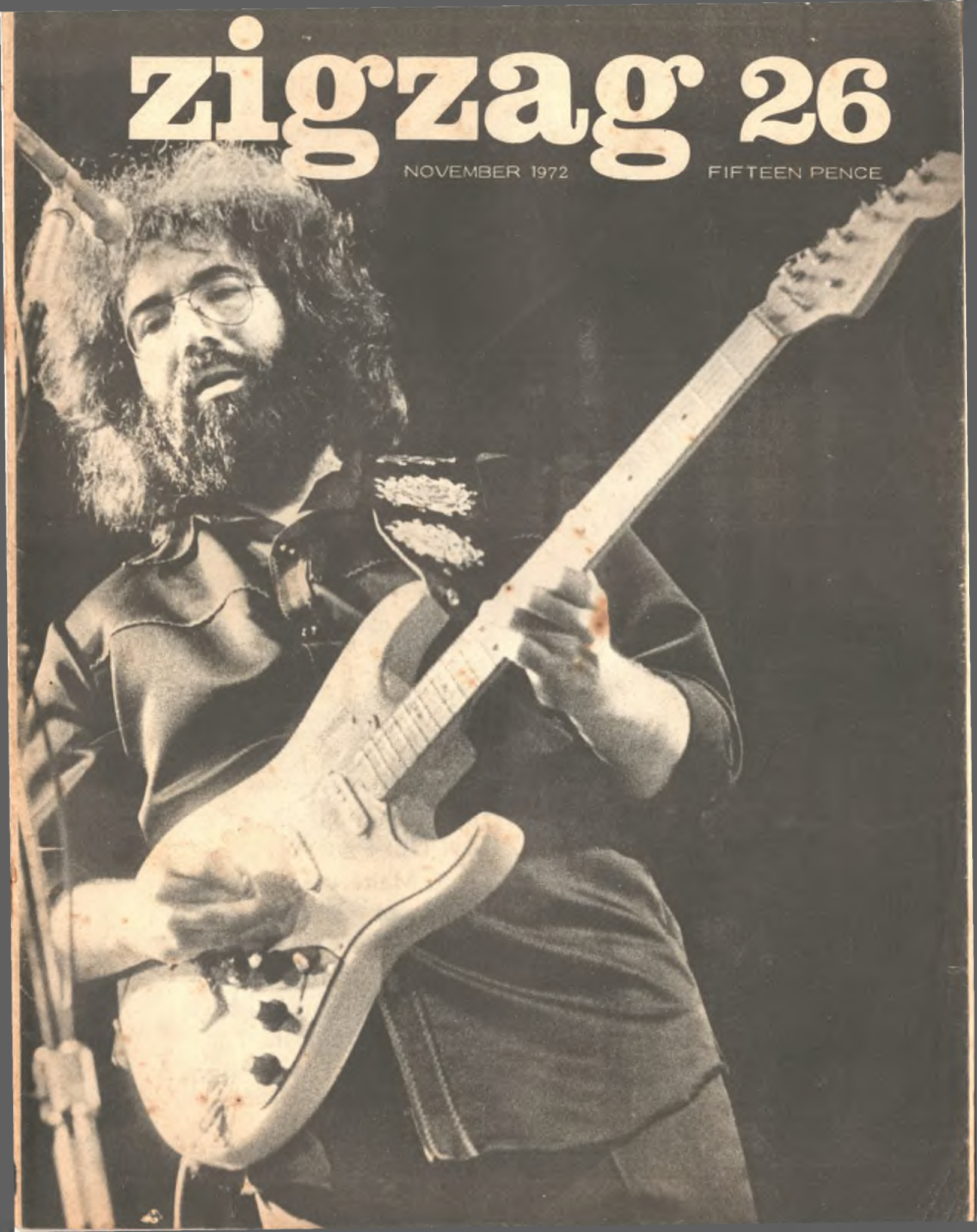


zigzag 26

NOVEMBER 1972

FIFTEEN PENCE



RAB NOAKES



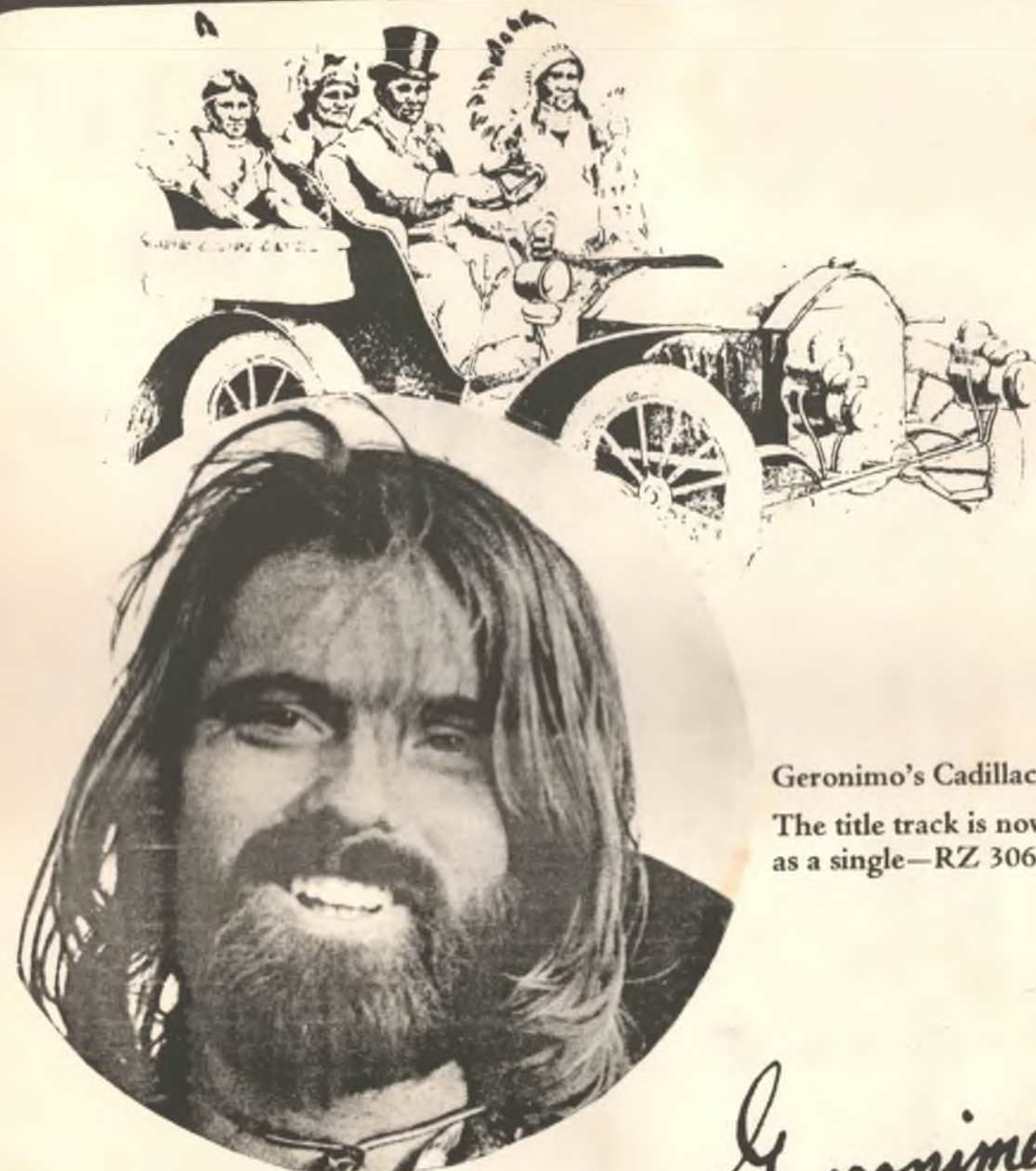
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Whenever I go up to London (as rarely as possible), I pop into UA Records first, just to have a chat and find out what's been happening in the metropolis since my last visit, maybe score a couple of albums, and work out my day's visits. Well, as often as not, the odd constituent of Hawkwind is flogging around the offices in an endless quest for dope or money or gigs (in that order probably); if it's not Nick, it's Del, and if it's not Del, it's manager Douglas, who's always ready with a friendly hustle.

This Douglas fellow - Smith to be precise - has been crossing my path for over 3 years now. He used to be with Clearwater Productions (who went bankrupt owing Zigzag bread), but split to work on his own several months before they collapsed. Since then, he's not only sorted his head into a more business like shape, but he's steered Hawkwind, who invited him to be their manager, to national success.

Whereas most managers of freak bands at least have some semblance of a straight exterior for bluffing it out with company executives and the like, old Doug never really managed to get that side of it together; he has no mohair suit or cigar or any other earmarks to distinguish him from the members of the band. He often carries a briefcase, but you always get the impression that it's loaded with drugs rather than contracts, documents and sandwiches (or whatever executive types are supposed to carry around).

In the old Clearwater days, on spying me, he invariably buttonholed me and began to bubble out ideas, but when it came to implementing these plans... well, something usually prevented their fruition. I used to get the idea that Clearwater was like a clapped out psychedelic bus trying to compete with London Transport.

And that was the impression that I retained, I fear, and whenever Doug told me that Hawkwind were about to break into the big time, I used to smile to myself and tell him that we'd love to do an article on them just as soon as we could find the time and space.

Anyway, to cut a long (snore snore) story short, I bumped into Doug a few weeks ago; there he was with his glazed eyes and his embroidered Levi shirt (with 'enjoy Cocaine' patch prominent) and as he loomed towards me, I wondered what astounding epithet he was going to thrust at me this time.

He grasped my shoulder. "1967's coming back, man!" he said.

"It is?" I replied, wondering what the hell he'd been stuffing his head with this time.

".... you've only got to see the audience at our concerts...." but then his enthusiasm started to get out of hand - he was babbling about a single they were going to release, something called 'Silver Machine'. He told me, with hushed assurance (in the way that a stockbroker must advise a client to invest in a certain shareholding), that it was certain to get into the top 5.

"He's out of his head for sure this time!" I thought to myself "... he's gone crazy - he's babbling like a lunatic". I was sure that his wits had finally turned; the inevitable result of stuffing his head with Cheech & Chong, sundry roots herbs and synthetics, an overdose of the Fabulous Freak Brothers and various other pernicious evils.

"That'll be nice" I said, knowing they'd as much chance of making the charts as a bloke with a shovel attacking Oxford Street in search of gold. I mean, even the album 'Xin search of space', which everyone was sure would be a hit, only hung around the bottom of the chart for a couple of weeks.

Hawkwind was an enigma; heroes to their fans, a joke to the press, an embarrassment to their record company, and poverty to their manager.

HAWKWIND

IN SEARCH OF THE FUTURE

part 1; managerial aspects

But that was a few weeks ago. Now, all of a sudden it seems (though the success of the single only accelerated their growing popularity), Hawkwind are big. Rather than present a mish-mosh of an article, I decided to split it into two parts; so firstly, here's the saner half, a look at Hawkwind from their manager's viewpoint.

ZZ: Can I start off by asking about this mammoth tour you're about to embark on?

Doug: Well, it's in a similar vein to our tour last year, but maybe not quite so flamboyant. We're promoting it ourselves, keeping the entrance fee below a pound, giving away free programmes and badges, and going to 30 different venues; it's like a touring theatre really. There'll be a few innovations in the equipment as well as the music - for instance, we've had new speaker cabinets built in the shape of rocket-ship fins, chromium plated and very teutonic looking, and we're hoping that these, combined with the lighting effects will help to create the environment the band and audience will be able to work together in. The whole point of the space ritual, which is what we call it, is, after all, to bring people together.

ZZ: Is it going to be an economical venture?

Doug: Oh yes. We've had to trim a few ideas - like we were originally going to cart around a giant space ship dome - but it should be a success both financially and aesthetically. The idea is that we provide the images, the music and the lights and the audience participates in the creation of the environment by supplying their energy to bring the evening to life.

ZZ: So it's not just a simple case of having a band on the road... it's more like an army...

Doug: Right; there'll be 3 equipment guys taking care of a great Mercedes lorry full of gear, plus another roadie to drive the band around, plus 3 or maybe 4 people on the lights, plus a tour manager, plus Andy Dunkley to take care of the sounds, plus me and maybe a few other odd bods.... so, as you say, there will be quite a few people involved.

ZZ: So how can you make ends meet?

Doug: Mainly because everybody's doing it for the buzz rather than the money: the amount it's cost us is negligible compared with what it would have cost someone like the Who to mount a similar tour. You see,

everybody realises that the financial rewards will come in the future, when we're able to put on concerts all over the world... the band's been struggling and broke long enough to realise that no-one's going to make a fortune straight away, and they wouldn't want that anyway. They're happy enough at the moment, getting £30 a week plus bonuses, which is untold riches compared to what they've been through. The rest of the income is invested - like we've got a really good pa system, a coach, a big Mercedes van and roadies, all of which we can hire out to foreign bands when they come in to tour... and the roadies will get a percentage of the profits that brings in. The same with our light show, Liquid Len and the Lensmen - they go out and do gigs on their own.... it's like a family organisation really, all pulling together.

ZZ: Let's talk about 'Silver Machine'.... what changes has it wrought?

Doug: Simply this; it's enabled us to do our trip.... what we've always wanted to do. The audiences have become very much bigger and the average age has dropped, but it's rather strange because the single didn't get much airplay or promotion to begin with.... it just caught on slowly by the odd radio play and word of mouth, and it didn't really catch on until the television thing.... but the size of our audiences has just shot up.

ZZ: Did you get any criticism from people who thought that the last remaining bastion of underground rock stoicism had sold out?

Doug: No, not really.... our earliest fans and audiences still come and see us, but all the time we get new people coming to gigs, being unable to believe it, and then returning with all their friends when we go back again.... the single did boost our audiences, but they were snowballing very steadily anyway. In a sense, though, we have sold out to a degree - like we haven't done any benefits for some time now, where as we always used to be doing them; the trouble is, of course, that it costs so much to go out and do a gig these days - I mean, they can't just turn out and do a sub-standard show, they've got to maintain the standards and the reputation they've been building over the years, or else they might as well go back to what they were in 1969.... always struggling to make ends meet. On the other hand, we're trying to get to a position where we can loan people money - like Frendz, for instance - and let them pay it back when they can; we're still interested in the community, but we've got

to find an alternative to benefits, which, as I say, just aren't economical anymore.

ZZ: Talking of bread, it's taken a long time for the band to become financially stable; was there always financial backing or was it a case of starving until the next gig?

Doug: Well, I suppose it was a case of starving, because they just didn't have anywhere to borrow money from. When I came back into the picture as their manager, they were skint, the van needed repairing, rent needed paying and so on. It was a case of me having to go out hustling, securing overdrafts and trying to get the band into a position where they could earn steadily and try to pay off their debts - there was never any financial backing as such. But Hawkwind, I feel, are pretty unique in their attitude and approach; for instance, when their gear was all stolen and we had to fork out for some more, they all volunteered to take a drop in wages. In a normal band-manager relationship, a band finding themselves in that situation would expect to be paid regardless.... they'd feel no shared responsibility for the trip, it'd just be a case of wages as usual and that's tough on the management because gear is their risk. It's a mutual respect thing really, and it works because, where-as bands like Mott the Hoople and Roxy Music are probably in debt to the tune of 20 or 30 thousand pounds, Hawkwind are in credit. Obviously they owe a few quid here and there, but their assets are well in excess of their liabilities.

ZZ: Are bands like that in debt to such a degree?

Doug: Well, don't pin me down to exact cases because I'm not sure of the figures, but a lot of managers work on the principle that if a band has potential and looks like staying together and making a lot of bread in the future, they'll pay out wages and finance equipment and recording and then recoup their outlay over the years.... so the band might get to the point when it's going out every night for 500 quid, but the guys in the band are still on £20 a week. The who were apparently £60,000 in debt when they were at the stage that Hawkwind is now - but Hawkwind never had any of that kind of backing; it always paid its own way, and if there were no gigs, there was no money - it was as simple as that.

ZZ: The record deal was negotiated over two years ago, when the band was more or less in the gutter and any deal was better than nothing, right? Does it choke you off to know that if you were contractually free now, you could get a much better percentage?

Doug: Well, I shouldn't really go into too many details here, but when a band breaks through, it has a lot more control whether they're under contract or not. In our case, United Artists only have 3 members of the band officially signed, and we're trying to renegotiate the contract at the moment. I say "trying" because I'm not having very much success - not that I'm worried about that because in a few months time the band will be even bigger, and we'll have a much bigger lever to work at them with. They'll have to talk sooner or later, and the longer they leave it, the better position we'll be in. What astounds me is the way that some record companies think that just because a person has long hair and doesn't wear a suit, that they must be pretty dumb

ZZ: How do you get on with the press? Why I ask is that it seems to me that most of the pop papers treat Hawkwind as just a bunch of gimmick ridden clowns with no



Nick Turner in mid flight

sincerity or redeeming musical value.

Doug: Well, to be quite honest, I'm not really bothered. I used to have some sort of reputation as number one pest, always trying to get articles on my bands, but I gave up after a while and concentrated my energies on them building up a reputation based on successful gigs rather than the number of column inches they got in the Melody Maker or whatever. I mean, no one can say that Hawkwind is a hype which has been foisted on audiences by the press... whereas I'm sure you could make a list as long as your arm of bands that have. The press will follow along.

ZZ: What about promoters - are they keen to book you, or are they paranoid about attracting an audience of drug fiends?

Doug: We don't have promoters anymore; we do it all ourselves, directly. We hire the halls and carry all responsibility, and so far we've had no trouble in terms of anyone getting hurt or any violence. None of the hall bouncers are allowed near the stage either; if anybody happens to get on the stage the roadies take care of him... if the guy gets heavy, they'll bop him, but usually it's just a case of gently directing them to the side and returning them to the audience.

ZZ: Hawkwind's always had this Notting Hill Gate image, yet you and some of the band have moved away now; is this because of constant hassles with the law, or is the area losing its pivotal strength?

Doug: We may have moved, but we haven't really left the Gate; maybe it's easier to look at the area objectively from a distance. The law did have a lot to do with the move, yes, because it does tend to make you a little paranoid living there... and it's always been a known fact that Hawkwind and the law just don't hit it off.

I can't remember just how many times the band and I have been searched, but it was getting to be a regular habit; mind you, the police always found some excuse for a search - like they considered it highly suspicious if I was going home after one o'clock in the morning. Yes, the law to a certain extent prompted the move, but I wouldn't say that was the prime factor. As it is, DikMik and Lemmy and Simon still live in the Grove, and Frendz offices will always be a meeting place for the group. In fact, whenever there's a gig, the band meets up at the Mountain Grill in Portobello Road (recommended by the Hawkwind Good Food Guide, no less) either for lunch or supper before splitting to do the gig.

ZZ: Is the gate still a hotbed of musical activity these days?

Doug: I think so, but it seems as though most of the people have burrowed themselves away... you don't see so much of them, although they're still there.

ZZ: So does the band treat the threat of being busted as an occupational hazard for a rock group... like a postman has to expect a few dog bites, and a soldier knows he may be shot at?

Doug: Yes. To give you details of exactly what avoiding action they take, however, would just be playing into the hands of the police because they have departments whose job it is to go through the musical and the underground papers for snippets of information like that.

ZZ: Isn't that just a paranoid rumour - the same as all the underground papers think their phones are being tapped?

Doug: I don't think so; Nick Turner was quoted (in the NME) as saying "there are always a lot of drugs around the band"...

so a few days later they get busted at a gig. But we do get the feeling that the police are out to get us... not that their searches have been very fruitful recently.

ZZ: As a manager, how much guidance do you offer the band? I mean, do you just take care of the business or do you suggest musical policy and stuff like that?

Doug: It's difficult to put exactly what I do into a concise nutshell; I keep the business end together and I often comment on the music rather than offer guidance. My attitude is one of steering them away from big business and big industry, but keep them on the road turning over their money without having to become part of a big machine. It seems to work out alright at the moment.

ZZ: Is there any adversity or conflict?

Doug: Inevitably there's the odd occasion when I think they're getting above themselves, and similarly they've thought that I was getting above myself, but the entire relationship is based on mutual trust; they maintain that if they haven't got a manager they can trust, then they don't want a manager at all... I mean, it's a democratic organisation and if they don't like the way that something's being done, they'll let me know, but we get on like an 8 piece band - it's 8 of us working together the whole time and for the same ends (even if I do a lot more work than they do).

ZZ: Well, thanks a lot... I reckon that just about wraps it up - I'll go away and distort it now.

Doug: Yeah, I bet you will... you'll probably make me out to be a two-bit, ten per cent twister!

Next issue: the 'horrible' 'Awkward' themselves (slugging off that two-bit, ten per cent twister of a manager of theirs!)

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JOE COCKER In Search Of The Lost Audience

SHOWBIZ STRIKES A HEAVY BLOW

Over the past three years, time has been something that Joe Cocker would have easily cared less about. Hiding away at his parents' home in Sheffield, England, Joe Cocker has been the modern-day Howard Hughes/Greta Garbo figure of the rock world. Rumor had it that Joe was feeling pretty miserable for a while although "wiped-out" might have been a better description. One of his earlier band members and associates attributed this ill-feeling to simple over-indulgence on Joe's part. "I saw him at Christmas and he looked really well, but when I saw him last year, he looked like he was nearly dead. Coke, acid, everything you could think of. He'd really overdone it." Cocker, feeling as he did, then withdrew into a virtual state of non-communication with his public, his record company, and with the man initially responsible for guiding him into the American spotlight — his former manager, Dee Anthony. In a soul-searching interview which took place some months ago, the silver-haired impresario explained some of the internal riffs surrounding Cocker's hibernation period: "Sure, I'd been to England seven times last year and I didn't get to see Joe once. He said he'd meet me, but he never showed. For 18 months he's been cheating his public, I wouldn't buy a record of Joe Cocker's. Not until he came out and worked. That's his obligation, not to me, not to A&M and not to his agency...but to his public! Sure, we were the machinery and we coordinated things and put him on the Ed Sullivan Show; but in the

end, it was the public who said yes. And when they finally got to a pitch where he had them with their tongues hanging out, he turned his back on them. Remember, the public likes to believe that they put you 'there.'"

If Cocker wasn't exactly getting along with his old manager, Anthony was sure there were some outside forces to blame for it. "Joe's gullible and he's clumped himself with people that have just poisoned his mind." The one-time manager of Tony Bennett continued, "I've had more people come into my office on behalf of Joe Cocker in the last six months, that at this point I call it 'The Flake of the Month Club.' I mean there are certain stories that Joe wants his contract back and that he was sold down the river. I can only tell you this; if you look at the totals to see who made the most money on Joe Cocker, I would be the last in line."

"If Joe has been deceived into believing that the management and agency in America caused this situation, I can only tell him to go back to when he had his little busman's jacket on at the Marquee Club in London and a guy called Dee Anthony came in and flipped over him. I fought to break him in America. I mean, agents and promoters were telling me that Joe Cocker was a figment of my imagination...if only Joe can look back at that and really see the people who were there and who believed in him. Instead, he believes those Johnny-come-lately's. It's these lecherous parasites he should get rid of. He doesn't need four head-shrinkers and all that jazz. They destroyed Joe, they made a mushroom out of him. This

whole situation is probably the sickest thing that has happened in the business and I say the most disgusting thing is that he's cheated his public."

"What Joe Cocker should do is concentrate on going out with a simple formula. Just go out like he did with the old Grease Band, and sing his ass off."

As we all know, Joe wound up doing just that, but due to innumerable legal, personal, and psychological conflicts it took more than just blood, sweat and tears to pull it off. In fact, the alleged figure was somewhere along the lines of \$250,000. The figure Joe Cocker had to pay Mr. Dee Anthony in order to be released from his three-year contract that Joe claims he never signed. Interesting.

It seems that in the early goings (February, 1972), Joe, along with several undisclosed persons, had set up a 21-city tour, which would take in such choice locations as New York, Canada, California and Hawaii. Cocker and his companions talked freely of having Poco come along as the warm-up band, then because of financial reasons switched to Red Bone and Irish folk singer Gerry Lockran. At this point Joe's record company had printed up an itinerary, which made the front pages of English trade magazines. But while all of this was going on, the Sheffield crooner had neglected to verify, acknowledge, or even meet with his "contracted until 1974" manager. And that proved to be Joe Cocker's undoing. For Anthony, who manages



Humble Pie, King Crimson, Emerson, Lake and Palmer and J. Geils, and who functions as a sort of father figure/football coach to his groups, decided to take a firm stand with his delinquent singer.

In accordance with the N.Y. Supreme Court, Bandana Management (Anthony's Organization) served a temporary restraining order on Cocker and any other parties who were vaguely connected with what Bandana called "Joe's Illegal Tour." And if you're into foreign intrigue mysteries, perhaps you'd dig the manner in which the injunction was served. One wintry evening upon returning to his Connecticut hideaway after attending a King Crimson concert, Cocker hesitantly agreed to be interviewed by a man who claimed he had spent all day tracking down his whereabouts. After the interview and photo session, Cocker seemed amazed as he pondered the legal documents contained in an envelope given to him by the anonymous gentleman posing as a reporter. (When asked how he actually tracked Cocker down, Mr. Anonymous explained, "Once we found their teenage and dope connections, it was easy.")

