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Transatlantic

Where The Electric Children Play



ZIGZAG 7 fiveoaks caddington luton bedfordshire phone 0582 27717

Editors PETE FRAME IAN MANN **Ass't Editor** DANNY MCGANNAN **Photographer** ROD YALLOP
Art director MARTYN GUY **Indispensable** JOHN H T JACKIE CLIVE HANDLEY MAC GARRY GARY JONES

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Cover: Dorris Henderson of Election. Title page: Dave Swarbrick & Richard Thompson of the Fairport Convention playing at our benefit concert. Photos by Rod Yallop

THE PENTANGLE

Interviews are hardly Bert Jansch's scene, but he agreed to answer a few questions between rounds of a conker match he was having with Rod in the bar of a Brighton pub. The Pentangle had just played a concert at the Dome.

Z. Originally you learned a lot about playing the guitar from Archie Fisher, didn't you? Yet when you first became prominent in London in 1964/65, it was with blues numbers and your own songs, and not traditional material.

B. I got the gist of the guitar, not directly from Archie Fisher - because I don't believe that he actually taught me at any time - but I was taught by people who were on that scene. But he was a very strong influence. The reason for singing blues was simply that in the folk scene at that time a blues guitarist was a very unusual person. They aren't now that pop has taken over, but in those days a really good blues guitarist was hard to come by... and blues were popular to the extent that I felt I had to play them - and I was asked to.

I still don't sing traditional songs myself because I haven't got the capabilities... if I had, I would sing nothing else, because they're beautiful.

Z. But you don't have much opportunity to sing your own songs in public these days.

B. Well, I'm given a section in the programme, as everyone is, to do whatever I want... but yes, it's so long ago since I did solo performances. I mean, I was just about the first folksinger to successfully do a solo concert in this country, and that was doing a two hour show, just as we're doing now. But that too was a far cry from those folk club days, when I never had a programme, but just went in and sung whatever was in my head. Nowadays there has to be a bit of organisation

because there are so many of us involved... we've all got to take our turn.

Z. How do you find you integrate into a group? I mean, you're so disciplined by your responsibilities to the other members.

B. It's not so much that, as a respect for each other. No one is told what to play... if you join in on a particular bit, you have something to contribute, and that's a good thing.

Z. I remember the first time you experimented in public as a group at The Horseshoe... you had a solid electric guitar, which you'd had made specially. What happened to that?

B. That's a hard one... I don't know. Having that made was just being childish I suppose, and I just stopped using it.

Z. And you had a lot of trouble with balance.

B. We still do! But The Horseshoe was a club where we just went to do anything we liked. If it sounded good, bad or indifferent it didn't matter. We could just get dead drunk and play... that was the idea, and it worked - everyone had a good time, there were no rules, and you didn't have to worry if you didn't play well.

Z. Don't you find a hell of a difference in audience empathy when you play with the group now? I mean, the audience tonight was very detached from the group.

B. Well, tonight was the slowest night of the tour. All the rest have started off pretty quiet, but by the second half it's all happening. But tonight, I don't know if it was us or the audience... maybe you should expect this at Brighton. It's funny how the ones you think are going to go well don't, and



John Renbourn, Danny Thompson, Bert Jansch, Jacqui McShee, Terry Cox

the ones you think will be flops are pretty good.

Z. What about American audiences, where you share the bill with heavy rock groups?

B. Well, we had really good gigs over there. At the Fillmore East, we were with Rhinoceros and Canned Heat - both very noisy groups - and we were sandwiched between the two; but we went over very well... the audience was rather shocked to say the least. They were stunned for the first couple of numbers, but after that they picked up and were digging it. It was pretty good at all the places we played at.

Z. How did you find the conversion from acoustic to electric?

B. Well, as far as electricity goes, we know nothing... we only know the music. But we know that as long as we can hear what we're doing on stage, it's alright... and we understand that the audience should be able to hear it too; but beyond that, nobody knows. We use 100 watt amps, and we could turn the volume three times as loud if we wanted... we have done too... under extreme circ-

umstances.

Z. Someone told me that you had trouble amassing enough material for your last solo album; is that right?

B. Load of rubbish. Some numbers have taken me years to write, others have taken me two minutes... but I'm not out to become the greatest solo artist in the world.

Z. Would you ever consider recording a lot of those old songs I used to dig - like Rocking Chair, and White House Blues?

B. Well, yes... but there's a hard point, because everything I do now relates to the group. I mean John and I play The White House Blues together, though we've never done it on stage... you've got to decide whether a number is liked by the group as a whole.

Z. You're famed for your laconic song links; did they arise simply because you couldn't think of anything to say?

B. Yes, I can never think of anything to say, and

also I hate doing it...but everyone else in the group refuses. If it's a number which doesn't concern me, then someone else has to do it, because I shut up. But I really hate it.

Z. You refer to Rhinoceros and Canned Heat as noisy - do you listen to any groups?

B. Listening to them on a record player is rather different from listening to them live, because you can turn them down. If you're in a hall, there is nothing you can do about it. I mean, I heard them practising...the Fillmore East is right in the middle of some incredible dilapidated area of New York, it's an old theatre, really falling apart, and these groups come on, line the stage with amplifiers from one end to the other, and then get going. I guarantee you could hear it three blocks away. And in the dressing rooms you can't hear to tune up unless you have an amplifier...I mean, when we were in Chicago with Spirit, the management sent an amp in to us so we could plug in and tune up. It's just ridiculous...it really is ridiculous.

Z. What about English groups, are there any you think are going along the right lines?

B. I think the Fairport Convention is extremely good - I really love them actually. I know Sandy very well and always have liked her.

But in pop, someone is King Arthur - I'm not quite sure who he is at the moment - and he rules and governs, while the rest are Knights, who are doing their bit. They're doing a good job, as Knights always do, but it'll get to the point when all these Knights will go to sleep...there's a climax coming; how big, I'm not sure; what sort of people it's going to affect, I'm not sure. For instance, Eric Clapton: I don't know him, though I've met him, but I think he's bewildered...just totally bewildered, and I don't blame him.

Z. One respect in which you differ from a lot of pop groups is that you don't all live together.

B. We live totally different lives, and we very rarely get together.

Z. You don't do much rehearsing?

B. No, not at all...why should we? The group gets together when it has to, when it's forced to.

Like when we have to do a record, we get together and create some numbers, but apart from that, we do no rehearsals at all. We just get on stage and play...getting on stage is our rehearsal really.

Z. You've moved from the Soho/crowds/hustle-bustle environment to live in some relatively remote part of the country. What effects have you noticed?

B. I read the papers and I watch television, but beyond that I very rarely see or meet anyone. By these means, I bring the world to me...if I want to. At the same time, whether or not this is good is arguable - some people may call it anti-social. You want a retreat, but you don't want to lock yourself away.

If I have to go to London - it's straight in, do my business, and straight out again. But strangely, when I'm in Tottenham Court underground station, I feel perfectly relaxed, completely at ease. The only other time I feel like that is at home.

Z. You've come a long way since I used to pay you £6 plus the train fare to play at our club in 1965.

B. I'm still drinking beer.

Pete.



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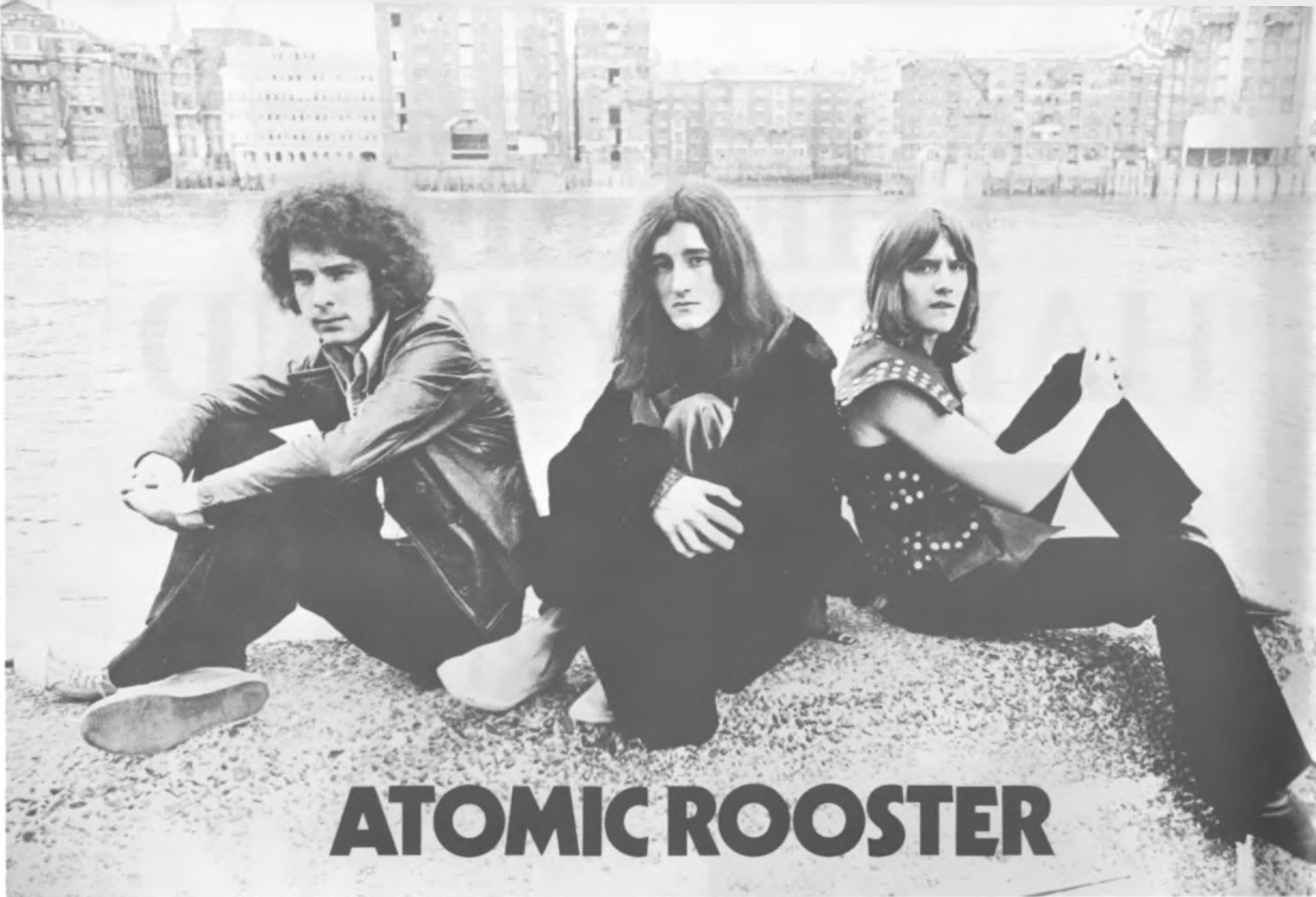
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VINCENT CRANE
talks to Jerry Floyd

My first thoughts on entering the world of entertainment were towards classical music rather than anything else, because classical was the only stuff I ever heard really, and I studied at music college for three years. Then, having heard and found out how much technique was needed, however good I was at interpreting music, unless I could master the technical aspects . . . in other words, unless you can play a piece very well you can't begin to interpret it. Fighting with the notes you can't get your own thing into the classical music at all, I realised that I would only be a fifteenth rate classical pianist if I played for the rest of my life and I wouldn't get a chance to express myself. So, I decided to concentrate on jazz which I started off playing at the Marquee, while I was still at college, as support group to Humphrey Littleton. I had a jazz trio--piano, bass and drums, called The Vincent Cheeseman Trio, because I hadn't changed my name to Vincent Crane - which is a thing I hastily forget -erase from tape-- Whoosh!!! . . . and I did that. Then the R&B thing came in and I started doing blues, left college, tried to

get a band together, went to France and sort of pissed around generally. Then I managed to pick up Graham Bond's Hammond organ very cheap, and started a bluesy jazz group, a bit like Brian Auger's sort of thing. Everybody wanted soul then so it never got off the ground - in fact it was a complete disaster. At that time I wasn't writing anything. . . in fact it hadn't occurred to me that I could write anything except classical, which I used to write a bit of. I was still staggering on with my own group when Arthur Brown came along, and I did a couple of gigs for him in Bognor at the Marquee place they had there - I realised then that he certainly had a certain talent for entertaining people, cause he was doing soul music - then he suddenly did a very freaky thing and they liked it. I went on doing my own thing with him, (after turning down an offer from the Foundations), and we got it together at the UFO and built up from there. When we did the LP, Arthur was doing most of the words, I was writing most of the music, and all the orchestration, which then made me realise that I could write music. Unfortunately soon after this, I had a nervous breakdown, which I think was due to overwork on the album and the American tour. When I came back Arthur had changed; he had a hit record and had turned into a "pop-

star"; the band had also changed from being a cooperative thing into Arthur Brown and a backing group, which wasn't very satisfactory.

