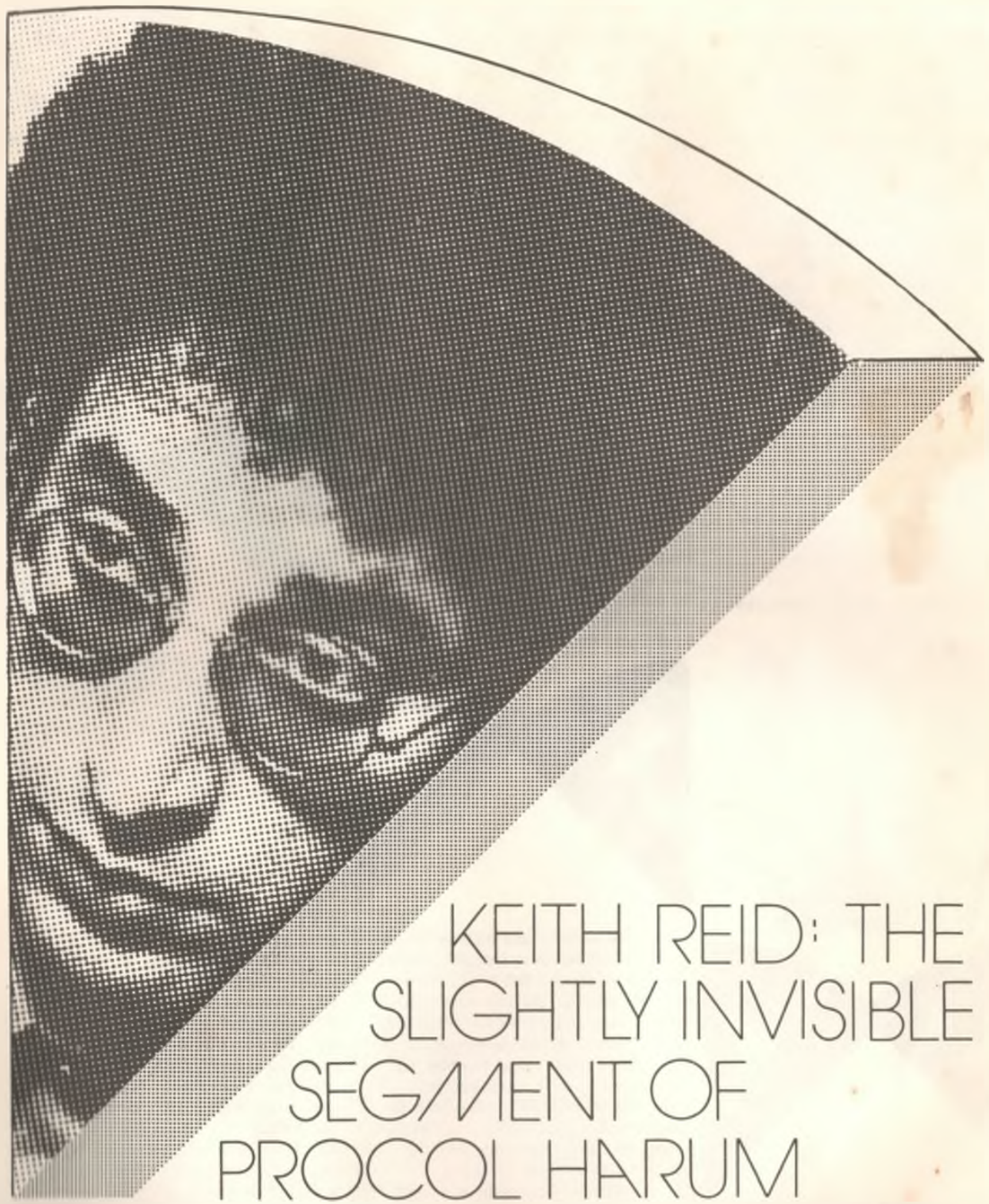
zigzag 30

Fifteen Pence



KEITH REID: THE SLIGHTLY INVISIBLE SEGMENT OF PROCOL HARUM

ZZ: The other Procul Harum interview ZigZag did was with Robin Trower (in ZZ27), and covered the period from the start of the group up until he left. So to begin with, can we have your views on his decision to go.

KR: You can hear it best really just listening to the 'Broken Barricades' album, made after Mathew Fisher had left the group—which had been I suppose, a year and a half, or a year and three quarters before. When Matthew left, we decided that we wouldn't get another organist but would be a four piece group, with the bass player playing organ on certain numbers and so, from that point on, we stopped featuring the organ as strongly as we had, and consequently the guitar came out more. Robin began to play a more dominant part in the group sound, and naturally began to want to contribute more to the songwriting side of things too—so, by the time we came to make the 'Home' album, he had written the music for two of the songs. Also, around that time we started to work more live; we became more of a live group giving live performances, so in that way he was more featured and when we eventually came to the time of 'Broken Barricades,' he was really wanting to write a lot. When he wrote the music for a song, it was based around the guitar, usually around a riff or something like that, the way most guitarists write songs, and it got to that point where he was wanting to dominate whatever he was doing—and he couldn't really do that within the group Procul Harum. I

don't mean that it was like a needle match or anything, with Robin trying to get ten minute solos; it wasn't anything like that, it was just that as things were evolving and he was being called on to do more, started to do more and of course, he couldn't stop doing more, and it was just that we couldn't become the Robin Trower group. Well, then we came to make the 'Broken Barricades' album, which really he wrote half the music for, it was obvious that he would have to go and form his own group. I hope this doesn't sound nasty, does it? It was just a natural progression, due to circumstances in that Mathew left and then we were a four piece. Robin was called on to do more, he eventually did do more and eventually reached the stage where he wanted to do the whole thing.

ZZ: When Robin left, what trials did the group go through?

KR: Well, we decided at that point that we had obviously gone as far as we wanted to go in the direction we had with Robin, and that we were going to go back to being a five piece group; with an organist as a permanent part and so we set about replacing Robin and getting an organ player as well (as Chris Copping was still going to be the bass player.) So we were, at that point, going to get both a new guitar player and a new organist. Well we tried to do that for a bit, but we eventually ended up getting a guitar player, which was Dave Ball, and we kinda had a brief flirtation with Matthew again after he expressed interest to return to the group, but it turned out that he didn't really want to commit himself; he just thought it would be interesting to do a tour of America to see how it went, which was just no good as far

as we were concerned, because we were trying to make a constructive step ... You can't change every three months. So we had this kind of brief re-association with Mathew, and then decided not to go through with it, but we had a tour planned, songs written, we wanted to record and so on, so we decided to take Chris off the bass and put him on the organ full time, because when he originally joined us it was with the intention of playing a lot of organ, which,through various circumstances, he never had. We said, 'Well, you play organ all the time and we will get another bass player,' which was a much easier thing to do—so we got in Alan Cartwright, who was a friend of Gary's from a long while back and there we were back again to being a five piece group.

ZZ: Therefore the writing reverted to Gary and yourself?

KR: Yes, exactly.

ZZ: And what was the first writing that came out of this?

KR: Well that's everything on 'Grand Hotel.' The first thing we worked toward, when we got the group reorganised, was doing the orchestral concerts with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in Canada and so on, and then after we had done that we started to work toward doing this album.

ZZ: How did that album with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra come about?

KR: A couple of years before we did the Edmonton thing, we had been invited to a festival in Canada called the Shakespeare Festival, which they have in Stratford, Ontario. We were invited to play with an orchestra there but it wasn't the same sort of concert; the idea was that there would be an orchestra come on and play for whatever it was, 20 min-

utes or half an hour, and then we would play with the orchestra for half an hour, followed by another half hour on our own. We did that, playing songs from 'A Salty Dog' and the whole of 'In Held Twas I,' and we wanted to record that, but due to, I think, union troubles, we were unable to do so. Anyway, as a result of that, a couple of years later we were invited to do a full scale concert, a proper hour and a half thing with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

ZZ: Wasn't it very hurriedly put together, though, in the end?

KR: Yes, I think it was in a way, in that these things always end up being a last minute thing; even if you plan them three years in advance nothing gets done, until the last three weeks of it ... particularly from Gary's point of view because he was still writing the orchestrations on the plane to Edmonton. (We were on an American tour, with the Edmonton gig about half way through, and he was still writing orchestrations on the plane going over...and I know he didn't write the orchestration for 'Conquistador' until a couple of days before we did the concert. He'd certainly not heard them played until the day of the concert—in fact the actual concert itself.) What we wanted to do was get there a couple of days in advance and rehearse, and also get the technical problems sorted out for recordings, but it eventually ended up that we couldn't really rehearse; in fact one song on the album we had never played before with an orchestra until we actually did it ... that was 'All This and More,' and 'Conquistador' I don't think we actually rehearsed with the orchestra—they had played the orchestration and rehearsed it once, but I don't think we actually went through

it with them. So we didn't have a satisfactory rehearsal in any way before we actually went on stage.

ZZ: And yet on the album the sound is fantastic.

KR: Well, that's a compliment to the people who recorded it really; Wally Heider's mobile unit, which was incredible. The thing they set up was just like a recording studio, and I think that's due to them really and to Chris Thomas who supervised it, but basically it was an engineering job, actually getting the sound down on tape, under very difficult circumstances. It was a miracle that we got anything.

ZZ: What was the attraction of working with an orchestra;

KR: We didn't want to work with an orchestra as such, it was just that it was suggested to us to do it. 'Yeah what a great thing to do ... Let's do it, why not, let's try it.'—it was like that.

ZZ: In the past, rock music and classical orchestras haven't to me seemed to work too well; they have been two separate entities.

KR: I haven't heard very much, but I think that is true. For a group or anybody writing popular songs to merge with an orchestra, you have got to have the right kind of songs. I mean, it's no good playing rock and roll with an orchestra because one thing has nothing to do with the other—so you have got to have a certain scope in the basic music before you can find something for an orchestra to do ... there is no point just having strings and so on for the sake of it, just playing the same thing as the group is playing, you have got to have something which they can add to and enlarge upon. There has got to be an empathy with the music that the group is creating and the kind of music that an orchestra is capable of creating.

ZZ: Next time you used an orchestra was at the Rainbow, wasn't it—just after Mick Grabham joined?

KR: Yes, which was quite a long time after Edmonton—something like 9 months later. We did the thing at the Rainbow, followed by a tour of Europe; we were invited by a German orchestra to do a tour with them and we played in Zurich, Vienna, and about four or five concerts in Germany.

ZZ: Did that work out well?

KR: Yes, it was great. That was really good because it was the same orchestra on all the gigs, so we were able to rehearse with them, and by about the second or third job all the problems had been ironed out and all the people could relax and just try and play well, because there are so many technical problems; the actual time spent on playing together is minimal compared with the organisation of setting it up. It's the kind of thing where equipment men had to arrive at 10 am., and it would take them ten hours to set up—you have to have 50 or 60 microphones to get any kind of balance.

ZZ: The intricacy of the sound set-up was noticeable at the Rainbow—all the mikes and roadies and things.

KR: Yes, well at the Rainbow we didn't have the equipment; the equipment that we used wasn't good enough. At both Edmonton and all the German concerts we had a much better mix between the group and the orchestra. At the Rainbow it was ridiculous. We didn't have enough microphones, the equipment didn't work very well, we rigged up bits of scaffolding with all the mikes held up on bits of string. They were all swinging around. Not enough thought went into it. They were still building the stage, you know. In fact, Gary was kind of designing the stage for them, I remember, it was ridiculous, we were at the office and we were trying to work out how many chairs we needed. We were all standing up with Chris saying 'Well, if he's a fairly fat chap playing cello he's going to need about this much room' Oh, it was just a farce. But eventually it worked out all right—and even though I don't think the sound was as good as it could have been, it was a really good concert. I felt good about it when it was all over. The other major improvement was that with the German orchestra, we also had a choir, the Munich Boys Choir, who were incredible; they were from the ages of about 8 to 16. That was great because they were a fantastic choir, but it was quite funny to see them on stage singing like cherubs whilst round the back they were a real bunch of hooligans throwing their music on the floor and punching each ohter, and in fact I was standing around the side watching them one night and one of them was pinching the boy beside him—it was like a really choir boys kind of thing, but they were great. It was funny—the last night after the last show, we laid on a party for them; we said 'We'll have champagne for the orchestra but what can we give the kids? We'll get a load of the 'Edmonton' albums and sign them all and give everybody an album.' So we had about 40 bottles of champagne and about 40 albums and we signed the albums and put them in a big heap ... and

then the kids ran in and drank all the champagne; they got in earlier than the orchestra, and there was like all the champagne gone, and they didn't want to know about the albums. They were great. It was really touching.

ZZ: You don't seem to have done so much touring lately.

KR: We have. Ever since the Edmonton Concert up until now, all we've done has been touring and recording. We've had very little time off for practically two years, but I'll agree that we haven't appeared in England very much.

ZZ: This was always the case though.

KR: Yes, this has been the case. We have done two tours of Scandinavia, tours of Germany, three tours of America each year, but very little in England.

ZZ: Have you got out of playing 'A Whiter Shade of Pale' in America?

KR: We always play it when people ask for it. The only reason we could feel embarrassed about it is if we believe what other people said about it ... that we were one-hit wonders. But we have got the thing in perspective so whenever people want to hear it, we play it. It's usually the final thing we do if people haven't had enough.

ZZ: Can you tell us a little about 'Grand Hotel' and when you started work on it first of all?

KR: We started work on it a year ago, in March of last year—as soon as we finished mixing the 'Edmonton' album. We started recording it, but were interrupted by touring, and I think we went back to it in about June or July, but at that point we listened to what we had got, and weren't at all satisfied with it, so we threw it all out of the window. Then we got a new guitar player, Mick Grabham, and went back in around the end of November and worked on it for about 12 to 14 hours in the studio every day for about 6 weeks.

ZZ: But it was all written prior to your going into the studio?

KR: Yes, well a couple of songs on it, 'TV Caesar' and a song called 'Liquorice John,' were written in the last period in October, when we last started on it, but the rest of the material was pretty much written.

ZZ: How do you go about writing things? Do you and Gary write separately?

KR: Yes, I write separately from Gary and give him the words. He writes whenever he has the chance; when he's at home, he'll sit down and try to write melodies or whatever, and when I have something ready, I'll give it to him and he'll see if any of what he's written will fit. We go on from there. As often as not, he'll have something that fits with only a few minor alterations on his part, but if he hasn't got anything, we'll specifically sit down together and he says I've got this little bit and that will go there and what about this bit and that bit.

ZZ: So, when you write the words, you

don't have any idea how the tune will come out?

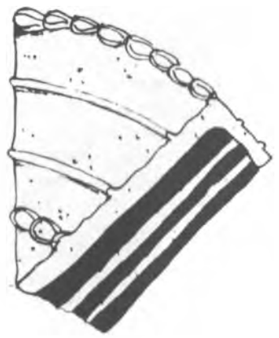
KR: No—no idea at all.