Right after that things started getting sticky. As an A&M spokesman put it: "The injunction issued by Dee was simply his protest against actions he thought contrary to his managerial contracts and rights." A strong rumor had it that there had been other parties trying to manage Cocker's business and financial affairs, and Anthony (Joe's legal manager at that point) just wanted to play it safe. After all 10% is 10%. A spokesman for Bandana then added: "We did this for Joe, and in the end he'll realize it was for his own good. You see, if he comes out under an illegal contract or an illegal managerial situation, all funds from any appearances would be tied up in the courts. Either Cocker functions under Bandana or he buys himself out of his contract."

Finally in a surprise move, Joe decided to resolve his differences with Anthony by laying out the loot for his contract. Just two weeks before the tour's kickoff date at Madison Square Garden, Cocker allegedly gave Anthony a "substantial" sum, rumored to be somewhere in the

vicinity of two-three hundred thousand dollars in return for all managerial rights. According to a Bandana press release: "In announcing the settlement, Cocker expressed his appreciation and admiration of Dee Anthony for the success Bandana has helped him to achieve, but stated that he was interested in new projects and that he and Anthony had concluded, and that Nigel Thomas (former Grease Band manager) would assume the management role at this stage of Cocker's career."

With the exchange of money for freedom, Joe buried the hatchet with Dee and suddenly all the legal hassles had evaporated. So, after a cluster of suspicious radio spots alluring to a "Cocker Come-back Tour," a full page ad in *Billboard* magazine proclaiming that Joe was: "alive and well and feelin' all right" and, of course, that rehashed single *Feelin' All Right* that Dee Anthony chastised as being simply "disgusting," Joe Cocker was indeed once again ready to roll!

But still, all of this doesn't quite answer the puzzling question of why Joe went into hibernation in the first place. Perhaps if we wander back to the cobwebs of the Woodstock festival circa 1969, we'd discover the when's, why's, where's and how's of the man's mysterious seclusion and of his sudden resurfacing.

Right after they performed at Woodstock, the original Grease Band and Cocker started going in opposite directions. One of the members was busted and several other personal entanglements followed. After a month's stay in England, Cocker and crew returned to the States for a second tour. Joe complained of feeling and looking older and even came to the conclusion that show biz had definitely aged him. In Los Angeles he met all the old time greats; Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, and sadly remarked, "They all look younger than they did in 1958, while I look older than I did last year!" Feeling as he did, he still admitted that, "I have to continue playing by putting my total being into my stage act, because that's one of the few moments of peace I still have."

At the end of the second U.S. tour, Joe flew directly back to his home town in England and stayed pretty much to himself — doing nothing of musical consequence. On the other hand, the Grease Band, being musicians in the strongest sense of the word, needed to play. They worked as studio musicians helping a splintered Spooky Tooth record their final LP, *LAST PUFF*. Extended recording sessions for the pop-opera *JESUS CHRIST: SUPERSTAR* then began, and three of the Greasers were offered jobs in the studio pits. Since there was still no word from Joe, a split seemed imminent. Henry McCulloch, one of the founding members (now with Paul McCartney's Wings) remembers the situation vividly: "The breakup left the Grease Band in a state of semi-paralysis. The exact split was in February, 1970. We'd just done America and then things started going wrong. We weren't getting any new numbers and Joe was never there to tell us what was happening or what we were supposed to be doing. Eventually the whole thing just fell apart."

On the other hand, Cocker felt the Grease Band was a bit too uptight for his liking. "No it wasn't really a problem of being inventive," mused Cocker, "there was just something wrong. Nobody in the Grease Band was ever totally relaxed. There were always cigarettes lying about the stage. Everyone seemed to be a bit neurotic. That used to really upset me!" Cocker also pointed out that now and again the Grease Band would find it hard keeping up: "Well sometimes I would drive pretty hard. I used to look at Bruce (drummer Bruce Rowlands) with fury in my eyes and say, come on man, come on, keep it driving. Keep it driving man!" Obviously, they didn't, and soon Cocker was back in L.A. (minus the Grease Band) with the intentions of recuperating from the grueling months on the road and to casually look over some new musicians for a possible summer tour.

On March 12, 1970, one day after Cocker arrived, Dee Anthony flew into L.A. bearing the tidings that a seven-week Joe Cocker tour, to begin eight days later in Detroit, had been negotiated. Anthony advised Cocker that the musicians' union,

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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FABULOUS

GREASEBANDS

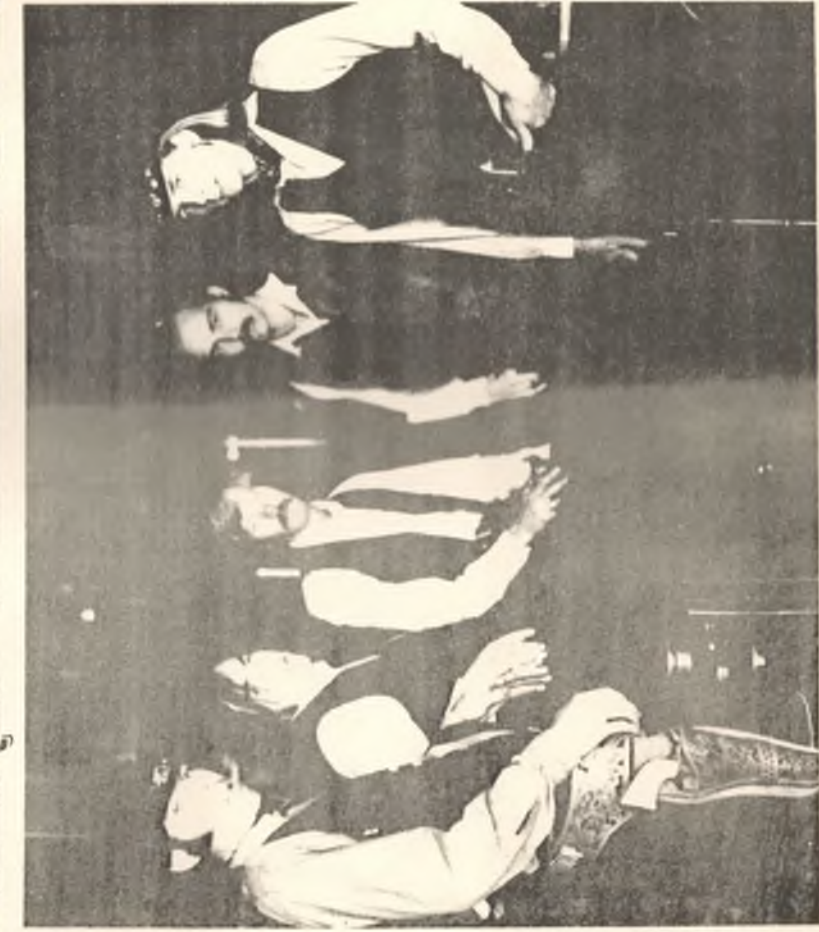
incorporating their amazing adventures in Virginia City and culminating, as we shall see, in the saga of Dan Hicks (not to mention his Hot Licks)

the tradition! Does the very mention of their name send the blood coursing through your veins?

As any informed reader will know, they were the Grease Band. San Francisco drug-oriented rock group but they got tangled in the San Francisco scene and consequently their story has never really been explained (not to my knowledge anyway). Well, it so happened that one day in late September, two ex-Grease banders, Richard Olsen (bass) and Dan Hicks (drums), had arrived independently in London — so we should think out and about out, as the fact into us wasn't, then brought them together for a long reunion.

The story starts in San Francisco in the late summer of 1964 (around the time that the Byrds were also hatching their schemes) and pivots around the ideas of an arranger called George Hunter, who, inspired (as everyone was) by the Beatles, decided to form a rock band and invited Richard Olsen, with whom he'd been at college, to advise him in the project. Olsen had been studying music at San Francisco State College and since Hunter was not a musician himself, he was anxious to enlist the help of people who could carry him, so to speak, because he wanted to be the singer — the guy who all the girls dug, you know?

The next guy to fall in was Mike Wilhelm, who in turn had been at high school in L.A. with Hunter. Wilhelm was a folksinger with a good grounding in traditional American folk music — and it was this type of music that Hunter planned to plunder and adapt, putting it in a rock setting — so he was originating a folk rock repertoire of



THE CHARMATANS IN THE BAR AT THE RED DOG SALOON IN VIRGINIA CITY: LEFT TO RIGHT: MIKE WILHELM • RICHARD OLSEN • DAN HICKS • GEORGE HUNTER

about the same time as Hoffman and his cohorts a few hundred miles south in L.A. but the Byrds, of course, kept him to the punch.

The three of them, all of whom had dropped out of college years before, it became at all fashionable, saw around getting stoned and planning their assault on the pop world. "Our [living] college was a gradual thing," says Richard. "It was a case of us all sitting around, you know, and wondering where we were going to lead us, or how all these people finishing college and then going nowhere — so we decided under we all wanted to do and eat about doing it."

Richard, by this time, had started to smoke and quite had been thinking and talking to tabs. George had taken up the writing (an instrument which was later used with some success by John Sebastian in the Limelight), and they decided to adopt a turn of the century mode of dress incorporating natty and white collars, cowboy hats, and arrow hats, fancy waistcoats, and vests.

In September 1964, the owner of a San Francisco antique shop called Mike Theatre for modern folk, one Michael Ferguson, who had just returned from tripping round the jungles of Mexico, volunteered his able services as pianist (and a lot of the weird clothing tips stemmed from his vivid imagination and his contacts to get hold of the stuff). All they needed now was a drummer and he soon presented himself in the shape of Sam Linde. Unfortunately Linde was unable to get it on, and he was replaced by a fellow named Hicks.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dan Hicks (who was in England on a mini tour to receive interviews like me and to suss out a possible tour next year)

Come into the picture at the end of 1964 "Sam Linde apparently wasn't all that much good and I guess the others had been sort of looking for another drummer on the fly for some time. I'd known some of them at San Francisco State College, and I'd done a bit of drumming here and there, but I guess you could say that my interest really lay in playing guitar & singing, so I did a bit of folk singing around the clubs a while earlier - ragtime folk stuff like 'Nobody knows you when you're down and out', 'San Francisco Bay Blues', 'Grizzly Bear' you know, a sort of Jack Elliott/Jesse Fuller/Woody Guthrie thing. Anyway, they asked me to come in on drums and so I did (though I also did a bit of singing and guitar playing too - usually on numbers I had written); I didn't really have all that much interest in rock music, but I'd seen various pop groups on KTVU and Shindig when I was working for a television monitoring service. It seemed like an interesting way of picking up some coin and having a really good time as well. It never entirely turned out that way though never did... we came close a couple of times, but the bread was always just around the corner."

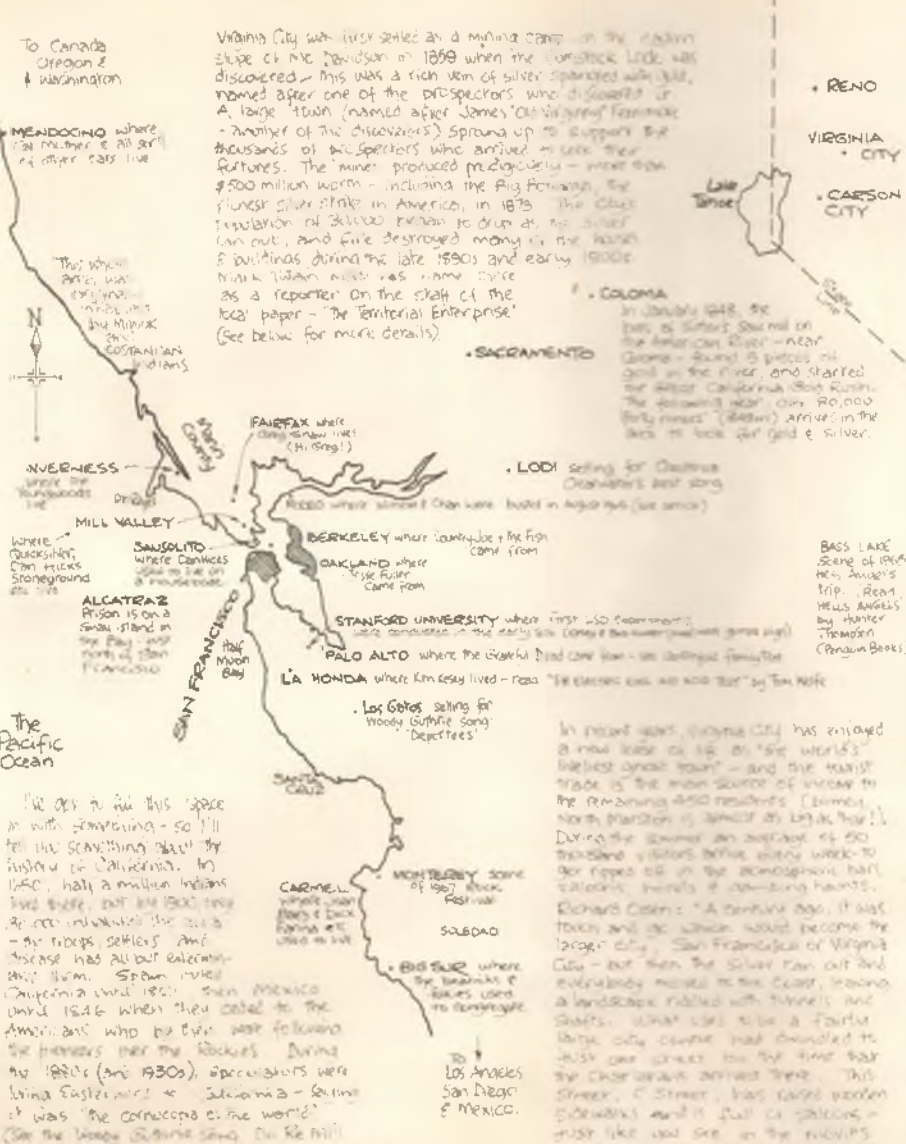
A lot has been made of Hunter's obsession for image and dress overriding his demands for musical ability. I asked Dan about that.

"He was pretty interested in the visual thing, yeah, but we could all play our instruments OK... it was a sort of combination of the two really. When I joined, they hadn't really formulated the musical style they were to adopt later, at that time it was mostly Chuck Berry stuff - tunes that John Hammond had done on his first two Vanguard albums and a sort of R&B standards like 'My Baby' and 'Got my Mojo working', or wasn't until later that we got into that folk rock thing for which we got our name and reputation."

Over the next 6 months, their repertoire changed radically, the few folk rock songs they already did were complemented by several more... songs like 'I was born in East Virginia' and 'Wildash Cannonball' - not that they had any gigs to play! All they did was sit around and rehearse, and it wasn't until late played a very weird and wonderful 'trick on them the following June (1965) that they were eventually offered work, in the form of a residency at the Red Dog Saloon, out in Virginia City, in California's next door neighbour, Nevada.

A century ago, Virginia City had been an active mining town (for fuller details see my crudely devised carto-

A MAP TO SHOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAN FRANCISCO & VIRGINIA CITY (plus a few other things of general interest to Ziggaggers!)



"REMEMBER THE CHARLATANS"

graphical effort), but for the last few years had enjoyed some sort of gold rush revival as a tourist haunt for Americans with cameras, and interested in history. You can go and explore shafts from which thousands of dollars worth of silver was mined, you can buy two fingers of rye in the Bucket of Blood Saloon, you can visit the old Opera House with the Spring floor which permitted drunken miners to cavort in unabandoned joy, or, if you'd been around in the summer of 1965, you could've spent the evening in the Red Dog Saloon, getting loaded on whatever whisky enjoying the fine music of the Charlatans.

The manager of the place wanted a group, preferably The Byrds, to entertain the customers, and sent one of his barmen, Chandler ("call me Chan") Laughlin to San Francisco to try and negotiate some deal. To get the Byrds, then riding on the very crest of international popularity with 'Mr. Tambourine Man', was obviously out of the question - but maybe Chan was a little green. Anyway, as chance would have it, he happened to bump into Richard Olsen and Mike Wilhelm, lounging around North Beach, which was very uncommon in those days, he asked them if they were the Byrds!

Our swaggering heroes explained to Chan who and what they were, and took him to see George, who was spending the evening with Kelly and some other artist friends. A day or so later, Chan returned to Nevada with his mind blown, having booked (tentatively, it transpired) the Charlatans for a period beginning on the 21st of that very month.

To herald their arrival, their manager at the time (Phil Hammond... who wasn't around for too long) put a large announcement in the Reno Orbit, the local newspaper: "LANDING LIKE 5 RADIANT SPARKS IN A FLASH."

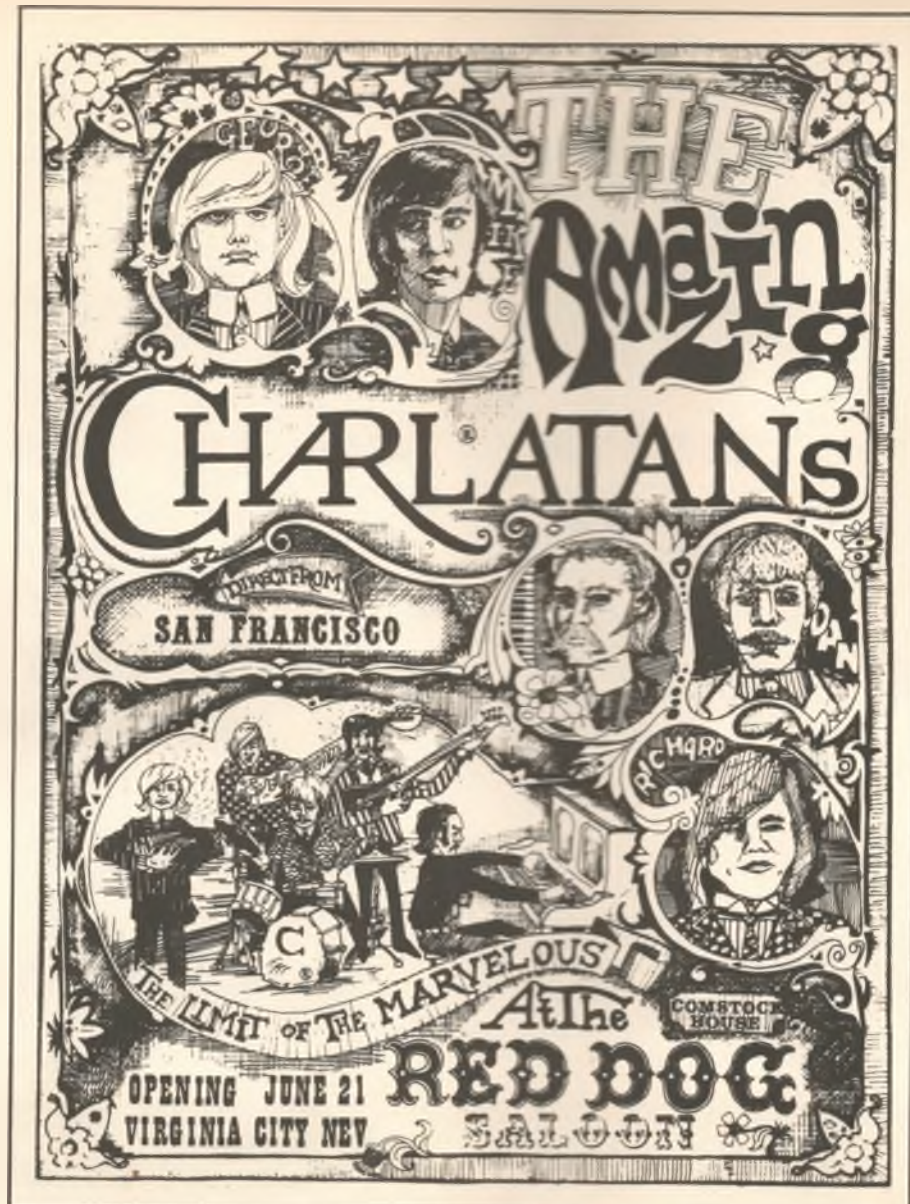
THE CHARLATANS HAVE ARRIVED Superior musical craftsmen and rhythm technicians, the Charlatans excel all others as performers of classic rock'n'roll for all time! A modest summary of their talents! Apart from this, and the word of mouth publicity, this was the only announcement which marked their debut - except a poster designed by Michael Ferguson, which is generally regarded as being

the first ever psychedelic rock poster (shown right). Ferguson's style tended to ramble into a great deal of concentrated anarchy, so Hunter added the finishing touches, to tie up all of the loose ends, as it were, and to make the point of the advertisement a little more direct.

Don't ask: "We found a pretty hip scene there when we arrived; most of the people were heads and everybody seemed to know how to enjoy themselves and have a really good time." George and Michael helped to decorate the place with paintings and things, and they got these carpenters in to put up a stage at the end of the room (which was subsequently enlarged, by bashing out 3 walls, to hold all the people that kept turning up - and turning on). We were the only live music there was in the whole town in the evenings, and we used to pull in a lot of heads and college people from Reno, but some of the local people used to resent us because we had long hair at a time when it just wasn't done... they used to yell at us from cars and that sort of thing, and they wanted to close the place down from the time we opened there."

Richard: "When we first got there, all the local people really fished on us... we were on a sort of western/old timey trip and they thought we were furthering the authenticity of the place and would attract even more tourist trade, but as time passed, they realised where we were really at and began to hate us. You see, we were acting as a magnet to the whole of the emerging hippie scene which was just beginning to flourish up and down the coast - and longhairs began coming in not only from Reno and San Francisco, but even from as far away as Los Angeles and Seattle and Portland. The place was swarming with heads, because this was months before the Family Dog or Avalon scenes and it was one of the few places you could go to hear turned-on music."

When they arrived they found that they hadn't in fact been formally hired, and were submitted to a most peculiar audition. "They sprang this on us out of the blue and it was our very first public appearance, even though it was only in front of about 25 people. We'd only just got there and we were a bit paranoid... Wilhelm didn't even have a guitar and had to borrow a Japanese electric one from some guy, and George was very uptight on account of his having never sung in public before. Anyway, we did the audition on acid! It was really far out, believe me... we were so zonked that we weren't even playing together. Wilhelm had taken it first and was the first to feel the effects - he just sat



down on the stage and started looking around him; then I started to come on and we were just sprawling about and playing each other's instruments, just collapsing with laughter - you'd have to have seen it to believe it. Everybody dug it though, and we were hired!"

"There was great rivalry between the Red Dog and the Bucket of Blood," Richard continued, "and it could've been a little weird because everybody had guns out there. I mean, we had guns too... we used to pile into a car, about 6 of us, and take rifles and 45s a mile or so up the road and have a bit of target

practice or whatever... just shoot them off. Nobody really minded, not even the sheriff, because it was all part of the Virginia City trip... like we all used to walk down the street wearing holsters with loaded guns!"

The police, it appears, were the last people they had to worry about; there was only a handful and anyway, they used to go and see the group playing every night... they were big mates.

Richard: "I remember that one day we heard that some detectives were coming up from Reno to investigate all this hippie influx that was threatening the town... but the sheriff, who was on our side, just told us to shoot them in the leg if they tried to hassle us without search warrants and things. So there were these two guys, barmen, totally zonked out, standing there guarding the door with rifles in case these guys showed up." Fortunately, they didn't arrive - or else they may have had their heads blown off by a pair of very stoned lunatics!

The Charlatans got \$100 dollars a week each, plus bed and board, to play 4 or 5 sets a night, 6 nights a week, and the place was packed solid, wall to wall... even the Governor of Nevada got to hear about it and came to spend an evening there. Despite the crowds, however, the Red Dog was losing money - since there was no entry fee, the only form of income was on whiskey & beer sales, and the profit margin on these items was hardly going to support all the expenses. Richard: "Maybe if they'd charged for entry or had a bit of gambling like all the other places they'd have struck it rich, but as it was, our salaries began to drop and people started to get a bit paranoid about the drug scene there."

Dan: "The guy who owned the place had put his son in to run it, and he was like a young guy, around 22... and he had hired all longhair people - the cooks, the barmen, plumbers and carpenters, and us. Well, one day, this cat's father came to town to see exactly what was going down and why the place was running at such a loss, and he found that everybody was just having one huge party at his expense; like every night we used to sit at this great long table and eat a seven course meal - and we used to go to the bar and get whatever drinks we wanted... it was really cool for us... a great place to be."

The owner, naturally enough, wasn't too pleased and to make matters worse, his visit coincided with Mike Wilhelm & Chan getting busted coming back from San Francisco after a supplies-run. (Holed up in the hills like outlaws, they were forced to make forays to nearby towns for the essentials of life).

Richard: "They stopped off in a little redneck town to get some gas and check a leaky radiator, and a couple of cops over the street got suspicious about 'these longhaired boys' and came over to take a closer look. They happened to notice a vial of pills tucked into Wilhelm's belt... then they found a couple of guns, and finally found some dope - not just one joint, but about a pound of it, because Chan and Wilhelm had been to town to score for the band, you know, for use over a period until the next run was made."

"Once the press got hold of the story, it was all over - you know how uptight people get, especially 'upright citizens', and how they react to drug stories. And it was much worse then because it was very unusual."

