

Rolling Stone

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FACE to FACE with a FACE

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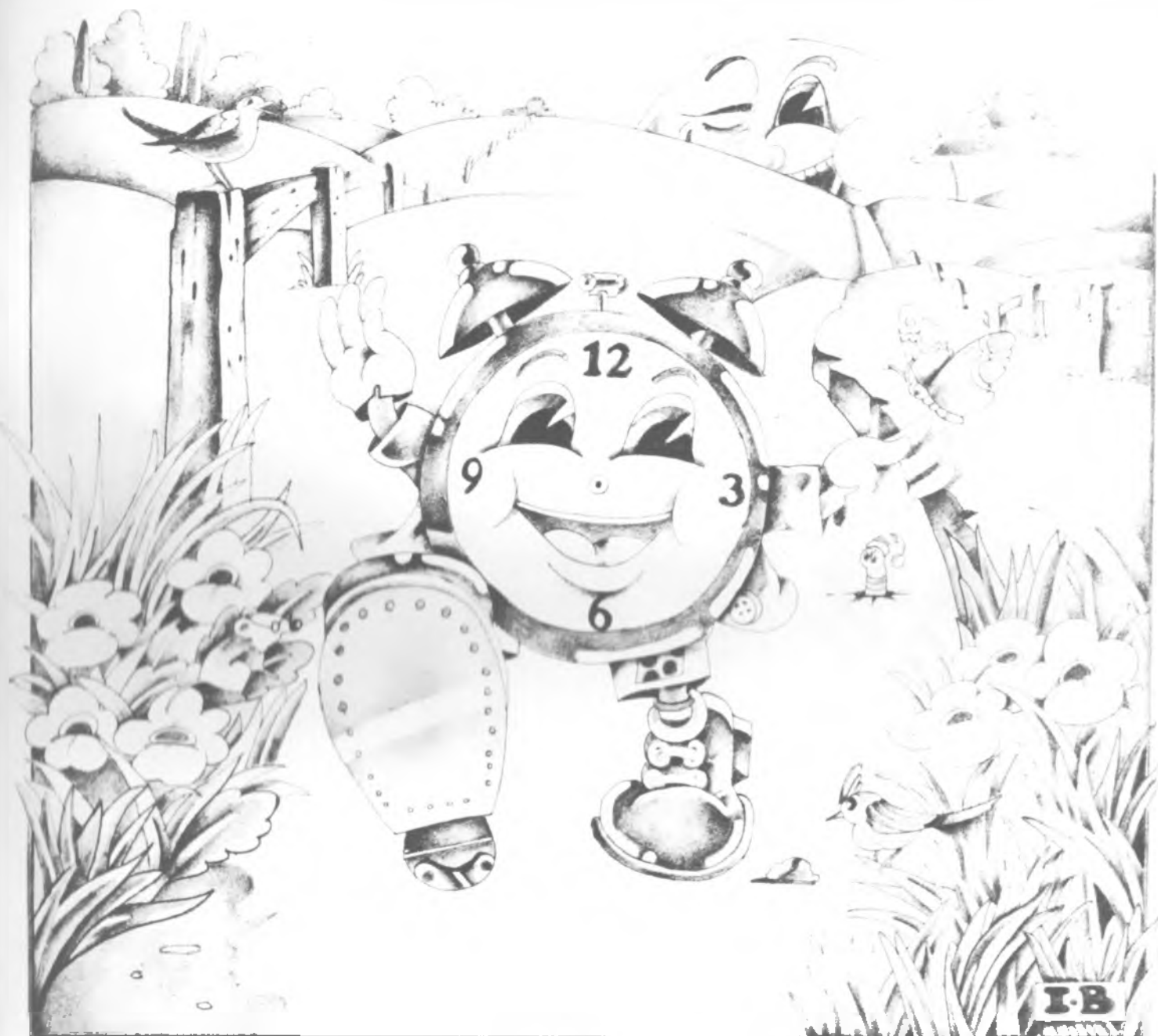
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FACE TO FACE WITH A FACE

There I was, wandering around Victoria, using an AtoZ to supplement my pitiful knowledge of London, trying to find the office of Mike Gill, the Faces' publicist. Well, I eventually found the building, but none of the doorbells seemed to fit... Miss Cane? Maxine and Maggie? I'd probably still be standing there like a berk if I hadn't seen Penny Valentine, of Sounds, get out of a taxi and vanish down some stairs. The basement! Ah, the penny drops.

So there we are talking to Ellie, his assistant, as Mike attempts to insinuate Lesley Duncan's album into our heads, as well as relating fantastic escapades involving exploding cars, jet flights, Long John Baldry's expensive hats, nocturnal excursions to raid Ian McLagan's drinks cabinet, and other totally incredible happenings the like of which never seem to happen out here in Bucks County.

By the time Rod Stewart rolled up, I'd consumed a pint of coffee and forgotten most of what I was going to ask him; but anyway, we went into the pub next door and he chatted away merrily (besides exchanging shouted abuse with Ronnie Wood, who was over at another table being interviewed by Penny).

We talked about the new Faces album, the Faces generally, and his solo albums.

Before we start the interview, it might be a good idea to give a brief history of Rod's musical career. He got into the business in 1964 (on the day Cyril Davies died) when he joined Jimmy Powell and the 5 Dimensions as harp player. "I couldn't play the harp at all - I used to blow it, and wondered why I kept running out of breath. Then I saw the Stones and watched Mick playing it, and I realised where I was going wrong".

Then he joined Long John Baldry's All Stars, later to be known as Long John Baldry and his Hoochie Coochie Men. As Rod the Mod, he was a crowd puller in his own right (audiences were mainly mods). "I used to be more worried about what I looked like than the music". That was in

1965.

Then came Steampacket, who were together for some time but never recorded because the constituents of the group were tied to different contracts. The others were Julie Driscoll, Brian Auger and Long John Baldry. "I got sacked by Brian Auger - then he kicked the other two out".

Shotgun Express next, with Peter Green, Peter Bardens, Dave Ambrose, Mick Fleetwood and Beryl Marsden. (If we had the bread to defend a libel case, we might print his comments about this band too).

Then the immortal Jeff Beck Group, which lasted from early 1967 until Sept 1969, when he joined the Faces.

Right.



ZZ: Why were 'Bad'n'ruin' and 'Tell Everyone' recorded by The Rolling Stones Mobile Unit?

Rod: Well, we started off the album at Morgan studios, because I'd done 'Gasoline Alley' there and we thought it'd be a good place for the band, but it wasn't; it took us a long time to get the sound we wanted and we were getting very frustrated, so we booked the Stones' studios for a couple of days and two numbers came out of it.

ZZ: Where exactly is this Stones studio?

Rod: It's down in Mick's house at Newbury... he's got this ginormous Georgian house and it's in the sort of reception area as you go in through the front door... it's like as big as EMI Studios. It's got a very natural sound; it's not dry... it's very expensive,

mind; it costs around £400 a day, so it was getting on for £1000 just to get those two tracks down. It was worth it though, because we felt that with our second album we couldn't afford to cut any corners. I'll probably use it for my next solo album too.

ZZ: How did you write the lyric to 'Bad 'n' ruin'? Did you and Mac sit down together and work the number out?

Rod: No, the band laid down the track and I had to go home and put the words to it, which was very difficult because they hadn't worked out the vocal breaks, and I had to find words to fit.

ZZ: Let's talk about 'Maybe I'm amazed'...

Rod: We've re-recorded that for a single... aah, it's incredible... all 12 strings and things... beautiful. We did it over in Sunset Sound and used Bill Lazarus, who's James Taylor's engineer.

ZZ: Who had the idea for Ronnie Lane to sing the first verse, and you the rest?

Rod: Well, I think it was down to my idea... I just thought the number lent itself to his style - I mean, he's not a bad singer. He's very paranoid about it because he thinks it sounds too much like Paul McCartney... specially now that we're going to do it on Top Of The Pops. Oh Christ, wait till we get on that programme; we aint half going to send it up... we wrecked the bar last time, so they've insisted that we have a security guard with us from now on.

ZZ: How different is the single from the album track, because I thought the live version had a really good clangy sound.

Rod: Oh, the single's got that too, but we cut the length down - cut the instrumental break out and the stupid announcements at the beginning. Then Ronnie double tracked the first verse, and there is a little of me double tracked too - just to make it a bit more interesting and different from the album.

ZZ: You originally planned to record the live tracks at the Marquee... did that

attempt fail?

Rod: I don't know really... at the last minute we got a bit worried whether we would get the support from the Marquee audience, but we knew we'd go down well at the Fillmore East... though it'd have been even better if we'd done it in Boston or Detroit - but we weren't too sure. We were very unconfident about ourselves over here - we didn't even know if many people would turn up to see us.

ZZ: Did Bill Graham ask you for extra bread for the privilege of recording in his auditorium?

Rod: No - he gave us extra money that night... he's not a bad old lark really - he's a businessman, knows how to make money, and you've got to admire him for that.

ZZ: A lot of people express great surprise about how good Ron Wood is on guitar, but he's been playing for 6 or 7 years hasn't he? Like he was playing lead guitar in the Birds, wasn't he?

Rod: Yeah, that's right.

ZZ: I've read that he was with Creation too, is that true?

Rod: He was with them for about 3 days or something like that - did one tour of Germany with them, when Kim of Ashton Gardner & Dyke was on bass with them.

ZZ: That pedal steel in 'Sweet Lady Mary' is beautiful - how long's he been playing that?

Rod: Only about three months. There aren't many people who can play one of those properly - though there's another really good bloke that Humble Pie always use.

ZZ: Yeah, Brian Cole out of Cochise. To get back to your songwriting, do you usual-ly liaise closely with Ron Wood?

Rod: Not really, Woody comes up with a chord sequence or a tune and records it on a cassette - then I take it home and work on the words. For instance, on 'Had me a real good time', I took the tape home and listened to see what it cooked up in my head; it seemed to suggest a party, so that's what I wrote about.

ZZ: What about those little touches in that - like the Auld Lang Syne bit, and the isolated line about falling off your bicycle?

Rod: Well, Auld Land Syne just came out of our fooling about in the studio - that's how the whole album came about really. The bit about me falling off my bike just came to me out of the blue - I love things when they happen spontaneously like that.

ZZ: What's this bit on the sleeve about 'On the beach' being recorded on a Revox spare room unit?

Rod: Ron and Ronnie did that round Ronnie Lane's house on a little tape machine. They couldn't recreate the feel when they tried again in the studio, so we put it on the album as it was.

ZZ: 'Bad 'n' ruin' is lyrically similar to a lot of your songs in as much as it's about the down and out adventurer crawling back home with his tail between his legs. Are these songs autobiographical or do you find a sort of romance in prodigal son-types?

Rod: Well, I don't think I'm the greatest lyricist in the world; in fact I'm very limited... but I write about things I've experienced.

ZZ: Have you been through that scene then - going back home in penury?

Rod: Oh yes, many a time - which is why

I find it so easy to write about. My old mum's really seen a few days, ain't she Sarah? (his girl)

Sarah: Yes - burnt his jeans once, they smelt so much.

Rod: Yeah, I had this beautiful pair of Levis that had taken me all these months to fade, and I came home from my travels and she burnt them... these beautiful old Levis - it was like losing a leg.

ZZ: This was all in the early sixties, before you got into professional music - your current lyrics refer to that period?

Rod: Yes - except 'Flying', 'Had me a real good time' and the things on my first solo album, which were all down to imagination really.

ZZ: I don't know if my copy of the album is typical or just a freak, but it's got loud crackles all over it and a big hole in one place, so the whole thing sounds like it was made out of compressed cowshit.

Rod: Really? Mine's ok - get them to send you a new one... get 'em to send you two.

ZZ: I thought it might be because it's so long.

Rod: Don't think so... they haven't cut it very well though, I will say that. The best record company in the world, and they've cut it really badly - there's no middle in it. But it is too long - miles too long.

ZZ: What about the steeve? I reckon it's a fairly imaginative but fruitless gimmick when you boil it down.

Rod: I really like it - seems I'm the only one. Everyone says it looks like an old 78, but that's what it's supposed to look like.

ZZ: I really like this great British image that the Faces seem to have acquired... sort of beer/football/cockney/party - a bit like the Kinks and Fairport, only more so, if you see what I mean...

Rod: That's exactly how the Americans think of us, I think. When Bill Graham introduced us at the Fillmore last time, he said "Ladies and gentlemen, the Mateus Wine Company presents the Faces" and it brought the house down - we just fell on the floor. I think it all stems from the early days when we used to think nobody wanted to hear us - so we used to go and get pissed and then go on and have a laugh. The best thing about it is that it's not at all forced - we don't go out of our way to get drunk and purposely fall about.

ZZ: It was originally purely to bolster up your confidence?

Rod: Yeah - we thought nobody wanted to listen to us... you know, "the Small Faces - bollocks", but now, after a year and a half, it's alright. I thought it would be like that - that we'd really have to earn our reputation, and I'm glad it's happened that way.

ZZ: Yes - the Faces worked very hard and made the transition, whereas Humble Pie didn't go about it the right way at all, I reckon.

Rod: Right; our album sold a quarter of a million copies in the States in the first 4 weeks - Humble Pie have never had an album in the Top 200. They started out with the wrong attitude, walking out on stage as if they were doing the audience a favour. That's not the way to do it - you've got to be humble... especially when you first start out.

ZZ: What about these rumours of the old Small Faces being really broke when they packed it in?

Rod: That's true... when I joined the Faces, all Mac had was a Mini Cooper and £150 in premium bonds, and he'd been in a band that had 3 number ones and a whole load of other hits... and that's all he had. Kenny had even less.

ZZ: It'd be interesting to know who walked off with all the bread, wouldn't it?

Rod: Yeah - well, they learnt their lesson and they're very shrewd now... they wouldn't let it happen again.

ZZ: I've seen you quoted as saying "The Faces don't need a producer, they're a dying breed, we can do it ourselves" and other times you say "we could do with a good producer".

Rod: Well, that's one thing that the group is in a real dilemma about. What we want is Glyn Johns. You see, it's easy enough to get my own albums together because it's all my own ideas, but with the band it's 5 people's ideas and we really need a producer to act as mediator. Glyn Johns is the only one worth having, as an engineer and producer... in the beginning, he wanted too much money, but now we can afford him and I think he wants to do us. We don't NEED him, and he doesn't NEED us, but I think the combination of the two is a winner.

ZZ: Let's talk about your solo work... have you started on a follow up album to 'Gasoline Alley' yet?

Rod: Yeah - we're working on it now over at Morgan Studios in Willesden. I've done 3 numbers so far; 2 originals (I is called 'Mandolin Wind') and an obscure Dylan one called 'If tomorrow wasn't such a long time'.

ZZ: Too much - I've got that by Hamilton Camp... it's really great.

Rod: That's where I got it from, and 'Only a hobo'. I've found someone else who likes Hamilton Camp! (shouts and whoops). I think the guy's really great, but his last LP was really bad - all strings and things - he's probably thrown up the old guitar and harmonica and dirty coat.

ZZ: Yeah - that first one was a really good record. (It's a 1964 Elektra release with lots of unknown Dylan songs on it - hustle for its re-release!) Judy Collins recorded that song too, didn't she?

Rod: Did she? When... not recently I hope.

ZZ: Oh, a long time ago - on 'Judy Collins 5' - around 1965.

Rod: That's alright then. I was going to record 'Amazing Grace' and call the album that, and then she went and recorded it... I'm still going to do it, but put it between two other tracks and not credit it on the sleeve. Her version's far too pure, anyway.

ZZ: What about these songs you were going to write with Paul Kossoff?

Rod: Well, he's in America and I'm here and we haven't had a chance to get together yet, but it should be good because he's got some really nice riffs and things, and he doesn't get a look in on Free's songwriting. I'm going to use him on the album.

ZZ: Who else is on it?

Rod: Oh, the usual line-up... only Woody from the Faces, Micky Waller, Martin Quittenton - but the Faces will be on one track - "(I know) I'm losing you" by the Temptations, which we've been doing live.

ZZ: A good old David Ruffin thing - which reminds me, I heard that David Ruffin's wife was so delighted by the way you did that song on stage, that she rushed round to see you in tears, begging you to produce her husband's records. Is that right?



Above: the Faces now: Rod Stewart, Ron Wood, Kenny Jones, Ian McLagan, Ronnie Lane.

Right: the Birds in Autumn 1965, with Ron Wood (4th from the left)



Right: the Small Faces in mid 1965; Kenny (standing), Ronnie Lane (hands on knee), Steve Marriott (tartan jacket), and Jimmy Winston, who was replaced by Ian McLagan a few weeks later.

Left: Rod Stewart when he was Rod the Mod in Long John Baldry's Hoochie Coochie Men in 1965. "Bloody 'ell, that's an old 'un. Do you know who's guitar that is? It's Beck's. My mum reckoned I used to look nice in those days - tie, neat hair....."



Rod: Well, I put in Rolling Stone that I'd love to produce him, and he sent me this telegram saying he wanted to know – because he's been putting out some strange things recently, and I think I could give him direction....I really dig the guy. Anyway, when we played in Detroit, his wife came, his sisters, his bass player, his mum, everyone but him, and they wouldn't let him in because it was a full house and they didn't know who he was. So, after the show his wife came round and said "When you did 'Losing You', I really cried because David missed it". Anyway, back at the hotel that night, I'd gone to bed when there was this knock on the door; "Hey Rod, you gotta get up now, cos it's big David to see you.... big David's here"...and there he was.... really big – up to here. And we talked, And we should get it together sometime. As long as he's with Motown, I don't want to know – upset Motown and you end up in the River Thames with a cement boot and your house burnt down – but apparently he's only got 7 months to go with them, and then we should be able to do it.

