you can't really work out whether it's a political speech or if he's trying to pull a chick. And I think that is possibly the direction to go in, but Morrison seems to have blown it to an extent - certainly on 'Soft Parade' - and I think the Miami thing was strategically a pretty bad move, but I don't suppose you consider the strategy when you're out of your mind.

But I'm sidetracking a bit too much here. To get back to the Deviants, we have also been doing some record producing ourselves, since Paul's been



Robin Morrison

over here. We've just completed two albums outside of the band, but with most of the band playing. The first one is a sort of country album by Trevor Reid - it's a bit like Nashville Skyline and goes through things like Donna and That's alright, Mama, and progresses through Guthrie's Plane Wreck at Los Gatos, Dylan's Please Mrs Henry and some of his own material. It might sell quite well but it's not really earthshaking in terms of ideology.

Then I've just finished producing a solo album with Twink of the Pretty Things - and that's got Paul, Russ, Steve Took, Viv Prince, a couple of the Pretties, & all sorts of people on it, and I really think it's going to be a phenomenal record because it's got such good stuff on it. It's coming out around October on Decca.

But we've found now, that there are enough musicians in London now, so that we don't need to piss around with the 55 year old shortsleeved, pipe smoking Musicians Union cats, who are only interested in playing written arrangements and taking tea breaks. It's a waste of time even bothering with those sort anymore.

I mean belonging to the Musicians Union is what, half a crown a week, but it's just a waste of money... in fact it's worse because it imposes so many restrictions on you. It's just getting more and more of a drag. They're only bothered about looking after the NDO - there's no benefit for us at all - it's run by out of work Palace musicians who still talk about all

this "three chord junk". Alexis Korner is trying to get an Electric Musicians Union together - all he needs is someone to provide some financial backing.

But as well as these old studio musicians being pushed aside, agencies like Blackhill are taking over that side of the business. The old type agencies are those left over from the Larry Parnes era, and they can't realise that these days the musicians are as intelligent, if not more so, than they are... and that's why they're failing, unable to keep their bands. It's the same with the old style record producers - they're being squeezed out now. And the record companies are making their last moves now, by decentralising their product into little labels - they're not fooling anybody. For instance, Harvest is just a joke. Some of their product is good, but there's still a big credibility gap between them and the consumer. It's not all friendly, and Stonehenge with the sun coming up; it's Manchester Square and it's raining.

That's why we're pleased we signed with Transatlantic, because they leave the musicians to get on with it. If Nat Joseph thinks you're sincere, he just lets you get on with it your way. You see, where the big companies fail is on the fact that their whole system is worked on a product profit basis, not on a label profit basis. For instance, Jac Holzman runs Elektra like this: he has, say, four bands and may lose money on three of them... but the fourth is, say, the Doors,

which more than wipes out his deficit on the others. And he's pleased because he's been successful - and that way, he caters for minorities as well. That's what underground music is about... and that's how Transatlantic works - their financially successful records subsidise their minority interest product, which they really like putting out. Big companies would cut out the ones which hadn't made a profit.

We'd gone to Stable, basically at the instigation of Simon, and also because we needed a deal and there weren't that many openings then. But we found out that they weren't exactly as we'd imagined, like their promotion wasn't at all satisfactory - so we activated the blow out clause in the contract.

So we're really happy the way things are going with Transatlantic - we have real faith in them. They're a real label, like they're releasing the Bizarre material over here because Pye wouldn't put it out - they didn't think there was a market for the Mothers or Lenny Bruce. Pye are one of these companies who really don't know what's going on.

In fact, recently I was talking to the chief A & R manager of one of the big corporations and he was really under the impression that the Mothers and Doors albums were just novelty records. He fondly believes that there are only about 8 hippies, they all live in Notting Hill, unwashed and ragged, and never buy any records. Unbelievable.

MAKE A DULL MONTH BRIGHTER WITH SOUNDS FROM MUSICLAND

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what a month for rock heads!
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MITCHELL KING CRIMSON MOTT THE HOOPLE TRAFFIC FREE
FUGS FIFTY FOOT HOSE FLOATING BRIDGE LOADS OF IMPORTS
and every record mentioned in zigzag all available from

Hyde Park Indoors



Of any released this year, the Blind Faith album is possibly the most difficult to review. Just as everyone went to the Park to see a new Cream, a new Traffic, or this country's first supergroup, everybody already has his own expectations of their first record. And, strangely enough, all of these suspicions are confirmed. At times, Winwood takes over completely, chopping up sounds on keyboards and soaring away with his unmistakable vocals. Or Baker and Clapton go off on their own, and together. Or they all get down to the crisp, relaxed sound of a quartet that is really above the field.