Dan: "After that, the residents and establishment people had an excuse to hassle us all the time; food inspectors would keep showing up in the kitchen, and police would come in and search people, and as well as that, the longhaired people sometimes caused the hassles - like messing around with the farmers' daughters, so to speak, and being too open with dope and things. It got to the point where it was plainly obvious that it was all over. There could be no more of the same atmosphere, and all we could do was pile into our cars and head back to San Francisco - which is just what we did."

Richard: "On the night we were leaving, who should arrive but Ken Kesey with his busload of followers. They'd come up to take a look at what was going on - so that was another acid night for all of us! Some of those cats had been up on acid for 16 days and their eyes were right out here, you know... and Neal Cassady was there, driving the bus... it was just so very bizarre, this crazy painted bus and all these crazy people. And I drove all the way back to San Francisco that night, pulling a big trailer behind the car... just roaring along the highway!"

Those few weeks out in Virginia City were, they reckon, the high spot in the Charlatans' career. After that,

it was a slow (and sometimes not so slow) downhill trip. "There were good times, sure, like the Avalon scene, which had its moments, but it was far more fun playing to a smaller, dancing crowd which was leaping around right in front of you, drinking and having a good time... when it gets all formal, like at concerts with the people jammed into rows of seats... well, you know."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

While they were out in Nevada, news of what a knockout band these Charlatans were, was ripping through San Francisco, where any kind of scene was still only at planning stage (the Airplane was just getting going, for instance). Tom Donahue, an open-eyed radio disc jockey who also owned Autumn Records, which had The Beau Brummels signed up (he's now manager of Stoneground), was rather anxious to see if they were amazing enough to grace his label and, in August, he got them into town to cut a few demo tapes for him, under the direction of Sly Stone, who was his staff producer.

Richard: "We finished our last set at about 2 in the morning, bundled ourselves into the 4 a.m. train, into a car at the other end, and into Donahue's studio as the sun was coming up. We were so wiped out it was ridiculous - and then we found out that he wanted us to record songs that he'd chosen - so we told him to get lost and we cut some of our own repertoire."

Donahue didn't like the results and consequently didn't feel like signing them up, but there are copies of the tape around (I got a copy of Andrew Lauder - thanks mate, I don't know what I'd do without ya) and the songs they did, albeit rough & ready, are often fabulous - even a bit of Byrdian 12 string jangle. They are: Baby won't you tell me / The Blues ain't nothing I know! / Jack o' diamonds. (For out!).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Virginia City whoop-up, as well as being the most enjoyable era of their lives, was musically excellent too. The songs were folk rock / cowboy / ragtimey and were basically traditional (stuff like 'Alabama Bound' '32-20 Blues' plus standards like 'Sweet Sue'), with a few Hicks originals thrown in for good measure (like "How can I miss you when you won't go away - I keep telling you, day after day"). As Hicks says, "if you asked an ardent Charlatans fan

what it was like, he'd have told you it was really great, I'm sure. I mean, the band was never really consistent - sometimes we were downright bad - but we were usually pretty good, though I think that the musical peak came about a year later when we had a residency in this, ahem, topless club. We were really tight then... sounded real good."

As it happened their first single was to be a contemporary song... written by Buffy St Marie and recorded on her first Vanguard album in 1964, 'Codine' (and which several Frisco bands, notably Quicksilver Messenger Service, recorded subsequently).

During the Autumn of 1965 the Charlatans had become a big deal and stood way ahead of any other Bay Area band in terms of reputation and prestige, and consequently there was interest shown by various record companies. They'd have done better, in the circumstances, to hold on until the 'San Francisco Sound' thing was in full swing, but it's easy to say that now. 7 years later; back then a recording contract was a recording contract and not to be sniffed at - even though they were a bunch of self-confessed bigheads who acted as if they were already super stars... then thought they had it in the bag.

Along came Erik Jacobsen of Sweet Reliable Productions, who had connections at Kama Sutra Records and who had done a magnificent job of bringing the Lovin' Spoonful to the nation the previous summer. He seemed to be the ace cat as far as good time music was concerned, so a deal was negotiated and closed. The Charlatans had signed themselves away for nothing... no advance and only a mediocre percentage deal. Soon enough, they found what a mistake it was.

They cut 9 tracks with Jacobsen: 'Codine' / '32-20 Blues' / I saw her / The Shadow Knows / Along come a viper / By hook or by crook / Alabama Bound / Side track / I'd rather be the devil (the last two featuring Stoneground Lynne Hughes who worked as a barmaid / folksinger at the Red Dog and used to sit in with the band). I've got a tape of that too - thank you to Andrew.

"There was quite a communication gap" says Dan. "The record company was in New York, and we were 3000 miles away in San Francisco. At the time, it was a bad situation, but throughout most

of the Charlatans' career, George Hunter, as well as playing tambourine and aural harp and singing a bit, was our manager too... he was like the key personality and hustler, and he got the record deal together without really being too aware of all the implications."

"The idea was to release a single of 'Codine' (with Wilhelm singing) backed by '32-20', but somehow the record company got the idea that it was too dope oriented and stuff like that, and they suddenly decided to put out 'The Shadow Knows' instead - on the Kapp label, which was like a Buddah / Kama Sutra minor subsidiary."

'The Shadow Knows', an old Masters song, was cut merely as a filler because it was Ferguson's vocal number, but the group was never behind its release - and neither was the record company, it seems, because there was an abysmal lack of promotion or distribution.

George had designed an ad to promote 'Codine' but that, as well as totally freaking Kama Sutra because of the mention of "drugs", turned out to be a complete waste of time and effort.

"They had just turned chicken and then went out of their way to avoid any further contact with us... we could never get them on the phone."

The whole episode was the most monstrous piece of illogical stupidity anyone, because the song was condemning drugs - not advocating their use!

Dan: "A couple of years ago, when I was without a record deal, I went to Buddah / Kama Sutra and they were still interested in releasing their album... in fact they'd gone as far as having the sleeve artwork designed, and it looked as though it would come out - but they were having a lot of trouble finding out who had rights to all the stuff. The guy there, Neil Bogart, was really jazzed, he was working hard to get it out... but it never came."

"On actual fact, the album has a lot of flavour and atmosphere, but it was only recorded on a 3 track, and it's not too wonderful technically."

Richard goes further and says that only 3 tracks ('Codine' / The Shadow Knows / '32-20') were completed, and that all the rest were overdubs. For this reason, he feels it'll never come out on Kama Sutra (besides which he holds the master tapes and claims that no legal contracts exist).

**Remedy
for a
Drugged
Market.**



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In September 1967, during a bleak, gigless period, Michael Ferguson dropped out and took a job at the post office. "Some weeks later we landed ourselves a gig and he showed up on the evening to rejoin the band" says Dan. "We had to tell him that we'd got another

guy in to play piano, and he took the hint and left. I'd brought in an Irish fellow from LA that I knew, Patrick Rogerty, to play piano and also, at this point, I told the other guys that I wanted to play rhythm guitar. I didn't want to be the lead singer of the star or anything, but I wanted to get out from behind the drums... so I got



in Terry Wilson to drum. He'd been in a group called The Orkustra with David LaFlamme and Jaime Leopold" (see later).

Well, they struggled on, getting the odd gig here and there, but though everything was happening around them, nothing was happening to them and they just had to sit and watch as many other San Fran bands got signed up for vast amounts of bread.

By June 1968, The Charlatans had fallen apart or the seams. Dan Hicks had decided to leave (we'll return to him shortly), the mad Irish Patrick had already gone, and George Hunter was seemingly eased out by a strange plot which involved everyone else saying "OK... that's the end... The Charlatans are no more." It was a very drunken evening.

Once that was settled, they immediately re-formed - 3 of them did at least: Wilhelm, Olsen and Wilson... and they got in a keyboard player called Darryl de Vore to complete the "new" band. Richard Olsen was determined to have one last fling and so, having secured a release from their Kama Sutra contract, had arranged a deal with Philips Records. The "magical thing", as Olsen calls it, had long been dissipated but before the name of the group finally submerged into oblivion they set about recording - though, in retrospect, they consider it may have been a mistake, and that they should've let the band die and be buried with glory on Boot Hill. So that the lovely charismatic memories were there as a tombstone rather than the mediocre

album they produced (released here on Philips in 1969).

Richard: "Darryl was more into avant garde music, where's Wilhelm & I were trying to cling to the last vestiges of our original trip - and when Terry Wilson was there on drums, we could do it, because he thought along our lines too. But after we'd done the backing tracks, Terry was busted and was in jail while the 3 of us finished the album. We were feeling very miserable - it was hardly the atmosphere for making an album, & we spent a long time over-dubbing the basic tracks - we thought 'what the hell?' and just kept changing things until we'd run up a studio bill of 29 thousand dollars. There are a couple of things on the album that aren't bad, but... well, I don't like it."

"We only did one gig after that, using a friend of Darryl's on drums, at the Fillmore, but that was so very embarrassing that I decided it was definitely all over for the Charlatans, and we packed it all in in June 1969."

Richard became studio manager at Pacific High Recorders (but that is another story altogether) and Mike Wilhelm, after a brief run with a Frisco band called Loose Gravel, is now back folksinging around the clubs and coffee houses. Recently, they re-united when Mike cut an excellent album with Pink and Jimmy, and hopefully (if Richard can fix up a deal) we'll be able to hear it soon.

At which point, we return our attention to the strange saga of

DAN HICKS & HIS HOT LICKS

"I used the name Dan Hicks & his Hot Licks for the first time at the Avalon Ballroom in March 1968 (Pete: in fact, I think it may have been earlier than that, from January 26-28th 1968, when the Charlatans were second on the bill to Country Joe & the Fish), and because I was in 2 bands at once, I was on the stage about two thirds of the time. At that time, Bill Douglas was on bass and David LaFlamme on violin".

"I kept up both activities for a time, with the other guys in the Charlatans on at me to stop messing around on the side like that, but a few months later I made the decision to quit the Charlatans and to keep on with the Hot Licks, who by this time were doing quite well. I'd increased the line-up by introducing a couple of girls, and I was projecting all my ideas into the group, and as far as I was concerned, that was it; the Charlatans could keep my share of the amps and equipment, and I turned in my bowtie and chequered vest". This magnanimous gesture wasn't as grandiose and big-hearted as it sounds; the Charlatans' equipment was not only pretty knackered by then, it was also pretty puny by today's standards.

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So, by now, Dan Hicks & his Hot Licks (La Flamme, Douglas, Patti Urban and Misty Douglas) were off and rolling, with their eyes open for gigs and a record deal. The unusual drummerless line-up "sort of evolved" from his folk preferences, and he wanted the girls to be more inventive than just be a background "oooh wah dooby doo" sort of thing; as well as that, he wanted the softness of acoustic music... a nice mellow strum, tinted up with the fat plucked tones of a double bass and a campfire gypsy violin. A lot of interviewers ask him how he came to choose this style of music, but he's unable to enlighten them because it wasn't really chosen... it just grew and happened as a result of listening to music all his life, playing this and that, messing around with ideas and all that sort of intangible stuff.

Personally, I can't put my finger on the style. It's like a cross between the Andrews Sisters, the Jim Kweskin Jug Band of 1965, the sort of thing you might hear on 'Night Ride', with a dash of small combo jazz feel added, a pinch of ragtime thrown in, plus a few other things. (How about that for a vague piece of tripe?) My knowledge of the guitar is fairly rudimentary, but it seems there are a lot of jazz types chords in there: rather than the usual pop patterns of C Am F G7 etc, there's more use of C minor 9th diminished and strange chords like that, which I could never get my fingers around if I practised for three years.

Hicks goes along with this, but he maintains that he fakes as much as he plays (modest fellow) and leaves his current

lead guitarist, John Ginton, to flash his fiery fingers round the fretboard and put in all the twiddly bits.

But we've jumped the gun - I've lost the chronological thread. Time for a row of asterisks, I think.

** ** *

During the early months, La Flamme wasn't a dedicated Hot Licker; he was too busy sniffing around, seeking out people to help him get it's A Beautiful Day off the ground, and he eventually left, followed by Mr and Mrs Douglas and Patti Urban. In fact, all that remained of Dan Hicks & his Hot Licks was Dan Hicks.

By this time, however, an old friend called Jaime Leopold had emerged from a period behind the bars of the state penitentiary for being apprehended for trying to make an honest dollar selling marijuana... at least, that's what the papers said. They obviously got the wrong end of the stick because, as Dan will tell you (with tears welling in his eyes), Jaime had merely been on a trip to Poughkeepsie to see his grandmother, who had called her devoted grand-son to her bedside... he remained with her until the very end (I'm crying myself now).

Anyway, on his return, he turned up at 'The Bret Harte', Dan's Sausalito riverboat home, and found Dan busily rehearsing with a guitar man called Jon Weber. To complete the group, Dan came across an ace violinist called Sid Page, and then advertised for a couple of girl singers.

He auditioned the 30 odd applicants and from them selected Tina Gancher and Sherry Snow, who stayed with him for a while - at least until they'd recorded a first album, 'Original Recordings', which Epic finally released in August 1969 (but never, in their infinite ignorance, got around to releasing over here).

The album was a result of Dan's own hustling ability. He had no manager and merely went round various companies touting himself and the band, but before he approached Epic, they came to him. "They were pretty zonked on us and they seemed to be genuine and sincere... and they assigned Bob Johnson to produce the album, which he did in about one week".

I don't know many musicians who have a good word for Bob Johnston, and Dan Hicks, it would seem, has no words for him at all... his face just smiled as if to say "maybe it'd be better if we didn't go into details".

When pressured by the Frame/McKnight flick-knife technique, he conceded that "Johnston's involvement was shallow... he's a sort of jet set hillbilly who flew in for the job and just sat there. He took the tapes back to Nashville and made a pretty sloppy mix, leaving in all the bits that we wanted out - so I told him, over the phone, that it had to be re-mixed and that I wanted to be present. We made a date to do the re-mix, but on the morning he was supposed to arrive, his secretary phoned to say that he wouldn't be able to make it after all - so I did the mix with Jon Weber and the studio engineer. In

the studio, it sounded pretty good and full, but when the record finally came out I didn't like the sound at all. I don't know... maybe it's a good thing that it wasn't released here because although I like the tunes, I think the performance and the production could've been greatly improved on".

About a year later, the group returned to the studio to cut another album for the same label, but the buzz was right off them and they couldn't get anything recorded to their satisfaction. Then, despite the 25 thousand dollar advance and the pretty low sales figures for 'Original Recordings' (around 5000), Epic released them without any argument.

One last thing before we leave that album (which is still around the import shops if you've got the bread); the rather nice sleeve was the handiwork of George (the very same ex-Charlatan) Hunter, who had formed an advertising/art studio called Globe Propaganda (he'd also done Quick-silver's 'Happy Trails' sleeve among a few others). The front shows Dan with his dog Fetch, and the whole group is shown lounging around in Hunter's living room on the back. There you go.

** ** *

During the eleven months it took Epic to release that first album, the band went through a particularly rough patch which saw the departure of both Tina Gancher and Sherry Snow, followed by the strange disappearance of Jon Weber who mysteriously failed to return from a vacation.

Dan, after wondering whether it'd be a better idea to give up this group lark and become a solo folksinger again, decided to give it another whirl and once more went through the chick singer audition trip. He came up with Nicole Dukes and Maryann Price, but having rehearsed this line-up, was once again saddled with a problem when Nicole found she couldn't reconcile life on the road with her wish to be close to her latest flame... she left.

What to do? Nothing for it except to go through the audition thing yet again. By now he was something of an expert in these matters. How exactly, I wondered, did he conduct these auditions... was it a case of troubling the young lady to disrobe entirely (to check out the physical suitability, you understand) and then asking her to sing a few bars of 'White Christmas'?

"Not exactly. What I did was to have advertisements broadcast on KSAN and KMPX radio stations in San Francisco and get the girls to phone up first. By this time, I'd had enough of interviewing girls every fifteen minutes, so I narrowed the field down on the phone; what I was after was professional singers, not stage struck girls who could hum along to the radio and thought they could make it. So, after I'd screened them, I invited them over and checked them out visually. That is fairly important - like I had girls who said things like 'I've got a full-bodied voice and a full body to match', but they usually turned out to be built like lumberjacks, so my fantasies sometimes didn't work out too well. Once I'd got to that stage, I'd tape them singing - maybe teach them one of my songs and get them to sing harmony... I found that taping them was the best way to see how good they were,

FREDDIE KING

"A record with not one bad cut on it."

"...He is truly one of the greatest"

"...It's so damn fresh...so exciting to listen to"

"There is no way not to love this album."

TEXAS CANNONBALL



but I also had to consider the fact that doing auditions like that can be a pretty cold experience, especially if you're a little shy."

Anyway, he managed to sift through another 325,000 applicants and find Naomi Eisenberg, who had been with a SanFran band called Dancing Food & Entertainment, and having found her, he had exactly what he wanted in terms of two versatile/good quality/able voices to complement his own vocals. "Right now I think I've got the 2 best girls I could possibly find".

So, having re-assembled the Hot Licks to his satisfaction, he once more set about finding a record deal and in Autumn 1970 Blue Thumb took a chance and signed them up. A live album, 'Where's the money?', recorded at the Los Angeles Troubadour in early 1971 was the first release - but since Blue Thumb had no European outlet at that time, we were once again denied the chance of hearing this amazing grist (unless we forked out to the import scalpers).

Despite Blue Thumb's somewhat dubious reputation (ask Dave Mason or Captain Beefheart how they feel about Blue Thumb), Dan and his manager Steve Pillster (a good cat and true) feel that they're getting a good deal. Not only that, but Tommy Li Puma, their current producer, is burning the candle at both ends to do the band justice, making constructive criticism, providing a relaxed studio atmosphere and taking great pains with the mix.

Thanks to Island Records' recent deal with Blue Thumb, 'Striking it rich', the third Hicks album is now available in Britain (and 'Where's the money?' will be available soon, they hope) and should be sampled by connoisseurs of inventive and tasty music. As well as the people already mentioned, it features the relatively recent acquisition, John Gorton, of whom we spoke earlier.

** ** *

With any luck, it won't be long before the ensemble arrives in England, together with that South Sea island back-drop that they cart around, to do a few gigs; various enthusiastic people are trying to piece a tour together and as soon as it's financially feasible, we'll see them. (Hustle your local promoters, folks).

Having had the pleasure of seeing the seedier parts of London and experiencing the unique thrill of riding on the tube, Dan flew back to the New World to get on with his tours and tv shows and fourth album, not to mention a Carnegie Hall concert. His reputation is growing very slowly but very surely; at the moment, says his manager, "he's a quiet national sensation".

Pete/Connor McKnight

References:

You can find articles on The Charlatans in Rolling Stone 52, and on Dan Hicks in Rolling Stone 82, and to get the whole thing into perspective you could check out Ralph Gleason's 'The Jefferson Airplane & the San Francisco Sound'.

Albums:

The Charlatans... Philips SBL 7903 (Not particularly good, but you might be able to pick it up for a reasonable price because it's now deleted).

Dan Hicks & his Hot Licks: Original Recordings... Epic BN 26464 (Import only)

Where's the money?... Blue Thumb BTS (Import only, but out here soon) 29 Striking it rich... Island ILPS 9204.

page eighteen



Maryann Price/Dan Hicks/Sid Page/Naomi Eisenberg/Jaime Leopold/John Gorton



The man himself: Dan Hicks

Long John Silver is out to get you!

RCA Records and Tapes

New from Jefferson Airplane



Well, Quicksilver finally blew it for good. It's now very doubtful that we'll ever get to see them over here; by cancelling their tour at the last minute, they caused a lot of people to lose bread - and no sane promoter is ever going to take the risk on them again.

The agency handling the tour had to send out letters of apology to promoters after they were informed, without any reasons being given, that Quicksilver would not be coming after all. It was the second time they'd pulled out at the last minute and left John Sherry Enterprises in the mire... and they'd done it to other agencies too. "One can only assume that they just don't want to come over here" says the agency man "...but the whole thing is beyond a joke; we'll never do any dealings with them again". So, the group has cut its throat... and with a solid tour at £400 - £600 a gig too.

Not that we missed all that much because of their cancellation... in fact they probably did us a service if their recent albums are anything to go by. Once upon a time, Quicksilver had an aura second only to Love and, like Love, any information was lacking... and this heightened their mystique; whenever San Francisco rock was discus-

THE END OF THE LINE FOR

QUICKSILVER
MESSANGER SERVICE

sed, their name was inevitably mentioned with glowing reverence, but interviews were rare and empty and publicity was negligible. When Dino Valente arrived on the scene, however, and proceeded to do a Swarbrick on them, their loyal supporters began to lose their once rampant enthusiasm.

Limp reasons for the cancellation (Dan Hicks thinks their bass player quit a week before they were due to leave and they couldn't get a replacement in time... and others think it was just their inability to pull themselves together (I won't go into details)) hardly explain the apparent lack of sincerity and warmth, or the inconsistency between their image and reality. If Valente is the sincere geezer I hope he is (from songs like 'What about me?'), I'd dearly love to know why he doesn't show a little

more consideration for what's left of his audience... maybe he's too busy making sure that his name appears in increasingly larger print on each album sleeve. I mean, the EMI press office took a great deal of time and effort to try and fix up a telephone interview for me - but they weren't even given the courtesy of a reply to their telex messages and letters. Well, balls to them if they want to shut themselves away like hermits and crank out duller and duller albums - that's up to them... but it's sad to see a once great band disintegrating like that. For most people they crumbled irreparably in 1969 and they're just about dead now, or at least they're in their wheel chair, hurtling downhill fast, with little hope of reclaiming their old glorious reputation.

They took a long time to

develop and were about the last big San Fran band to sign a recording contract - and then, within a year, they had peaked. When Gary Duncan left at the end of 1968, they might as well have called it quits, and blown apart as champions; then we could go around saying "my god, just think how good Quicksilver would have been if they had stayed together... they were magnificent" instead of the usual "oh my god, why don't they kick Valente out and go back to 'Happy Trails' type stuff?"

When I was able to get to the Fillmore (courtesy of Brinsley Schwarz Airways) I happened to see Gary Duncan hanging around back stage, as I was trying to find Van Morrison's dressing room. "Hey mate", I called to him, "there are 50 million people in England waiting for you lot to come over" - but if he heard me he didn't respond; too busy looking for crumpet, I should imagine.

So, what a drag. They're not coming - either to confirm or confound our preconceptions. But does anybody really care? Pete

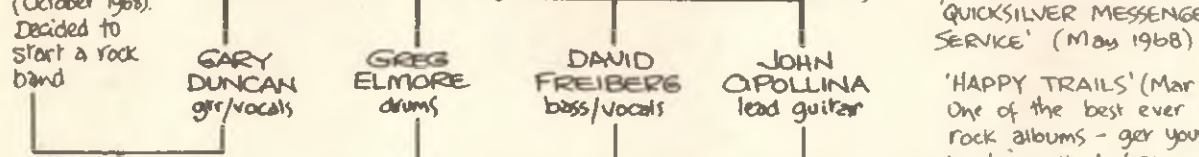
PS. The only reason I wrote all this stuff is that I spent a good few days preparing the family tree you'll find over the page. I was going to tie it in to an interview... but I don't want to throw it away.

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QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #1 Late 1965 to Spring 1966
Started out playing clubs and coffee houses in North Beach area of San Francisco. The original group was to have included Dino Valente, but he got busted and they got going in his absence. Quicksilver seems to be about the least documented of the San Francisco groups, but for fuller information see Zigzag #12, and "Supernazzy Vol 1" #1.



QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #2
March 66 - Jan 1969. One of the last SF bands to sign with a label, they signed with Capitol in 1968 - for an unprecedented advance and royalty deal. Very big concert draw during those spreading-SF-sound years. Albums: 2 tracks on the "REVOLUTION" sound track album (deleted) 'QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE' (May 1968) 'HAPPY TRAILS' (Mar 69) One of the best ever rock albums - get your hands on it before the feds delete it!

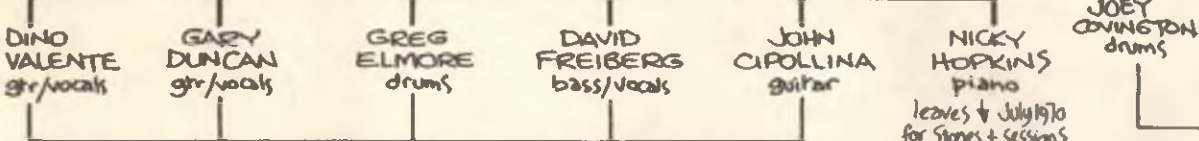


The OUTLAWS
In Jan 69, the two of them went to New York to look for a boss player, a drummer & a pianist. Within 8 months, they were back in the Bay Area - still looking. They never found the personnel they wanted, and after a year without gigs or records, they both went back to Quicksilver.

QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #3
Jan 1969 - Feb 70. Album: 'SHADY GRAVE' (Nov 1969). After recording 'Happy Trails' they more or less broke up, and remained in a sort of gigless limbo. After a while, Nicky Hopkins arrived and they started work on a third album.



