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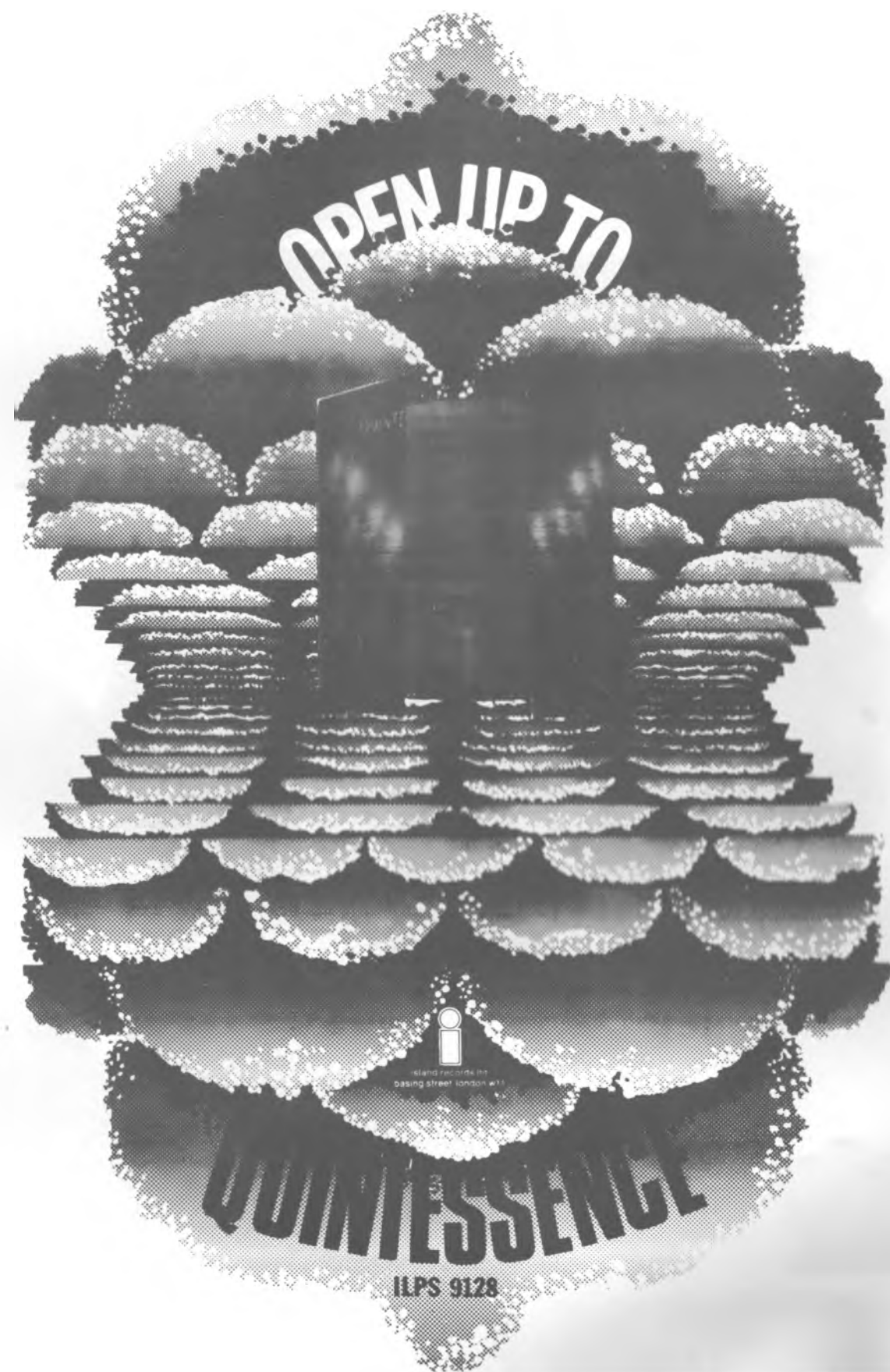
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USA
60c

no13 june/july



The Grateful Dead



THANK CHRIST FOR THE BOMB

A NEW ALBUM BY GROUNDHOGS

*In 1914 a war began
A million soldiers lent a hand
Weren't many planes to give support
Hand to hand was the way they fought.*

*Young men were called up for the Cause
For King and Country and The Cross
In their naivety they thought
That it was for glory, so they'd been taught*

*In 1939 once again
There came the sound of Marching Men
Occupying European Lands
All the way up to North French Sands*

*In the final year of that war
There were these big bangs that settled the score
Against Japan who'd joined the fight
The Rising Sun didn't look so bright*

*Since that day it's been stalemate
Everyone's scared to obliterate
So it seems for Peace we can thank The Bomb
So I say Thank Christ for The Bomb*

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That the Dead's records never really took off here was probably a combination of Pye's inability to realise that there were other markets besides 'family listening', the usual failure of disc jockeys (apart from the obvious few) to recognise good music, the general lack of publicity and media exposure, and the incompetence of various promoters who were just too inefficient to bring the band over. You see, no-one in England really knew much about the Dead... the pop press weren't pushed to write about them, and probably knew nothing about their music, lifestyle, attitude or anything anyway. And a lot of what filtered across the Atlantic; ie the only bits and pieces that one could base any knowledge on, was either wildly inaccurate, wildly exaggerated, or else merely opinion... and more often than not, the opinion of someone more qualified to discuss Bing Crosby, or at least the music of a different generation.

For example, one of the first references to the group that I can remember was a mention on the Third Programme. Kenneth Rexroth, one of the speakers in a series about "America Today", in a programme about dissent, bracketed the Dead with the Sopwith Camel (certainly one of the weakest of the SF groups) and dismissed their music with a few sweeping generalisations about the ineffectuality of revolution in rock lyrics.

Then, in his review of the '67 Monterey Festival, Downbeat's Barret Hansen talked about "uncontrolled cascades of notes building up to the threshold of pain". "Certainly it mesmerizes the freaks, which is what the Dead get paid for doing" he said "but it's kind of a slipshod, lazy way to play music". Quite amazing. He completely misconstrued the attitude and entire approach of the band.

All in all, then, we had to rely on their music to tell us about them.

So, what about the Dead?

I got chatting with Pig Pen, organist, percussionist and vocalist extraordinaire, at the reception Warner Brothers held for them when they came over for the Hollywood Festival and he was delighted to sit and talk rather than do the tiresome rounds of introductions which the others were going through. "We never get involved in anything like this at home... all these people look like they've been put in here and told how they've got to

act". I've got to admit I was taken aback. I was expecting to see a massive, hairy, bear-like hulk... aggressive and rowdy, as depicted in the legends and stories about them. Nothing of the sort. It looks as though he's lost about half his bodily bulk, half his facial hair, and altogether I reckon he's one of the most charming, polite and quiet people I have ever met.

"You're blowing your image", I told him. "Everyone's expecting you to leap around like a brawling wild man".

"Oh I can get wild sure enough", he said "but usually it's with the rest of the band". I'd read about these internal arguments that threatened to break the group up every so often. "Oh we've got past the stage of thoughts of breaking up. What usually happens is that we go into town, to a saloon, shoot some pool or play cards. Then we accuse one another of cheating and start fighting".

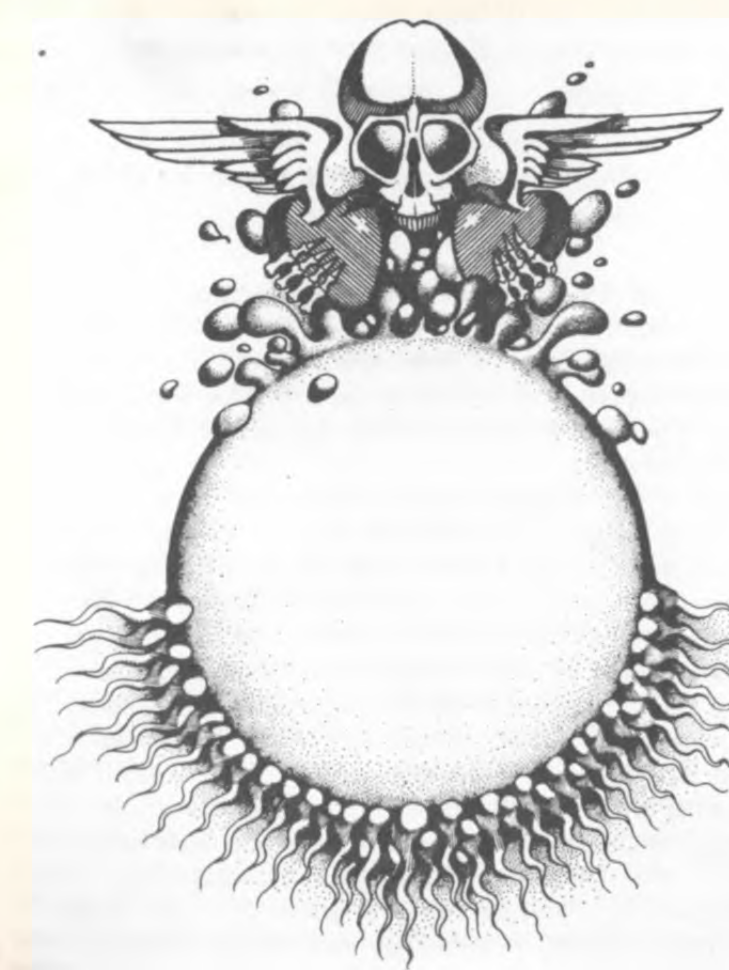
All this sounds a bit like a Virginian TV addict's fantasy, but the Dead are like a bunch of cowboys. 3 of them have ranches and all ride horses a lot. They all wear these excessively pointed, stout leather boots. Pig Pen took pains to explain how they were pointed to enter a stirrup with minimum difficulty, and the

high cut-back heels were to prevent the foot slipping through. "I wear them all the time - you can't beat a good, solid pair of boots; I've had these for 2 years and the soles are hardly worn at all. I've got no time for foppish clothes - I like them to be functional. I mean look at those snakeskin boots that guy's got on; you might just as well wrap your feet in paper. Like, if I was on the run from the police who were chasing me through the forest", (a very bizarre piece of fantasy, I thought) "I'd be OK because I'd be dressed in the right clothes. That's why I wear the same stuff all the time". The back of his denim Levi jacket was ornately decorated, he had a little stash bag hanging from his belt, this battered corduroy Rambling Jack cowboy hat, and his hair was pulled into an elastic banded pigtail. (Compare the appearance of today's rock star with those of the fifties; there's Jerry Garcia looking like something out of the Bowery, with his dark stubbled face and paunch. Then remember Frankie Avalon).

Pig Pen was tired. They'd flown direct from San Francisco to London, over the North Pole ("just an ordinary TWA flight") and he hadn't had much sleep. He hadn't seen much of London either, but he'd got the hang of our monetary system - to a degree. "Well the first thing you've got to do, is the Sonny and Cher trip" I told him. "All the Americans do that so that they can tell the papers about it... that means seeing Buckingham Palace (bonus points if you see the Queen), a London policeman with his funny hat, a double decker bus, Carnaby Street..." "I don't want to see any of that stuff" he replied, "but I do want to find a good cutter; I want to get a nice long, open-out razor... and a shaving mug".

Pig Pen.

How did it all begin? Well, towards the end of the 'folk era' of 62-65, a lot of folkies started forming groups - John Sebastian, the Mamas and Papas, Country Joe and the Fish, Jim McGuinn; and in Palo Alto, a community of about 30,000 on the road between San Francisco and San Jose, 3 such musicians Ron McKernan (PigPen), Bob Weir and Jerry Garcia did likewise, starting a band called The Warlocks. Previously they had been Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions (a similar set up to Country Joe's jug-style band before they plugged



in to become the Fish), but gigs were falling off, until a music store owner volunteered to sponsor their electrification. But the Warlocks, when they started in mid 1965 didn't exactly fit into, or dig the available work, which was the Byrds type Hollywood club circuit, so it was fortunate, just when they found the limitations of conventional venues becoming an unbearable drag, that they met up with, and got mixed up with Ken Kesey's bunch of LSD disciples, the Merry Pranksters, and Owsley Stanley III.

In his book "The Electric Cool Aid Acid Test" (an essential book to anyone who is interested in San Franciscan music, but still only available here in hardback), Tom Wolfe describes how the Warlocks, or the Grateful Dead as they became a few months later, became the Pranksters' travelling band, playing at the Acid tests where they invited the world (or the people of Southern California anyway) to sample the esoteric delights of LSD.

Kesey had first run into Jerry Garcia in 1962, soon after he had discovered the beneficial effects of acid. Garcia was one of the local beatniks who used to crash the parties where LSD laced venison stew was the main dish, followed by a summer night on a mattress stuffed into the fork of an oak tree, watching the stars and the sky. But because of his youth and his inability to contribute to the parties, he was an unwelcome guest.

It was another story towards the end of 1965 when Garcia's group supplied all the music for Kesey's Acid Tests, and instigated the music which was aptly termed "acid rock". Everyone was happy - the heads really dug the music and the Dead really dug the freedom of playing what they wanted for as long as they wanted.

The series of Acid Tests culminated in the Trips Festival of January 1966, which was the start of the Haight Ashbury era. The festival was a 'huge wild carnival' which inspired Bill Graham to open the Fillmore a fortnight later, and a new multi media, weekly psychedelic dance hall genre was initiated. "The heads" says Wolfe, "were amazed at how big their own ranks had become - and euphoric at the fact that they could come out in the open, high as baboons, and neither the sky nor the law would fall down on them".

Acid remained legal in California until October 1966, and Augustus Owsley Stanley III, or Owsley as he was notoriously known as throughout America, manufactured millions of dollars worth; several million capsules and tablets. His tabs were the perfection by which others were judged, and as well as becoming the legendary 'White Rabbit', he became very rich. A lot of his bread, he channelled into the Grateful Dead - as well as being a chemical genius, his hands had a way with electricity - and bought them more equipment than they knew how to handle ... every device on the market became part of their sound. Says Wolfe, "The sound went down so many microphones and hooked through so many mixers and variable lags and blew up in so many amplifiers and rolled around in so many speakers and fed back down so many microphones, it came on like a chemical refinery. There was something wholly new and deliriously weird in the Dead's sound".

When Kesey split for Mexico, to evade American 'justice', the Dead went off to LA to live with Owsley, but discovered that his way was too erratic for the partnership to succeed. Owsley had a strange past; he had been expelled from school for consuming alcohol, been busted for issuing rubber cheques, arrested for



The Dead in early 1967; Pig Pen, Lesh, Sommers, Garcia, Weir.



Jerry Garcia & Bob Weir in early 1967. (photo by David Flooke of Crawdaddy).



Phil Lesh in early 1969. (photo by Ken Greenberg of Crawdaddy).

disorderly conduct and subsisted on unemployment money for some time before insinuating himself into the nascent hippie scene with his project to benefit the community by manufacturing as much acid as possible.

To the Dead, Owsley was a financial angel as well as supervising their sound at gigs, but things didn't go too well and they split back to Marin County near San Francisco in mid 1966, reverting to standard Fender amps and allowing Owsley to cart away all his speakers, amps, tapes and mikes. I asked PigPen about the split, and the equipment, because I'd heard that the Owsley stuff produced a very loud but very muddy sound anyway.

"Well, when it was working properly, it was really good ... the best in the world, literally. But that wasn't

too often. You see Owsley had this time lag - it took him so long to get things sorted out, and we couldn't put up with that if we were to function as a band. Even now our equipment is standard stuff, but we've had it altered around a bit to make it more reliable". As well as that, the Californian authorities were passing legislation to make LSD illegal and the Dead didn't want Owsley's business to be too closely connected with the band's work. But there's no rancour separating them; he still hangs around with the Dead periodically and gets credited on their albums, but PigPen hadn't seen him for some time, he said.

In the last half of 1966, the Dead moved into a big house at 710 Ashbury, right in the middle of San Francisco's growing head centre, by which time Garcia



The Dead in early 1970:
Tom Constanten (who left soon after) Jerry Garcia Pig Pen
Bob Weir Phil Lesh Mickey Hart (who joined in April 68)
Bill Kreutzmann

The cover photograph shows the Grateful Dead as they are now.

(then popularly known as Captain Trips) was practically the local patron saint, and they'd become one of the city's three most popular bands, but one still without a recording contract. Their attitude to this side of the business was shared by Quicksilver, who's manager Ron Polte, when questioned, said "We're all waiting for an honest record company that we can talk with", and they resisted all the offers of the slick suited LA record company executives who came up snooping for lucrative contracts. Another thing: "If the industry wants us, they're gonna take us the way we are"... Bob Weir, 1966.

Their first album eventually appeared on Warner Brothers in early 1967, and though one could assume that they had found their honest company, all but a few critics either attacked it, or

wondered where the excitement of their live performances had gone. Typical comments read; "For some reason it succeeded in capturing only a small fraction of the excitement they shower on the listener in a concert performance". Loyal Crawdaddy Magazine loved it of course; "... pure energy flow ... West Coast kineticism developed to a fine art".

Their second album "Anthem of the Sun" was very long in appearing (Summer 68) and it leaked out that the Dead and Warner Brothers were at loggerheads, with much dissatisfaction and animosity on both sides. In the course of recording, the Dead sacked their producer Dave Hassinger and finished the production themselves, using over 20 taped performances to achieve what they wanted.

Aoxomoxoa, their third album (readers of Zap Comix will know that Rick Griffin is a pallindrome freak - hence the nonsense title), was presented to Warners as a completed entity, sleeve and all; but their last to be released here, Live Dead, is probably the most successful in terms of capturing their live excitement. "It completely eclipses the faults of their previous albums... well mixed, completely non-commercial in approach, and completely free flowing" said the LA Free Press.

What was the cause of the mutual displeasure between them and Warners? Pig Pen; "Well they wanted us to give them a hit and we didn't, and we wanted them to stop advising us and promote us more than they did. Let's say that was basically it; but I try to keep clear of those kind of hassles".

"We're not singing psychedelic drugs, we're singing music. We're musicians, not dope fiends" said Bob Weir back in the past. But what about their supposedly overt use of euphorants? The Dead have been endlessly described as drug freaks (or experimenters, let's say) of the first order. The Rolling Stone article gave detailed descriptions of cocaine snorting and nitrous oxide inducing, and they were involved in mass dope busts in late 67 and just recently in New Orleans.

"Were you arrested in New Orleans?" I asked Pig.

"No, I wasn't", he replied.

"How was that?"

"Because they didn't find anything in my room. They came in and went over the place, then searched me, then the room again, but they didn't find anything. I told them that I didn't use drugs, and eventually they went away saying that I was either telling the truth, or else I was mighty sneaky".

"Were you telling the truth?"

"Yes, I just don't use drugs anymore, because it just doesn't help me at all. Marijuana makes me act stupid, and the few times I've taken LSD weren't too good. So now I stick to drinking and cigarettes ... they're my only vices".

PigPen, amazing character who almost left the Dead a couple of years ago, but got persuaded to stay.

PigPen, asking me how far the Festival site is, and how near it is to Manchester. His grandmother was born there, he tells me ... used to make military uniforms in the First World War. And how can he get to Dublin ... because a lot of his ancestors came from there. "There's a lot of Irishman in me" he says.

Articles you read about Dead performances are invariably based on comparison with previous appearances - like "they were sloppy and didn't get it on like they did last time they played the park" and "as usual, they took about half of their marathon set to warm up". Well at the Hollywood Music Festival, most of us in the audience were witnessing the spectacle of a Dead set for the first time in our lives, and only the records, played till the grooves had worn out, served as a foretaste or comparison.