ZZ: Isn't that a bit shattering when you get in the studio?

KR: No, I always know what it's like before we go in and record it. That's the strength or weakness of the relationship, you know. The better the words and music come together, the more perfect the marriage, the better the song; the most successful songs we do are the best marriages of words and music. With, for

example, the 'Grand Hotel' album, every song's like that to me.
ZZ: Can you tell us something about those songs?
KR: Well, 'Grand Hotel' starts off by saying, 'Tonight we sleep on silken sheets, drink fine wine and eat rare meats.' The song is like that, the music is like that, all silken sheets, fine wines.
ZZ: Why the concept of 'Grand Hotel? '
KR: Well, because I just thought originally, 'Grand Hotel' would be a great title for an album, and it immediately gave me an idea for a song. Actually, I had the title before I wrote the song. The thing is, it isn't a concept album, it was just for the first time we echoed the particular song in the artwork and everything, and I guess in the promotion of the album in relationship to the song.
ZZ: Is there something that fascinates you about grand hotels—I suppose you stay in a lot of them?
KR: I wish we did. That song is a bit of a fantasy, a bit of wistful thinking. I'm all for staying in grand hotels and sleeping in silken sheets—none of this out in the country for me, I'm afraid, it's the Ritz ... We are dining at the Ritz;
ZZ: 'A souvenir of London' was about VD, I believe.
KR: Who told you that? It's certainly about tourism, I think I can safely say that. Certainly about young men abroad, or broad young men. I can say no more, my lips are sealed.
ZZ: What other tracks can you tell us about?
KR: There is a song called 'Toujour L'amour.' The title is humorous because in the song the woman goes off and leaves a chap, who comes home to his empty flat to find a note she's left for him; she's taken the cat as well!
ZZ: Personal experience?
KR: No, not yet—I've still got the cat. Then there's a song called 'TV Caesar' and that comes from being in America a lot. They have these talk shows. Particularly a couple of years ago when David Frost was really popular there and Johnny Carson and Joey Bishop and all those shows, and the idea of the song was like they are all TV Caesars—Caesars of the television; they are running everything.
ZZ: It certainly seems that way with Carson.
KR: Yes, well he's fantastic, I mean wow I really like him! The song sort of says, well, there you are sitting watching them, eating your TV dinners. They are creeping in through you eyes and ears, finding out all about you, and the idea is that they run everything, because to a certain extent in America I think their lives do revolve around television. I mean people do watch TV so much and if you listen to them talking, they talk about 'did you see so and so on the Frost show last night? ' A lot of their life has to do with what opinions people express on these shows ... the things they talk about.
ZZ: Have you ever been on one of these chat shows?
KR: We've never talked on one of those shows, but that's our ambition. We've been on the David Frost Show, and on the Smothers Brothers show once. The David Frost show was incredible; it's done on the day to day kind of thing—he doesn't come to the rehearsals but turns up at around 6.00 and shakes everybody's hand. For the rehearsals, they have a wax effigy of him sitting in a chair ... you can't tell the difference. Hope you are not reading this David! He's such a powerful man. But they have a big wax dummy of him sitting in the chair, and then they slip the dummy out and he slips in.
ZZ: Did he say anything abut you? What did you play?
KR: I don't know, we did 'Salty Dog' a long time ago, 3 or 4 years ago, but we didn't see it because it didn't appear until a few weeks later. Apparently it was diabolical.
ZZ: What about the Smothers Brothers show: that was meant to be a satire, wasn't it?
KR: Yes, but once again we did a musical thing—we just played on the show. I believe that was pretty diabolical as well ... we didn't see that one either though.
ZZ: For 'Conquistador,' Top of the Pops did a film, didn't they? Did you ever see that?
KR: I did. Say no more. That was terrible, that was really a diabolical film. They should have had Pan's People dancing to it. In suits of armor.
ZZ: Why weren't you on it?
KR: I don't know, I think it was one of those things, if it had gone a bit higher the following week we would have been on. Something like that. I don't know.
ZZ: You seem to me, compared with the modern pop scene, to be very much a loner. You are apart. Do you see yourself like that?
KR: Yes, I suppose so, and I think the group as such, is kind of apart. I think that's probably our strength.
ZZ: And then of course, at the Rainbow, you came on and read your own lines.
KR: Yes.
ZZ: On 'Grand Hotel' do you do anything like that?
KR: Well I did do something like that, but I went off to Jamaica and they decided to cut it.
ZZ: What did you do?
KR: I recited a poem. The idea was for it to be at the end of the album. It's a poem called Sayonara.
Henry Higgins fell from the riggins,
In Yoko Hama Harbour,
He hit the deck and broke his neck,
Sayonara.
What we did when we said 'He hit the deck and broke his neck' was we had the crunch of the neck and the thud of the body hitting the deck. Anyway they cut it out.
ZZ: Why?
KR: Probably no good.
ZZ: Are you writing any poetry at all now, besides lyrics?
KR: Not really very much. Usually anything I write we use, though occasionally I have done things which just were not capable of being made into songs. When I sit down to write, I sit down to write something that is going to be a song ... I don't ever sit down to write just a poem or something.
ZZ: Do you see yourself writing for anything else but the group, or the group doing perhaps, for want of a better word, a rock opera. More of a concept thing?
KR: I'd like for us to do, not an opera as such, but something like that. A concept kind of album, yes.
ZZ: I think opera is a rather overweighted word combined with rock.
KR: Well, it has been rather abused. I mean if you are going to do an opera you have to have different characters and you have to have a story, which is quite a hard thing to do. If I write a song it's usually written in the singular—one person speaking about himself or about a relationship between people, but it's not usually different characters. It's not a Mr. Big Man and Mr. Little Man and so and so, but I would very much like to do something like that; I think it's the sort of thing we could do well. But whether we will or not—that depends on me really, and Gary.

Michael Wale



OH NO

...THE DREADED GETTING IT TOGETHER IN THE COUNTRY

The trend, created a few years ago of groups going away into the country to find themselves musically, has led to a number of recording studios springing to life in suitably rural areas away from it all.

One studio that is proving that London is not the be all and end all of the British recording scene is Rockfield studios, Monmouth. They have just launched their own label, achieving chart success first time with the Dave Edmund's recording of 'Baby I Love You.' The single is admirably produced, 64 dubbs in all, weeks of hard work and all done by Mr. Edmunds himself.

The studios are owned and run by Kingsly Ward, with help from his brother Charles. That there Welsh border country is pretty wild territory and if you think that Edward the First subdued the Welsh crazies then the story of the Ward brothers' success may make you think again.

Rockfield is one and a half miles outside Monmouth; a telephone box, a post office/cum shop and a few houses —but no sign of a recording studio. The studio is, in fact, back up the road towards Monmouth, situated in, to what all intents and purposes looks and smells like a Welsh farm. The sign on the gate says Amberley Court, there are cows in the fields; a tractor is parked outside an old hay-filled barn and there is a pungent line in soil-covering, which definitely makes it wellington boot country. The only indication on first arrival that the place could conceivably be linked with the swinging pop business is the smallest of signs saying 'STUDIO 1,' which points towards the old stables.

Kinglsy Ward's mother came to the farmhouse door and showed us up to her son's first floor flat. She goes to great lengths to explain that the house was once owned by Lord Llangattock, that the farm covers 120 acres and that she has taken to locking up the family valuables ever since clocks and ornaments started to disappear with the groups.

If you have any preconceived ideas about how a 34 year-old recording studio boss acts or dresses, then I advise you to dispense with them for the time being to prevent the following incidents from straying into the realms of comic fiction. Kingsly Ward is long and skinny with straggly hair that makes him look like he has been kipping under a bramble bush for a week. The nose is large and hooked; combine this with a missing front tooth to the right of the mouth and you have a side profile straight from the witch in 'Hansel and Gretal.' His accent is rambling, mumbling Welsh, ending his sentences in a series of insane cacaphaneous laughs, which tend to prove totally infectious to the assembled company.

Within a few minutes of entering his flat, a conventionally furnished flowered wall-paper type of place (which also houses his wife and two children) we realised that we were in for a unique and crazy experience. First a traditional Rockfield welcome, a handshake, a loud laugh, a few more handshakes—and a few more laughs. Almost immediately the plans for Rockfield's new 24 track quadrophonic studio are produced from the sideboard drawer and spread out on the carpet. The new set-up, which will be a further developement on the present 16-track unit, is being built in a series of run-down outhouses, will cost around £70,000 and should be ready for the first sessions in the next few months. The intial PR is impressive, but Kingsly has trouble deciding which way round the plans should be viewed from, so he screws them up and shoves them behind the television.

'This is the Rockfield system lads; under the jug, behind the tele, all over the bloody place!'

A camera is then produced to get a few informal shots of Kingsly. The effect is amazing. He starts to leap and bound around the room, brushing his hair back, kicking his legs in the air and shouting, 'OOh what a bloody poser I am, what a bloody poser lads. Oooh Christ I must wash my hair. I can't have me picture taken with dirty hair!'

Suddenly he trips up on the carpet, falling against the large oak sideboard and knocking over a complete lego model village and a large bowl of goldfish. Everbody ducks as the room is covered in fish and plastic. Kingsly leaps up frantically;

'Ooooh christ. Where's me goldfish. I want me goldfish back. I don't give a fuck about anything else—but where's Clarence!'

After a desperate search, Clarence, the Ward's prize goldfish is found limply flipping his tail under the settee and is popped back in his bowl with his friends. Kingsly is relieved at finding his fish. He starts to giggle, giggles a bit more, finally breaking into uncontrollable hysterical laughter.

Suddenly he stops and looks serious.

'Do you want to have a look at the studio'

We nod

'Got your wellies?'

We make a rather quick exit from the flat. The room is soaking, with a few fish still lying around the carpet. Complaints are also filtering up from Kingsly's parents downstairs, that water is dripped all over the 'bloody place.'

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The studio is situated next to the farmhouse in a set of converted stables. From the outside you would bet very heavily that the building contained horses and not tape machines. But it has all the mod cons, even down to the doors being electronically locked and monitored by a remote controlled TV camera perched on the roof opposite. That is for security reasons, says Kingsly. Inside, the place is long and narrow, true to stable dimensions, with a low ceiling made even lower by the red interior lighting. At the far end a door leads by way of a small step to the control room, which contains a fine array of recording equipment; a 16 track machine, a Leevers Riche, Two Philips tape recorders, a Revox and an EMI recorder for phasing and double tracking. The mixing panel was made specially to Rockfield specifications by Rossor's of Swansea and is flanked on either side by two large speakers and the H2H amplification system—a definite guarantee when it comes to rattling the cerebral juices. Stone walls, dimly lit, give the room a general Wookey-hole feel.

Nobody is using the studio today, which does account for some of the coldness. Carole Pegg was due to be doing a session, but she has been involved in a car accident up north, so apart from a drum kit, a piano and a few mike stands, the studio is bare.

Kingsly is still leaping around, refusing to be pinned down by anything passably sensible.

'Well here it is lads. Bloody great, eh? Let's go have a pint, I talk better after a pint or two.'

At the Beaufort Arms, Monmouth, we are joined by Kingsly's older brother Charles who's just come from the fields after tending to the cows. It is truly amazing what a few beers and a ploughman's lunch can achieve. Suddenly the two brothers become unstoppable. The subject; the Ward brothers' early foray into the pop world—during the late fifties and early sixties.

KW: We started playing around the rock shows in South Wales, around 1958.

CW: We had one group called The Infernos.

KW: Oh christ yes! Talk about being green in those days. Charles bought an electric guitar, but he didn't realise that you had to have amplification. So he spent the whole time twiddling the nobs on this bloody electric guitar trying to change the sound. We went for this audition at Abergevenny for the BBC or something or other. There was this lady in the stalls very posh like. Anyway we walked on. There was Charles with his guitar and no amplification, the drummer's cymbal held up with a milk bottle top and me, stoned out of me head, on keyboards.

CW: Oh a right bloody state we were in!

KW: Anyway we let rip. At the end there was complete silence, you could have heard a pin drop. Then this posh lady stands up and says, 'What are you called? 'The Infernos,' we said. 'The infernal what?' she says. Oh christ it was embarassing!

CW: We went out like little piggies on all fours.

ZZ: You were still working fulltime on the farm in those days?

KW: Oh yeah, yeah, the farm was our bread and butter. We used to travel all over the place. Sometimes we wouldn't get back until 4 or 5 in the morning and then we'd have to get up at seven in the morning to milk the cows. It meant that we were working 90 hours a week.

CW: We had 400 pigs in those days. It was no joke.

ZZ: What happened after the Infernos?

KW: Well around 1960 after I came out of college Charles and I formed the Charles Kingsly Combo, consisting of drums, keyboard and guitar. We used to promote artists like Ricky Vallance, around the clubs in the area and instead of having to pay for a backing group we used to back the artists ourselves. Clever eh?

ZZ: Did you make any attempt to do any recording at this time?

KW: The first tape that we made was in 1960 and was recorded in the hallway of the farmhouse on an old Ferrograph—very primitive technique it was. Charles played the guitar and I backed him on cocoa tin, hahaha. Talk about a bloody row! Anyway we thought we might as well take the tape to the record companies in London ...

CW: We went up during the haymaking season, wasn't it? Rushing up to London was a drag.

KW: Ha ha ha ha ha! Talk about a pair of scruffy yokels! I only had one pair of shoes and one pair of trousers.

CW: We were up there for two weeks as well.

KW: Ha ha ha ha. Oooh don't mention that ... Anyway we went to London clutching our tape. We went to Middlesex first I think. We got to the door of the record company and there's this doorman all posh like. He takes one look at Charles and I and says 'Where you lads want to go is St. John's Wood.' So off we troop to St. John's Wood and when we get there after great bloody difficulty this doorman says 'Aah where you lads want to go is ...' It was a bloody chain reaction!

CW: The person we really wanted to see was George Martin, the Beatles producer, you know.

KW: Christ I didn't know who he was. Christ I thought he was a comedian. Ha ha ha ha ha ha. Honest I dind't know who the bloody hell he was!

CW: Well when we got to EMI and they said that George could see us in two weeks time. So we thought we might as well come back and see him.

KW: We went up to George's office on

the sixth floor or something—and there's this long corridor with fancy glass panelling. We couldn't find the door, we were banging on the glass and his door was 20 yards down the corridor. Anyway we go into his office and George is sitting behind this huge desk. 'Come in and sit down, lads,' he says. 'What have you got for me.' We produced our tape and he wants us to play on his machine. 'No, no,' we says, 'it's all right George, have a listen on our machine;' we didn't want to risk putting it on his sophisticated gear, see.

CW: We didn't have a plug though, so we connected it using a couple of match sticks. The socket was bloody difficult to find as well.

KW: Oh christ. The plug was under George's desk like. So there I was holding the flex in with the two matchsticks, crouched under the desk, with the bloody sparks flying up around George's knees.