When I rejoined the band which was about three or four months after my breakdown, Carl Palmer had joined; and he was such an improvement on the previous drummer, it was incredible. We worked together with Arthur for about a year, getting to know each other very well musically. . . if I play something Carl will immediately follow it up. I'm not mad about jamming, in fact I don't really like jamming, but Carl and I can get some very good jams together if we want to, because whatever I do Carl can follow and if Carl wants to break out into something I can follow him.

Anyway, whilst we were in the states Carl and I decided to leave Arthur, return to England, find a third member for a new group, and do something. We tried to get people we knew, like Greg Ridley, who we knew played and sang well, but, of course, as we had been in America for about three months, all the people who were previously available were now doing things with other groups, so we realised that we would have to find someone that no-one knew about. We did about two weeks of auditions and got some of the worst people I'd heard in my life, to such an extent that I thought we

were never going to find anybody. Then at practically the last audition Nick Graham came along and just sang one number, played a bit of flute, and we thought "yeh that must be the one". We hadn't even heard him play bass. . . he happened to be very good on bass. . . a sort of bonus.

He had come up from Southampton, where he'd been doing some terrible civil engineering job, which he didn't really want to do. He was gigging with some semi-pro bands and was looking for a professional job. He wanted to get out of the terrible rut he was in and when he saw the advert in the paper, he came up on the off-chance, because he didn't even know who we were until he was half way to London.

At the moment we want to play to people all over the country, we want to go to Germany, also to Scandinavia, building up a public before we even think about bringing out a record. Then, when we think we're ready, we shall release a record - an album. In that way you get the right sort of public. . . the 18 upwards public, which I think are the public who will dig us and who are going to go on liking us and coming to see us. . . I don't think the teenyboppers are going to dig us that much - if they do it will only be because of a hit record. . . that is no sort of public to make you last - I don't want the band to be one of those terrible up with the rocket and down with the stick bands. . . one hit wonder then disaster, like someone I won't mention. I want the band to last a long time; if an LP is doing well, like, say, Led Zeppelin, I think you can last a long time providing you don't stagnate musically. I know a lot of groups break up for a lot of reasons other than musical disagreements. . . which they usually give as the polite reason for splitting - though some do split up for this reason; for example The Foundations who I know are fed up with doing soul music and want to get out of it and do something more experimental, are in a trap, because the clubs they get booked into and the public who come to see them aren't interested if they play anything which isn't soul. I never want to get into a trap of thinking, "oh I can't change, I'm frightened to change, the public won't come and we're going to go broke". I'd rather go broke than play something I was tired of playing.

I don't like audiences who sit back and say "entertain me"; I want audiences who come willing to be entertained; I want audiences that like music, basically because that's what we are doing; we're doing music - I don't want people to label us like, it's a rock band, or it's an underground band, with people coming just because they like rock music or underground music, because bands are so different that come under the same title; like rock bands you might go and see Sly and the Family Stone or Creedence Clearwater are both the same label, but they don't play the same music, they don't even begin to play the same music, I think labels are bad. I just like an audience who is musically aware if that is possible - and that doesn't include people who throw bottles

or call out "skinny freak" and other such things which were shouted at Arthur and me in America.

Obviously our music has got influences from all over the place - anyone who writes music must have influences, Carl's drumming has to be influenced by other drummers and Nick's playing and singing by other people, but I've written most of it myself so it's mainly come out of my head. Carl's changed it a bit by his drumming and Nick has changed it a bit the way he interprets it, but what I'm writing Carl and Nick seem to like. . . . I don't know, I'm the last person to ask what the music's like because I'm writing it - we call it Rooster Music.

I don't know. There's some jazz in it there's some classical in it, but not in the terrible jazzed-up Bach thing - any classical influences came from my classical training, not in specific terrible quotes. . . a lot of people have heard the music and they still can't classify it. A friend of mine came to our first gig at the Fishmongers, although he's quite musically intelligent, he couldn't classify it, but obviously some idiot will.

As far as humour in music goes, I think it's very difficult to be humorous. . . I've written one joke number which we might use on the LP when we record it. I don't think we'll use it on stage. . . one reason being that I don't want to be remembered as having been with Arthur Brown because I want to be thought of as Atomic Rooster now. I think maybe some of the lyrics could use some humour in, I don't know. . . I've only just started writing lyrics anyway - because I could never write them before Arthur did, and most of mine seem to be gloomy or foreboding - something terrible's going to happen, you're growing old etc. There's not much humour in it. I think music can be happy and sad, but there's only one piece of music which I think is funny and satirises and old form of music but is still good in its own right - that's Charlie Mingus' "Eat That Chicken", which is an imitation of Fats Waller with Roland Kirk doing sax of that era, but it's not just an imitation it's something more, but unless you're a musician I don't think you would appreciate it.

I think since the days of UFO the underground has fallen apart as what could be classed as a movement. When UFO first started I saw the underground movement as an audience that was reasonably good at appreciating music although I felt you could put a load of shit over to them and they would think you were doing something freaky, when in point of fact you might have been doing something freaky or you might have been doing a load of shit. We could go on stage and have three idiots jump up out of the audience, wreck the act, half the equipment could break down and 99.9% of the audience would think it was part of the act, which strikes me as a bit strange. No I thought going to UFO,

it was a crowd who enjoyed it and enjoyed staying up late and so on, but when people started coming up like Suzy Creamcheese saying "you must support Release, you must do this, you must do that", I could feel that that was not what they wanted; I felt that they weren't prepared to be a force and I don't think they are a force now really. I think as a movement, music itself is stronger than say the underground, the whole underground put together. I think one of the reasons the underground will never get together as a movement is that maybe it's too complicated - because when you think about the war and all these incredible slogans people used to lap up. . . you think about them now and you think what a load of rubbish. How could people walk about murmuring patriotic phrases? . . . something sort of crude and direct seems to whip 90% of the population up; music as a cult or force could be quite strong I think it gives people a feeling of environment i.e. you hear a blues number and it gives you a feeling, if you really listen, of a place and an experience that you've never been to and never experienced, but it makes you feel as if you have been there and you understand it, which is maybe one of the reasons that people are so frightened of music, even the public we are hopefully playing to, if we went on and said we were going to play some jazz. . . "Oh, they would say, 'we can't listen to that, because we said the magic word jazz and if we went into a pub and said jazz or classical, people would completely faint on the floor at the mere thought that they might have to listen to jazz or classical, but if you didn't use these terms they might quite like it as long as they didn't suspect what you were doing, but if they suddenly thought I've just clapped some classical music they'd be very upset, . . . which has nothing to do with the underground whatsoever. I don't know about the underground really. I think it's slightly stronger in America e.g. if you go to New York round the village, it's really a dump, and you go to the Fillmore East where the underground movement have, as it were, forced Bill Graham into giving them a free night "to do their thing"; I went to one and they did absolutely nothing just jumped, made a lot of noise, laid on the floor; the M.C.S. went on. They are, I think, incredibly bad, - they use Hitler techniques to harrangue the audience, they really are Hitler techniques "Kick out the jams" he screams, and I don't know what that means, unless they mean stop groups jamming together, which I can't imagine is what they mean. The underground movement is stronger in the states but seems to be a bit of a mess. It's no alternative - like in the book "Brave New World" where the only alternative given was the savage, which wasn't a good alternative and Huxley said if he'd re-written the book he'd have another alternative; I think people don't like the office-worker, or the police and many other things about the system, but I don't think the underground is the practical alternative, there must be something else inbetween, but I wouldn't like to say what it is. As far as I'm concerned I'm a musician.



NOTES FROM AMERICA



AMERI KAKA!

with peter
stampel
& antonia

....must be the season of the country fetish. The Holy Modal Rounders did a concert at Carnegie hall with the Burrito Brothers and the Byrds. It sure was fun. Gave me a new appreciation for country fans - they tend to know a lot about country music, and be greatly enthusiastic about it. And their, er, image is more, er, friendly than the, ah, image of the, for example, blues fan. More country fans like blues than blues fans like country. The oldest fans, of course, are country blues fans. The entire underground sub-structure (subground understructure?) is, of course, directly tracable back to the Country Blues.

"You mean it's all a Black Power plot?"

I met Charlie Musslewhite and his piano player in Boston. They are from, respectfully, Mississippi and Texas. We were talking about the way people like Creedence Clearwater Revival are inventing this Great American Southland which is incredibly idealized and fantastic, and such an improvement over the real South. The invention of this greatnewsouth is a Karmic necessity. It is an elaborate ritual exorcism of the southern sin of racial bullshit. We were talking about the bigoted old southerners who were all dying and would soon be all dead ... And the whole south will give a party when the last redneck dies."

We played with the Grateful Dead recently. It's so spiritually uplifting to see a bunch of people who so obviously belong together. They all looked so PURE. The skill, ability and general righteousness of the Dead is massive.

"Looky, real humans, and they're doin' it!"

"Always knew they hadit innum." GOODIE OF THE MONTH: a new album by Melanie. This young singer-songwriter has some of the widest range of emotional responses of any singer I ever heard. Her record's on the Buddha label. I've only heard about 1/2 the cuts but I'm really excited about what I heard.

Aren't Jethro Tull's rhythms neat?

On the other hand... Captain Badmouth Strikes Again! Janis Joplin. Now there is a lady with a narrow emotional range. One song sounds much like another, when she sings it. All songs receive the same approach. I suppose this is democratic, but it's

hardly musical. However, she is good live.

Ungano's, a club in the West 70's, is attempting to fill the gap left by the demise of the Scene. More power to them. New York has very few places for rock musicians to play live. Ungano's is going to have the Kinks. That's the right idea.

Our Roadie, John Schmitt, has moved in with us. He is currently building scale models of the Luftwaffe. They are covering all our flat surfaces and now they're starting on the floor. I built a Hawker Typhoon to take care of them. Schmitt is full of roadie epics - Schmitt is a roadie epic.... "The saxophone player from Johnnie & the Hurricanes used to eat nothing but slim jims (a 10c skinny hot sausage) and his whole saxophone STANK like a huge slim jim and wherever he'd blow his horn, people would KEEL OVER!"

Cool weather has really arrived in New York. If anybody out there is thinking of coming to N.Y., Autumn is really the time to do it. Crisp clear air, theatre openings, pears and apples. And a slight chill on your face. The smell of fresh roasted chestnuts in the streets. Everyone moving just a bit faster.