Of course, the music they played was for the most part completely different. "Wait till you hear our new things," PigPen had told me, "we've gone right back to simpler, more straight forward type of stuff". And so they had. The traditional Americana that has always been peeping through their music has suddenly become prominent; traditional blues (I know you Rider - variously known as Woman Blues and Circle Round the Sun), traditional

folk (a 900 Miles derivative), traditional type country (Riding that train, high on cocaine! - well I said traditional type), neo-traditional cowboy epics (Me and My Uncle, the John Phillips/Dino Valente classic), traditional pop (Good Lovin', Not Fade Away) and traditional R & B (Too hot to handle). Most of this material represents the new style Dead music and will presumably comprise the new album "Working Mans Dead". The pop stuff, they've always been doing - I remember them saying in an interview "We'll play our half hour version of 'In the Midnight Hour' for anyone who'll listen".

Then they played a superb "medley" consisting of most of the Live Dead album. Incredible. And I don't use that word lightly. It was incredible... the awe, the music, the excitement, the whole scene.

Sure, vocally they are weak; Garcia, who does most of the singing has a reedy, most unforceful, undistinguished voice, and neither Lesh nor Weir are too hot either. On the other hand, Pig Pen almost totally obscured by his giant organ (that sounds suspicious) swings into his vocals with tremendous gusto and turns cruddy ancient pop songs into driving, classic performances. But musically they cut most other rock bands to ribbons.

The solid red Gibson looked so small and flimsy in Jerry Garcia's hands - like it would just break like balsa if he squeezed it - but it seemed that every time he touched it, beautiful, clear, ringing notes poured out; and on 'Me & My Uncle' he was just fucking fabulous. Phil Lesh's bass playing was superbly inventive, and Bob Weir was nice as a complementary lead guitarist. As they began each piece, the three of them zigzagged from the back to the mikes at the front of the stage, squeezing past the two drummers, Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, who hammered phrases at each other and occasionally attacked us with other percussive devices like gongs and pistol shots.

I can't really agree with one appraisal of the Dead - that their music is "a synaesthetic assemblage of disparate ingredients and tonal colours whose progression from start to finish is non-focused but dynamic" - because I don't really know what all that means, but I do know that I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon.

Before the festival, I'd spoken to this San Franciscan cat who had told me he was dubious about attending. There had been a full moon a couple of days before, and now, with the moon in Capricorn, things were bound to go wrong; at least, he reckoned, it would be freaky if not disastrous. "The last time the signs were like this" he said, "Quicksilver's roadie nearly hanged himself with an amp cord". Well, Wall Street had its worst day for seven years, but the Dead were totally magnificent.

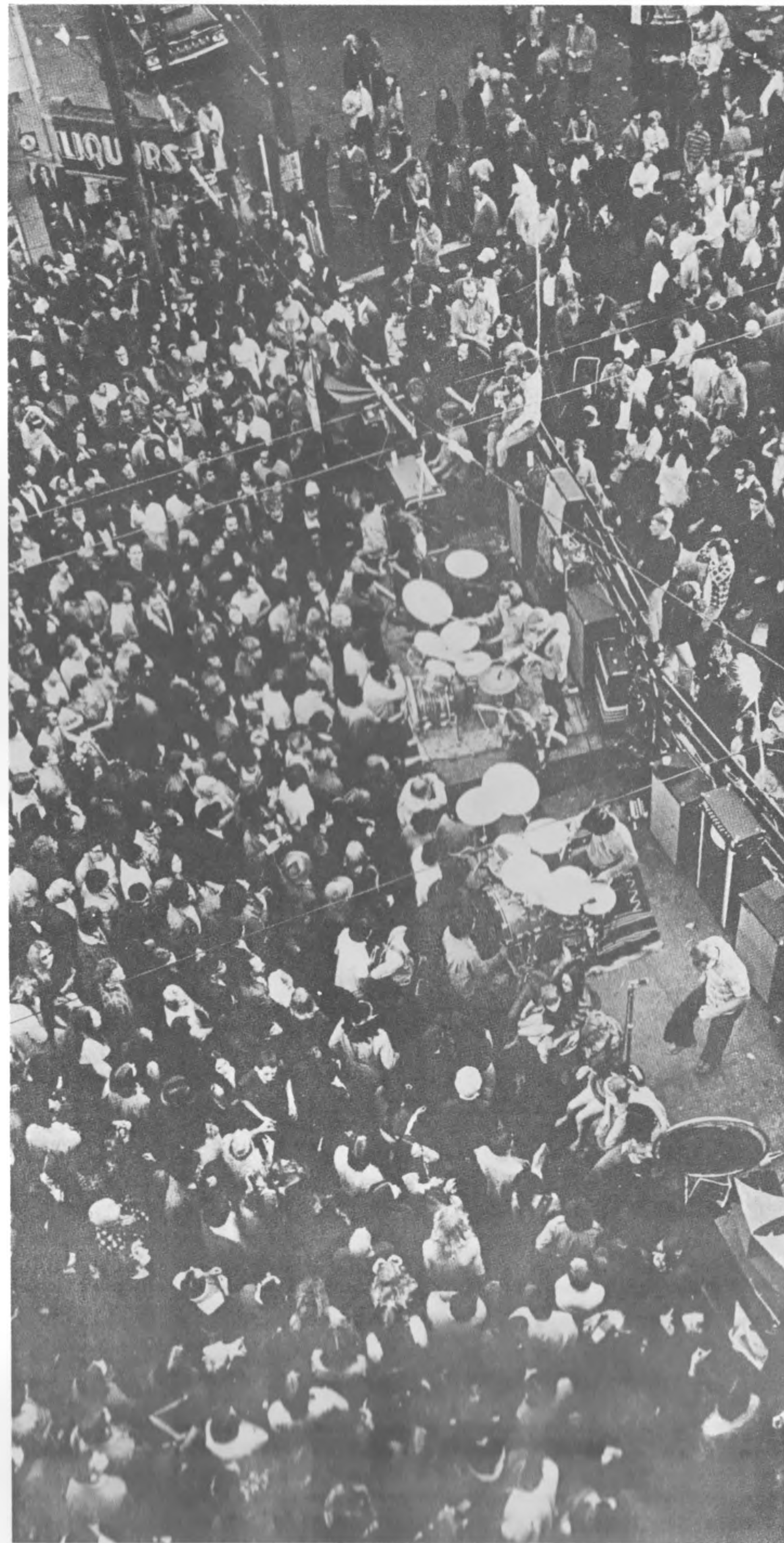
Mac Garry

Photo of Jerry Garcia in centre pages by Pete Sanders.

Further reading:
Rolling Stone No 40 (the best ever article on the Dead)
The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test
by Tom Wolfe.

Questions:
Who is Robert Hunter?
Where is Tom Constanten?
Who was Reddy Kilgore?
Why did Bill Sommers become Bill Kreutzmann?

Who are Mcgannahan Skjelleyfett?
The best answer wins prizes!



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TALKING WITH TOM PAXTON



Z: Some of the songs on your new album are quite old; like 'Cindy's Cryin' you wrote in 1966, and 'I have nothing but time' was even earlier. Is this an indication that you are writing fewer songs lately? I mean, I found a quote where you said that you'd written 105 songs in 18 months back in 1963.

T: Well, I've been trying to record 'Cindy' for ages. I've done it three separate times, but I was never satisfied with the way it came out. In a way I felt that I had to record it, because I kind of like the song... and this time we got a recording that I like. 'I have nothing but time' is something I'd forgotten about, but as I was assembling this album, somehow it came up.

Z: You obviously spend more time on each song these days.

T: Yes, but also I'm a lot busier and don't have as much time to write.

Z: How do you go about creating a song? Does a particular idea or concept generate a desire to find a vehicle for that concept?

T: Well, the way I create songs now is the same way that porcupines make love... very carefully. I've learned that when I get an idea the worst thing that I can do is sit down and start writing. At least, for me that's the worst thing to do. I've learned now to like lock on the idea and let it run around my head for a few days, and question it all the time, saying 'Has this been said? Why say it? What's the best way of saying it? Is there some kind of slant which would clarify the whole thing?' And when I've kind of got that out in my head, then I sit down and try to write. So I'm a much slower writer than I used to be, but happier.

Z: And they are 'songs rather than sermons' these days.

T: Yes... when you write propaganda type songs you usually wind up preaching to the converted, and what a bore that is. I want to get to as many people as I can, and I want to write songs which I don't have to drop after 3 weeks because they're not topical anymore. I want the song to be as good in 10 years as it is now. The most topical thing I've done lately is 'Forest Lawns', which is about the commercialisation of funerals, which is a really grotesque thing. It's a funny song, and it'll still be funny in 10 years time.

Z: So you're bringing humour back into your records after its absence from 'The things I notice now'?

T: Well it's pretty difficult to write humorous songs, but I love to make people laugh. There are three sort of funny songs on the new one - 'Molly Bloom', 'Saturday Night' and 'Forest Lawns'.

Z: You've written several songs poking fun at organised religion and the state of the Church - like 'Talking God is dead' and 'The Cardinal'. Have you considered recording them, or do you think it's a bit dangerous to make such dogmatic condemnations on record?

T: Well, a talking blues has got to be really good, really exceptional if you're going to record it... usually they're just performance numbers. 'Talking God is dead' wasn't that good, and 'The Cardinal' was so topical (about Cardinal Spellman) that I thought most people who bought the album wouldn't have a clue what it was all about.

Z: Several of your songs concern neo-nazism - like 'We didn't know' and '1000 Years'; do you see Nazism as a rising threat?

T: They seem to have temporarily run

their course in Germany... the resurgent far right thing doesn't seem to be gaining any ground there - they lost the last elections. But they're watching; and all those songs were intended to do was say 'Never forget. Maybe forgive... but never forget.'

Z: How about accompaniment? What did you think of the orchestration on 'Morning Again' in comparison with 'The Things I notice now'?

T: Generally speaking, I still like both, but the orchestration is getting better. It's coming to fit what I'm doing better... on the new LP, the accompaniment is very closely tailored.

Z: I thought that songs like 'About the children' were beautiful, whereas 'Now that I've taken my life' and several others on 'Morning Again' were ruined by clod-hopping arrangements.

T: Yes, I didn't like the tympani on that; and some of it was badly recorded, I think.

Z: You changed producers after the first three albums and Peter Siegal did the next two... was that because Paul Rothchild was getting too heavily involved with the Doors, Rhinoceros and so on?

T: Well, yes. It was just the way things went logistically. Paul was doing the Doors and was primarily working on the West coast, and he was so heavily booked that there was no chance of our getting together.

Z: But Peter Siegal was, I imagine, a sympathetic guy for you to work with, because he came up through folk bands and so on.

T: Yes that's right, but actually I've got yet another producer on Number 6, Milt



Okun. He's been a great friend of mine for years, and he's just become my musical director... supervising all rehearsals, and keeping an eye on things.

Z: Did you meet much derision when you started to sing your anti hard drug songs, like 'The Hooker', 'Third & McDougall', 'Cindy's Cryin' and so on? I ask you this because when people make assertions that certain things aren't good, they are attacked on the basis that having had no personal experience of the situation, how are they qualified to draw conclusions.

T: I've never tried putting my head on the tracks of the subway, simultaneously gripping the third rail while the train rolls over me. Never having tried it, I'm not qualified to put it down? But, no, I haven't met anyone who's put me down for being against heroin... for a drug with so many users, it has precious few defenders. I think that heroin is an insidious goddamn thing, and I'm agin it - that's all there is to it. It should be obvious from one of my better known songs that I have nothing against marijuana, though oddly enough I haven't used it myself in months and months; I'm really off it... as a matter of personal taste I prefer Scotch Whisky, which is my personal way to Nirvana. But I'm all in favour of grass - good God, it's the most harmless stuff around.

Z: Your songs link heroin and prostitution a lot. Is there a strong connection?

T: Well, in the States, with the prices being what they are, it's not uncommon for someone to need 100 dollars a day to support their habit. So where are they going to find that sort of money? It's either by theft - which is how most of the men get it - or by shoplifting, or by being hookers. A very high percentage of the streetwalker

type hookers, not the high priced whores, are junkies. There are over 100,000 heroin addicts in New York alone, you know.

Z: In your early career, you met a lot of criticism from thick straights; for instance I remember an article which accused you of deliberate and calculated anti-Americanism and filth. Did you have much trouble?

T: Not really - just the odd case. But the other week I was singing in Providence, Rhode Island, and some far right student body were handing out mimeographed leaflets comparing me with the Black Panthers, David Dellinger, and so on. I was quite flattered. I thought 'My God, what have I said to make them think that?... and how can I say more of it?'

Z: I remember reading about how some soldiers had got up and walked out of a Judy Collins concert when she sang your 'Lyndon Johnson told the nation'.

T: Yeah, that was funny... tickled me to death. I wrote that song to make the listener laugh, because sometimes laughter is the only defence against an impulse to scream oneself into insanity.

Z: That article you wrote about Folk Rot in Sing Out... do you still stand by it? (see reprint).

T: Yes; in that article, I was trying to make it clear that I wasn't making any judgement of Dylan at all - I have many things to say about Dylan, most of them favourable. What I was trying to say was that a phony tin pan alley bandwagon was being generated - a lot of shit was being sold as folk music. And it was just crap. I mean, I saw a full page record company ad in one of the trade papers at home, and it said 'Rock + Protest = Profits!'. And

that was just about the level of all that 'Eve of Destruction' type, breast-beating, egocentric nonsense. They were calling it folk, protest, rock, etc, and it was none of these... it was just garbage. And that is what I was trying to say.

Z: So you're glad that Dylan went electric when he did?

T: The way things have turned out, I think the world should be grateful that Dylan did pick up an electric guitar. It's transformed popular music, and had an effect on most major performers, including the Beatles. Yes, the fact that Dylan plugged in certainly changed music for the better, if you ask me.

Z: I know that you were joking, but in the sleeve note to 'I followed her into the West' you said 'I'm waiting for the folk-rock version'. Did it ever come?

T: No, but it's a good tip for somebody. The Byrds could do a lovely job on that song - so Roger McGuinn, if you're listening...

Z: A great many of your songs have been recorded by other people - how well do you think they were done... 'Mr Blue' by Clear Light, for instance?

T: That was wild - I liked it very much; a terrific piece of theatre. The Women-folk did a beautiful version of 'Last thing on my mind', and Peter Paul & Mary did superb, definitive versions of 'Zoo' and 'Marvellous Toy'.

Z: You're one of the few contemporary writers who specifically write songs for children. Are you still fascinated by the scope of the subject?

T: Well it's hard not to be when you've got two of your own. It's a neglected art I suppose... people should write more.

FOLK ROT

by Tom Paxton

©1965 SING OUT!

So you thought the Hootenanny craze was bad? So you cringed when some antiseptic, pepsodent-toothed moron knocked hell out of his guitar and sang about SUFFERIN' ON DE CHADN GANG? So you ran for the hills when the ALL-AMERICAN HOOTENANNY CAVALCADE OF FOLK STARS hit your town? You thought it might hurt folk music a bit? You spoke too soon, friend. Alongside the current "happening" the Ship-dippity Singers are virtual Friends of Old-Timey Music. "Where it's at" nowadays is with the new darling of the Top Forty types: folk rock.

One thing should be clear right away: it isn't folk, and if Bob Dylan hadn't led, fed and bred it no one would ever have dreamed of confusing it with folk music. Any time you hear some moron bleating:

"The school board says he can't come to school no more Unless he wears his hair like he wore it before.
The P.T.A. and all the mothers Say he oughta look like the others.
Home of the brave, land of the free,
Why won't you let him be what he wants to be."

A few more incisive thrusts like that should bring the whole Establishment down like a house of cards. At the center of it all is the aforementioned Bob Dylan, the Chief Oracle and Originator. Not only is he the All-hip (keep those threatening cards and letters coming in, folks) but the thundering herd in his wake has so ravaged and savaged his song bag that recordings of his songs by beat groups now number in the hundreds.

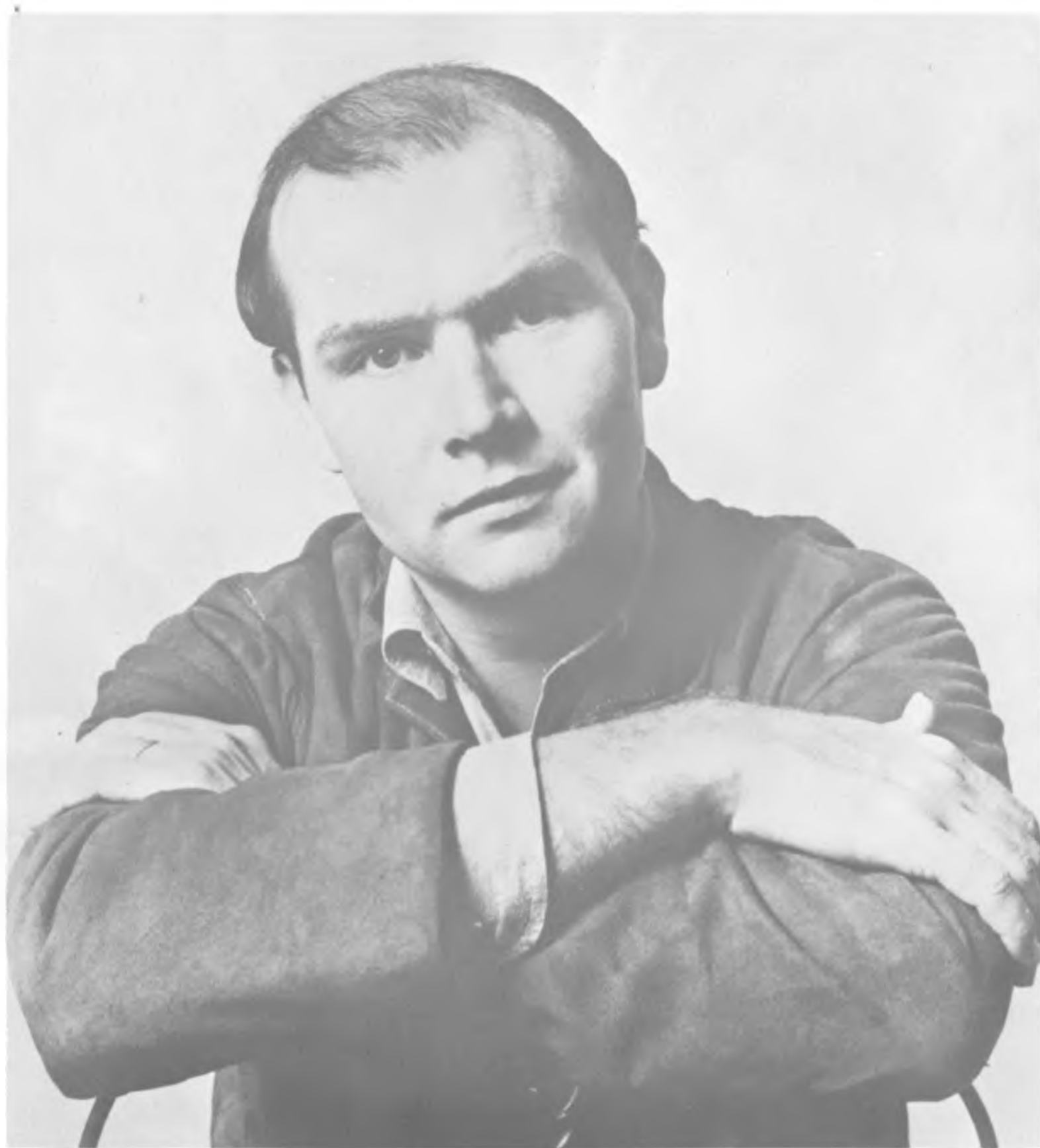
The question of why he took this road is academic. It could have been on the advice of his manager. It could have been at the urging of his parasites or at the behest of John Lennon of the Beatles, who introduced him to the screams of England. In the end though, it was his

choice and he decided that for him there were no more Hattie Carrolls. Bob Dylan plugged in and rocked.