CW: He was creasing his brow a bit. I don't think he dug the sound. He was very nice though, very charming.

KW: Oh yes he must have been charmed by us. Ha ha ha ha ha, what a nice couple of blokes he must have thought. What a pair of charmers!

ZZ: Did anything come of that meeting?

KW: Well George thought that our sound was a little dated. He didn't think that he could do anything for us.

At this point the conversation was broken off by a call of 'time' from the bar. Charles was eager to get back to the fields anyway. So we all returned to the farm.

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Back at the farm we adjourned to the cottage at the top of the farm that is used to accomodate the groups. Kingsly is slightly subdued by the lunchtime pint and there are no distractions; Charles is in the fields, Pat Moran, Rockfield's resident engineer, is fiddling around in the studio down the track and Fritz Fryer, who has been producing at the studio, was last seen swigging Guinness in Monmouth.

ZZ: Okay if we could start from when you first got the idea to turn the farm here at ...

KW: Oh christ you know when I get talking you can't stop me! I'll tell you a funny thing. I went on a Radio 1 club at Cardiff a few years back to promote the studio. When I got on, I just kept talking, the DJ didn't get a chance to ask any questions. After a few minutes he was trying to shut me up. 'Thank you Kingsly Ward, THANK YOU Kingsly Ward,' he kept saying. The only way he got me off the stage was to put his boot against my chest while he introduced the next record ... and I'm still shouting about Rockfield as he is doing it! Ha ha ha ha ha! Ooh I'm sorry, you were saying. Oooh christ I am a bugger aren't I. Ha ha ha.

ZZ: I was asking you when you first had the idea of using the farm here at Amberley Court as a recording studio?

KW: Okay. Well it goes back to about 1962, when we took a demo tape of the Charles Kingsly Combo to a record producer, who was very well known at the time, called Joe Meek. He had a very big hit on his hands at the time with 'Telstar' and when he heard our tape he couldn't believe it. We had a sound identical to 'Telstar,' but recorded two years before 'Telstar.' That's what got him interested in us, see. We released a single from the demo tape called 'Lost Planet,' which didn't do a thing over here but got in the local charts in the States. We weren't known as the Charles Kingsley Combo in the States, we released the single there under the name of the Thunderbolts. Over here we were known as the Charles Kingsley Creation. We were only known as the Charles Kingsly Combo when we played in South Wales.

Anyway with Joe's encouragement we came back here and set about putting our own studio together. We have very good premises here, you know. We were just lucky to have the premises to convert.

ZZ: What was your first studio like?

KW: Well in 1963 we bought four domestic EM Ferrographs, which we put into the attic of our farmhouse. Up until then, as you know, we were recording in the hallway of the house on a couple of old tape machines. We started to record small local groups ... very primitive it was. Then in 1965 we converted what was the granary reallly into a small stereo studio. The first group we recorded there was a group called 'The Interns.' I took the tape to EMI and they were so knocked out with the quality of the sound that they offered a contract. So from 1965 to 1967 we were recording mainly local bands like the 'Interns' and 'Amen Corner.' The people in London found it quite amusing that we were trying to do it better in the country. We were a bit of a joke, you know. Then in 1967 I got involved with certain artists in Cardiff and one of them was Dave Edmunds, who was recommended to me by several musicians as an outstanding guitarist. Anyway he came on the scene and my brother wrote a song called 'River To Another Day.' He recorded it and that was how Love Sculpture was formed. That was the first single that we managed to get successful plugging on. Previous to that, we couldn't get plugged, because we didn't know enough people in London. John Peel rated it—it got good airplay—and that was the beginning of our upward climb.

ZZ: Around this time 1967/68 you got to know record producers Gus Dudgeon and Roger Bane. What sort of help did they give you?

KW: Well I got to know Gus and Roger through David Platz of Essex music ... Well what happened was that in 1968 we moved from the granary to the present studios in the stables. Charles built most of the new 16 track studio, when he wasn't milking the cows. Anyway Gus and Roger came down and gave us some very useful advice on the equipment set up, how low we should have the ceiling and things like that. They also started bringing bands down to record and generally telling people that we existed. Mind you, not always totally successfully. Ha ha ha ha... I remember Gus was on a Welsh TV show supposed to be giving Rockfield a plug. He was wearing a huge top hat and all the colourful gear. Anyway he sat there on the box and talked for 10 minutes non-stop, talking absolute shit, he was. We couldn't believe it, he was talking absolute rubbish ... and he didn't mention Rockfield once. Ooh Christ I don't know how he got away with it!

ZZ: Dave Edmunds took 'I Hear You Knocking' to the top of the charts in 1970. That must have really been when you got off the ground?

KW: 'I Hear You Knocking' was the first hit single to be done at this place. That obviously added incredible publicity to us. After that bands such as the Roy Young Band, Hawkwind, Gypsy and Arthur Brown started using the place. From then on there's been an endless stream of groups using the studio. About six months ago we had a telephone call from America and a recording company over there, mentioning no names, wanted to fly five bands a year just to record here. And they were the biggest company in the States. But we were fully booked up. It just seemed too much of a hassle to get involved in, so it was never followed up.

ZZ: The cost of getting this place off the ground must have been quite enormous. Where did you get the money for the studio and all the equipment?

KW: Well we're very lucky that we always had a lot of assets and if you've got a lot of assets at the back of you you can easily borrow money from the bank. We owned the property and that stood as a good guarantee. We borrowed money from the bank and all sorts of places. It was a very gradual buildup from the early sixties through to 1970 and Dave Edmunds' hit record. It didn't take the world's largest amount of money.

ZZ: You've just launched the Rockfield label with the Dave Edmunds single, 'Baby I Love You' and, to put it crudely, have hit the jackpot first time.

KW: We were very lucky really! We had signed a deal with RCA about 12 months ago for our own label, on the understanding that if we could find a couple of groups to start the label, then we would release a single at that point. Dave Edmunds' contract with his previous company had expired, so his recording of 'Baby I Love You' was available. So the obvious thing to do was to start the label at that point. It's lucky that it proved successful first go.

ZZ: What sort of deal does Dave goet on the label?

KW: Well he gets about 9% of the profits. We get about 2/3%.

ZZ: Is it a lot cheaper for groups to record here than in London?

KW: It costs a group roughly £160 a day to use the 16 track studio. In London it can be as much as £40 an hour or getting on that way. For four hours in London you can get a whole day at Rockfield. The reason that we can operate at such a low cost is primarily that we owned the property originally, we had no use for this place, other than it was a farm. So all we've done basically is convert something that wasn't making money into something that is quite profitable. If we had had to buy the property from scratch then obviously we would have to charge double what we are charging now. This new 24 track quadrophonic studio will be as cheap to use as some 8 track studios in London. We have passed the low overheads of the place onto the groups and the record companies.

ZZ: You mentioned earlier that in the early days, people in London treated Rockfield as a bit of a joke, a sort of down on the farm, straw chewing scene where only groups desperate for a place to record would use. Did you ever get disillusioned by people predicting failure?

KW: Well ... people in London told me it would never work. That everything went on in London, that all the session men were in London, that London studios were the best. We came along with our ideas and it looks like we are going to be proved right. The only thing we have comparable to London studios, is the 16 track machines and the 24 track when it arrives. But the mixing consuls and the design of the studios are different from the way things are done in London. Because of this I think that Rockfield has that little bit of magic in the sound of it. It strikes me that in London the mixers and the equipment are all interchangeable. No matter what studio you use, they more or less sound the same; very clinical and very well recorded. I don't really hear that little bit of magic—coming out of them.

ZZ: Can you say that there is a definite Rockfield sound produced from the studio here though?

KW: Well all I can say is that we don't have any trouble with bass and drum sounds, they're very easy. We can't take much credit for it, we're just lucky that the building we converted, with the low ceiling and the equipment that was designed specially for us, means that we get what can best be described as a 'funky sound' from the groups that come here.

ZZ: Something that strikes me about your success here is that you seemed to have achieved it without any great advertising campaign or any noticeable hype. For instance the only clue that this place could be connected with the pop business is that small sign out in the yard saying 'Studio One.' Apart from that the place is all fields and cows.

KW: The thing about Rockfield is that we never intended it to be a big hype thing. We thought that we'd start slowly doing a bit at a time. If the value of the place demanded that it had to be used, then its worth would get around naturally in the business, by word of mouth. You know, people came down here and went away and recommended it to other people. We're ex-directory and we don't advertise because we don't need to. I'll give you an example of how this place is advertised by word of mouth; we'd done Brinsley Schwarz and it proved very successful and from that session we had a group called Bees Make Honey, and about three or four other groups who are friends of Brinsley Schwarz are now using the studio.

ZZ: You're very close to the Welsh border here. Have you made any attempt to promote the Welsh bands in your area?

KW: Well the trouble is that these last twelve months the studio has been so busy that I haven't had the time to really go around Wales to see exactly what bands are playing. When this new studio is off the ground then I might have time to go round and have a look. I think Wales is very fortunate to have some very good musicians like Man and Budgie, whose last album was recorded here; it sold very well. And of course Dave Edmunds. I think Wales has got more than its share of good musicians and that side definitely needs to be got together.

ZZ: What about the future here. What sort of direction do you think the studio will take?

KW: Well as far as the Rockfield label is concerned we've been offered a number of quite well-known groups. But what we want to do is to take our time, just put a few singles out and perhaps a Dave Edmunds album. If that proves successful—and I'm sure it will, then we can really start to expand ... perhaps build a high-speed pressing plant, who knows? But at the moment, we're just going to take our time.'

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It is now midafternoon. Rockfield sessions normally begin around this time, finishing somewhere in the early hours of the next morning—or whenever the groups eventually flake out. Kingsly as far as it is known, has never been known to collapse on a session, in fact it's usually his job to carry groups and producers out of the studio.

Friz Fryer (once a member of the Four Pennies, now a fully-fleged producer) has returned from Monmouth. His involvement with the studio started in October 1971 when, after problems with a Roy Young album he was doing in London, everybody came down to Rockfield in a desperate bid to lay down the final few tracks. The success of those early sessions has kept him working closely with the studio ever since and he is now in the process of buying a house in the area. Pat Moran, Rockfield's resident engineer, has also arrived; he has been at the studio for three years now—another person captured by the charm and the madness of the place.

Fritz: In most cases this place compares very favourably with London studios. There are studios in London where you will find extra facilities, because they have more than one studio. But we will

have another studio here anyway, when this new 24 track set becomes available. All that I can say is that I've never been stuck for equipment and I have done some pretty involved stuff here. The CMU album I did here was pretty involved with phasing and all sorts of effects. But I had no problems at all.
Pat: Mike Harrison of Spooky Tooth came down and naturally expected a London studio out in the country, but when he walked in he couldn't believe it. There were mattresses there and pieces of wood here and odds and ends all over the place. He was knocked out by it. He thought it was great, the atmosphere and everything. He said that it was rather like Mussell Shoals in the States. There's music there 24 hours a day. It's like having the studio in your own front room.
ZZ: Do you find that the rural atmosphere is beneficial to the groups that come down here; in a creative sense?
Fritz: No doubt about it, because they can relax by going for a ride on the horses, go for a walk by the river or go fishing, before they start a session. It means they generally come to the studio more relaxed. In London it's a three hour session—it's very frenzied and often, because of the rush, musicians go away feeling unhappy with their performances.

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In the evening, Rockfield social time begins. The lights are out around the farm, the cows have been put to bed and glasses of Guinness and light ale are beginning to rear their frothing heads. Everybody is soon feeling slightly more than a little loose and more classic Rockfield tales are beginning to appear. They range from the night that Arthur Brown nearly caused a riot in Monmouth when he stood on a pub piano screaming out his hit 'Fire' to the day the brothers tried to use the field at the front of the farm as a landingstrip and ended up writing off a friend's new aircraft.
Charles: Oh that was bad! You couldn't see the aircraft for shit! I thought we were going to be taking the pilot home attached to the back of the tractor. All that was left of the aircraft was the engine and the tail and a bit of the front, but the pilot and his mate only had cuts and bruises—they were very lucky. The aircraft knocked down the whole bloody orchard!
KW: We had Albert Lee down here the other week and he was having such a great time that we couldn't get rid of him. We eventually had to tell him to piss off so that other people could use the studio. He phoned up the other day to say that the week he spent was one of the best weeks he had ever had. Oh christ that was a hell of a week!
The other week somebody was certain that John Lennon was down here. One of the members of a group that was recording here went down to a pub in Monmouth and the landlord pulls him over and says; 'Hey, arrgh do you know they had John Lennon up at Rockfield studios this week, we know it was him, cause we saw the helicopter.' Do you know what it was? It was the helicopter from the South Wales Electricity board inspecting the pylons. Ooh Christ I thought that was funny. Ooh christ ha ha ha ha ha! ... ha ha ha ha ha ha! ... ha ha ha ha ha!
The general merriment goes on until dawn when there are only a few hardy celebrators left. Despite the craziness and zaniness of the place everybody knows what they are doing. Part of the trick is to act the yokel and give everybody else the impression that they cannot tell a cow's tit from an album cover. Fritz Fryer sums it up very well: 'You know when I first came down here I was a little worried. Well nobody can take Kingsly seriously—everybody says ooh arrgh, village idiot. My initial reaction was, I wasn't sure. When we got in the studios he was leaping around saying 'Tape machines, what are tape machines, err uarrgh.' He was kidding me on that he didn't know anything about it. But he does, he's a pretty together lad. Don't underestimate him. He is a very astute fella.'

Duncan Gibbins

THE ELTON JOHN STORY

FINAL PART

ORCHESTRA ON STAGE
The first one we did last year, with a session orchestra, was my idea. I've always said that I'd like to get an orchestra together on stage just for one gig, to hear what it sounds like. So we did it, and it was great. Then Vic Lewis suggested I do one with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, because he's something to do with them, their chairman or president or something. I though that was great, because a thirty piece orchestra had given me quite a buzz before – think what an eighty piece would do! I'd just go bananas! But the one we did earlier this year, I just didn't enjoy, because I just thought the orchestra were c** every single one of them. The one before was with session men, and they're pretty bad, but they really got into it, and freaked out completely. But the Royal Philharmonic – I just thought they gave a quarter of their best, and they didn't take the event seriously, and I was taking it seriously. I felt so tense, because I was uncomfortable playing with them. I talked to a few of them, who said they'd done it with the Nice, and Deep Purple, and they seemed O.K. They only had to play dots, and I though if session musicians can do it, fucking classical musicians can play, because most of the strings on sessions are classical musicians anyway. But it was all snide remarks during rehearsal, like Paul (Buckmaster) would say to them "Can I please have a bit of quiet?" and someone would say "Well, if you got your f**** hair cut, perhaps you could hear quiet," and it was all down to that sort of scene. I financed the whole fucking thing, I filmed it, and the film turned out O.K. as far as I'm concerned, because I sang well on it, and we're going to flog it to America for a quarter of a million. The film turned out much better than the stage, because we wanted the strings unamplified, and they didn't play hard enough. If they'd played a bit harder, the audience would've heard them. The sound was great on the film, because Gus mixed it on a sixteen track. But that concert was a torture for me, and I was so relieved when it was over. I'd sunk a lot of bread into it. I'll never do it again. Like the live album, you learn by your mistakes, and there will be no more orchestra things in England. I don't know about America, because the sound systems in America are absolutely fucking unbelievable, and I imagine really getting it together. I'd really like to do it in L.A. or New York, but I'm a stickler for rehearsal, and I like to rehearse for a week, and that costs a lot of money.