ZZ: What about this other production role you're involved in... Long John Baldrey?

Rod: Incredible! Finished... comes out on May 1st. I completely surprised myself, and I think it did Elton John too.... it's such a good album – really captured him at the right time, with the right songs. I don't want to build it up too much, in case it's a let down, but I was ridiculously pleased with it myself – because John's voice ain't what it used to be. The two sides really complement each other – the Elton produced side is very relaxed, and the side he did with me's really punchy. I think it'll be a monster – really put him back on the map.

ZZ: Are they new songs, or oldies but goodies?

Rod: He's done 'Flying', 'It ain't easy', 'Black girl', 'Morning morning'...

ZZ: The old Fugs' song? Great number!

Rod: Well, that's the only one I don't like – I think he's murdered it....he did a real old Derroll Adams on 'it.

ZZ: There's a name from the past – one of your early 60s folkie mates I presume.

Rod: He's dead now, isn't he?

ZZ: No!

Rod: Yeah – been dead for about a year now; I'm going to do one of his numbers – off the 'Portland Town' lp – called 'Cur-tains of the night', which I'm going to dedicate to him, now he's no longer with us.

ZZ: He can't be dead...he's living in Belgium, surely.

Rod: That's where he died. He was just beautiful, old Derroll – played lovely banjo.

ZZ: Can we talk about that folk era for a while – you say you used to sing the old Ramblin Jack Elliott and Woody Guthrie songs – what else did you do besides 'San Francisco Bay Blues'?

Rod: Oh, lots of 'em....note for note copies off those old Topic albums and so on....'Cocaine' and 'Salty Dog', that sort of stuff.

ZZ: Is that when you were ligging around Europe with Wizz Jones?

Rod: Well, I never actually knew Wizz at the time, but I used to absolutely hero-worship the guy because he was such a good guitar player – and I was just around when he was there. People have often

written about how we went around together so I wish you'd put that in. I knew a lot of the other folkies – like Alex Campbell, who was in Baldry's band, the Thames Side Four.

ZZ: Why did you stop playing guitar, if you were such an ace flat-picker?

Rod: Well, there was no call for it – but I still play a bit on the records; I played on 'Only a hobo', 'Lady Day', 'Jo's lament' and 'Sweet Lady Mary' – all those, and more.

ZZ: You played a lot of acoustic on the 'Gasoline Alley' album? I wish I had the American sleeve to that, because the English one missed out all the track personnel in the usual inept Vertigo way.

Rod: Yeah – they really fucked it up – I can't stand albums that have big picture spreads and no information. The American copy (on Mercury) has pictures of all the musicians on it.

ZZ: Is it right that the Faces only played on 'My way of giving' and 'I don't want to discuss it', and the rest was basically Ron Wood (bass & guitars), Micky Waller (drums) and Martin Quittenton (guitars).

Rod: Yes, and a guy called Pete Sears (now with Stoned Ground, soon to be in Baldry's band – probably) on bass (as well) and piano, and yet another guy, who's name escapes me, played string bass on the two acoustic numbers. The violinist was a bloke called Dick Powell, who I found in a little restaurant in Beauchamp (is that spelt right?) Place. You should have seen the American sleeve – it was really good because I couldn't remember some of the musicians, and I put them down as various footballers – like Stanley Matthews and Denis Law. You have a look at it.

ZZ: The actual title 'Gasoline Alley' – isn't it an old blues song? I remember a group called that, years ago....then there was that Hollies thing 'Gasoline Alley bred'. Were they all from the same source do you reckon?

Rod: Well, the Hollies recorded that in the same studios, about 3 months after I was there. But I don't really know where the phrase came from originally – I got it from this girl in America.

ZZ: Where's your Gasoline Alley, anyway?

Rod: Highgate – that's where I was born and bred. The next album is going to be called 'Every picture tells a story' – a real old English cliché.

ZZ: I was listening to 'Gasoline Alley' the other night, and it occurred to me that it doesn't rhyme, or it only rhymes here and there. Did you just abandon efforts to get it to rhyme for the sake of it?

Rod: Yeah – very rarely do my lyrics rhyme. I came to the conclusion "what do I want to make them pretty for?" They're meant to hit you in the stomach.

ZZ: Again there are lots of little touches on that album – like the 2 lone chords at the end of 'Alley' and the whistle in 'It's all over now' – where did they come from?

Rod: Oh, they're just little ideas I had – I think things like that make an album. Those chords were trying to get the train idea – being home and all that.

ZZ: What about the arrangements – are they done impromptu in the studio, or are they well rehearsed beforehand, because some, like 'Only a hobo', are just amazing.

Rod: That was Martin Quittenton's arrangement....he's got such beautiful chords in

his head – a really clever guy. The way we do it is, I get Martin up from the coast (where he lives) the day before we're going into the studio, and say "this is the song and I'd like to do it in this tempo". And he'll say "what do you think about this riff, and this little bit" and so on – and we do a little work on it before we go in. The guy is really gifted, and I pay him well because he's worth every penny of it. So is Woody and Micky Waller. I think they're a winner combination – I wouldn't use anybody else.

ZZ: I know that you consider yourself a Face rather than Rod Stewart, and that you have no wish to go on the road with your own band, but wouldn't you dig to do a few solo shows?

Rod: I'd love to do just one show. I don't think I'd get the same kick as I get from the Faces, because that's a laugh, but I'd love to do just one show with Pete Sears on bass, Micky on drums, Woody on guitar, Martin on acoustic and me on guitar too.

ZZ: Yeah – I'd like to see that. Let's get back to 'Gasoline Alley' – did the Small Faces originally record 'My way of giving'?

Rod: Yes – they did a monstrous version on one of their albums, but Chris Farlowe did a beautiful version just after 'Out of time'. That's a song I'd like to do, but I haven't got enough confidence yet – I don't think I could improve on the way he did it, and I'd hate to fall down – especially on my third album. People are bound to criticise it after the other two....I can't believe the acclaim I got for those.

ZZ: You recorded 'Country comforts' long before Elton John – did he offer you the song?

Rod: No – I didn't even know he wrote it. I got it off Harry Reynolds who was the singer in Silver Metre (with Micky Waller, Pete Sears & Leigh Stephens)....they did it on their album. That's why I sing the wrong words. (Harry Reynolds is also the second voice on the second chorus).

ZZ: There's a line missed out of 'Cut across Shorty' – how did that happen?

Rod: That was Woody's fault – he suddenly forgot one change when we were laying the track down, but I think it's great....it doesn't sound wrong. It was a lovely sort of mistake really.

ZZ: What about that dog-barking imitation, and those asides like "you remember that story", and the liberal sprinklings of "wooooo hooooo"?

Rod: Well, when I put the vocals on, it's just me and the engineer – Mike Bobak, who is a fabulous engineer – and I feel very free and able to put all those things in. But if there are lots of people up in the box I can't stand it. I like the freedom to really get into it.

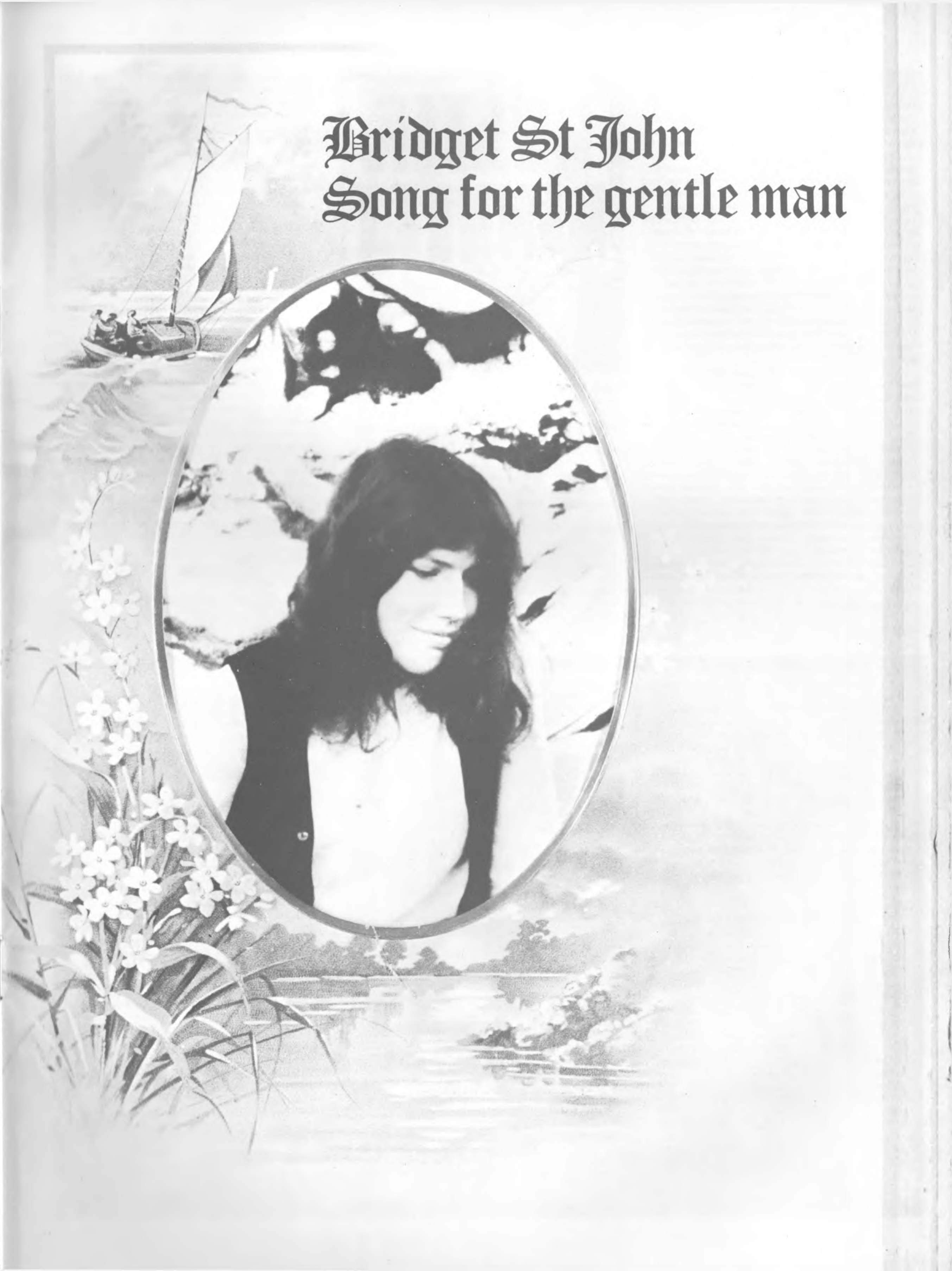
ZZ: I always thought 'Lady Day' was an allegorical thing about your humble adulation of Billie Holiday, as being your blues singing heroine, but it was really a song about a girl friend wasn't it?

Rod: Yes – a lot of people thought it was about Billie Holiday, though I wasn't thinking of her at the time. She was lovely though – I read a book about her called 'Lady sings the blues'....incredible book.

ZZ: Can we talk about your ancient contract with Immediate?

Rod: I never actually had a contract, but I made one single for them called 'Little Miss Understood'/'So much to say'.

We'll have to leave Rod's comments on his days with the Jeff Beck Group until next month. Pete



Bridget St John

Song for the gentle man

Duster Bennett talking to John about his life and music.

ROOTS

"I've been compared with the Don Partridge type of one man band, but less than I expected to be. The reason why I'm a one man band is basically because I'm a loner, and I was prepared to do it on my own; you see, when I started, I was an art student and as such, didn't have enough time to run and rehearse a band. I was into electric Chicago blues - Little Walter and things - and used to just play at home, purely for the fun and enjoyment of it; I had a little Selmer amp that I used to sit on, and the voice, guitar and harmonica would all come out of it, with the drum, and it all sounded ridiculously overloaded, but as I say, it was fun. It took a bit of time and persuasion before I began to play in public, because I was afraid that I just wasn't good enough, and that people would be bored.

I started out as 'Tony Bennett' on my early gigs (that's my real name), before the name Duster cropped up when I played the interval between Fleetwood Mac sets at The Blue Horizon club in Battersea. As the Fleetwood Mac came on, Mike Vernon, who's pretty clever with words, introduced them - we'd been looking for another name because I obviously couldn't use Tony, and we'd rejected suggestions like 'Long gone' Bennett and 'City Boy' Bennett, deciding to cool it until the right one turned up - anyway, Mike introduced the Mac: things like 'Bermondsey's only Jew, Peter Green' and, because of 'Dust my blues' and things, 'Jeremy 'Duster' Spencer'. And that was it - we decided that Duster Bennett sounded ok.

PETER GREEN

"The first gig I ever did was at a charity concert in Guildford, and Fleetwood Mac were also on the bill. Well, it happened that Peter Green and I were just knocked out by what each other did, . . . I'd been watching him for weeks and I could hardly believe him. . . . we just hit it off; brothers from that moment on, and have been ever since. He convinced me that I could make it as an entertainer, but I didn't take his words too seriously until Mike Vernon phoned me up a little while later saying "Peter Green's been pestering the life out of me - I've got to hear you play". So I did the Blue Horizon gig, on the strength of which I made a demo, which they went overboard about and signed me up. Peter and Clifford Davis (Mac's manager) managed me, and then Clifford on his own, but that wasn't too productive I'm afraid, because he was primarily interested in the Mac.

JOHN MAYALL

"I was staggered when he asked me to join his band - he asked me the third time that I'd ever met him, just like that. He'd always been nice to me, in fact absolutely charming, and he genuinely dug my music, which is a great compliment because he doesn't really like many white artistes. I considered myself lucky to have found an admirer who was so important, but when he asked me to join him, I first of all said no. What would I do, I asked him, . . . he played all the harp parts and had him and Jon Mark on guitar, and I certainly wasn't a good enough drummer to be in that band. But he said (and I'll always be thankful to him for this) "what I want to do is this. I don't know exactly how much longer I'll have a band on the road now (he was thinking of quitting at that time), but before I break up this one at the end of May, I'd very much like to take you to the States with me, and present you. You're going to make it on your own, but it'll take you years to get that acceptance;

DUSTER BENNETT

we could do it so much quicker if someone like me could go onstage and say 'I've got someone very special here who I'd like you to listen to - Duster Bennett! . . . then everyone would be all ears". So I joined him and went to the States. The band would go on and do two numbers without me, then John would introduce me, I'd play, and everybody would go mad. . . . I was knocking them silly, which was really incredible. They just couldn't believe a one man band. From there on I'd be absorbed into the band, and we'd all play together. Amazing.

But I was never really sure if I was right for the band personality wise. I felt it was a better band before I joined, but I don't think it was my fault as much as the fact that the band was naturally getting heavier without a drummer. It just wasn't right somehow. But when 'Turning Point' was made, it was, I think, the best thing that Mayall had ever done because it was the first truly original thing he did. . . . before that he'd always been copying BB King or Otis Rush or somebody else. On 'Turning Point' he really laid it down and said "look, this really is a John Mayall sound - this is something new". A terrific album.

I was never actually on any Mayall albums, although we recorded live at the Fillmore East (where 'Turning Point' was recorded); what's become of those tapes, I don't know - either John or Polydor own them, I suppose. It was nice to work in a band for a change, and I learnt a lot by watching what the other guys were playing, and then going back to the hotel and trying out things I'd seen them do. Alex was a superb bass player, and Jon Mark is just so masterful on guitar.

BAND PLANS

"When I left the band, I was once again longing to be a solo artist, but now my thoughts are going towards a band again, but it must be on my own terms. I want the sort of band where everyone pulls together, then you get the sort of strength there is behind bands like the Who and the Band. I'm not forming the band at this point, but what's going on from here is a thing called Duster Bennett and his House Band, taking the title from the first album. I'll be working from now on with Tony Mills on bass and Rick Wright on piano, which makes a nice extension to what I'm playing now. It's the logical step before the band, and they will be the nucleus of the band, unless they decide to go their own way in the meantime. Rick used to play with BB King, and I think he is the only white man to do so. During the six months Rick was with them, I think the BB King band, I think it was better than it was with a black piano player because Rick was able to bridge the gap between the older back men on stage and the young white Fillmore audience. He also added his own brand of rock'n'roll to the band - he really rocks like crazy. . . . not like Jerry Lee Lewis but more like the Earl Hooker tracks. He really put some fire

into the King band so that they really got cooking; what they'd do at the end was 'Rock me baby' - Rick and the bass player had it worked out so they'd double up the timings - and B would let Rick take a long solo. He loved Rick's playing - you could see he was happy, and he stood up to the audience and said "ladies and gentlemen, Rick Wright on piano" several times. It was so good seeing a young Detroit kid rejuvenating that band; when I saw him, I said to myself "I want that guy playing with me one day".

Every guy in my band must be hand picked, because I believe that a band isn't just a bassist, drummer and so on - it's a question of x amount of guys who really are together, musically and mentally. So many bands fall down because they hire a drummer without making sure of his capability and compatability. We haven't got a drummer and we're not going to have one until we get one which is right for us - I want a guy who is going to be talking back to me with his drums when I say something with my instrument.

There'll be a place for Top Topham if he wants it, but that's up to him. Peter Green said he'd play drums for us, but he's too much of a guitarist ever to be doing that for me. Peter and I both wondered if I'd be joining him, but he's not actually on the same level, musically, as me. He's better than me for a start, and I find it difficult to keep up with some of his thoughts. Our views on the business also differ slightly at the moment.