Hanging desperately to his coat-tails are a swarm of beat groups, their hair grown hopelessly long and their expressions surly from long hours of practice. Unwilling to admit to the altogether normal desire to be rich and famous popular musicians (like the Beatles, who enjoy it enormously), they instead piously declare that they want to "get the message through." They want to be "where it's at." "Where it's at" is a euphemism for "rich".

Many of them, especially the ones who left folk music, explain that they want to reach "a larger audience." One group claims that if just one line of Mr. Tambourine Man gets through to the teenies it will all have been worth it. They are doomed to a disappointment which I trust they'll survive. For the sad fact is that although rock versions of "Blowin' In The Wind" have by now been danced to in nearly every lily-white frat house in the South, no great rush to sign up Negro "brothers" seems to have resulted. The fact that there has been a response by the young to these "protest" songs is no cause for rejoicing. Anyone who asks of these idols that they probe a bit deeper will be disappointed, because these songs never intended to tell them anything more than Mom and Dad don't understand them.

The form doesn't permit anything deeper. Nothing could be more ridiculous than to suppose that while swimming and frugging the kids are going to be contemplating Red China. They are going to dance and dance only and any apologist or pundit who would have you believe otherwise is putting you on. These protesters are protesting because it pays. It isn't folk, it isn't very good rock, it is fraudulent protest - but it does pay well. When it stops paying it will disappear. But by then all the money will have been made and we'll have to wait with bated breath to see what the king-makers will think of next.



TOM PAXTON

Z: Back in 1964 you said 'Ramblin Boy is still my favourite song I guess'. Has it been superseded?

T: Oh yes, it has. I still like 'Ramblin Boy' very much, but I would say that 'All night long' and 'Annie's going to sing her song' have become my favourites.

Z: Tradition is not such a readily obvious element in your work these days. Is that just the way your writing has evolved?

T: Well originally what I was reacting to was the honesty and unpretentiousness of traditional music. It was such a refreshing and critically important change from the pop music of my youth and adolescence... that was drivel. But lo and behold, we started to get honest popular music in the sixties, and at the same time I was living in an urban environment and becoming more of a city man. So gradually, though I never lost my respect and admiration for people like John Hurt and Doc Watson, I began to add new influences and reflect my own environment.

Z: I think the unpretentiousness of your work is one of the main reasons why you transcended the US folk boom of 63/65, whereas a lot of your contemporaries did not.

T: Maybe... but there was a hell of a lot of phony crap in that folk song boom.

Z: Most of it got onto that TV series 'Hootenanny', which never got across the Atlantic, thank God. You refused to appear on that didn't you?

T: Yes, for a number of reasons. For a start, it was a dreadful show... It was full of pop folk, commercialised quartets and so on, with the audiences neatly clap-

ping on the beat. It was altogether pretty embarrassing. Nevertheless, I could have really used the nationwide exposure, and my agency at the time succeeded in getting me lined up to do one episode. But a great many of us had banded together to boycott the show because the producers had refused to allow Pete Seeger on the programme. He was blacklisted for 'communism' and the producers went through a great deal of blatant hypocrisy; saying he wasn't blacklisted but had not been asked to appear because he couldn't hold an audience - the most incredible kind of crap. So a great number of us got together at the Village Gate and decided that until they had Pete Seeger on, we wouldn't go on - none of us. And that included people like Peter Paul & Mary, The Kingston Trio, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and so on... it critically damaged the show. I was a very small fish, but some of the others would have increased the viewing audience.

Z: Did the producers relent?

T: No.

Z: When you were living in Greenwich Village, in relatively hard times, you made a bit of bread by allowing one of your songs to be used on a TV commercial didn't you?

T: Yes - that was 'My dog's bigger than your dog' which was used in a dog food commercial. I wouldn't do it now, because I don't need the money; though I might conceivably let one of my songs be used intact. In this case they changed the words around to include the name of the dogfood, but it came at a perfect time - Midge and I had just got married, and suddenly here I had 2250 dollars. Some of my friends twitted me about it, but I just asked them to come

up and see our new furniture. It wasn't the most aesthetically rewarding part of my career.

Z: Greenwich Village used to be the core of the American folk world, but it's not anymore is it? What's happened to the impetus and enthusiasm which folk used to have... and the romantic aspects of it all?

T: There's been a split for many years, and things have gone back to where they were before the Kingston Trio. There are loyal followers of the New Lost City Ramblers and people like that, but there is no mass audience now, because folk music doesn't obviously and clearly relate to now. Of course, it does really, but it takes a little work on the part of the listener, and the audience doesn't really care for that, in this spoonfed age. So the traditional folk music scene goes its own unpretentious quiet way.

Then you have the urban folk music; the show business folk music, which is what I'm in, frankly, whether I like it or not. If I'm going to feed my family I've got to reach a broad audience, and I like a broad audience. In the remaining Village clubs, the singers have the same goals as I do.

There aren't so many causes now - we did trips to Hazard and to the South - but it's only love that anybody sings about now.

Z: Do you think that the folk movement had any effect on the areas of politics it entered... like Civil Rights, working conditions, the Vietnam War, and so on?

T: Not very much. I think that the causes helped the music rather than the other way round.

Pete

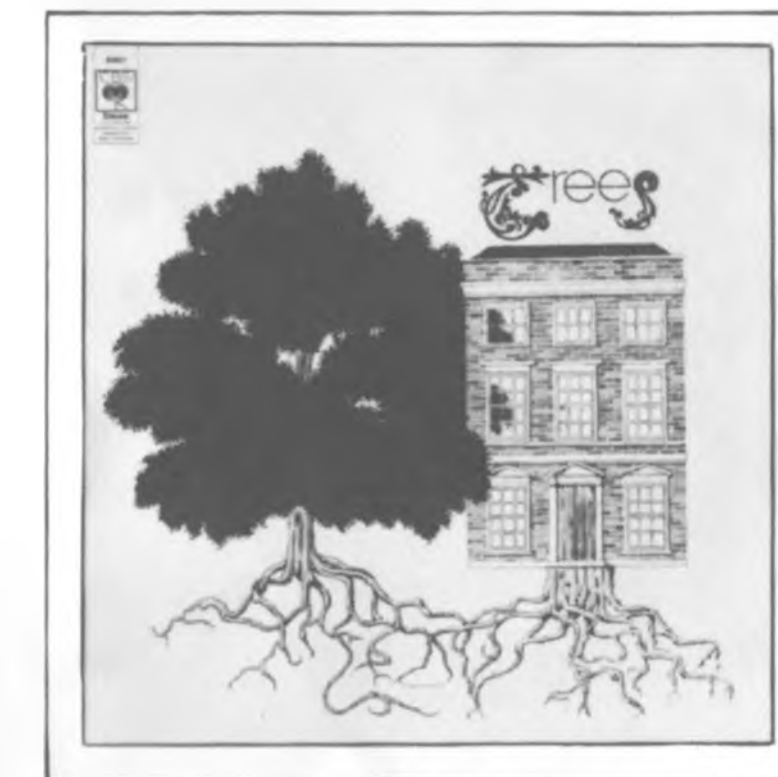


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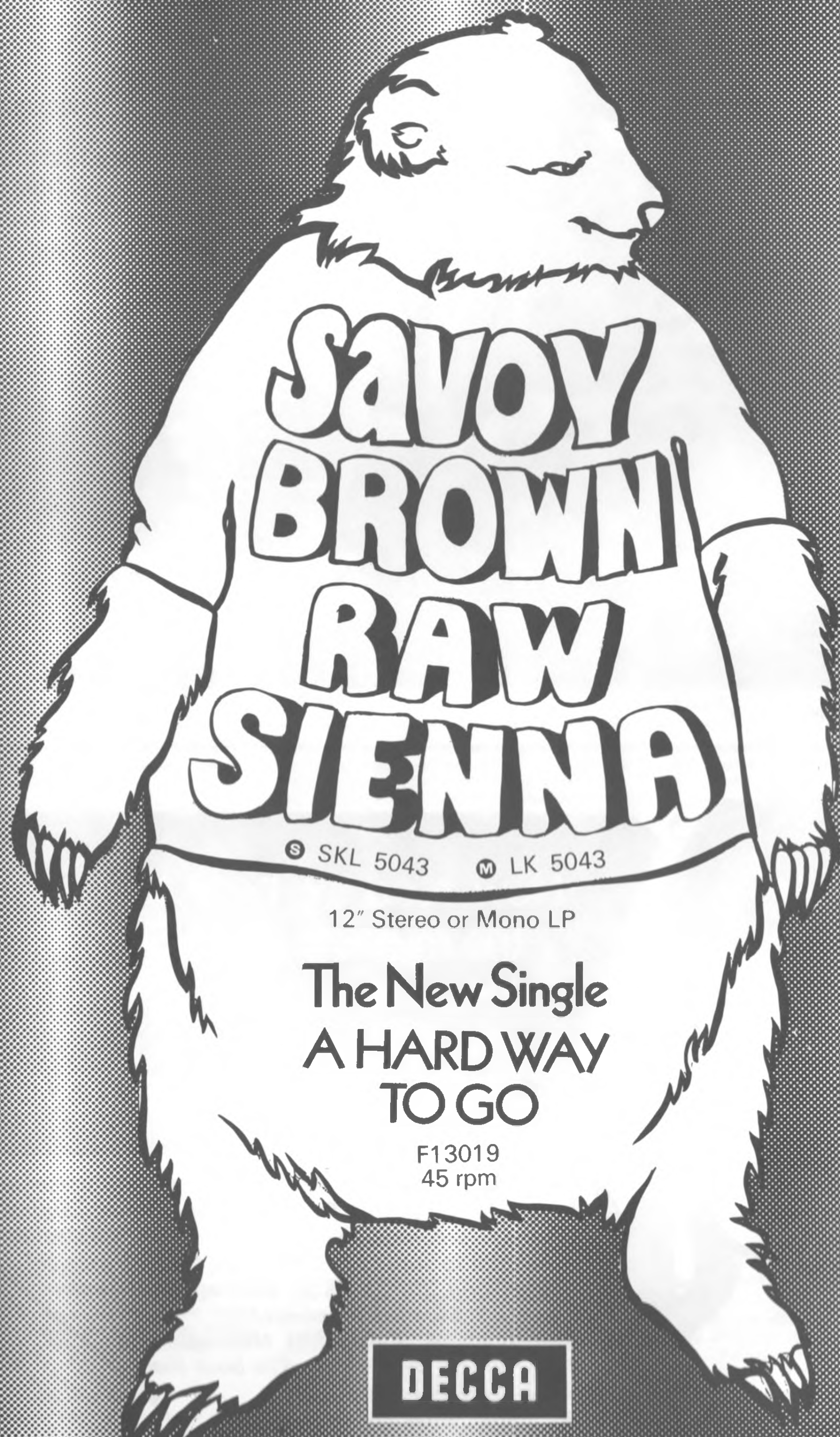
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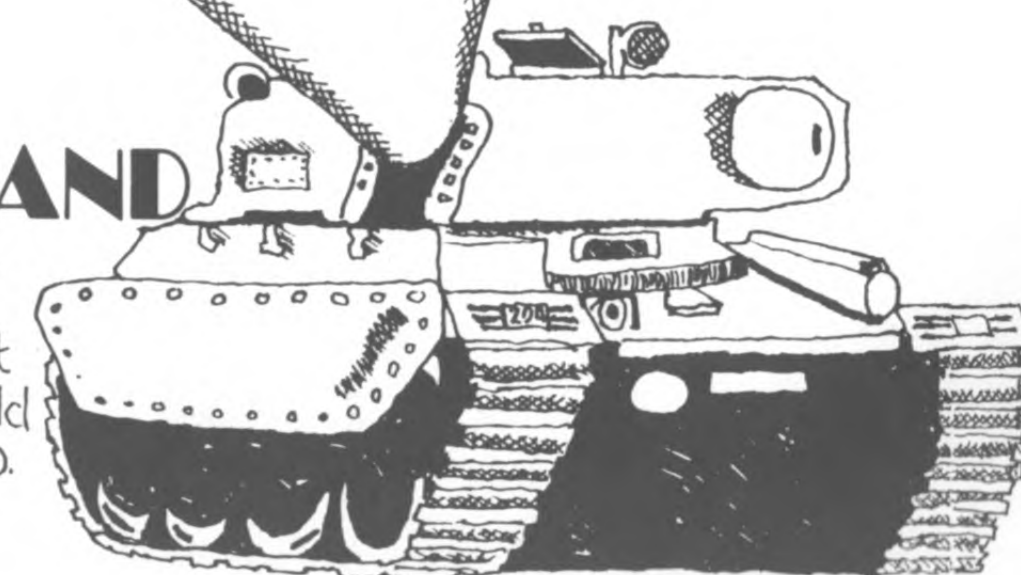
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Where The Electric Children Play

In Zigzag Wanderings, you'll find mention of a religious brainwasher called The Plain Truth, which had this long article about the evil influences of rock music. During his hysterical condemnation of all pop music, the author made reference to a song about "fornication in a car on a rainy night to the rhythm of the windshield wipers" (I think it was an allusion to 'Rhapsody in the Rain' by Lou Christie), which set me thinking about what other songs were about screwing and whether or not such songs were a product of the "sick and decadent music of the hippie society".

Oh for the days of flying frills on eager thighs doing the Charleston - memories of which, so many ageing owners of paunches pour ceaselessly into the ears of their young ones to prove that they too, like Chesterton's ass, had their day. The paunchers were, and in many cases still are, as capable of sexual enjoyment as anybody else. But the permissive society - created or promoted by their BBC and ITV, their popular press, and their fantasies - has made them feel that they may be missing out. Hence the Charleston days are evoked and embroidered.

The Charleston days passed and things proceeded as before, but less noisily. The idyllic, between-the-wars sunshine public morality was nurtured. Doubtlessly the same amount of extra, pre and post marital activity went on - in more or less the same proportions as it always has done and always will do - but people were quieter about it. For instance, when Bing Crosby sung 'I'd like to get you on a slow boat to China', he wasn't considering the opportunities for afternoon badminton on the quarter deck... what he had in mind was a nice private, uninterrupted six weeks pants-down scene. And this silent, stealthy, hypocritical humping period lasted right up to the Teddy Boy era - as always, sins of violence had greater public acceptance than the sins of sex.

Rock'n'roll was more a symptom than a cause of the permissive society in its early stages. Rock'n'roll was here before the swinging sixties, and it was in many ways a sublimation of sex, vicarious sex, sex at a distance, but rarely close to the Bed or the Act. In fact the parallels between rock songs and the poems sung to unhandled damsels by knights (especially Italians, French and Spanish) in the middle ages are quite surprising. In the knights' poems there was no attempt at originality; repetition was essential and love was a state of mind; a fever expressed at a distance, a desire never to be fulfilled, pure in the certainty of its non-execution between sordid sheets. Or else whinings about the girl not returning the knight's love, or her love for the loser in the castle on the next block. A few titles from the past show the similarities. In 'Cathy's Clown', 'Big Man', 'Great Pretender', 'In Dreams' and 'Oh Carol', the chick has either never loved the bloke, or they've had a bust-up and the bloke is licking his wounds in a loud voice; and sex-free love, with the bird intact on her pedestal, is seen in 'Only Make Believe', 'Teenager in Love', 'Dream Lover', 'Only the Lonely' and as many hundreds more as you care to think of.

In some tunes, thank the Lord,



GOGG ROGG

or

**"What? They'll
be urging people
to go out and copulate
in the streets next"**

the male was dominant - as in 'That'll be the day' and 'Keep a knockin' - but these were more than balanced by the mournful tones of 'Guess it doesn't matter anymore', 'Fool such as I', and 'Heartbreak Hotel'. Perhaps Fabian was the most aggressively masculine in his choice of songs like 'Hound Dog Man', 'Tiger', 'Turn me loose' and 'I'm a Man', but press photos of him standing with his priest, and publicity about his dating techniques took the edge off his gruffness.

The essential rock era was an ambivalent time of sex being seen and not heard. Billy Fury was noted for his onstage affection for the microphone, and Elvis's hip movements and 'hosepipe' were copied by all. Yes, cockrock started as a visual phenomenon. If in 1968 happiness was a warm gun, in 1958 it was a bulging crutch perimtered by hips - phallic symbols weren't a fashionable topic of conversation in those days, so the neck of the guitar was still fairly innocent, whatever angle it was held at; innocence aided by the fact that the acoustic guitar sported by most hip movers invited less speculation than the long-necked small-bodied instruments being tossed by Hendrix in today's world of symbol spotting.

In the late 50s came a great spate of 'making love' songs; Larry Williams was 'making love underneath the apple tree' with Bony Maronie, Floyd Robinson was 'makin love' whilst playing truant from school, and Russ Hamilton was bragging that 'we will make love'. But in their love-making, the couples were able to reach satisfaction without orgasm or revealing more than part of a breast or padded bra - the kind of behaviour to which even the most self-righteous People reporter wouldn't object. But the same reporter would 'make an excuse and leave' on hearing Jagger shouting 'I just wanna make love to you'... Jagger being the first to give the phrase its true meaning and give the listener the impression that he really did want to screw the arse off some woman.

As the permissive society came into being, so did a greater search for sexuality in wider fields. This is partly because sex is more openly into people's minds and partly because sex started getting into songs in a subtle way and it became a big game to spot the hidden references. Just as the more imaginative among us can see 'Puff the Magic Dragon' as a song about grass, so Dylan's 'Where are you tonight sweet Marie?' is obviously concerned with lack of synchronisation of orgasms between male and female, the 'yellow railroad' of the songs is blond hair and the 'ruins of your balcony' refers to breasts not at their best.

Housewives and other females bound by a humdrum existence have always needed some kind of release at a distance. Johnny Ray cried and so did the hot oven operators who gave him his popularity. The advent of Elvis, Fabian and Avalon and their contemporaries made the excitement a little more realistic, but in terms of cleanliness and fresh-facedness they would all have been welcome guests in puritan homes, as long as they kept the lover part of their torsos still. For the continuing benefit of the ever-in-love housewife (and potential housewife aged 12½

plus) we now have the curious hip movements of T. Jones, which seem as outdated as flat irons, and the TV close ups of yards and yards of Humperdinck's mobile lip membrane and his fields of tickling sideburns; all at a distance, televised stimulants for the fantasy of housewife audio-groupies... a continuation of the wishing-that-Johnny Ray-was-their-milk-man days.

After Elvis's cooling off period in the army which smoothed him into the all-American-boy pigeon-hole, the two figures with the most energy and appeal to the wilder side were Little Richard and Chuck Berry, still big and positive influences in today's rock revivals and rock continuations. Although not very specific, the sexual vibrations were there. Little Richard sang of Long Tall Sally's extra-marital appeal for Uncle John to the chagrin of Aunt Mary, and although Chuck Berry's joy was mainly concerned with cars, it shouldn't be forgotten that Marie of Memphis Tennessee was a mere six years old, and that 'Sweet Little 16' was probably the world's first groupie. And whether or not they were specifically sexual in their lyrics they were definitely not clean-cut characters that you would lend your daughter to. And the break from clean-cutness and the advent of cockrock are closely tied.