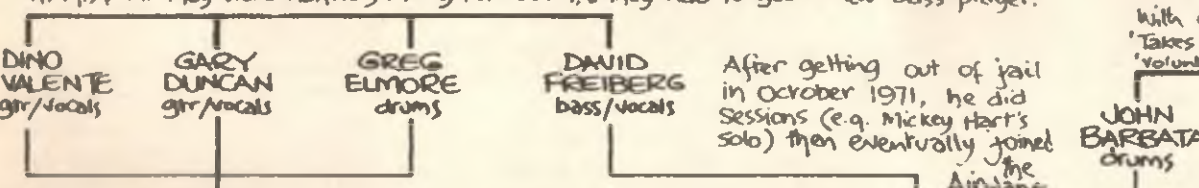
QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #4 Feb 70 to July 1970.
They get back on the road (as a sextet) and gig for a couple of months, before going to Hawaii from April to June to record their 4th and part of their 5th albums.



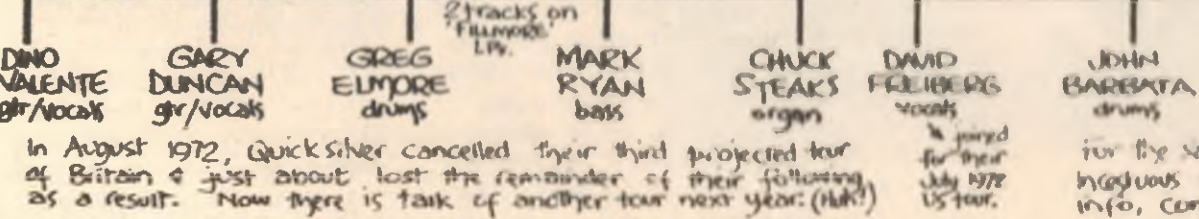
QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #5
July 1970 - Oct 1970. Album: 'WHAT ABOUT ME' (Sept 1970). Cipollina decides to pull out and its back to 4.... but information about this period is very scant.



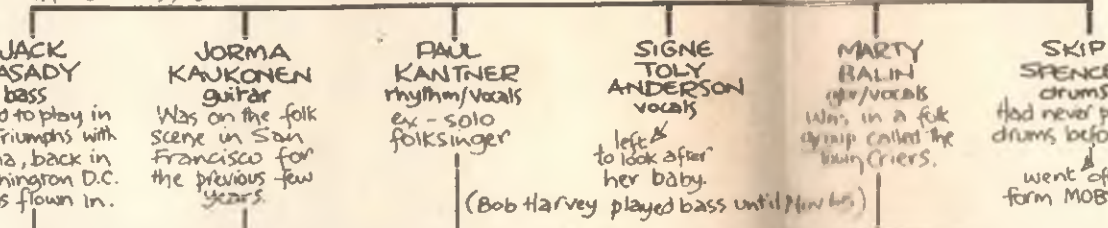
QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #6 Oct 1970 until September 71
When Freiberg was jailed for marijuana possession (his 3rd conviction), he was fined 500 dollars and put inside for 2 months. At this point they were halfway through an album, & they had to get a new bass player.



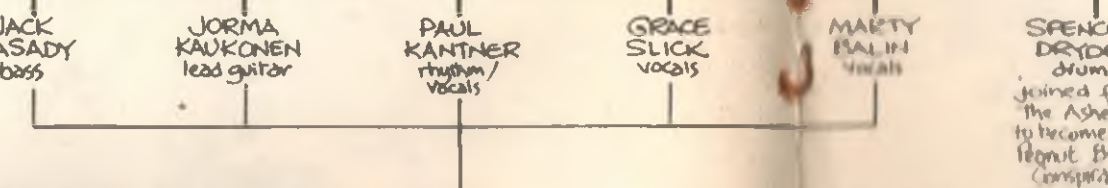
QUICKSILVER MESSENGER SERVICE #7 August 1971 until the present.
Albums: 'QUICKSILVER' (November 1971) and 'COMM THRU' (Apr 1972). By now, Quicksilver had become very unpopular with most longhairs because of Dino Valente's dominance and the subsequent loss of their acid-rock guitar sound. As a result, they got virtually no press publicity, and no one seems to know where the new guys came from (You can bet that by the time this is published, everything will have changed).



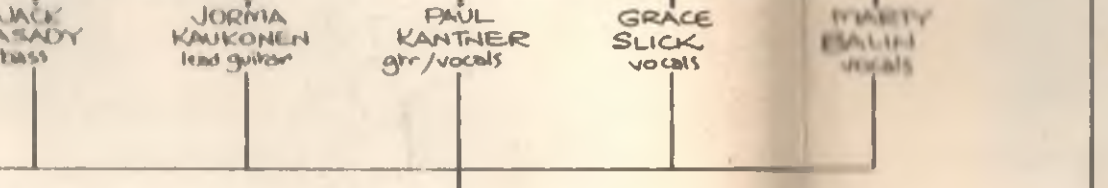
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #1 August 1965 - Sept 1966
Album: 'JEFFERSON AIRPLANE TAKES OFF' - October 1966. One of San Francisco's first groups - only the Charlatans and the Mystery Trend pre-date them. Started out playing almost acoustic folk-rock at the Maerix in SF and topped the bill at the first Family Dog dance on Oct 16th 1965. Marty (who founded the group after seeing the Beatles) & Paul tried out several people before agreeing on the following line-up:



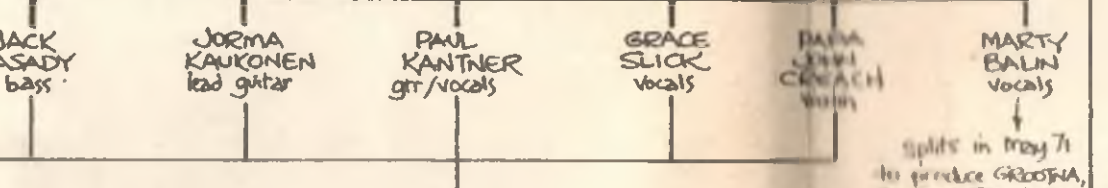
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #2 September 1966 - March 1970. Albums: 'SURREALISTIC FLOW' (3-67), 'AFTER BATHING AT BASTERS' (1-68), 'GROWN OF CREATION' (9-68), 'BLUES ITS POINTED LITTLE HEAD' (1-69), 'VOLUNTEERS' (10-69), 'THE WICEST OF JEFFERSON AIRPLANE' (11-70).
The Airplane became the first San Francisco group to make the national & international big-time, with top ten hits 'Somebody to Love' and 'White Rabbit'. They even made it to Europe in August/Sept 68 to do free concerts, a Roundhouse gig and the 1st of Wight festival. For much fuller details, see Ralph Gleason's book 'THE JEFFERSON AIRPLANE & THE SAN FRANCISCO SOUND'.



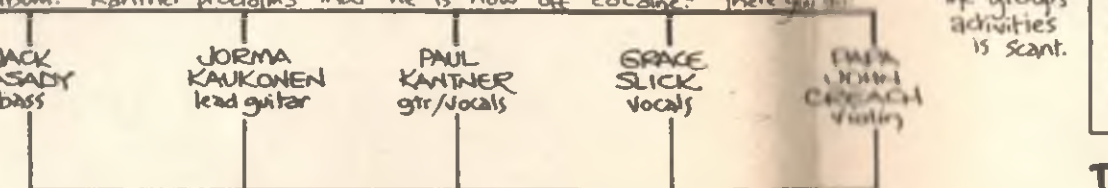
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #3 March 1970 until October 1970. No Airplane albums released.
A lazy period, during which Jack & Jorma got the first job Tina Turner together, & which saw the Airplane return to England to play the Bath festival in July 1970. Further started on his Jefferson Starship album, and Grace Slick's stomach began to swell with pride.



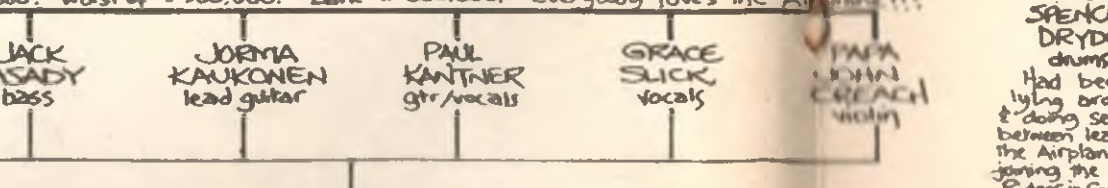
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #4 October 1970 until May 1971. Again, no Airplane LPs released.
This period saw the disengagement of Marty Balin, founder of the group, and also the famed Grace Slick car-crash (13-5-71)... not to mention the birth of China Slick. 31 might also have seen the odd drug bust - I don't know; Airplane drug-busts are too numerous to keep track of.



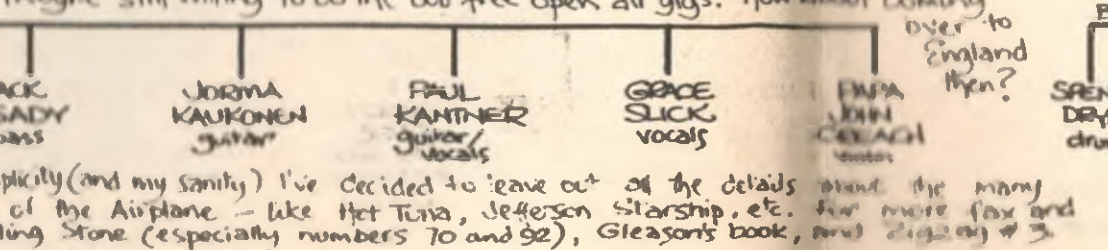
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #5 May 1971 to April 1972. Album: 'BARK' (Sept 1971).
'BARK' appeared on their new Grunt label, their own co-operative record company where the group & artists share the profits. Meanwhile, a second Kantner/Slick album is released, a solo Papa John album and a second (and third) Hot Tuna album. Kantner decides that he is now 'off cocaine'. There you go!



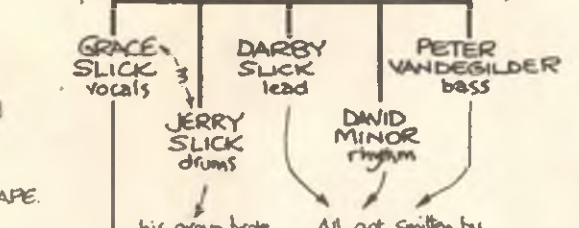
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #6 April 1972 until Sept 1972.
With Grunt Records 1 year old, it was revealed that the Airplane albums had sold as follows: 'Takes Off' - 300,000. 'Flow' - 1,300,000. 'Barkers' - 400,000. 'Grown' - 550,000. 'Volunteers' - 700,000. 'Wicest of' - 200,000. 'Bark' - 600,000. Everybody loves the Airplane!!!



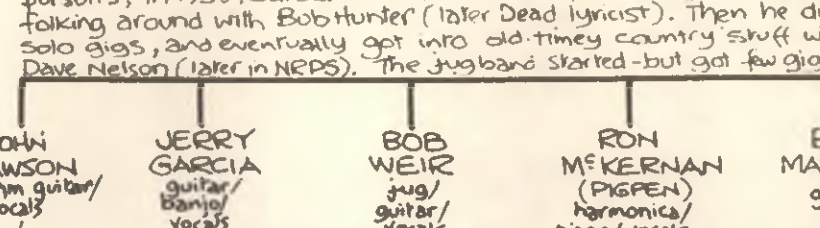
The JEFFERSON AIRPLANE #7 July 1972 until the present. Album: 'LONG JOHN SILVER' (August 1972).
The first Airplane album for a year. They claim they are, as always, literally 'on the brink of financial disaster'... we make a lot of bread and support a lot of people with it... we also spend it on pleasures. They're still willing to do the odd free open air gigs. How about coming over to England then?



The GREAT SOCIETY
August 65 - Sept 66. Albums: 'CONSCIOUS ONLY IN ITS ABSENCE' (March 66) and 'HOW IT WAS' (Sept 66).
Could have been a big group, but Columbia only released the albums after they'd split up and Grace had become famous. They split, because of differing musical directions in Sept 1966.



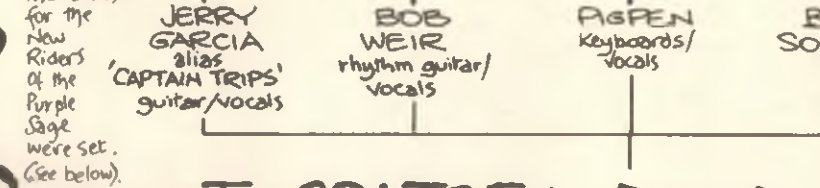
MOTHER M'CREE'S UPTOWN JUG CHAMPIONS
A Palo Alto, California jug band, 1964 - 1965.
This venture was an extension of their individual folk music pursuits; in 1959, Garcia was thrown out of the army, & started talking around with Bob Hunter (later Dead lyricist). Then he did solo gigs, and eventually got into old-time country stuff with Dave Nelson (later in NEPS). The jug band started - but got few gigs.



Much as I might strain & try to cram a polluted (pol-nedd) history of the Dead onto this small area, I can only squish in so much. For a full picture, the following are invaluable:
'THE ELECTRIC BOOL-AID ACID TEST' by Tom Wolfe, Rolling Stone 40, 100 & 101, Zigzag 13 (June/July 1970).
... quite performing & became a studio engineer... and subsequently engineered & produced much Dead music. Now boss of Alembic Studios.

The WARLOCKS
the jug band electrified (or Pigen's insistence), modified & played R&B/Rock Standards. JUNE 65 - FEB 66. they became the same until Summer 1967.

The GRATEFUL DEAD #1
Did the 6-miles-a-week-at-the-same-club some as the Warlocks until they fell in with the 'Acid Set' in Nov 1965. They supplied the music at all the acid tests (except March 66) & then, having split to Mexico & the Merry Franks' losing their axis, they moved to Owsley, the acid maker's house in WATTS, L.A., where he constructed a giant PA for them. In June 66 they moved to 710 Ashbury in the Haight area of San Francisco, & shortly thereafter they signed with Warner Bros and made their first album (on speed & pot): 'THE GRATEFUL DEAD' (March 1967).

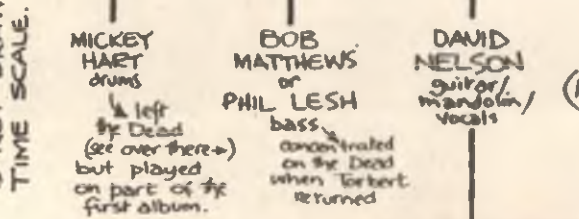


* They had a different bass player to begin with, but Lesh joined after a few gigs in July 1965.

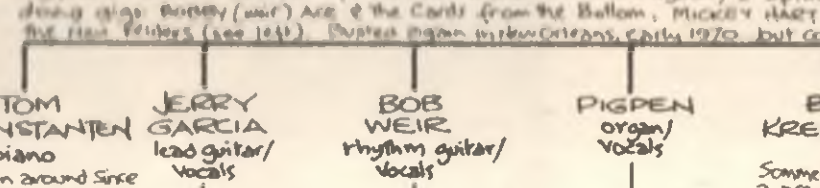
THE HIERARCHY OF SAN FRANCISCO ROCK GROUPS
incorporating the rise and rise of THE GRATEFUL DEAD & THE JEFFERSON AIRPLANE & the rise and fall of QUICKSILVER

The name of DAVE NELSON keeps cropping up on Grateful Dead sleeves too (he's on 'Anthem', 'Workingman's Dead' & 'American Beauty'). He was in a group called the WILLOW BOYS with Bob Hunter, Garcia, & Peter Albin back in 1962 & when Garcia became a 'jugger' and then a Warlock, Nelson & Albin formed Big Brother & the Holding Co. He split from that to start THE NEW DELHI RIVER BAND with Dave Torbert.

The NEW RIDERS of the PURPLE SAGE #1
Spring 1970 - Spring 1971. Bob Hunter & Dave Nelson named the band by 'numerological transportation' from their old name. Matthews started on bass, but it didn't work out & Lesh took over. There were always 5 members, but until Spring 1971, the personnel was very fluid.



The GRATEFUL DEAD #2
Summer 67 to Spring 70. Albums: 'ANTHEM OF THE SUN' (Aug 1968), 'WORKINGMAN'S DEAD' (June 1969), 'LIVE DEAD' (Jan 1970).
Shortly after getting busted in late 1970, they moved to separate dwellings scattered around Marin County & San Francisco. They did tours, took a lease on the Carondelet Hall in early 68, but that was a financial disaster until Bill Summerson turned it into a goldmine as the Fillmore West. Big mid 69, self-confessed managerial ineptitude had shored them into a 60,000 capacity den - growing as the time. Pigen & Lesh who'd moved left in late 68 are now solid again, & Spencer Dryden is also doing gigs. Bobby (and) Ace of the Cards from the Bottom, Mickey Hart & the Heartbeats & the Blue Riders (see 141). Pigen began to play again, early 1970, but coming out of that had a different era better.

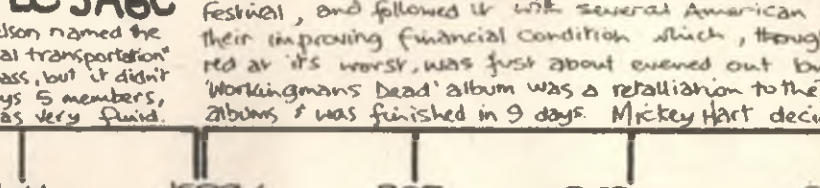


leaves to go solo & eventually makes an amazing album (10.72).

The NEW RIDERS of the PURPLE SAGE #2
Spring 1971 until November 1971. Album: 'THE NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE' (Sept 71).
The New Riders, still comparatively obscure, were touring with the Dead and doing the support or intermission spot. Dave Torbert returned from a long holiday in Hawaii to replace Lesh on bass, and Spencer Dryden came in as permanent drummer. Garcia continued to do 2 jobs (at least!).

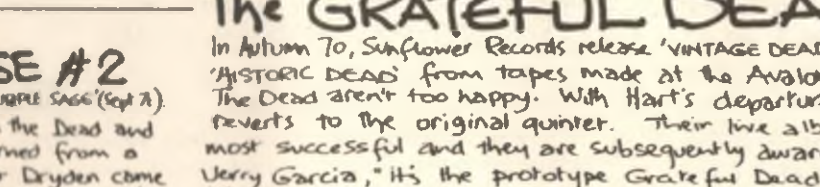


The GRATEFUL DEAD #3
Spring 70 to Nov 1970. Albums: 'WORKINGMAN'S DEAD' (July 70), 'AMERICAN BEAUTY' (November 1970).
Manager Lenny Hart was kicked out in March 70 after he'd embezzled loads of Dead beer. The band came to England in June 70 to play the Hollywood festival, and followed it with several American tours, consolidating their improving financial condition which, though 180 grand in the red at its worst, was just about evened out by the end of 1971. The 'Workingman's Dead' album was a retaliation to the complexity of their previous studio albums, & was finished in 9 days. Mickey Hart decides to leave the band to go solo.



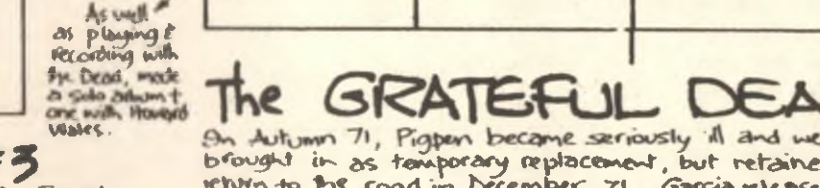
leaves to go solo & eventually makes an amazing album (10.72).

The GRATEFUL DEAD #4
Nov 1970 until Sept 1971. Album: 'HISTORIC DEAD' from tapes made at the Avalon & Matrix in 1966. The Dead aren't too happy. With Hart's departure, the line-up reverts to the original quintet. Their live album becomes their most successful and they are subsequently awarded a gold album: 'It's us man' says Jerry Garcia, 'It's the prototype Grateful Dead - basic unit. Each one of those tracks is a total picture - a good example of what the Grateful Dead really is, musically!'



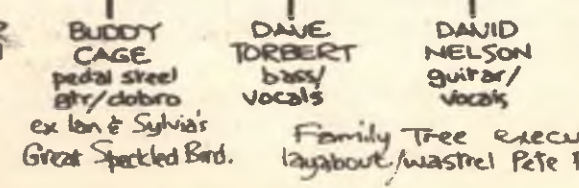
leaves to go solo & eventually makes an amazing album (10.72).

The GRATEFUL DEAD #5
Sept 1971 until present. On Autumn 71, Pigen became seriously ill and went into hospital. Keith Godchaux was brought in as temporary replacement, but retained when Pigen recovered sufficiently to return to the road in December 71. Garcia released an album with Howard Wales called 'SPOTRELL' in late 1971, and a solo album in January 72. Bob Weir released a solo album 'ACE' in July 1972. In April and May, they made their first extensive tour of Europe and recorded most concerts to edit for a 'live-in-Europe' album.

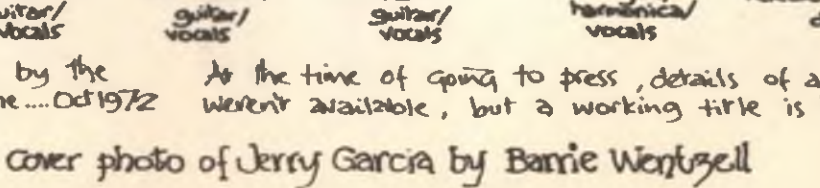


As the time of going to press, details of a new Dead album weren't available, but a working title is 'Europe on \$5000 a day.'

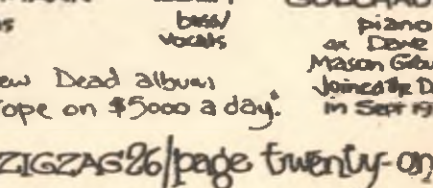
The NEW RIDERS of the PURPLE SAGE #3
November 1971 until the present. Album: 'POWERGLIDE' June 1972. Toured Europe with the Dead in April/May 72. As they grew in stature, they were able to survive separately from the Dead & therefore got in Buddy Cage to replace the straggled out Jerry Garcia.



The GRATEFUL DEAD #6
As the time of going to press, details of a new Dead album weren't available, but a working title is 'Europe on \$5000 a day.'



As the time of going to press, details of a new Dead album weren't available, but a working title is 'Europe on \$5000 a day.'



how ron watts became afflicted with a severe case of brewers droop and the steps he took to relieve himself.....



Almost as soon as we moved to Buckinghamshire around Spring 1970, I began to hear tales about Ron Watts. I never actually met or even saw the bloke, but I heard about him. By all accounts, he was a sort of modern day Falstaff - famed for pouring unprecedented quantities of ale, whisky, wine, gin or in fact anything that had any alcohol content into his ever swelling belly..... and then, once liquored into a state of partial sensibility, he'd become violently amorous and conduct himself in a somewhat indiscreet manner, usually involving at least one wench who would be tempted to accompany him to the nearest graveyard, alleyway or other suitable premises for a spot of hanky-panky.

Discussing the legend of "Randy Ron" was always an intriguing way to spend the odd hour, but as I say, I never got to see the man in the flesh, so to speak, because although he had been known to parade his lewdness in the Dark Lantern or the Derby Arms in Aylesbury, he spent most of his time a bit further south - frequenting the taverns of High Wycombe.

It was in Wycombe that I eventually came face to face with him - I'd gone down there to interview Quiver at a pub called the Nag's Head, where Ron, all 16 stone of him, used to be the promoter/compere of a rock club. His style, by normal promoters standards, was strange, to say the least; he hovered around, being careful not to tread on any unsound floorboards and only moved out of a ten foot radius of a well guarded crate of pale ale when it was time to mount the stage to announce.

Informality seemed to be his hallmark; "Get 'em off" he'd bawl out, together with a string of suggestions that might be construed as a little too indelicate to blacken these pages with. Then, almost as an afterthought, he'd introduce the band.

His activities at the Nag's Head spanned several years - in fact, his rotund form was about the only constant factor during that time, because the pub changed hands several times - and after his weekly musical evening had come to an end, he usually (weather permitting) led a large proportion of the audience to a hot dog/coffee wagon in the town centre, where festivities continued into the night.

But promoting was an uphill struggle - someone was always throwing a spanner in the works; if it wasn't the law doing one of its periodic drug purges, it was the fire officer closing the place because it had no fire escape. besides which

page twenty-two

Ron was anxious to try his own hand at performing.

Over the years, Ron had often staggered onto a stage and, as he puts it, "had a moan and a groan, a shake and a shimmy" with a passing band, but his mates were always urging him to start his own band. He decided to let this idea mellow in his brown-and-mild faced mind, but he was forced to implement the wild scheme sooner than he had anticipated.

"It was up at the Palladium seeing an Incredible String Band/Fairport Convention concert, and was in the bar having a drink during the interval. Of course, I had a few drinks and inevitably started bragging.... saying I had a band and how great it was, and one of the blokes I was with, Bob Walker, it turned out, was a drummer. Well, amidst it all, we decided that he should join me. By this time, I had the idea for the name and the presentation worked out too, so it was a case of looking around for other guys to complete the band."