INFLUENCES

"My harp playing is, at last, based on no-one but me. I've finally attained what I've been searching for for about 8 years now. I've gone through copying a lot of people - Stevie Wonder is perhaps one of my harmonica idols and he's a tremendous singer too. He, Papa Lightfoot, and Snooky Prior are the three who move me the most still. As far as singers go, I'm still influenced by Jimmy McCracklin to a certain extent, Bobby Bland very much, and country singers like Blind Blake, perhaps Lightnin Hopkins, certainly Robert Johnson and Sleepy John Estes, but there's also an awful lot of Duster Bennett.

As far as guitar playing goes, it ends up like me, but it starts out trying to be like Scotty Moore, Albert Lee, Earl Hooker and Hubert Sumlin. I'd basically like to be a good rhythm guitarist like Steve Cropper, if I could.

Really, Cyril Davies was one of my first influences, and he taught me the basics of harmonica playing - like suck instead of blow to get the key. I wanted to play like Cyril Davies and I started by learning 'Country Line Special'. Jesse Fuller, although a one-man band, was no influence at all. . . . though I've met him a couple of times and really enjoyed his playing. He is more of a minstrel really; a different sort of thing. . . . but Dr Ross was a one man band that did influence me. Also, of course, there's Juke Boy Bonner - he's one of the best blues singers in America so honest and good.

BLUES SINGERS

"I think what this country needs is another Yardbirds - that sort of hard, lowdown, rocking, really fulfilling beat. The Stones started out that way, but they went into something completely different. Here, the blues works on very different terms from America - I think people always react to it in this country, but it'll never be like it is for the black man in America. Too many white musicians all over the world have cashed in on their music, which is a shame. . . . I suppose I'm doing it myself, although I feel that

I'm doing it as well as I can, and as honestly.

There are very few people who do it properly. In my opinion, Mayall doesn't do it well because he's too personal in the approach to his songs - he's not saying anything for people in a general way. A great parallel to the blues singer, for me, is Edith Piaf, because she was really singing for the poor people of Paris. I don't think Mayall regards himself as a blues singer anymore anyway - he's owned up quite a bit now. Alexis Korner is a non-entity, I'm afraid - he didn't ever quite happen - and Cyril Davies couldn't really achieve enough before he died, so Mayall can probably justifiably be called the Father of British Blues. Anyway, John Mayall set up the underground scene in England completely; he did all the hard gigs and played blues when nobody else had ever heard of it. . . . all the Locarno Ballrooms and so on. They booed him a lot at first, but bit by bit it got round, and just by sheer weight of appearances, he started selling records.

Ronnie Jones and Jimmy Powell and some others of the early sixties, were I think, better than the blues boomers, because to have done it then, they must have really believed in it. The early Farlowe as well, like 'Stormy Monday' with Albert Lee. Steve Marriott, long before the old Small Faces, went out as Steve Marriott and the Moments, playing straight blues. He's admitted recently that Humble Pie is going back to the roots of what he played originally. . . . Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf. He's got an amazing voice - the first Small Faces single 'Whatcha gonna do', killed me.

To my everlasting shame and regret I didn't like Georgie Fame in the old days. In fact I didn't like him at all until I saw him live about 2½ years ago. . . . he



wasn't happy with the audience, and therefore wasn't content to play what was expected of him - his hits. Instead he just sat there and sang the blues. And then, at a time when every band in the country was doing blues, I saw Georgie Fame just sitting there so relaxed, singing better blues than anyone else. He's top of my book among those kind of artistes.

There are certain other groups that come to mind - the Fourmost, the Sheffields (who had a great harp player), the Redcaps, The Animals of course. Eric Burdon and Joe Cocker are out there in front for me, and Derek & the Dominos. Canned Heat have never moved me in any sort of way because, as far as I'm concerned, they've never played the blues. They did a lot for the blues - Bob Hite and Henry Vestine particularly - laying out some great old records in front of people, but

playing. . . . no, forget it. It may be because I have a mental bloc over certain people, like I cannot stand Neil Young, though I appreciate his music. . . . same with Bob Dylan - I can't stand to listen to him, and yet he's absolutely incredible, such a monument. Paul Butterfield, at times, I find tremendous and other times, like when he tried to add horns, much less successful. I appreciated what he was trying to do, but you just can't help remembering the early stuff with Bloomfield and Billy Davenport. After I saw them, I walked around in a dream, just not being able to believe it. The world was different. The only weak link was Mark Naftalin.

Nobody really bridges the gap between black and white. Jo Ann Kelly, for example, is too intent on sounding like a 78, but perhaps Tony McPhee is starting to win. Really, the only ones who are doing it are Joe Cocker and Eric Burdon, who are singing about now rather than yesterday. There is a great connection between soul and the blues, with the possible exception of James Brown, who's on a James Brown trip. He has utter individuality, a great cry singer as they call them over there, but he's difficult to assess. Almost by mistake the roots come out in his singing, as if he's not even interested in it, which he's not. James Brown is interested in James Brown; black people sure, but only because he's black. . . . otherwise he'd be like Frank Sinatra. Diana Ross is, for me, doing the same thing as Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee did. . . . that is, selling out, but I don't blame her because it's very difficult for a black person to earn a living out there. I don't blame them, but I don't dig it very much either. I'd far rather listen to Martha & the Vandellas than the Supremes, because they still shout it out.

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FROM RAGS TO RICHES:

how Help Yourself
became
superstars overnight

A flashy title, but unfortunately (or fortunately) not true.

They didn't have any bread when they came up to our cottage one day last summer...but that didn't appear to perturb them at all. They just lay on the lawn, in the sun, sat on the swing, climbed the trees, enjoyed the grass, and generally did bugger all, all day...just like they had done the day before, and the day before that, etc.

You see, not only did they have no money, they didn't even have any instruments. They had nothing except a common (but hazy) musical direction, the vague notion that they were a band, a gig sheet as blank as virgin Andrex, and mixed and varying feelings of optimism, enthusiasm and ambition. Their manager, John, a bloke more like Falstaff than Brian Epstein (and who, I suspected, knew approximately as much about management as I did), talked vaguely about his plans, but it was abundantly evident that he had precious few concrete ideas about their future, and only a flimsy faith that they even had a future. Getting through the present was enough...we'll think about the future when it comes.

The group, Help Yourself, had left Famepushers along with Brinsley Schwarz, and their existence was in the balance for most of 1970. But I'm jumping the gun; Malcolm (who's shirt when he visited us, as I recall, was no more than a vest of the type favoured by road digging gentlemen) gave a brief resume of their history when I spoke to them again recently. "Dave and I originally started Sam Apple Pie, but I quit that a week or two later because of money troubles, bother amplifying the piano properly and an accumulation of other things - and I packed it in completely until this freak of nature, this whole Famepushers thing and the strange circumstances of our meeting".

He met Richard in a cosmetics factory; they weren't buying their lipstick wholesale, they worked there - humping tubs of powder around for the benefit of Strand Cosmetics, "manufacturers of the Eylure range". Richard had come south, passed through several bands who have since hit the big-time (working mans clubs), but ended up in a temporarily destitute, direct-

ionless and disillusioned state in the factory. Their foreman just happened to be manager John, who had the idea of getting a group together within the factory. His interviewing of job applicants was simple; those with short hair were eliminated straight away - no chance, and freaks were interrogated thus: "So you've chosen to seek a career in cosmetics?"

"Er, yes, that's right".
"I see. Can you play drums?"
"Er, well, er, no".
"What about bass?"
"Er, no, I...."
"Thankyou, goodbye. Miss Goodbody, could you send in the next one please?"

Around this time however, John, Malcolm and Richard broached their ideas to Stephen Warwick, with whom John had previously collaborated on film scripts, and he agreed to finance them through his company Famepushers Ltd. This was around October 1969, and whilst they were still looking for a bassist and a drummer, Famepushers signed up a second string, Kippington Lodge (later to become Brinsley).

Malcolm continued: "For one reason and another Dave decided to leave Sam Apple Pie, and so we were three, and then one day we bumped into Ken in Portobello Road. (Groovers!). Paul, our roadie, knew him from somewhere, said 'hello!', and we passed by. I asked who he was and Paul said he was a bass player he knew. 'Well, aren't we looking for a bass player', I said after about 10 minutes, when it had sunk in; and we went to see him and that was it".

Ken, an ex-journalist and veteran of many a semi-pro band (including 3 years with a bunch called Growth (?!)), was pissed off with doing auditions for groups who required him to do Dread Zepellin emulations, and joined with all haste.

So, by January 1970, they were a band, complete with manager and roadie and a comprehensive range of impressive and costly gear: One Vox AC30 amp (approx 900 years old), One set of Broadway drums, One Framus 12 string with a cracked neck,

and that was all, except for Richard's old Stratocaster, which they persuaded him to sell so they could eat.

They ate...and played too, sometimes, in a one legged sort of way.

When the bread was there, they received a salary, but they couldn't get off the ground because nearly all the money was being diverted into the 'Bringing Brinsley to the nation' campaign, leaving none to buy equipment. "I'm not beefing about our treatment, because Famepushers did a lot for us...we were just four totally unknown musicians and they paid us while we got to know each other properly. We always thought the equipment was just around the corner - John would come in and say 'it's tomorrow', or 'next week, definitely', or 'Stephen says it shouldn't be more than a couple of days now'. So they improvised with what they had and what they could borrow, and of necessity became a very soft, gentle band...but Famepushers at least kept them out of the Eylure factory.

Everyone who reads Zigzag will know that last summer Dave Robinson and John Eichner carted their bands away from Famepushers (and have now formed their own management company, Down Home, with Ernie Graham and Mighty Baby also joining them). So from then until last November, when they did their first gig (a week after Dave had procured some gear for them), they did nothing but sit around, wait, and play together when they could. During that time, they went into Olympic Studios one day, just to try out a few numbers and see how they came out. Richard, having no other, was using a domestic tape recorder as an amplifier. "But we've got all the recording apparatus here already" explained a puzzled engineer, seeing him carrying it in.

"Let's talk about management", I ventured to John.
"No, man, don't talk to me about management".
"You didn't know an awful lot about it when you started, did you?"
"I still don't, man".
"Well, I was going to ask you something like 'How did you accumulate this vast amount of

knowledge?!"
"I didn't, man...I dunno...I think that management involves being able to talk to the musicians side and the straight side; if you can do that, you're into management. You're just a mediator, as well as which, you have to keep money, and all the other things which musicians aren't capable of doing, together".

He's pretty good at laughing too...a right jolly bugger. I'm sure if the roof had collapsed he'd have emerged laughing. "Like I say, we grew up as a bunch of happy amateurs really, and I suppose we're doing everything to get away from the Famepushers star trip, because we're just ordinary people and not into that league at all". "But you're superstars!"
"That's just it - so many people, even on this low level, think they're something different". (I know what he means - I've met many a "massive star")

So anyway, last month Liberty released Help Yourself's first album, which I find very pleasant...hesitant it may be, derivative it certainly is, and technically it may be slightly less than George Martin's idea of perfection, but I like it. Nice. Lying, as I was, in a wretched condition listening to it, I somehow found myself thinking about an old (late fifties) hit that I used to play to death - it was called 'Jennie Lee' by Jan & Arnie, and was allegedly recorded in a garage. Now I ain't exactly saying that the Help Yourself lp sounds like a garden shed job or anything, but it's got a good feel of polish absence - a sort of uncontrived simplicity, together with abrupt finishes, rapid fade endings, wavery vocals, uncertain playing...in other words, a real album, a credible, non-clinical album. Mind you, other things are spot-on - like the economical guitar tones in 'Your eyes are looking down', some of the harmonies, the eerie guitar in 'Katherine', and the way that they've unwittingly insinuated their character onto the record.

"What are you going to say", I asked them, "when the reviewers inevitably start making Neil Young and Buffalo Springfield comparisons?"
"We're going to say 'So what?'"



Richard (guitar)/Ken (bass)/Dave (drums)/Malcolm (vocals & guitar)

They are, of course, right. So what? A first album must reflect your influences. (Look at the way everyone put down Mott as Dylan impersonators, and now listen to the beauty of parts of their third album). The shelves of their record collection may be top heavy with Poco, Neil Young, James Taylor, et al, but I think that's in their favour.

What I'm really trying to say, is that for a first album, I think it's good.

How was it recorded? Well, most cuts have live backing tracks, recorded at second or third take, and then decorative guitar bits were added. Vocals were usually done last of all, but some - Katharine, for instance - were done completely live.

"The whole thing was really very strange. We were so unsure of ourselves...we had never been on the road, we didn't know what we even sounded like, and we hadn't even sung through a microphone before."
Was the album just a wee bit premature, in that case?
"No, it was a necessity, and a good thing. We'd had these songs inside us for nearly a year. But I know the next album will be absurdly different - not necessarily better, but different - much more of a band thing, rather than a collection of songs which came together under adverse conditions. A lot of aspects of the record hang us up, but we're pretty satisfied on the whole. It holds back, but it's a good direction finder. You see, nobody had heard us, clapped us, said 'too much, man' or anything - so we had no confidence.

What about production?
"Well, in all we did about 10 days in the studio, spread over a period of several weeks around Christmas. Basically we played and Dave Robinson sat in the box - he made a lot of suggestions, some of which we rejected, got the best sound he could from each instrument and let us get on with it".
What about the mixing - things like deciding where each instrument should be placed on the stereo spectrum?
"Dave did all that - we were there though, to make our suggestions...it was very much a

joint effort". (Of that, I am sure).

Their current music is far removed from the album because, as they say, what they recorded was developed during their embryonic months. When it was recorded, they were "hesitant and worried", and "the whole recording trip was a paranoid experience - but we had to record to get the bread to get the equipment, so we went in with what we could scrape together. No-one had any confidence in the equipment or themselves, so the whole thing held back considerably. Not that we're putting the record down or that we're ashamed of it - we think it's really nice".

Well, that's the end of the article as such, but there's something more I want to add. Help Yourself's music is often described as "country rock". I don't know how to define 'country rock' anymore than I know (or care) where to draw the line between Cajun Rock and Swamp Rock, but I know what they mean. Now, I was bothered, in my cynical way, by the way that the ex-Famepushers mob were gathering themselves a contrived 'country rock' image...their publicist seems to have latched onto this angle, the management call themselves 'Down Home', some of the musicians wear check lumberjack type shirts and work-shagged Levis, and so on. But I needn't have worried, because basically I know what they mean, and I know it isn't a piece of superficial contriving or the latest line in hype. I'm aware that Headley Down (where Help Yourself live) ain't exactly your big wheat country, and I can't imagine them having orgasms when they see the first Spring crocus or whatever, but I can appreciate the difference it has on one's life (and music and style of creativity) if you spend a lot of time lying in the grass, looking at trees, earth, skyscraperless skylines, with clean air circulating in your lungs...forgetting what a stone drag is the city of shadow, dust, concrete and a million psychological pressures. This is a long paragraph without a conclusion. Draw your own. Hello and goodbye.

Pete

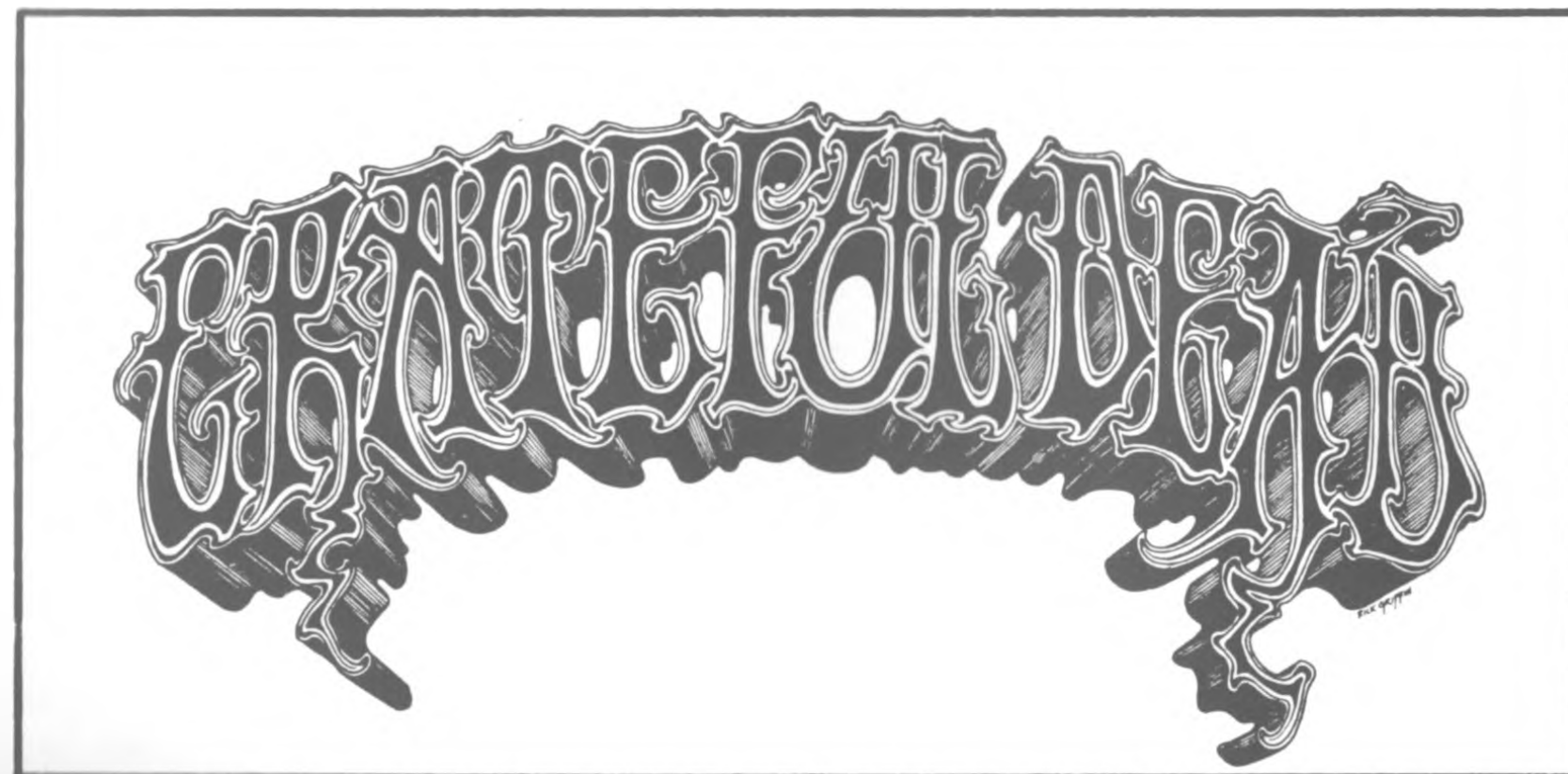


"HAVE THAT RARE ABILITY TO SATISFY BOTH MIND & FEET"
Melody Maker

WAR

A NEW ALBUM

"FAR TOO GOOD TO BE CALLED
ERIC BURDONS BACKING GROUP"
N.M.E.