The end of the Don Lang/Denis Lotis epoch and the beginning of the real music scene in England was the Liverpool surge, but even them it was largely clean-cut. The editor of a Merseyside music paper even took credit for having persuaded groups, through his editorials, to throw away their leather gear and dress in "smart suits". And true enough, the Beatles would not have had the immediate acceptance of "mothers and fathers throughout the land" if in 1963 they had grown their hair and been happy to be scruffy.

But of course there are pre-scruff-era references to The Act and preliminary groping. Was Adam Faith aware of the implications of 'Made You'? Maybe not but Ray Davies knew what he was saying when he shouted "get 'em off" to introduce the guitar solo in 'All Day and All of the Night'. And note the subtle voyeur element of 'Little children, you'd better not tell on me'. And talking of little children, it was Dottie Stevens who, at 13 years old, sang 'Oh, must you go? Don't you know that a girl means yes when she says no'.

Over the years there have, of course, been songs which might be categorised (categorising is my favourite hobby) as contra-cockrock. Take for instance, the Shirelles' million seller of 1960, in which a girl weighs the losing of her "treasure" against "just a moment's pleasure", and asks her man "tonight the light of love is in your eyes, but will you still love me tomorrow" - the song is a morally didactic dialogue which should be heard by all aspiring groupies, after they have heard the convent song 'Don't throw your love away' by the Searchers, not to mention the maternity gown warning of 'Careless Love'.

And of course, in this world of good and bad there is also the kind of guy who will be urging forward and at the same time handing our warnings. 'Courtin' Blues' on the first Bert Jansch album does the urging:

'Don't you be afraid to lie by me
Your father will not know',

But later on in 'Oh how your love is strong' the singer warns his bird that he has "no father's hand" and at the same time he doesn't forget that parenthood would be a cramp to his way of life:

"What shall it cost, is my freedom lost
What is the price of nature's own way?"

Then there is the direct, brutal and admirably honest attitude of the Gordon Lightfoot song 'That's what you get for loving me'!

'I ain't the kind to hang around
with any new love that I've found;
moving is my stock in trade
I'm movin' on, I won't think of you when
I'm gone'.

Some ego tripping males warn girls not to fall in love; the true James Bond type uninvolved males. Others come home to find someone else's hat where theirs ought to be, or find another mule kicking in their stall. The first record I ever remember being banned by the BBC was Lonnie Donegan's 'Diggin' my potatoes'. To hear it eventually was a bit of a let down, a simple analogy repeated again and again. More interesting is the charming Fairport ballad of Matty Groves. In poetic justice, retribution for the 'droit du seigneur', Matty Groves, a servant on the estate of a noble lord, lays the noble lady across the ancestral four poster and is discovered, gaiters down. A duel, fatal to Matty Groves, refloats the lord's ego, but not for long. His dear wife prefers her oats country style, at the horny hands of a servant, and she too is given her final orgasm, death.

Those who let their ears stray to the easing sounds of Reggae will have appreciated its simple and direct sexual allegory. It is tied to a long tradition, much of it rooted in white prejudice, of the legendary sexual virtuosity of spades, as recounted in innumerable blues numbers. But as Dick Gregory said, the unfortunate aspect of desegregation of public toilets in the Southern States was that it "exploded the giant cock myth" - a myth contributed to by such classics as 'Candyman' (the Mississippi John Hurt song, not the Gary Davis one), 'Shave em dry', 'Back-door man', and so on.



Miss Mercy of the GTOs

But just as liberal church officials were beginning to show tolerance for engaged couples enjoying the complete

fruits of their physical endowments, instead of stopping at the kneecap (or perhaps, in more extreme moments, allowing their flat-tops to curl - the mystic experience that Jerry Keller went through in 'Here Comes Summer'), along came the Stones. Jagger made Presley's sexuality seem pretty tame, and as well as sparking off a whole series of erudite observations like 'Nobody should ever forget that rock music is about fucking, and that's all it's about', the Stones and their contemporaries started a whole new wet-pants teeny bopper era. (I even remember reading about a cinema manager who was angry because he had to sterilize all the seats after the Stones had played a concert).

American DJs saw through the thinly disguised screwing lyrics of songs like 'I'm a King Bee', and the Stones tried other moves to retain the message but still get airplay. 'Let's spend the night together - now I need you more than ever'. No hint of love, just a need for refreshment beyond the limits of Coca Cola's ability. The song, they protested as the paranoid authorities imposed bans, was harmless; it merely meant spending the evening together to talk and drink tea. Then we had 'Satisfaction', and a lot of people got the gist of the song but failed to realise that one verse dealt with the frustration of being prevented from making a chick by the dreadful menstrual cycle.

And in case the message of loveless sex (as opposed to the sexless love of 'only make believe') doesn't get through, there is always the Stones' morning after song 'Please go home' in which the bird oated during the night tries desperately in the warm light of morning to communicate her personality and convince herself and her one night lover that she is more than an available body; but the bloke has no wish to be convinced and orders her to go.

So the Stones marched on, through 'Stray Cat Blues', 'Parachute Woman', 'Honky Tonk Woman' and so on, chopping their way through prissiness and hypocrisy like a chain saw through a padded bra, leaving the way open for groups like Led (I want you to squeeze my lemon till the juice runs down my leg etc) Zep-pelin and the Stooges to base their entire stage acts on chick arousing.

The world's teenyboppers waited with clammy pants and baited breasts for Actualised Cockrock to materialise. The bulging crutch period had the odd mishap, like when the calculated limitations were nearly exceeded by P J Proby's infamous splitting trousers, but it took the genius of John 'I've never seen my prick on a photo before' Lennon plus his Nikon F with delayed shutter action to finally present full frontal nakedness of both sexes in the cold and sexless form that the '2 Virgins' sleeve presented. Everything was revealed, yet nothing was revealed. And when Morrison flashed his snake in Florida last year, it was only a natural culmination of his recorded bragging. The Doors' sexual reputation had not only been established by the singer's onstage activities, the orgasm sequences in 'Light my fire' and 'The End', and the obvious meanings of such songs as 'Soul Kitchen', but also by the piss-taking announcement by Morrison that ALL the Doors' songs were 'about fucking'. And that included 'The Unknown Soldier'. Anyway, you can bet your boots that the next musician to expose himself on stage, whatever his motives, will be greeted with derisive shouts of 'trendy' and 'groover'.

By now though, the way was clear for all kinds of sex to be dealt with on record, and so it appeared in a less

Please turn to page 40

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'GOTTA LET THIS FAT BOY INTO YOUR LIFE'

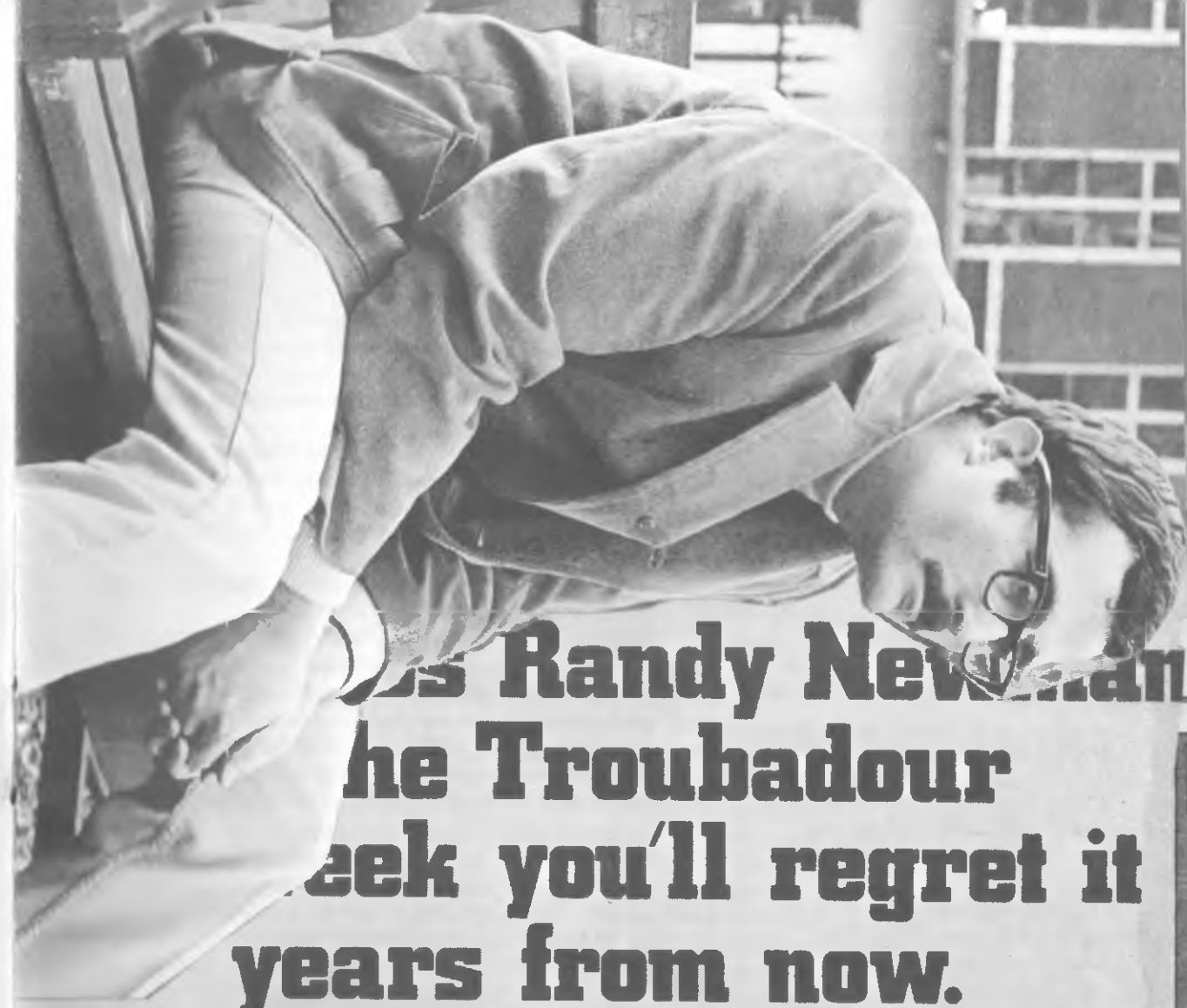
Zigzaggers who've read previous bits by me will, I hope, recognize a thread of continuity in what I write... some sort of constancy in my attitude to what is happening in rock. Certainly writing about it helps to crystallize my own feelings about music and this should, theoretically, allow me to write with greater conviction about what I like. But all writing about popular music is very susceptible to dreadful snares and pitfalls of taste, fashion, over intellectualisation, and downright arty-farty snobbish one-upmanship... wow! And looking back at old Zigzags I can see that I have plunged blindly into most of the deepest and nastiest of these traps. So to all readers who have been moved to hurl Zigzag from their garret windows and rush out to write 'Cloves is a longhaired twit' on bog walls; I plead "guilty but well meaning" and will try to do better next term.

By now, the 'A' stream readers among you will have recognized a crafty ruse by which I can sneak into yet another bit of pontification about poetry and music, and are already on the way to the nearest gents. But bloodied and unbowed, I shall now hold forth on Randy Newman. So hup to the lot of ya!

In answer to those about to say "Randy Newman? Another bleedin nutter I've never heard of" let me hasten to explain that he wrote all those big hits for Alan Price (like 'Simon Bear and his amazing dancing Smith', 'Love Story', 'Dayton Ohio 1903', etc), and that lots of other stars of stage, screen and wireless have made small reputations and large amounts of money from his songs. I guess it was 'Simon Smith' that first put me onto Newman, and also Judy Collins who sang 'I think it's going to rain today' on her great 'In my life' album; and then when someone played me 'Randy Newman', his first LP, I was hooked from there on. This LP was recorded by Reprise in 1968 and was given the full works... 75 musicians on the session (It reads like the guest list at a Bar Mitzvah), massive publicity campaign and double green shield stamps. So far, I believe, they've managed to get rid of about 5000 copies, and it looks as though I'm on another lost cause.

According to his publicity blurbs, Newman is 27, had a straight musical education and began to write songs at 16. His uncles, Emil, Lionel and Alfred Newman are all arrangers/composers well known in the film music business and I suspect that they and his (I guess) Jewish middle class background have proved a considerable influence on his music. In the autumn of 1969 Newman made his first public appearance as a performer, to rave reviews from Rolling Stone, and has recently appeared at the Troubadour, a Los Angeles club. His second LP, 'Randy Newman, 12 Songs' has just been released.

Now to the difficult bit. In my opinion, Newman is a poet of major importance who happens to have chosen music as the medium to get his poetry over. Now there is nothing particularly new in that - the Elizabethan troubadours did it, Woody Guthrie did it, and Bob Dylan, David Ackles, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell are doing it - but what interests me is why they are using music. To some extent, the medium is the message, but this is much less true now than in the early days of rock'n'roll, when the sheer excitement and relief at the arrival of the music meant that 'Be bop a lula' was sufficient a lyric. In those days the music was enough in itself and with rare exceptions, notably Chuck Berry, the lyrics were of little importance. But Dylan changed all that, and now there are many writers who are using rock music as the medium to get their poems over to a large public. Leonard Cohen is a case in point - I bet most people who've read his poems and novels have come to them via his records, and not the other way round - and the interview with Cohen in No 10 is very revealing about this process. "...when I was writing... listened to the radio... played a lot of country music... always had my guitar with me... wrote and played songs... after 'Beautiful Losers' realised my head was full of music (because I'd written the book to the accompaniment of the radio) so I made up my mind to go to Nashville and sing... I was no longer content to sit at a writing desk!" Cohen is getting on for 10 years older than Newman, and I think that is why it's taken him a relatively long time to get into music. Newman is a child of Rock 'n'Roll and music is the obvious and NATURAL medium (continued on page twenty two)



...s Randy Newman...
he Troubadour
week you'll regret it
years from now.

That's the way to treat a friend



Randy, you see, is not a common performer. Despite his former reputation as a singer and a songwriter, Mr. Newman's only public appearance took place some months back at an obscure club in a semi-obscure city in Northern California. You can insure Randy's privacy on either of these two indescribable Reprise:



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Or you can hear Randy in the flesh at the Troubadour through Sunday. And someday you'll say smugly, "Yeah, I remember seeing Randy when he was still playing clubs and Reprise still had to advertise him."

A very important composer has recorded a whole album of Randy Newman's songs. So has Randy Newman.



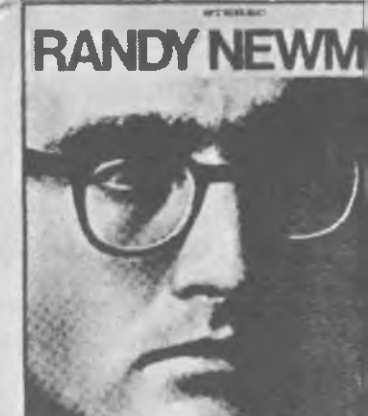
Apparently, it's taking I to get used to that voice Newman" almost a year pened in the record at him about that, our Mr. up Reprise's sales changing the subject a be ready with the next

Undaunted by this album, we comforted notices which, like the also wondered, "Are w No, we decided, because ment we respected, like Miss Collins and Mr. Newman" was in the masterpiece category.

Where had we gone wrong? We changed the jacket, putting the lyrics of Randy's tunes on the liner, because some people complained he sounded like Ray Charles with a sinus condition. Those people we wrote off as know nothing spoil sports. But, printing those lyrics didn't up our sales curve.

So next we wrote to people saying, listen,

THE OLD COVER



THE NEW COVER

Once you get used to it, his voice is really something.



for his poetry. Richard Goldstein in his book *The Poetry of Rock*, suggests that if Dylan Thomas had been 20 years later he would have been writing songs ... Dylan would have been Dylan in fact. And I think that's right.

I say this is the difficult bit because, it is difficult to use terms like "art" and "poetry" in relation to a style of music which too many people are still prepared to dismiss as shallow and meaningless. The fact is that music IS the medium now and we ought to pay much more attention to what our songwriters/poets are saying. Of course many many critics and pundits have exhaustively explained, analysed and interpreted Dylan almost out of existence but what I think they have missed is that he is merely the outsider - and in the war party are many who may even prove to be greater. He is not an isolated phenomenon but the Wicked Messenger, he's Quinn the Eskimo and if your ears are bent by what he has to say - just wait till the others come over the hill all wailing and whooping. Well it seems to me that Newman is just about breasting the rise and he has a story or two to tell worth hearing.

Now unlike Dylan, Randy Newman's songs are written very much in the language of rock'n'roll - Dylan seems to have fashioned his lyrics out of American folk music, rock'n'roll and English/American literature. By comparison with Newman his lyrics seem fastidious, cool and, of course, biblical - Newman is straight out of Fats Domino, Leadbelly, Chuck Berry, plus vaudeville and even Hoagy Carmichael.

"Had a great idea the other night
Come-a-ti-yi-yippie, baby
look out

When the blue of the night
meets the gold of the day"

This is from a rolling Jimmy Yancey style blues with down-homey piano from Newman and quotes from Leadbelly and Bing Crosby and a play out line of "We love you" - as the Stones. The lyric, literally a number of popular music clichés spliced together which convey nothing of the wit and lazy drive they have when performed. But try this ...

"Broken windows
in empty hallways
pale dead moon
in a sky
streaked with grey
human kindness
is overflowing
and I think
it's going to rain today.

scarecrows dressed in latest fashion
with frozen smiles
chase love away
human kindness
is overflowing
and I think
it's going to rain today

lonely lonely
tincan at my feet
think I'll kick it
down the street
thats the way to treat
a friend"

.....from one of Newman's finest songs, "I think it's going to rain today". The Judy Collins recording of this song quite stunned me when I first heard it but I didn't really understand what Newman meant till I heard his own version which is sung at about half the speed of the Collins version. This song is on the first LP and Newman's dragged out vocal sung in his grumpy stoned-negro voice is backed up by an amazingly beautiful string arrangement which echoes Newman's piano

phrases. There is an ache in Newman's songs which is the real stuff of poetry because finally there must be something more in a song lyric than an easy effect - a shallow truth ... that's if it is to last beyond half-a-dozen plays. It's the difference between likeable and forgettable pop like "love grows

where my Rosemary
goes
but nobody knows
but me"
and Newman's song, "Living without you".

"the milktruck
hauls the sun up
the paper hits my door
the subway shakes my floor
and I think about you
time to face the dawning rain
of another lonely day
babe it's so hard
babe it's so hard
living without you ..."

I'm not trying to score an easy point off "Love grows" which by any standard was a good pop record; but a month later you're hard put to remember the tune let alone recall a line or two. There is nothing wrong with forgettable pop either, it's just that music has become such a central and indispensable part of our lives that we might as well use it - I mean really make it work for us, because if things are going to come right in the end we need to use every tool that's available. And music is one of our tools and what's happening now is our music - we mustn't let it slip away into the grasp of popularisers and users - people who use the medium but don't give a fart for the message. There is a very nicely made, tuneful and tasteful LP of Nilsson singing Randy Newman which is also out at the moment and without suggesting that Nilsson is a user, this record misses by miles because Nilsson obviously can't feel Newman. When Randy sings "Gotta let this fat boy in your life" I feel he's not only singing about all the ugly ones who are excluded from love but also about himself ... "listen to me, Randy Newman, I've got something to say." "Davy the Fat Boy" is the greatest Newman composition I've heard and if he never writes another song he might just be remembered for this. It's the story of fat boy Davy who is put in the care of his childhood "friend" by his parents ...