LONG JOHN BALDRY
No longer Long. I've produced half of two of his albums now. I never really thought I'd want to produce a record, because I'm very impatient in the studio; I like to get things done, and I can't stand wasting studio time. And when I had a phone call in New York from Billy Gaff, saying John was in a bad way, not health or anything, but he's done "Let The Heartaches Begin" and he's done the cabaret bit, and now he really should be back doing what he was before. I agreed totally, so he asked if I would help by doing half an album, although there wouldn't be much money involved. I said sure, because I really love John, and all the time I worked for him, he paid his musicians. Also, he's the ultimate gentleman, he's the ultimate guy who'd give you the shirt off his back. We did that first album with him, and it was strange because John hadn't sung for ages, and he really found it hard to get into that sort of thing again and it showed, but it did increadibly well in America, thousands of copies and got to about sixty in the charts. He went over there, and he got some bad reviews for his concerts, but he really did very well, because he was very theatrical, which they love. Now I've done half the second album with him, and the difference in his voice is remarkable. Because he's so outrageous, I had great fun keeping him down, because if it was down to him, he'd have recorded Peggy Lee numbers on the first album, and Della Reese things.

CURRENT PERSONAL LISTENING
I've been raving about Redbone for ages, ever since I got their first double album. I don't particularly like their new one much. It wasn't released here like that, but just as a single album. I also really like Pearls Before Swine which is only Tom Rapp really. He wanders about, doing occasional gigs in folk clubs, and apparently gets incredibly knocked out if you say you like him. He's one of those guys who survives from people's appreciation. His ESP stuff is really nice, but the Reprise things are incredible. Then there's the Grateful Dead. Nobody thinks I like them, because I'm not allowed to. I think "Anthem of the Sun" and "Working Man's Dead" are excellent. Probably "Aoxomoxoa" is their weakest album, and if that was the first thing you heard, you could get the wrong impression. I think Bernie's been very influenced by them since "Working Man's Dead". Also, I'm really into bands like Fairport and Lindisfarne – the English people don't know what they've got in

their own backyard. It's the same with Americans, of course, but people like Fairport are so f**** good, any of the line-ups, but particularly with Sandy Denny and Dave Swarbrick – "Liege and Lief" – but I still love the other albums they've made. Also, Ian Matthews who I think is an incredibly talented person, but again is ignored here. The current heap of albums I've got here for immediate listening is a good guide.I'm really into soul music at the moment – there's the Stylistics who are incredible, Paul Simon – I don't like that very much, very hard to get into – Bread, who I quite like because they show no hangups, Jackson Browne – that's a good album – Mylon, who is very good on stage, Hookfoot, which is a better album than the first one, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, now there's a good band – that album "Uncle Charlie and His Dog Teddy" – particularly "House At Pooh Corner" – John Redbouren who I love, but who has never made as good an album as "Sir John Alot", Leo Kottke, Linda Ronstadt who I like tremendously, Brinsley Schwarz – both this one ("Silver Pistol") and the album before I like tremendously – amazing, and yet nothing happens Saleswise. I think people must have forgotten about the hype now, so why don't they sell records? Genya Ravan – Goldie. That is superb – Barry Mann. Ry Cooder is nice but a bit predictable. Freddy Scott – that's really good. He was my original – when I was in the soul band, I was always listening to people who I considered to be obscure like Homer Banks. But "Are You Lonely For Me" by Freddy Scott is so very good. It was produced by Bert Berns, who also did Erma Franklin's early stuff on London like "Piece of my Heart". Then there's Billy Preston, Crazy Horse which I like. I really like soul music at the moment. Ah, that is awful – Malo, it's Carlos Santana's brother. Mark-Almond which is incredible (their second album). They made us play shit-hot every night, because they're so musically good and such nice guys. Judee Sill is nice – ah, I forgot to mention my fave rave of all times, Daddy Cool. I thought they were amazing when I first heard them – nothing complicated. Van der Graaf, Donnie Elbert. Faces – I can't see what all the fuss is about, I much prefer their first album with "Plynth" and "Flying" and "Wicked Messenger". I can't see why everybody likes "A Nod's As Good As A Wink", and the Rod albums are so much better. I don't think the Faces really rate as a musical band. . . .

LEON RUSSELL & MARC BOLAN

We were happening slightly ahead of Leon in the States, because he's come to prominence not through the Delaney & Bonnie album, which was the thing that turned me on to him, not even his first album really, but it was the Joe Cocker Mad Dogs thing that did it. It was coincidence really, but when I saw him in the front row of the Troubadour watching us, I nearly shit a brick, and then he invited me up to his house. I was very frightened of meeting him, but he was really good. Everyone thought there was going to be a big war between me and Leon, but we've always got on very well.

I've known Marc ever since that Roundhouse thing we did the first time, and we got all the nasties drained away from the things I said about him before. I've really got into his music a lot and I really like him, and we've been friends ever since then. He's been very good to me recently, because I need a boost in this country, and he's mentioned me a lot. It seems as if I'm trying to cash in on his success, but it's a mutual thing, because I give him plugs in the States.

RECORDS

Rather than being at the Speakeasy every night, I prefer to be at home playing records. I make it my job to listen to everything – not because I want to pinch ideas from people, but I think there's so much that never gets heard, and it's very important to listen to everything that comes out.

HONKY CHATEAU

The general reaction to "Honky Chateau" was pretty good. It served its purpose in more ways than one – it was the first number one album we had in the States, but more important, it established us over here, doing really well after "Madman" hadn't done so well. "Madman" in fact has been the most personal and painful album to make. I really can't see why it didn't go, because it had a lot of our best songs on it. For example, on stage, we still do "Levon", "Tiny Dance" and "Madman" itself, and it contains a lot of numbers that don't wear thin after they've been played for a long time. "Honky Chateau" is not the biggest one we've had in England, the "Elton John" album is, then "Tumbleweed", then "Chateau". It's really only because the "Elton John" album has been out for two years, and still sells like a thousand every week, and so does "Tumbleweed", and so, actually does "Empty Sky", which has nearly done as much as "Madman". I thing "Honky" will overtake them all soon.

THE NEW ALBUM

We went to the chateau again, last June, and I was in a terrible state with glandular fever. Before we made the album, I said I didn't want to do it at that time, because it was such a strange situation with "Honky Chateau" released only a month before, and it was weird to make another album at that time. I wasn't feeling too well, and wanted to chuck it in. Gus said that was O.K., and we could go back and do it in September. I was going on holiday in July for a month to L.A., and I though it would be great to try one track before I went, so that I could think I'd made a start. So we did the backing track to "Daniel" and everything worked out fine and we carried on. But I was pretty evil during the sessions, so uptight and shouting at everyone.

There was very little augmentation to the group. We used the same brass lineup as on "Honky Cat" for two or three tracks. Even though I was very doomy while we were making it, it's basically a very happy album. Side one is Elton John's Discotheque album.

As far as I'm concerned, the ban is one step further forward from "Honky Chateau", tighter, because that was really the first time I'd used the band on record except for a couple of tracks on "Madman", and a couple on "Friends". For me, that was one of the turning points – it was either giving up, or using the band on record. When we got Davey in, it's just gone on from then. I could never go back to using session musicians again as such, because it's so much better now.

DAVEY JOHNSTONE

Poor sod, he has to do all the guitar bits on record. If we want to use three guitars, he has to overdub them all. He has enough to do, playing acoustic, electric, mandolin and banjo on stage, and he's slowly slipping into playing electric guitar, although it can't be that easy for him. When he's not playing with me, he's free to do exactly as he likes. He's making a solo album, which is nearly finished, and I've heard some tracks which are amazing, like nothing I've heard before. I'm making a prediction that he'll be one of the world's top electric guitarists in two or three years time, probably have his own band, and really be a name, which would be great. I'm amazed at how he's adapted, because when I said to Gus that I wanted Davey Johnstone in the band, I'd never heard him play electric, but he's really got into it, although he still loves folk, and most of his album is folk oriented, but not prissy folk, folk with balls. On "Have Mercy On The Criminal" he's astonishing. On stage, it's a matter of getting used to playing every night, and when you do a ten week tour of the States, you improve all the time. And it's not just him – Nigel's improved and Dee and I, because there has been less pressure on the three of us, because Davey's taken up some of it. It was impossible with three – it's all right if you're Emerson Lake and Palmer and there's Hammond organs everywhere, but with just a piano – there's no sustaining instrument among piano, bass and drums. I can't think how we coped.

ROCKET RECORDS

Inevitably, it's a label for me to be on eventually, but it wasn't formed for that reason. Davey was going to make an album and we couldn't get a good enough deal for him anywhere. It was while we were making the new album in France, and John Reid and Steve Brown came over and told us that they couldn't get a satisfactory deal on Davey, so we all sat down that night, and got thoroughly drunk, and said "Let's start our own label." You know what those things are like – next morning you get up and it's instantly forgotten, but we remembered, and I came up with the title of Rocket Records. It's all started from that, from a piss up one night to reality, and all because Davey couldn't get a good deal. We all discussed it at length later, and decided that the company would be formed for new artists to get really good royalties when they first sign, instead of two or three per cent, which is ridiculous. I really get pissed off with the business sometimes . . . I know it's a bit idyllic, like every three years the Moody Blues start a label, and it's all going to be flowers. Ours isn't – it'll be fucking hard work. It's taken us six months already to get the basic things done. We've got offices now in Wardour Street, and we've got the distribution practically done in the States and here. Next we've got to go all round the rest of the world and see who wants to distribute it. Island are going to distribute – it was a toss up between EMI and Island, and Island won because of their track record. Everyone was a bit worried about EMI's inability to get records in stock, and overall throughout the coutry, 99% of the stores said that Island records were practically never out of stock. There's nothing worse than having a hit record that's out of stock. Also, Muff Winwood, with whom I have a great relationship, is to be involved, and I know David Betteridge, – so, although EMI offered us a better deal financially, we decided on Island because we thought they'd understand our product better. In fact EMI offered us a fantastic deal, and although I know a lot of people at EMI, I didn't particularly want to go with them, Especially in my position you have to

be so careful – I mean, I've been offered so many million pounds to sign a publishing contract before my current one ends, and you just can't do it. We did make the mistake when we resigned with MCA. We should never have resigned at the time, because if we'd waited we'd have been in a much better position. But that's learning the game. Going back to Rocket, there won't be any releases made until everything's sorted out. We could put a record out next month, but what would be the point, because there'd be no organisation. When it comes out, it'll be right, and for the artist's benefit. We've got Bruce Johnston, who's written some amazing things, and he phoned us. He's formed a group with Terry Melcher, and I think both the group and Bruce as a solo artist will be on the label. When he phoned and told us, we just stood there chuckling, because I've known him for quite some time. We're trying to sign Jean-Luc Ponty – we've already got John McLaughlin agreed to produce and arrange it, so if we can track him down through the French telephone system, that'll be done, because he's already agreed verbally. I don't want to start out with a bilge of product, like 25 albums. I haven't found an act to produce yet. Long John, who I've produced before, is in the air with his record company at the moment. I don't really want any super-established names on the label just yet. Jean-Luc isn't really that established yet, although I think he's capable of making an album that will sell as well as "Inner Mounting Flame", say. But if you said "Jean-Luc Ponty" in the street today, somebody would probably hit you with a marrow. For most people who form a record company, it's an idyllic dream. We're trying to make a better deal for the artist – if an artist is really brought down about something, he comes to 101 Wardour Street, and he doesn't have to wait three hours in reception. Steve Brown is an amazing person who got me together and Bernie together at DJM, and put us on our feet, and that's what he'll be doing for Rocket. John Reid runs the business side of things, and Gus, Bernie and I take an interest and find product. But I do take an interest – the good thing about me not being on it is it's not like a Moody Blues label or a Rolling Stones. For example, if I went on the label, when the initial releases came out, my album would receive much more publicity than all the others combined. "Elton John, and also on Rocket are . . ." So we don't want to do it like that. None of the other record companies formed this way have done much. Apple has only really had Mary Hopkin and Badfinger – they told James Taylor to f** off, and both Billy Preston and Doris Troy had more success elsewhere. Mary Hopkin was just Paul McCartney's little thing for the time being. Still, they've got a good image, and anything that comes out on Apple will probably receive immediate attention – in fact, they've got Lou and Derrick Van Eaton, which is one of my favourite albums of the moment. Even so, Apple has come up with more than Threshold – I can only think of Trapeze, Timon and Sue Vickers – and the only thing the Rolling Stones have had is Howlin' Wold, Brian Jones and "Jamming with Edward" which was awful. If we have the same sort of success as Charisma, I'll be happy, although I think they release too much. I like the way things come out and the way they advertise. We want to break acts, though, and neither Charisma nor Island has broken many recently. We're not going to release anybody unless we think they're going to break.

I'm still on DJM for two years and I'm still on DJM for two years and I'm very happy with them, despite the disagreement we've had recently; but apart from that, they've always packaged my records and promoted my records in a way that has given me no cause to complain. However, my management contract and my publishing contract are up soon, which has got nothing to do with recording. One of the most disappointing things is that we tried to sign Philip Goodhand-Tait for the States, because no one is very interested there, and we'd love to have him, and possibly get him a producer he could have faith in, because he desperately needs that. When we first started to work with Gus, he was someone to fall back on, and he would tell me if things weren't right. You need someone to tell you how you're doing. But because of all the other things, Dick James said no, and it's a shame, because all Philip wants is a little encouragement, someone to rave about you. It means far more than money.

THE BOLAN FILM

I was only involved with it for about four hours. Marc just asked me to come and jam in the studio. I never do jam, but I thought it might be interesting as I'd never met Ringo before, and I quite enjoyed it. We had a nice afternoon in Apple Studios just playing around. The version of "Children Of The Revolution" we did is far superior to the single Marc put out, and he knows it, but it would be impossible to edit. That was all I was involved with it, and the next thing I knew about was the Premiere. I was very surprised to see my name on the poster, because I was only in it for literally a minute and a half out of ninety eight minutes, but I was very flattered. It's just a film about Marc.