My nomination for Underrated Album of the Year: Procul Harum's "A Salty Dog".

Nice music playing on the radio as I write this. Spirit. They're really good. Their lead guitarist, Randy California, is a big favourite of mine. Lead guitar is not a matter of how many notes you can play how fast. It is a matter of individual TOUCH. Randy California has a fine touch. I like his name too. I like people with balls.

With that final edifying note, we leave you for another month. Keep warm. Love.

BOSTON BREVITIES by John Kreidl

The Underground here is essentially dead, despite still being very strong in Berkeley, where they are ready to shoot if necessary. But on the east coast, where Underground means cultural revolution or college political activism (Students for a Democratic Society), there is nothing. Most of the writers sold out, and many hip people have gone into either advertising or movies. SDS hates the pop people, and vice versa.

Chuck Berry visited the Boston Tea Party and was great - just great... he's still human, whereas the Everly Brothers and Rick Nelson, who also played here, did slick C&W arrangements. Good show-biz, but no love in their hearts. The Who are coming next week, followed by the Kinks, Donovan, Crosby Stills & Nash. Very strange English/West coast mixtures now. English bands no longer dominate, except for teenyboppers (with the exception of the Who, Zeppelin (somewhat), Beatles and Stones. Jethro Tull are popular, but are thought to be too vague.

Mountain - Felix Pappalardi and Leslie West's new group - is terrible; they really suck. NRBQ is the new East Coast Rock'n'Roll band. They're a bit like Fleetwood Mac on stage, and are quite good musicians.

I like Doug Kershaw's 'The Cajun Way', which is part of a big new fad for Bayou rock (Creedence Clearwater on the commercial side).

Moondog, a blind, eccentric brilliant beat generation composer has an album on Columbia - it's a gem. But much crap from Bloomfield Kooper and Gravenites. New Joplin album is a bummer... I don't like it one bit, even though her new James Brown approach worked well at the Woodstock Festival.

J. Geils Blues Band is Boston's best now, featuring the dynamic singing of Peter Wolf, who has got to be the best East Coast performer going.

Crosby Stills Nash & Young are instantly liked, as they sound very "American". They are as sentimental as Nashville and as smooth as LA, they don't play blues but sound kind of blue. Also their songs sound great on radio, and several TV performances have them to be charming.

Elvis is very popular among musicians, but I've never heard anyone else rap about him - so don't get the idea that there's a big Elvis revival here. There ain't. His biggest fan must be John Lennon.

Here's a rock map of America, which will tell you all about the new trends.



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Why did the Beatles cross the road? To get to the other side.

When 'Revolution' first appeared, the Soviet Authorities, dreaming of great propaganda booms, rushed out to dig up a copy of it from their black market contacts, hurtled back to their office, lit up their Georgian sticks of cannabis variant, and listened carefully.... Later, the Tass press agency, their mouth and organ, issued a statement denouncing the Beatles as counter-revolutionaries, gagged by the forces of western capitalism. They had heard the phrase "you can count me out". Meanwhile, according to the British press, 'Revolution' was played at full blast as a hymn on student held campuses all over the world at the height of student disruptions. And in the 'Beatles Illustrated Lyrics' Lennon is pictured as one of three revolutionary philosophers.

In the later recording of 'Revolution' for the LP, Lennon added to his original phrase, which then became "you can count me out - and in", showing not only his indecision, but also the stupidity of people saying what they think he's thinking when he's not sure himself. It gets to the point where at least half the comments on the Beatles or their songs are irrelevant, and the rest are ignored because people get tired of the low-quality news barrage that inevitably gets hurled at anyone of interest. If they are not accused of being a solid part of the Establishment, they are alleged to be helping to form a new and equally unpleasant non-establishment which adds up to the same thing. Various anti-drug factions accuse them of being pro-drugs, while pro-drug factions accuse them

of being anti-drugs, nationalists accuse them of being internationalist, internationalists accuse them of being nationalist etc etc.

Maybe it would be best to slide into the fantasy world and let Professor C—, Head of the Department of Sociology at the University of F—, give his ideas about 'Abbey Road'.

"Well, of course, the first thing I noticed was the design of the cover. This is a well conceived piece of work, and I see several fairly obvious meanings contained in it. First, the road stretching away into the distance is the road of life, and the fact that these four young men are walking across it indicates that they have deviated from the routine course of life as represented by the straight line of the road. It's also interesting to note the order in which they are walking, Lennon and McCartney being separated by Ringo. This is, no doubt, to give the group a greater image of unity, as the names Lennon-McCartney appear together so often on record labels and in references to their songs, placing perhaps too much emphasis on them as individuals rather than as a part of the group".

"Notice also the presence of a police vehicle in the picture - this no doubt indicates the Beatles' basic approval of law and order, and it is a very British sort of thing, part of Britain's image, and all this will contribute to the sales of the record abroad, as will the fact of their having chosen the name of a London street as the title - indeed, many visitors from abroad are bound to

flock to Abbey Road and put themselves in the picture, so to speak.

"In my studies of terminology, I've found that in Spain and France the Beatles have been responsible for a linguistic contribution to both languages - the term "ye-ye" is used to describe anything which is new and a part of the instant culture of youth. A Spanish girl with a mini-skirt for example, in the days when they were considered daring, was invariably referred to as "una chica ye-ye". I note that on this record, though they make no such direct innovation, they are using their language in a way which reflects the fast-changing nature of contemporary slang. In the song titled 'Because', they once again use the term "turn on", either in continued rebellion against the BBC for the banning of 'A Day in the Life' or else with the desire to point out to people such as myself in the academic world, that the phrase has undergone a certain semantic development since then, and now refers to the general propagation of happiness. Then again, along with other phrases like "you can feel his disease", clearly intended to shock, it could just be a mere show of rejection of normally established standards".

"When I was a young man, many of the songs used rhyming schemes involving "moon", "spoon" and "June", etc. Until recently, to use such facile schemes in combination with melodic tunes would have seemed very dated, simply old-fashioned. But it has become evident during the last few years that practically any inspiration can be used, and the idea of things being dated is being supplanted by the very widespread adoption of music and clothes from all periods, going as far back as the sheepskin and goatskin jerkins of pre-historic times and as far forward as the velvet tunics of the Victorians; and a lot of music I hear - my daughter is an assiduous collector of records - seems definitely primitive in its rhythms, while a great deal of sophistication is evident in many records, those of the Beatles being in the forefront. What is particularly noticeable is that since 'When I'm 64', 'Honey Pie', and similar songs, nothing seems dated anymore. I feel the Beatles have been instrumental in the finding of this new freedom, and 'Abbey Road' continues in this way".

"I think one could call this a happy rec-

ord. The lads seem to have developed a tendency towards pathetic fallacy and an almost pantheistic approach to nature and what is around them. 'Because', 'Here Comes the Sun' and 'Sun King' are all demonstrative of this link between man's feelings and the weather, the uplift he derives from his surroundings. In the other direction, the rec-ondite aspects of 'Come together', 'I want You' and 'Carry that weight' indicate a movement towards introversion almost to the point of arrogance. But this does add interest, and I must say I've spent a jolly long time trying to puzzle out exactly what they're trying to say".

"Some of my colleagues, in our discussions about the Beatles as a sociological phenomenon, have placed a lot of emphasis on the universal appeal of their songs. There is of course, a great deal of truth in this, but I feel I must quibble with the generalisation. If you consider this LP, from the point of view of a child, you will most probably come to the conclusion that a child's favourites would be "Octopus's Garden" and "Maxwell's silver hammer" but it's almost certain that a majority of children would not be enchanted by "I want you". Perhaps I'm splitting hairs, but what I mean is that some songs are designed for specific preferences, some for others. Each LP has universal appeal, perhaps, but not every song."

"On 'Abbey Road' there is a subtle unity in that there are many references from one song to another, both musically and lyrically. Sun King refers back to "Here Comes the Sun"; in "Carry that Weight" there is a reference back to "You Never Give me your Money"; and so on. You might say that a kind of magic circle is formed. And in general on side two, there is difficulty in distinguishing which song is which, signifying a rejection of artificial barriers."

"The End' typifies today's youth-philosophy of give and take rather than lend and borrow, and the idea of heaven and hell on earth - one is repaid on earth for one's sins or good deeds, the here and now is more important than the there and after".

On, on, on. Perhaps in the early 21st century, when the sixties will be vaguely in perspective and the Beatles are studied at University as a factor in the accelerated social changes of the second half of this century, they'll get better treatment.

Ian.

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DORRIS HENDERSON:

HERSELF AND ECLECTION

Dorris Henderson first came to Britain, knowing nobody, just to have a look around and see what the place was like. She'd been singing in California and New York, but it was at a time when you had to pump out pure blues or pure gospel, always something very specific and very limited, and though there was plenty of work going in clubs, it was not the place for Dorris to develop in the way she wanted.

Arriving smiling in London, like sunshine on a foggy day, she did a guest spot at the Troubadour, and this led to further bookings, and the further bookings led to her meeting with John Renbourn, who was at that time beginning to make folk club audiences stop rattling their beer-glasses and listen to his guitar producing sounds which turned badly lit club cellars into halls filled with harpsichords.

Until meeting John, Dorris had accompanied herself on autoharp. Now the combination of her crystal voice and John's mercuric guitar made her two albums 'There You Go' and 'Watch The Stars' a great success (aesthetically, if not financially), especially with people who'd seen her in person. After a visit to her family, back in LA, she returned to the folk scene, playing to increasingly wider and more enthusiastic audiences at universities and clubs all over Britain.

During the same period, Trevor Lucas, an Australian who had met Dorris shortly after her arrival here, was singing folk around the place, and an appearance at the 67 Cambridge folk festival brought him into contact with Canadian Michael Rosen who, along with Norwegian Georg Hultgreen, was in the process of getting a group together. Trevor knew a compatriot, Kerri Lee Male, who gave her voice to the group, which by now had been aptly named Eclection, and drummer Gerry Conway appeared to complete the line-up.

Despite the poor attendance at their press



reception (for which John Peel verbally smote those who had chosen to go to a Bobby Vee reception the same evening), their single 'Nevertheless' was launched in a blaze of publicity (including two 'Colour Me Pops' and journalistic admiration (including a Tony Patmer column in the Observer), and these, together with their own obvious talent and an Elektra album, gradually built them a solid reputation during 1968, until Kerri's departure made them four musicians in search of a vocalist.

Trevor Lucas remembered Dorris and her voice and sought her out to persuade her to join Eclection. She was happy to join, and after a time there was compatibility all round - everyone was happy and they were soon musically together. The arrival of Polly Palmer (to replace Mike Rosen) wrought more changes; "The music became a lot more solid and gutsy... the new sound was nowhere near how they had sounded before, and it took quite a bit of adjusting. It's got a lot more to do with people and life and situations you can really identify with now, because I won't generally sing a song I can't feel some sort of identification with... the song must have something that's a bit basic, I suppose. Birds and bees and skies and all that sort of stuff is very pretty, but when it comes to singing it, I don't want to know".

Perhaps the folk background of Trevor and Dorris accounts for some distinct folkie aspects which run through a lot of their material, although they do only two straight traditional numbers 'House Carpenter' and 'One morning in May', the rest being originals. Perhaps also as a result of the small intimate audiences at most folk venues, Dorris quickly establishes close rapport with all audiences, whatever their size.