Like their music, the opinions of the members of the Grateful Dead are both highly individualistic and yet part of a harmonious whole. During the interview which follows, Phil Lesh told me of his interest in Renaissance choral music. That music was a well developed form of choral music with predominant harmonies and a refinement of polyphony — a musical form where each voice had its own melodic line. That could easily be a description of the music of the Grateful Dead as well. And, as it describes their music, it describes their personalities and opinions.

The verbal expressions of Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh and Bob Weir are very different in style, and occasionally conflict. Yet they are a completely co-operative, coherent and highly developed group, whether they're onstage playing, or talking with an interviewer. I also was impressed with them as being among the most serious and articulate of musicians.

This interview was done in two parts — the first at the Park Sheraton Hotel in New York City on November 19 with Bob Weir and Phil Lesh. Along for the talk were Frankie Hart, acting as a hostess/publicist for the group, and a member of the Dead family; John McIntire, manager of the Grateful Dead; John Barwell, friend of the band; Penny Ross, Warner's New York publicist; and Pippen, who wandered in midway and offered additional comments. I spoke to Jerry Garcia four days later, backstage at the Anderson where the Dead were about to do a concert that was sort of semi-sponsored by the Hell's Angels. I tried to ask Garcia the same questions that I asked the others — and then to co-ordinate everyone's answers. In those cases where the questions asked Garcia were phrased a bit differently; they have been included so that his answers can be interpreted correctly — Lisa Robinson.

How do you feel about the new album? (American Beauty)

JERRY: I liked it, I mean it's difficult for me to listen to because we were having some heavy times when we were making it. There's a lot of emotional

trips happening in that record.

PHIL: This is the first record I've really got off on.

Why?

PHIL: Well it's hard to say. I don't know — maybe just because I was satisfied with my playing on it in the studio. And I've never been satisfied on a record but this time it seemed as if it all fit.

Do you record live, essentially, in the studio?

BOBBY: A good group that uses acoustic guitars only might be able to go in and do that, but the problem of mixing and balancing with electric instruments is harder.

JERRY: We've done it an instrument at a time, we've all also played together and done vocals all at the same time, we do it every way.

Do you produce yourself in the studio?

PHIL: We really do. However, the guy who was listed on this lp as co-producer, Steve Barncard — if you have a guy like that it's so invaluable, because you don't even have to talk to a guy like that sometimes. Or if you're not satisfied with the sound all you have to do is frown a little, and he's over there doing something about it.

A lot of people think of your music as either being "Soft Dead" or hard... do you relate to that thinking?

JERRY: NO! (Laughs) I never heard about that! Who cares — they can call it vanilla... any fucking thing...

PHIL: I don't care what they classify it as. They think some of our stuff is hard, some of it is soft, okay. It's all mixed in, to me. Each one of the songs has elements of all of that.

What kind of music do you like to listen to?

PHIL: There isn't much rock and roll music that interests me. I came out of classical music, that was my first musical trip, and so I have a lot of classical music still. Delving into stuff that I didn't have a chance to study earlier... some obscure people, and Indian music, Greek music, older music. The kind of music that was really designed to get people high. Like a certain kind of Renaissance choral music and the mass where they would have incense and wine. Music that gets people high, I guess, is what interests me.

How did you develop your bass playing, you really play melodies, it's quite different than anyone else...

PHIL: Well I used to play the trumpet, and before that, the violin. I don't know, I never thought about the bass as being a bass; recently I've learned to play it as the bass, but I had always played it as if it were something else.

Do you feel that if you play a rock and roll bass line, more rhythmic, that it's alien to anything else you do musically?

PHIL: No I don't, it all fits in somehow. I haven't quite made all the connections yet! I'm playing the bass line that keeps the bottom on it, and yet the same time playing stuff that contributes to the flow. It's like motion and stasis in the same place.

(To Garcia) How do you get that sound out of your guitar? I've never heard anyone get that sound — what kind of instrument do you play?

JERRY: Gibson. SG — Standard. The kind of guitar where you go into a music store and there's five or six electric guitars and you take one down... this'll do. I'm not on any kind of a trip about instruments, I like to get them as simple and uncomplicated as possible, because if you have a fancy instrument, somebody steals it. So I just take anything man, if it works, I play it. That's my philosophy about instruments.

Did Crosby, Stills and Nash work with you on harmonies?

JERRY: No, they never actually worked with us, the thing was that they were around. And having them around and sitting down and singing with acoustic guitars was such a turn on for us that we just got into it.

(To Bob Weir) Are you also involved with some spinoff group from the Dead?

BOBBY: Well I got a lot of friends who are about to do stuff... For one, there's a group called James and the Good Brothers...

PHIL: They're from Canada, we met them on the train...

BOBBY: And we've just been picking and singing together alot...

PHIL: They're planning to make a record.

Are you going to be on it?

BOBBY: Well, I'm going to play on it a little, but what they really need is someone in the studio. At this point they're so together that they ought to put

together an album, and I plan to be around to help out.

PHIL: That's the sort of thing I'm doing with the New Riders...

Are they recording for Warner Brothers?

PHIL: They're recording for themselves! Have they decided who's going to distribute it or anything?

JOHN McINTIRE: They'll decide when the album's done, and I will hold it up and say, here's this album, which one of you guys wants it...

When will it be done?

PHIL: Ten days in December... they've been doing demos and stuff for a long time...

How do you feel about what's happening in New York now when you play. Kids are sleeping out all night on the street and stuff to get tickets...

JERRY: I think it's crazy...

PHIL: What do we know about that!? Superstars...

BOBBY: It's unreal, but we can try and make it easier for them so they don't have to sleep on the fucking concrete to get tickets...

PHIL: The promoters could cover that a little better by not putting the tickets on sale so fast, so there would be less of a chance of them being sold out so far in advance. Or by holding half of the tickets to be sold on the day of the gig itself, at the door... or one third...

But whose responsibility is it?... How much responsibility do we as a band have to take to reach the people we want to reach?

BOBBY: It may well be that we have to take a hundred percent responsibility because nobody else is willing to accept it.

PHIL: Well the people themselves aren't willing to accept it, that's the trouble. That's where it ultimately lies, I think.

BOBBY: Yeah, but I don't have much faith in the ability of the people...

PHIL: This has been the political schism of all time...

Do you feel the band has to take responsibility if the kids can't get tickets for your shows and stuff?

JERRY: Yeah, we do. It's almost coming down to that our responsibility might entail not playing so as not to be drawing people to a bum scene. But you see, what puzzles me is that you have a situation where everybody thinks what a drag it is, and you could say fuck it, I'm not going to pay five bucks to do that, and not do it. That's what I would do, it's weird. I don't understand why people will willingly be burned and then complain about it... for the longest time

Well, they don't think it's being burned. There's nothing else... they're still hearing music, and if they don't go, well then they don't hear live music.

JERRY: That's true — but they could play... I don't know, I guess maybe that's the next step. But I really don't know... I don't understand the vagaries of human behavior. It's all a complete mystery to me, why people do what they do.

Have you played the South alot?

PHIL: Yes, unfortunately we've played the South, about three or four times in Atlanta which is about the grooviest place in the South we've been in... and once again in New Orleans and Memphis, neither of which we'll ever return to again.

BOBBY: In New Orleans they busted us, and in Memphis they gave it a real good try.
PHIL: Anyway in Memphis it was really an uptight performing situation. If anyone stood up on their seat they got busted, and I mean busted. Even if you thought about moving, you got wiped on the head, dragged out and taken to jail.

Are you approached by a lot of political groups to do benefits?
BOBBY: We're really more insulated now, it's all done through the office.
PHIL: But what we tend to do with that stuff is to do the things that are the most meaningful to us — like political candidates — never.
Well I didn't mean political candidates, I meant like the things you felt were righteous...
PHIL: Oh you mean like relevant shit. Well the things that we consider righteous are like the Pit River Indians who are having their land taken away from them and the People's Park Bail Fund...
JERRY: We have some loose semi-association with the Black Panthers because we met Huey Newton and got along well with him. We don't deal with things on the basis of content, the idea of a philosophy or any of that shit, mostly it's personalities — people. That sort of thing.

Is it a hassle doing free concerts now?
PHIL: No, no more than paid gigs man, doing concerts is a hassle.
JOHN: It's very difficult to be allowed to do a free concert now, in almost every city in the country.
PHIL: Yeah, we've almost blown it...
BOBBY: They turn into a hassle. Like for instance we played at Columbia when they had the student strike, and we thought it would be nice for us to go down there and stir up some shit, nothing political, just lend some energy to the situation. And see how things felt. So we went down and set up, and as soon as the microphones were turned on and all the people who wanted to know if the microphones were turned on realized that they were, there was a mad rush for the microphones because everybody had a very important announcement. And I told about five people in the space of one minute that no man, these microphones were for the music and not for politics. And from every single one of the people that I told that to I got "lame honky bastard", or "crass bourgeois son of a bitch". They just unleashed their political views. And I hate that. And there's a lot of that going down.
PHIL: That is definitely kind of a facistic tendency, however, you've got to realize, that as long as you're living in this fucking country, the revolution is right in your lap.
BOBBY: And I've always felt that those people are low-consciousness people not to realize that we are doing our part by doing nothing but music.
I thing that really liberating music is more revolutionary than talk...

PHIL: It is on a certain level, but some of that stuff has to be translated back down to the regular level of mundane existence in order for things to get better here. Throwing rocks and things ain't the revolution. That's dumb people

setting themselves up as targets; here I am, kill me.
BOBBY: Or here I am, get uptight enough to start killing me. It doesn't have to happen man, but it's gonna. It looks that way.
PHIL: Yeah, it really does. And music won't be able to do anything because now music is really stigmatized as being the cause, or the carrier of the bad vibes. So in a way the musicians have blown it.
Do you think the musicians have blown it, or the kids, or neither of them — just the repression...
PHIL: Well it works both ways...
BOBBY: The only way that music can re-achieve its dignity perhaps, its apolitical standpoint, is to become pastoral. And I won't become pastoral because I'm not a pastor. And that gets into the thing — do you have a responsibility to keep your mouth shut, if you don't have anything to say. And I have a few notes to say, but I have absolutely no sociological, philosophical, political bullshit...
JERRY: Well I think the musician's first responsibility is to play music as well as he can, and that's the most important thing. And any responsibility to anyone else is just journalistic fiction... or political fiction. Because that bullshit about the people's music man, where's that at, what's that supposed to mean? It wasn't any people that sat with me while I learned how to play the guitar. I mean who paid the dues? I mean if the people think that way they can fucking make their own music. And besides, when somebody says people, to me it means everybody. It means the cops, the guys who drive the limousine, the fucker who runs the elevator, everybody. All that.
What about the thing of breaking down those traditional dues, standing in line, paying some promoter for the ticket, what about the kids who feel that way?
PIGPEN: Rock and roll owes me a living...
BOBBY: Hippies aren't all enlightened people...
PHIL: Yes, long hair does not a sage make.
Do you feel it's going to work out?
JERRY: Oh... I think there is hope, but I don't want to say, because you can't know. And it can go any way in this country, and the fact is it's so much weirder now than it was four years ago...
But you as a group could demand that the prices be lower...
PHIL: But we can't afford to play for less money, for one thing. We would like to but can't. Unless we start to sell millions of records, which hasn't happened yet. We support fifty people for one thing...
How many people travel with you?
PHIL: Thirteen. So our air fare from San Francisco to here is four thousand dollars.
There are fifty in your family?
PHIL: I would say that there are about fifty in the family...
BOBBY: We support the hippie scene around us too. Not just our family but the hippie craftsman and artists and stuff like that. And we have electronics crews who are exploring new horizons in sound... and video for that matter

too. And they need support, and we're just about the only people who can give it to them, us and the Airplane. And that's expensive. And we have to more or less subsidize them by giving them projects, and that becomes expensive because of the work and parts... they all have to stay alive too.
Do they depend on you a lot?
JERRY: Well, we depend on us a lot, and each of us has at least some small scene to cover... more or less. But essentially we are in debt, and we've been working to get out of that. And to get a little ahead of ourselves. Mostly to buy ourselves time so we don't have to work so fucking much.
BOBBY: We've been working on the road, traveling as much as we could generally, for about four years...
How can you go in and do two shows a night, or aren't you doing two?...
PHIL: We're not doing two shows a night anymore, it was just us doing a set when we did that. There was no time to build anything up, because we'd be pacing ourselves for the second show... it was just jacking off for the first show.
BOBBY: Everybody loves a circus.
PHIL: True, true. I shouldn't complain about it, it's to be expected. The only thing that makes gigs worthwhile is playing good.
Would you rather see a situation where you only played once a week, or one week out of a month or something?
PHIL: I'd rather see a situation where I'd only play when I godamn well felt like it. And I fell like it a lot, more than you might think judging from the way I talk. Cause I really like to play, but I don't like anything else about it.
If you sold more records you wouldn't have to play as much... would you miss it? (To Garcia)
JERRY: To not have to. That would be groovy. I mean I play in a lot of different contexts at home, you know. I play virtually every night at home... I play in the recording studio, I play everywhere man, I'm a musician! That's what I do! So I know I'm always going to play, it's just a question of whether I'm going to play in huge crowded public scenes or not. And that's about pretty true of all of us.
Are you going to do another live album?
PHIL: Well, not until we make up some new music. By which I mean not new songs, but music to play. New music to play.
(To Garcia) *Do you think you'll do another live album?*
JERRY: Oh yeah, sure.
With the material you're doing now?
JERRY: Well, I don't know. Probably a whole range of things, and a lot of things we've never recorded — other people's material and so forth. It would be what we hadn't done before...
How long do you think you'll be doing the material you're doing now?
PHIL: It's hard to say, we run in cycles of about a year. I just really don't know, we just haven't had time to think about anything else, anything new. Once we made up our minds that thinking up new songs was the thing to do, I mean it never necessarily came to an agreement, but we just all felt that way, and since that went down we haven't had time to practice much of anything.
Do you practice alot?

JERRY: I practice when I can, which isn't too often when I'm on the road. The band — we don't practice too much because we don't have a place to practice... we play instead of practicing.
Do you ever get any bad reactions when it's an off night from the audience?
PHIL: Well we used to when we did two shows and the first show would mostly be kids out on dates, generally younger people... And it'd be slower, we wouldn't be doing much mind blowing shit, and they'd get uptight if we didn't do encores.
Besides now we're pretty good, so that now — we can have what to us is an off night, and people will still dig it.
What about when they start calling out for requests, like "St. Stephen" and all that?
JERRY: Oh that's always a drag, because it's like — it's just a reflection on whether somebody can allow for you to grow and change. That's all, I mean I don't mind playing any song. Mostly all of the songs that we've done I can still dig as songs. It's never a bummer to perform any of them. But sometimes you just feel like doing something else. But in our case we do it. I mean we aren't restricted — we don't give a fuck about the audience man have you ever seen us seriously go on a trip about what the audience suggests?
BOBBY: Yeah, but sometimes, sometimes, we'll stand around the amps, sort of scratching and saying, "what do you want to play, oh I don't know, what do you want to play", and then by them screaming out we'll get ideas!
PHIL: One time we were into a really long, soft thing, and one guy in the audience yelled out "FREE BOBBY SEALE!" That was GREAT!
How do you feel about singles, do you care at all about them?
PHIL: They don't interest me personally. "Uncle John's Band" was picked because it was obvious. The ones on this album are pretty obvious too — this is not a rock and roll up tempo album, there are a couple of numbers on it that could be singles... But singles just don't interest me.
The only thing that might possibly interest me would be going in and the challenge of doing one single piece of material really fast and really tasty. Our first single, "Golden Road" was done that way, and it was really exciting, it sounded really good on the track.
That's why you have to look after all that yourself.
JERRY: I know, but I have no interest about singles so I don't want to bother about it.
Commercially they're valid, groups get big single hits and then sell consistently after.
JERRY: It would be nice the have a single, but a hit single usually means twelve year old audiences.
"Uncle John's Band" was really fucked up. Did the people who worked with you on your album do that?
JERRY: Yeah... I gave them instructions on how to properly edit it, and they garbled it so completely and we didn't get a chance to hear it until way late, and it was... oh fuck, what an atrocity.
Why? Wouldn't you like to turn them



on to something?