FILMS

I don't want to make a film about Elton John, or do a pop music film. I'd like to do a straight role or a comedy role, but it all depends on the script. A couple of years ago I wouldn't have considered it, but I probably would now. I'd like to branch out a bit, but its very difficult as you're really on the firing range. I know I could make a good one, but its a question of timing. I'm more interested in the band at the moment. When I first broke in the States, my company being UNI, which is Universal Films, they sent me the most unbelievable scripts. The first one I read was called "Harold & Maud" which is brilliant. Cat Stevens eventually did the music for the film. I'd have loved to do that, because it was my sort of humour, but when I saw the film it didn't really come off as well as the script or the book. Otherwise I was offered loads of rubbish, or pop films. I've always tried to stay clear of things with other people, like festivals. I'm always asked to do them, but I'm basically against the idea of festivals, which are a bore, and in this country there's always the weather. I mean to put a festival on in May, you must be insane. Even in July or August you're taking a risk. And it's always the fans who lose out, never the groups. The whole thing really depresses me. The only one that was right was the I.O.W. Dylan one, which was magical. There'll never be one like that again, because it all built up to that climax, and after Dylan no one wanted to hear another note of music. I don't want to put English festivals down, but they're a succession of not quite stars, no Jagger, no Lennon, just a succession of popular groups. I think if you're going to have a three day event, you've got to build it on one name, and have all the other groups down below. So pop films find it hard to be other than a succession of acts. The only one I've enjoyed that I've seen is "Fillmore". That was more or less a documentary and Bill Graham is extremely funny in it, but the music is really good. Its photographed well, a la Woodstock, but the music is far more exciting, probably because I hadn't seen several of the groups, like Lamb for example, Cold Blood who were brilliant, and Quicksilver who were the hit of the film. The guitarist in Quicksilver played the most incredible things I've ever heard. Their first two albums were excellent, and "Shady Grove" was alright, but the inclusion of Dino Valente seems to have affected their records. Even so he was in the film, and the numbers he did were amazing. The Grateful Dead were abysmal, and the Airplane a waste of time. It was like posing – in fact the Airplane mimed. Can you believe that? I sat there and couldn't believe it. The Grateful Dead played "Casey Jones" which they always play, but hideously out of tune, and then "Bye Bye Johnny" which was like The Wild Angels. They're a terribly over-rated band. I really liked their first couple of albums, but when they started doing twenty eight minute versions of Chuck Berry songs . . . And then this Europe on $5,000 a day – let's release a triple album and get an instant gold, because you must get a gold album out of a triple. Actually, Garcia has had a go at me, so I don't mind saying all this. "Working Man's Dead" was their best I think, and "American Beauty", but since then its a succession of live albums Then there's all this rubbish written about him being a dedicated musician, and playing all the time. If he does that, then why doesn't he improve? In the film, Quicksilver put the Dead to death.

THE OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST

I watch it sometimes, but its on at such a ridiculous time. Its a typical BBC attitude – put the slightly intellectual music on BBC 2. But what really annoys me is those stupid films they show. You mentioned that in Zigzag – that if you haven't got a colour TV, you might as well pack up and go home. I suppose the only good thing about it is that a couple of groups play live, like Focus, but its a bit boring and predictable. The interview spot is usually embarrassing. You could do a much better programme with a bit of imagination. If we had an educational channel over here, we'd be laughing, because in the States they have say, Cat Stevens, live for an hour. You don't get paid for it, but that doesn't really matter. Its great to get live music. David Bowie was on Top Of The Pops, and even though the bass player made a couple of cock-ups, it was great that they were live on TV again. You get into a rut, worrying about the sound if you play live. But when we watched Ready Steady Go we never worried about that sort of thing – it was just great to see someone playing.

POP JOURNALS

Apart from Zigzag, I read Let It Rock, which is the next best one to Zigzag. I read them all really, but the weeklies are pretty mundane. Let It Rock is about the best of the glossies, but Charlie Gillett's tastes are about the worst in the world, like recommending Marty Robbins. Everyone's entitled to their own opinions, but Marty Robbins! I love the poll in LIR, but it must have been difficult to be unbiased. You could see the little favourites coming out. Like The New Hovering Dog, Brian Cole's band, who are great. United Artists seem to have so many good bands, but they can't break them, like Help Yourself, Brinsley Schwartz and Man. If Deep Purple can sell that many records, Man should sell twice as much. Their latest album sleeve was brilliant. I'd just got my album sleeve, and was all knocked out, and I picked up their album sleeve, put the record on, and then opened the sleeve and freaked out. It was like a stand out book only better. Going back to mags, I think "Cream" is a nonentity. It's over half full of record reviews, and I think record reviews can be boring, if there are too many. There's another good rock 'n' roll paper coming from Harrow, which has started a little like Zigzag. (Fat Angel)

Of all the weekly papers, Sounds has probably got the best editorial staff – Steve Peacock, Jerry Gilbert, Penny, Martin Hayman. They've moved to Holloway Road which is a terribly depressing area. I know, because I used to live there. Penny's leaving – she says she's not going to work there. (Subsequently P.V. became press officer of Rocket Records.) They're all so brought down about it – I was talking to Jerry Gilbert the other day, and he couldn't believe it. Apart from that, as a publication there's only one thing wrong with Sounds, that is, its charts are a week late because it comes out on a Tuesday. They should start doing their own chart, because I sincerely believe that the chart produced by the British Market Research Bureau is a complete and utter joke, although we've done really well with it. They only take it from 300 fucking stores.

I used to be very hostile to the press, but I think they're generally improving. Even so, Record Mirror is dreadful – it's just nothing. They say it's bigger and better this week, but surely it couldn't get any smaller? It's such a con – the layout is horrendous. It's funny to say it, but I don't like the typeface used by Sounds when you look at the MM, it seems much more direct. Also I wish Sounds would get a better American correspondent, because it's all a mish-mosh and out of date. Melody Maker seems to be the best value for money, but I'm not very keen on all those instrument surveys, which seem to be fill-ins. It's like that thing in Record Mirror – learn to play a song, or something. Unbelievable. I think Disc is improving – I like John Peel's singles reviews, because I think his and Penny's are the best. He likes things that I do, like Mel and Tim . . What else do I read? I find less and less music in Rolling Stone. The thing that used to be great about Rolling Stone was the Rolling Stone Interview, and I've got the bound edition with the Pete Townsend interview, the Keith Richard interview, and even the Jerry Garcia interview was amazing. They did one recently with Carlos Santana, which I gave up halfway through because I was so bored. It's still very pro San Francisco – most of the people they interview now are much less interesting. I used to buy Rolling Stone as a music magazine, but it's getting less and less so now. I still love their random notes – of all the sort of gossip columns, theirs is the best, because it's factual and interesting, and they seem to dig up news when nobody else does, which is more interesting. I suppose the problem is that there are very few people left around to interview, but I find it difficult to believe. I'd like to see a Robbie Robertson interview. (see very old RS)

After this enormous excursion I don't suppose he'll want to see another tape recorder for at least two more albums. Anyway, many thanks to Elton, not only for his time but for his support, John.

how neil sedaka added an extra chin and sang his own songs again

In a recent 'Stuff and Nonsense,' the perceptive readers among you may have noticed a mention of Neil Sedaka, not instantly a typical ZigZag musical choice, but certainly a singer and writer whom I and the great Frame have long held dear, dating from the time when we were conducting our very first sexual experiments with persons of the opposite gender to the sound of a very appropriate 'Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen' or the less pleasant conceptually 'Breaking Up is Hard to Do.' Pete even remembers making out in Italy with Sedaka singing in Italian. Therefore, I arranged to meet the great man, and although I didn't get too much time with him due to the fact that he was performing at the monstrous 'Talk of the Town.' I hope you'll enjoy reading about this legend, which, in conjunction with Richard Williams excellent Melody Maker piece of a couple of months ago, should convince you that Neil Sedaka is at least as important to rock'n'roll as someone like Jerry Lee Lewis, with whom there are many parallels, in that they both moved away from the music which originally brought them fame, and managed in the process to produce something equally valid. So, off we go.

'I was writing songs when I was 13 years old, and I'd been going to various publishers without success, until one day, when I was 18, Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman suggested I should try a new publisher who had just opened on the third floor of 1650 Broadway. They were working at the time in the same building for Hill and Range, who used to publish the Elvis Presley catalogue. In fact, I had just been turned down by Paul Case of Hill and Range on a song called 'Stupid Cupid.' which we still kid each other about.

'So I walked into this new publisher, which was Aldon music, run by Al Nevins and Don Kirshner. They knew Connie Francis, gave her my song, and it sold over a million records. At about the same time, I wrote a song called 'The Diary,' which was supposed to be a follow up to 'Tears on my Pillow' for Little Anthony and The Imperials. It's a great coup to get the follow up to a big hit like that, particularly for a young almost unknown writer, but it was recorded very poorly, and didn't turn out very well for him. So, when I was 19, they said that I could record 'The Diary,' which was my first record for RCA Victor, and when it was an American hit, everyone figured that I had a future as an artist as well as in songwriting.

'During that time, I was working for Nevins and Kirshner, at what has become known as the Hit Factory. I was signed to write with Howard Greenfield, and of course, you know the story about how Carole King was my first girl friend, and I took her up to Don Kirshner, who signed her. Later, she met Gerry Goffin, and they were married. and then Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil followed. There were a couple of other good writers there at the time as well, but I can't remember their names.

'At that time, we all sat in very small cubicles, and the sounds being made in other cubicles came through to us. I would hear Carole, and Carole could hear me, and Barry would hear the next person. I think that some of the Screen Gems songs, so called because the catalogue was later sold to Screen Gems, started to sound very similar, as we were all competing to write the best song for an artist. When you got a hit, you graduated to a room with a window, which, at that time, was very big doings. At the Factory time, I only collaborated with Howie Greenfield—Carole was a composer, Barry Mann was a composer, and Howie, Gerry Goffin and Cynthia Weil were the lyricists. I hate to say that phrase 'Factory Time'—we dedicated our lives to music. We lived, breathed, ate

and slept music. It wasn't a factory, it was a love affair with music. In fact, Howie did collaborate with Jack Keller for a few songs in those early days, but it wasn't until later that I collaborated with Carole Bayer, who is married and is now Carole Seger, to write 'When Love Comes Knockin' for the Monkees, and with Roger Atkins for 'Workin' On a Groovy Thing' which was a million seller for the Fifth Dimension.'

In about 1963, hit records became a memory gland as far as Neil Sedaka was concerned. That's singing them, of course, not composing. 'For about six years, I sat at home writing. I had given up performing for many reasons. I had travelled to practically every country in the world, and spent about eight months a year away from home. I was married, I had a child and another on the way, and I wanted to be quiet, take stock of myself, do some thinking, and also some writing, because basically I'm a writer.

'I had hits, thank God, with a lot of easy listening artists. They are the easiest to get to, because they're not self contained like some others, such as the Beatles, Rolling Stones, etc. I wrote for Andy Williams, Peggy Lee, Fifth Dimension, Tom Jones, Friends of Distinction, David Jones and the Monkees, among others. It occurs to me now that the reason I wasn't getting hits for myself was that I was repeating myself too much. There were record executives who said I should continue doing the same kind of material, and I felt stifled creatively. I'm not knocking the songs, but they were all similar in structure, and the lyrics were not very thought provoking. However, they were happy, catchy tunes, which were fun to dance to, but even so, the public went to other people after five years of my hits. I don't think too many lasted that long; it's only the smart ones like Lennon and McCartney who change their style, and make it interesting for their followers.

'Then, in 1971, RCA thought I should record again. The time of the singer/composer was very big, with Carole, James Taylor, Laura Nyro and those kind of people. In fact, I'd been signed to them all along without making a record, until they saw that I'd written a song for Tony Christie called 'Amarillo' which sold 4 million copies, and they said, 'My God, if he can sing as well, he's a potential threat.' So I recorded the 'Emergence' album, which cost RCA 50,000 dollars, and Lee Holdridge came in and wrote absolutely brilliant arrangments. The songs, I must say, are some of the best Sedaka/Greenfield songs, but the album sold zilch—absolutely nothing. The singer became secondary, Lee Holdridge became primary, and Howard Greenfield and I had a big fight. I went and did a tour of some of the funky clubs in America, the Bitter End kind of club that is in New York, Chicago and other big cities, and spent a couple of months on the road with the 'Emergence' collection of songs. For the public, I had to be in a T shirt and jeans, and I was scared to death, but I thought that either I must get out there and show the people what I'm doing, or forget it. I got three comments: that the music was contemporary, they liked me much better with just a piano and rhythm section in the funky clubs, than they had when they'd heard the over produced album, and they thought that the lyrics were deisgned for thirty five to forty year olds.

'So I went back to Howie and told him that we'd have to change. We had written so many songs over the last fifteen years, that I felt we could write practically anything. Howie, I think, took offence, but at that time I wanted to write with other lyricists, and also to write my own lyrics and poetry. I'm happy to say that now we are back together writing two days a week, but it was almost a year from the difference of opinion before we got together. Also, I'm now writing with Phillip Cody, who is brilliant, and writing some of my own lyrics.'

In fact, the 'Emergence' album didn't sell any better in England than it did in the States, but salvation was to come, in England. 'I was performing at Batley Variety Club, and one day Tony Christie's manager came to see me there. He was also the manager of 10 CC, who are tied up with Strawberry Studio in Manchester, and he asked me to try out the studio with two or three cuts. I was so delighted that in about a couple of weeks, we'd finished the album. Graham Gouldman and the others up there are super talented, and I found it gratifying musically to work with young people who are so enthusiastic. That was the 'Solitaire' album, of course, from which 'Beautiful You' and 'That's Where the Music Takes Me' come. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to get on the road with those musicians although I tired to get them for a Japanese tour, but it was at the time when 'Donna' was a big hit for them. Right now, I'm working on songs for the next album, and seven of them are ready so far. Any new records will be on a different label, MGM/Polydor, because although I've received a lot of support from RCA in England, America was not very enthusiastic, and I did not get the treatment that I should have. I want to do the next album in England, for several reasons, although it will not necessarily be with the same people as the 'Solitaire' album. There are so many very talented musicians in England, and of course the British public have been very good to me, in that they respect my contemporary songs as well as the older ones. I'm very grateful for that.'

At that point, I felt I wanted to hear about some of the other songs that Neil had written, so we went a little deeper into the man's musical past.

'Someone yesterday was talking to me about Atlantic Records, and they mentioned Ahmet and Jerry Wexler, who were in fact, the first people to take my early songs, even before 'Stupid Cupid.' They took some of my R&B songs for people like LaVerne Baker, Clyde McPhatter and the Clovers, songs like 'Since You've Been Gone,' 'I Waited So Long,' 'Bring Me Love,' and there was one done by Mickey and Sylvia, among quite a number of R&B things that made the charts. Also, after 'Stupid Cupid,' I wrote three others for Connie, 'Where The Boys Are,' 'Frankie' and 'Fallin'", and there was one of Jimmy Clanton's follow ups to 'Just A Dream' called 'Another Sleepless Night.' There were quite a number of records that would probably mean nothing to you which made the bottom of the charts, but I didn't really get too many chart records as a writer until after I'd stopped performing. I could write hits for myself, but I didn't do incredibly well with other artists until I sat down and concentrated on writing for other people, with songs like 'Puppet Man,' 'Working On A Groovy Thing,' 'One Day Of Your Life,' 'Time Waits For No-one' and 'Rainy Jane' for artists like the Fifth Dimension, Peggy Lee and Eydie Gorme.