She says that at first, the change from acoustic to electric made her feel drowned by the noise; "You can't really say anything effectively if you've got to shout all the time"... and she won't shout when subtle inflections of the voice can con-

vey so much more. But now accustomed to electric noises and amplification of her own voice, Dorris is at home with and close to the people listening to her. She conveys to them her great enthusiasm for life, with her soaring voice and that really happy smile - it's strange that many photographers portray her looking serious, or maybe it's just that photographers find it easier to focus on her at poignant moments in songs when she's not darting around with an excess of energy.

Her enthusiasm includes a passion for reading - even during TV ad-breaks - science fiction when possible, often psychological books, but otherwise, anything that happens to be available. When we talked to Dorris at her home, we were surrounded by books and pictures, and a wall-poster of Eclection, showing her naked, provoked the rather stupid question, "Would you sing naked on stage?"

"When the guy I live with first wanted to do that poster, I said to myself: Oh God, what are people going to think, but after a while I thought; it doesn't really matter. You could say that when you sing you are a naked soul, and the body is symbolic of that, not of physical nakedness, and



Trevor, Gerry and Polly surround Dorris

bodies are beautiful, you can't get around it, they really are. I wouldn't sing naked, because the audience would be so distracted by a person standing up there nude, they wouldn't listen to a thing you're singing, and with me, what you're singing comes first, not what you look like; and society is very sex-orientated, you can't get away from it, it's one of the most dynamic forces in life, and until we can become a bit less conscious of the naked body and accept it as an extension of the personality, a part of the whole person, it's not the right time, for singers at least. Perhaps in ten or fifteen years... When you're nude you've got nothing to hide and you've got to be yourself. You come into the world nude and you can't take anything out with you when you go and all the nonsense and paraphernalia you collect in between has really got nothing to do with it."

Another question put to Dorris implies that society is not yet educated enough for the way of life advocated by many voices in the hip community which depends on co-operation and love for one another.

"Yes, Jesus preached the same thing and



Georg, Trevor and Dorris

they're still not ready for it. We're still terribly primitive in spite of all our dishwashers, colour TV and men on the moon. We haven't come much further than keeping ourselves warm artificially and cooking food."

"People generally take life far too seriously - they get uptight at the drop of a hat, usually about nothing at all - things that just aren't important. It's a pity that people don't think out some basic guidelines for themselves rather than get all shook up about other people's lives. It's really strange if you stop and think about it." And if you really stop and think about it, Dorris Henderson is a really nice person.

"Hey, let me say something controversial", she concluded. "Don't believe in marriage, believe in the pill, believe in abortion, priests should get married, hash should be made legal... what else do you want to know? Ah yes, have a listen to my brother Eric's group Gallery... OK Eric?"

The present state of the music industry and public relations methods is such that there is only a certain level of popularity you can reach without having a current LP available. Eclection have reached that level, and an LP is necessary before they can go on to the level of appreciation they deserve. One is planned to appear within a reasonable time which promises to be exciting... It's shrouded in mystery and secrecy and we look forward to it.

Photos by Rod.

Trevor, Dorris and Polly



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Clive Selwood (left), soon to become Elektra's European manager, talking to Mike Hales, his successor as head of Elektra in England.

ELEKTRA AND CLIVE SELWOOD

Jac Holzman dropped out of college 18 years ago to open a record shop in Greenwich Village, install stereo units, and make records. He had started the Elektra label as "a marriage of his two natural loves; electronics and music" a year earlier when he was nineteen, but his first venture, a 10" classical LP, had been a financial failure. The second album's production costs, according to legend, were no more than the expense of tape and coffee - it was recorded on a domestic tape recorder by Jean Ritchie.

The idea in Holzman's mind was to allow profits from one album to finance the following one and so on...but in practice, it didn't quite work out that way. The label got into debt - at one point he owed 90,000 dollars - but two relatively successful albums were sufficient to clear the deficit, and in 1956 the company broke even.

To begin with, the label had been primarily concerned with traditional folk music and its interpretation - Ed McCurdy, Theo Bikel, Josh White, etc - and later with contemporary folk - Paxton, Ochs, Spoelstra, etc, but in 1963 there was, to quote Holzman, "a rebirth of the company

...its second wind", prompted, to a certain extent by his association with Koerner, Ray & Glover.

This group turned Holzman on to "a whole new area of music", and it led to his signing the Paul Butterfield Blues Band in 64. This infuriated a lot of folk purists, but he was anxious to get away from being a "one dish company" and start providing balanced meals without losing the name and integrity the label had attained. Besides, the music he was listening to around that time, went back to Holly and Presley, and it seemed as if rock recording was either being ignored or mis-handled.

"So I started listening for electric bands, and heard Dylan at Newport (1965). I'll never forget that evening - I was standing in the pit facing the stage, and Dylan came out and launched into 'Maggie's Farm' with the Butterfield Band backing him. It all clicked into place - I was just knocked out".*

After seeing Love playing at a Los Angeles club, Holzman signed his first rock group... "thirty seconds into 'Hey Joe' I knew that this was the rock group I wanted", and together with the

Doors, Judy Collins, Tim Buckley, Tom Paxton, and all the others, they are the reason that Elektra has become the most successful independent in America. "Several of the larger labels in the US are floundering at the moment", said Holzman. "Why, because they have become musclebound with excessive or inadequate personnel, an unwieldy overhead, and a lack of confidence in their own musical judgement and abilities. The result - a glut of poorly conceived records."

"We function with a smaller, more realistic artist roster and a lean release schedule. Each of the 40 albums planned for 1969 has, we believe, a reason for being and talks to a specific audience".

Clive Selwood succeeded Joe Boyd as head of Elektra in this country, having joined the company in very strange circumstances. He had previously had his own buying and selling business, but needed a credit rating for a mortgage. "So, quite cynically, I came to Elektra for a job as sales manager, thinking I'd get my credit rating and mortgage after 3 months and then split. But I got involved in the music... I couldn't walk out on things like 'The Dove' by Judy Collins and so on, without trying to get them across to more people".

I asked Clive to comment and elucidate on several aspects of Elektra which had been intriguing me...

In view of their tremendous expansion this year, could it be that bread was getting to be as important a factor as discrimination and quality? In signing up these rock bands right, left and centre, weren't their ideals being eroded? I quoted Bread and Roxy as examples.

"I agree on a personal level, but disagree with the examples you've chosen. Roxy is a band discovered by a girl in our LA office, and she was just freaked out of her mind by them... and so was Jac when he saw them. Bread... have you heard the Bread album? They are simply three very good, very creative studio musicians who got fed up with doing things for everybody else, and decided to do something for themselves... and they made a very good album. It's easy to put down, because each track could well be top 20 material, but as far as the rest of the Polydor group is concerned, it's the most exciting album to come out of Elektra for years".

"But I would go along with your thinking on a number of acts; but then again, I've discussed them at some length with Jac, and he has his own very good reasons for recording them. I would argue with the David Peel and the MC5, but they were attempts to capture a phenomenon - what was happening in 1968. When the MC5 started showing a lack of responsibility towards Elektra, Jac let them go - which confounds anything you could say about the label being commercial, because the group sold their contract to Atlantic for between a quarter and a half million dollars... and we just released them".

The comparative failure of the Delaney and Bonnie album after its critical acclaim.

"We took ads on the underground... we spent more on that band than anything else this year - and in the States they've spent more on Delaney and Bonnie than any other 5 acts. They're doing smash performances, and I really mean

smash... if you look at the critiques of the Blind Faith tour, and Eric insisted that they go on that tour, Delaney and Bonnie took every notice, without a single exception... so much so that they stopped reprinting the notices because it would only have started antagonising Blind Faith fans.

"They've done all the top TV shows, and nationwide radio interviews, jammed with Eric Clapton after each show - everything... Blind Faith have a million album, and there's nothing happening on the Delaney & Bonnie. People like George Harrison, Mick Jagger and Jeff Beck - and just about everybody in the business - were all saying that this is just about the greatest band in the whole world, so you can't say the music's passe or anything like that. Maybe it's just a head album... maybe it's just too tight and professional... I really wish I knew".

Leviathan?

"They completed an album and we sent it to the States. Jac didn't think it was ready - he wanted two or three more tracks. They've now given us these and they're being mixed at the moment. But the group has split - for economic reasons I guess. This was a disastrous summer for the music business - more groups split up than in any other period I remember".

Judging by the letters we receive, Love are by far the most popular American group. Are the rumours about the old group killing their road manager true, and is that why Arthur Lee has assembled a new Love?

"I couldn't comment on that... I've heard the story too. And that's all I can get out of our American offices too - 'I've heard the story'. Love was Arthur Lee... he had some great guys with him, but Love was Arthur Lee.

"Arthur is a very difficult person, but we stayed with him through thick and thin, because Jac happened to think that Arthur is a genius - and that's not a word that he throws around - but now our contract with him is finished. I got a call from Jac the other day, and he said 'When you're running ads for the 'Four Sail' album, why don't you put on the bottom 'Follow Love's career in future on Island Records'. But when I put that to people here, they said 'What? Are you out of your head?'".

"Love were the first rock group we signed - they had an entirely new thing - but until about 6 months ago, they had never played a gig more than three miles from their home. But Arthur has always wanted to come to England, mainly because I put out 'The Castle' as a single... he said, 'Any country who wants 'The Castle' as a single, is a place I want to go'. I think that was a big influence on his coming here soon".

"There's an interesting story about Arthur actually; Jac was in New York, and thought it was time the artists came to him (he'd been going to the artists for 3 years). So he said 'Arthur, we've got to re-negotiate your contract - come to New York'. So Arthur duly arrived in New York at about 9pm, they booked him into a hotel, and agreed to pick him up at 10 the next morning. When they went to get him, the next day, he was gone... there was just a note saying 'I can't stand this fucking town'".

The lack of cooperation shown by the Doors.

"It's a thing we don't comprehend. For the 'Waiting for the Sun' album, for instance, Bill Harvey made three trips to LA with a photographer - and he just got the two shots.

"They were extraordinarily difficult in London, but on the day they left, I went out to the airport with them and they all came up to me and apologised, which was nice, and they said 'We understand we've been a bit difficult but we were simply terrified - we'd never been to London before, and we'd heard so much about it - all the anti things'... and they really did get paranoid over London".

"As I left from my last visit, they were negotiating for an English tour, but they've obviously got to sort out their trouble over there first. There are fleets of lawyers meeting, but I can't really tell you anything about that because it's still sub judice".

Keith Relf's Renaissance.

"We probably won't have them for England - we'll just have them for America... Jac knows he can do a job for them there where he controls promotion and so on, but over here, things are very much out of his hands, though he thinks they are a very important band. I mean, there's a good story about this; when he was over here last, one of the executives of, er, a major international record company - a German gentleman - said to Jac, while we were up in his flat, 'I'm so busy that I haven't listened to an album all the way through for 6 months'. So Jac said; 'then may I respectfully suggest that you don't waste your time talking to me... go and dig out some albums and play them'. And the guy was really annoyed, but Jac ushered him to the door saying, 'If you haven't listened to an album for 6 months, I don't have anything to discuss with you - because you're going to be talking about money and turnover, and I'll be talking about music... so there's no point in you staying'".

Also controlling Dandelion, don't signings conflict?

"No. There's no real problem there, because Dandelion is committed to not paying any advances whatsoever - not in any shape or form... an obvious reason being that we don't have the money. Elektra are obviously in a position to pay advances; for instance, no-one would expect to sign Keith Relf without guarantees, compensations and so on."

Lonnie Mack.

"Lonnie Mack is doing such business in America, and his album is just getting through to people. There is a new album very soon".

Ars Nova.