JERRY: Oh... fuck, I don't know! I'd like to play for some old people, man...

Do you play on a lot of people's albums that we don't know about?

PHIL: I haven't personally. Jerry's been on many albums, many, many... I've played on David Crosby's album.

How many of you are on that album?

PHIL: Jerry is, Bill is and I am. There's a lot more of that sort of thing happening now, like on Kantner's album for instance. (*Blows Against the Empire*) Garcia and Harvey Brooks, and Mickey, Grace... Christ, everybody and his left-handed brother played on that album... it's beautiful.

What other albums are you on besides Brewer and Shipley's and Kantner's?

JERRY: Well I'll be on Crosby's and Graham Nash's. I'm sort of producing Crosby. Graham Nash's I played on about three or four cuts. There's a San Francisco group called Lamb — it's a guy who plays classical guitar and a chick who sings, and they did a thing with a friend of mine called Ed Vogel's who's a string arranger, violin player and that sort of thing. And I was in the studio and did a few tracks on that, and let's see... what else. There'll be the New Riders album and there's an album that I and Howard Wales — an organ player friend of mine — have done for Douglass Records — be coming out in February I guess.

What about all those rumors about the Dead and Airplane and Quicksilver forming their own label and having someone distribute records?

PHIL: That's a great fantasy. That's the proto-fantasy. Something is going to happen, but it won't be that.

JERRY: Who knows, all these things are trips that we've been talking about for a long time and maybe they will happen and maybe they won't. But things are working out now so that we have enough freedom to do whatever we want in relation to each other... like Kantner's album. It was like... then I was a member of the Jefferson Starship. *How come that MGM album came out?* (*Vintage Dead*)

PHIL: Well, what happened was that we signed a contract with this guy — another company, to put out some cuts. Some of the material was the same, but the cuts were totally different. They were mostly from the Matrix, not the Avalon. And we signed a contract and figured it was cool because it was all stuff from before Warner Brothers. Apparently the company we signed the contract with went bankrupt, and MGM bought up the contract. But they couldn't find the tapes. So they got other tapes from someone else and put it out anyway.

BOBBY: That's fascism! That's really fascism! Maybe I shouldn't say that because I'll lose a whole lot of friends... I'm condemning them for liking me the way I used to be!

And there's nothing you can legally do about it?

PHIL: See the original plan was to put it out as part of an anthology of early San Francisco, tapes from the Matrix, tapes from the Avalon. And that whole scene seemed to be of some cultural relevance, because it had a whole bunch of different people, different groups, and you

can pretty much re-create through that the vibes that were going down at that time — that spawned the Haight-Ashbury scene that for awhile went pretty nicely. And you can also see the roots of a certain genre of American music that actually happened. And that might be interesting — at least culturally significant, in a minor way, but just to have one group — the Grateful Dead playing at the Avalon Ballroom, you can't put anything together from that.

And it's really lame, it's the only album of ours that's ever had liner notes.

Do you all get salaries?

BOBBY: Yeah we all get salaries. Sometimes we miss our salary one week, sometimes we get a bonus one week. It evens itself out. And we make, quite frankly, a working class salary. Nothing spectacular.

PHIL: We aren't even making what musicians would call top scale.

There really is a myth about the money that rock and roll musicians have.

PHIL: Yeah it's bullshit...

PIGPEN: Ninety bucks a week...

PHIL: I wish it were true man, because then I wouldn't have to be here. I'm not giving — man, I could be home in California — out in the sun somewhere.

BOBBY: Dreaming up some really beautiful things... And all these money hassles, and problems, and whether the kids are going to be able to get in, and the promoter's responsibility to the people — the patrons, and the artist's responsibility to the people, and the artist's responsibility to get together and work these things out — all have to be given a lot of serious thought. And there's just no time in this hectic scene that's going down now to be able to do that. And it all has to be given serious thought.

Do you like playing colleges especially?

PHIL: Colleges are kind of like islands in the midst of occupied territory, although some of them are occupied territory. But some of them are about the only free ground there is. A lot of times the cops would have to have special warrants and shit to get on the campus, and there are a lot of drugs on the campus.

JERRY: I hate colleges. Because every college scene we've played at during the last few months — they're getting wierder and wierder... I don't hate colleges, it's just that they're harder to do because they break in man...

I was at Stonybrook when that happened...

JERRY: Yeah well that's the way it's been at every college we've played at in the last couple of weeks. I mean we've been playing a lot and it's been that same situation every time and each time it's a bummer.

What about festivals, do you think they're over?

PHIL: Yes I think they're over and if they weren't, I wouldn't play them.

BOBBY: The only one that worked was Woodstock and it worked through a fluke.

PHIL: There were a lot of smaller ones that worked before Woodstock...

PIGPEN: When festivals got to be in vogue man, they just went down the drain. It didn't get to be too much fun, with all the people demanding free everything...

BOBBY: Well I think a lot of the reason that Woodstock worked was that a lot of people paid for their tickets in advance, and a lot of people who went there expected to pay for their tickets... they didn't know what was happening. And the idea of storming the gates hadn't really jelled in their minds yet, and they got there and found out that the scene was so rushed that the guys just didn't have time to get the gate up. And so everybody just walked in. And there was no hassle, no uptight vibes, no "I'm going to bust this gate down if you don't let me in", there was none of that because everybody just got in. And it was just a fluke.

Have you felt more repression lately coming down from the government?

PHIL: First of all the Attorney General of the U.S. has sent out directives to all the State Atty. Generals to use any and all methods to crush rock festivals. And as soon as something like that goes down, what's to prevent local people from interpreting that as *carte blanche*, to do the same for anything in their town that they don't like. In other words, it doesn't have to be rock and roll, it can be the Black Panthers. In Albany, the Black Panthers were denied the use of the very same hall...

JERRY: I don't personally feel any... Partly we've learned to deal with those things more smoothly as we have had more experience with them. I don't think that repression... I mean the way it looks to the people who are responsible for whatever repression there is in this country — the way it looks to them is we're entertainers... we're like clowns or comic relief, so we're okay. We make money so we're okay.

But you're still a threat to them...

JERRY: Not really, well they don't understand that yet, they might — like Al Capp might tell Spiro Agnew that that's what's happening, but so what. The government is not in a position of power in this country, the kind of power that they think they have is some pretty illusory thing and it exists only as long as people continue to believe in it. One way or another — if you fight it — or go with it. That's the thing that makes it real. And it's really no realer than that. Like nobody I know really buys that, you know... I mean how often do you see a politician fave to face. What do they actually do that affects a person's life — not much.

How involved are you with the business aspects of making records?

PHIL: Well I'm into statistics, and I'm interested in knowing since everything we do is an ad including our records — that the quality of those ads is as good as the records. And I'm interested in knowing that the records are in the stores so the people can get them.

JERRY: Here's what happened. We went down there and met all the people in the art department, the advertising department, and they're all young freaks, you know — who would like to be able to do what they would like to do. And we figured well, what the fuck man, our ads were never very good, you know we don't really like to write ads and here's all these people just itching to write some copy, put out some ads and all that stuff... why not give them

something to do in relation to us, 'cause that's what they want to do so just let them do it.

How do you feel about groups controlling their own product?

PHIL: Oh that's great. I'm not into that — I would just like to see a little more control.

JOHN MCINTIRE: Well you guys are into that a lot heavier than you realize, because of the fact that you're producing all your own albums, and you have complete say over every word that goes out about you, ideally. And today Warner Brothers called me with a radio ad, read it to me and I said it was the lamest shit I had ever heard... so they called Hunter about it to see what he thinks, and they'll change it.

Do you think that at some level of the record industry there has to be more information or education for the musicians in business shit?

BOBBY: Well perhaps some sort of switchboard where you could call up for legal or contractual advice, some sort of scene like that would be nice. Maybe all the bands could get together and have some sort of organization... and another organization to investigate thuyvideotape scene... But then again, you have a centralization of authority — or information, and I think that's a bad idea. Centralization of information means centralization of authority.

PHIL: Yes but that has to be an evolutionary weeding out process. The people who are equipped to make the best out of it are naturally the ones who do the best. They either understand all that stuff intuitively or have the right people.

JERRY: I think there are more and more people finding out more and more about it. The artists now — traditionally the artist has been duped, taken in by crooked promoters, the record company and the agents. But now there's so much lore about that subject available...

But there are still people who get screwed by those companies...

JERRY: Well they're just making terrible mistakes, but I don't think that anybody should ever sign anything or act in any way concerning what they're doing unless they know what the fuck they're doing. That's a rule of thumb I think everybody should be responding to.

Why do you think your records are selling more now, did it take a while for more people to find out, or is the record company doing more, or are they just better records?

JERRY: Well, I think — yeah, they're better records because we've been making our own records all along and it's just lately that we've learned how. I mean the first four records were us trying to make records, us trying things out and seeing what works and what doesn't and we were learning how to do it. And the last couple of records were us doing it — and they're simple records really.

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Hear him whip the women,
just around midnight

MICK JAGGERS GOING AWAY PARTY

by Geoffrey Cannon

"...our sense of standing in the ruins of thought and on the verge of the ruins of history and of man himself... More and more, the shrewdest thinkers and artists are precocious archaeologists of these ruins-in-the-making, indignant or stoical diagnosticians of defeat, enigmatic choreographers of the complex spirit -ual movements useful for survival in an era of permanent apocalypse"

Susan Sontag: "Thinking against oneself".

We keep on taking the question as answered: why do we listen to so much rock music? The record-players and albums we all possess; the periodicals and articles we read (like this one): they didn't come installed, like the electricity or water supply. We search them out. Why?

Here's one cluster of answers, printed often enough. Because pop music can be art. Because Paul McCartney is on a par with Schubert, or Gershwin. Because pop music is today's classical music. But these aren't answers; they don't begin to be answers. Art, Schubert, Gershwin, classical music, don't matter in the way rock does. The effect of the Beatles, or rather the Beatles as misled by McCartney, was to sell out rock, as an insipid, cadet branch of conventional music. Happily, rock'n'roll will stand. But as what? Happily, there are as many accounts as there are great rock bands. And none more exemplary than the Stones, who've stood up for the qualities in rock which cannot be assimilated into art. The Stones are perverted, outrageous, violent, repulsive, ugly, tasteless, incoherent. A travesty. That's what's good about them.

Good old Rolling Stones! They're still banned from the Albert Hall. Still banned from the biggest hotels in Liverpool and Manchester, as they discovered this last month on their English tour. The first time they performed at the Station Hotel, Richmond, was January 1963. That's half a lifetime ago for a 16-year old. For all I know, you, reading this, are 16 years old. That's half your lifetime away. And all that time Mick Jagger's not budged. Now, he makes better music and has better lawyers. But his stance is the same. "My responsibility is only to myself" (said after the Lord Chief Justice had allowed his appeal). "My responsibility is only to myself: YEAH!" And down the years, he's brought maybe ten million people over, by his example, not to his side, but to their own side. Over, to say, "I am", just a little bit louder.

Seeing Mick, anyone's head hums with recollections and sensations. He walks on stage at the Roundhouse, London. (Was this really the last Rolling Stones concert?) Neon purple trousers. Black bolero, with sequinned lights. Baseball cap quartered, and quartered again, in primary satin colours. And torso. And the grin of a man who's learned to be the ringmaster of himself.

"I was born in a cross-fire hurricane". The guitars scooping your breath away, the mind immediately bombed with sound, and word images rushing over each other. Mick the demon king. Mick as the Spring-heeled Jack of the penny dreadfuls, leaping through the windows of your imagination at dead of night, eyes starting out of his horned head. "I was washed up and left for dead". The band play in their classic positions on stage: Charlie at the back, Mick in front, Keith to Mick's left, Mick Taylor to his right, Bill to Keith's left, standing still. Keith dips to Mick's side. "With

a spike right through my head". And backs away again, until the next androgynous chorus. There's no way to get used to "Jumping Jack Flash". And why try? The audience gives gasps of happy outrage. Dr Jagger and the Nostrums. Flesh crept. All in fun. You'll never feel better, because you'll never feel quite the same. Ever heard the joke about the hanged man's erection?

Bass guitar, then a cross-buzz. "I've got nasty habits. I take tea at 3". Mick makes plays with his elbows, bunched up to his chest, and the band exchange glances. "Don't you think there's a place for you, in between the sheets?" Jim Price and Bobby Keys rip in on horns at the points that, on the song as recorded, now sound thin with only guitar. The sound sensation rises. Mick's voice is a blur. The Roundhouse is a small place; the three-man band that came on before the Stones, the Groundhogs, filled the air with noise. Mick's eight-man band (Nicky Hopkins on piano making eight) makes us drown in sound. We depend on our knowledge of the song. But we know it, right. All around the gallery, feet pound, making the boards bounce and ring, and we're all grinning like fools. "The cook, she is a whore". Travesty as an aesthetic.

Mick's insolent, flat speaking voice. "Thank you. We're going to do three new songs for you tonight. This one's called 'Dead Flowers'".

Flash, flash, flash. The bars like a shuttle weaved through and through this number, working like the Flying Burrito Brothers do. The Stones have been sharpening these new numbers, right across Europe, in 1970. Now, back home, Mick prances in front of the mike, hands on hips. "Take me down, little Susie, take me down, I know you think you're the Queen of the underground". Price and Keys lift their horns, into the Stones' carrier wave. "Send me dead flowers to my wedding".

Have you noticed how all great Stones' songs have got a line somewhere in them, maybe buried so you don't hear it until a few listens, that makes you start up and prickle and say "what's that?" "I'll be in my basement room, with my needle and spoon, and another girl can take my pain away". Listen.

Mick only does it to annoy, and because he knows it teases. Rolling Stones' songs are not meant to be helpful. The on-stage volts hiss and crackle.

The music is ambiguous, between being observation of horrible events (perceived with dread) and between dwelling on invented perversions (perceived with excitement). Is Mick aware of this ambiguity? Be very sure that he is. Music is, by its nature, ambiguous. You can never say, of any piece of music, "what does that mean?" But what Mick has mastered, is creating ambiguous reactions in his audience. Because you don't know whether to cry out, or laugh, you become tense and excited, and subject to the music. How to keep your pecker up, in the city of dreadful night.

The stage is a metre high. Two hours before, the freaks at the head of the queue hurried to sit down in front of the stage, and the floor filled up slowly, looking like a festival crowd, except here there was a roof. Some had bought sleeping bags. There is no barrier between the audience and the stage. Anyone who wanted to jump the stage could do so (no-one did). The Stones have lost their one bad (really bad) trait: the star paranoia that it took Altamont to burn out of them. Put wire or police between

the audience and singer, and, watching, nasty fantasies of shooting and stabbing start buzzing around in the back of everyone's mind.

But this evening was different. Just before Noir (the first backing act) came on, two kids, one aged maybe 6, the other maybe 4, nudged and eased their way through the sitting freaks, and put their coke cans on stage. The elder kid, looking a lot like Brian Jones, wriggles himself on stage and sits on it. A roadie, grinning, lifts him off carefully, holding him two handed round the middle. This was Mick's going away party, his big Hello and his big Goodbye. Once upon a time, rock 'n' roll stars used to operate in terms of their audience's alienation. A star had to be inaccessible. Touch a singer like Jagger, and a girl would hold her hand up like it was an object and scream "I touched Him". (It touched Him). But now, audiences belong in the same world as the singers.

"Yippee" Mick shouts. "Yippee, Yippee". "Stray Cat Blues". Remember how the chick used to be 15 years old? Her age now depends on how outrageous Mick is feeling as he sings. "I can see that you're just... 13 years old". "It's no capital craa-um. It's no hangin' matt-uh". A couple of chicks to Mick's left put their arms upwards, palms out, fingers parted, but it's more to stretch than in ecstasy, far as I can tell. "If she's so wild, she can join in too".

Followed, as on the live album, by "Love in vain". Similar enunciation to "Stray Cat Blues". "Ah followed her to the staashun". "Looked her in the ah". He leans towards the audience, head cocked, as if putting a proposition. Robert Johnson's lacerating song is in a world different from Mick's persona. Maybe not from Mick's private self. But that's another matter. Singing another man's song, Mick allows space for reflection.

Noticed how girl photographers are always 5 foot 8 or more, and wear denim or jean suits, kerchiefs and shut lips? I remembered as a muscular hip hit me. The lady craned over the gallery, her 200 mill lens giving her a lover's eye view of Mick's mouth. Next to her, another girl photographer, her aperture equally wide. Mick and Keith switch to an acoustic "Prodigal Son", playing alone on stage.

Teasing pause. That harmonica intro. "Midnight Rambler". Cheers, claps, whistles. Or else, tensed up and deeper breaths. Waiting.

The temptation with the Stones' most impressive songs is to try to take them seriously as consistent stories. "What's he trying to say? What's that mean?" Questions like this always fail. Take "Sympathy for the devil" as an example. The question put, often enough, is "whose side is Mick on?" When he sings "I shouted out - who killed the Kennedys?" he seems no longer to be Lucifer, but himself. Sure. He's either/neither/either.

"Just as every cop is a criminal
And all the sinners, saints,
As heads is tails..."

Like I've said, travesty as an aesthetic. The conventional distinctions denied. Music is not to "be made sense of". The fan's reactions are the most authentic.