The next to come along was a violinist/bassist called Malcolm Barrett, and he fitted neatly into Ron's ideas of a band that could play blues based rock, which could be infused with a touch of Cajun music - in other words, a band that could play all the kinds of music he'd spent his life enveloped in. All he needed now was a guy who could play keyboard and accordion, and a guitarist - then he'd have just what he wanted. a good solid band to back his bawdy, bawling vocals.

It so happened that just the blokes he wanted, John Mackay and Steve Darrington, who had both been in a High Wycombe band of note (Mahogany), had been hired as part of Marty Wilde's backing band - lured with promises of abundant gigs and bread to match. It was only a matter of time before they realised that Marty Wilde was not the key to the garden of Eden, and they decided to throw in their lot with Ron.

Brewer's Droop was born.

The name was appropriate; Brewer's Droop is a medical condition which stems from an excessive induction of alcohol, though most medical dictionaries seem to be unaware of the complaint and most doctors are loath to prescribe antidotes. Ron Watts is only too familiar with the



symptoms; they often threatened to put an end to his legendary accomplishments.

In January 1970, this motley collection of musicians took to the road. They had no delusions about bread; Ron, having been a promoter, was well aware of what they could expect - and so they went out for whatever pittance they could get, and played as often as possible to establish themselves. A once weekly college gig for forty or fifty quid was enough to subsidise the fivers and tenners they were getting the rest of the time; gradually their reputation grew and the money improved accordingly. to the extent that they've been able to prune their gig schedule to only three or four nights a week, instead of six or seven in the old days.

Much to some people's displeasure, the band's stage act is not without a hint of crudity, for they see no reason to let prudence or discretion interfere with their enjoyment of life. It's for this reason that Brewer's Droop has the distinction of being the only rock band to have been condemned for obscenity in Lord Longford's weighty (and totally worthless) tome on pornography.

Not only that, but prosecutions are constantly threatened; for instance, a while ago Ron was plagued by several visits from Birmingham CID who were making investigations following complaints made by an outraged witness to one of the band's performances - he'd managed to stir up a huge fuss in a local paper.

"What exactly did you say at Digbeth Civic Hall" enquired the detective, bent on protecting the ears of the innocent. Ron told him what he'd said and the copper collapsed with laughter, and almost rolled about on the floor. Having composed himself, he made it clear that the police couldn't tolerate such behaviour - which, I think, just about sums up the hypocrisy of some of the custodians of "decency" in this country. As it happened, the complainant declined to press charges, and the case was dropped, but they've been banned from ever returning to play at council halls at Bolton, Guildford, Bristol, Penzance and Ipswich. In each case some council employee, usually the hall manager or an electrician, has reported this "serious breach of common decency" and the councils have put the Droop's name on the blacklist.

Indeed, I can see why the Mary Whitehouses of this world find the act a little strong; to see this big fat Wild Bill Hickock, full of just enough alcohol to



ward off infection, wearing a t-shirt like a bell tent, introducing a song called 'I can see your pubic hair'. Or when he uses his modified kazoo (which has a big funnel stuck into the end of it) to illustrate girls he has known; "some girls are like this" he says, trying to push a drumstick into the narrow mouthpiece, "... and some are like this", whereupon he waves the drumstick around in the wide funnel end, his eyes twinkling and sparkling with glee. Or when he describes the next song as being an example of "shagging music. about a young lady who just lays on her bed and asks for more".

One of the weirdly titled epics they specialise in is 'It aint the meat, it's the motion', which, surprisingly enough, is not their own concoction. The song was originally recorded by the Swallows, an American spade R&B group, around 1950 and is one of the singles in Ron's huge collection of blues records. He's always been mad on the blues, an enthusiasm that led him to found the National Blues Federation in 1967. He was living with folk singer Ian A Anderson at the time, when he and Chris Trimming, who worked in a South London record shop, had the idea of bringing American bluesmen to England.

(Since the NBF packed it in 1969, Chris Trimming has gone on to promote reggae in Madison Square Garden, and various other enterprises - like putting on a James Brown concert in Antigua, and bribing the President to declare a James Brown Day, a national holiday, which had the effect of bringing half the population of the island to the cricket field to see Brown in action. Trimming, the only white person for miles around, watched the performance through binoculars from a distant vantage point).

All the blues enthusiasts helped them to set up - Mike Raven, Alexis Korner, Mike Ledbetter, the Vernon Brothers - and the first guy they got over here was Mississippi Fred McDowell, who turned out to be really sensational. Over the next couple of years, they brought in several guys including Arthur Crudup, Son House, Dr Ross, Johnny Shines and various others.

They'd send a ticket over, and guarantee the guy 1500 dollars for a 3 week tour. This amount was more than most of them had ever seen in their lives - and they thought it was paradise to play in front of young, enthusiastic, large, white audiences when they were doing literally one gig a month in smoky Chicago bars or else the

odd gig in a Southern beer shack - like Lightning Hopkins was doing.

"Some of them arrived with one dollar in their pocket, and they'd had to borrow a suit to come over in - we always sent the air ticket rather than the money, in case they freaked when they saw the bread and rushed out and spent it".

Fred McDowell (who died quite recently) could neither read nor write, and on one occasion Ron put him on a train with a big notice pinned to his jacket: Fred McDowell, illiterate blues singer - please deliver to Lancaster University tonight - urgent.... has enough money to cover expenses. He made the trip ok.... no problems.

It was always rewarding (spiritually I mean) to see the happiness these tours brought the singers. "Arthur Crudup got almost two thousand dollars from his tour, plus an album advance, and there were tears of joy in his eyes. 'why did I have to wait so long for this?' he was saying".

Unbelievably, Crudup, who wrote such numbers as 'My baby left me' and 'That's alright Mama', had never seen any of the royalties that should have arisen from the millions of records these songs must have sold - so Ron and Chris took up his case with the American Songwriters Guild and various other bodies and as a result his Authorship was recognised and he is now receiving his due. thousands and thousands of dollars. So the riches that he was denied for so long are finally coming his way. A story with a nice happy ending.

To revert to Brewers Droop (or Wilting Willie, as they are known locally), they have an album out soon (no doubt it will be out before this issue of Zigzag hits the streets), which will hopefully refute the old adage that too much wine dulls the senses. It was produced by Tom McGuinness, in whose attic Ron often used to doss back in "the old days when Tom was racing round the country with Manfred Mann", and generally reflects the atmosphere of a Brewers Droop gig. slightly toned down of course, in an attempt to evade the Boots/W.H. Smith censors. And RCA must take the credit not only for letting these lunatics loose in a studio, but also for giving them a very fair percentage deal.

Meanwhile, the band continues to gig with gusto. The bass player left in September (he thought they should approach their music more seriously, which would defeat the entire object of the band), and has been replaced by another Wycombian (if that's the word) called Derek Timms. He's joined them at a time when they're doing gigs in a slightly more responsible fashion. "After all" explains this Laughing Cavalier, the Bob Hite of Bucks County, "the money has gone up and we're not a support band any more. A while ago, it was just great if we fell on our faces and rolled off the stage in a drunken stupor - everybody used to say 'cor, that support band was far out - did you see that fat bloke fall off the stage?' And for £15 a night both the promoter and the audience thought it was fantastic, - because there was the main group to come on and supply the music. Now we've acknowledged our responsibility and we try to put on a good performance, both visually and musically."

I always have considerable difficulty in writing a final paragraph to any article. It should really be dramatic and pitiful and things like that, but it's 2 a.m. and n.bodily functions don't seem to be working with their customary zip. I think I may have caught Brewer's Droop - surely it can't be contagious.

Pete.

page twenty-three

TEN YEARS AGO IN GREENWICH VILLAGE: A DISJOINTED HISTORY OF THE EARLY COFFEE HOUSE FOLK SCENE

It all started on the Lower East Side, now the East Village, during the second world war. Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly and Pete Seeger were living on East 10th Street. All through the forties. Infusing the area with the heaviest folk karma. All I know about that scene is from a friend who was there then.

"What happened?" I asked.

"Woody's old lady ran off with a sailor" he said.

Then Tom Paley came to town. Tom Paley is one nifty dude. More than anyone else, perhaps, he introduced the modern acoustic guitar and banjo-picking styles to New York. Before Paley, nearly everybody except the 10th St vanguard thrashed grossly on the nylon stringed guitar. Paley brought Travis and Scruggs to the Big Apple, clear as a bell.

In 1953, Folkways Records released the Harry Smith 'Anthology of American Folk Music', and a mighty release it was too. 84 cuts of Mississippi John Hurt, the Carter Family, Charlie Poole, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Uncle Dave Macon, the Memphis Jug Band, Blind Willie Johnson, Eck Robertson, shape-note hymns, cajun music - a six record set, released just before rhythm and blues became pop. The lot of them were recorded between 1927 and 1931. The Harry Smith anthology is where I and thousands of others learned about country music, cajun music, etc.

The first city cat to really get his thing together was Luke Hapgood Faust. Luke learned to play the banjo, frailing style, from Woody Wactell, a contemporary of Paley's. The thing about Luke is that he was the first city person who sounded as if he was from the country. His singing and banjo playing were and are just about perfect. (He later became a member of The Insect Trust, who had a couple of albums which you'd do well to get hold of before they disappear).

In the summer of 1958, the Kingston Trio made folk music safe for America and the New Lost City Ramblers were formed. They (Mike Seeger, Tom Paley and John Cohen) were largely responsible for the revival of country music from the 20s and 30s. They were also about the first people to inaugurate old-timey Salvation-Army drag.

By 1959, two kinds of people were beginning to perform folk music; the dedicated lovers of traditional music ("Keep that flame! Keep that flame!"), and the newly graduated from acting school, who saw folk music performance as the easiest way of getting on a stage. The former group saw the latter as desecrating their music with their dilettantism, and the latter

group saw the former as desecrating the stage with their lack of professionalism, or something. The good old days!

The way that I started getting money for playing music was that two of my old friends had jobs at this Jewish home for girls who had been committed to a posh flip house called Hillside. The girls were able to get out of Hillside by living in this Jewish Home in Brooklyn and observing curfew, etc. I had been reading trilogies and learning to play the fiddle in an effort to ease my heart, which had recently been broken by a young lady from Queens. It was early 1960, and I was living on the Lower East Side. I picked it up pretty fast and so my friends invited me to join the group.

The social function we were to brighten was the dreaded once-a-year visit of mummies and daddies to see their wayward daughters. Boy, it sure was an uptight scene.

We were Mac Grundy's Old Timey Wool Thumpers and we played old timey music. Wool thumping is an old timey expression for sexual congress - quaint, ain't it? The girls really liked us, and everybody else there really hated us... but we were gonna get them with this real nifty routine we had worked out in the middle of this instrumental piece called 'Callas Rag'. See, it had this 3 beat pause; on the first beat I, standing in the middle, ducked down, on the second beat George Dawson knocked the corn-cob pipe out of Rob Hunter's mouth, and on the third beat I stood up again, so that we were able to resume playing on the fourth beat. We practised that bit very hard.

The big moment comes. I duck down, Dawson swings... and connects! The pipe goes flying, straight as an arrow, towards this scowling old dyke who is head of the home and hates us because we got long hair and dress funny and play this music. Bonk! The corn-cob pipe hits her smack dab in the middle of her forehead. "Gasp" go all the mummies and daddies in perfect unison. Hunter and Dawson collapse to the floor in compulsive laughter. I'm in the middle, still playing my mandolin, and kicking each of them in turn so they'll get up and help me finish. Blood trickles out of the corner of my mouth because I'm biting my tongue to keep from laughing. Well, we finished together, but they only paid us fifteen dollars instead of thirty. Whatta debut!

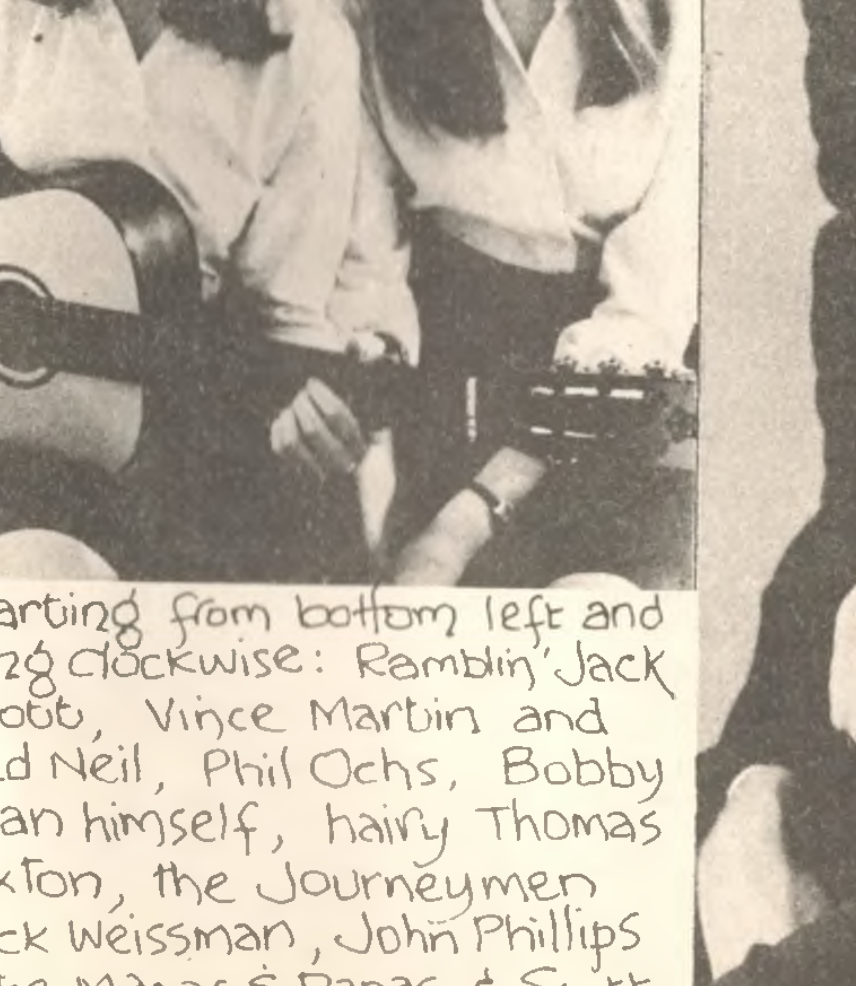
At that time, I didn't know what the Village folk scene was like apart from what happened at the Folklore Centre, because I believed the Village was full of phoneys and that the real people all lived on the Lower East Side. Dumb snobbery on my part.

Anyway, I went to California for a year and made the amazing discovery that I could play music in coffee houses and get paid for it. In late summer 1961, I got back to New York and moved to a place on MacDougal Street, across from the Cafe Wha!. Making the rounds of the folk haunts, I discovered that most of the people playing there were cruddier than me. I'd been considering myself as not a nifty enough musician to make it in New York, but hell, I was plenty nifty enough. The Beat Generation movement was on, and the scene was coffee houses - and in many of these places you weren't paid, but passed a hat to the annoyed tourists who were already put out by the bad overpriced coffee. Folk and flamenco got played, and poetry got read, but nobody who was anybody admitted to liking rock'n'roll.

The local heroes were Fred Neil, Dino Valente and Bob Dylan. Dino had this flair for the dramatic even then, and he used to get put down by the dedicated and professional folkies for changing chords and words to make old songs sound more dramatic. His changes added a lot to the emotional impact of the songs, and the crowds loved it - and he could really get you hopping up and down in your seat with his train rhythm songs. I remember, one morning, he and Karen Dalton were wailing out a high-voltage version of 'Chickens they are crowing', and at about 4 am, an annoyed neighbour came down and kicked in the glass door of the cafe. Dino was ready to kill him. So was I... I could have listened to that song all night.

The basket-passing coffee houses had no legal entertainment licences, and there was a lot of bad feeling between the old residents of Greenwich Village and the musicians who came in looking to sing and play. We musicians kept musicians' hours (noon to four in the morning) and the older straight people were resentful; they kept trying to close the cafes down and get all the Undesirables out of the Village. But we just went on making music, listening to it, avoiding dark alleys, and eating potburgers at dawn when we usually all went to someone's house after we'd done our evening's and night's work. Then we would all go up on the roof and listen to Dino as he sang and played the sun up.

It was the time of the crystal. Hallucinogens had just cracked on the scene, and I lost my atheism unexpectedly when I came face to face with the reality of God's existence. When I was straight again, God was still there, so I accepted it - I mean, fighting it is a lost cause. I well remember the first batch of acid coming into New York. The guy who had it put it onto 200 sugar cubes, then he took the sugar to the Village, from coffee house to coffee house, handing it out to everybody



Starting from bottom left and going clockwise: Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Vince Martin and Fred Neil, Phil Ochs, Bobby Dylan himself, hairy Thomas Paxton, the Journeymen (Dick Weissman, John Phillips of The Mamas & Papas, & Scott McKenzie), and Lucy and Carly Simon.

Some of the star attractions of the Greenwich Village folk scene in the early 60s.

he found performing there. The circuit took him two hours to complete, and then he went back to the first place he'd visited and made his rounds again, this time observing the results of his handiwork. It was certainly an interesting evening.

Fred Neil's haunting voice and fatal charm were elements that coloured the scene; even then, he had that incredible beauty of note-choices and purple-blue shading of tones that characterises his singing. He is one of the best singers around, and everybody wanted to be Fred in those days. Then Tim Hardin arrived in town, bringing his ghosts and his graceful, shimmering music - but he always seemed to be on the point of leaving for somewhere, even when he'd only just arrived.

The streets filled up with fifteen year old girls in peasant dresses. Richie Havens began to get noticed, starting out in the basket passing cafes, but soon proving that he could hold and sway an audience in the paying clubs. Competition to get into the few paying clubs was keen; you had to be able to hold an audience, and that meant you had to have a style and sound of your own - and Richie had that. He too re-worked old tunes, but he also had this tremendous ability to involve the audience in his songs. He is modest and genuinely friendly, seeking to share something with his audience rather than show off - and the audience senses this and in turn responds warmly.

In the summer of 61, things really began to cook. Up to that time, about the only person playing traditional type stuff and making it work for people who were not into traditional music was Dave Van Ronk. Dave taught a lot of people how to play guitar and several thousand guitarists play his classically traditional arrangements. Precious few of this group, however, have Van Ronk's taste, phrasing, balls and sense of style. Most of the traditionally oriented musicians were into very technical trips - Perry Lederman was one of the few around who could bring it off. Back in those benighted times, the hip



Jewish kids were into bluegrass, and had been since at least the mid 50s. The blues and traditional thing came later.

The reason that things started to cook in that summer of 61 was the arrival of Ramblin Jack Elliott and Bob Dylan, from across the Atlantic and from the mid-west respectively. Ramblin Jack immediately blew everybody's mind with his flawless taste and his ability never to play too much guitar, but the right guitar to back his singing.

I first saw Dylan in a coffee house that successively changed its name from the Commons to the Fat Black Pussycat to the Feenjon. I assumed he was a punk motorcycle type because he wore this punk motorcycle type hat. He was 20, and just about beardless - you know, he looked like that photo of him on his first album. I missed him the first time he played at Gerde's Folk City, although I saw him from outside, playing away; I couldn't hear him, but he didn't look like a motorcycle punk when he moved with that guitar. I heard him play a little later - and talk about having your mind blown... that same incredible rush as when I heard Little Richard for the first time, in 1956.

He started his set with a fiddly-banjo page twenty-six

type tune called 'Sally Ann', which just about took the top of my head off. He was doing all traditional songs, but it was his approach! His singing style and phrasing were stone rhythm and blues - he fitted the two styles together perfectly, clear as a bell, and I realised for the first time that my two true loves, traditional music and rock music, were in fact one. They were one!



As winter settled into 1961, I got a really ace job at the Gaslight Cafe, just a two minute walk from where I lived. The manager was going to try something new; traditional music all through the winter - he figured the time was right to get a lot of people interested in it. I got 75 dollars a week, plus another 25 for announcing who was on next, and I was supposed to be their resident singer for the whole of the winter.

The first two weeks, I worked with Dylan and Jim Kweskin. They did a lot of stuff together, including the definitive version of 'San Francisco Bay Blues'. They sure were dynamite. Dylan didn't like having to play twice every night, so he quit after two weeks.

One thing about Dylan - make that two things. First, a valuable thing he gave me; I had just turned 23 and was hitting the point where it was easy to look down on people 5 or so years younger. It was a lot easier to do back then, because damn few people under 21 could do anything at all original. Perry Lederman, again, was one of the exceptions, his style being at once super-flashy and super-technical, yet super-ballsy too. Anyway, here was Dylan, just 20, and doing something that nobody at any age was doing better. By 1966 it wasn't uncommon for people between, say, 14 and 20 to be into excellent original stuff, but in 1961 it was rare. Anyway, before Dylan, I often pre-judged people unfairly on the basis of age. After Dylan, I didn't.

The other thing about him was his brilliant ability to communicate to an audience but his inability to deal effectively with people on a one-to-one basis. He sometimes misinterpreted the actions of those around him and this was one of the only characteristics he had which could be referred to as flawed - though he was in one hell of a better shape than I ever was at 20. Anyway, this "flaw" was just a growing pain that he'd got over by the time he achieved a wide popularity.

Another thing that surprises me about Dylan is how long it took people to hear his voice. People who heard him back then often go on about how bad he used to sound; he sounded great then, it just took them a long time to learn how to listen.

In the winter of 61/62, the Gaslight featured Dylan, Kweskin, me, Sandy Bull, Luke Faust, Dave Ray (who'd been washing dishes at the Fat Black Pussycat) and Jack Elliott, and people like Ian & Sylvia would often drop in later on, after they'd finished working at the Blue Angel uptown.

Summer 62 was a busy summer. Four years earlier, the folk music/coffee house/beatnik tie-up had originated, but in 1962 the above syndrome was securely hooked up to the protest and drug movements...



everybody was taking acid and talking about it at length; you could hardly start a conversation without talking about drugs.

This may sound hard to believe, but all everybody in folk music talked about from summer 62 until Kennedy's death fifteen months later, was drugs. Some other things that happened during that summer are: people started hitting you for spare change on the streets (ugh) and 12 year old runaways started hanging around the Village for the first time. Many new words sprang up and got popular in the community - like "uptight", "old man", "ole lady", "spaced", "boxed", "rap" and "needle-freak!" 1962 also brought speed, with the resulting amphetamine guitar style. Speedfreaks were called "A-heads" back then.

That summer also brought John Sebastian and Phil Ochs to the Village and around this time too, people started to hang out in the Nite Owl. The prior favourite hangout place was the Fat Black Pussycat, then the Nite Owl started to take over - at first, because it was so unhip... I mean, wall to wall Keane paintings indeed! But a lot of hookers hung out there and it was also pretty hip to know a lot of hookers in 1962.



1963 brought morning glory seeds and the news that Mississippi John Hurt had been rediscovered. It also brought the Holy Modal Rounders (Stampfel and Steve Weber) to the basket passing world of the Village. By then, Weber had set a heap of styles - he was the first to wear Ben Franklin style shades, was the first cat I ever saw with Afro style-Helix hair, and he also established the world record for walking barefoot in New York without getting one's foot cut - an amazing seven months.

Oh yeah, the other big number from 1962 was the pot shortage, which lasted the summer long. This was simply a result of unprecedented numbers of people starting to use it, and there wasn't sufficient to go round. As people explained at the time, pot went uptown. There was a hallucinogen shortage too, for the same reason, and this went on well into 63.

"Bleecker Street and MacDougall on a Friday night
Carnage, pillage, everyone uptight.
I only go to meet my friends or score,
To that reeking, freaking, shrieking
Landslide, Westside scene!"

Just one more thing about 1962; that was the year when the Beatles, Stones, Dylan, the Beach Boys, etc began to get established on a popular level. In short, rock music became hip that year. Just as Dylan put poetry and music back together, the Beatles and the Stones put popular culture and art back together. In those 'good old days', everybody in the Village would say "It's bad enough to sell", and this, of course, rationalised their own failures. This kind of nonsense is what the Beatles killed... not folk music.

Peter Stampfel

Peter Stampfel, as Zigzag loyalists will know, has been a Holy Modal Rounder for almost a decade. He is currently planning a country album with Luke Faust, Steve Weber and Robin Remailly.

As I begin this article, it occurs to me that only a small percentage of readers will even be aware of Dave Van Ronk - and that, to me, seems to be some kind of tragedy. Without a doubt, this geezer gets a very bum deal over here; of his dozen (at least) American albums, only one is currently available in Britain, and that has seemingly been advertised on a word of mouth basis, rather than any information being disseminated by his record label.

Right, so we've established that the bloke's not very well known here; so, if Zigzag is going to serve any purpose as a historical document/rock encyclopaedia series, we can't omit a fat entry for this gentleman - can we?

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The first decade of his musical career, which started in 1953 in an East Coast jazz band, remains obscure, but somewhere along the line he drifted out of a below-decks coal-boat job into folk music - the traditional American stuff - and by 1959 he had established himself in the emerging folk scene which had been quietly nurturing itself in Greenwich Village, long before that area became the fashionable haunt of weekend folkies (see Peter Stampfel's piece elsewhere in this issue).

"I'd become interested in folk music and country blues because of the banality of pop music at the time" quoth the mighty Ronk, speaking to me (at Polydor Records' expense) via the muzzy miracle of the trans Atlantic telephone.