"They're on Atlantic now. That was a long, tough, hard story. I personally feel that Jac's judgement was off centre there. It was really a big hype - they had a ten page spread in Life magazine, and so on... they had a really aggressive manager, who arranged all these things - and it all cost so much money, so much... and it just didn't happen. I resisted all their attempts to hype it in England, because I thought there were so many more worthwhile groups to spend money on".

The Stooges.

I really love that album... I'm the only person in the country who does, it seems. There is a major problem having an identity like Elektra. People who are anti Elektra immediately think

'pretentious', no matter what... like with 'Both Sides Now' by Judy Collins - people said 'it's so simple, it's pretentious', they really did.

"I have tremendous arguments with the people from the BBC - they have a look at the label and say 'Huh, Elektra - it's either pretentious or it's longhaired freaks'. People love to classify... I mean, I was talking about air time on Dandelion and the guy said 'How do you expect to get airtime on this kind of material'... and he was talking about Beau, Brigit St John and Coyne/Clague. How can you lump folk and straight rock and roll into one bag?"

Tom Rush.

"He's gone to Columbia. We're sad about it, but we've felt for some time that we haven't been doing him justice. Tom has the potential to be a big star, and somehow it wasn't happening on Elektra records. We tried talking to people like Mickie Most, who could probably take Tom and make a lot of money for him, but nothing transpired. So Tom's gone to Columbia, and we wish him joy".

Tim Buckley.

"I talked to Tim the other day - he told me he's stopped drinking... he only drinks on Sundays now. He lives next to the beach, and every Sunday at 3 in the morning, he gets on his bicycle, loads his pockets up with booze, rides up and down the beach until 7 getting stoned, then goes back home and falls into bed. I said to him 'Tim, you're just not real - you're like a character out of an F Scott Fitzgerald book - you're just not real'... and he said, 'there's a lot of us about Clive'".

"I asked him about his leaving Elektra, and he said 'I can still come and visit can't I?'. He's come to a deal with his manager that he looks after the business and leaves the music to Tim, so though he'd like to stay with us, he's taking his manager's advice and is going on his manager's label. But he's finished his next album, which will be on Elektra".

The business as a whole.

"The business is about to change mightily. It's going through changes now.

"One of the things that is not generally known, is that it is not the Musicians Union who control needle time on the air - it's the record companies. By that I mean Decca and EMI - it's bullshit about the MU. One of the projects I've got on now, with Elektra's blessings, and on behalf of them and Dandelion, is to get together with prominent people in the business and form an alternative organisation to the one which currently licences the BBC to play records. Ostensibly, the Phonographic Performance Ltd, which is run entirely by Decca and EMI, licences the BBC at present... they're old gentlemen, and it's like a club - 'play it my way, and I'll let you join'.

"Also, I think commercial radio will be here soon - when we get the new Government, I hope. I wish I could say that the big mechanical companies would feel the pinch as a result of all this creative movement, but they'll just go on churning it out".

* Jazz & Pop, June 1969.

+ From Jac Holzman's speech at the 1969 International Music Industry Conference.

Centrefold: LOVE.





PRINCIPAL EDWARD'S MAGIC THESPIANS

FREE TO MAKE A DREAM

'John Peel's raving underground group' proclaimed the advertisement heralding the presentation of Principal Edwards Magic Theatre at the Hermitage Ballroom in Hitchin, Um.

Suspensions of some hand rubbing, shark promoter wringing bread out of what he thought was a money spinning trend - the 'underground craze' - were solidified as my ticket was dispensed from a cinema style kiosk, and professionally scrutinised and torn in half a few yards later by a suitably attired thug, whose facsimile was dotted all over the hall. Underground - Hitchin style.

As if that wasn't horrifying enough, I entered the hall to see a gigantic photograph of Matt Monro dominating one wall, and scores of pubescent mod chicks covering the dance floor - twitching to the sound

of Max Romeo, patting their hair into place, and balefully staring at the males (mostly stereotyped skinheads who must have learned of the specie from the current straight-media skin head boom), who were leaning across the corral type bar partition like disinterested cowboys witnessing a dull rodeo.

The DJ, consuming much beer, played a lot more of the latest hip and groovy underground sounds - Edwin Starr, the Equals, etc - interspersed with cretinous inanities like "Do you like it girls? I don't mean the record. Ha ha ha" and "If you like pushing it in and wiggling around, this is for you".

And in this abysmal atmosphere, Principal Edwards were expected to perform. It was heartbreaking. No magic flowed or was allowed to - and they played a mediocre first

set to about 27 interested people, while the other couple of hundred were merely waiting for the return of the reggae and to guffaw at the clod DJ's observation - "I've never heard anything like that group in my life... I think I'll grow my hair long. Ho ho ho".

Their second set was constantly interrupted by abuse, missiles, a bloody skirmish, and booing, while the belligerent DJ, who had forgotten their name in his introduction, grinned like an ape throughout. They called a halt after three numbers.

A couple of days later they played at Aylesbury, and that audience, ever grateful to guests who depart from conventional styles, showed the warm reciprocation that the group needed. But it was a week fraught with tribulation; the radiator of one of their vans had disintegrated and they had

further suffered at the hands of an incompetent AA man and the speed(?) of British Rail. Accordingly, their playing, though an enormous improvement on the necessarily ragged performance at Hitchin, was still superimposed with tension and a bit of anxiety, and they weren't as impressive as usual.

I spoke to Vivienne and Jeremy and was delighted to find that the joy which flows out in their music was deeply rooted. There are some taped conversations I'll never erase, and, though chairs were being dragged around and Dave-the-promoter was having one of his pissed-on-music-enthusiasm-rants in the background, when I listened to it again I found that they spoke musically too.

I asked what they thought of the Hitchin spectacle. "I don't know really... it just seems so horrible that scenes like that can exist - we've never come across anything like it before. It seemed like a little town where the kids have nothing to do but go and make trouble. I'm quite prepared to accept the skinheads for what they are, but they seem unprepared to accept us and give us a chance. They see the long hair, and that's it".

When I mentioned to someone that I was going to have a chat with Principal Edwards Magic Theatre, his face burst with laughter; "and the best of luck - you'll need a bloody sheepdog to round that lot up". It wasn't as bad as that, although two members were missing, but to avoid confusion and provide clarity, here is a list (I love lists) of the entire troupe:-

Leslie Adey and Chris Run-ciman; operators of lights, slides, films, and visual effects.

Bindy Bourquin; violin, harmonies, recorder and nice name.

Root Cartwright; guitars and music.

Jeremy Ensor; exponent of mutilated Fender bass and erstwhile Peelian chauffeur.

David Jones; hand drums, lyrics and facial reflection of the audience warmth.

Monica Nettles; poet, dancer, and another nice name.

Martin Stellman; singer, reciter and hair.

Vivienne McAuliffe; singer, and joyous interviewee.

Eva Darlo; picturesque leaping nymph (hope I've spelt the name correctly).

Paul; roadie, PA manipulator and skinhead calmer.

Lyn Edwards; percussion.

Gillian Hadley and John Hill; dancers, now engaged in marital dancing, far from the madding crowd.

According to folklore, any random half dozen used to make a performing quorum, but since turning professional they manage to avoid turning up with a skeleton force.

I was expecting to see a marked lack of equipment... a straggling string of musicians and dancers struggling through the streets to the venue, humping antiquated 10 watt amps and vintage instruments, reclaimed from Denmark Street dustbins. Instead I saw a sparkling red van, and about 18 tons of brand new amplification. "We don't get advances from Dandelion, but they in fact paid the down payment, and we're paying the rest. But in the past we have been known to go on stage with a couple of drums and a two string bass". That's how the no-equipment legend must have snowballed, because nearly everything one learns about the group is by word of mouth, and apart from a John Peel column in Disc (5/4/69) and a few Tin Pan Alley type snippets like "13 into one mini won't go, ha ha", there seems to be very little documentary evidence of the existence of the band.

Vivienne and Jeremy proceeded to elucidate. "We used to radiate from Exeter, but now everyone who was at College has taken the year off, and it's up to them whether they want to go back next year... it depends how we're doing. But apart from those on leave, the rest of us have dropped out or finished, and, at the moment we're relatively content because it looks as if we've quite good prospects and we're managing to get across to a lot more people now".

"Our music is totally original really" (They're right - I've been unsuccessfully scraping the barrel for comparisons, and I'm sure that, though I see how he devised it, Jim Haynes' description of their material as "a cross between the Incredible String Band and the Fugs" is a little off the beam. "We have never thought of ourselves as a musical group... we're more of a social unit really, a group of friends who got together and wanted to do things, and we just carried on from there.

"The original nucleus was at Exeter University, with Martin at Bristol. But it was accidental that we got into the business really, because Jeremy was running events and things at Portsmouth Tech, and he was an old friend of Leslie's. We were playing there once and John Peel saw us... so maybe we'd have just continued as a nice little group of friends at university if we hadn't met him".

An obvious question; their album (on Dandelion, a label born of the same spirit which fires the group) will only contain one facet of their act. Where each number aspires to a condition of drama, can such a hybrid be caught on record? "Well, we've called the album 'Soundtrack' to make it clear that it's just the music as opposed to the

total show. We were worried at first because we had only two days of studio time in which to record it, but in fact it was an advantage in that we did everything straight off and it was fresh, despite a few technical mistakes. We didn't spend months producing and mixing the tracks - it'll be released virtually as recorded. When we have more experience with studios, we'll probably be able to spend our time more profitably, but I think the record is successful as being representative of our musical side - I certainly think it will be advantageous for us to release it".

Were they disenchanted with their contemporaries? "There is some good stuff, but on the whole... (a thoughtful pout, a grin and a shrug conveyed the rest)... but I admire people like Edgar Broughton who's got such different views, and sticks to them. I think there's only one group I really flip out over and that's the Floyd."

And like the Floyd's, their music is brimming with invention - time changes, unusual chord progressions, interesting lyrics - but to a certain extent the ideas are in advance of the technology... their musical ability is just that little bit behind their mental creativity. But that is not to say that their music is lacking in enjoyment - you often find yourself listening to them with a big smile on your face, because they are happy people; happy with life, happy with their music and dancing, and there are so many moments of realised brilliance. It ranges from simple acoustic picking, embroidering a single voice, to romping striding rock, centred around Root's full, fat chords.

Of their songs, particularly lovely are 'Ballad', 'Enigmatic Insomniac Machine' (which sounds something like a mixture of 'Machines' by Lothar & the Hand People, and a Country Joe song - how about that for a comparison), and 'Sacrifice'.

"Root writes all the basic music, and the arrangements are done by all of us. Root has had a very sound classical background, which accounts for the complexities in our music, and he's had experience in jazz bands and folk music. The rest of us are more poppy in our backgrounds".

None of the tight show operators or performers is relegated to inconspicuity because each has his or her individual role which provides the tremendous scale of colours and material immanent in any performance they give, and though the diverse elements of their theatre appear on paper to have only the most tenuous connections, they are in fact beautifully complementary.

I'll tell you what... go and see them; but take pains to see them at a sympathetic venue. Pete.



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She said "Why don't you work like other men do?"
I said "How the hell can you work when there ain't
no work to do?"

Ringing The Dong don't worry me
If I don't work the more I'm free.

There's nothing particularly special about these words, no great poetry or anything like that. They are just lyrics from the chorus of one of Gypsy's songs and rather typical of the sentiments they express. What does matter is that these words appear to reflect the atmosphere of their very real attitudes and mentalities, rather peculiar to the new-wave drug rock bands, born out of the Northern environment where the group has evolved. "Ringing The Dong" is Gypsy slang for joining the dole queue, one aspect of a way of life, part chosen, part imposed, which has far more in common with the majority of the country's thinking youth, than the superficial way of life to be found in London's underground scene.