There are disappointments - at second, third and fourth hearings, Baker and Clapton don't appear ever to stretch themselves. But this is what Blind Faith is all about... four musicians who have been, to varying extents, fed up with the last two years' playing, and have almost retired into a new group, hoping it will allow them the freedom they need. They all sound happier, very relaxed... Clapton writes in his one song: "I have finally found a place to live, in the presence of the Lord". It's strange that within this beautiful melody 'In the presence of the Lord', Clapton produces the only fierce sound on the whole set. Still.

Each track is a driving, well structured cut, punched along by Baker's Afro-jazz drumming. The best to my mind are Clapton's 'Presence', & the Buddy Holly revival 'Well Alright' - neatly put together by an incredibly tightly knit band. The one major impression is that Blind Faith has already extended as far as its members need, and that possibly one of them (perhaps Stevie Winwood after what happened to Traffic?) will split with boredom, to start something else. This was really Cream's trouble too - after the first three months it was so together it never had the opportunity to change or find new things.

We expected so much from Baker and Clapton, perhaps less from Winwood, and without meaning to put him down, certainly less from Grech. Yet these last two come over brilliantly all through.

Winwood's voice has more control and a wider range than we've heard before, his organ playing is smooth and subtle, counterpointing the searing whine of the guitar. When he double tracks on piano in 'Well Alright', it's all too much. Two keyboards have always freaked me since the Band album (they're currently getting No 2 together - irrelevant, but interesting, eh?). Grech uses his violin nicely on 'Sea of Joy', but really does it on bass in the Baker written 15 minuter 'Do What You Like'.

This is the showpiece for the whole band - organ solo followed by lead guitar, then Grech beautifully finger twisting heavy bass notes, and finally Baker. He is incredible! Beginning with relatively slow simple rhythms (over the drone left by Grech) on both sets of side drums, for three or four minutes he works up to a complete frenzy of cross patterns and high hatting. (Note to all aspiring drummers; freak to this on headphones - the separation is so good it seems like you're doing it yourself). As a solo, it doesn't extend Baker's technical brilliance, but working like this towards his climax he certainly extends the cones in my speakers. Shouting "Ding dong Billy bong" does not help it any, but those 15 minutes explain what Blind Faith, and all the immense 'supergroup' bullshitting is all about.

It's going to be a classic album. The band is together from the start and has produced 6 tracks (a total of over 40 minutes) which will probably become landmarks in contemporary British music. At first it's slightly disappointing, like the debut concert; but down on plastic the moments of brilliance can be relived, as each number comes out as a perfectly constructed piece. Possibly the whole set is too cool, but new things become apparent all the time.

The record should be released over here late September or early October (WHY?), and even if we don't get nudie shots of Ginger Baker's 11 year old daughter on the sleeve, don't be prevented from buying it. Find the music... it's all there. Dick

BLACK CAT BONES

The 'White Blues Boom' of recent times must have been the most boring phenomenon in music since Simon Dee. However, two records have arrived recently from young coloured blues singers - records that are the result of very different environments, that are only loosely 'blues', and that are both worth more than the casual listen. The first is pleasant in an ugly sort of way, and the second is ugly in a pleasant sort of way.

RAM JOHN HOLDER

It must have been Eric Burdon who broke the monopoly America had on place names in blues songs when he recorded (on his first B-side) 'I'm gonna send you back to Georgia' as 'I'm gonna send you back to Walker' (Walker being a suburb of Newcastle). Now an album has been released by Beacon, which deals exclusively with a black's perspective of bad (and good) times round London, of crumbling bedsitters in Ladbroke Grove, and all night Wimpey Bars in Edgware Road.

The record is called 'Black London Blues' and is by Ram John Holder, who I remember going to watch a few years back at the Witch's Cauldron in Hampstead, where he used to sing with his brother as 'The Ram Holder Brothers'.

Some tracks concern feelings rather than places, and these appear to be the outstanding tracks. Not only are they better musically but they don't suffer from lines like "by the time I got to Clapham Junction Baby", which is something of a drawback. 'Too much blues' is a standard blues structure and the fullest musically - the sax has a good foggy sound and it moves well from climax to verse to the high harmony ending. Though entirely predictable, 'Notting Hill Eviction Blues' is possibly the best track on the album.