"It was a choice between exploring this vast world of traditional music that I'd stumbled into or else listening to stuff like 'How much is that doggie in the window?'. . . so it wasn't a very difficult decision. I'd been playing traditional jazz for a while, and that has close links with traditional folk, especially black folk music. For instance, in the late 50s, you'd go into the average record store and find they made no distinction. . . you'd look in the 'trad jazz' rack and along with Louie Armstrong and Bunk Johnson you'd find stuff by Leadbelly and, if you were lucky, Furry Lewis or someone like that!"

"I started singing around in 1952, but I didn't allow myself to think that folksinging could possibly support me until 1960, which is when I finally became professional, as you might say!"

In those pre-boom days, not only was the core of folk musicians relatively limited, but so were the audiences, who Dave compares with the audiences he saw in England when he made his one and only visit in 1966. "They were small, but very avid and committed clubs and societies, where a great deal of emphasis was placed on purity or, at least, what they considered to be purity. I remember that once I was almost drummed out of a club because I said I supported Lightning Hopkins, who was considered beyond the pale because he used a pick-up on his guitar - but, by and large, it was a nice, enthusiastic little scene!"

In the late 50s, folk music in England was even more underground and was supported mainly by the beatnik types; it was fairly vogueish and cliquey and had close ties with the Kerouac/beer/long scarves and duffle coats/CND sort of scene. . . . that was the club side. The traditional side was confined to a very few clubs and societies and was devoted to keeping the English heritage alive - like folk crafts and folk dancing - and there wasn't even a sniff of commercialism. The overtly commercial side was supported by the skiffle groups which had broken away from the trad jazz bands, and way out in front was Lonnie Donegan, who was thrusting up-tempo arrangements of Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly songs up the charts with



the story of dave van ronk the thirty seven year old folksinging father figure of greenwich village

great success.

During the same period, the vanguard of commercial folk in America was the Kingston Trio, whose clean cut, neatly arranged traditional adaptations were packing them in at West Coast nightclubs, and eventually 'Tom Dooley', which topped the US charts in November 1958, convinced everybody that a folk music boom was on the way.

Meanwhile, the hard-core "authentic", "ethnic" traditionalists were getting on with the scholarly/folk process/culture aspects - Jean Ritchie, Pete Seeger, Jesse Fuller, Brownie McGhee & Sonny Terry - and gigs weren't easy to come by unless you had a Kingston Trio family appeal image. Dave Van Ronk, having turned professional maybe a little too early, found the going rough and had to go out to the West Coast where there were more venues for an up and coming young folksinger.

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Once folk music caught on in Greenwich Village, as a tourist-trap entertainment scene as well as an "art form" boom came revival, coffee bars and clubs proliferated and Dave was able to return to a moderately comfortable gig sheet. Now, as an English enthusiast, I have read and heard many descriptions of how Greenwich Village rapidly deteriorated into plasticity

and how dollar signs shone out of every eye, and I've known just as many who say that despite the superficial facade of commerciality, there was a lot of sincerity and good music. What about Dave... how did he view it in retrospect?

"I think it got better as a result of all the popularity; the singer/songwriters put an end to the purely imitative school and that was pretty good for a start; I mean, once Leadbelly had recorded a song in a certain way, what's the point of a generation of new singers copying it note for note? There were quite a few worthwhile reforms in what had become a fairly staid musical form, and singers began to think for themselves a bit more".

Before we moved on from that early 60s era, I asked who he considered to be the best instrumentalist and singer that he'd seen in the clubs during that period. "The best guitarist, clear and away, was and still is Doc Watson. The best performer, I think, was Dylan - but comparatively few people ever saw him in a club. I was talking to him about this a while ago and we were arguing whether he'd played 4 clubs or 3 in his entire career. I maintained he'd done 4, but he insisted he'd only done 3 before going into big halls and concerts. . . . lucky fellow".

Well, within those Greenwich Village years, Dave Van Ronk became a standard by which other performers in the trad folk field were judged; his phrasing and particularly his guitar picking techniques were widely copied. Even over here in England his influence was felt; if you moved in folk/beatnik circles in 64/65, you often spotted a Folkways Van Ronk import being ostentatiously paraded - because Dave Van Ronk was a real Underground hero. . . even John Renbourn and Bert Jansch used to steal his arrangements when they did songs like 'Come back baby' and 'I'm a winding boy', back in their pre-Pentangling days of scuffling.

As he worked steadily at the Village clubs, he saw a lot of people come and go. Come with ambitions and go with their pockets lined with gold and their reputations secure. When the word "folk" was coupled with "protest" or "contemporary", it meant profits, and a lot of folkies who struggled through hungry days and hoarse nights, struck gold and went into the concert hall/college circuit - or else, smitten by the Beatles, went into rock. . . and good luck to all of them, because Greenwich Village in the early 60s spawned some of the greatest musicians that the world will ever see.

But, after this exodus of successful folksingers, after the gold rush trails had grown over, Van Ronk was left behind; still the father figure, but to a different flock - a whole new generation of aspiring Bob Dylans trying to fly the same course. And in a sense, I always think of Dave as an American counterpart of our Alexis Korner, who pioneered the early sixties R&B awakening in England; they both pioneered a musical style in the face of criticism and luke warm acceptance and both got left behind when bandwagoners and imitators, who owed a lot to them, went off and got rich when the style blossomed and became acceptable to a wider audience. The Alexis Korner parallel stops there however, because Dave didn't sell out to commercialism as a last resort. . . he always maintained his sort of shabby integrity, though in between times he did go off at a tangent a couple of times.

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In Summer 1963, a minor jug band revival originated in New York, deriving its style from the great jug bands of the 20s. The 20s boom had come about as a

result of record companies looking farther afield for novelties to stimulate flagging sales, and they thought that maybe people in the Northern cities might appreciate some of the more wider-appeal Southern and Negro music. So, driven by a sheer profit motive, they accidentally fulfilled the inestimable service of recording for posterity some of the native culture of the Southern states... not only people like the Carter Family, and Clarence Ashley, but the jug bands too had their recorded music spread across America.

Anyway, in the early sixties, various groups began to revive interest in the jug band form; the pioneers were the Even Dozen Jugband (see Zigzag 23 John Sebastian), the Jim Kweskin Jugband, and Dave Van Ronk's Ragtime Jug Stompers, who's repertoire was an extension of Dave's passion for his country's folk heritage.

Among others, Van Ronk's band included Sam Charters (well known Blues authority and Country Joe producer) on jug, and Danny Kalb (later to start the Blues Project - see various Al Kooper interviews in old Zigzags) on second guitar. How could a combination of this talent and the rowdy uninhibited music fail? Well, it did; the band lasted only one album (not released here, and now deleted by US Mercury) and a few months before it split up and its constituents all went off to implement new ideas and ventures. Van Ronk went solo again, and remained so, even when all his counterparts were girding their loins with electric guitars, groups, amps and fuzzboxes.

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In late 1967, curiosity got the better of him and, to the horror of ethnic maniacs across America, he suddenly began to appear at gigs singing and flat-picking his guitar in front of a rock band: Dave Van Ronk & the Hudson Dusters!!! But what a band... a winner combination; an ace lead guitarist called Dave Woods, a drummer who was fed up with starting as a member of Mose Allison's band, a bass player who'd been on the road with Joe Tex and Jimi Hendrix, and an organist called Pot!

His audiences were not prepared to accept the "cacophony and claptrap of this foolish old man", and after an album (on Verve import only) and a few months they split up and Dave reverted, once more, to his solo act, where he has remained ever since. The Hudson Dusters album (the name comes from a turn-of-the-century Bronx street gang, by the way) is uneven, but contains the best ever version of Joni Mitchell's 'Clouds' and a classic piece of Stampfelism called 'Romp through the swamp' - they don't make titles like that anymore.

"I'd been a supporter of rock all the way through... I'd never been one who put down amplified folk music - and one day I came to the abrupt conclusion that I wanted to be like all the other kids... I wanted an electric train to play with too". Things didn't work out too well; besides the electrical problems they always seemed to be immersed in, Dave, who'd always been his own master, felt a bit too hemmed in by the restrictions of group work, where everything has to be worked out beforehand and where no changes could be introduced without big conferences and majority decisions and all that sort of palaver. It was all just a dream, babe, a vacuous scheme that sucked him into wanting a rock band when he must've known all along that he could never reconcile his loner instinct with the disciplines of a group. Eventually it ground him down to the extent that he decided he'd worn out the novelty of his

page twenty-eight

electric train, and he reverted to his old toys.

A strange period in his life, chronicled in one album and a couple of tours which he'd "rather not remember".

"I had inherited a lot of Dylan's old die-hard, mouldy fig fans when Bobby went electric... they were glad that 'Van Ronk was still holding high the standards of purity', whereas I never thought I was doing any such thing - and I think that one of the reasons for the group was a backlash against the residual resentment that Bobby had received in 65. In the final analysis, it didn't really matter".

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By 1969, he was back on the road as a solo trying to re-establish himself - which didn't prove too difficult - and since then he's always been in demand in clubs and colleges throughout the States. His management don't appear to have much trouble in arranging neat and compact tours which pack a lot of gigs into a few weeks, entailing a minimum of travel.

"Over the last few years, the emphasis on my material has tended to shift from traditional to contemporary, and I've also taken up writing the odd song - but fundamentally, I'm still playing the same type of gig that I've always been playing. Greenwich Village itself has been through a lot of changes, but it's always remained a kind of focal point for folk music activity and there seems to be some sort of mini-revival going on at the moment; as well as the established names who've been a foundation all along, as you might say, there are always new singers coming along, many of whom are pretty raw and inexperienced, but occasionally very interesting also. One guy in particular, Lost John Hutchinson, who I came across in Ohio, absolutely knocked me out".

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Recently (in fact it's just about a year ago now... my god, doesn't time fly?), Polydor Records released his newest album, called 'Van Ronk', which reflects his interest in investigating the more obscure contemporary writers as well as re-interpreting a few better known songs and throwing in a couple of his own.

Richard Williams of Melody Maker, who (like us) finds himself in the fortunate position of only writing about people who interest him (and me), went bonkers over the album in a delightful review, saying that it was one of the best of the year, and though there are one or two criticisms which prevent me from endorsing that completely, I agree that I too find it exceptionally interesting.

Each song is wrapped in an orchestral setting (arranged by ex-Hudson Duster Dave Woods) and it is here that my main complaint lies. Dave Van Ronk is a great singer (once you get used to his voice... more about that later) and a superb and delicate guitarist, but at times he's totally smothered in lines of trumpets blasting forth behind him, or else banjoed to death in a sea of vaudeville music. It just seems a little too corny - for instance, in 'Port of Amsterdam' (a picture in music and words by Jacques Brel and Mort (Ace cat) Shuman, who used to write some fabulous rock'n'roll crap in the Fabian Forte Brylcreem era), the continental atmosphere is conjured up by a cruddy accordion... which to me is as hammed up and obvious as an episode of 'The Saint' where they let the dumb viewer know it's set in France by having a beret wearing onion seller wheeling his bike past striped canvasses with the word "boulangerie" written across them. But perhaps this is pettiness on my part, be-

cause this criticism is trivial when one considers the whole album.

As for the man himself, he's as pleased as the proverbial punch... though he agrees that "on the odd occasion, the concept we'd devised for the arrangement got a little lost in the execution". But it must be difficult to remain objective when you're sitting in a studio, spending great tracts of time engulfed in the same song being played over and over for you to consider possible musical decoration.

His favourite track is Brecht's 'Legend of the dead soldier', which came out just as he'd planned it, but I must say that I prefer the two monstrosities written by Peter Stampfel (whose name seems to be cropping up with alarming regularity), and the capsulated autobiography song, 'Gaslight Rag'.

The album, like I say, is on Polydor, but I imagine you'll have to order it if you want one because few local record shops will be wise enough (or foolish enough) to stock it. But a word of warning: Van Ronk's voice is rather like squid - it's an acquired taste. (I know that's a really stupid comparison - it's just that Connor McKnight from Time Out was extolling the joys of eating squid, and the thought of such a vile plateful has been plaguing my mind ever since). You see, Dave suffers from asthma, and as a result his voice often half disappears when he's holding a note... and, over the years, he's developed this disadvantage into a vocal effect. You'll have to listen - either you'll dig it, or you won't.

*** ** **

It seems odd that Dave has only toured the English clubs once, in 1966, and that was cut short because he broke his thumb nail. At the time, I remember wondering why the hell that should stop him performing, but his fingerpicking style is so very reliant on his right thumb-nail that breaking it is like a footballer pulling a thigh muscle. (Which reminds me of a story I heard about Julian Bream, the classical guitarist; he never ever puts his right hand into his pockets in case he breaks or cracks a fingernail!)

Well, I'm scratching about now, so it's time to pull the strings round this article and wind it up; yet another minority-appeal piece from the pen of Mac the G, who uses these pages to document his own favourites rather than to ruminate on what a far out gig Yes did at Stockton last week.

(Mind you, we do try to maintain some kind of balance - but we bear the loyal reader in mind rather than the sheep record buyer who goes by image/reputation/hype/etc for his choice).

Dave Van Ronk is one of those names that sends me into daydreams. Only fools cling to the past, say the sages; but out of the past came forth some fabulous music, which still captures my ear and mind - and should Van Ronk ever be stumbling around the Bucks County wastelands (very unlikely) in search of shelter, he'd be more than welcome to stay here. I bet you could fill a few books with his tales.

One last thing: I find it rather puzzling that almost every photo you see of Dave Van Ronk shows his face screwed up in a foul contorted grimace - as if he is either about to puke up last night's sardine supper all over his guitar, or else his trousers are around his ankles and he's having a powerful enema administered. Very strange.

One more last thing: up there at the beginning, I said he got a bum deal as far as promotion goes - well, I just this minute phoned up Polydor for a photo. Not only were there no photos, but they hadn't even heard of the bloke! Oh dear.

Mac

BILL WITHERS: "STILL BILL"

One of those rare albums that makes that over-worked word: "soul" still very meaningful.

Includes world-wide chartbuster: "LEAN ON ME"

A&M/SUSSEX



DEKE LEONARD: 10 YEARS ON THE ROAD (AND HE'S STILL GOT BO DIDDLEY'S MUSIC COURSING THROUGH HIS VEINS)

Deke Leonard, who recently left Man and who even more recently temporarily joined Help Yourself, was telling me that when he'd finished the interview he had to hitch hike back to the Swansea Labour Exchange, box 2, to collect his £14.65 debt, and then hitch back to London where he is currently living with friends. Are these the rewards for ten years on the road? I asked him, if he'd known in 1962 what he knows now, whether he'd have chosen a different route... and I expected him to say something like "well, maybe I'd have kept on my career as a management trainee". As it was, he looked a bit thoughtful and then said "well, I think I made a mistake trying to get into that Beach Boys sound around 1966 - I should have stuck with Bo Diddley all along". Wow, there's dedication to his craft.

Deke, in fact, had beaten us at our own game - he whipped out a family tree chart that held done to show all the aspects of wild, woolly, Welsh rock. Blimey... that ought to keep all you Zigzagers going for a few hours.

"The first four bands in Wales were the Blackjacks, the Meteorites, the Fireflies and the Fleetwoods (who have been left out of the chart because it would have got too complicated and anyway they're all coalminers now) - this was around 1961, when all the bands wore yellow jackets with black lapels and played Shadows stuff and 'Wimoweh' (which they copied from Karl Denver's copy) - and I was a wide-eyed kid in the audience."

"These bands used to play all the ballrooms in Swansea, Llanelli, Carmarthen, Port Talbot, Mumbles and all those places... the Saturday night dance scene."

Now, young Deke... wait a minute - Deke? What kind of a name is that? Can you imagine a quaint scene in one of those stern-looking Welsh chapels, with everybody standing around in their Sunday best, watching as the Reverend Iorwerth Jones christened a baby "Deke"? Neither can I. But, gentle reader, there is an explanation - but you'll have to wait for a while.

Young Deke and his mates weren't into Shadows music - but they used to go to the dances to look for crumpet - they were much more interested in Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis and used to send away to the States for copies of albums that you



Duke Leonard studies the Rockfield console like some Boris Spassky (or maybe he's fallen asleep). Martin, Terry & Micky of Man, look on.

couldn't get hold of locally. ("Charlie Feathers? Is he in the top ten? Well, we haven't got it then.") They listened to the records, but didn't for one moment consider that they could play guitars and things themselves... it was assumed that you had to be an American, possessed of some magic powers to be able to play rock n' roll - but when they saw these yellow-jacketed boys playing Cliff Richard hits, they thought "...if they can do it, so can we!"

Deke and Micky bought guitars... very cheap acoustic plywood ones with buzzy frets and slipping tuning pegs, painted them white (naturally) and at parties while all the other kids were trying to get inside each others pants, they bashed their way through the Gene Vincent/Buddy Holly songbag - a demented three chord bedlam... Aaaaagh!

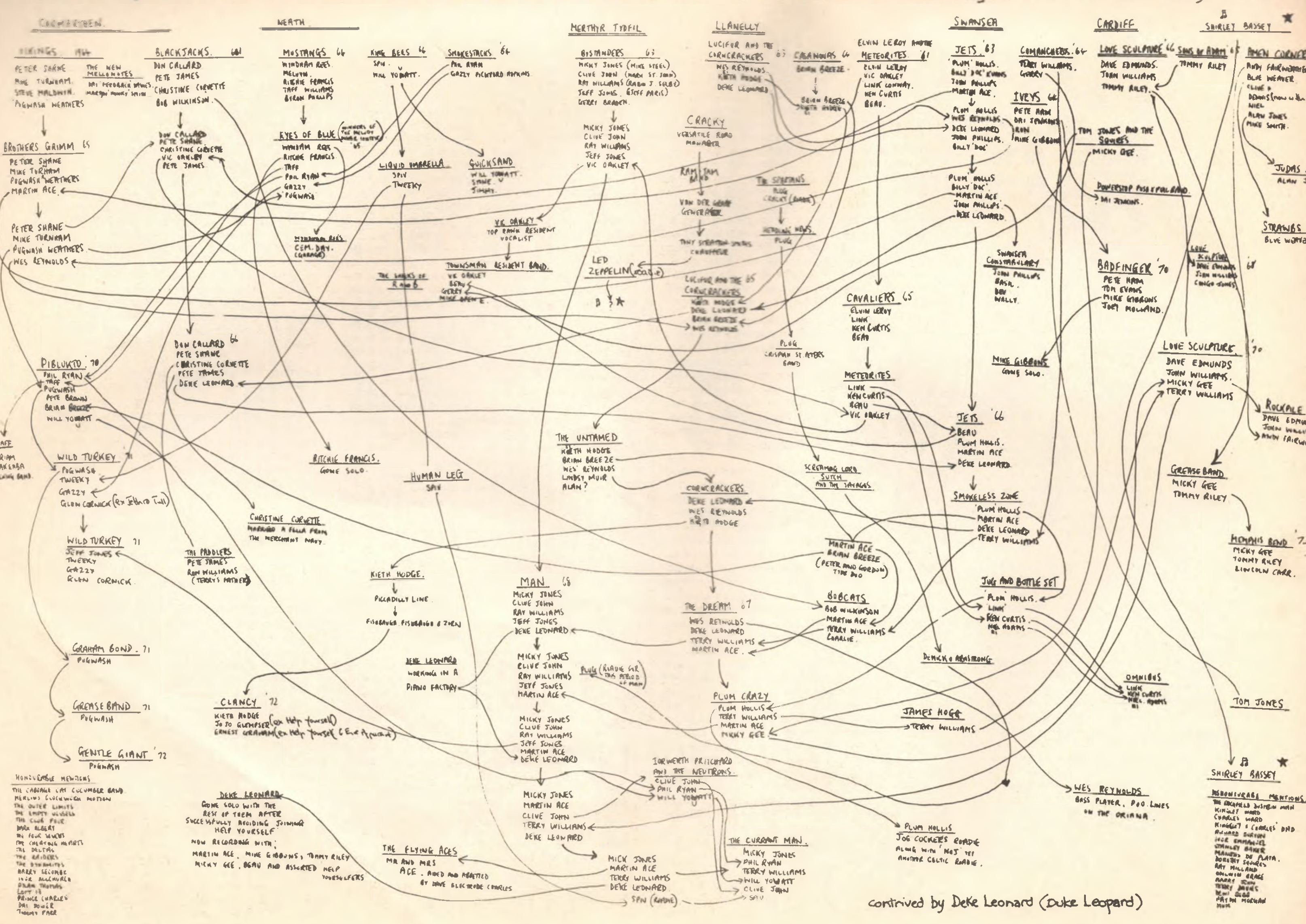
If this was going to be a fairy tale success story, the next thing that should happen is Brian Epstein, riding through the town on his bicycle, hearing this sweet serenade, and signing them to a lucrative record contract and star billing at the Palladium. Unfortunately, Epstein didn't turn up, but they were heard by a neighbour who was on the committee of the Carmarthen Bay Power Station Recreation Club (this is true, by the way) and as a result they got their first gig - ten bob each plus two drink vouchers! Can't be bad.

From these humble beginnings, they began to make giant strides... they landed a gig at the South Wales Electricity Board Club, a far more prestigious gig but they had to take less bread. Their stage act was 20 Flight Rock/C'Mon Everybody/Tutti Frutti/Teddy Bear/Don't be Cruel etc., and Deke had the house mike tied round his neck with string. Even so, the drums drowned everything else out and they'd have died a miserable death had it not been for Micky, who had seen a film of Joey Dee and the Starlighters on television, taking off his jacket and whirling it above his head... but he left and another supergroup had split for reasons of diverging musical tastes.

A little later, Deke bought a Hofner pickup and a Selmer 8 watt amplifier - then Lucifer and the Corncrackers, as they were called, were in the big league. They replaced the original drummer with a guy called Keith Hodge, and, purely

TEN YEARS OF WELSH ROCK 'N' ROLL

A parlour game devised by Deke Leonard and designed to send the reader totally insane!



continued by Deke Leonard (Duke Leonard)

because he owned a bass, brought in this fellow called Quasimodo (so called because he had a slight hunch). Quasimodo played through a 3 watt valve amp and a four inch speaker which just lay on the floor without a cabinet or anything. . . . every note almost blew the cone out, and the only noise that came out was the fuzzy distortion of a speaker about to disintegrate. It didn't really matter because he couldn't play anyway - he did it all by numbers and his lips would move as he counted out the beats in readiness to switch to another note. Obviously he was no match for the other bigtimers, so they got this guy Wes in, and then things really began to happen. . . the Swansea Railway Workers' Club, Llanelli RAF camp- whew, there was no stopping them now. In his devotion to Presley, Deke got his latest soundtrack album (maybe 'Loving You') and learnt all the numbers for their gigs; because Elvis played a character called Deke Rivers, Roger Leonard (that's his real name) started to get called Deke, and the name, as they say, stuck.

During the day, Deke was a management trainee, Wes was a barber, and Keith was an articulated accountant, but in the evening they got their mojos working and attacked all the R&B favourites. They hired a pub back room, and because nothing else happened in Llanelli, they packed the place solid. . . . Appearing tonight: Lucifer and the Corncrackers. Whereas they'd be glad to get four quid gigs, they suddenly found they were making about £60 a week at their new club - so they put down payments on impressive gear - a Vortexion p.a. and Vax 30watt amps like the Beatles had.

News of their triumphant success and popularity got out and spread across the Welsh mountains like rugby fever, and as a result they broke onto the ballroom circuit, once the monopoly of those first four bands we spoke of. So the Corncrackers were pioneers of the R&B scene in Wales - independent of any of the English bands like the Stones who they'd never even heard of at this time - and after a while the Shadows-bands got pushed aside altogether in favour of the new group scene they were leading. Then the promoters started getting in bands like the Hollies (around the release of 'Ain't that just like me!') and the Big Three (and the band that blew us apart, Johnny Kidd and the Pirates. When I saw Mickey Green playing that Telecaster, I wanted to throw away my Hofner Verithin. . . . so I sent Quasimodo, who was then our manager, to London to get hold of a Telecaster at any cost! He went to Ivor Mairants eventually and found one - one of the very few in the country at the time - and it was a Custom one with stripes on it. . . . it came to about £120 including HP."

Where Thompson has pushed the literary barriers forward yet again is that he sets off to report a motor bike race and then a police anti-drugs convention in Las Vegas. Maybe Hunter Thompson is the

After quarrels and all that sort of stuff, they broke up and Deke joined the Jets (with Martin Ace, later of Man) and they were the tops on the dancehall circuit - but, because they demanded excessive fees like £15 a gig, the promoters decided to bring in the Bystanders from Merthyr.

"We were too cocky to be worried by a bunch of hicks like that, especially since they came on the stage in matching mohair suits - but they were so slick and professional, and did all the Four Seasons/Beach Boys stuff so well, that they went down a storm, and we thought that was the end of stomping music and the end of us too. The Bystanders became a big success - got a Pye Records contract and made 7 or 8 singles that were really big in Wales, so then all the R&B bands broke up and came back as surf music bands."

Deke ran out and bought a couple of Beach Boys LPs, learnt the songs, and reformed the Corncrackers as a harmony group, but that didn't work out too well, and he blew them apart when the Blackjacks, one of the four original Welsh bands who were by then making a lot of bread at American air bases all over Europe, asked him to join as lead guitarist/vocalist - at £25 a week; riches.