In London you have it good. The whole scene revolves around money earned from the multi-million pound luxury and leisure industries, and amongst the mass of anonymity you can get away with hell. There's nobody really cares what you look like, however outrageous. London lives in a world of its own and seems to want to stay that way; It is absolutely blind as to what is happening in the provinces. It's an artificial and liquid environment where everything is taken to extremes all the time, to such an extent that the people become really biased and apathetic.

The provinces are a different story. Any mildly revolutionary thoughts or practices are put down straight away. People live local lives with local minds, ruled by the God Securia, and have

to work on a local level to earn their daily bread. All you can do when you leave school, if you can't or don't want to get into University, is to work in a factory, or in an office, or in a shop, or a garage. What does it matter? They're all as boring and as uncreative as each other. Long hair or coloured clothes are sacrilege in the grey areas. You'll probably get your face done-in by the skinheads, or the rockers, or the Golden Shot pisheads, give them half a moment. It really can be a bad and totally depressing scene, and if you opt for the long-haired life, you're more likely to believe in it - and with conviction. You have to fight for it. That's the attitude Gypsy's music seems to be a part of, and, up until five years ago, this was the main function rock & roll served. It united the youth and their break-away life style and acted as a catalyst in the expression of their attitudes. Singles became anthems; they were a complete emotional turn on for a whole generation.

It's rather unusual to find a provincial band with their own thing as most are too gullible and follow 'what is happening in London' but six months later. Few pioneer, most follow. Similarly, the media brain-washed audiences only want to see the same thing, and that's what Gypsy and other provincial bands have been fighting for years. It has taken until now, with a lot of exposure to the media in London who then feed it back, for promoters in the rest of the country to accept them. The audiences accept the music and they go down a storm wherever they play.

The music is difficult to describe as they seem to have absorbed so many varied influences and styles in the development of their own thing, and their natural talents are so diversified, that one

cannot put it into any other bag than youth music.

The five-man line-up gives them probably more scope than any other rock band around. They feature four guitarists (bass, two guitars and 12 string) and one of them doubles on piano. All the five sing, three of them tackling most of the lead parts, and working together to full effect with harmonies. Between them, they have an exceptional range of actual voices, and styles of singing. Different combinations are used to the full in attaining different moods and emotions. They are a group in

the full sense of the word, who work together on stage to stir, and to communicate to their audiences. Their sound has the excitement of soul and hard rock, yet has the relaxed and natural feel of country when desired. They really must be one of the most interesting, unusual and freshest bands around, and are worth hearing, even if you go along first time out of curiosity. An album will be ready by Christmastime...until then, go and see for yourselves.

Phil Ward.



GYPSY (l to r): Rod Read, John Knapp, Moth Smith, Dave Smith, and Robin Pizer (who is also pictured on the previous page).

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BABY TALK

MIGHTY BABY are (l to r in the photograph opposite) Martin Stone, lead guitar; Mike 'Ace' Evans, bass; 'Bam' King, guitar & vocals; Roger Powell, drums; and Ian Whiteman, vocals, flute, sax, percussion, organ and piano. We spoke to them before they went on stage at the Zigzag benefit dance.

Z. You're renowned for having been conned by the business, but John Curd seems to have promoted new confidence.

MB. Yeah... he's the only one who's done anything for us; I mean, he's a friend. Most of the other managers we had just took instead of giving. What we owe to John, we give him in ourselves, what we play... we give him the band.

Z. Economically, you've been through all sorts of hang-ups - has it been difficult to survive as a group?

MB. Well, it hasn't been really difficult. Sometimes we've had like £2 a week each, but that sort of thing isn't really difficult unless you make it so. We knew it'd be alright in the end.

Z. And you're getting more gigs now?

MB. Yes - about 4 a week. Amazing!

Z. Plus some unpaid ones too - like this one.

MB. We dig doing benefits, and we've told John that we want to do them. That's where music is basically at - to help people, turn them on.

Z. I was talking to John once, and he referred to Village as his 'jazzy' group, and you as his 'freaky' group... is 'freaky' really very descriptive of your music?

MB. That depends how stoned you are... it can get freaky and it can get heavy...

Z. And what sort of emotion do you reckon it provokes?

MB. I think excitement more than anything else; happiness, uplift - but you can uplift people in lots of ways. Lots of groups appeal to people who sit down and listen, like in the head scene, when the people really want to get into it. It's often what the audience is like that matters - the audience plays us in a way... it's not calculated, it just happens that way. The audience participation is sort of invisible.

You could say that we're freaky in the sense that we're erratic, depending on the state of the audience and the state we happen to be in at the time.

Z. But when you get erratic, you all tend to get erratic in the same direction.

MB. We don't get erratic in that way - we can have a bad gig... it's loose enough, and free enough for that to be possible. It depends on so many things. It's not a sort of premeditated per-

formance. You could say that our music is like talking to people in as much as you interact and respond... you don't just put on a record of yourself speaking. But there are people in the outside world who speak like that - they have prearranged things to say and think, instead of saying what they feel.

A lot of people who come to see us realise when we're having a bad night, and they understand it. We could never play the same constantly good music every night - sometimes we're really good and everybody just cracks up laughing, and other times it can be so bad that we feel like walking off. It's the chance you take, and unlike some other bands, we'd rather take that chance than have everything planned beforehand.

Z. So your numbers are basic structures, clad in improvisation?

MB. They're usually very free, yes. A few have lengthy solos that are arranged to go on for a definite time, but even they often go past it.

Z. And is the music on your album representative of your current music... I mean, it was recorded a comparatively long time ago wasn't it?

MB. Well, over the last 6 months, but 3 of the tracks were made during the last 8 weeks. It's representative of how we play in a studio... you can't say more than that really. I think it's probably condensed quite a lot. You could say it's a precis... dilute to taste!

Z. Maybe I've got this wrong, but weren't you called the Aztec between being called The Action and Mighty Baby?

MB. No, we were called Azoth... but only for about a week.

Z. I must have seen you at Middle Earth that week then. What happened to that?

MB. The name went back where it came from - it was blasphemy. We went back to being the Action for a time.

Z. (to Martin) What made you leave a successful group like Savoy Brown for the relative insecurity of this group, who weren't exactly 'sweeping the nation' when you joined?

M. Well, it wasn't entirely my decision, but I think I was right to change at that time. You can play blues, and can advance so far in that direction - in fact you could be a much better blues player than I ever was, but I didn't want to be just a blues guitarist. I mean, Peter Green is a beautiful blues player but even he is doing different things now, because it can get so mechanical in a narrow idiom. It becomes just a mechanical exercise and you think that way while you're playing - it's not you, you're not free.

The same applies with lyrics; it can get



embarrassing listening to someone singing "Big fat momma lives up on a hill", because someone who sings like that just has to be putting you on.

Z. So that was just one factor among others?

M. Yes...there were other things, but...you know.

Z. Today's generation of musicians seem to be growing up with the music...

MB. Yeah, I think there are going to be 30 and 40 year old people in bands, and it's going to be really good because they'll be so turned on, and when they play they'll play everything.

It's like anything; we're all young, which ever way you look at it - no body's very far, and what the body gets hold of, the mind doesn't forget. That's one way of looking at it.

There used to be a syndrome where you made it and then went into obscurity, but that was just for pop stars. Pop music was just a bracket like jazz and classical music and so on, and what we play is considered pop music by people who sit and watch television...but if you get into it, it isn't pop music, it's everything.

Z. How do you see the current music scene and the head revolution?

MB. Very healthy. You can sense this in audiences sometimes - a different effect completely. Instead of people going to church like they used to, I think they'll come to dancehalls...they'll come for the music to raise their consciousness.

But I think it's a very gradual thing. The

changes are definitely very peaceful, with a few ripples on the top...it's basically very calm. I don't think there's a sudden awareness; there are always people on different levels, rebels who have been able to progress. I don't think there is a sudden psychedelic revolution - that happens to be the way it manifests, it could have been something else.

Drugs aren't enough, you need a system, which can only be taught to you. They may give a glimpse of possible states - they're good in as much as they are an initiation, but they're not permanent. They give you faith, if you like, and you see your possibilities, but you have to actualise those possibilities through work on different levels, just doing worldly things. I don't think the head revolution is a big thing...it's more a way that's leading towards something, and a certain number of people will get to this other thing.

Z. Do you see much hope for such a revolution when you look at some audiences, which often seem to be a lot of cliques, without much unity?

MB. It's still young...it's a slow thing. I think everyone is conscious of their reasons for being together.

Z. And music is the unifying factor?

MB. Yeah. Rock music is basically just that: it's communication, to unite people.

References:- IT No 62, which has a particularly good article on the group. Their first album, just released, on Head Records.

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Henry Lowther (trumpet & violin), Jimmy Jewell (tenor & flute), Keef Hartley (drums), Gary Thain (bass), and Miller Anderson (lead guitar & vocals). Photo by R. Sacks.

Hartley's Blues Broken

In spite of the posters promoting John Mayall's forthcoming nation-wide tour, his influence on modern British music is indeed "legendary". Cream, Colosseum, Fleetwood Mac, Aynsley Dunbar, and many lesser bands owe (or owed) a large part of their existence to the rigours of touring, playing and learning within the tight discipline of a John Mayall band. Naturally, all these offspring bands retained much of what Mayall had instilled. Little else could be expected (why were people surprised when Blind Faith sounded like a mixture of Cream and Traffic?), and none of them matured properly until they had managed to break away from earlier traits.... compare the Mac's material now to the stuff they were into eighteen months ago. Keef Hartley's first album "Half Breed" showed obvious signs that the shackles hadn't been thrown off. Despite the presence of Henry Lowther as trumpeter extraordinary and arranger of the small brass section, the band wavered on "Half Breed"; there was no definite direction.

Keef realised this. Almost immediately af-

ter it was released he was quoted in at least one 'pop' paper as being slightly less than overjoyed with it. But "The Battle of NW6" due for release this month really begins to fulfill the promise of the band. Using a total of nine "session" musicians, including Barbara Thompson (John Hiseman's wife who occasionally plays with Colosseum), Mick Weaver (remember Wynder K. Frogg?), Mick Taylor (remember the Stones?) etc., the original five-piece band is now built on lines to which our ears have only recently become accustomed. The influx of albums by BS & T, Chicago and the amazing Sons of Champ-lin have obviously had an effect on the total sound of the group, as well as Keef's drumming, which has become more 'refined' and expressive. Every number except "Me and my Woman" is self-composed, and they're all arranged by the group. The track that Keef singled out to play me, "Believe in me", is in his words "the most individual". It features a slow, rolling bass drum coupled with steady cymbals and CTA-like cowbell, tight falling-leaf brass phrasing repeated over and over again, and a beauti-

fully mellow violin solo from Henry Lowther. It's complex, nothing near the raunchy blues and rock based numbers that they still occasionally play on-stage, and it points a well thought-out direction for the band. The feel of the production is a little empty at times compared with similar States teams, but the eventual live debut of the Hartley-Lowther 14-piecer should blow the minds of a few 'blues fans'.

Quite apart from figuring on the latter half of the Mayall tour - the Hartley band has only managed a few days rest since the return from an overwhelming first visit to America, and goes back for a short tour in January; and Scandinavia and Germany figure on their listed date-schedule for October and November. A band that busy just has to warm a few hearts wherever it goes.