Ram lists all his complaints - rents, prices, soul brothers with no integrity, it's the "same all over from Portobello to Petticoat Lane", but he's not going to die in "a freezing bed sitter" so he signs off "Yours truly, Ram, Brixton Jail"... so that's where Beacon keep their studios.

Often the trite lyrics and banal tunes ruin any appreciation of the man's convictions and feelings, but on tracks like 'Ladbroke Grove' it all comes over - it's happy Portobello party music and every body's getting together to shake the blues.

It's a Londoners' album, and probably a black Londoners' album, full of nostalgia and downtrodden humour, and often succeeds in conveying real vitality and pathos as well as being of great interest musically.

BILLY JOE BECOAT

Over here, American 'Black Power' has the image of justified hatred and violent logic hurling itself against white beurocracy. Out of this background, Billy Joe Becoat delivers his 'Reflections from a cracked mirror'. The title itself shows some disenchantment with the state of things, yet the songs and Billy Joe's vocals are melodic without ever being particularly original. It's not the sound that makes the album interesting, it's the power of the words that he confusingly puts to his weak and almost soulless tunes.

It's a very strange album. The voice is sweet and pure, bred in downhome gospel choirs. The words are violent prose poems crying out against the harshness of being "born black, innocent of the world around". And the tunes are often 100% early Dylan - on 'Hi Diddle Dee Dee' the phrasing of "My ways, Brother, they are a-changin'" is a direct take.

The lyrics hold the key to the true feelings of his songs. They show an odd mixture of modern black blues, country and urban, from the political "Who struck the match? Burn baby, burn!"

It wasn't I said the politician..."

to the religious

"Now I lay me down to sleep

I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

In between, he encompasses heartless chicks, domestic rocks, and downtrodden blacks - "Pray that I can work real hard without any fear of the mule braying softly 'competition's here', of the fox grinning slyly from ear to ear, of the hen cackling loudly 'danger's near'... and please don't let my wife look in my billfold".

Really too good. They're probably the best words in the record, but out of the overall uncomplicated and unpretentious sound, the occasional backslash breaks through.

There are some pleasant sounds on this album (which Liberty are releasing shortly), but with a little more thought behind the actual tunes, Billy Joe Becoat could become a black man's Richie Havens.

Arthur Davis



RADIO IN NEW YORK

by Peter Stampfel

For those who have wondered just what Yankee radio dials are full of, here is a complete scan of the AM dial. (An article on the FM dial will follow).

a) Top of same, is WWRL - rhythm & blues 24 hours a day, except for about 12 hours of gospel music and church services per week (mostly on a Sunday morning) and 7 or so hours a week of discussions. I hate 'discussions' on the radio.

b) Next is a 'nice' station that plays classical music. Shuts down between midnight and six.

c) Station signals carry further at night, and between 10.30 and 7, WKBW of Buffalo NY, greases in from 500 miles away. In 1965-7, this was one of the finest stations going, but 'underground' FM stations have stolen AM's thunder since then, 24 hours a day - except midnight to six on Mondays.

d) Spanish language station. Latin dance music is great (Mongo Santamaria, Tito Puente, Willie Bobo, Ray Barreto), but Latin Top 40 is shlocky - sloppy sentimental in a cloying way. 24 hours a day.

e) WNJR - R&B from New Jersey. A lot of off the wall stuff here. Unbelievable advertisements - 'Joe, the working man's friend, sells you colour TV on credit, if you have been working for just 3 months' etc. Fine station - 24 hours.

f) WADO - Latin music, largely shlock - 24 hrs a day. Hard Latin is great, soft Latin is awful.

g) WEUD. Ethnic station, shut down at night. Jewish hour, Ukrainian hour, Croatian hour, etc.

h) WNEX. Similar to WADO.

i) Ugh! A dogsuck station where lame twerps phone the jerk in charge, and they flaunt their stupidity at each other. This is broken by ads for the reserve officers training corps & US savings bonds.

j) WWUA - the 50,000 watt clear channel voice of Wheeling, West Virginia. Country music 24 hrs a day. Only comes in at night because so distant.

k) Easy listening station. Easy listening is mainly music to float belly up to (Tom Jones, Sinatra, etc) but an occasional nice record qualifies.

l) Another one. The only hard rock on these easy listening stations is in the commercials. TV commercials are also getting more into rhythm progressions, because rhythm progressions sell!

m) WINS - once the city's best 24 hour a day pop station, and home of Murray the K, who I have a tender spot in my heart for. Now a 24 hours of news a day station. What maniacs want to hear news all the time?

n) Country music from New Jersey, all day and all night. Most country music is still awful - I can dig about one record in ten.

o) Easy listening. If phlegm were noise, it'd be easy listening.

p) WCBS - news and talk. What kind of...

q) Classical music, or people discussing same.

r) WABC - formula pop station, with a playlist of 50 or so songs played over and over. They used to play the No 1 song every hour on the hour. How popular can you get?

s) More easy listening. Whoopee!

t) WNBC - 24 hours of talk, news, sport, weather and song once in a while. Has been going since television goosed out radio in about 1953/4.

u) Easy listening? Just what do they mean?

v) WMCA - 24 hour pop, superior to WABC, because longer playlist and album cuts are used.