After a three month tour of France, he returned to find that his bird had gone off with an apprentice leek grower, so he went out and got royally drunk in the best Hollywood film tradition. As fate would have it, his old mates the Jets were giggling at the pub, and he naturally had a blow with them. Old memories flowed with the beer and he decided to rejoin them, plunging headlong into the Otis Redding/Chris Farlowe routine, and, for the first time in his life, going up to London for the odd gig.

A London agent, Jack Fallon, got them booked into the Top Ten Club in Hamburg, so they packed themselves off to Germany to do the five one hour sets a night trip at various clubs in Frankfurt and Hamburg.

"The be-all and end-all of that whole scene was pills. There was always some-one at every club, like a toilet cleaning lady in the Top Ten, who was ready to dispense whatever kind of pills we wanted - to keep us awake, to put us to sleep, to put us up, to pull us down, and every band who played at those places must have kept going on pills. We shared the bill with groups like the Senate and the M15, but Tony Sheridan was still the king of Hamburg . . . but the romance you hear about just wasn't there; it was a real con scene where tourists were made to buy as many drinks as possible and where violence was all around, and prostitutes and thugs. We played our dues, playing ourselves to death for £30 a week, plus free bed, which was a roomful of bunks. . . . but the

memories I have are of like strippers, transvestites, guns, knives, crooks and pills - that was Hamburg."

While they were there, their singer (Plum) was put in jail for rolling a tourist for his wallet, and Jack Fallon sent over Alan Walker (look up that name on your Elton John chart) to sing for them.

Whereas the Jets were all dirt and sweat and stubble, this Walker bloke was on a Baldry/King's Road trip "with tailored suede jackets and neatly pressed flared trousers. . . . and he was the first person I ever saw using Brut." Literally within a fortnight, Walker descended to scruffiness, pulled a prostitute and moved in with her, and when it was time to return to London, he chucked his ticket away and stayed in Hamburg. Meanwhile, Plum was deported.

On their return, they changed their name to the Smokeless Zone, a name they thought sounded a bit "hipper", but that collapsed after a while and Deke decided to rejoin his old mates the Corncrackers again, who had been going all that time and had enjoyed some success at exotic venues like the Caribbean Club in Bognor and the Untamed. They had a Tamla Motown repertoire, so Deke adapted his style once again, but when 'flower power' arrived, they modified themselves into The Dream and brought the "freak out, man!" thing to Wales.

"We'd no idea what a freak-out was at the time, so we had to invent our own, which was leaving our guitars on top of the amplifiers to create a great drone and then throwing great armfuls of chopped newspaper into the audience whilst we squirted crazy foam over each other."

Martin (Ace) used to wear a loincloth with flower's painted over his exposed flesh - everybody thought we were wild lunatics."

"It was difficult for a bunch of Welsh yokels to get into the London 'big-time', but I really wanted to play in other parts of Britain besides Wales, where I'd been doing the same gigs for so long, and so I rejoined the Bystanders after a year and a half with The Dream. The Bystanders were doing cabaret type stuff at places like the Batley Variety Club and though it was a very solid money scene, they wanted to progress out of the clean-sounding harmony thing and get into something with a bit more guts to it. So, when I joined, they changed their name to Man and built up a whole new style and repertoire."

Within a month, they cut their first album, 'Revelation', for Pye (bad reviews here, but big sales in Germany where it even got to number one in Hamburg), and a while later, after a particularly poverty stricken period, they cut a second album called 'Two ounces of plastic with a hole in the middle' (which would probably have made more money for Pye if it had been

"Two ounces of hole with plastic in the middle").

But in Germany, everything was just terrific. Around the same time that the band had got into drugs and the inevitable spaced out music, the Germans were at the height of their dope mania, and Man became one of the most popular bands in Germany.

In England, we were doing the rounds of all the small clubs, like the Wake Arms in Epping, and on percentage deals we were coming away with about £4, which wasn't even enough to pay for the petrol, but in Germany we were big stars capable of pulling huge crowds. It was fortunate because the scene there was ideal for Man at that period; the Germans were into big dope festivals and really dug us because we were a stoned band who just went on and let it rock. We could make a hundred quid a night there, so we used to do a solid month which would just earn us enough to get through the next barren three months in England - we could pay the rent arrears, the van hp and stuff like that, but we still had to rely on friends for food!"

Man went through numerous changes - far too complicated to detail (you'll have to consult Deke's chart and try to puzzle it all out) - but they eventually got signed to United Artists, and their fortunes very slowly began to improve. . . . to the extent that by the middle of 1971, they were able to support themselves in England.

"In the last year, things got much more organised; our two United Artists albums sold well and as a result we got bigger audiences". But, after recording their 'Live at the Padget Rooms in Penarth' album, Deke and Martin Ace left the group in a big re-shuffle. It seemed that no-one could enthuse about anyone else's ideas - like Deke wanted to play free rolling rock, whilst Mick Jones and Terry Williams were more into Zappa and early Steve Miller things - so, rather than split up, they had an amicable change around.

His initial idea was to bum around until a nice band came along, but several people talked him into thoughts of a solo career. At the moment, he's getting the details worked out in his mind and making demos at Rockfield Studios, as well as doing the odd gig with Help Yourself (who are looking for a permanent guitarist/key board player to replace Malcolm Morley, whose feeble frame just wasn't up to being vibrated to pieces in an old van speeding round the globe).

The results of his schemes won't appear until the new year, but he's working and plotting like a madman. "Bo Diddley has suddenly returned to my bones!" he says, "he's very simple and direct, but at the same time he's incredibly strong. . . I spend a lot of time listening to him". Mac

And now for a new column about books. No, we're not going to turn this into a jack-of-all-trades magazine, but we thought that a few paragraphs concerning paperbacks might be of interest to you. (Write in if you disagree!)

PAPERBACK PERUSAL

FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS
by Hunter S Thompson. Paladin 40p
THE SITUATION OF THE NOVEL
by Bernard Bergonzi. Pelican 40p

At first sight, these are an odd couple of books to review together; one a drug crazed reportage by an American writer, the other a serious thesis by the professor of English at Warwick University, and yet they are inter-related.

I mean, which English publisher would ever commission a book such as 'Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas'? What's it all about, and who is Hunter S Thompson? He's certainly not your well put together, highly commercial Hunter Davies; and could anyone write a readable book about the novel? Professor Bergonzi certainly has.

Enough of this rambling. The main point of 'The situation of the novel' is that in England we're missing out. The best in Britain is about the past. Novel writing is a gentle art. Whereas in America, to quote Professor Bergonzi, "there is one crucial way in which American procedures seem to me clearly superior to English. It concerns attitudes to language. At his best the American author will take nothing for granted; he has to forge his own style as a basic act of self definition". And later on, he says about writing in England: "Novel writing is seen as a visible and established tradition, the niceties of which can be picked up as one goes along. It can even be regarded as a natural process like breathing, in which no conscious thought need be given to questions of style or construction".

Although Bergonzi does not mention it, there has also grown up in America a tradition of social historical writers, of whom Hunter S Thompson is the latest. For me it dates back all those years ago to the original drop-out days of the beats and Jack Kerouac's 'On the road', a pattern updated in the film 'Easy Rider'.

Kerouac was followed by a generation of American writers who grew up with, though not professionally involved in, rock. They often included pieces about it in their work, notably Tom Wolfe's 'The Kandy Kolorad Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby', with its essays about Phil Spector, The girl of the year, and The fifth Beatle.

Wolfe too went into the drug culture, or more specifically the acid syndrome, in 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test', which went on a trip with Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters. Wolfe is the reporter, his skill is that while being involved he doesn't get involved, which is obvious after reading his adventures with Kesey. Rex Reed, who got a part in the film 'Myra Breckinridge', is also a brittle waspish reporter of the same school, and more latterly there has been Richard Goldstein, whose 'Goldstein's Greatest Hits' concentrates entirely upon rock.

Where Thompson has pushed the literary barriers forward yet again is that he sets off to report a motor bike race and then a police anti-drugs convention in Las Vegas. Maybe Hunter Thompson is the

greatest 'straight' ever and he's having us all on, but I doubt it; that he never really gets to write anything on either event is because most of the time his head is racing thousands of drug-wracked feet over Vegas. With him is a man known simply as 'my attorney' who, if anything, is even more spaced out, turned on, freaked, stoned and meeting himself on the way back.



One of the several Steadman drawings gracing 'Fear & Loathing', which was first published in Rolling Stone 95/96

The book is hilarious, causing me to burst into open laughter on the London tube, which is likely to get you put away in the booby hatch for a start. Believing that the best form of defence is attack, the two men set about defending themselves with a zeal which turns the already materialistically crazed Las Vegas society into supporting them.

Two anecdotes in particular are retained when the enjoyment of reading this book begins to fade: The time the two men leave the anti-drugs convention to go downstairs in their hotel and encounter another police officer at the bar. Seeing their official accreditation labels, he gets into conversation with them and believes all their totally fallacious stories about human werewolves in California. (Mind you, having just finished the American edition of 'The Family', about the Manson case, I can see why he believed them!)

Then there is the hotel cleaner who enters their bedroom by mistake, and discovers the absolute wreckage they have caused in a frenzy brought on by mixing acid, mescaline and other high-powered ingredients. They persuade her that they are undercover agents and enlist her into their organisation, so that she doesn't tell the hotel owners what has happened. Like all good comedy, all Thompson's adventures verge on the possible. But who gives him his next assignment after this confession? And how does he follow a book like this, which I totally recommend.

So why is it, that every time writing is pushed forward, it is the Americans who do it? The fault lies with the timidity of British publishers as much as with British writers. Both are to blame. Meanwhile, Bernard Bergonzi's theories are being proved true. Michael Wale

STUFF

from the pen of John Tabber

(No room for any nonsense this issue)

Quelle monthe fantastique, as we say in these parts. . . rushing about like an insect with an illuminated rear, trying to keep up with all the great excitements available to a poor middle aged rocker.

An old Zigzag recommendation, the Boz Scaggs (or Scraggs, as Sounds call him) album on Atlantic has been re-released. Anyone who digs the Allman Brothers should check it out because it contains some of Duane's best guitar playing ever, as well as the finest Boz songs to date. . . . a goodie for sure. So are these; Brinsley Schwarz's newie, Pete Townshend's solo, the best new Hendrix for a while, 'Carney' by Leon Russell, Lindisfarne, Jim Webb (please investigate this one), Freddy King, and the latest expedition into Ray Davies's mind by the Kinks. . . and it's about time that you started getting into Phillip Good hand Tait.

On a less obvious level; David Bromberg has rarely left my turntable this week (and he's looking a bit ill, but he'll hopefully recover in time to record a 2nd record of amazing guitar virtuosity), Man sound good on their live album (limited edition only folks - snap it up quick or you'll lose out on a collectors' item), Rick Nelson's 'Garden Party' is a fabulous 45. Paul Williams is a great songwriter and an interesting performer, American Spring has made the best Beach Boys album since 'Pet Sounds', and Clifford T Ward (on Dandelion) has made a really scintillating first album. . . an incredible contrast to the other Big D product this month - the second Mike Hart epic, which you're unlikely to hear on the radio.

Another paragraph on the same subject. Bill Withers is unnaturally brilliant and either of his two albums will reward your interest, Caldara is Tonto's Expanding Headband in a previous incarnation (and look out for that genuine electric lady on the front), Rab Noakes and Jonathan Kelly both seem destined for the stars, there's a good cheapie on A&M's Mayfair label with both the Burnitos and Dillard and Clark on it, and finally you can hear some interesting stuff on 'Last Days at the Fillmore' (but only if you're prepared to wade through a lot of uninteresting stuff).

Saw the Everlys at the Fairfield Hall and reckon they're still fabulous even 15 years after their first hit. . . . though I don't really dig their recent albums too much (except 'Roots'). 'Bowling Green' by them is my favourite song on the month!

Elektra are releasing a fat batch of fine albums this month - all we need now is enough bread to buy them all. There's the debut of Plainsong, which is very very good and strikes me as being the strongest Elektra album for ages, Aztec Two Step is a conglomerate of my favourite soft rock sounds and includes guest appearances by ex members of the Spoonful and Spanky & Our Gang, and debuts by Casey Kelly and Goodthunder are well above average.

Well, here's to the next time - and don't forget to look out for Kevin Coyne (new album on the way) and Capability Brown (I'm still trying to unscramble an interview from a tape consisting of two hours of drunken debauchery, cursing and general abuse). I wish I was a lion cub. John

Unfortunately, due to sudden restrictions in space, we had to castrate John's column. . . . sorry about that mate, we'll give you an extra big one next month. . . . ok?

JOE COCKER



immigration authorities, and promoters involved should be mightily chagrined (to the point of barring him from performing in America henceforth) should he fail to go through with it.

Denny Cordell, Joe's producer remembers the situation well: "Immigration said he couldn't just cancel his tour or they wouldn't let him into the musicians' union or something. And all the promoters threatened to sue, so it was a question of force."

Leon Russell, hearing of Joe's plight, immediately offered his services in forming and playing in a swiftly contrived band that was scheduled to disintegrate after twenty dates. As Russell remembers it: "Joe had just come back from London and he didn't have the Grease Band anymore. And they were going to try and cancel the tour because he wasn't really feeling well and needed the rest. He had just finished a cross-country tour. They talked to the people about it, and they said that he might not come back again. So I said, 'What the hell, we might as well put something together just for the hell of it.' That's what happened."

So great was Russell's prowess on the telephone that by day's end, ten musicians had been assembled and rehearsals begun. When the smoke cleared a week later, a somewhat bewildered Joe Cocker found himself standing on a Detroit stage flanked by a 40-strong tribal unit — known from that day on as *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*. The potpourri of musical stars and assorted hangers-on was intricately detailed in newspapers from coast to coast. Denny Cordell was quoted as saying, "The whole thing was a bit like *Alice & Wonderland*, a kind of *flying Easy Rider*." A noted West Coast correspondent thought that the Mad Dogs and Englishmen tour was a rock and roll circus with Joe Cocker in the center ring. While one famous English writer wrote it off as "a hideously grueling marathon tour that was to become a big part of rock history as *Woodstock*..." and that it was, "this 57-day slog across America...that finally brought Cocker to the crux of his problems."

Still, when Joe and his (?) troupe hit

our towns, we all came to watch; lucky for us Joe came to play. But did he sincerely want to? Surely as the tour progressed things fell into place, but the initial scar of being somewhat forced on the road was always to remain with the inwardly intense singer.

When the tour folded and all the Mad Dogs and Englishmen went their separate ways, a flurry of razor-sharp rumors ensued. Many claimed Cocker felt despondent and withdrawn. Some said that Cocker was, at one time or another, fed a mess of medicinal-type synthetics which didn't contribute to his mental state any. Rita Coolidge, one of Joe's few lasting friends from the tour, remarked that several petty jealousies on the part of troupe members helped bring down "bad Karma."

When they parted, Leon Russell couldn't get over Joe's wariness and his lack of enthusiasm for the ensuing period, the Mad Dog's movie and particularly Cocker's future plans. Russell went on to admit that Joe was definitely pushed throughout the tour. Dee Anthony, who was severely hurt by the bad attitude and lack of consideration on the part of the majority of the troupe members, spoke to Joe the day he left California. That last day before he went underground. "I asked him, Are you happy with everything Joe?" he said. "Yeah." "Then what's wrong?" He'd always say: "Nothing, I'm just gonna get my head together, relax a little." Fine, "I said, 'ok Joe, take a little time off — the music's got to be right.' he said, 'I don't want to play any big places.' I told him, 'Whatever you wish, Joe. I'm not gonna send you down the river. I didn't send you down the river when you were nothing, why, should I send you down now?'" Sent down the river or not, when Joe Cocker stepped on the plane to return to England, for one reason or another, he was leaving America with an extremely bad taste in his mouth!

In the eighteen long months that followed, Joe Cocker made only three publicized appearances. On Mother's Day of last year Cocker unexpectedly jammed with Rita Coolidge when she toured his home town (Sheffield) with the Byrds after announcing that he was "sorry to break into someone else's show, but this is such a great band (The Dixie Flyers), I just had to sing." Cocker immediately laid down three tunes including a 12-bar improvisation and Bonnie Bramlett's hymn titled *When the Battle is Over*. (Shades of things to come?) His other

"appearances" were, of course, at the Island London studios in July and toward the end of the year, when he was seen at a Grease Band gig in Middlesex. At this gig, Joe refused to jam with his old band. At this point Stainton, who by now was a bit p—ed-off at Joe, took the band to America to try to find a new singer. After several futile attempts, Chris rang Joe up in England and said: "Look, we need a bloody singer;" and as you know, the rest is history.

An old friend and session player on Joe's first LP possibly put in the remaining pieces of the Joe Cocker jigsaw puzzle by giving his opinion as to why Joe went away in the first place: "Well, he had to go away because there were a lot of screw-ups with the management, but it looks like he may be getting on the road again. They f—d him up. They started getting heavy, with guns and things. That's why Joe laid off more than anything, because the contract ran out in July, and he said he'd much rather not work, than to have to work for all those pricks." But what's more remarkable than everything is with all the tours Joe's done and all the times he's been working over here, he talks about getting a new band together. And, he's still with Chris (Stainton) and the same cats he was with three years ago. I'm not putting them down, but they're not the best players that are available for him. You'd think he would have been introduced to other people..."

Other people, eh? Do you really think it would make a difference? Old people, new hangers-on, different musicians, a change of management — it's probably all the same to Joe. For what you have in Joe Cocker, is basically an extremely talented, down to earth (if somewhat naive) individual, who, after all the managers, contract disputes, and numerous stories go by the boards, will still be basically the same ole rock 'n' rolling Joe Cocker — an unassuming man of "funk," from a dingy little town in Northern England who got caught up in the grand musical grind, shook the musical world by cutting out when they least expected it, and who's now back to pick up where he left off.

Like Denny Cordell says: "Joe is a strange guy; he has no ambitions at all. He just likes to rock 'n' roll and he has no dreams about how he could do it, because he could rock 'n' roll any way he wants." Lord have mercy....

Patrick Salvo
Reprinted from Phonograph
Record Magazine of L.A.

Starting from where we left off last month, Elton resumes his explanation of how he came to record his albums, and to form his group for live gigs.

PART TWO: ALBUMS & GIGS 1... "Empty Sky"

"When he saw that 'Lady Samantha' had done quite well, Dick said that it was alright if we went ahead and made an LP and, though we'd prepared plenty of material which we wanted to record, we just couldn't believe it... an album all to ourselves! So, we went in and made the 'Empty Sky' album which still holds the nicest memories for me — because it was the first, I suppose. We used to walk back from the sessions around four in the morning and stay at the Salvation Army Headquarters in Oxford Street; Steve Brown's dad ran the place, and he used to live above it — so I used to sleep on the sofa. It's difficult to explain the amazing enthusiasm we felt as the album began to take shape, but I remember when we'd finished work on the title track... it just floored me; I thought it was the best thing I'd ever heard in my life! Caleb played so well on that track — I'd wanted a sort of Stones feel, but Caleb didn't really go for the Stones that much because he was a Hendrix freak, but he finally agreed with us and really pulled it out of the bag.

"The album was released and got quite a lot of play on the radio, but it didn't sell a tremendous amount... not that anyone, especially me, really expected it too. It sold around two thousand initially, which wasn't really bad for a first LP — but what really pleased me was the reaction it got from the press, particularly the underground press; I was beginning to get a bit worried that they would typecast me as a Radio One type performer, because I'd been doing broadcasts to get a bit of exposure.

"We thought it was time to move on to something new, so with the next single, 'It's me that you need', we used orchestration for the first time. Steve Brown produced the basic track once again, at Dick James' studio, and then the strings were added at Olympic. That came out and again got a lot of airplay, but that wasn't a big seller either — and by this time, I was getting a little worried and a little depressed... but we kept on writing all the same.

"Around that time, there was a great lull; nothing much happened until we went to see Gus Dudgeon. Steve Brown had decided that he didn't want to produce us anymore; he wasn't really a producer and felt we should be working with somebody who knew more about it... and he also suggested that we look for an arranger, because the songs we were writing during that time were better suited to an orchestral setting than just a small group. Well, we went to see George Martin, but nothing came of that, and, frankly, there just weren't any arrangers in the country that I liked... but we went to see Tony Hall, and he put us onto Paul Buckmaster, who had done 'Love at first sight' by Sounds Nice and 'Friends' by Arrival. Paul had a listen to the tape of 'Your song' but, though he thought it was fantastic, he was worried that he wouldn't be able to do it justice.

2... "Elton John"

"Paul listened to all the other songs we had ready to record and eventually agreed to work on them with us, and he suggested that we go and see Gus Dudgeon, who he reckoned would be just right as our producer. Gus played it cool at first... 'not bad' he said, as he was listening to our



CONTINUING

THE ELTON JOHN STORY



The moody 1969 style Elton

tapes, but he eventually agreed to do it — so we had a new team. Dick had told me that he didn't mind how much the album cost as long as it was a good one, and so, in December 1969, Gus, Paul, Bernie, Steve and I sat down to discuss plans... and we did so in great detail, even down to which instruments were going to appear in which song. The following month, we cut the ten tracks which came out on the album, plus 'Grey Seal' (later the b-side of 'Rockin'roll madonna'), 'In the old man's shoes', and 'Bad side of the moon' (which came out on the b-side of 'Border Song').

"Not only was Gus a good producer, he was a good planner too; he and Paul organized all the session musicians — a lot of whom I knew already, especially the backing singers. You see, whilst all this was going on, I was also singing at sessions, like 'Back Home', for instance, and I was also making cover versions of hits for Avenue Records, which came out on Marble Arch, and I did a couple for Music For Pleasure... things like 'My baby loves loving', 'United we stand' and 'Signed, sealed, delivered'. They used to give me the higher ones, but the guy who did most of them was that bloke in Uriah Heep, David Byron.

"The 'Elton John' album subsequently came out in May 70, and sold about four thousand in the first few weeks... it even got to number 45 on the Record Retailer chart for one week! As far as we were concerned, it was a flop — we were really expecting great things to happen, but all that happened was that a lot of the songs got recorded by other people — a million groups did 'Pilot', and there were several versions of 'Sixty years on' and 'Border Song', including a superb one by Aretha Franklin.

"All this time, Steve Brown and various other people had been pressuring me to get a band together, but I'd been through as much of that as I needed during my four years on the road with Bluesology... I was well aware of all the hassles involved in group life and I didn't want any more. In the end, however, Steve got me to realise that going out on the road with a band was the only way I'd ever get anywhere. My first thought was to ask Caleb, but he was already involved with his own group, and so I approached Dee Murray and Nigel Olsson, who had been in the last Spencer Davis Group and had been to the States with him a couple of times. Since Spence had disbanded the group, they'd been doing nothing except the odd session, and so they were pleased to join me. Not many people rated Nigel as a drummer, but we did a rehearsal in the DJM studio one afternoon and things seemed to work out alright. Our first gig was the Pop Proms at the Roundhouse; we were third on the bill, above Curved Air, but below Brinsley Schwarz and Tyrannosaurus Rex, who were kind enough to let us use their pa, because we didn't have one. That worked out ok and we went on to play colleges and gigs like that.

3... Jeff Beck and USA

"I always said I'd never mention this, but Jeff Beck came to talk to me after I'd done a set at the Speakeasy one night... he said he'd really like to join the band. Well, I obviously wasn't going to let an offer like that go by, but at the same time I was a bit worried that he may try to turn us into a wailing-guitar group, which I was always against. Anyway, we set up rehearsals and I just simply couldn't believe how well Jeff fitted into the band... he was so good. But the crunch came when Jeff said 'I don't really like your drummer too much — I'd like to bring Cozy in'. You see, this was at the time when Beck was recovering from his car crash

and he didn't have his group together except for Cozy. Well, we had a big meeting and I decided I'd rather keep just Nigel and Dee because we'd only been going for a short time and I was really enjoying it.

"We'd been offered a gig at the Troubadour in Los Angeles and various other gigs in USA, but I was going to cancel them to rehearse with Jeff (until he pulled his bombshell), but looking back, I think Jeff maybe wanted to take the band over and go touring the States on his reputation. I've got no malice towards him - in fact, I think he's a really great guy, as well as being an incredible guitarist - but, as I said, I told him no and that was it... we went off to the States on our own and it worked out fine. Jeff asked me not to tell anyone about it, but I don't suppose he's bothered anymore... he's with those guys from Cactus now, so I imagine he's happy enough.

"As it happens, I really like Nigel's drumming - to the extent that I'm sure I'd find it very difficult to work with anybody else.

"I think the start of all the success was the Troubadour thing; it was just amazing. It's an incredibly funky little place, the best club of its kind anywhere, and all it is is some wooden tables and chairs and good acoustics. It only seats about 200, and the first night we played there it was packed to the brim with people from the record industry, who expected me to come on with this 15 piece orchestra and reproduce the sound of the album, which had recently been released there.

"We'd flown to Los Angeles, thirteen hours over the pole in this jumbo jet, and we arrived to find this bloody great bus... 'Elton John has arrived' and all that sort of thing... and it took another two hours to get to the hotel. Once we'd booked in, we were hustled out again and off to the Troubadour, where the Dillards were appearing... they were incredible, just knocked me out completely. In fact, the Dillards will probably be on our next American tour... I'd like to bring them over here too.