One gig they're never likely to forget was the now-mythical Woodstock Festival: "It was an honest festival that got out of hand". What really impressed Keef was the reaction of the incredible sized crowd to all the things laid on them: "They just enjoyed it; none of it was planned or aimed at them. They took everything at face value". About the more than favourable reaction the band itself got in America, Keef was emphatic: "Americans are just sensational", and he sees no difference between

audiences on different sides of the mighty ocean: "People are generally more intellectual about their music, they are more interested sub-consciously. Either in America or Britain, there's no difference. Only that in America things have to be packaged sensationally, whether it's in a supermarket or on a stage. That was first true, for an English group, with the Beatles. It was true for the Cream, and recently for Jethro Tull." Despite the 'packaging' deal, at least English bands are able to play music that has a British ethos, though belonging originally in the fields of the southern states. But reactions from the States are difficult to analyse: Ten Years After are only just getting the recognition over here that they've had in America for some while; Terry Reid is about to become really huge, though little-known here; the Family bombed on their recent tour (though not as badly as in some reports, mainly from promoters who just backed them too heavily). The Keef Hartley band went down very nicely. Nothing earth-shaking, but good enough for a quick return visit. When "The Battle of NW6" is released it should be easier to figure out why they are so heavily booked. To give a clue, somebody just came into the room while the album was playing, and asked who it was. 'At least they've stopped playing blues' he said.

Dick Lawson

ZOOT MONEY RETURNS

Wheeling and such around town the other Friday, I happened to learn, through a chance telephone call, of a sadly underpublicised and under-rated event. The public unveiling of the union of Zoot Money and the Mike Cotton Sound, both with so many years of experience and raving performances behind them, was taking place without fanfare or tumult, in almost esoteric conditions. But full marks to Alan, the most helpful promoter, who staged the happening at Bedford College.

A feeling of tense restriction mingled with anticipation gave way to concentration as the music began, illuminated by the innovative light show by Black Sun. The basics were all there - a heavy but subtle beat laid down by the drums as a solid foundation to allow for and compliment the expression freedom of the others; the sympathetic fusion of the bass, whose interesting riffs were further intensified by the chunky rhythm guitar, which, though fitting, was very much under level. This was one of the main problems - the balance. The PA, controlling the voice and horn section - both adding the final poke and lifting the rhythm section into their part of the whole, was, together with the imperfection of the hall's acousticity, the main offender and I was consequently surprised not to see any roadies adjusting or twiddling to get the best effect... but maybe that would have

merely added to the tension, which was noticeable but well covered. Do what you like, but apart from getting completely out of your skull, there's no way to block the fear/tension vibrations of a first night - especially with such an experimental venture.

Hearing Zoot's voice after such a long natural was quite a revelation, and a pleasant compliment to current musical excursions which are heading in the right directions in so many cases now. The familiar range was still there, but with more control and the organ was fitting well, and swinging marvellously at times. But here again, balance and level must be sussed out if the beauty, much of which was being overlooked, is to be fully appreciated.

It is heartening to think that great things are imminent from this combination, which can only elevate the audience appreciation of The Mike Cotton Sound, a fine group musically, but one which has long suffered from the middle of the road/average/mediocrity tag they've unjustly been saddled with. The tightness, yet looseness, which inevitably comes after playing with the same musicians for some time, is all that is needed and the signs of such an integration are at this early stage most encouraging.

MacLeod.

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A story about Buddy Block Ball, and Little Boy Big... Mad River rolling west

To keep things tidy we can call Mad River a San Francisco band, but in fact their background lies in an area of America not renowned for its contribution to the world of rock. The source of Mad River was the Midwest, where they met at college and formed an old-timey jug band using acoustic instruments. After a time, the group went electric and tagged itself the Mad River Blues Band, performing standard blues material, which, considering the time and the place, was a fairly adventurous thing to do.

The Mad River Blues Band then faced a problem that many groups all over America have had to face. Namely, being able to experiment and advance their music when the level of musical appreciation of local music lovers needed only a weekly dose of 'Hang On Sloopy' and 'Louie Louie' to satisfy itself. When faced with this problem a group can choose two courses of action - either to stay and fight the apathy and dissent, or look around for pastures new where people might possibly appreciate what they were trying to do. Mad River chose the latter and decided to make their home in San Francisco, moving west in mid 1967.

Shortly after their move, things didn't go too well for them. They'd lost the last half of their name on the way, but their music failed to impress at an audition for the Fillmore West, and they could only manage third billing at the Avalon (Youngbloods, Other Half concert on Sept 15, 16, 17 1967).

At one time the group came very near to disbanding as the only gigs they could get were in their newly adopted home of Berkeley. As far as the recording scene was concerned, Mad River took the same course as fellow Berkeley bands Country Joe and the Fish, and Frumius Bandersnatch and recorded an EP. Soon

after this, they fired their manager and all of a sudden things started to get better. Offers started to flow in from all the major record companies who wanted to sign a San Francisco group. At one time it looked as if they would go to Warner/Reprise, but in the end they followed Steve Miller and Quicksilver to Capitol for an advance somewhere in the region of \$65,000.

Late in 1968 the first album was released (Mad River - ST 2985) and met blasts of criticism from all sides. True it wasn't perfect, nowhere near, but it was good and different. The band at that time was a five piece, lining up as follows: David Robinson (lead gtr), Rick Bockner (voc & 2nd lead gtr), Lawrence Hammond (voc, bass, gtr, piano), Thomas Manning (voc, 12string, bass) and Greg Dewey (drums & voc). Much of the criticism of the album was due to the fact that on first hearing it sounded disjointed, through tempo changes and the complex interweaving of the three lead guitars, but after repeated listenings, things start to fall into place. It was produced by Nick Venet, a Capitol staff producer who had been responsible for recordings of Lothar & the Hand People, Fred Neil, Vince Martin and Hearts & Flowers, and engineered by Leo de Gar Kulka at his own Golden State Studios.

In July this year, the second Mad River album was released in America under the title 'Paradise Bar & Grill' (ST 185) and was entirely different from their initial effort. Jerry Corbitt, ex Youngblood, produced the album, and his influence is evident in the music. Thomas Manning was no longer in the group when the album was recorded, but the absence of a third guitar does not seem to have hindered the group in any way.

The mood for 'Paradise Bar &

Grill' is set by the cover, designed by the band's manager Harry Sobol, which transports one back some eighty or ninety years and reflects the musical style completely. Highpoints of the record include the brilliant acoustic guitar solo tracks by David Robinson ('Harfy Magnum') and Richard Bockner ('Equinox'), and the acoustic guitar duet by David and Lawrence Hammond as a backdrop for Richard Brautigan's poem 'Love's not the way to treat a friend'.

'Copper Plates' is pure country with David Robinson on banjo and Richard Bockner laying down a superbly tasteful guitar solo. It is hard work to pick out a standout track on an album which maintains such a high standard throughout, but 'Revolution's in my pockets' is most likely it. Lyrically it is beautiful, and musically it is superb, with brass adding weight to the chorus and blending in perfectly with the acoustic and electric guitars.

Through 'Paradise Bar & Grill' Mad River show themselves to be a band who have sorted out most of their problems and discovered a direction which is natural to each of the members. Recently, Greg Dewey joined Country Joe & the Fish, played with the group at the Royal Albert Hall, and showed what a fine drummer he is with a really exciting and inventive extended solo. Although Dewey has joined the Fish for at least one year, the group and manager insist that he is still very much a part of Mad River and will be appearing and recording with them while the Fish are sleeping (in the Mad River?).

Recent news of the band hasn't been easy to get and EMI in London have no new details or photographs, but I'm pretty sure that wherever they are, they are enjoying it and pretty soon we shall too.

Alan Lord.



ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

Whenever I put pen to paper on the subject of the Fairport Convention, I get carried away. So let me just say that their performance at our benefit last month was magnificent. Everyone I've spoken to who was there, was totally enchanted and awed by the music. Our warmest thanks to them, and to Mighty Baby who also played a fine set (and whose new album is a joy), and to Soft Cloud, to Jerry Floyd, to Optic Nerve, and everybody else who helped to make it such a happy, peaceful, beautiful evening.

For storers of trivia:- 1. The David Cohen of The Great Awakening (referred to last month) was the guitarist on Bobby Darin's 'If I were a carpenter'. 2. Spiro Agnew and Captain Beefheart were both born in Lancaster California. Now, isn't that interesting.

And speaking of the Captain, reprints of our articles on him now form part of the official Captain Beefheart hype kit.

What has happened to the Gates of Dawn - erstwhile regular advertisers in our pages? The answer - everything. Plagued by Customs officers, bad payers, and Revenue men, the final absurdity was a letter from the head postmaster of Warrington, warning them that prosecution was imminent as a result of their sending obscene matter through the post. What was the root of this heinous offence? A postcard made from a page of Oz, nothing more. Amazing isn't it?

Elektra-ites will be delighted to learn that the Revelation newsletter, which was very helpful to us in our early days, is to re-commence from the beginning of next year.

If anyone has been infuriated by no-one answering our phone, we apologise. We're also repentant about the time it's taking for letters to be answered. The problem was that Jackie (who, as described on the title page, is indispensable) was ill. The Caddington doctor diagnosed the ailment as back-ache caused by an over-

fat mattress, and proscribed codeine. A day later, she was rushed to hospital for blood transfusions, and all kinds of problems and treatment. So much for local quacks. But we are all back to normal now... except that this issue is a week late. Again, we're really sorry.

Thanks very much to Liz, without whose assistance I would have gone crazy (crazier).

"Elvis is still king!" say Transmutation, one of our distributors, whose ace work is doing wonders for our circulation.

Not two miles from here, down a twisting lane, is a dome of plastic entertainment called Cesar's Palace, devised to entertain the Vauxhall nouveau riche. Next week they have Tiny Tim - guaranteed to draw every hip-and-groovy-swing-er for a radius of about 50 miles I should think.

Next month, among other things, we have articles on Arthur Lee and Love, and Leonard Cohen. Take it easy.

CTA

In Chicago they were called The Big Thing (pronounced Big Ting back there, they say), a name given them by the Syndicate. They were mohair-suited and choreographed and pompadoured and earning long bread in meat butcher town, averaging close to \$2000 a week. But the dues they paid were heavy ones. An expensive cologne set they gave a club-owner for Christmas was raffled the same night (in front of

them) by the ungrateful owner. Walt Perry, the woodwind player who has a degree from DePaul University in orchestral clarinet and had studied with members of the Chicago Symphony, was, in his words, "baseball-batted around a parking lot outside one of the clubs." Others in the band had seen waitresses worked over with bicycle chains and shot. The money was good, but there wasn't a hell of a lot of class around.

So they signed a contract with an old school chum, Jim Guercio.

Guercio had been in Dick Clark's road tour band (along with some of the CTA), had been one of the early Mothers of Invention, had written hit songs for Chad and Jeremy, had produced four Top 10 singles for the Buckingham. (And currently is producing Blood, Sweat and Tears.) As their personal manager, he bought them one-way tickets to Los Angeles. Goodbye Mafia and \$2000 a week; hello sunshine and poverty.

"It's a groove, man," said one of the seven two months (and a

limited number of jobs) after landing here. "The music scene is stagnant in Chicago. Another six or seven months and the group would have broken up. It's too easy to fall into that easy money thing, and we wanted something deeper than that. We'd rather be here and work once a week than there working every night. L.A. breeds creativity. We aren't living high, but Jim (Guercio) is paying all the bills. All we have to do is play. You can't beat that."

When he said this, four of the seven were living together with a road manager (and no road) in a small frame house a short walk from the Vedanta Temple in the Hollywood Hills; the remaining three lived around the corner. (And the Illinois Speed Press, another group signed to Guercio, lived next door.)

The living room of the house was stacked with amplifiers, rehearsing three to five hours daily, leaving only occasionally to perform at the Free Press birthday party, at Brucemas, at two of those KRLA "Sock-hops" in Pasadena, at the Whiskey. They were getting ready to record an album, and so what if the frequency of gigs didn't match their track record in hood-town.