'Getting a little more up to date, Lou Christie covered one of my songs from the 'Emergence' album, 'I'm a Song, Sing Me,' which was detrimental to my record because it came at a time when I was trying to present something new. At a time like that, I couldn't afford a cover record, much less a bad cover record, but more recently, I'm happy to say that Andy Williams is covering 'Solitaire' and it's being produced by Richard Perry, which should result in an excellent record.'

A few thoughts on songwriting by Mr. Sedaka.

'Every now and then, if you're a creative person, you get an uncomfortable feeling that the song you're working on will be the last good one you'll ever do—pretty silly when you've written something like 600 songs in the last twenty years ...

'I've had to write in a large variety of styles, and as a result, I'm a regimentated writer, but now the great treat for me is to write for myself. I'm happy to say that the public of today is that much more sophisticated.

'One of my early trade marks was the onomatopeia, the use of syllable with the melody, the tra-la-las if you like. I suppose that came to me while I was writing a dummy lyric, just for a lack of words, and I sang 'sha la la' or 'tralala.' Many of those early records, like 'Oh Carol,' 'Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen,' 'Breaking Up Is Hard To Do' and 'Right Next Door To An Angel,' had that sort of intro, and we used to call them the sandwich records, because I'd end wth the same sort of thing as the introduction.'

The name of Don Kirshner has cropped up several times within this piece. I asked Neil to speak a little on that subject.

'Kirshner is a very sweet man, who actually started my career off, and he has the ability to be very exciting and inspirational to creative people, and is an exciting person to be around. He's one of those people who knows what's happening, and his track record is impeccable. I'm still with him. When I signed up with him, I was married. I wanted security, and he gave me one of the best song contracts there has ever been, and enabled me to dedicate myself to my art of writing without having to worry about going on the road. He gave me all that.'

Richard Nader has for some time been producing rock'n'roll revival concerts in the States. I wondered whether Neil was ever asked.

'He called me three or four times, and my current manager, who goes to every oldie show, asks me, and I always turn them down. I've decided against them, because I think the biggest detriment to my career is the old songs. The way I'm making it is not by destroying old images, but by showing the people that I am a creative artist who goes on to new things, and is not resting on his laurels. I wouldn't like to do an oldies show, because I think it's very sad, seeing those people brought together who haven't sung together for years and years, and have other jobs apart from show business, assembled to go through their shoobydoobys.

'I still do my oldies on stage, but in a medley, and I bring a tape with me which contains piano, drums, and one track of my voice, to which I synchronise another voice on stage to get the multi-tracking effect.'

At that point, Neil had to go and get ready for another capacity house show at Talk of the Town. When I was there, heavily disguised in a suit, wellington boots and wearing my trousers back to front, I was amazed to see much of the cream of British womanhood in the thirty to forty range, sitting at their uncomfortable tables, eating the unspeakable food, beating their way round the traffic jam of a dance floor, and not minding, because Neil would be on later. When he eventually emerged, he went down a storm, and it says something for the durability of his songs that many of those ladies, the vast majority in fact, were word perfect when singing along. It was also somewhat of a revelation to find myself singing along, as well as on the old classics, with the Sedaka version of 'Is This The Way To Amarillo' which was in fact superbly done. All in all, he was an absolute knockout, and my addled brain admits to few such enjoyable performances in the last three or four years.

If you get the chance to see him at Batley Variety Club, or wherever, have a go, remove your suit from its mothballs, and although you'll have the piss taken by some of those singing ladies, I'm sure you'll get quite a buzz out of it. If that's far too far out, either for financial or aesthetic reasons, go and buy one of his albums. He hasn't made many, actually and the first two are deleted. They're called 'Neil Sedaka' and 'Circulate,' although I don't believe that the latter is up to much. Available now, though, are 'Oh Carol,' a budget hits compilation at less than a quid or 'Emergence' and 'Solitaire,' the most recent two offerings. As Neil said, the former is somewhat overproduced, but contains at least two find songs, 'Superbird' and 'I'm A Song, Sing Me,' and there may be more. Even so, I think you should buy 'Solitaire,' and if you like it enough, go back to 'Emergence.' I'm shortly going to do just that.

John

PAPERBACK PERUSALS

Sean. Eileen O'Casey. Pan. 50p.
Rose and Crown. Autobiography. 1926–1934. Sean O'Casey. Pan. 40p.
Sunset and Evening Star. Autobiography. 1934–1953. Sean O'Casey. Pan. 40p.
A Dictionary of Famous Quotations. Compiled by Robin Hyman. Revised edition. Pan. 60p.
Dear Dr. HIPPocrates. Eugene Schoenfield. Penguin. 25p.

Writers are arguably the hardest done-by creators working in the arts at the moment. The miners of culture, the providers of raw material who remain exploited unless they surround themselves with those other money-sapping necessities of 20th century life: an agent, an accountant, in some cases perish the thought, a lawyer.

They provide an interesting contrast with the rock industry. Think of the advances barely known groups are able to extract from record companies; an author is winning if he should be advanced £400 on a work that may take a year or more to complete. While musicians have the Performing Rights Society collecting assiduously what is due for each air and public play, the author gets nothing but the royalty of seven per cent from each public library that buys his books and lends it freely to as many people as wish to read it.

It is nothing new, but has been brought to mind by reading Eileen O'Casey's fascinating study about her playwright husband Sean, a continual tale of financial suffering and misjudgements about his work by people who should have know better, such as W.B. Yeats who turned The Silver Tassle down when O'Casey submitted it to The Abbey in Dublin. O'Casey married Eileen, an actress much younger than himself. O'Casey was, of course, a literary 'drop out' way before his time. How he would have loved the events of today, the alternative press, the political action. He was in fact a Communist brought up in the Dublin slums. Unlike other books that have been written, mostly by Americans, about writers they lived with or were married to, Eileen O'Casey's book is a work of extreme tenderness, a literary record of what many women have done for literature, nurture writers. It is an occupation which requires extreme patience, fortitude and ultimately a love for the written word. That is the greates gift the writer can bestow: the first to read his work.

It is almost all giving, for writers are insular self-protective creatures unless lured out of their homes by publicity and then usually end up writing drivel and dying of drink: Behan, Dylan Thomas. Perhaps 'drivel' is too strong a word. Let us just say they stop writing, they stop practising their trade, which is the worst fate that can befall them. It doesn't matter if you don't get printed, as long as you keep faith with yourself. People write because they want to, and then because they know no other way of earning their living, and then they have to think about the money it is or is not bringing them. Thus O'Casey's wife writes: 'We seemed at Chalfont to be continually in money difficulties. Samuel French, the play publishers, had asked often if they could buy the world amateur rights of Juno and the Paycock, The Plough and The Stars, and Shadow of a Gunman for £300 and a half share of all royalties for ever more. Sean hated to part with this property; equally, he hated to borrow ... Unwilling we accepted the play rights.' With his introduction of music and singing into his plays, O'Casey at the time was pushing dramatic barriers forward, but America was more willing to listen than England.

I have a set of his autobiographies in paperback published some years back by Macmillans but Pan have brought out a more easily readable version. Typographically, I hasten to add, they have not tinkered with the words. Volumes five and six complete their set and for a study of a writer at work and the times in which he worked they are well worth the money, although having re-read them and coming afresh to Eileen O'Casey's book I find her observance of the man as writer and husband almost more revealingly truthful. There is an amazing aside, for example, when she finds herself pregnant by another man and returns to tell Sean. The child is aborted, not because of him but because she had already tried several methods unsuccessfully and when she was inspected by a specialist he advised it.

O'Casey's reaction was first of sorrow and then a closer coming together. She never saw the other man again, anyway he went to America at the time of their trouble. Thus an amazing human relationship is recorded, warts and all, and therefore gives an even better understanding of O'Casey's work. Pan have recently been concentrating on bringing out some fine Irish books, a duty hitherto fulfilled in paperback by Four Square. I hope their sales figures justify the policy.

The other comparison between the record industry and publishing industry where the author loses out is in exploitation. A fairly mediocre recording artist can get all the hype going, but most books just rely on reviews and that's that. If only the British publishing trade would stop pretending to be gentlemen, perhaps their authors could begin to be financially more successful. Certainly we have much to learn from America.

I have a friend who buys most of the reference books which appear, but in hardback they are very expensive, and are usually poor investments because they date quickly. So I advise using a good library, but every now and again a reference book worth buying comes out in paperback, and Pan's (yes, it's certainly their month) A Dictionary of Famous Quotations at 60p is well worth the money. It is indexed under subjects. One of my favourites is this one. I give the author and book last so you can test yourselves: 'He spoke with a certain what-is-it in his voice, and I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being gruntled.' Answer: P.G. Wodehouse, The Code of the Woosters. I have a great mind for the irrelevant and the best irrelevant entry must be: 'Why fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure in life:' Charles Frohman, last words before going down in the Lusitania.

In contrast to Pan, Penguin, that publishing house who continue to play a large part in my self-education, seem to have temporarily lost their way. They have had, I'm told, quite a few internal changes over the past months and this seems to reflect in their lists. They are still strong on what might be called 'standards,' but where is the imagination of the moment? Anyway they have brought out, somewhat belatedly, a selection of answers given by Dr. HIPPocrates, who was very much part of the 1968 drug culture scene in America. Eugene Schoenfield for the alternative paper Berkeley Barb. There are some witty and direct answers on sex, drugs, in fact any matter of that moment. Musicians note: 'The risks of high noise levels are greater to the performers than the audience.' As the doctor writes: 'DO YOU HEAR THAT.'

Michael Wale

RECUMBENT REFLECTIONS

Trends may come and trends may go, but the lovable, elderly and often, in the past, intermittent ZigZag limps on forever, vainly searching for the sunset, fame and the circulation of FAB208. Ah well, hope springs eternal, as they say, and it's a big smiling hello to the unspeakable Connor McKnight, recently recovered from an affliction he has suffered since birth, that of perpetually standing on his head. From foot level, he tells me that it's something to do with his country of birth, and he calls me a podean. If you've got this far, you'll very likely have noticed that Pete Frame is no longer the editor of this journal, and I've been urged to compose a piece, looking backward, forward and sideways at the life and times of ZigZag.

When I first heard of it, I was working, as I am now, as a computer programmer for a large bank, which you may find unlikely, but which is absolutely true. Pete, together with Ian, his brother, Rod Yallop, Danny McGannan and a couple of others, had ventured into publishing, and rang to ask me if I'd help out, which was no sooner said than done. The big problem was having someone in London to make contact with the record companies, for there's one very big truth, which far too many people forget, and that is, that without record companies there is no need for a magazine, and without record company advertising, there's no future for a magazine. So it was my task to wander round the companies, phoning them up frequently to remind them of our existence, because in the record industry, out of sight is completely out of mind.

Thus I met a lot of pretty nice people, and a few pretty revolting ones as well, but gradually ZigZag became more than a name on a letterhead, and due, I like to think, to the quality of the writing and the depth of knowledge demonstrated, has become fairly well respected within the industry as well as with all of you out there. That's not to say that there haven't been problems: we've nearly been sued a couple of times for printing the truth, Pete and I have both had personal problems because of the time we spend on the paper, and for quite a lot of the time, only Pete and I have been writing for the paper, because our erstwhile colleagues have freaked out, gone away or generally lost interest.

Now, we're under some sort of business like management, and the sort of problems that have afflicted us in the past should be removed. Just to give you an idea, contributors were not paid until issue No. 25. That's going to be fixed, and now we have the lovely Claire to transcribe our interviews, which will probably enable me at least to double my output. Still, enough at that and on with the month's thoughts and recommendations.

Let's make a start with what ought to be obvious. I'm not a great admirer of the Whistle Test, for several reasons, and often I don't bother to watch it. Recently, though, there was an excellent edition featuring Humble Pie, Ry Cooder and a Led Zep track. The first and last have new albums out, you'll probably know, and I'm not about to criticise them all. 'Black Coffee' by the Pie is fabulous, and the Zeppelin album is as good as you'd expect. Both will inevitably be in the charts soon, so this little aclaim isn't necessary, but even so, I'm pleased to have them.

On the same show, there was an example of what Hoyt Axton can do. He's been around for years, and has recorded for several labels, the latest of which is A&M. His new album is fine, and there's another one that seems to turn up a lot in sales, and is worth getting, called 'My Griffin is Gone' on CBS. Still on the second hand trail, I buy a lot of records from those sources, and although I'm not about to disclose my sources, I'd like to start a service for you indicating three worthwhile and one worthless album I've bought second hand in each issue. To get the junk out of the way first, there's a double album on Capital called 'Word of Mouth' by Neil Merryweather, which is in the nature of a 'superjam' and features such heroes as Steve Miller, Barry Goldberg, Charlie Musselwhite and Dave Mason. I can only assume that they felt pretty ill that day because they play like rank amateurs.

Then the goodies. There are at least two Jerry Corbitt albums around, one on Polydor and one on Capitol. The Polydor is superb, and worth at least thirty bob if you see it, but I've only just got hold of the other one, so it's too early to recommend it yet. Then there's a very strange record on the Poison Ring label, called 'The Great Grizzly Bear Hunt' by the Incredible Broadside Brass Bed Band which has several great offensive tracks like 'Little Dead Surfer Girl' and 'Don't Cry Lady, I'll Buy Your Goddamned Violets.' I've never seen it before or since, but it's sure enough a goodie. Finally, I found one of the Koerner, Ray and Glover albums on Elektra last week. They're pretty obscure now, but very very good, and worth £1.25 at least.

Back to the new stuff now, and predictably enough, the usual good albums have come from J.J. Cale, Heads, Hands and Feet, (article soon,) Gallagher and Lyle (ditto,) and the fine live Dion and the Belmonts thing from a Richard Nader show, which I think we should have over here as soon as possible. New people you might like are fairly few this month, I think, but try Billy Mernit, who's co-written some of Carly Simon's songs and the Kim Fowley produced Flash Cadillac and the Continental Kids, which is almost as good as Fowley's own albums are not.

After enthusing about Camel last time, I went to see them live, and they exceeded my expectations. There were extraordinarily good, particularly Andy Latimer, their guitarist, who plays just beautifully, so unlike most of his contemporaries. Please go and see them, and buy their record, because you're really missing something if you don't. Oh yes, and don't forget to listen to Dory Previn's new album. If you're feeling browned off, she'll make you feel better, because there's always someone worse off, etc. Now, a little bit of advance news on albums you might be thinking of buying in the next few weeks. Thanks for the chance to Anni Ivil of WEA and Tony Woolcott of CBS.