The ostensible subject, and the theme, of "Midnight Rambler" is the same as The Doors' "The End". And the theme is paranoia. Don't be sure you're safe. Jim Morrison's style is explicitly serious. Mick Jagger remains exquis-

itly ambiguous throughout. The song resolves nothing; it contains no catharsis or synthesis. It doesn't allow us to move, in our minds, into a make-believe world. Its dialectic reverberates between horror and fascination, between repulsion and excitement.

Mick's running on the spot, hitching his hips, well within himself, fading his voice out, and bringing it in, in terms of the applause and the yells.

"Did you hear about the midnight ram-

bler?
The one that shut the kitchen door".
Mick picks up another belt, which he hangs round his neck like a snake.

"Well honey it's no rock'n'roll show
Well I'm talking about the midnight
rambler

The one you never seen before..."

There again, it is a rock 'n' roll show. That's just what it is. And, at the same time:

1. Mick is acting like an idiot trying to be a singer. His lips are relaxed and gaping, his gaze unfocussed.
2. Each successive musical phrase is unfinished. As the music accelerates, as it does slowly through the song, an up-tight sensation is created and focussed.
3. The words of the song come over like interjections; as much as the audience's cries. Or like Mick's interpolations during the instrumental break. "Get down on me, baby". "Oh yes. A-aaah".
4. The action with the belt whipping, which we all now know about before he starts, is a joke. At the same time, the equally well anticipated words are not funny. Women died.
5. The music is roaring white rock. It has no history. Absorbing it makes you feel as if you're being melted down. The chords draw out, and out.

"You heard about the Boston... (whip)
Honey... it's not one of those! (whip)

Talking about the midnight... (whip)
See me shut the bedroom door! (whip)".

The song is a cycle of travesty. Mick is making fun of his old pop star image: in the old days, a jiggle of the maraccas, held close to the head, was enough to get the little girls going. He is also making fun of his media image as pisser-against-the-wall. He is also making fun of his "quality" media image as purveyor of sadistic notions. At the same time, he knows he is a pop star who'll piss against the wall, and who does purvey sadistic notions. ("Mr Jagger, are you a sadist?" "Sure". "No, really..." "Sure. You asked me").

"I'm called the hit-and-run rape her in
The knife-sharpened tippy-toe". [anger,

The song speeds up again, and the phrases start to flicker, like magic lantern slides or hallucinations. "Shoot em dead brain bell jangler". "I'm going to smash down your plate glass windows, put a fist through your steel-plate door". Jerks his head. Music louder, accelerating faster.

"Well go easy with your cold fandango
I'll stick my knife right down your throat".

What's that?

The lights go up. Great enthusiasm from the audience. Mick looks benign, and sneers into "Bitch", the second new song of the evening, also on the Stones' new album. It's a blaster, with plenty of Hopkins, Price and Keys. Mick in his James Cagney role. "Yeah, when you call my name, I salivate like a parlour dog. Yeah, when you lay me out..."

Mick sits down on his bottom hard, and surprised, as if Ali swiped by Cooper. Up quick. "Thanks, Implosion, for giving us this gig, without which we couldn't have played in London this weekend". After that little exact speech, "Honky Tonk Women" done as a sing- and clap-along. "She blew my nose and then she blew my mind" - a line out of the Stones Auld Lang Syne.

"I was born in a cross-fire hurricane!"
"I've got nasty habits!"
"I'll be in my basement room, with my needle and spoon!"
"I can see you're just 13 years old!"
"I followed her to the station!"
"I shouted out: who killed the Kennedys!"
"I'll stick my knife right down your throat!"
1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.

Song after song, is mask after mask fitted on. Which mask is himself? That's his problem. I'd say the songs in which the "you" comes closest into focus are probably the most personal. But they're not the best songs. Mick is at his best being his own ringmaster; with hat, whip, and grin, bringing on the next act, for our entertainment. High wire, the dwarfs, the lions, have their equivalents in the Stones on stage, with Mick putting the tightness in your stomach, and that dizzy feeling in your head. He sings:

"I can't get no satisfaction".

An old act, a worn mask. The song's done absently, and he follows with another man's song, standing with legs astride the microphone stand. "Little Queenie", which fits better with the genial mood Mick's been in for the last few months. "Satisfaction" may be the best rock 'n'roll song ever, but the "I" in it has a bad time. Tonight, the "I" swaggers:
"I got lumps in my throat
when I saw her walking down the aisle".

Mick's entitled to claim an affinity with Chuck Berry. They lick their lips, within their songs, the same way, and punch the emphasis into their words. "I got lumps in my throat..." "She's too cute to be a minute over 17": the words stressed separately, like there's a full stop after them. And Mick makes the song by the insidious way he wraps his tongue round the word "mee-an-while". He sings clearly, the band pour out a beat that weighs six tons. "Go, go, go, little Queenie".

Next, "Brown Sugar", the star song of the new album, which has to go to number 1 released as a single. The most blatant theme of many of the best Jagger/Richard songs is a compulsion to break rules. The song states, or implies, a norm, which is contradicted. And, through such songs, norms are searched after, so they may be contradicted: which is why anyone who looks for a common stance in Stones' numbers is wasting his time. The only thing common, is being perverse. It's a rather fetching tic: combining childishness ("yah! I will do it!") with a perception of, even respect for, the rules. (Why otherwise make any reference to rules?)

The music pours over the song's verbal pre-occupations like honey and rum, mixed and hot. Keith Richard's guitar is so spiked. The eight musicians, with Mick, become one band:

"Scanned old slaver know
He's doing alright
Hear him whip the women..."

And Price and Keys produce this chord on their horns, I can't reproduce it, I can only say it's the fattest, richest key chord on horns I've ever yet heard, and it'll make you shiver with pure pleasure every time you hear it played
"... Just around midnight".

Mick puts his side to us, like he used to in his old maracca days. But now he punches the air in front of him, prancing on the spot, ducking into the hand-mike. He rolls his eyes and yells "whoah", like some stud horse.

"Brown sugar, how come you taste so good?
Brown sugar, just like a black girl should".

Bragging about what he can do, in and out of songs, making the amazing display of himself, refined by meticulous use of exaggeration, over the years, Mick's like a Muhammed Ali who's about to retire not only undefeated, but unchallenged.

"I'm no schoolboy
But I know what I like
You should have heard me..."

And that horn chord, oh wow, how to wait until I get hold of that album?

"... just around midnight".

A Stones concert is such a treat.

The last number. Guitar, bass, drums, break in like great waves. The first time I heard this song was in the Roundhouse, at the time we in England first heard the rumours of what really happened at the Chicago Democratic Convention. Jeff Dexter, the Roundhouse jockey, announced he had his hands on an advance copy of the new Stones' single. He named it. "Street fighting man". And its noise, grossly distorted, swelled and howled into the auditorium. Tonight, live, it was even more deafening. Within the song, the guitars burst like artillery, and have the shock of sudden overhead thunder. This isn't music, it's a bloodstream.

Backstage, the Stones' ladies have come forward, and stand in a little tableau behind the amps, centre stage, watching. All wear versions of peasant dress, hair long and falling free past their shoulders. One claps, her hands at chin height. One holds her hands to her ears. Silently, they seem to confirm a goodbye from the band.

The noise is unbelievably loud and distorted. You have to know the words and the song to distinguish structure within it. The band refer to it rather than play it, but that's OK, because everyone knows it and is playing it inside their own heads. "My name is called Disturbance. I shout and scream, I kill the king, I rail at all his servants". Imagery like the tin figures at fairs you shoot down with rifles, to win prizes

"Where I live, the game to play
Is compromise solution"

Mick makes a little circle with his right hand, stretched above his head. He leaps up. "Bye bye, good luck". And he's gone.

"... Being a free-lance explorer of spiritual dangers, the artist gains a certain licence to behave differently from other people; matching the singularity of his vocation, he may be decked out with a suitably eccentric lifestyle, or he may not. His job is inventing trophies of his experiences - objects and gestures that fascinate and enthrall, not merely (as prescribed by older notions of the artist) edify or entertain. His principal means of fascinating is to advance one step further in the dialectic of outrage".

Susan Sontag: "The pornographic imagination"

Duane Allman



This interview with Duane Allman was conducted by Jon Tiven of the New Haven Rock Press, with which Zigzag has loose ties.

ZZ: When did the Allman Brothers decide to be a band rather than just session men?

DA: I don't know really. ... we just sort of changed over, there was no specific date. Since the second album's done so well, we've just stopped taking backing gigs and stuff. ... not stopped taking them, you know, but we've tried to cool it a bit.

ZZ: In what circumstances did you meet the rest of the band?

DA: It was down in Florida, two years ago in the Wintertime. ... me and Jaimo got together in Alabama, and we went south and got all the other cats together. Went back to make it where our offices are; we're close to the business - keep from getting screwed, you know, keep an eye on things.

ZZ: What artistes have you most enjoyed playing behind?

DA: Laura Nyro, John Hammond, King Curtis and Eric Clapton. The most recent was for Laura Nyro - one cut off 'beads of sweat', and I didn't play much on that, just a couple of licks. But it was real enjoyable man, she's a real outasite chick and a fantastic artiste and composer.

ZZ: What's the story behind your involvement with Derek & the Dominoes?

DA: Well, I was down in Miami, at Critterion studios - they're the best - to watch them make that record, because I was so interested. I thought 'well now, that cat has himself a band' - I've been an admirer of Eric Clapton for a long, long time; I've always dug his playing - he inspired me a lot - and I figured that I'd get a chance to meet him and at the same time, watch this record going down. So when I saw him, he acted like he knew me - like I was an old friend; 'hey man, how are you', you know. And he said 'as long as you're here, we want you to get on this record and make it with us - we need more guitar players anyway'. So I did, and I was real flattered and glad to be able to do it.

ZZ: Which places have you found the best to play?

DA: Stonybrook College in New York; or the Warehouse in New York, man, I always get off there. ... yeah, and the Fillmore has good sound. In Detroit, there's a place called The East Town Theatre, and that has a fantastic sound too.

ZZ: Why do you use two drummers?

DA: We've had them from the first, 'cause we knew we were going to be playing loud, and both cats can play everything they need to play if there's two of them - instead of one cat having to flog his ass off all night.

ZZ: How was Adrian Barber as a producer? (He did the first album).

DA: He was good to us, man, we were satisfied with him. ... he's a fine cat; he pretty much turned the knobs for us.

ZZ: Are you happy with your second album?

DA: Yeah, we are. Tom Dowd, man, a master, an artist. We're really gonna be happy with the next one.

ZZ: Where's that going to be made?

DA: Partly live at the Warehouse, and partly done at Miami. We're also going to the mountains for two weeks to write, and we're bringing an 8 track up there with us, so we might get something out of that too. Then we've got some tapes from the Atlanta and Love Valley Festivals, which were both recorded, and if they're any good we may use bits from them.

ZZ: How do you write - sit and wait for inspiration?

DA: I don't write, I don't know how, and if you ever find out, please tell me. No, Greg originally wrote all our stuff, then Dickie wrote some of the last album. He sits down and tries to write, yeah, but if he doesn't feel it, he doesn't write it. If you've got something you wanna say, and have people hear it, a song is a good way. People can really dig songs; everybody loves music, but not everyone loves messages.

ZZ: Why didn't you use the Muscle Shoals studio, as you're so familiar with it?

DA: I don't know, man, we just started recording and before we got there we got done. I hope we use it sometime. I know the Stones did a hell of a thing there.

ZZ: Did you learn to play by ear?

DA: Yeah, I can't read.

ZZ: What about influences. ...

DA: Man, everything I ever heard - just about everything that WLHC radio ever played.

ZZ: Any specific people?

DA: Well, Miles Davis (early Miles) and John Coltrane and Robert Johnson, Junior

Wells, Muddy Waters; see, you get a goal in mind, a note that you want to hit with your band and then, when you go out on the road, your spiritual battery runs down. You get home and listen to that stuff and say 'Ah, there it is! I have it before me and I know what to do, and you go out and do it.

ZZ: Do you listen to much jazz?

DA: Man, I have a pitifully small knowledge of jazz; Roland Kirk is clean outasite, 'Kinda Blue' by Miles is one that just kills me, and an album by Miles called Jazz Tracks is really good. ... his greatest hits album on Columbia is fantastic too. 'Best of Trane' on Impulse, and 'Best of Trane' on Atlantic are both unbelievable. ... hear a man's life work in an hour.

ZZ: You've played with Johnny Winter, haven't you?

DA: Yeah - I saw him this morning, came to our room. Good bottleneck, good player all round; I prefer his music to his show. ... I prefer music to any show.

ZZ: Did you have trouble getting gigs before you were a name band?

DA: Yeah, nobody knew our name. The thing is that people are like monkeys. ... if someone says 'Man, this is outasite!', they say 'Ah, it is, isn't it?'. Well, nobody told 'em.

ZZ: When was your first big break?

DA: Getting with Atlantic Records. They really dig our music, man, and Ahmet (Ertegun), the president, loves to listen to good sides, man. You go right to him and bang on his door 'Ahmet, Ahmet, something's screwed' and he says 'what?'. You tell him and he says 'right, we'll change it'. ... you don't have to fool around, he sees that it's done. There ain't none of that crap - he's solid, and it's a good label.

ZZ: You're getting loads of gigs now. ...

DA: All different things - colleges, ballrooms, concerts. ...

ZZ: Do you get a chance to live at home at all?

DA: Gypsies ain't got no home. I'm at home when I'm with my people; I'm always at home - I'm at home now.

ZZ: I take it you like it.

DA: I LOVE it, man.

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GENESIS

Peter Gabriel, their singer, talks about the downs and ups of Genesis.....

"1966 is what we've been saying... we started in 1966 when we were still at school - four of us; Tony Banks, Anthony Phillips, Michael Rutherford and me. We wanted to be songwriters rather than performers, but in order to get the songs on tape, we started to play together. We sent a tape to various people in the music industry, most of whom either lost it or returned it, but one of the recipients who did listen to it was Jonathan King; he did criticise it, but paid out the mighty sum of £10 to finance another demo recording session, the results of which he liked a lot better.

We were still thinking of ourselves as songwriters at this time, but before we knew what was happening, contracts were produced - 10 years - and, of course, over a cup of tea and a chat, they were signed willingly. So there we were, signed up to Jonathan's publishing company, which leased recordings to Decca. Our parents were pretty horrified when they learned what we'd done, but fortunately we were all minors, so the contract was void. So then we entered a legal contract, supported by parents' signatures, for one year.

Well, the first thing we recorded was a single, 'Silent sun', which didn't make it, but for our second attempt we were told that we would be accorded the legendary Decca A1 promotion treatment. But that single, 'A winter's tale' didn't get anywhere either. Nor did our album, which appeared in 1968.

By this time, we were a group, though still at school struggling with A levels, but when we left to become professional, we managed to get a fair amount of financial help from friends and were able to get the basic equipment like amps and an organ. Once we went on the road, however, we found how much money you need to keep running, and we couldn't get management or anybody willing to take us on with the debts we owed. We began, very desperately, to hunt around the music world, but it was very discouraging listening to people promise you the world and then never getting in touch again. We went to one particular famous agency, and they just told us to give up - without even listening to our music.... and there were so many with the same kind of attitude.

Eventually Rare Bird happened to see us and went back and enthused to Tony Stratton Smith of Charisma. He got John Anthony (who later produced their album) to come and see us, and things suddenly began to pick up. Within a few weeks we had half a dozen offers - including Island, Threshold and the re-appearing Jonathan King - but we signed with Charisma.

The comparison between Decca and Charisma is amazing; Charisma is like a family, but we used to go to Decca, give our name at the door, and the man at the desk would phone up and say "the Janitors are here to see you". Our sales figures seemed to fluctuate rapidly too - we'd be told a record had sold 1000 one week, then 2000 the next week and so on; then later they'd say it had sold a total of 649. They eventually caught on to the way that other labels like Island were scooping all the sales and we got a letter from them saying "we now have an artists relations manager - come along and chat to him whenever you want", which seemed a bit like waving the flag when the ship's sinking.

We did the country cottage bit from October 1969 until February 1970, and



then recorded our 'Trespass' album, after which, Anthony our guitarist left, and that was the biggest blow we've yet suffered. He didn't like the road, felt too nervous playing in front of people, and he thought that playing the same numbers over and over again, night after night, was causing it to stagnate. But you just don't get the opportunity to keep changing your repertoire when you're in our position.

At the moment, we're doing a lot of Charisma promoted tours, but it would be nice if we could have more time to sit down and work out some new material. I suppose that ideally, we'd like to concentrate on quieter type music - a concert type group - but it would be just as good if we could be free to work on our music through the week and then go out and play it at the weekends, or some arrangement like that.... I'm quite sure we could get the music to a much higher standard in a very short time if we had the opportunity to do this. But we still have it a lot cushier than a band in our position, say, five years ago. Before we went on the road, when we were on the point of turning professional, we used to spend about 3 days on the lyric to one song, but now it's often done about two hours before we record it. The words to 'Knife', for instance, were done the night before we recorded it.

But even in the early days we used to feel that we were rushing things, though we struggled on playing how we wanted to play, and then King Crimson appeared on the scene, and we thought they were just magnificent; doing the same kind of things that we wanted to, but so much bigger and better. And we used to think "they'd never allow themselves to be rushed.... why do we?", and we built Crimson up into giant mythical proportions inside our heads, because they were putting our ideals into practice - musically, and in the way they were being handled.