The CHARLATANS continued from page 10

and is called simply "The Charlatans". However, only two of the original band are left. Dan Hicks left to form his own group, Dan Hicks & His Hot Licks who are now signed to the US Epic label (album due any moment), and also absent are Michael Ferguson and George Hunter. George is now contributing to the scene in a different way via his designing for Globe Propoganda (examples of Hunter sleeve design can now be seen in UK via Quicksilver Messenger Service album "Happy Trails" and Can- ned Heat's "Hallelujah"). The Quicksilver sleeve is a particularly fine example of the Western/Victorian trip that Hunter and The Charlatans were on).

The full line up for the new album is Richard Olsen - woodwinds, bass, vocals, percussion, Darrell De Vore - keyboards, bass, vocals, Michael Wilhelm - fretted instruments, vocals, percussion, and Terry Wilson - drums and assorted percussion, and a very good record it is too - the stand out track being a weird arrangement of 'Alabama Bound' the old traditional country/folk song, which lasts seven minutes. The actual sound of the music is very hard to describe on paper, but suffice it to say that it has a kind of avant-garde, dixieland jazz, country rock feel - and though the actual recording quality leaves something to be desired, the sheer excitement of the performance makes it an extremely interesting album.

With the record being released in the Autumn, it may very well be overlooked in the rush of new albums put out at this time of the year... a fate which it certainly does not deserve.

For roadside
the Free Press

A bi-weekly underground newspaper with the emphasis on hip rock & folk. That's a pretty bad description of a very good publication, to which I have subscribed since 1964. Well worth the bread.
Pete Frame.

English subscription (by sea mail) 25 issues for £2.



ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

Our benefit on August 13th went well... a night to remember in the Civic Hall, Dunstable. What a roll for Zigzag (Breadhead) Promotions. Four ace bands playing for free, and hundreds of people paying a nominal sum to watch them - they staggered home happy, the bands departed penniless but glowing (we hope), and we paid the printer. What's more - we're probably going to do it again on Tues Oct 14th, when Zigzag Hyperfreaks Holding Co intend to stage another action-packed, fast-moving, star-spangled show, details of which we will disclose next month. Our real thanks to the Edgar Broughton Band, the Groundhogs, High Tide, & Sweet Slag... also Sim's Lights and Optic Nerve, and everybody who came along and made it such a tasty evening.

When we first started Zigzag, we were all of the conviction that we must move our office to London as soon as the bread situation allowed us to. We now reckon that we are ideally situated as it is (probably because we subconsciously realise that we'll never have enough bread), and everyone seems to have got used to us operating from this wheat surrounded outpost anyway. It's quiet outside too.

A nomadic Scot called Loof, who writes to us from Dumfries, Edinburgh, and other parts of the Northern Hemisphere, says that there are a lot of very good groups trying to erode the cast iron walls of the soul cities up there - Writing on the Wall, Truth, East West, and White Pepper particularly. An open air free concert held in Edinburgh last month was, he says, poorly attended but enthusiastically received by those who did go.

Kelly James, quoted as being 'Canada's answer to Lennie Bruce', is currently in London parading his amazing lewdness at various places like the Country Club and the Lyceum. He's worth catching - seeing is not only unbelieving, it's undoing.

Someone told me that the driving wheel behind the single called 'Amazing Grace' by the Great Awakening was David Cohen of Country Joe & the Fish fame. The aforementioned gentleman was the major contributor to one of my favourite records ever - 'Porpoise Mouth', so I greedily obtained the record, played it, and found myself really digging it. I subsequently bumped into David Cohen (namedropping again), who is over here to get a studio band together, and he explained that it's another David Cohen on Amazing Grace. (That's

his picture on page 7) He's apparently the former leader of an LA group called King David and the Parables. I still really like the record.