I haven't seen 'Deliverance' yet, but of course, I have seen that superb clip that's been on the box a couple of times. In fact, it was on that Whistle Test that I've mentioned above. Obviously, the instant attraction is 'Dueling Banjos' with its ridiculous build up, and the question marks about whether that weird looking person can really play the banjo. Well, it doesn't really matter in terms of the 'Deliverance' album, because it's only one among many star tracks which are generally composed of lightning fast banjo/mandolin/guitar picking in the best tradition of the Dillards, Country Gazette and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. There's a find unnamed violinist who might well be Byron Berline, and altogether it's the bluegrass record to end all your searching if, like me, you've often wanted a bluegrass record, but have been afraid of getting a heap of dross like country corn, with only one or two good tracks of the type you want. Everything here demonstrates that impeccable musicianship which is so contagious when you hear it, bringing to mind hoedowns (yi-haa!) and John Wayne films just before a fight. The amusing thing to me about the album is that, with the exception of 'Dueling Banjos,' it's an extremely old record, nine or ten years in fact, and was originally released on Elektra under the title of 'New Dimensions in Bluegrass' by Eric Weissberg and Marshall Brickman. Interestingly enough, you can also hear the track from which the film piece was adapted, called 'End Of A Dream,' which like many of the tracks, lasts under two minutes. Weissberg and Brickman are obviously aware of the tedium possibilities of continuing for a lengthy period with the same track, and thus you get eighteen very worthwhile tracks for your money. My favourites, apart from those already mentioned, include 'Pony Express,' 'Bugle Call Rag' and 'Rawhide' and certainly if you're at all into bluegrass, you should inveigle your shop to give you a listen.

Then we come to Beck, Bogert and Appice, who I haven't seen live as yet, but who are certainly at the top of my list so to do after hearing their album. I'm sure I can't be the only person to subscribe to the theory that Jeff Beck is potentially as great as Clapton, Page or Hendrix, but that he hasn't in any way fulfilled his potential since the 'Truth' album with Rod Stewart, who himself hasn't always been up to the very high standard set at that time. From hearing this album, it appears that all that Beck was lacking was backing musicians of sufficient calibre to provide a showcase for his often world shattering guitar screams. He hasn't exactly got a backing group here, mind you, because both Carmine and Tim are past masters at the purveying of heavy music, and may even have been the first real 'heavies' when they were with the Fudge. All the instruments sound wonderfully rich, and the only question mark can be over the vocals, which are sometimes excellent as on 'Oh To Love You' and at other times are a little too far back in the mix. BB&A's version of 'Superstition' drives harder than Stevie Wonder's, and with the exception of a too weak vocal, is infinitely superior as far as I'm concerned. In all, this is the record that Jeff Beck should have made three years ago, when he had his car crash. I for one am very glad that he's finally done it, and I can only urge you to get it just as soon as you can. I'm not sure when it's going to be released here, but place your orders now, folks.

OK, that's all for this time, and don't forget that ZigZag loves you. I'm moving house this week, so I've got to go on and strap the paintbrush on my arm, or Nicky will feed me to the animals. Bye.

John

ZIGZAG
37 Soho Square
London W1
01 437 9632

Moving Spirit and Founding Father
Pete Frame

Editor
Connor McKnight

Contibuting Editors
John Tobler, Michael Wale

Advertising Production
Claire Weltman

Heroes
Messrs. Lee, Van Vliet, McGuinn

THE DEPRESSION AND THE DUSTBOWL

A RANDOM SELECTION FROM "RY COODER; A MUSICAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA AMERICANA"

INCORPORATING COMMENT & HISTORICAL INFORMATION FROM WOODY GUTHRIE

For purely selfish reasons, I hope Ry Cooder never stops making albums Having "paid his dues" with Taj Mahal's Rising Sons and worked with Beefheart for a spell, he's now decided to limit his contributions as a studio musician (to a handful of friends whose work he admires) in favour of concentrating on a solo career, which means (as far as we're concerned, anyway) albums rather than gigs.

So far, Ry Cooder has recorded three albums - none of which, on the face of it, are very staggering..... but if you take the time to dig into the bones of each song, you'll find endless fascination (provided you're interested in the roots of American folk music and the way it's developed over the last century or so).

As I suspected, Ry, as an interpreter of the songs of a wide range of writers - living and dead, is deeply convinced of the worth and historical value of each piece he chooses, and he can tell you all about the author, the period, and the environment in which it was written, why it was written, in what style and geographical area it was first performed.....he'll talk all day if given the chance.

In fact, on his recent "promotional" visit, we talked about each one of his album tracks at great length, and if I wrote up the entire conversation, you'd have a hazy picture of the changing face of rural America since the 1920s (and before) through the eyes of song writers who probably had no idea that their songs would outlive them and come to be regarded as graphic documents of the times in which they lived.

As I said, we'll be here all day and all night if I'm not careful, so what I'm going to do is talk about one era, The Great American Depression (1929 to 1939), and specifically the Dust Bowl, to which period and events several of Ry's songs relate. This will also afford the opportunity to incorporate information on and from the greatest influence on folk music ever - Woody Guthrie.

In the Spring of 1928, prices on the New York Stock Exchange, already at an unprecedented high point, began to surge ahead as Hoover's presidential campaign got into gear....."the abolition of poverty" he stressed, lay just around the corner. This phenomenal rise in stock continued during the first half of 1929 as a mania for speculation swept the States, inducing tens of thousands of people to invest their life savings in shares....but then the market wavered until, on October 24, a massive wave of selling sent prices spinning downwards and a record number of 13 million shares changed hands. Bankers and politicians rallied to check the decline and President Hoover assured an anxious populace that "the business of the country is on a sound and prosperous basis".

Within five days, the boom was over; the bottom fell out of the market completely, wiping out the savings of thousands of small (and big) investors and destroying public confidence in the supposedly perfect machinery of American capitalism. Madness broke out - you might even have heard of desperate bankrupts hurling themselves out of Wall Street windows.

Actually, this financial chaos was only one contributory factor to the Great Depression, which resulted mainly from imbalances produced by the industrialisation and urbanisation of the United States in the course of the century, and from the chronic problem of underconsumption; factories produced far more than they could sell and eventually began to lay off staff and close down. Unemployment statistics reached incredible lows... for example, over a third of the entire population of Pennsylvania was on the dole and 40% of Chicago's working population was out of work. Countless thousands were facing starvation as local authorities ran into huge debt, without prospects of collecting additional funds; in Philadelphia, during an 11 day period when no money was available to the Welfare Department, hundreds of families existed on stale bread, thin soup and garbage. Ramshackle ghettos, known as "Hoovervilles", sprang up in every major city, where families made their homes from packing cases, rusty sheet metal and similar materials, and thousands of hungry tramps roamed every highway.

The national mood, at first apathetic, became one of resentment followed by outright fear and fury.

But it wasn't only the city dwellers who suffered during this time; a region of some 150,000 square miles, comprising parts of Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico, and the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles, was devastated by drought between 1933 and 1939, and became known as "The Dust Bowl". If you've read the book "The Grapes of Wrath" by John Steinbeck (or seen the film which the BBC shoves on every few years) or heard any of Woody Guthrie's "Dustbowl" songs, then you'll have some idea of the situation. Briefly, at the end of World War 1, the rising price of grain encouraged farmers to plough up what had been grazing land in favour of planting winter wheat - but then, during the depression, a drought set in and the light soil dried and crumbled. The Spring high winds whistled across the bare fields, piling the sandy soil in dunes and across roads and what little pasture there was left, and the lighter silt was whirled into dust clouds, some of which were five miles high.....and these "black blizzards" swept as far east as the Atlantic Coast. So the topsoil was eroded by wind and quickly rendered useless..... the farmers couldn't grow anything or graze anything - in fact, just couldn't live off the land any longer.

That's the historical and geographical setting; now what about the music? Well, we're going to talk about the following five songs, with commentary by Ry Cooder, and explanatory comments by Woody Guthrie (swiped off the Elektra "Library of Congress Recordings" triple album, which is deleted here now, but is worth its weight in gold if you can get your hands on it):

From the first album 'RY COODER' (RSLP 6402):

'Do Re Mi' - written by Woody Guthrie

'How can a poor man stand such times and live?' - written by Alfred Reed.

From the second album 'INTO THE PURPLE VALLEY' (K 44142):

'How can you keep on moving?' - a traditional song

'Taxes on the farmer feeds us all' - another traditional adaptation

'Vigilante Man' - another Woody Guthrie song.

We'll begin by eavesdropping on a conversation recorded by the Department of Interior Radio Broadcasting on behalf of the Library of Congress on March 21st 1940, between Woody Guthrie and Alan Lomax, where Woody is showing Lomax a photograph of an approaching duststorm.

"Some of the worst dust storms in the world broke loose in the area where I was working; Steinbeck (in 'The Grapes of Wrath') talks about one end of the dustbowl - the Oklahoma end - but if you wanted to find the middle of the dustbowl, where they get the blackest and thickest dust storms, you just go to Amarillo, Texas. The picture shows the little town of Tampa in Texas.....that's where my wife and children are living now; I hear from them twice a week and they're still having the same duststorms..... what do you think of that picture?"

"It looks like just about the most awful thing I ever saw" says Lomax "a black cloud about two miles high, coming over some little shacks and chicken houses - is that the kind of house people live in, down there in Tampa?"

"Oh, yeah", replies Woody "them ain't for chickens - they're dwelling houses. We'd seen duststorms before, but nothing like the one we had on April 14th 1935; a whole bunch of us were standing outside this little town that you see, and we were watching this storm coming up like the Red Sea, closing in on the Israel children".

"We were up on the plains there, about 60 miles north of Amarillo, about 3600 feet high and as flat as a floor, about a thousand miles wide.... there wasn't a thing to stop the wind except a barbed wire fence. It was like an ocean jumping on a snail!"

"I'm telling you, it got so black that when it hit, we all ran into the houses, where all the neighbourhood had gathered together, and it got so dark that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face, and if you turned on a good strong electric light bulb, it looked like a cigarette burning. So, we got to talking, and a lot of the people, being religious minded and pretty well up on the scriptures, thought it was the end of the world.... and everyone accepted the prospect of death in a very level-headed way - they thought it was God's way of punishing the world for not living right; the human race hadn't been treating each other right - they'd been robbing each other with fountain pens and guns, and having wars and killing each other, so the feller who made the world whipped up this duststorm; well, everyone was waiting for the end, and saying to each other "so long, it's been good to know you"".

After the worst of the storms had blown over, leaving the land arid and barren, and ruining the crops on which the livelihood of so many families depended, nobody was sure exactly what to do. Woody: "They hated to give up what they'd worked for for 50 years, the land they'd been born and raised on, but they owed the bankers 3500 or 4000 dollars for a combined harvester, 1100 for a tractor, a year's fuel bill which always amounted to several hundred dollars, they owed the grocery bill for about a year, seed bills and so on, and when they couldn't pay them, the bankers came down with their mortgages and took their land. So these people didn't have but one thing to do; just get out on the middle of that road (and incidentally the66 Highway (Route 66) runs just about a mile of the place I was living) with a bundle of belongings and head for California, the land they'd heard so much about.....where you can sleep outdoors at night, work all day in the big fruit orchards and make enough to get by and live decently. According to the handbills they passed around in California, you were supposed to have a wonderful chance of succeeding there, so that's where they headed."

"Most of the people in the dustbowl had seen the pretty pictures of California, and they'd heard all the pretty songs.....like that one Jimmy Rodgers used to sing; he put it on some kind of phonograph record, which went all down through Oklahoma and all over Texas, Georgia, Alabama, Kansas, Mississippi, Tennessee - and I've seen hundreds and hundreds of people ganging up round a phonograph, listening to Jimmie Rodgers singing that 'California Blues'. It said things about "going to California where they sleep out all night,'cause the Oklahoma women naturally ain't treating me right. I'd rather drink muddy water and sleep in a hollow log, than to be down in Texas and be treated like a dirty dog. California waters taste like cherry wine, but that Georgia water tastes like turpentine". The folks would hear that and punch each other in the ribs with their elbows and say "there's the place to go - he's singing the truth, I tell you". So thousands and thousands, three or four thousand soon found themselves on the road, travelling in these old broken down jalopies, and they went to California...and I was one of the first bunch to go, because when people start going somewhere, I'm always the first guy to take off and leave".

"When I got to California, I saw things that I wouldn't have believed. If anyone had told me that there were thousands upon thousands of people living under railroad bridges, down along river bottoms in old cardboard houses and old rusty places they'd made out of sacks and corrugated iron and orange crates, I wouldn't have believed it.....because all these people had gone out there for one

reason and one reason only; they hadn't gone there to loaf about or have a good time - they'd gone there to try and get some work. But I've seen three or four hundred families, in hobo jungles, camping on one hillside and sharing one little spring of water, no bigger than the flow of one kitchen tap, to do their washing in, to shave in, to drink from, for sewage disposal .....for every purpose."

"When we'd got to the California line, they'd asked us questions about where we were from, and they'd tried to turn a lot of us back - the hobos, the boys who were riding freight trains, the hitchhikers.....anyone who didn't have money in their pockets. But we remembered the tractors covered up with dust and we said "no mister, we'd rather be in jail here than go back to that farm." It was reckoned to be highly unsanitary to be out of work; they had this vagrancy law - it was a jailhouse offence to be out of work, and they enforced it when they took a notion.....they found ways of putting that Vag Law on you and put you to work on some pea patch or washing dishes for free, where you didn't make any money".

"It was really a question of having the money when you arrived in California, wasn't it?" asks Lomax.

"That's it" says Woody "they don't ask you where you got it or how you got it.....just as long as you've got the dough, the do-re-mi".

And so, as with everything he experienced, Woody wrote a song about the Okies'(ie. people from Oklahoma) rose coloured vision of California - 'Do Re Mi', which Ry Cooder recorded on his first Reprise album.

Ry: "I got interested in the songs of the depression era through listening to Woody's records; I listened to them as a child- there were two kinds of music being played around my house when I was young....classical music, because my father was interested in chamber stuff - Beethoven and Mozart and the quartet kind of thing. That was going on, but I had my own record player and records by Pete Seeger, Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie, who I liked the best. There was something magic about the stories in all his tunes.....very graphic and intriguing. The "dust bowl", particularly, became kind of a fixation for me - to find out what it was all about - and the historical thing has always meant the most to me. The whole idea of an era, a period, a whole movement of people who could produce music that was so crystal clear - more so than blues, even. You listen to a song and get such a clear picture of how it must have been ....it's all there."

"One thing I find, is that people tend to confuse the meaning of the word nostalgia....I've seen my 'Purple Valley' sleeve described as nostalgic, but that sleeve relates to a certain time and place visually. Nostalgia is a kind of sentimentality about the past, which I am not sentimental about because I didn't live at that time. I have a purely abstract interest in it and those shots, which were taken at the Warner Brothers studio lot, weren't supposed to represent any kind of lifestyle.....it was just for the fun of it. Incidentally, the English sleeve is very slick compared with the American one which was printed on old linen paper, like a postcard, giving tremendous colour

resolution."