"take care of our Davy
you may be the only friend
he ever will have"

His "friend" puts him in a side show ...
"what do he weigh folks?
can you guess what he weighs?
you know it's only a quarter

I think we can persuade him to do
his famous fat boy's dance
for you

and Davy playing the only role life offers,
sings
give me half a chance
I just know you'll like
my fat boy's dance"

and then follows a typical sad/beautiful Newman melody - lumpy and dumpy as Davy dances for the heartless sightseers and the song plays out on his hilarious chorus of "Davy the fat boy
Davy the fat boy
isn't he round
isn't he round"

But the chorus isn't heartless - like many Newman songs it is sad and funny at the same time - oneway of facing up to a hurt that might otherwise be too much to take. Most of the songs on the first LP are backed up by a large orchestra and many of them

have a "musical spectacular" feel - the arrangements are by Newman himself and the record was produced by Lenny Waronker and Van Dyke Parks. I think many of Newman's tunes on this record owe a great debt to Vaudeville, and they have that characteristic run-jump-and tumble at the end of the musical line, underlining perfectly the sad-sentimental-nostalgic lyrics which are always rescued from coyness by a marvelous witty twist in an unexpected line. The child in his suburban marital cycle "Love Story" drinks "his baby brew from a big brass cup" and in "I think he's hiding" a religious song about God/Jesus he calls him the "Big Boy" and sings ...

"now I've heard it said
that our big boy's dead
but I think he's hiding
I think he's hiding"

His songs are about loneliness and lost loves, domestic dramas, small town politics and they are very American and personal - there is little attempt to be universal but his song "Cowboy" a lament against the encroachment of the "steel and concrete" city is applicable to all industrial societies where the city gobbles the land and vomits its waste. It's strange that Newman sounds so like a negro - I was convinced he was black the first time I heard him - but in a curious way I find this right for his songs. His negro style is a cross between Leadbelly and Ray Charles - much more to do with jazz than Pickett/Redding soul - and overall amounts to a tetchy broken mumble which makes it very difficult to catch his words. I have a feeling though that this may be exaggerated due to recording deficiencies and on his second LP he is certainly more articulate.

On his second LP Newman reveals another aspect of his work - his extraordinary eclecticism and ability to play in a variety of piano styles. This record is really a trip through the geography of American music - from Appalachian mountain music, field hollers, urban blues, the new Country music of The Byrds and The Band, the City Blues of Chuck Berry, the ragtime/blues gentleness of Jelly Roll Morton and just a trace of the Vaudeville feel that so predominated in the first LP. This time, though, it's the Negro vaudeville of the Buck and Wing, jig and tap dance, rather than the white Jimmy Durante-ish songs like "Davy the Fat Boy". Overall, the record is a synthesis of blues and country music, and as such, is right in the mainstream of contemporary American music. In a way, this is a pity, because somewhere between the first and second LP's Newman's striking originality has been lost and finally this is merely(!) a very good record in a style that some other people are doing just as well. Perhaps that is an unduly harsh judgement because what still separates Newman from the pack is his wit - his sly sneaky humour creeps into his songs with similar effect to Charlie Chaplin's amazing backheel kick that used to catch the Bully unawares as he was bending over. It's a way, I think, that Newman has of cutting himself down to size - of avoiding the easy lyrical philosophy and glib newthink of the flower songs of 1967.

The record opens with a fine relaxed rolling song called "Have you seen my Baby", sung and played with an obvious nod to Fats Domino and the brass section playing those fat chords which are a Domino trade mark. Most of the tracks on this record, however, are backed by a beautiful relaxed country band with Ry Cooder on bottleneck guitar and Clarence White and Ron Elliott on steel and straight guitar all given ample opportunity to work out on the songs. The band is so good in fact that they

alone justify the record and on "Mama told me not to come" and "My old Kentucky Home" they get into an exuberant Country jog-trot that is high irresistible.

It's not easy to adequately quote Newman's songs from this record because his humour is insinuated into the music and his own way of delivering the lyric...

"open up the window, let some air into this
room
I think I'm almost choking on the smell of
stale perfume
and that cigarette you're smoking 'bout to
scare me half to death
open up the window, let me catch my breath
the radio is blasting, someone's beating on
the door
our hostess is not lasting - she's out on
the floor
I seen so many things here I ain't never
seen before
I don't know what it is - but I don't wanna
see no more

Mama told me not to come
Mama told me not to come
Mama said "that ain't no way to have fun".

This song reminds me very much of Joe and Ratso going to that wild party in "Midnight Cowboy" - and it's part of the same experience - everything connects. Pop art-films-rock-jazz they are inseparable. In a song called Lucinda

"Lucinda lies buried 'neath the
California sand
put under by the beach-cleaning man
Lucinda, Lucinda - why'd you
have to go
they sent her to high school
they sent her to low school
She just wouldn't go no further"

This is a sort of slowed-down Chuck Berry number and rather strange and menacing

- it could mean all sorts of things - the other side of the fatuous Beachboys jolly/surfing/Barbara-Anne type songs? It's full of very definite film images under-laid by some penetrating whiney guitar and Randy's beat-up voice. And in "Yellow Man" Randy sings
"Very far away in a foreign land
live the yellow women and the yellow man
he's been around for many a year
they say they were there before we were
here

eatin rice all day
while the children play
you see he believes
in the family
just like you and me
Oh yellow man, Oh yellow man
we understand, you know we understand
he keeps his money tight in his hand
with his yellow woman he's a yellow man
got to have a yellow woman
when you're a yellow man"

Imagine the problems of writing about Chinese/Koreans/Vietnamese in America - where every war comic features the "yellow peril" - green/yellow savages with mongol faces - slaving lips, ripping off-the-shoulder blouses off American nurses, torturing honest G.I.'s, beating children. How can you say "these are human beings" other than in Randy's sly and affectionate parody of "Underneath the Harlem Moon" - a genuine vaudeville song also on the record - "You see he believes in the family just like you and me" is a truth that millions of racialists everywhere just cannot accept.

Back at the beginning of this article I said that Newman, Dylan, Ackles, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen etc were poets using rock as their medium - in a way this does them less than justice because they are songwriters and singers.

The music and the words fuse, and are inseparable - just as their style of singing is inseparable from what they are singing about. None of them are concerned with the conventions of articulation, enunciation, projection etc because they speak with the authentic voice of urban America - which is increasingly becoming the voice of urban Western Europe - like it or not. That's why they speak to so many people who can intuitively respond to what they have to say and that's why English literature departments at Universities and Colleges ignore them and can't understand them anyway. I believe that the new singers and writers have created a genuine popular art capable of profoundly influencing our lives and that Randy Newman is among the best and most penetrating of these new voices.

Just as a postscript to this piece it's instructive to have a look at Newman's recording history. His first record, despite very good reviews in the American music press, just didn't sell; I think, personally, that the bad recording quality may have put casual listeners off. Reprise then reissued it with the words printed on the cover and when this failed even tried giving it away to anyone who cared to write (according to Rolling Stone, that is). Now they have redesigned the cover and advertising it again - so somebody at Reprise has faith in him. The chorus of his first song on his second record goes
"hold on, hold on, hold on."
and the chorus on the last track goes
"We love you
we love you
we love you."
Now I think that's a message to us but it could also be a message from Reprise to Randy Newman.

Jeff Cloves

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There are only five musicians in The Whole World.*



Lol Coxhill is one of them

Lol Coxhill, eyes twinkling behind your actual National Health frames, hovering over his record player. "Listen to this!" he gurgles, pulling a Ronnie Ronalde LP from its sleeve.

"Ronnie Ronalde?" my mind puzzles, "what the bloody hell's he putting that on for?"

"I got this in a sale at Smith's. I usually stick it on at parties when everybody's really into it, and thinking they're all fantastic dancers because they're pissed, and chatting other blokes' wives who think it's great because they're pissed as well".

He gurgles as Ronalde buggers up 'Bye Bye Blackbird' to the accompaniment of rotten music, and we both practically collapse in hysteria during 'The Happy Whistler'. He rips into this one with gusto and enthusiasm, but whistles the entire thing a half tone out of tune, even through key changes. An amazing golden oldie from the collection of Coxhill goodies, which range from 'Music for Silent Films' to Laura Nyro's 'New York Tender-berry'.

A well worn demo 45 is produced. "This is my first recorded solo!" he shouts over the scratches, through which I can just about make out 'Messin with the man'. It was recorded in 1962 when Lol was with Tony Knight's Chessmen. Days when R&B was progressive pop, and it was all down to the Fleming and whatever band the Rik Gunnell

agency had to offer.

"I was only semi-pro with the band at the time, but we were doing about 5 or 6 gigs a week, and I was rolling up at work rather apologetically at quarter to nine instead of seven-thirty. I wasn't arriving shattered, because I was making sure I got my sleep, but I was just continually being late. In the end I was given an ultimatum to 'stop this fooling around with music and remain a bookbinder for ever, or else leave'. Well, this came at a time when the band was invited to back Rufus Thomas on a tour, so I decided Rufus was a better bet and left. And off we went round the country playing 'Down to the Nitty Gritty' and 'Do the Dog' sort of stuff. He was a really nice bloke".

Another 45 is put on - 'Good Morning Little Schoolgirl'. "This was one we made backing that bloke Jan Cremer; have you heard of him?". All that I knew was that he wrote an egotistical book about what an ace he was with women. "Yes that's the bloke ... well, he had this sort of James Bond thing - everything he touched sold like mad. I think this got to number three in the Dutch charts. We had to teach him the words like a parrot - that's why he says 'dot' instead of 'that'. He went off touring America after that with his own band, which he called the Chessmen too".

Lol left Tony Knight (who now drums

with Sweetwater Canal) to join the Gass, doing the odd Ronnie Scott Allnighter with his own trio at the same time. The Gass's single of 'Sweet Dream Baby' was going to be his big bread making debut with CBS, but it didn't exactly set the charts alight, and then when psychedelia arrived he was kicked out when the group "decided to sack the front line and get on to the flower kick, which was funny".

"I still play with them sometimes ... not officially, but because they're mates of mine. I don't sit in to get myself across, it's just that I like playing. In the same way, I play with a trad band in a pub some sundays - they're all mates of mine ... they all get pissed and sometimes it's a drag and sometimes it's a good laugh, but what else is there to do on a Sunday lunchtime. Brett Marvin & the Thunderbolts is another band I like playing with - they do the 51 Club on sundays, and if I'm in town I go down there and have a blow. I can play exactly how I like and I still fit in ... they're very original - no-one else would ever play like that ... maybe no-one else would want to".

Anyway, where was I? I'm going to get horribly mixed up if I'm not careful because the more up to date Lol's musical biography gets, the more vague it becomes because there are so many things going on at the same time. Ah yes, after the Gass he did

a lot of free lance work with people like Alexis Korner, did one man shows at colleges - half playing and half chatting, and also started busking, which pulled far more acclaim than his group work.

"I'm not likely to be doing the West End bit anymore, but I shall still do outside the concert halls now and again because it's nice in a way ... it means meeting people. There have been the times when I busked in the vain hope of getting something going, when I've been really skint, and sometimes it was a drag, but generally if I don't have to do it, it's good. Like if I'm waiting to do a session somewhere and it's a nice day, I just do it and it's good".

"It didn't make much difference if I played hit medleys or the kind of music I like to play. I think that unless you've got a bottle you're not going to make much money anyway, so if you just play standard tunes all the time, people will ignore you anyway. I found that the only times I created an interest were the times I played just how I wanted to - I don't mean really free stuff because that doesn't make too much sense on my own. But I never did suss out how to do it to make money ... I can't think that way anyway".

"I'll do a dance band gig, and if the music doesn't mean a thing, fair enough. As long as it's played well, I'll take the money. But when you're standing in the street trying to play something with the sole thought of copping some bread, it's not such a good scene".

"I found that if I played standard tunes, it was because I liked someone who asked me to ... and it was usually a little old lady who was skint anyway. On the times that I've really felt like playing, often quite openly and sometimes without even a theme, there'd be people who knew nothing about music and who genuinely hadn't heard anything like it before; and they weren't trying to classify it. And I'd be playing something really free, and a little old lady would come up and say 'Ooh that's lovely dear, will you play Stranger on the shore?' I don't reckon you can get a much nicer compliment than that really - they can hear the farthest out you can go, and get the good things out of it. So then I'd play Stranger on the shore, and the ones who liked the freer stuff would say 'Huh, he's selling out'. But sod them".

"So I play how I want, and when it's a tune I don't particularly like, it's usually because it's making someone else feel

good, which makes me feel good too ... but it's very difficult to put that down on paper without it looking very sick - it's either as if I'm trying to be a do-gooder or else trying hard to say the right sort of thing. Which means we've just wasted five minutes of tape".

But busking never earned him enough to make it logical as a sole means of support. Sometimes he'd play outside concerts, earn enough to go in and see them, and then come out and earn his train fare home. And very often people would give him a ticket - like if their bird didn't turn up or something, but there were also those who weren't so titillated by his playing. "One time, after a concert" he recalls, "this guy came out of the Festival Hall and said I was a crappy player. So I said 'Maybe it's just not the kind of music you like' ... you know, trying to be reasonable. And he said 'It's not music - I don't expect to come out of a concert and hear this damned rubbish'. So I said 'Piss off, you're wasting my time! and he went away mumbling. When I started playing again, a piece of brick hit me and I had a £5 repair bill. The thing that puzzled me was where he'd found the bloody thing, outside the Festival Hall. Someone suggested that he'd taken it in with him in case he didn't like the concert; but he did like the concert, and rather than cart the brick home, he lobbed it at me".

"But I busked in the hope that if I played how I wanted people to hear me, then I'd get jobs from it, which I did to a certain degree. As far as publicity goes, John Peel is the one who's helped me most - he's been putting plugs in for me for a couple of years. He wants to do an LP of me - he'd come out with a tape recorder, give me a free hand, and we'd do it in the street. What I'd like to do is get kids in it and all sorts of things, and generally play on all the sounds that are around us ... traffic, police cars, amusement arcades, and so on. Arranging the time and place is the difficult thing though - John's never there when I phone, and I'm always out when he phones ... but he still wants to do it. Now that I'm with Kevin Ayers, John phoned Blackhill to see if they'd mind me doing a solo LP, which they didn't - not that they had much choice, because I'm going to do it anyway. If and when we ever manage to get it done, I imagine it'll be overall freaky, but not head splitting."

With a shout of "I'm cold", Lol leaps into the kitchen, turns all the gas rings

and oven full on, and warmed air drifts into the lounge. "I get a bloody great gas bill every quarter", he calls out, "but it's much quicker than coal ... and you can cook while you're getting warm". He presently re-appears bearing coffee, and I get to wondering why he shaves the wrong end of his head. (And that beard he's growing threatens to turn him into one of those faces that you can turn upside down).

Right - where were we? Who did you play with next?

"Well Simon Lee (now with Cody's Glider) asked me to join a band with him, Bob Weston and Steve York. I can't remember what they were called when I joined, but I got them to change their name to Giant Marrowfat, which is still my favourite name. If I ever have a band of my own, I'm going to call it Giant Marrowfat."

"Anyway, that packed up, and the next thing that Simon got going was with Stephen Miller, which is how Delivery got started. It was Bruno's Blues Band to begin with, and I read in the Melody Maker that I'd joined them. I thought it might be a good idea anyway, so I did join the following week. The name got changed to Delivery, and the band slowly changed from being a very straight Blues band into a very nice jumbled up one".

Another single goes on to the turntable - a totally dreadful piece of contrived commerciality called 'Let's go dancing' by Johnny Rio. As the music starts, Lol looks up, all grins and sparkles. "I was booked as a session man on this, playing two sopranos. My part isn't loud enough, but it's the first record featuring the Coxhill wind of change". A couple of, shall we say, freaky 4 bar inter-verse solos and he's finished his contribution ... "Thank you, £18 please" he says, bent with laughter at the memory of the whole episode. "I walked out proudly clutching the bread, and pissing myself with laughter".

Suddenly he realises it's Thursday and we drive into Aylesbury to get him a Melody Maker before the shops shut. As I park the car in the Market Square, he says "See that green man over there?" I look in the direction of his vague gesture expecting to see a Martian or something but see no-one. Then I realise that he's indicating a mould encrusted statue of the 3rd Baron of Chesham. "My grandfather used to be his gardener, and I'm named after the bloke that was named after him ... you can take a scraping from his belly and keep it on your mantelpiece if you like".

Lol, you see, is a corruption of Lowen. But on ... Lol, er Lowen, having made his purchase, we enter The Dark Lantern and continue our business. How did he come to join Kevin Ayers and the Whole World and leave Delivery?

"Well it's funny, because Delivery is a good band, and when I was with them I used to think 'Christ, if this doesn't work, I'm going to pack it in' because there was nothing else I wanted to do. But just by chance, when the going was rough at one stage, I wrote to Kevin in reply to his ad for a sax/flautist. Before he received the letter though, he got in touch with me. So though I'm now officially with Kevin, I'm still being treated as a member of Delivery on the LP we've just done, (to be released soon on B & B Records), because I was with them for a couple of years. Kevin's is a really weird band - not weird because you can't understand it, but strange. Like there's Kevin with his very English pop songs and very original guitar playing, and there are really freaky bits with David Bedford and me working out. It's a real head jumbler".

"David's doing something for the Proms next year and he fits into a pop context the same way as I do really; I started off as a jazz musician, then got into freer jazz, and



*The Whole World; Mick Fincher (drums), David Bedford (keyboards), Lol Coxhill (saxophones), Mike Oldfield (bass/guitar), & Kevin Ayers (guitar/bass/vocal).

then got into free stuff which wasn't jazz ... and David is a free writer. So really there's common ground between us; and Kevin's songs are so open that it can all happen on them".

"Kevin tells me more or less what he wants me to do on each song, and I develop it how I choose, which is alright by him because he likes the way I think. I get a definite framework - like when Kevin's singing there is very little free playing from any of us. It's sewn up more than most bands."

And now, with his joining Kevin Ayers (who is famous enough to get features in the national pop press), Lol finds himself being accorded all sorts of praise, but he's seen so much publicity poured over other progressive (to coin a term) sax players who just happened to have the publicists' wheels driving them, that he is not so much gratified as amused by the sudden spurge of recognition. "It's just really bloody funny, because it seems like they're going over the top to make up for the last few years, using words like 'mighty' and 'amazing'!"

But a full page feature in the Guardian a few weeks ago wasn't Kevin-inspired; the author had never heard of him and wrote the piece about Lol's busking life. "I got to know the guy and liked the result" says Lol, "even if it was a vague piss take. He didn't do the article until he'd chatted to me twice, and the bits where he takes the piss are alright because we decided we liked each other anyway. Getting a page in the Guardian is reckoned by some people to be quite

big, but what difference does it make? A lot of people are coming up to me and saying 'I saw your article' and they're probably clapping a bit more, but the article wasn't about that kind of music anyway. And people who've always hated my playing are now saying 'I still don't like it. ... but that doesn't mean it isn't good' and soppy things like that".