We've still got some very large debts, and we also owe Charisma a lot which we're paying back from gigs and records - it's their risk. We get paid £15 a week each and I don't think it will

go up for maybe a year - and we had such an advance that I don't think we'll see any royalties until maybe the 4th album.

All the arrangements on 'Trespass' were our own, and very much worked out beforehand, but John Anthony, who produced us, is very good with people and he seemed to get the best out of us. I mean, we all have strong opinions as to how the numbers should be played, and he acted as mediator as well.

Looking back, I see lots of areas for improvement, but I still like the album. I think 'Stagnation' is the best number, but I don't think it came across too well; what we'd like is a more romantic and personal approach with our next one.

As far as gigs go, Stratton is very enthusiastic about organising our affairs - for instance, this tour we've just completed would have been beyond our wildest dreams a year ago, but now it seems more natural. Audience reception varies, and we seem to reach peaks within the band.... but every so often we have to go on and play when the music is really stagnant - when we should be locking ourselves away in rehearsal instead of doing gigs. We often get very tired of playing, but if we get a new number into the act, the others seem to become rejuvenated.

We used to have a very idealised picture of how we'd get our music across, but just sitting down, very relaxed, and singing quietly to someone on the other side of a sitting room is hardly comparable to a live gig, we found. But you can always tell when the power is there.... I don't know, someone suggested that if music is good enough it will stand on its own feet and come across on its own, but that's not true really - for instance, you'd be surprised how much difference it made when I started to wiggle about a bit, instead of just standing still.

We've had two new lead guitarists in the last two months and we've had to rehearse a lot, but this latest one is permanent we hope.... he came to us through a Melody Maker ad and seems to fit in very well".

WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO MY GROUP, MA?

Once upon a time, I considered Blood Sweat & Tears to be a rather wonderful, distinctive and original band, and I was fairly disturbed (though perhaps not surprised) to read in that august journal the Financial Times, this quote, following a definition of 'hype': "The saddest hype was the appearance of the American band Blood Sweat & Tears in an evening of unrelieved boredom at the Albert Hall". Not that most of the normal national dailies' music columnists know much about music, any more than I know about quantity surveying, but I felt a little peeved that BS&T should have become so notorious that they reached the ears of the Financial Times.

I put on the three albums to refresh my memory. The first was called 'Child is father to the man' and had an amusing, if slightly nauseous, sleeve, which only struck the casual rack-browsing sleeve flicker after it was past. But that was nothing compared with the record. The freshness of it is still incredible now, about three years after it all began. The genius behind the whole thing belongs jointly to Al Kooper, that much maligned (and unjustly so) super sessioneer, and John Simon, producer extraordinaire and recorder of an as yet unreleased here (brilliant) solo album. Kooper formed, led and inspired the band, and Simon produced it all, as well as sorting out the excellent horn and string arrangements.

Kooper had gathered around him several adept and adaptable musicians, including Steve Katz, his erstwhile mate from the Blues Project, a splendid saxophonist with the unlikely name of Fred Lipsius, and other notables from various fields, and formed the only band so far which has managed to make rock'n'roll sound less than a contrived, over rehearsed pile of uninspired crochets and quavers, when combining it with horns and strings.

They used a mixture of material.



Of the twelve tracks, 8 were written by the group (7 by Kooper, 1 by Katz), and, for the rest, they used the best of the popier (in the good sense) writers - Randy Newman, Nilsson and Goffin/King... rounding it off nicely with Tim Buckley's 'Morning Glory'. The whole thing is started by an overture, and ends with an underture - a typical Kooper move.

As in all good overtures, snippets of the tracks to follow are included, but this one has the added embellishment of maniacal giggling. Then into as perfect a selection of tracks as you are ever likely to find (and don't edit that Pete), with great Kooper vocals (and one by Katz), and a really well defined balance between soloists and ensemble playing. Nothing is excessive, and Kooper's voice, far from being weak as it has been described, is in perfect sympathy. I find it almost impossible to criticise anything about this record, which is a frequent visitor to my turntable. If I had to suggest sample tracks for your local record shop listening, I suppose I'd say 'My days are numbered' with a sizzling Katz solo, 'I can't quit her' with the BS&T soul chorus and a beautiful vocal, or the brilliant interpretation of 'Just one smile' with Kooper and Simon doing the fugue bit on organs. Enough to turn Gene Pitney green. And the BS&T version of 'So much love' will prove wrong all those who thought that while Tony Blackburn has little future (and no taste) as a DJ, he might make it as a singer. (Are there such people?)

The whole of the back of the sleeve is crammed with information (a good move) in complete contrast to the next lp. (The ZZ fact collectors amongst you may be interested to know that Harry Lookofsky, one of the violinists in the BS&T string ensemble, was the producer of the Left Banke's 'Walk away Renee'.) (What about that then?)

A fair gap before the second album,

devastatingly titled 'Blood Sweat & Tears'. The title is a little out of character, considering what went on before, but perhaps that's the first hint of changes to come. We knew that Al Kooper had left, disgruntled with the group's move towards jazz, which his primary background as a soulman and rocker, found repugnant; and we knew that Randy Brecker had left to make a totally forgettable solo album and to play with Horace Silver. Obviously they had to get a new vocalist and, after some negotiation with various candidates including Stephen Stills, they opted to bring in one David Clayton-Thomas, a wrestler like Canadian with a voice capable of many shades and nuances, but with a hoarse edge not so easily acceptable. Also, they needed an organist, so Dick Halligan left his standing up position as trombonist and sat down where Al had sat. With Chuck Winfield and Lew Soloff coming in too, the band swelled to nine, and they changed producers... John Simon (a sensitive genius) was replaced by James William Guercio (Chicago's producer). Perhaps I didn't put that down in a subtle enough way, but suffice it to say that the brass is rather more prominent this time. Arrangements are likewise less intelligent and more obvious, like the cocoanut hoofbeats in 'And when I die', although this, together with 'Spinning Wheel' and 'You've made me so very happy', is one of the better tracks. It says that Al Kooper helped to arrange a couple of the tracks, but it really does not sound as if he arranged more than what studio they would use, or what day they should make the record.

Altogether there's a noticeable lack of the enthusiasm generated by the first album, except in one or two places, where they discover a good song and do it really well - as with the 3 tracks already mentioned. In fairness, it should be noted that 'Spinning Wheel' was written by Clayton-Thomas, and that it is probably



the most memorable track on the record, but the other two are by Laura Nyro and the Berry Gordy gang. They make 'God Bless the child', a Billie Holiday anthem, positively tedious, and the beginning and end of the record are bits by Erik Satie, an in-name among groovers for a short time last year, also a classical composer whose music sounds to me, an inveterate rocker, like music I don't want to hear.

Then there's a real indication of the direction the group is going in, in a track called 'Blues Part 2'. If this had still been Kooper's band, I'd have looked forward to a screaming rock'n'roll free for all. But it's not. It's a small modern jazz combo type of thing, with people taking solos in a polite, orderly, highly organised way, mostly ending up having achieved nothing after a monster build up. Halligan's organ is pregnant with what is going to happen, but never does. Ex-Springfield bassplayer Jim Fielder produces nothing except a couple of unaccompanied lines from 'Sunshine of your love' and Fred Lipsius sounds dispirited. And Clayton-Thomas' contribution is merely a reprise of the previous track. Oh! the lost possibilities.

Now, when this record came out it received universal critical acclaim... which surprised me and the three other people who bought the first album, for apparently none of the critics had listened carefully enough to the first lp to know that this was but a pale follow up to the masterpiece. Anyway, it enjoyed huge global sales and BS&T were on the crest of a wave in an empty swimming pool, if you see what I mean.

Which makes it all the more strange why they should be in such direpote now. But before we go into that, let me say that the sleeve of that second lp was equally disappointing. With twice the previous area, for it's a Unipak (ie a record you pull from the middle of an opened out cover),

it contains about a tenth of the information, and that in an almost unreadable curved section.

Then came the third album, with another staggeringly inventive title, 'Blood Sweat & Tears 3' (how do they manage to think up these brilliant titles?). I find this equivalent to the second record... need it be said, considerably weaker than the first. Mr Guercio has vanished from the scene, no doubt so taken up with brass that one of Gerard Hoffnung's serpents has swallowed him whole, while he investigates the possibility of an 11 man trumpet section in his new discovery The Detroit Stacks, whose press handout describes them as "a progressive soul band with roots in skiffle, folk, trad and Stan Freberg". Now where have I read that before? But I digress. The band is now more a compromise than a battle between brass and the rest. Clayton-Thomas hasn't changed at all, except that he's hiding his receding hair less ('if Crosby can do it...'), wearing Fillmore West T shirts ('a link with the audience we'd like!') and is seen with the daughter of a very famous English film star. The material is just as patchy, with 'Hi-de-ho' (being a Goffin/King song) standing out, but with 'Fire and rain' being utterly destroyed in a way I'd hitherto thought impossible by a treatment so insincere and lifeless that it becomes meaningless. The whole thing smells of unoriginality, and really Clayton Thomas uses few of the colours his voice is capable of. On 'Lucretia MacEvil', a particularly bad track, he screams in a gruff falsetto - a little reminiscent of a castrated Yogi Bear - and Lew Soloff does a wild and fairly inaccurate impersonation of Eddie Calvert impersonating Maynard Ferguson. The sleeve is a little better than its predecessor, but I tend to mistrust supposed rock musicians who smoke pipes (those sort of pipes anyway), it's a bit too establishment and conserv-

BLOOD SWEAT & TEARS (Mk 1)

Opposite page; left to right:

Back row; Fred Lipsius, Randy Brecker, and Steve Katz.

Front row; Jim Fielder, Bobby Colombey, Jerry Hyman, Al Kooper, Dick Halligan.

BLOOD SWEAT & TEARS (Mk 2)

This page; left to right:

Steve Katz, Dick Halligan, David Clayton-Thomas, Fred Lipsius, Bobby Colombey, Jerry Hyman, Chuck Winfield, Jim Fielder and Lew Soloff.

ative and they look so bloody smug.

But wait, the worst is yet to come. Track one of side two of 'BS&T3' is for deaf people. It's a quite diabolical version of 'Sympathy for the devil', with DCT sounding more like the Peddlars than ever before. Perhaps the best way to describe it is to compare it to the theme music of the film 'The Connection' which has the least tuneful tunes I've ever heard in a film - so bad as to be distracting. You can see what BS&T are trying to do, but in execution, Engelbert could do much better. The whole idea of transposing rock'n'roll by giving it a jazz arrangement is a complete loser, and the reason it never works is that all semblance of essential rhythm and melody are removed by musicians without enthusiasm for rock. So the shapeless form of modern progressive jazz is mingled with cocktail lounge piano and flash drumming time signatures, producing a cacophonous and patently unpleasant noise - as foreign to my ears as Bill Haley must have been to Ruby Murray fans of the mid fifties, but hopefully, in my case, because what they're doing is incorrect, and not just too far away for my aging ears.

Perhaps I should sum up my feelings about Blood Sweat & Tears, and their change from makers of one of my all time favourite albums to also rans in the progressive field. Firstly the loss of Al Kooper and John Simon, who most critics were hardly aware of, seems to me to have brought about their downfall. After their departure, strings were never again heard on the dark blood, sweat and tear spattered doorstep, and it seems to me that they provided a 'middle' between the rhythm instruments and the voice, like a lubricated condom. (?). Then the relaxed inventive genius of Kooper was replaced by the talented but uninventive David Clayton Thomas, a good singer, but more in the Johnny Mathis/Tony Bennett field than the brassy groovings of BS&T. The loss of producer Simon was equally sad, for he would certainly have had a less heavy hand on the brass button than Mr Guercio, and allowed what are, after all, talented musicians, to be themselves, rather than metal replicas.

And that's the point really, because they are talented and adept musicians, who were initially driven and guided in a fluid easy style. When the catalysts were gone, the stilted, mechanical and obvious became dominant. Those who say that the band has no future are wrong, for the only basic criticism that can be levelled against them is that they thought they knew better than Al Kooper. They were wrong, and it's probably everyone's loss that they were, but if a dominant person were to arrive in Blood Sweat & Tears with as much imagination as Kooper, they could straddle the world, as I once thought they would. I hope he hurries, before it's too late. John

Child is father to the man... CBS 63296

Blood Sweat & Tears... CBS 63504

Blood Sweat & Tears 3... CBS 64024

MIKE NESMITH'S FIRST NATIONAL BAND

At a time when reports of Mike Nesmith's bankruptcy petition are reaching the pop press, we thought it might be interesting to trace his post-Monkee career. The following account by Todd Everett was reprinted from 'The Phonograph Record Magazine' - a monthly Californian paper.

The band itself is a departure for Nesmith and apparently is the result of considerable soul-searching. "I wasn't really into country music at all until quite recently. The producers of the Monkees shows and records had me in that bag; probably because I was from Texas. But really, my whole background was in rhythm and blues."

"I was raised in an area just outside Dallas called Farmers' Branch - my family inherited a lot, and when we moved there we found that it was sort of a black shantytown. Most of my friends were black; my first girlfriend was black. I'm surprised that I didn't marry a black girl. I was married by a black preacher."

"Music didn't really mean anything to me until I was twenty. It was just something I'd hear in the back of a bar while I was shooting illegal pool. The kind of music I was exposed to? Well, I remember when B.B. King had something like six hits in a row. They were hits to me because they were what got played a lot on the juke boxes. People like Ray Sharpe, Jimmy Reed - Hell, they lived right there!"

"I played a little sax in high school, but just because it was part of the curriculum. The first time I ever played an instrument was when I heard a Kingston Trio record. I saw a song folio in a store, and said to myself, 'I already know the melody, all I have to learn is where to put my fingers on the guitar'. It was easy music to play. I got a good guitar - a Goya - and just started playing. Later, I was impressed by Bud and Travis. They were a little slicker and more polished than the Kingston Trio, and I liked their patter between songs."

"On my way back home from doing a show in Rhode Island, I stopped in Memphis, and got to do some sessions for Stax Volt. This was before they moved into the theatre; before Steve Cropper and Duck Dunn were there - they were mostly doing gospel records. I only stayed for



"We introduced Jimi Hendrix to the unsuspecting world."

three weeks, and nobody's ever heard of the things I played on. The only reason I stayed as long as I did was because there was a girl there...."

"You see, in rhythm and blues, the rhythm guitar player has a lot of status. I was going to be a great rhythm player. I went to the Coast, because that's where everything seemed to be happening. And then - pow - the Beatles. 'Merciful heavens', I said, 'look at that!' All the limousines, the girls, the whole scene. I wanted to be in on it. It was a tremendous ego thing for me. I'd always had a tremendous ego. In fact, that's probably why I got into music. With a guitar, it's easy to make an impression at parties and things. Anyway, back to music."

"I got into a folk music thing. But then I heard about auditions for the Monkees. I went down and said, 'please, I'd like some work'. And they hired me. A lot of guys they didn't hire made it themselves later. Danny Hutton, for instance, and Steve Stills."

(Pause for a minute to imagine Steve Stills as a Monkee)

"It was pretty good. Ego satisfaction was there, and I had all the money I needed. I probably got a million and a half from the Monkees. None of it's left though."

"I signed on with the Monkees as a musician. The most crippling blow of the whole affair was when they told us that they didn't want us to play. In fact, they wanted to keep us from playing. They got the best studio guys in town; Jimmy Burton, Glen Campbell, Hal Blaine, and all the rest, and had us just sing. That was o.k. I guess, but then they tried to tell people that we were doing the instrumentals."

"It really got embarrassing when 'Valerie' came out. The record starts with a tremendous guitar run by Lou Sheldon. We'd play a concert, and people would come up to me and say, 'Show me how you did that run on "Valerie"'. I shuddered. There wasn't much nobility in the way we were approaching music, but there was even less in the deception we were trying to put over. Finally it got to be too much for me."

"I delivered our second album in a hotel room. That was the one where we were modelling clothes from Penney's on the cover. Anyway, I called up all the magazines I could think of but only Look and Time sent people over. I said to the reporters, 'There comes a time when you have to draw the line as a man. We're be-

ing passed off as something we aren't. We all play instruments, but we didn't on any of our records. Furthermore, our company doesn't want us to, and won't let us.' Look ran a big, illustrated story based on it. Mickey, David and Peter were mad at me for rocking the boat."

"Screen Gems, who owned the Monkees, called a meeting at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Don Kirschner, who ran the music division, was there, and we all were. I said to them, 'Either we play on the next album, or I'm leaving.' Well, there was this suspension clause in our contracts. What it meant was the company could put any of us on suspension - without pay - for as long as they wanted. And if we tried to record for another label during suspension, they could be sued. So if they got mad at me, I couldn't work in this country. But I was mad enough to leave."

"Well, this greasy little guy - I can't remember his name - looked at me and said, 'I guess you haven't read your contract.' I knew if I decked him they could throw me in jail. I did something that still causes them to tremble when I walk into the New York offices - I rammed my fist through a door! I told him, 'That could have been your face,' and walked out. We did the instrumental work on the next album."

"When we were told to go ahead, we worried a bit. I play guitar, and Peter is an excellent musician. But Mickey was just learning to play drums, and all Davey played was his tambourine. We did it! And I think it was a pretty good album. Even though we did the instrumental work on most of our stuff from then on, a lot of people refused to believe that it was really us."

"One aspect of the Monkees phenomenon that has been perhaps forgotten is the fact that they introduced Jimi Hendrix - Jimi Hendrix!! - to the unsuspecting American public."