Personnel Department, Credentials Section:

1. Walt Perry, already mentioned, has 14 years with a woodwind in his lips.

2. Danny Seraphine, drumming 10 years, studied with a member of the CBS orchestra in Chicago, now is working with Louis Bellson.

3. James Carter, on trombone and composing much of the band's original material, has three years of music education at DePaul and Quincy College behind him, as well as work with the Bobby Christian and Ted Weems Orchestras, Bill Russo's Chicago

Jazz Ensemble and his own jazz quintet.

4. Terry Kath, eight years on guitar with assorted Chicago rock groups, is now contributing original songs and provides, besides lead guitar, the harder of the three strong voices.

5. Pete Cetera, on bass, played with Chicago's top rock band (the Exceptions) for more than six years, provides the second lead voice.

6. Bob Lamm, on keyboard, studied music composition for two years at Roosevelt University, studied string bass with the bassist for the Chicago Symphony, has the third (deeper, gentler) voice, also composes.

7. Lee Loughgana, trumpet, studied two years at DePaul and two years at the Chicago Conservatory College.

There is no one star in this band; all are equally good, and the problem that corrodes slow or fast so many groups—ego—seems as far away today at the Mafia bars. The band is tight. The rock elements (electric piano, bass, guitar, drums) blend with the exceptional brass section comfortably. There is a lot of talk about bands "getting it together." The Chicago Transit Authority has getting it together, with more energy and efficiency than the transport system by the same name in Illinois could ever

hope to achieve.

To call the CTA a pop group with brass is to make them sound like the Tijuana Brass. Adding the word blues puts them in, say, Butterfield's bag, or that, perhaps, of Blood, Sweat and Tears. No... pushing the CTA into any one cubbyhole is to deprive them of the uniqueness that is theirs. Whether they are duplicating note for note "Foxy Lady" by Hendrix or "Sunshine of Your Love" by the Cream, or they are performing their own 25-minute-long, three-part sonata, "A World Apart," they are unlike anyone or anything else. There's a refreshing sound here, a symphonic sound—with properly integrated chord and rhythm changes—smashing into your mind Vesuvius-like.

"We're a contemporary conglomeration of all idioms," says Jim Carter. "Call it contemporary rock, borrowing from jazz."

The others in the room say, "Don't call it anything" and "Yeah... okay" and "Huh?"

There is a Latin beat in part of their rendition of Spencer Davis' "I'm a Man." The horns enter growling and the electric piano provides the sound of a European police car in the bridge of their highly imaginative arrangement of "Unchain My Heart." Feed-

back makes a spare and tasty appearance in the same tune, in "Gimme Some Lovin'" and "Liberation." The flute, almost buried in heavy accompaniment (sadly), contributes an occasional pastoral touch. The "rock section" is deep in blues in one song, while the brass cools it... then the horns take the lead and the rhythm falls back. Behind it all is one of the tightest drummers in town. Some of the lyric content is relatively uninspired ("I need you right here with me/Don't leave me in misery/Girl, you know I would cry/If you split and said goodbye"), but it doesn't seem to matter much. As variant as the elements may seem, they fit as if each tune were presented with the same satisfaction you feel when you push that final piece into an extremely complicated jigsaw puzzle.

And if this all sounds like a group designed for listening pleasure only, forget it. When they played the Whiskey the first time (in late August), no matter what they played, the dance floor was packed continuously.

End of jowely praise.
Up the CTA. Down the Mafia.

by Jerry Hopkins.
from Zero/LA Free Press (UPS).

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Middle Earth gets it together

"In one sense" said Paul Waldman "Middle Earth Records have got a ready-made audience. We know our customers from the Covent Garden and Round House days and they know and trust us to give them value for money, with a surprise or two thrown in. But in another sense we have a more difficult job, because our product is going on general sale. Pye salesmen; hard-headed pop record executives are looking over our shoulders; we are acutely aware that we have to make the operation pay its way. When we have achieved this happy state, we will have the freedom to really strike out and experiment". Of the two Waldman Brothers, Paul is the careful diplomat, Brian his younger brother is the dynamo, full of bounce and sound commercial sense. Number three in the triumvirate is Dave Howson. He considers himself absolutely one with the Middle Earth paying customers.

One way or another, the formation and launching on October 31st of Middle Earth Records is the first step back into the arena for Britain's foremost progressive pop promotion outfit, which has gone literally to earth since March this year.

"It might seem" says Howson "that the bone of good bands has been picked pretty clean by the major disc companies, not to mention Elektra, Island, Liberty, Blue Horizon and Transatlantic, but we have been pretty lucky with the two heavy groups who have kept faith with us, Arcadium and Writing on the Wall. Their trust in us will pay off, because we manage and present them live as well as record them, so this is a good example of the kind of extra we can add to our recording activity. Anyone will tell you that these are two groups making it very strong on the live circuit. The third group in our first releases is The Wooden O, brainchild of composer/arranger James Harpham, a jazz group playing recorders, who add that element of unexpected Middle Earth spice to the proceedings".

What will the expectant Middle Earther hear as the stylus drops onto the run-in grooves of the first LPs bearing that marvellous fiery symbol? Arcadium first with "Breathe Awhile", a five-man outfit, a co-operative group (on paper) in fact led and driven by the massive melancholy of Greek singer/writer Miguel Sergides. A singer to rate with Family's Roger Chapman, Sergides (or Big Mig as he is known by the group) take us through enormous agonised arias of personal loss and bewilderment, death, suicide and such. The lead guitar and organ of brothers Bob and Alan Ellwood amplify and decorate the emotive songs, taking off on duets which are as inventive and exciting as anything you are likely to hear. In

John Parker the group have a drummer with mind and muscle and in Graham Best's bass melodic and elegant correctness. On the whole music which has the power and danger of a slowly-closing steel trap. A good buzz.

Writing on the Wall's first LP "The Power of the Picts" shows to advantage the raw-boned nastiness of a blasphemous bunch of hard Scottish brutes who in the words of organist Bill Scott like to really 'belt it out'. Coarse, hoarse, abusive and inarticulate louts on stage and off: I doubt if one of them has had a change of underwear in months (indeed if any of them wear any). Is this what Bonnie Prince Charlie fought for? This record is a treasure of tongue-in-cheek violence and squarely in the centre of British "Fuck You!". Added to the list of Broughton, Deviants and Arthur Brown: but special. Play it loud; but play it.

And what of Wooden O? James Harpham is an eccentric young musician/composer with a noble beard who makes a kind of lunatic slurping on the great bass recorder. He persuaded Christopher Taylor (of Indo-Jazz Fusions and L.S.O.) to put aside his flute and play recorder with him and Arthur Watts to come out of the twilight or session bass-playing to form this trio. Wooden O? James refers you to the prologue to Henry 5th. The Globe theatre of course - a tiny theatre for big events.

They mostly play extremely inventive jazz variations on Jacobean themes, with occasional harp and mandolin from guests David Snell and Hugo D'Alton. The real turn-on track is an amazing distillation of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F; even after Brubeck, The Nice, The Swingles and Loussier, this is witty, clean and irresistible. The one Harpham original called "Maypole", represents another funkier direction for this unit. The nice thing about the rest of the tracks is the way the group spans about three hundred years of music, from Thomas Tallis to Kirk, Coltrane and Messiaen.

Spice of a tangy, sweet kind as the Wooden O is, nothing prepares you for Sweet Plum. Daughter Cass? Fourteen stone of solid Scottish soul? Underground bubble-gum? Undergum? The only reaction to "Lazy Day" can be "they must be joking"! and of course, knowing Middle Earth, it's highly likely that they are; and even more likely that the joke will work. Yes, let's have more of this kind of good-hearted sending up. Welcome to Middle Earth records. Wish it well, buy the albums and hope they will continue as optimistically as their first product.



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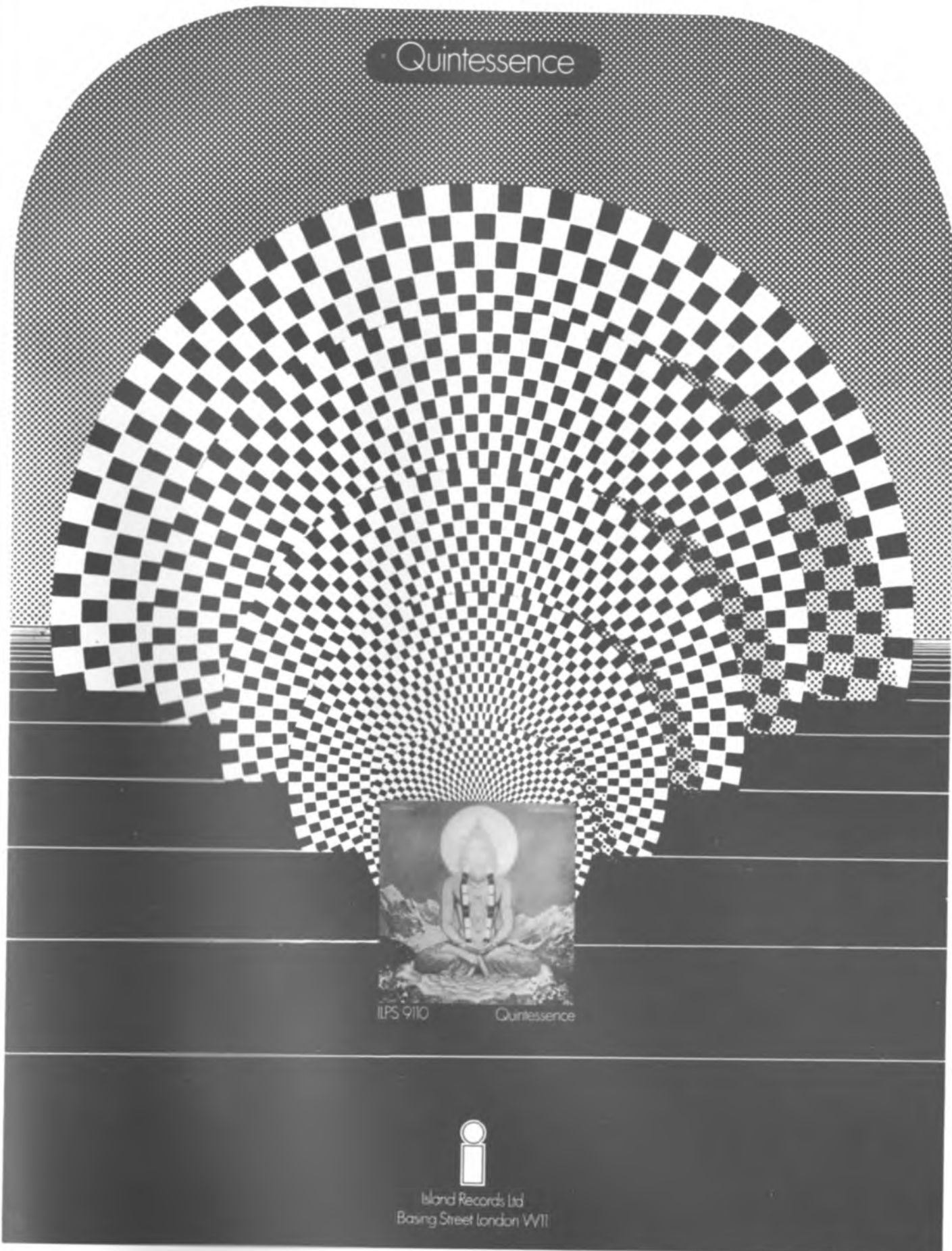
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