But for some people in his home town of Aylesbury, his playing is legendary, and stories about his skill abound ... like how B B King jammed with him and clapped him when they'd finished. I asked him about the incident. "I was playing at the 100 Club with Delivery, when this bloke came up and said he liked my playing - I didn't know it was B B King. ... it was just some friendly, knowledgeable, well-dressed Yank as far as I knew - and he sat in for the second set. I'm not particularly interested in the blues scene as a whole, but I like his playing. ... he's really nice. He said he liked my playing because usually when he has a sax player, he's hardly conscious of him because he knows that he is going to play one of 12 riffs; and I didn't do that".

"Who do I like listening to? Well, I really like Tony Oxley's things - his trio and sextet; the Soft Machine - good alto player Elton Dean; tenor players I particularly like are Evan Parker (every time I've heard him) and Bobby Wellings (on a good day); but there aren't many sax players I like really, not on the progressive scene anyway. ... what a stupid word 'progress-

ive' ... doesn't mean anything. Eh? Oh yes, there are quite a few around, but you don't notice them because they aren't doing much. Dick Heckstall and Jack Lancaster are good players. ... but don't put in that I like Dick Heckstall because people will only assume that I'm trying to play like him. Anyway, that doesn't mean that I think he's better than me, but don't put that in either". Glee spreads across his face. "Yes, stick that in - it's about time somebody said that. I don't suppose he'll come round and beat me up. ... he might come round and laugh though".

Kevin & the Whole World have been spending a lot of time on their album at the cost of doing gigs, but the record sounds good. "We're doing so many things on it. For instance, I'm playing three solos together and things like that. ... and as soon as we've finished that bit, Kevin is bound to suggest that it might sound very nice with 80 cellos underneath it. God knows when we'll finish it".

And when you've got yourself established as a band, I suppose you'll be off to the States to get the bread in like the rest of them? "Sod, I hope not. I don't want to go over there".

So there you are. All neatly compressed into the proverbial nutshell. Apart from urging everyone to go and see the group (which I do most strongly), all we need now is a stunning final paragraph to tie all the ends up. Well we haven't got one. Pete



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It's A Beautiful Day

"I think with us an audience gets what it is looking for. If they don't really want that much we can't give it to them - we can give them about what we can give on a record. But if they want more and let us know it, and feed us the energy then we can take them just about as high or as low as they want to go. I feel that most of the San Francisco groups are very much like that".

David LaFlamme, leader, violinist, singer and sometimes guitarist with It's A Beautiful Day was talking before the group's Albert Hall concert last month. Sandwiched between rather disappointing sets from Taj Mahal and Santana, a good rhythm section that never really got off the ground, IABD came over as fresh, subtle, interesting, exciting and joyful.

On a technical level their musicianship is good, and so are the songs, but as David points out, this is not the whole point:

"It's the spirit of the group, the exchanges between the group members themselves in the music that's the exciting part and the magic part to it, and the part that people really want to feel. The other things are just tools, even the music, because in a sense there are only so many notes; so it's really the spirit."

And the thing with electric music is that it's big, and you can feel the spirit - it's not just a matter of abstractly listening to it, you can actually feel those drums and the bass, and feel where the people are at and what kind of people they are, and whether you can really love them easily. And if people fall in love with you they'll come to see you.

I think we're using the music as a vehicle for some kind of moral expression or philosophical expression of where we believe that it's at and of what we can do for each other, and just how we can enjoy one another".

Playing live in front of a responsive audience, this kind of communication is easy, but in the recording studio the immediate two-way thing between musician and listener is destroyed. Those who have heard both the IABD album (It's A Beautiful Day, CBS 63722) and the Albert Hall concert will know that the easy graceful music is the same, but the excitement is different: on stage it is a crowd experience, on record it is what the group want you to hear.

"Some numbers are more or less studio written and arranged and we really try and go more for a sound rather than a spirit. It's almost impossible to capture a live spirit in a studio so I think we con-

centrate more on sound there and try and make it as spirited as it can be realistically within the context in which we're working.

What we usually do is if we've been performing some things for a while, we get into the studio and pick the best of what we've been playing and use those parts and throw the other things out. It works well like that.

Most of our arrangements have a lot of open areas in for improvisation, for experimentation, and that's where the truly exciting playing is happening. When an audience is really enjoying us and showing us someone else takes over the playing. We start playing beyond our capabilities.

So it's then on stage, that it's truly exciting for everybody. If all they hear is pretty well what we've arranged to show them, it might be pretty good, but it will never have the magic to it that the real open things do".

IABD were formed by David in San Francisco in July 1967. I am not an expert on 'Frisco bands like Alan Lord, but they seem to me to have all the special qualities that you expect from really good groups from that city. Like Jefferson Airplane they have a very individual sound, but there is something about them that is unmistakably San Francisco.

"It's not what it was a few years ago", said David, "certainly it's levelled out more, We have a lot more money, for one thing, so you probably stop searching so hard.

It changes - a lot of groups have become successful, or at least semi-successful, but still there's a great underlying mass of people that you'll probably never hear from over here, or see, or experience, that are really the substance to the city and are really its heartbeat. Those are the people that make us - those are the people who really have a direct influence on our lives and on our music.

San Francisco probably has a broader spectrum of types of people than any city I've ever been to. There, on an average performance, there will be everybody from God's angels to the Hells Angels, all looking for something, and all wanting to get it on, so to speak, so you've got an extremely broad audience to deal with.

A certain percentage of them are maybe drunk out of their minds, another percentage are taking some kind of downer, another large percentage some kind of upper, and probably another large group are





more psychedelically orientated. So that's what you've got to work with, and it's still pretty amazing that you can get together fairly peaceably and without too much trouble.

In our culture there is a certain group level of understanding as to how far you can go with certain things. It's difficult to live there, but it's very exciting because there's always that broad spectrum of feeling. A musician is very close to that and is able to express himself through that.

In San Francisco you're so directly influenced by the city itself that quite honestly you never know what style you're going to end up in. If country music becomes very popular all of a sudden you find almost everybody playing some. I don't think they even think about it - it's in the air, in the weather. We're very subject to our weather there.

It's a wonderful place - I wish everybody could come there for a while because I think they'd enjoy it. It's very conducive to a happy life. It's truly a magic city."

Though David is obviously part of San Francisco now, it wasn't always his home. He was born in Salt Lake City and came to the city in 1962.

"I worked as a solo performer in nightclubs in '62 and '63, and then in '64 I got heavily involved in a new group".

His first group was a blues band, then he formed The Orchestra which had electric violin, electrified oboe, piano, bass and drums. Then, in 1967, he formed IABD with his wife Linda playing keyboards, Hal Wagenet on guitar, Mitchell Holman on bass, Val Fuentes on drums, and Patti Santos, vocals.

"Linda and I were married for five years. Right after we finished cutting the first album - a year and a half ago - we were separated and we're now divorced."

David has since remarried, to a girl called Sharon, and Fred Webb plays organ with the group.

"The day she left Fred appeared. I got a phone call from a friend who said he thought Fred would be ideal, and he was".

After that upheaval, and early

troubles finding the right guitarist, the group seems to have settled down as a very stable unit. David thinks that they will stay together for a long time, and it is clear from the music that they know and respect each other.

"We have our own, what you would call, guru. We just met him one day, and he's been that to us ever since. He's called Steve Gaskin and he's probably the most spiritually intelligent and aware man in the country, bar none. He's worked with us a lot of group therapy kind of sessions where we get together and get very stoned and we literally fly together. Also we tread through the mud together when it is muddy. It's helped us a great deal to learn how to love one another and how to enjoy each other in the group. I still believe that as far as a group goes, that's where the magic is".

This integrated group approach to the music also throws some light on David's violin playing. It has now become the fashion to have a violin in a group, but he must have been one of the first people to do it. Aged 27, he has been playing for around 22 years, and with rock bands for seven. Apart from John Weider (a guitarist who plays a little violin) he hasn't heard many people apart from the Flock's Jerry Goodman.

"I think Jerry plays very well, but I like the instrument used more in a group context. I think he's using it a little too individually, and he's a little too self-expressive - more classically/jazz orientated than pop. I still try and keep my playing relatively simple within the context of the music and just let it sing out. Violin alone I don't find that interesting for a long period of time. I prefer it if it's mixed in with a lot of other things happening between the guitar and the violin. I like a couple of instruments together taking the lead more than I do solos. We try more to play lines and things together. I do some solo things - we all do - but just here and there, and we stick to a group sound most of the time.

I haven't heard many rock violin-

ists, I listen more to jazz violinists like Stefan Grapelly, Jean Luc Ponty, and Svend Asmussen".

David's instrument is five-stringed which gives him the range of violin and viola.

"I more or less invented the thing. I spent three years working at it, experimenting on my own, and got enough of an idea together to make a couple of instruments on my own.

I happened to run into a very good instrument maker and we put this instrument together - he was my hands, so to speak. The whole thing cost about £10, and I've been using it for nearly three years, so it's paid for itself time and again. Now I'm trying to develop it still further - it's still very crude. I'd say that the development of the electric violin - and I have it further developed than anyone else I know - is like the guitar was maybe 30 years ago.

I think in the next few years, if I keep working at it I'll develop something that's really a fine electronic instrument."

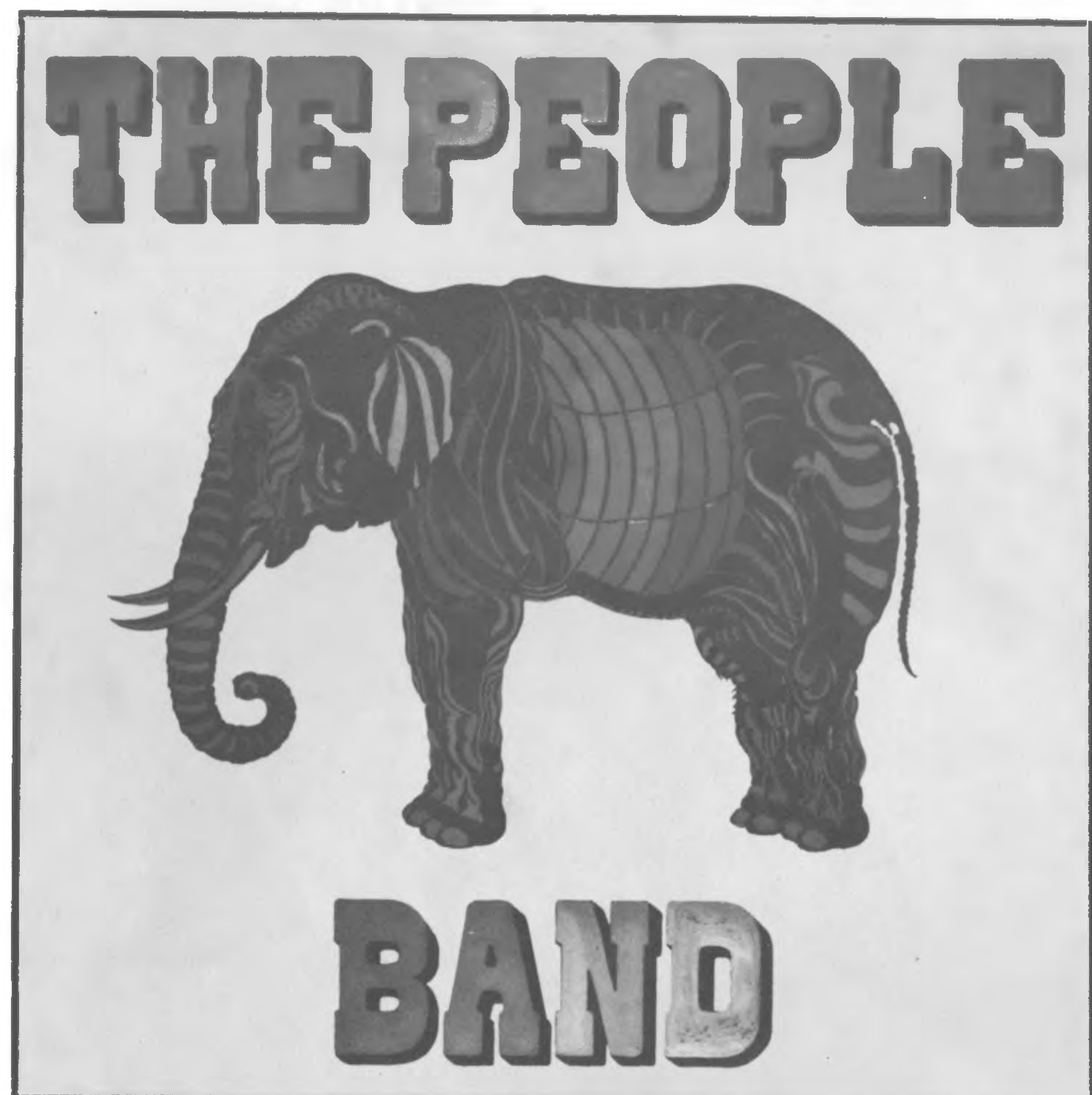
The group finished work on their second LP just before they left the States for Europe. The first two numbers they played at the Albert Hall were from the new album, which should be out now in the States, and out over here in two or three months.

"Everyone has at least one of their own songs on the new album," said David. "The others have done some writing in the last few months, so there's a broader expression there, and our influences have been a little different. Country music has been a big influence in the States, so there's some of that, some more plain, simple rock and roll, and still some of the "White Bird" kind of things that are more melodic, pretty and flowing.

I think it's a good combination. There are a lot of different things on there and I think that makes for an interesting album. Everybody's pretty much singing the leads on their own numbers so there are a lot of different vocal qualities. Everybody is very pleased, we're very happy with it".

Steve Peacock

There's a lot more of...



TRA 214

Transatlantic Where Trends Begin



Their second album on Harvest: SHVL 773

Musica expels the spirit which belongs to witches and sorcery, it drives away the spirit afternoon which inspires all those melancholic sectarians who think they see a heaven and a god therein. All these are diseases of the human mind of reason.

Theophrastus Bombastus Von Hohenheim called Paracelsus 1490-1541.

The Sun Wheel Ceremony with the Third Ear Band
Royal Festival Hall, June 24th.



Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young

Steve Stills was still suffering from the stupefying after effects of a full week's all night studio sessions, when I found him at his hotel recently. He'd been recording his own solo album, partly because being in a group with so many first class writers he has only limited outlets for his work, and partly, as he says, because "it's part of a plan to keep the group together a little longer. We already have a couple of solo albums and another on the way, and I guess that David and Graham will start theirs when they return from sailing off the Mexican coast".

We listened to 'Deja Vu' and Stills talked about each track.

"Carry On" was something I wrote in the middle of a session. We needed an opener for the album, so I went back to the hotel and wrote a song about how the group was then... our session scene from 7pm to 7am. We stuck the song on the front of a little jam which Dallas Taylor and I had cut three days before. It worked out OK I think.

"Teach Your Children" is one of Graham's songs... a nice little acoustic guitar thing. We wanted to put a steel guitar sound on it, so we asked Jerry Garcia of the Dead to have a go at it. I think it's the best track on the record... head and shoulders above the rest. I'm knocked out by it.

David Crosby wrote 'Almost Cut My Hair'. I think we could have played better on the track. I think we were capable of getting a better take. 'Helpless', which Neil Young wrote, is about a small town in North Ontario. Neil plays guitar, and I'm playing lead and piano. It's a nice relaxed kind of ball to it... almost an R & B sound; at least, I play R & B the usual way while Neil plays his own rhythm. Sometimes the song goes into some groovy things. It's interesting the way it moves along in parallel fashion, without ever coming together.

'Woodstock' was written by John Mitchell. We played at Woodstock and I really blew our minds. On the drive back, I was trying hard to think of something to write about the festival.

We had Jetho of our plans and I kept working out some ideas. Just as I was on the verge of writing it together, Sam came over and played us that song. So I said 'That's great, but I couldn't top it myself'.

Woodstock covered some credit, it was with the Woodstock people. They came over our song. They want to use it as the title song but they didn't like the tape reverb on the lead vocal. They sent me over the tape and asked me to redo it but I've got a terrible cold and I don't think I could do it better anyway. So if the Woodstock people want to use it, fine; if not, screw it. 'Deja Vu' is my second favourite song on

the album. It's really outstanding, because it took so bloody long to finish. It's another of David's songs.

Graham wrote 'Our House'. We just left him to do it. I respect him immensely and love working with him and I miss having him around. In the studio, he's a great cheerleader and mixer. I've missed him on my new album.

He did all the backing tracks except for bass and drums. I ended up singing harmony with him.

'4 + 20' is a song I wanted to keep over for my solo album but the guys insisted we use it in 'Deja Vu'. It means a lot to me.

'Country Girl' is another of Neil's songs. You'll notice that all of Neil's tracks sound as though they were mixed differently. There's some good vocal work though, but I would have liked to have sung better on it. After the first few verses I got into it, but it takes a while to get there.

'Everybody I Love You' came from Neil and I. Neil had the riff and I had a 7 minute track of another song we'd done at my house. We took bits and pieces and put them all together. But like the voices which make the track happen.

Stills wrote both the opening and closing songs of 'Deja Vu' and also suggested the idea for the simulated leather cover and the costumed photograph. He's already written the three he is allowed on the third C S N & Y album.

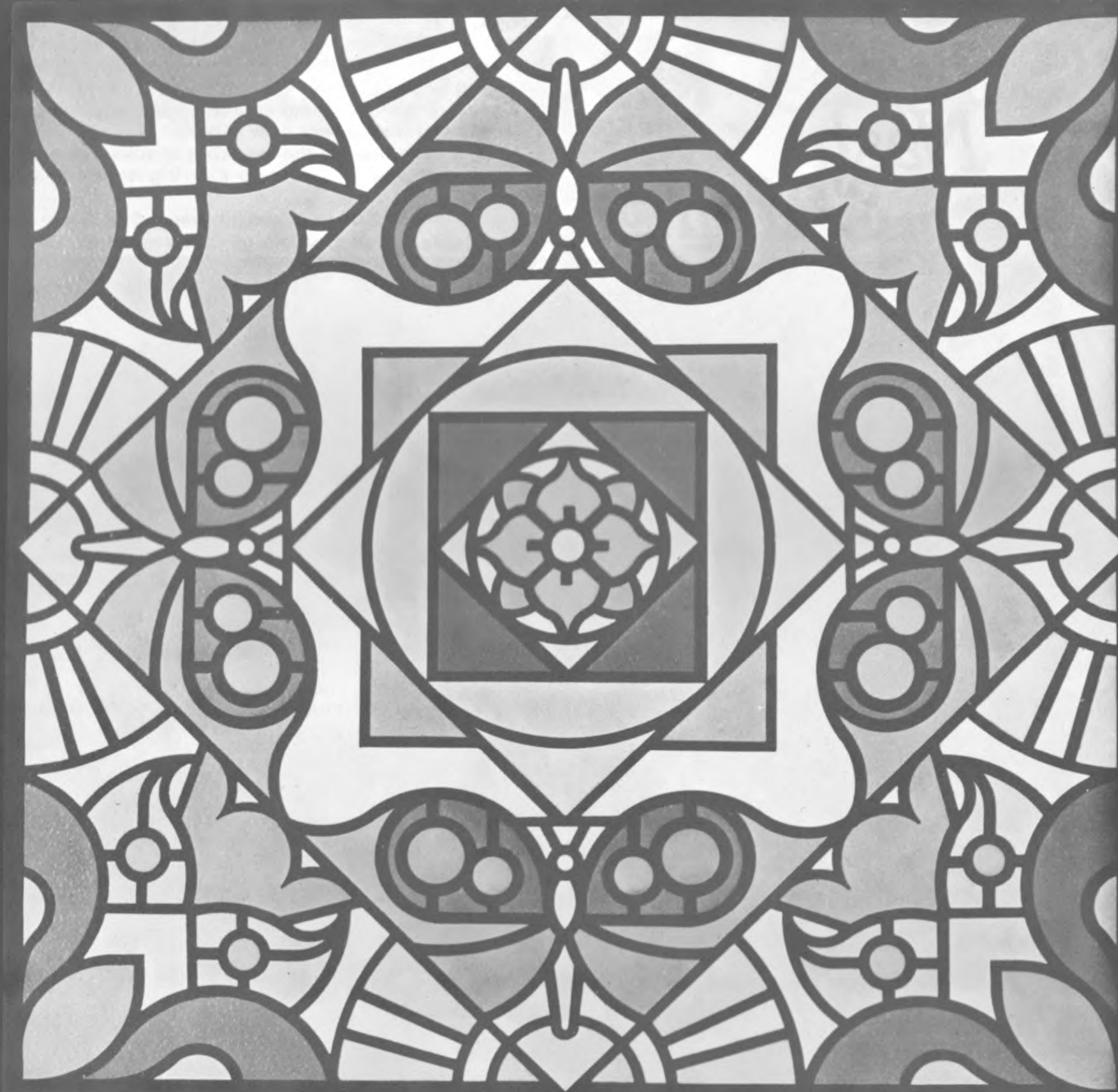
When I asked him if he thought the second C S N & Y album was better than the first, he said: 'It's not really for me to say. That's up to the public. What do you think?' I said: 'I thought I preferred 'Deja Vu', though I didn't know why.'