"We were in London and Mickey came back to the hotel from another hotel. 'You've got to hear this guy,' he told us. 'he's the most amazing thing I've ever heard.' Well, we said, 'if he's so good, bring him along on our American tour - we need a second act.' So Mickey invited him, and Hendrix was eager to come."

"The audience just couldn't get into it. In the South there was a little trouble because of the color thing. When we played Forest Hills, New York, he got booed. The kids were there for us. But he knocked me out." The tour was, you will recall, followed by PTA's everywhere denouncing Hendrix."

Those were the old days and Nesmith seems rather reluctant to think of them as having been particularly "good". Except, of course, for that million and a half dollars. "But now, I look at things differently. I'd rather go without the money so long as I can do what I really want. And that's quite a change from when I auditioned for the Monkees. I'm making more progress as a songwriter and gaining more self-confidence in that direction."

"The new band is working out well. They are \$25,000 a year studio guys playing with me, you understand. It's unfortunate that we don't have many bookings so far. What I'd really like to do is take this group into someplace like the Fillmore, where the audience is against me and everything I stand for, on principle. With this band in a place like that, I think we could really show them some thing."

A POP WRITER'S GUIDE TO CLICHES

Twenty years ago, Orwell wrote how depressed he was about the abuse of the English language. He was concerned about misuse of the language caused by 2 motives: deceiving people and avoiding the exertion of trying to be original. If he could hear today's politicians' efforts to conceal the fact that they have very little to say behind torrents of -isms and -isations, he would revolve in his grave at 33 rpm. If he could read the average pop press album review, he'd whirr in his oak coffin at an uncomfortable 78 turns a minute.

We print below a fictitious review based on phrases lifted from all areas of the pop press (including Zigzag). Anyone hoping to become a record reviewer may cut the article out and make an index of all the cliches, to which he can add from as many sources as possible. . . . even a few from his own brain. The cliches can be shuffled and chosen at random to produce the standard article.

Following hard on the heels of their funky hit-parading single 'Eat my elbow', which dented the charts on both sides of the pond, the Concrete Ear Muff have been burning the midnight oil to get their first album together on the Grab label; 'Green beetroot and red cucumber', which looks all set to shoot up to the coveted number one spot, vying for chart honours with their stablemates, the Chrome Armpit (who also have a potential chartbuster out next month).

I first heard the finished tracks 3 weeks ago in the group's fashionable Georgian terrace house in Chelsea, where John Groat, whose up-tempo guitar is showcased throughout the album, had invited me to loon over and rap over tea and biscuits. "The alcohol bit is such an uncool bag, man" said John, as he infused the Tibetan herbal brew, "I really groove to this ethnic potion - it keeps my mind on today, and far away from material things".

John, who hails from Ponders End, laid the acetate and Koss stereo phones on me, flaking out on a pile of velvet cushions and looking very pleased with himself - small wonder, as I hear through the underground grapevine that he is on the point of inking a 5 year contract with Songwax Music. Most of the Muff's ditties are self-penned, and John and drummer Spike Tyrebold are well on the way to establishing themselves as a duo of major songwriting talent. They started writing when they were gigging with Phlegm, a

now defunct pop outfit, and haven't looked back since. Dogged at first by the teeny bopper tag earned by some of their early sentimental ballad outings, they have now shrugged off the past and gone heavy - John's unshaven stubble bore witness to their change of attitude. John and Spike had always felt musically restricted, and didn't want to be known merely as a backing group for extrovert singer Shell Henderson. "There were no hard feelings when we left - it was just a case of musical divergence. We're not jumping on the bandwagon, we feel that we can express ourselves better now."

There was a time when John, Spike and Jake were constantly to be seen looning around the Out Jams Disco in Soho, but now the group shuns the limelight. "We'd prefer to be known for our music rather than gimmicks" says Jake, bass player and introvert of the trio. "We just rehearsed for eight months without doing a gig - we were offered plenty, naturally, but we felt that the public wasn't ready for us".

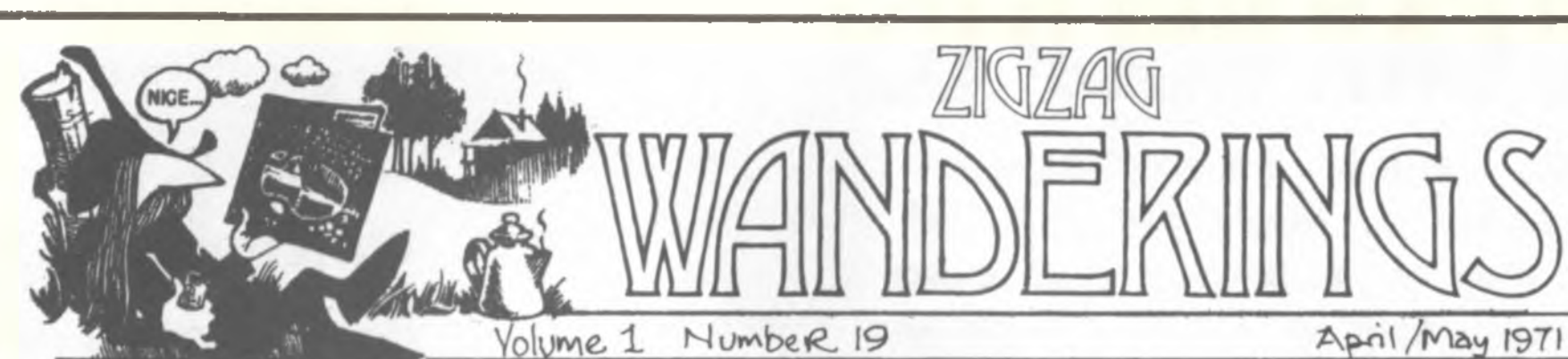
I'm certain, however, that they'll make their mark with this slice of hard rock, which ought to blow the mind of every pop pundit. I'll stick my neck out and say that it's the funkiest, hardest rocking 12" piece of plastic yet to be produced. . . . and it has everything! Beaty ballads, a slow belter warbled against a backdrop of lavish strings, Spike's lush voice putting over a hauntingly beautiful love song (though normally the vocal honours are handled by John), and a revamped version of their ill-fated single 'Oh how I love you babe' which for contractual reasons never saw the light of day here.

The first track on side two has a wild cajun violin strongly featured, blending in perfectly with the head-slicing guitar and Jake's driving bass excursions, and I feel that the atmosphere created really merits the swamprock tag they've given it. Jake also underpins John's slick up-tempo vocal treatment on the next cut, with his insistent bass line churning beneath the country-tinged, subtle shades of an un-named session man's acoustic guitar. The rest of side two is mainly comprised of raucous, robust rockers.

Side one, I purposely leave unanalysed to ensure that readers lay the sounds of that half of this remarkable platter on themselves. . . . thereby being able to experience a literally new level of musical appreciation.

The album is a collection of fine tracks, the magnetic performance of which is the Muff's hallmark; they have a power and a vibrancy which zap you in the stomach, but eschewing brash self-indulgence and disregarding the conventions of the sock-it-to-me brigade. All in all, a certain chart contender from a threesome who pack punch and at the same time know how to pull their punches. The group are now going out for £1200 a night, but John assures me that this figure is very reasonable considering their enormous range of equipment and their need to maintain four roadies. "People criticise us for wanting to crash the charts, but it's not for any commercial reasons at all - we want to get through to as many people as possible, and to sell a lot of records is the best way".

Many an impresario will be rueing the day he declined to sign up this vocal team who are now a force to be reckoned with, and whose name can now be safely and reverently whispered in the same breath as Mungo Jerry and a host of other bands whose gems have studied the charts. Truly an impressive launching of the Grab label's new mid-priced series of underground waxings, and bound to guarantee them mammoth sales. Ian



If the print gets any smaller, we'll have to give away free magnifying glasses. But hello anyway. We've got a new printer this issue - change of printer, change of fortune? I doubt it. But on.

And straight into the good records around at the moment - millions of them, so let me pick out 4 of the best; 'Tarkio' by Brewer & Shipley (one of our astute staff reckons they're only one step away from the Seekers, but I disagree. . . . an excellent record), 'Long Player' by the Faces (great album), 'Wildlife' by Mott the Hoople (anyone who puts this record down is a twat - and I'll defend that remark to anyone who disagrees), and 'The J Geils Band' (good rocking grist by the best band ever to come out of Boston). But it's hardly fair to pick out 4 like that when there are so many ace records out at the moment.

Saw the Cream film at last - the worst film I've seen for years; rotten camerawork, dire platitudinous narration, and a virtual waste of time.

If you want to see a fine example of cliché writing (such as Ian discusses over there), read the sleeve notes to the Elektra sampler 'Garden of delights'. (There are factual errors too!) The record itself is very good however, so have a listen.



Next month: 'How we went heavy and conquered Implosion' - interviews with Grapefruit, Love Affair, Tremeloes, and Fairweather. Wow.

Can anyone explain why the stereo of 'Alone again or' (off Forever Changes) by Love is the other way round on Love Revisited? Which reminds me, Snoopy from the first Love is reputedly in England getting a band together.

Now that Tomes Jones has made enough bread to last him the rest of his puff, he should chuck up all that old crap, get back into his denims, and start playing the clubs with a good rock band. He used to be good.

We got a press handout telling us that Uriah Heep's first album sold 55000 copies in England (which would put it in the Cosmo's Factory bracket). Competition; explain this amazing contention and win an Lp of our choice (guaranteed no Perry Como).



I've been talking to a few writers from the national pop press and I really hadn't realised the pressure they have to work under - being required to do things like review 5 albums in one day, and do 6 features in one week, and then see their efforts being chopped about by editors. Blimey, I couldn't stand the pace. I'll never criticise them again. And on the

subject of national press, I noticed that Steve Peacock of Sounds made reference to their previous LP (import only, under the name of the Rockets) when he reviewed the new Crazy Horse LP. There's no substitute for a Zigzag training!



Do you realise/care that Zigzag is now 2 years old (and still going weak), which is as good a reason as any for dragging out some historical details about the magazine (since so many letters ask us to - for some strange reason). Well, all the people who write for Zigzag have 2 things in common - they're always broke, and they live-eat-sleep rock music. (No-one who writes for us is doing so for any other reason than he loves the music). None of us have ever had any journalistic training (and it shows); I (Pete) used to be a surveyor who spent more time in Musicland than at work. Ian was (and is) a Russian/Spanish translator who used to use Dylan lyrics as dictation pieces to Spanish students when he was a teacher in Spain (& he's my brother). John Tobler is a mad computer programmer who spends his life amassing information and records - he squashes a week's activity into one day (and he's also an Elektra freak, possessing every record they've ever put out. . . . even his bloody dog is called Elektra). Jeff Cloves was a lecturer at the college I used to attend - notable as being only a couple of years older than his students, looking like Bert Jansch, reading poetry to us instead of building construction, and telling us to "piss off" at the end of each lesson. Mac used to work with me (and John) when we were all incarcerated at the Prudential (?), but he's off in the south of France somewhere at the moment - if you see him, say 'hello' from us. Pippin is a Mancunian maniac and the subject of a thousand unfounded rumours; & Mike Simmons is a letter answerer/mainstay/guitar teacher/songwriter/cat who used to be at school with Ian and me. Now, I'm quite sure everyone found that very fascinating, didn't they? No.



A&M should put out a maxi-single (or EP, as it used to be called before some trendy tit invented this new-fangled term) of their 4 Beefheart tracks. I fear that they underestimate the mad captain's popularity here. The tracks are 'Frying Pan'/'Moonchild'/'Diddy Wah Diddy'/'Who do you think you're fooling!'. Hustle A&M to release it and thrust the Captain into the charts! Write to: Beefheart for break fast, A&M Records, 1 St George St, W1.

This column gets more and more inconsequential every month, and as it happens I've run out of trivia (which is why we've filled up the space with the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers). See you next month.

YOU CAN HELP US!

So that we can keep more in touch with our readers, we'd be glad if you could spare the time and trouble to fill out this page and send it off to us. We can't give you anything in return (except a magazine reflecting your tastes) or even refund the postage (being continually broke) but we'll be forever grateful. Please answer all the questions (honestly too) and stick your name and address on the bottom only if you want to. (Write as small as you wish - you'll have to).

YOU Age.....Occupation.....

List last 6 groups you saw and describe each in one word.....

.....

RECORDS

How much do you spend on records each month?.....

Do you prefer certain record labels, if so why?.....

Are albums too expensive?.....

Are you impressed by double sleeves?

.....Worth extra bread?.....

List the last 10 LPs you bought.....

.....

.....

Do you tend to buy the more popular lps, like CSN&Y in preference to, say, Help Yourself?.....

What makes you decide which Lp to buy? radio/review/word of mouth (give exact details).....

.....

Which radio programmes do you listen to?.....

Which TV programmes do you watch?

.....

Are there any DJs or reviewers whose recommendations you trust, or do you

only trust your own ears?.....

.....

Are you satisfied with your local record shop?.....Why?.....

Which musical & 'underground' papers do you read and what do you think of

each (one word).....

.....

ZIGZAG Is 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p too expensive?.....

How often do you buy it?.....

Does our irregularity bother you?....

How many other people on average read your copy?.....

Do you have trouble getting it (ZZ) in your area?.....

Are you ever influenced by ZZ articles to buy records or go and see bands?...

Give examples.....

Should we review records?.....

Should our interviews be longer?.....

Are you interested in the less well known bands we feature or should we concentrate on the more popular?.....

Should we chuck out any writers?.....

.....

When records are advertised in Zigzag, do you feel more disposed to buy them?

(You better say yes, or else.....).....

Which ten groups/artistes would you like us to feature next?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

If you can't get all the answers on this page (or don't want to mutilate this fine periodical) write them on anything - as long as you send them. Thanks again. Name & address.....

.....

John Tied and Dyed



Since the release of the movie version of Woodstock, John Sebastian has been synonymous with festivals. He wasn't even scheduled to play at Woodstock. He got a ride in on a helicopter because his friend was doing equipment for the Incredible String Band. "When it started to rain," he says, "the producers asked if I would play since they knew I didn't need to use an electric guitar. I borrowed a guitar and my set was really shitty. It was one of my worst in quite a long time."

"I was very wasted on acid and I really didn't know what was coming down. Even though the people seemed to enjoy the show, I still knew I wasn't too good. It was the mood of the festival and everything else going on there."

"The trouble with a lot of festivals since Woodstock, is that promoters think they can have another Woodstock. It's insane. Woodstock is in the past and besides, it wasn't planned to come off the way it did. It just kinda happened that way. Putting barbed wire around festival grounds is not the way to do it - it's just plain crazy."

Since his non-scheduled Woodstock set, he has played at festivals in all parts of this country and in other countries. At the Randall's Island festival this past summer, an assorted group of self-styled radicals and revolutionaries took over the stage to expound their politics to the audience. They refused to give up the stage, so after waiting four hours to go on, John walked out and started his set.

"The people," John explains, "didn't want to sit around and listen to all the shit so I started to play and no one stopped my set. The people who were talking on stage were boring everyone and besides that, they're not even revolutionaries. They're not even radicals. They drive up in daddy's new car and then try to tell people their 'revolutionary' ideas."

Recently, he performed at the Isle of Wight festival where he was unintentionally reunited on stage with Zal Yanovsky. John had begun his set when Kris Kristoferson told him that Zally was there so he asked him to come up and play. It was the first time they have played together publicly since the days of the Spoonful. The entire set lasted for two and a half hours and according to John, it was the best set he played in quite some time.

"If I ever want to release a live album, it will be the set from there. Everything went right; it was great playing with Zally, it was a great festival and a lot of fun," he explained.

While in England for the festival, John had Jimi Hendrix up to the room for a three hour session. "Jimi and I played acoustic guitars and had a real fine time. It was the first time I had really gotten to know and talk to him and I'm glad that we had a good time because that's the way I'll remember him," John explains.

Before Neil Young joined Crosby, Stills & Nash, there had been some talk that John Sebastian would become the fourth member of the group. "It was always kind of a joke," John said.

"We called ourselves the Reliability Brothers but it never really got serious. I asked if I could join them and they said sure, they said they could really use a drummer. I said thanks, but... I really wasn't into the group scene as I had just left the Spoonful not too long before to be by myself. I introduced them to Dallas Taylor and we still all get together as often as we can to play. A bunch of those guys and some other friends played on my album and we all had a lot of fun."

"I enjoy performing for people, but not at places like the Troubadour where they've already had a couple of drinks before I start. I like to play when there's lots of room to move around and people can have a good time," he says. "The only reason I played there was because I have one of those long term contracts which states I gotta keep comin' back."

His album for Warner Brothers, *John B. Sebastian* was released about six months ago after many hassles. He was involved in contractual difficulties with Mike Curb and MGM who went so far as to release the exact same album on their label. MGM then released a bootleg of Sebastian that was probably one of the worst records ever released (from a technical standpoint).

"Mike Curb (MGM president) was holding a Spoonful contract that MGM hadn't seen fit to exercise in three years," John says. "I don't see why they (MGM) wanted to hurt me. If they would have pulled this a year ago, I would have been through. If I owed them an album, I gladly would have recorded one with new material. I didn't want to release the same material again."

"The bad thing about this," he explains with deep emotion in his voice, "is that no one knows it was a bootleg. It is the most shocking piece of music I've ever heard of. I want people to know that the album was not at all representative of my work."

As this could set a dangerous precedent that other record companies might follow, John said that the artists has nothing he can do. "He gets fucked up and down the line as rock 'n' roll just moves too fast. It moves six months faster than our legal system."

Jeff Sherwood

reprinted from Creem

The Compleat Tom Paxton



on Elektra

EKD 2003