"Anyway, that first tour was a promotional thing; we did a week at the Troubadour, where it all happened, and then worked across to New York. If you happen in LA, you happen everywhere apparently... that's what they say, because LA is very slow and very fickle. After LA, we went to San Francisco to play the Troubadour there - they'd only just opened it - and that was a disaster... horrible... a big room with a fountain, and check table-cloths. It closed down, but we had one of the highest attendance rates they'd had... about 30 people a night! It was that bad!

"One thing about that week in LA: I was sharing the bill with David Ackles - I was topping the bill, but that seemed just unbelievable to me - there was no way anyone could've convinced me that I should be above David Ackles, but they explained to me that he was almost unknown there. I was flabbergasted, but during that week I discovered that people like Tom Paxton, and Ackles, and David Blue and so on are disregarded in LA... they're much better known over here.

"David Ackles was brilliant... I made a point of watching him every night, and he was just brilliant - and I heard that he only earned something like 5000 dollars in the whole of 1970. At the end of the week, he bought me a half bottle of Scotch and told me how much he'd enjoyed working with me... which was utterly incredible, because I'd always been a number one fan of his. To see that audience just chatting away while he was singing those lovely songs just tore me apart... people were there because the buzz had got around that

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I was the guy to see, and they didn't give a toss about a great person like him. One thing that did come out of that, however, was the album he's just put out; Bernie worked on the production of it... the songs are amazing.

"We eventually got to New York to do some East Coast gigs, and the best one was at a place called The Electric Factory in Philadelphia. We were bottom of the bill to Lighthouse and we just steamed on... no-one had a clue who we were, so we had nothing to lose. We just blew the place apart... went down a storm... and then we had to return to New York, where MCA Records had arranged a press party at the Playboy Club - you know, a 'these are some of our new acts' thing. It was a disaster from the word go... we were supposed to go on at 2, but didn't make it until 3, by which time all the press people had gone back to their offices... so that was a total waste of time.

"While we were in New York though, I got one of the biggest thrills of my life; I went to the MCA office and they said 'we just heard that your album is going to be number 17 on the Cash Box chart next week'... and it was; me at number 17 with a bullet, and Crosby Stills & Nash at 18! That freaked me out entirely - but I had to return to reality, and to London, to do a film soundtrack, 'Friends', which we'd contracted to do earlier in the year.

4...."Friends" and "Tumbleweed"

"The people who made the film were originally trying to get Richie Havens to do the soundtrack, but that fell through and they asked us... they'd heard our songs and liked them. At that point, Bernie and I were in the doldrums and were grabbing at any chances we could, so we agreed to do it - and, in fact, we had a couple of songs ready before we'd even seen the script. The film itself turned out to be a disaster, and anyone involved with it should own up to that fact... but the people who made it were really nice people, Lewis and John Gilbert... they taught us a lot about film music, showed Buckmaster what it was all about and they gave us plenty of leeway. But I'd never do anything like that again - not unless it was my film and I had complete control - because I reckon that, apart from the Lewis's and a handful of others, all film people are bastards. The hassles we had over that film... for instance, we wanted David Larkham, who does all our sleeves, to do the cover for 'Friends', but this guy at Paramount had other ideas: 'I don't like his work, I think it's awful - our boys will come up with a stunning cover'. And they came up with that horrible pink thing which makes you feel ill every time you look at it. Oh, I don't want to go on about it, but I'll tell you - that's the last time I'll ever do anything like that.

"We did all the 'Friends' album in 4 weeks... four weeks of very harrowing work, I might add. We did it at Olympic, but for some reason got a terrible sound and had to do the whole lot again at Trident. I didn't want the album to come out like an actual film soundtrack with car horns and things like that, so we filled it out with a couple of songs we were saving for the album after 'Tumbleweed' - 'Honky Roll' and 'Can I put you on?'. That album was so rushed it was a wonder it ever came out at all.

"By this time, 'Tumbleweed Connection' was already complete and ready to come out. Unlike 'Elton John', which had been

cut in about ten days, we did this one at odd sessions over a longer period and that gave plenty of time for David Larkham to get the sleeve exactly as he wanted it... he took so much care and trouble over it - I think he should get some sort of award because it's certainly the best sleeve of its kind that I've seen.

"Uni Records released 'Tumbleweed' in the States while 'Elton John' was still in the top ten there - and it went straight into the charts at number 25 with a bullet... within a couple of weeks we had two albums in the top five, and when we got back home, all the press suddenly wanted to know us. It was exactly the same thing that happened with Joe Cocker and Cat Stevens and Led Zeppelin... but once we started getting all the publicity, both 'Tumbleweed Connection' and 'Elton John', which suddenly began to sell over here, zoomed into the charts.

5....The live album

"I agree that the live album (17.11.70) is not very good, but I'll tell you the full story behind that; during our second tour of the States, which was mostly us co-headlining with people like Leon Russell, the Byrds, Poco, the Kinks and so on, we were asked if we'd like to do a live broadcast over the air. This hadn't been done in New York for years, and WABC (which is now WPLJ-FM, I think) said it could be done in a studio, sent out in stereo, and that the sound would be really good. Everyone agreed that it'd be an interesting thing to do, so we did it; we played in headphones, and it all came out of this little recording studio which had an audience of about a hundred to create the concert hall atmosphere.

"We didn't know at the time, but afterwards we found that Steve Brown had arranged for an 8 track recording to be made - just to see how it came out - and when we listened to it, we thought it was quite good. Well, because of a combination of many things - like that 'Friends' album, over which we had no control, was about to come out, for instance - we did a quick mix at DJM and released an album from the tapes. At the time, I thought it was good enough, and I also wanted it to come out because Dee and Nigel, who had been on very little before, were featured very strongly, of course.

"On the third tour of the States, the radio stations were playing it to death, and because it wasn't scheduled for release for another 3 months, there were an awful lot of import copies being sold... and I panicked: 'you've got to release it now or else it'll be a dead duck in 3 months'. So it came out in America, but the mix was much much better on the American copy.

"Looking back, it's not a wonderful recording, but I think it's valid - despite the fact that saleswise it was a disaster. Even 'Empty Sky' has outsold that one in Britain, and in America it only did 32.5 thousand, compared with the previous two which both did over a million. But it did mean that I had 4 albums in the US top 30, which hadn't been done since the Beatles.

"The 'Friends' album was officially certified as gold, but I don't believe that can be true. I think they pumped out so many copies to the shops that it was gold on the day of release... but I'm sure it didn't sell very well and that the shops'll send them all back to the company in due course. I'll have a look at the royalty statement and let you know... not that I mind having another gold album to hang up - it looks nice on the wall there.

The concluding part of this article (alright, we know that this was supposed to be the concluding part - but we don't want to chop it up and condense it, do we?) will appear in the next issue. Elton was talking to John

STRING DRIVEN THING



'String Driven Thing'

A discovery in the highest tradition of Charisma 'firsts' (i.e. Lindisfarne, The Nice, Genesis, Van der Graaf Generator). A remarkable first major appearance at the Reading Festival '72 has been followed by a period of private and close co-operation with producer Shel Talmy. A strange line-up: The superb violin of Graham Smith the sturdy vocal of rhythm guitarist Chris Adams, the voice and driving concert tambourine of Pauline Adams, the fine bass work of Colin Graham worked under Sir John Barbirolli in the Halle, before moving on to the Scottish National, where he began 'moonlighting' on gigs with Chris, Pauline and Colin in the Glasgow area.

CAS 1062

ATACAMA



'The Sun Burns Up Above'

The combination of good music and intense political motivation, performers and writers joining to reach and persuade public opinion, is now full-blooded tradition in Latin America, and particularly in Chile. Music is as effective a media as any when artists are prepared to play for little or nothing in villages impoverished and illiterate. ATACAMA's second album to be released on Charisma (The first was 'Atacama' CAS 1039) features songs from the central and southern regions of Chile, including three from their acknowledged 'master', Violeta Parra, who died tragically some years ago.

CAS 1060

LORD OF THE RINGS



Bo Hansson

Around five years ago quite a few British musicians were admiring a Scandinavian duo called Hansson and Carlsson, an organ/drums outfit ambitious beyond its time. Hansson, composer and keyboard man, retired from the gig scene to an island off Stockholm. Reclusive and other-worldly, he was seduced by Professor Tolkien's 'Lord Of The Rings' trilogy. Out of the seduction was born a series of haunting rhythms and melodies. In large part this 'Lord of the Rings' suite was recorded on that same small island off Stockholm, with Hansson's own organ and Moog Synthesiser dominating. The album includes a colour portrait insert of the rarely photographed Professor Tolkien, taken by Snowdon.

CAS 1059

REMEMBER...

CHARISMA PUTS A LITTLE COLOUR IN YOUR CHEEKS.



Well, the swallows have gone - lined up on the telephone wires over the road and cleared off to less wintry latitudes (the towards), as the first weeks of Autumn confirm that those few sunny days were, in fact, all we are going to see of any summer this year. And life in North Marston goes on in its familiar pattern; the Morton brothers have got in all the hay, Mrs Long's having her cottage re-thatched, the village children are all back at school, and the vicar is dead chuffed because the church clock's going again. All of which has not the slightest connection with music. (But I must just tell you; in the porches of at least 3 houses in this village of some 400 souls, stand gaily painted plywood parrots, balanced on perches by means of weighted tails. This I find both fascinating and extraordinary - could it be that the Womens Institute once ran an evening class here, giving instruction on the construction of plywood parrots?)

The Mothers chart in the last issue prompted quite a deluge of mail, and Zappa fans will doubtless be interested to learn of two operations: the first is The Mothers Home Journal, a sporadic publication on Zappamusic which is put out by one Craig Eldon Pinkus, Attorney at Law, of 3419 N. Pennsylvania, Apt E5, Indianapolis, Indiana 46205, USA. Then there is the Zappa Archives (Zark, for short), which is instigated and invigilated by Urban Gwerder of Schoffelgasse 10, 8001 Zurich, Switzerland. Should you drop a line to either of these astute gentlemen, it'd be a nice idea to enclose an International Reply Coupon so they won't have to fork out for stamps.

Many people write to enquire whether any of us write for other publications. I don't make a habit of it - though I recently did a couple of Mott articles (for which I haven't been paid yet.... come on, Defries... stump up) - because I just don't have any spare time. Mac, too, writes exclusively for us, but old Tobler makes up for both of us. He's written for just about every periodical known to man - under a multitude of bogus names as well as his own; James Fisher, Morrison, Arthur Davies, etc. His party piece is the patent Tobler Doors article, which he writes for every journal that hits the market - the latest being Let It Rock. He's done it so many times now, that he only has to sit at his typewriter, press his nose, and his finger starts prodding automatically.... cranking out his slightly modified Doors-in-a-nutshell like a computer print out. Chug chug chug. In fact, he's been so involved with other ventures that he hasn't done anything for Zigzag this month. Yah boo! Shame!

I'm always hesitant about recommending albums because my tastes have become even more narrow and bigotted than they were; a condition brought on by feeling obliged to give careful consideration to every record I get sent. However, for what it's worth, I derived intense pleasure from the following:

'Geronomos Cadillac' by Michael Murphy is very attractive, especially 'Calico Silver', which is a beautifully controlled and executed Virginia City (see Charlatans article) song.

'Rolling Thunder' by Mickey Hart features some fine grist from John Cipollina (Mill Valley's answer to Deke Leonard), which may be a good omen for the forthcoming Copperhead album.

'The Ship', produced by old Byrdman Gary Usher has some nice rolling stuff and is the best of the recent Elektra bunch.

'Faro Annie' by John Renbourn sees a re-version to his 1965 style, which I can't help preferring to his current Pentangling, though their new album is their best ever. The 6 Atlantic Blues releases are so very

ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

A very crammed up worthwhile inasmuch as they're a product of thought and love - beautifully packaged too.

Brinsley Schwarz keep it up... good on em. And finally, a remarkable album by a band who look perched ready to grasp superstardom after a long grind; 'Foxtrot' by Genesis. They've long been a favourite Bucks County group - highly popular with longhairs and, surprisingly, even young girls.... I know of several 14 year olds who would prefer a night with Peter Gabriel to one with David Cassidy or Donny Osmond or whoever the latest teenybop heart-throb is. Well, well... how interesting.

Records that I derived some measure of pleasure from include the Phlorescent Leech & Eddie, John Fahey, the Doobie Brothers, Cheech & Chong, Bob Weir.

I fear that I derived little or no pleasure from Tim Buckley, John Cale, John Hammond and various others that I can't even recall to mind.

Coincidental with Michael Wale's inauguration as our paperback recommender, comes his own fat tome called 'Vox Pop', published by Harrap at 30 bob, which does seem a bit pricey for a paperback without any fab pics in it. But, if you are fortunate enough to be laden down with hard cash, you'll find it a fascinating exposition of the record biz and its internal workings; 320 pages, including a brief mention of Zigzag.... can't be bad. Browse through it at your local WH Smiths. And while you're there, have a gander at 'Hell's Angels' by Hunter S Thompson (Penguin), which is the best book on the subject. Thompson himself has become something of a cult figure, what with his 'Fear & Loathing' and his amazing coverage of the election campaigning in Rolling Stone. Personally, I rate him as the most interesting journalist of our age. (He's the same guy, by the way, who ran for Sheriff of Aspen Colorado a few years back.... had he been elected, one of his immediate reformations was to have been the legalisation of mes-caline).

Books that you won't find in Smiths, but may come across in any shop which flogs import books are: The First Thirt by Neal Cassidy, star of 'On the road', 'The Acid Test' and later a Grateful Dead roadie. It's jumbled but good if you're into history of beatnikism and tracing routes of hippie culture and all that sort of stuff. (Cassidy is also the subject of a song on the recent album by Aztec 2 Step, and another by Ian Hunter of Mott, which was left off the Dudes album because Bowie vetoed it, I think).

The Age of Rock, volumes 1 and 2, are good in parts but mostly the usual Yankee hocus-pocus/mumble jumble intellectualising analytical horsemanure. 'The Rock Revolution' by Arnold Shaw is a nasty little potboiler, assembled with as much love and care as a Jimmy Young show.

If you live within the reception area of Radio London, you're lucky. We sit up here, our ears riveted to the crystal set, but listening to the music through all the atmospheric crackle is like trying to eat spaghetti through a tennis net. Have you even tried that? You'd be amazed at some of the perversions we get up to. Charlie Giffett has a good show on Sunday lunch-times - a programme chock full of solid rock'n'roll, supervised by someone who knows what he's talking about. Another

programme worth hearing is Breakthrough, hosted by Steve Bradshaw on Tuesday evenings... excellent. Interesting and varied, with nice interviews and a Richard Williams spot. Steve was kind enough to ask Connor McKnight and me to lunch the other day, and a delicious repast it was too, concocted exquisitely by his good lady. Many thanks.

The Old Grey Whistle Test is still by far and away the best (and only) rock show on television, with Bob Harris at the controls, but I still maintain that unless you have a colour box and an abundant supply of euphoriant, those whirly little films they have are a total insult to the intelligence. With any luck, Bob's column will be back next month... we've got into an incredible mix-up, but we should sort it out soon.

We had a weekend visit from 5 Byrd maniacs recently; Chrissie Annie and June of the Byrds Preservation Society, Barry the Byrdfreak and Carolyn from Massachusetts. We sat around, chatted, played records and tapes, and watched the telly, but the Zigzag ladies disgraced themselves by consuming too much wine and Bridget inadvertently tipped a whole plateful of steaming spaghetti into June's lap. Typical of our hospitality.... something invariably goes wrong.

Up to date on the Byrds: as far as we can gather (via the aforementioned Byrds ladies), the Rolling Stone report that Clarence has left is nothing but poppycock. The current Byrds, touring the US East Coast now, are Roger McGuinn (who has just finished a solo album - out next month), Skip Battin (who's also done a solo - out soon on Signpost Records), Clarence White, and new cat John Guerin on drums. Guerin is a highly paid session man (he was on 'Hot Rats' for example), so whether his arrival is permanent is rather dubious.

Now here's a strange thing; we've actually had several letters asking about the people who put Zigzag together, and even suggesting that we have photos of our faces at the top of each article! Blimey.... what do you take us for, Melody Maker ego trippers? Besides, we're an ugly lot of cretins - we don't want to destroy any romantic illusions you may be harbouring. Which reminds me; I see that Steve Peacock gets his face into Sounds with glamping regularly.... hey Peacock, you're looking a little run down there boy, a bit out of condition. Are you burning the candle at both ends, or isn't the Gnome feeding you properly?

If anyone is interested in cheering up a depressed Yank, drop a line of greetings to Dave Ivey, Number 223397, Box 777, Monroe, Washington 98272, USA. He's been shut away in the state pen on a 15 year sentence for an illegal fire-arms rap.

I've seen a lot of bands recently; Help Yourself, Manassas and Genesis were all superb, and quite outstanding too was a group called Glencoe, who made a considerable impression on my mind until it was wrenched out of its socket and stamped on with the arrival of the main band, Wizzard, who proceeded to belch forth the most unholy horrendous racket I've ever heard. Waaaagh! And I'd gone to see them because I've always dug Roy Wood's subtle imagination. Who else? Ah yes, Mott, who are still Mott and still magnificent.... but can these wild rumours about Overend Watts and David Bowie be true?

Well, I'm rapidly running out of space, so fare well. See you next month, when, in the face of all competition, we'll still retain our gritty integrity - we've got no intention of giving up our bumpkin heritage for gloss and colour (as if we had the bread for such escapades anyway!) Don't forget Little Molly Baked Bean, and that Thursday night is boogie night. Pete

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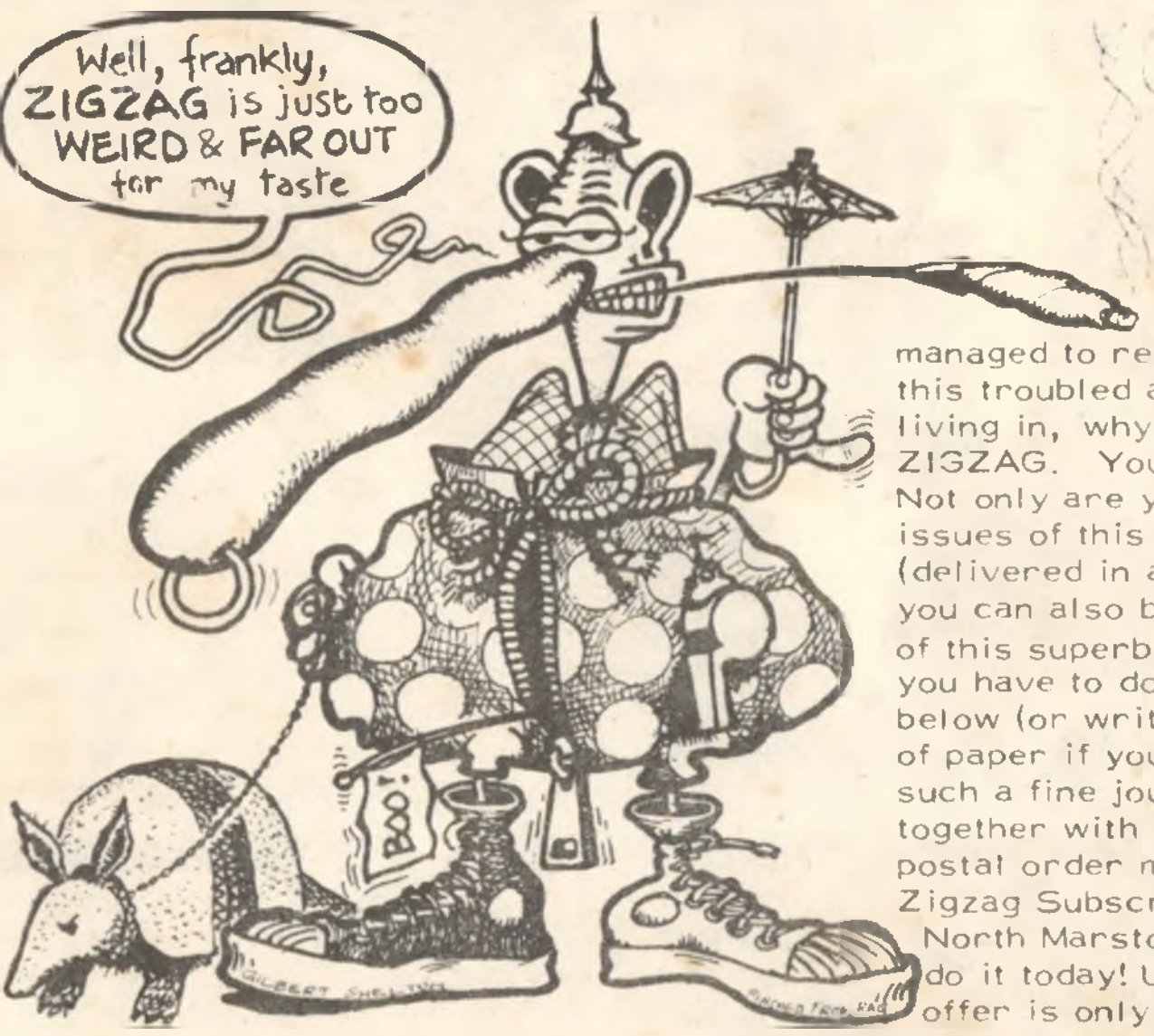


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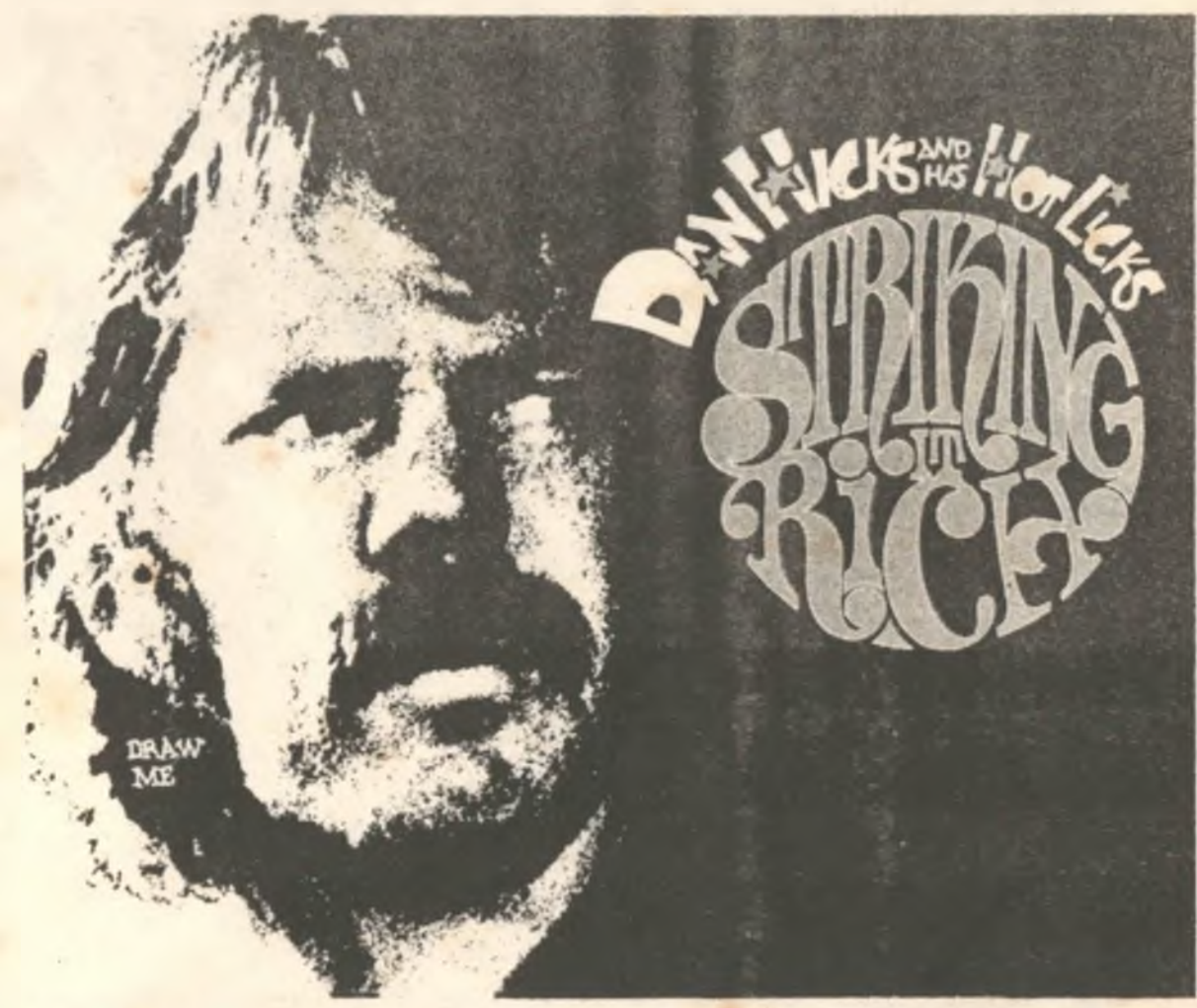
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