"I think the reason is that more of the tracks on 'Deja Vu' were played live in the studio. It makes the album jump a little more. Everybody was really working on it. 'Deja Vu' seems a little soft to me, but I guess that's alright. People are digging soft things now."

Douglas Garrick

Answers to the competition in Zigzag 11:
1 Clear Night, 2 Doug Lubahn, 3 Mowbray,
4 Dallas Taylor, 5 Wooden, 6 Steve Stills,
7 Still contracted to rival company, 8 Graham Nash, 9 Nashville lady, 10 Wally Heider studio 11,
11 He was to be their guest, 12 David Crosby,
13 Crosby, 14 The Rockets, 15 Judy Collins,
16 Jerry Garcia, 17 Greene/Stone, 18 Jim Messina,
19 For what it's worth (UK), 20 Steve Stills,
21 Los Angeles, 22 Davey Martin, 23 Richie Furby,
24 Jim Messina, 25 Five, 26 Topanga,
27 Supermarket, Any Day Now, Who knows where the time goes, Song in a minute, 1963, Vol. 1, 1964,
John Sebastian, Ringo Starr, Sentimental Journey, etc.,
28 Gray Clark, 29 Less than a month, 30 Woodstock
Chick, Teled, 30 Fired by McGuinn, 31 Greatest Hits, Preflyte or Younger Than Yesterday, 32 He produced her first LP, 33 Stills, 34 Listen to me, 35 No, 36 Manchester.

Winners:
Martin Norfield, 93 River Meads Ave, Twickenham, Middlesex. (40).
Roger Newton, 42 Dereham Rd, Watton, Thetford, Norfolk. (39).
Selwyn Harrold, Church Farm, Saxthorpe, Norwich, Norfolk. (38).



Barclay James Harvest

First Album on Harvest Release: June 5

in concert with
The Barclay James Harvest Symphony Orchestra

Manchester Free Trade Hall-28 June Royal Albert Hall-3 July
Edinburgh Usher Hall-23 July Birmingham Town Hall-17 July

Stereo SHVL 770



BRETT MARVIN & THE THUNDERBOLTS

"Mississippi Brett Marvin ... now there was a man", recalls Jim Pitts, mandolin, guitar, harp and spoons man with the Thunderbolts. "He used to carry his guitar, an old National Steel, in a manure sack. He was real. He used to hitchhike around the Delta, spend all his money on booze, play in low places and sleep on the ground".

"Brett", I once asked him, "what do you think of all these commercial people who go around wearing velvet trousers, trying to be the flashiest guitarists in the world, driving fast cars, and playing blues to make a lot of money?"

Old Marvin tilted back his floppy hat, stared at the girl at the end of the bar and picked his nose with a black fingernail.

"They stink", he replied evenly. Then

he went to the gents to be sick. He knew how to be humble.

He wasn't too proud to ask. He used to go up to, you know, these blokes in their, you know, suits and ties, and say "Buddy, can you spare a dime?" And they'd look at him and a couple of times I saw him get a quarter. Then he'd buy some more wine. He was infested with vermin a lot, but hell, so what? He was a bluesman's bluesman".

So, when Graham Hine, Pete Gibson, Keith Trussell, John Randall, John Lewis and Jim Pitts accidentally became a band, they decided to call themselves Brett Marvin and the Thunderbolts partly as a tribute to the old boy, and partly as a

reflex against the Peppermint-Bicycle/Hairy-Chrome-Orange kind of name. "You've got your Jaguar E-type bands, but we're like an old moped that keeps conking out and breaking down", says Keith.

It was true. When they started, they had next to nothing. All were folk club performers of one sort or another and all except Graham were involved in other pursuits (like art, university etc.) which prevented their becoming full time professionals. The group was just a laugh, a hobby, an experiment ... not a calculated assault on the British Blues Breadscene, which was in full swing when they started.

"British blues, I reckon, at the moment is morbid, bloody rock bottom, and full of people saying 'How can we make a bit of money?'" says Pitts. "There are some really good people, like Jo-Ann Kelly, and some really good guitarists; but look at all the ones who stand up there and announce their songs in a Birmingham accent and then put their mouth up on the side and put on a hoarse voice when they sing. What's that all about then? If you sing, you do it with your own voice, and you don't have to make it sound like a dirge. These spades like old Marvin, a lot of them used to get up and have a good time, because it isn't a morbid thing".

The band's instruments are, for the most part, crude and improvised. Like, what other group relies on spoons, washboard and zobstick for their rhythm section? And what other band boasts only one 15 watt amp, through which mandolin, guitar and vocals are channelled? "The sound was always distorted", says Pitts ... and I don't bloody wonder. The standard of musicianship, however, is high. John Lewis is an excellent pianist, and Graham Hine has a solo track on a Yazoo Records anthology along with people like Skip James.

But right now, they're standing at the proverbial crossroads. Their recent Sonet album is selling well, they are in demand for university gigs, they're having articles about them spread across Music Now and so on, and the pressure is on. Or at least it should theoretically be on.

A lot of the people who attack record companies indiscriminately for turning out commercial pap to ossify the minds of the nation's kids and to make a lot of bread at the same time, have never even heard of Sonet Records, but the Thunderbolts signed with them because the label manager, Rod Buckle, was interested in them from the start and gave them complete freedom over material and design.

(Sonet, Scandinavia's biggest record company, decided to open a London office a couple of years ago in order to offer better service to its English clients and Buckle, who had once been a writer for a teenybop magazine called 'Jackie', a record producer, and manager of groups like Unit 4 + 2 and the Roulettes, was put in control. Since then the English label which they started has put out only material which they thought was good; including 2 John Fahey albums, a superb Little Richard's greatest hits LP and fine records by Robbie Basho, Johnny Otis and Bukka White).

"Brett Marvin and the Thunderbolts are our second English signing (after a blues duo called Blue Blood)" says Buckle, "and they've ex-

ceeded our wildest expectations ... everyone likes the album it seems. I've always been interested in them and whenever I went to see them play I used to die of fright because I'd see other record company people watching them. I practically lived with the band day and night to get them on Sonet because I thought they were so good. They are all good musicians and have recorded for other people somewhere along the line, and they just got together as a hobby really".

"We paid them an advance of £1,000, which is a lot of money, especially in these days of bands breaking up after a couple of months; but we paid it on the condition they spent it on equipment and a van and things like that. They were in demand by other companies and they could have screwed a much bigger advance if they'd wanted, but they looked into our set-up and distribution and decided to sign with us, just for England that is. As for the rest of the world - they've had offer of over £1,000 advance from France, good offers from Germany, and an American company offered them \$25,000 a year for 3 years. But if I put out a press release about how much money they've been offered, people's backs automatically go up and you get stuff written about super-hypes, and that's what I'm trying to keep away from, the big sell. We're going to try and let the record stand up by itself".

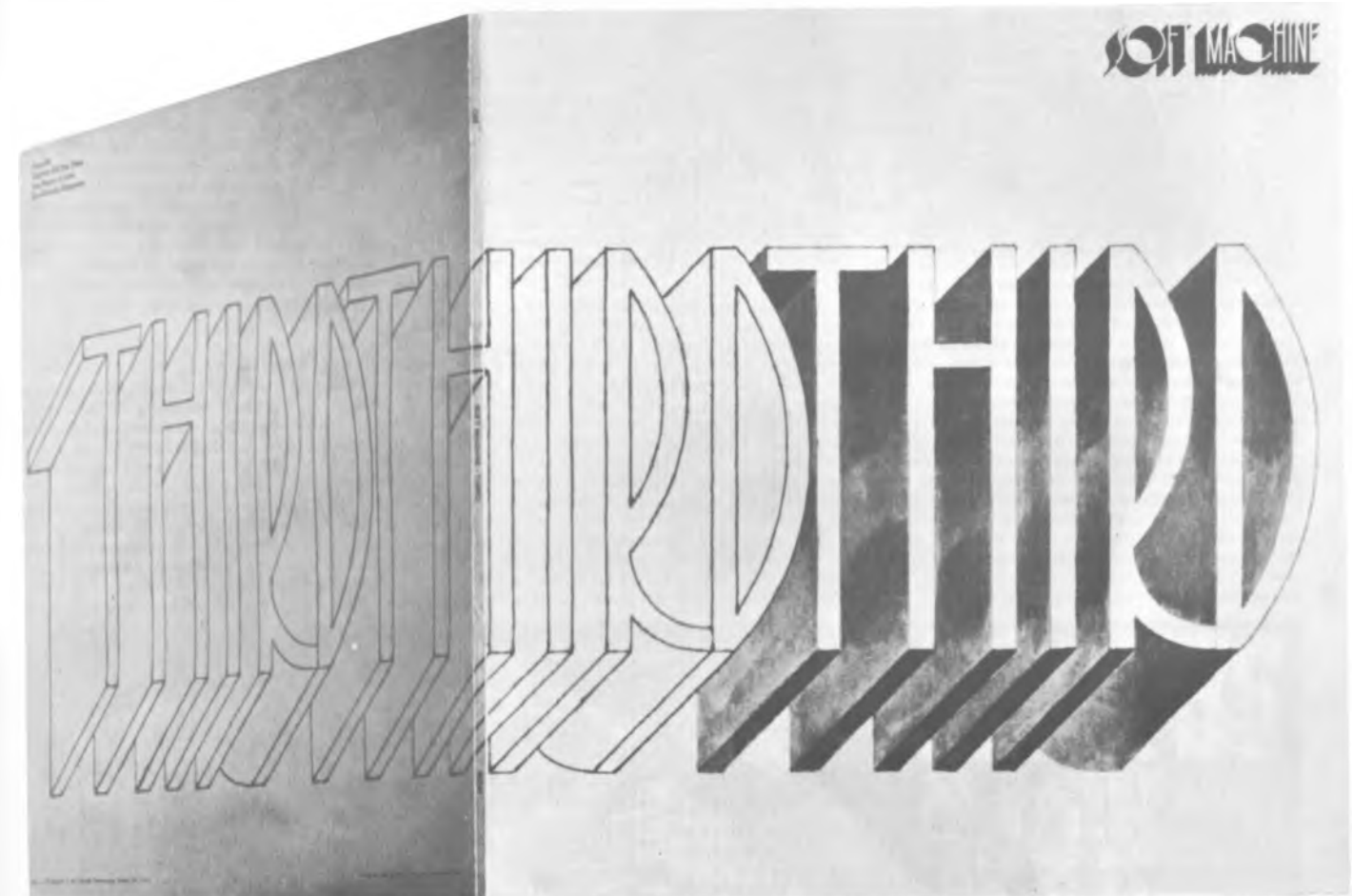
With all this bread, does this mean that their percussionist will part exchange his instrument for a new Fender double cutaway stereo washboard?

"No it doesn't", says Jim Pitts, who has been in 5 or 6 bands since being chucked out of Her Majesty's Navy for being unsuitable for any kind of disciplined life. "At the moment, it's fun, and we're all having a good time. We're getting a couple of small amps and a new P.A., because you can't go on doing big halls with our stuff, but we're not really interested in this seven nights on the road bit. If it becomes a choice between music and art, I'll drop music like a hot potato; what we want is a nice compromise ... say, two or three gigs a week. Like, I could make a pretty good living out of art and sculpture if I wanted to, but I've turned down contracts on that side too, and I just do what I want to really. I mean, you don't need a lot of money, do you? ... these old geezers like Marvin, they weren't thinking about money, they were just playing their music".

"Half of our act is music", explains Trussell, exponent of the bottle-topped skin-booted zobstick, "and half of it's a laugh", and like the group itself the humour just sort of happened. Before John Lewis joined, mandolinist Jim Pitts had specially learned 3 piano chords, and in the early days of the band, they "were diabolical," which, I presumed, couldn't have pleased the blues purists.

"Well to me, the word purist means bi-got", says Pitts. "Yes, a lot of people couldn't or didn't want to accept us, but a lot of those who didn't like us to begin with have come to like us better now. I think if people listened to Hinesy and Lewis, they'd see that they're good players. Fred McDowell really liked the band, but Alexis Korner didn't ... he started throwing pennies at us on one gig. But he does things like 'Polly put the kettle on', so who's right?"

Soft Machine are currently touring the UK



66246 Recommended retail price 59/11

now on CBS



hidden way; 'I think we're alone now' (just waiting for parents to leave the room so they can prove to themselves that they're not too young), 'Bend It' ('overt smutrock' I saw that called), 'Master Song' (poetic deviation), 'Love Chronicles' (giving Al Stewart the distinction of being the first English singer to use the word 'fucking' on record), 'Blase' by Jeanne Lee and Archie Shepp ('You who shot your sperm into me'), 'Martha' ('her heels rise for me'), 'Triad' (trendy trollism), 'Delta Lady' ('Longing in your soft and fertile delta'), the 'Fresh' LP (Homosexuality), 'Give it to me' (more "overt smutrock"), 'Je t'aime' ('now come!'), and the two American oral intercourse singles which never got released here of course, 'Midnight Snack' by the Doppler Effect and 'It smells kind of funny, but it tastes kind of good' by Mao Tse and the 4 Tongues. And groups with names like Hard Meat and Skin Alley unashamedly came into being.

Girls Together Outrageously chose to disregard the fact that Christianity wrapped women in a shroud of untouchability which mothers and daughters have too often seen fit to preserve. A group of painted, gaudy, loud females, the GTOs exist as a group not only to make bread and music in the usual way, but also to unwind the myth of women without desire and maybe to create a counter-balanced myth of all women dripping at the lips with desire for good quality male. When they sing there is a strange appeal in the discord of their shriek voices, and of course, on their album Zappa, the producer, has used his good musicians to back them up. The talking tracks are

good 'n' varied, for a couple of hearings at least, and the titles, besides selling the album, tell you a fair amount about each track: 'Miss Pamela and Miss Sparky' discuss stuffed bras and some of their early gym class experiences, 'Miss Christines' first conversation with the Plaster Casters of Chicago'. And there are equivocal sounds all over the album which could originate in mouths, armpits or any other suspect bodily zone. 'Rodney' is a track about a guy who hangs around all the names and basks in their glory. 'I got laid every day for one week solid because George Harrison and I were pictured together', he says.

The girls discuss the behaviour of drivers who pick them up when they're hitching lifts. One of them offers ten dollars to eat them or five dollars each to jerk off while looking at their legs. The girls' final comment holds out real hope for the human race: 'I feel so sorry for them, they're demented those men, and there are more of them than there are sane people'.

The sex orientation of the Fugs is parallel with the swastikas and Iron-crosses which adorn the Hells Angels - the main purpose is to shock people out of their complacency; to pull down their pants and assault their hypocritical propriety and plastic dignity. By going to the extremes they do, the Fugs almost purify themselves. Everything goes in circles, and if you go too far you end up where you started; the obvious perversion of a "zebra skin gropeharness" is merely funny, as is the thought of a lorry driver and a hippie bird making whoopee in a bath tub of Mazola oil. (The Belle of Avenue A). Their liberal use of 'fuck' as a word has

probably given them an unbalanced reputation. The full view is in their statement:

"There comes a time when you have to take a stand for peace, against war for love, against hate for freedom, against blind force for sex, against puritanical fascism for me, against you."

Nevertheless the sexual aspects of their music are worth looking at. Their records are necessarily tamed down versions of their stage acts, and a lot is lost - without the gestures and movements. But in many cases the words are sufficient to show more or less what the Fugs are on about:

"I'm gonna kill myself over your dead body if you fuck anybody but me" effectively combines shock tactics with sex, and the same may be said of: 'Coca Cola Douche', 'Jack off Blues', 'Group Grope', 'Bull tongue clit', 'The Gobble', 'Wet dream over you', 'Top Queen Love' and 'My bed is getting crowded'. With such directness there's no need to go looking for subtle innuendos.

Cockrock is a response to suppression, an unnatural response to unnatural suppression. The Fugs are the "cleanest" response through their directness, in spite of all their talk of harnesses and coca cola douches which are too amusing to create any artificial mystique.

And so, in these days when no festival or pop-prom is complete without a giant polythene prick waving about, cockrock is needed to provide balance and will exist as long as it is needed; as long as there is an unbalance in the sexual attitude of society.

Up you!

Ian

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

I wonder if we are not attracted to John Sebastian because his songs are so essentially untrue. Perhaps the pleasure he gives us is the illusion that we are actually capable of transcending pain and sadness and empty nights, maintaining our dreams and irrational loves and innocence in the face of sorrow, and that we can do this with light music and soft smiles.

In the old days, people would say: it's human nature. That could explain our problems. Now we say: it's only human not to know what being human really means. Alienation has become an overworked and threadbare concept, but it's hard not to use it. (I often feel alienated and sigh my sorrows down or console myself with inconsolable laughter. And, yet, my masks are perpetually baffled.) Sebastian never assumes any mask and never fouls up any dreams. And he takes us with him all the way into a sweet, secret world, charms us completely with an easy grin and makes us suspend disbelief in love and beauty, and all those other things we cynics laugh at so wistfully these days. He is the gentlest performer I know, also the sweetest, without ever being coy or cutesy-pie.

"A lot of people are seeking to make music as naturally as possible...."

"It's like tryin' to tell a stranger 'bout rock 'n roll...."

"Most people think that inspiration comes out of a perfectly relieved state of mind. A lot of people, a lot of young kids who are writing, want to know about the nature of inspiration. Usually they imagine that you should be off in a log cabin somewhere, out in the middle of the woods with the birds and everything, and suddenly the muse strikes you from out of the sky. It's funny how irritation is sometimes the cause of inspiration rather than just a sort of beatific state...."

"Do you believe in magic? believe in the magic of rock 'n roll; believe in the magic that can set you free....?"