Let me think of some other good records. The new Jeff Beck, Van Morrison, Neil Young, High Tide, Beefheart still, and Lothar & the Hand People are all excellent. I haven't heard many of this month's releases yet, but there is some really good stuff coming out. One album I have heard is the Youngbloods new one which is really nice - article on them next month.

I'm typing this while listening to Top Gear, which is very unsuitable muzak; I have to keep stopping to listen. John Peel is not a liar.

Lis Christopher, please let us have your address.

Friars club in Aylesbury continues to feature the finest bands in the land. They had Principal Edward's Magic Theatre the other week. Incredible. It's spreading, it's spreading!

Derek Jewell, in a recent Sunday Times column, advised readers to "stay clear of albums by Earth Opera, Velvet Underground, and the Holy Modal Rollers (sic) if you do not wish to be bored out of your mind". I'd be a bloody sight less bored if he stuck to his own narrow taste - Derek Jewell is as hip as a Tuf shoe, and for him to review such music is as ludicrous as casting Cliff Richard for the lead in an Andy Warhol film.

We've been practising the phrases from Disc's Dictionary of Hippology. We think we've mastered the meanings of 'kick out the jams' and 'getting it together', and are confident enough to try them out on some of the people they mentioned.

Caddington (population about 3000 souls) has a group! And they're good. They're called Bliss, and even had a single released a while back. An album is in the process of being made, and from the stuff I've heard, it's going to be really good. Amazing. As I said, it's spreading.

The Melody Maker said that Tim Rose wrote 'Hey Joe' and 'Morning Dew'. Anyone who sends in the correct composers will receive a photo of Fatty Welch, autographed across the jawl.

The sinister A. Brown, Esq, is apparently in the process of sidling back to Track, preparing to explode upon us once more. Should be very interesting. And speaking of returns, where is Denny Laine?

See you at Hyde Park.

ROD YALLOP
photographer

56-64273

ups

THE UNDERGROUND PRESS SYNDICATE is an informal association of publications of the "alternative press" and exists to facilitate communication among such papers and with the public. UPS members are free to use each others material.

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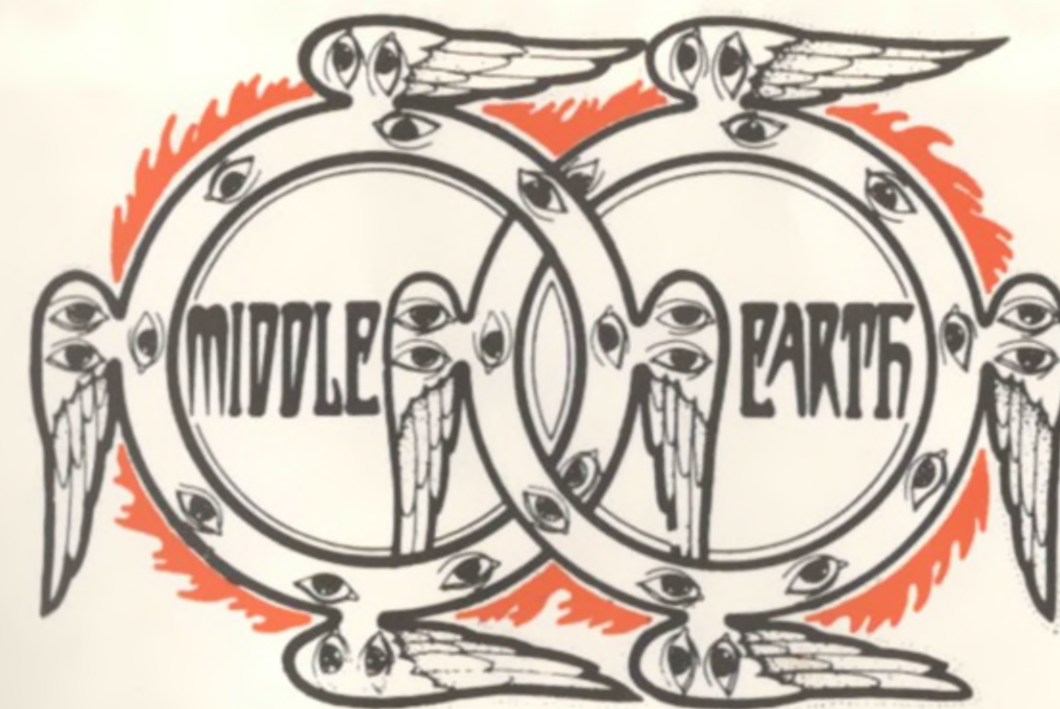
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