But Sebastian: there are records available, including a new, deeply-satisfying one on Warners that takes a little while to become comfortable with. And these are scrapbooks of where this man's thoughts placed in music and space and time were once upon a time (those magical childhood words), and isn't that what Sebastian is to us: his songs and life style seem the same, like one of those strange graphs of the migration of people from the polluted pig city. He, like them, is seeking some quiet corner of beauty, some gentle "real" place away from the confusing disfigurements he has fled.

John Sebastian was 21 when he formed the Lovin' Spoonful with Zal Yanovsky, Steve Boone and Joe Butler. Before that time, he had lived in Italy and Massachusetts and settled in Greenwich Village where he played guitar and harp on early records by Freddy Neil and Tom Rush and others. He was 24 when he left the Spoonful. During those few years, he wrote a large collection of songs which he advanced so joyously and directly that you didn't know quite how to take them - except that they made you feel happy. Romantic, cheerful, altogether "healthy" songs like "Younger Girl," "Daydream," "Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?" "Jug Band Music" and "Darling, Be Home Soon." Wrote the music for two movies, *What's Up, Tiger Lily?* and *You're A Big Boy Now*, and composed a few songs for the Broadway show, *Jimmy Shine*.

"Leaving the Spoonful was a very spontaneous thing. To me, there was a long time when it was really magical and exciting.... We had two years of really out of sight chemistry. Everything outside of that is really supervicial...."

"The late, late show died a long time ago. With a few words from a priest...."

"Why did everybody laugh when I told them my dream; I guess they were so far from that kind of scene....Feeling mean...."

"So here we are together, machines and me;

I feel about as local as a fish in a tree...."

"My own work," asserted the artist Hans Hofmann, "is initiated through inner vision. I sense the mysteries in nature and reveal them through the act of creation. There is no end in nature and none to inner vision." All of Sebastian's songs are direct, uncomplicated and sublime images of his personality, lyric, flowing pictures, conveying a feeling or emotion. There is nothing outwardly mysterious in a Sebastian song; we skim with its surface prettiness and revel in the sort of vitalistic mysticism it inspires. His songs record the growth of an individual's perceptions and reach out with felicitous and simple eloquence. It's obvious Sebastian is a radiant man, full of love, sweet and funny and tender-hearted. If he had a master, it was probably Wordsworth or Thoreau. He has few disciples.

His new songs, on his new LP (*John B. Sebastian*, Warners-Repulse 6379), seems a little more impressionistic, more introspective - taking things out of time and space and giving them perspective according to the way he looks at them. "The Room Nobody Lives In" lives in a room no one has entered for forty years. The other nine songs inhabit their own special rooms.

Sebastian's message is simple, but never simple-minded: take life, accept its mysteries, be gentle and dig yourself and others and love and respect them and all your dreams. And never, never let your instincts and perceptions dry up. (I wonder if he still writes songs on shirt cardboards?)

"Strangers on a train/Fate arranged a meeting/Somewhere two spots of rain/Umbrellas beating...."

"Going out to California.... I've met an incredible number of my friends from the New York Streets who have paid their group dues.... A tremendous number of them were at my sessions for my new album.... At one single session, all of my old friends were there, plus a few new ones I've made...."

"Though you are strangers/I feel like I know you/By the way you treat me/And offer to feed me/And eagerly ask if I'll stay for a rest...."

"If I go back where we've parted/Could I ever feel like that again....?"

If I haven't succeeded in recapturing the moment as well as Sebastian or in bringing him into focus, as any talented underground journalist could bring Dylan into focus with a New-Critical-analysis of "Lay, Lady, Lay," it is because John's joy of living is always bursting out of those wonderful songs and swirling about in exuberant, delicate, three-minute eddies which every now and then visit us. That's hard to catch. (Look for him in *Woodstock*.)

He is a dangerous man, because he forces us to remember what's important about living: happy moments, as many moments as you're capable of having, tender memories, spacious living, not disappointed with withered and dusty air, or the creaking joints of the city, politics and time.

To know the man (but that means being the man and we have enough problems being ourselves) - to know the man... I look inside myself and often can see a darkness and try to write it out in words (a harsh matter) but find myself falling back on thoughts and dreams I've had and lost for - was it a second? Was it an eternity? Sebastian organizes his dreams into impressionistic portraits and smiles with an un-upright magic and makes me feel good. Besides that, what could possibly interest me about music?

"I'll paint rainbows all over your blues...."

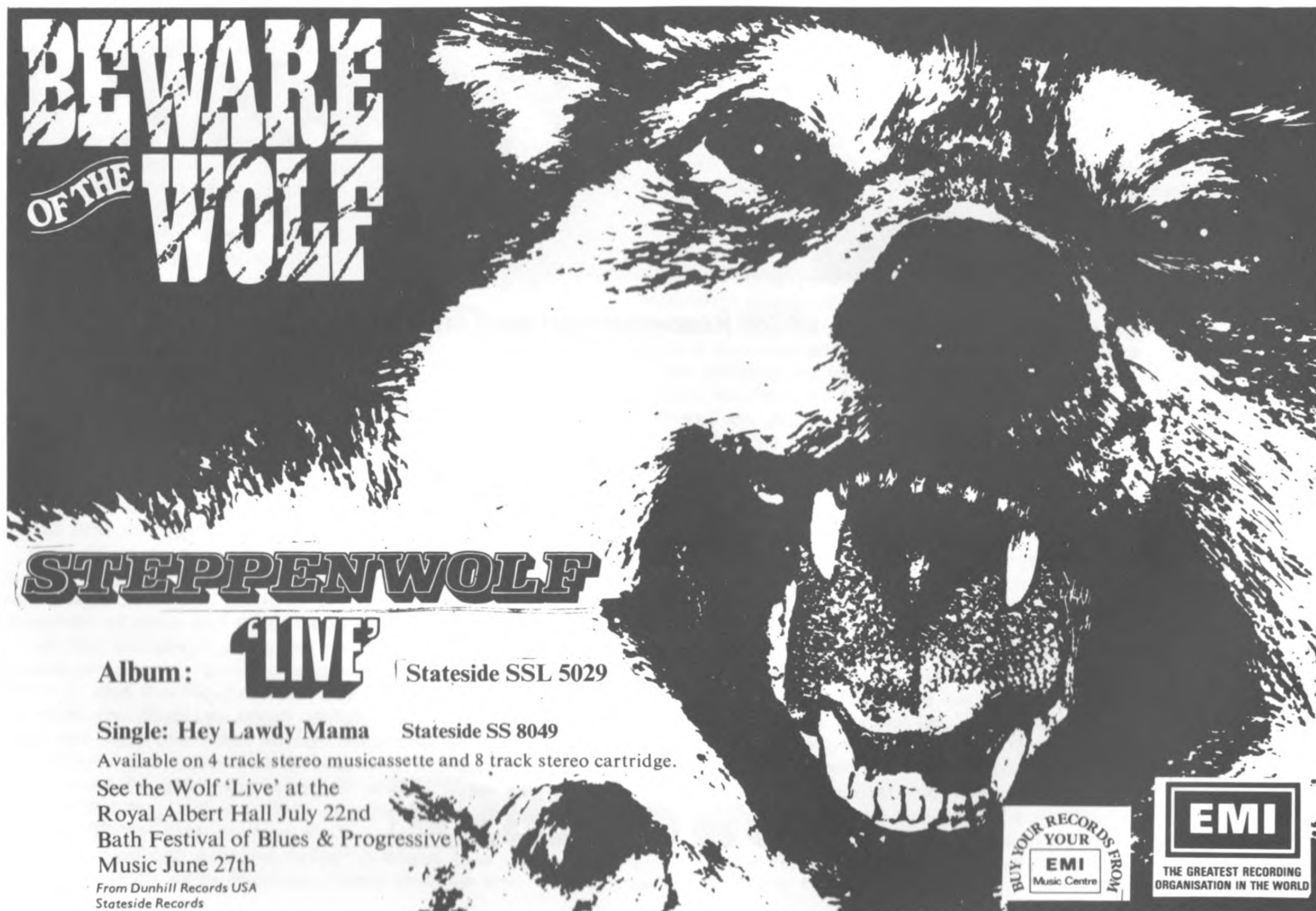
"It's time to find a new life style/Cause this really ain't the way...."

"Oh lady/Lady of ladies/I remember days that felt like it was raining daisies...."

(All italicized parts are from various interviews with Sebastian and from his own songs.)

MICHAEL ROSS

Los Angeles Free Press



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I seem to remember that around the late 60's "De Blues" came to England, stayed for a while in the hands of Mike Cooper, Ian Anderson, Gordon Smith etc., and were then captured by the Fleetwood Gumboot and friends. Well some of those infamous blues gentlemen are rearing their heads again, but playing guitars instead of tin boxes and playing from their own heads without a single trace of gravel in their voices.

The following is an interview with one of those heads - that of Ian Anderson, the creator of the first country blues club in England, and virtuoso of the steel guitar. More to his credit, he is the young gentleman who put the boot in British blues at last year's Farnham Blues Festival with his incredible "Twelve Bore Blues", which had Mike (The Blues) Raven trying to organise a lynching party, and the crowd crying for an encore.

Z: The obvious first question is "why did you stop singing the blues and when?"

IA: I got bored. I had been playing the same old things since 1962 and taking very little notice of other types of music. Last winter (68/69) I was living in London and got very pissed-off with the music business and what I was playing and listening to, so when I moved back to Bristol in May 69 I just stopped dead playing blues, had a rest and started writing a lot of what could I suppose be called contemporary folk songs.

Z: "De Twelve Bore Blues" which is on your latest album sounds very vindictive of what you were doing yourself before. Is this a deliberate attack?

IA: Well that's exactly it. It's kicking myself for having fooled myself I was a wrinkled 1929 spade for so long. And also shooting at all the purists who are more interested in dates and record numbers than the musical content. I used to be like that but I grew up. The last few years of blues playing were an enjoyment thing for a while. It's just "true confessions".

Z: But you were so deeply into it. Was it just that easy to snap out?

IA: Well I got bored without realising it. I thought of all the other reasons why I was unhappy doing blues gigs, like chick troubles and so on and bad finances with the old band, before I finally realised I was bored. So when that clicked, it was like a complete reaction away; in fact for a few months I went completely anti. But having got over that, I still hold the old blues guys like Fred McDowell in the same esteem but it would not occur to me to copy them now. I'm listening to so many different things now.

Z: So where are you going now?

IA: Hard to say really... I'm writing all sorts of songs. I'm trying to produce interesting material I suppose, not particularly clever but pleasing to listen to... I try to avoid confusing people with the music. I try to involve people on a listening enjoyment level so that when I go out and do a gig I can keep them digging what I'm playing and put over the particular things I want to tell them by talking to them between songs. I feel that people go to clubs to be entertained so you should give them that, but not to lose that vital opportunity to show them your way of thinking.

Z: Is there any group of people you really want to get over to?

IA: Well two sections really; there's no need to preach to the converted. Hairy gigs are just for enjoyment. The first

THE OTHER



ian anderson

ones are those who are completely entrenched in their way of life, the stereo-type nine-till-fivers who don't appreciate what they're missing, who've never given themselves an opportunity for freedom in say their twenties when they can best use it, or come up with the old cry of "but we're stuck with this whatelse can we do", being too tied by established social patterns for anything else to occur. Also the young kids, the 13-16 year old middle class kids who are in the "O" level, "A" level, University, Career rat race and are being moulded by the educational system and

mass media into vast numbers of educated zombies without realising it. They must think.

Z: Do you feel limited in the venues you play? You're very club orientated.

IA: In the average small town folk club you get them all, not in vast numbers but enough to do a certain amount of good. And I try to get as many school gigs as I can for little more than expenses to get the opportunity of meeting those audiences.

Z: You keep saying you are trying to get through to them, but just what are you trying to get through to them?

IA: I just want to make them think of the ludicrous pattern that the life of the average person in society today falls into. To make them consider an alternative way of life, "Drop Out" in a way. But not even that, just to consider their own personal freedom to enjoy life as they would like to before they allow themselves to be moulded and persuaded. I want to see the social change that needs to come about come about peacefully, not politically, not fast, certainly not in the "up against the wall, shoot the grays, kill the fuzz" type of revolution that is happening in the States.

Z: Do you feel your music is the best way to do this?

IA: I don't try to do it with the music. I play music I enjoy and I hope others will enjoy, and this will put me in front of audiences. The folk singer has more opportunity than any other artist to communicate with his audience, just sit and talk as well as sing. Audiences will accept that. I can educate and entertain at the same time but on two different levels, thus keeping people interested for a whole evening.

Z: Getting back to the music, having once been defined as a blues singer, how would you define yourself now?

IA: I try not to.

Z: What's your current position with the recording side of things?

IA: Well the "Book of Changes" LP has been quite a disaster for me though in many ways I'm glad. Chapel Music (who I have been recording for) put it with Philips, who have been totally unco-operative and unfriendly. They gave me a dreadful sleeve in spite of my protests, postponed it so that it was nine months old when it was released, then omitted to promote it or distribute it. It's not a bad LP considering they only gave me one day to record in, but I won't be sad if it disappears with little trace. I'm now recording for a new label, "Village Thing" down in the West, spending two months on it, producing it myself. It'll have a really good sleeve and will be well handled, probably come out in the States and Europe too. Here around September. Village Thing is a co-operative between artists and various others in the West to produce a label where the artiste is the boss and where promotion and distribution are properly looked after. It's mainly for contemporary folk to start with.

Z: What made you leave London finally?

IA: Because it breeds neuroses, and is the centre of everything corrupt. Bristol is a fantastic place to live in, the scene is very healthy and it's much easier to be in control of your head. When I go to London for gigs, I get out as quick as I can, it's all so depressing. Bristol will be my permanent home for a long time now.

Reg Leftley

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My God - what a state conventional religion has reached. Have you seen those ads in the Sunday paper magazines for a mag called The Plain Truth? I sent away, because they were giving away free books about Dolphins, and I like Dolphins. A few weeks later, I got a 'Plain Truth' through the door. One article was a big, biased, bigotted load of bullshit about unwashed hippies, so I wrote and told them not to bother sending me any more issues. Anyway, in the course of my hanging round with Lol Coxhill, he produced an earlier copy of the self same periodical (June '68) which had a picture of him wailing away at Woburn Festival to illustrate an article titled "What's wrong with today's music". Here are some of the statements made and conclusions drawn by the author: Pop music is mostly "nerve wracking pandemonium", "raucous noise", and "odious din". Song subjects include rape! (a ridiculous misconception of Phil Ochs' "small circle of friends" by the author). Listening to pop music causes a hypnotic trance which causes loss of self-control, which is a SIN (their emphasis). "The immoral conduct of many of the best known performers is no secret. Such wrong use of sex is SIN (Matthew 5:28)". "Little or no skill is needed to imitate favourite musical idols". Rock music is a direct cause for the breaking of the first 2 commandments - "it will not go unpunished". It causes "aggressive pacifism, ludicrous dress, widespread rejection of religion," etc.

Well, I feel ashamed of myself. I'm editing a magazine which actually approves of rock music. How can I reform? Where do I go? "The bible reveals the purpose of music. Music is for enjoyment and the expression of wholesome emotions."

"To try to find good music of the rock type is about as fruitless as trying to find quality merchandise at the city dump".

Right. You've got that have you? Cast your Mothers LPs into the dustbin. Throw your Beatles albums onto the city dump. "Various high-class record clubs have economical albums, including some good music in both popular and classics. But beware of the advertisements of pulp music in cheap magazines (Zigzag, of course). It is an utter waste of time and money".

All this anal drivell reminds me of another load of religious tripe; a book called "Rhythm Riots and Revolution" by the Rev. David Noebel published by The Christian Crusade, Oklahoma in 1966. That amazing book had things like "Communism is substituting perverted forms for standardised classical forms of music" and even stated that the Beatles were merely pawns in a communist plot to "hypnotise teenagers with savage-based rhythms". As well as condemning songs like "Times they are a changing" as being "praise for communists and communism", it cited "Matty Groves" as being a "song of immorality". Rock, it concluded, creates conditioned reflexes so that susceptible teenagers can be mesmerized and then brainwashed with communist

slogans. Did you ever hear such rubbish? These religious maniacs must walk around with their heads up their arses.

On to better things ... like nice albums; John Sebastian, Joni Mitchell, King Crimson, Medicine Head, CSN & Y, the Burritos, John Phillips, Groundhogs, and the usual 3 million that I haven't heard yet. And there are lots of good budget priced (as they say) albums around - like the Backtracks, the Everlys, Buffalo Springfield etc. Not only that, but there are excellent new albums in process of completion by Mighty Baby, Hawkwind and 2 groups that John HT of London and Brighton is rushing around screaming about; Kingdom and Stackwaddy (who he reckons is like Beefheart meets Bo Diddley meets Canned Heat).

As the day grows longer now, more and more letters arrive with complaints about the non-appearance of Love/da Capo reprints. The publishers of da Capo now inform us that they haven't got enough to supply our needs, so we're reprinting the magazine here. Copies will be sent out soon, (he says hopefully), so please worry not.

I remember speaking to Raja Ram during one of my infrequent visits to Simon's Stable. He was suggesting that Zigzag have a "Poor groups page" (poor financially that is), and that Quintessence be the first band to be featured. That was about a year ago. Times change; they're just about to play their first solo London concert at Queen Elizabeth Hall, and their second LP has (according to their manager) one of the most expensive sleeves ever produced. Haven't heard it yet.

Where is the Leon Russell article? Good question. Telephone interviews were set up 3 times and at the last minute each had to be postponed because the man was otherwise disposed. One day.

Do you believe in magic? On midsummer's night, the 3rd Ear Band and the Groupe de Recherches Musicales are performing "the Sun Wheel ceremony" at the Royal Festival Hall.

Thanks to all who wrote deprecating our intention to come out on newsprint. You're right. We're staying as we are.

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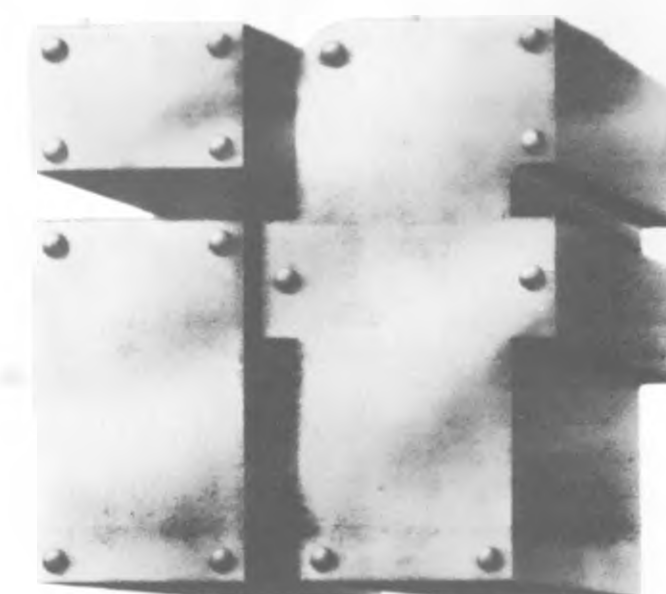
Concept (poetry) 3s inc post from Roger Falcon, 22 Pembroke Square, London W8.

Ma Boheme (art/poetry/prose) 1/6 inc post from Jim Morrison (!) 456 Maryhill Road, Glasgow, NW.

Bit Man (information) 2s inc post from 141 Westbourne Park Rd London W11.

Recent Rolling Stone articles on Captain Beefheart and Joe Cocker are both superb.

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