"Anyway, let's get back to 'Do Re Mi' and 'How can you keep on moving', which is related to the same theme... the exasperation of going all the way to California in search of work, only to find that you weren't wanted. Those people would go out looking for work in the cabbage patches or orchards of California and Washington and find that so many had gone the same route that the native Californians didn't want to admit any more for fear of being overrun by them- "we don't want any more Okies here unless they've got money to bring in". You see, all the way up from the 1800's to the 1920's, when it was pretty much settled up, people were encouraged for one reason or another.....the railroad would reach the area, buy the land from the government for next to nothing and advertise plots for sale, encouraging the growth of a community which would have the benefit of a railroad which they could use to ship stuff back East.....so at that period, California was advertised as the cornucopia of the world. Of course, that was all tied up with money; the developers used to make tremendous amounts by creating one land boom after another - that's why LA is so big".

"So these orchard owners and land owners, who moved in early to take advantage of California's climate and irrigation, discovered that they were on to a good thing by exploiting unskilled temporary labour. The migratory situation was ideal as far as they were concerned; they could advertise by sending handbills to Oklahoma and attract as much cheap labour as they wanted. They'd advertise for 1000 men and 10,000 would turn up.....so where were they all to live? Slums and shanty towns sprung up and the Californians, being very proud of their state, didn't like this at all, but the big growers could turn this to their advantage. They'd say "we want 1000 men to pick peaches at 5 cents a bushel" and this would get some of the Okies to offer to work for two cents a bushel, simply to feed their families.....so the owner would say "OK, all those who'll work for 2 cents are hired". This usually led to some ringleader saying "look, we've got to organise and work together - form a union.... we can't work for two cents and then have it all taken back by the company store who overcharge anyway". In turn, this led to the company thugs, the so called Vigilante Men (also the subject of a Woody song recorded by Ry), who were like phony deputy sheriffs beating up the trouble makers or burning down their camps - to protect the vested interests of the growers.....it still goes on today, to a lesser extent, with the imported Mexican labour".

(To interrupt for a moment, another great Woody song, "Deportees", about the death of a planeload of Mexican fruit pickers, can be found on the Byrds 'Easy Rider' album).

"So these company thugs were engaged to keep order and to bust any union or socialistic movement, which was what people like Woody were urging for. The owners played on the desperation of these poor migrants - they'd pay them paltry wages and give them limited credit at the company store, so the workers never made any money and existed on little food. If somebody started saying "if everyone demands ten cents a bushel and no one works for less, the peaches will rot on the trees", the Vigilante Man would come in, call them reds, shoot them, tar and feather them, get rid of them ....."troubleshooters upsetting the established balance" they'd say. That would make the people scared, and it would be every man for himself again".

"'Do Re Mi' is advice to would-be migrants to stay where they are, rather than make the trip west..... "California is a garden of Eden - a paradise", but you're better off staying in the dustbowl."

So all these poor old migrants were stuck in miserable conditions. Woody again: "The Californians called us dustbowl refugees.....all the newspaper headlines were full of stories about dustbowl refugees. We'd always

At the conclusion of the pea harvest in one California county, the supervisors voted $2,500 to fill the tanks of the pickers cars with enough gasoline to get them into the next county and avoid having to feed them. The receiving county, resentful, sent word that if there is a repetition, the migrants will be turned back at the county line with guns.

been taught to believe that the 48 states were absolutely free and that we wouldn't get asked questions or get turned away from places, but the Californians, although they needed people to pick their fruit and work for them, looked down on the people who had come in from other states".

As Woody goes on to explain, the situation of enticing and exploiting labour still persisted at the time he was speaking (1940), though the handbill method had been replaced by more subtle propaganda. The end effect was similar; once the optimistic labourer had been drawn to California, the orchard owner would say (to quote Woody Guthrie) "well, the fruit is in awful shape.....it isn't going to be worth nothing this year; I doubt if it's worth picking - may as well let it rot on the trees, considering the price I'd get for it. Of course, if you boys want to pick it, you can pick, pack, carry and load one ton of peaches and I'll give you a dollar".

'Do Re Mi' became a very popular song, simply because of its catchy tune and chorus - people like the Black and White Minstrels used to sing it - but in reality, as we've seen, it was born of tragic circumstances.

Ry: "Woody Guthrie sang the truth - he always did.....he put into a song exactly what was going on. Exactly. That's where his talent lay, in fine melodies and succinct lyrics and the way he mixed with everybody..... music was the common language between these people, who for the most part had no radios and no record players... they only had singers like Woody and Cisco Houston. Music was so important to that whole movement and had been since the days of Joe Hill".

'Taxes on the farmer feeds us all', is, in certain versions, (for instance,

that of the New Lost City Ramblers) a depression song, but Ry's is an amalgamation from 3 different sources. "It's a very old song - goes way back to the 1890's, but it was modified during the depression to suit the times. It says "the mortgage worked the hardest of us all" because it was impossible to redeem it; no matter how hard the farmer worked, he couldn't repay the bank, because the prices were rising and the crops were not raising enough money. During the depression, everything had to be bought on credit, so the farmer was up to his neck in debt all the time.... never had a chance. The financiers always won out, it was just a matter of time. So that was the scene for the farmer in the thirties; either he was blown out by the duststorms or he was forced out by the bankers who came with their caterpillar tractors and just flattened both the farmhouses and outbuildings, irrespective of anything but financial considerations. So much for private enterprise on the plains".

"Then we come to the East Coast, where it was no better really - which is where we get to 'How can a poor man stand such times and live?'. That was written by a guy called Alfred Reed (an album of who's work has, I believe, recently been released in the States on the Rounder Record label), who was a white hillbilly singer, and he sang a lot of songs like that - very bitter and angry, but wrapped up in a sort of humorous shell. He played the violin and sang with a very edgy ring in his voice, but he wrote some really

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 1933

Roosevelt Offers Program Assuring Jobs to 250,000; Beer to Be Legal April 7

Asks Congress to Enlist Corps for Flood and Forest Work.

THREE-POINT PLAN

500 Million Direct Aid, Billion for Public Works to Follow.

By Universal Service.

WASHINGTON, Mar. 21.—As the first step in a vast unemployment relief program, President Roosevelt asked Congress in a message to authorize the enlistment of a civilian conservation corps of about 250,000 jobless men to work on reforestation, flood control, soil erosion and similar projects.

Roosevelt Eats 7 1-2-Cent Lunch and Finds It Good

fantastic, incredible songs. I love this song; I could've made it much longer because the original had many more verses - a whole catalogue of complaints about the cost of food and doctors and preachers and clothes.... it's a great song. He was in the middle of the Depression, down on his luck and down to his last bean....lived in West Virginia direction, down in the Lower Appalachians where they were doing all that strip mining. He was always very poor....I'm sure the guy never had a penny. I mean, the mine workers down there in places like Kentucky were and are exploited in just the same way as the Okies out in California; nobody gives a shit about the way they're treated. They live in terrible conditions, desperate poverty, they die of silicosis from breathing all that coal dust....they're right up there with the Biafrans. Here's the great country of America, spending millions of dollars all over the world, and their own people are living like that, even today...they just get glossed over. Johnson did a bit to help them and of course Roosevelt brought in rural electricity, which was good and everyone loved him for it, but noone else has lifted a hand to help them. They can't even clothe or send their kids to school...it's pretty awful".

If I wanted to make this article five times as long, it wouldn't be difficult because all Ry Cooder's songs can be threaded together in some way....but this should do to be getting on with. Anyway, have a listen to his albums (and if you buy the third one,'Boomers Story', make sure it contains the booklet, which was left out of a number of sleeves....much to Ry's annoyance) and be thankful that there are still a few singers who are proud of and interested in their musical heritage. (Like Tyger Hutchings for instance, who's band is playing one of my favourite folksongs, 'Raggle Taggle Gypsies', on the John Peel Show at this very minute).

If you're at all interested in all this stuff, and I always feel that where it's worth it rock music should be investigated for more than just its superficial interest (all rock and no roll makes Jack a dull boy), then you might want to know some other sources of information. I suggest you read 'The Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck, though it's very depressing, and 'Hard Travellin' by Kenneth Alsop (get it from a library or lash out on the Penguin). Also excellent are two books by Woody Guthrie; 'Bound for Glory' and 'Born to Win', both of which can be obtained in paperback from our mates at Compendium Books down in Camden Town. A good place to snoop and sniff around is Collets in New Oxford Street; they have a good load of folk literature and fascinating records by the New Lost City Ramblers and other essential troubadours of that ilk, and the guy behind the counter (Hans, I think his name is) is very knowledgable and helpful.

Enough, enough. Carole maintains this is the most boring article she's ever had to read. She says it's like one of those exam questions - read all this waffle and summarise it into two concise sentences. (Do not attempt to write on both sides of the paper at once).

Pete

The photograph is of Ry Cooder, and the drawings are by Woody Guthrie.

SAIL TO SANITY

WITH ZIGZAG BACK ISSUES

6 Quintessence, Capt Beefheart, Marsha Hunt, Kinks, Youngbloods, Easy Rider, East of Eden.

7 Bert Jansch, Atomic Rooster, Beatles, Elektra, Love, Principal Edwards, Gypsy, Dorris.

8 Renaissance, Jethro Tull, Capt Beefheart, Pig poster, Jackie Lomax, Colosseum, Jody Grind.

9 Joe Cocker, Spirit, Buddy Holly, Siren, Kevin Ayers, Pete Brown, Paul Butterfield, Lennon

10 Love, God rock, Canned Heat, Ackles, 3rd Ear, Hawkwind, T Rex, Argent, Cohen.

11 King Crimson, Simon & Garfunkel, Love, Roy Harper, Steve Miller, San Francisco, Jazz rock.

12 Broughton, Dylan, Quicksilver, Cocker, Brinsley Schwarz, Nico, Everlys, Ian Matthews.

13 Dead, Tom Paxton, Cockrock, IAB Day, Lol Coxhill, Brett Marvin, Randy Newman, etc.

14 Byrds, Dylan, Jelly bread, Country Joe & the Fish, Fairport, Beefheart, Medicine Head

15 Leon Russell, Airplane, Joni Mitchell, Thunderlap Newman, Mick Softley, Stackwaddy, Pink Fairies

16 Doors, Dave Mason, Cochise, Velvets, Moth the Hoople, Bread, Peter Hamilton, I of Wight.

17 Mayall chart, Jack Elliott, Brinsleys, Roy Harper, Stooges, Wild Angels, Quintessence.

18 Groundhogs, Quiver, Sreeleye, Lou Reed, Chuck Berry, Stream Hammer, lotsa more.

19 Rod Stewart, Duster Bennett, Allman Bros, Help Yourself, The Stones, Grateful Dead, Genesis.

20 Mountain, Jeff Beck, Phil Goodhand-Tait, J Geils Band, Wildman Fisher, Snoopy, Melanie.

21 Marc Bolan, Jo Mama's family tree, Al Kooper, Amazing Blondel, Kevan Coyne, Buffy St Marie.

22 Jack Bruce tree, Moth the Hoople, Allman Bros, Alice Cooper, Tamiyan tree, Terry Riley, Link Wray.

23 John Sebastian, Colin Blunstone, Fairport & Stonegound trees, Rory Gallagher, Big Brother.

24 Pete Townshend, Capt Beefheart, Love, Poco/Springfield family tree, John Walters, Humble Pie family tree.

25 Elton John family tree, Lou Reed song, Flamin Groovies, Zappa family tree, Love tree, Pink Floyd/Underground.

26 Hawkwind, Joe Cocker, Dave Van Ronk, Greenwich Village, Grateful Dead/Quicksilver tree, Dan Hicks Delo Leonard, Charlatans, Droop.

27 Jimmy Page, Bridget St John, Ducks DeLuxe, Kinks, Procol Harum and Traffic family tree, Barclay James, Steve Stills, Byrds

28 Led Zeppelin, Thy Filthy Dirty Bunch, Kim Fowley, Alvin Ayers, Soft Machine family tree, Love, Stealers Wheel, Donleavy, Byrds

29 Genesis, Everlys, Beefheart, The Eagles, Eagles/Burritos family tree, Johnny Speight, Silverhead, and Chapter 3 of the endless Byrds story

Illustration from 1848

Due to the discovery of a cache of old magazines in a Caddington garage, we are pleased to announce that limited quantities of of ZIGZAG 2 and ZIGZAG 5 are available at the extortionate price of 30p each, including post and packing. RARE!

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CHAPTER FOUR
'YOUNGER THAN YESTERDAY'
A QUICK TRIP TO LONDON
January 1967 – July 1967

1967 arrives and finds 'McGuinn' (and McGuire) still getting higher" and still trusting that everything will work out alright. It also brings a new album (the best yet): 'YOUNGER THAN YESTERDAY' (released in USA on February 6th, and in England on 7th April... CBS 62988), produced by Gary Usher.

Tracks, notes and comments by Roger McGuinn and Chris Hillman (in conversation with me unless otherwise noted)[2]

'So you want to be a rock and roll star'
One of rock's greatest (and most quoted) tracks; memorable for the rhythm, Hugh Masekela's trumpet which juts into the intro over that percussive scraper device, the screams (supposedly recorded at Bournemouth - or was it Birmingham - on their 1965 tour), and those great cynical/serious lyrics. "Don't forget what you are..." is the key line that McGuinn has always toed - like when I interviewed him, he patiently sat and talked over ground he must've covered a million times with dumb interviewers like me, purely because he never forgets his responsibility to the unsavoury parts of pop stardom - as long as he is to remain a pop star he must bear the indignities involved (like having his life torn open by nosy pressmen, having to travel around and get up on stage when he might not feel like it, playing 'Mister Tambourine Man' for the 12, 947th time... but he was never a puppet - he didn't sell his soul to the company.... not like a few I could mention).

McGuinn: "Some people have accused us of being bitter for writing that song, but it's no more bitter than 'Positively 4th Street'; in fact, it isn't as bitter as that. We were thumbing through a teen magazine and looking at all the unfamiliar faces and we couldn't help thinking "wow, what's happening... all of a sudden here is everyone and his brother and even his pet bullfrog singing rock'n'roll". So we wrote 'So you want to be a rock and roll star' to the audience of potential rock stars - those who were going to be, or who wanted to be, and those who actually did go on and realise their goals!"[3]

ZZ: Is it true that 'Rock and roll star' contains no autobiographical comment?
Chris Hillman: Yes, it's not about us at all.... in fact, we wrote that when the Monkees came out; we were just being cynical about the way a bunch of people could be contrived into the kind of popularity they got.

'Have you seen her face?'
Hillman singing, great ploppy/cloddy/bonky drumming from Clarke, corkscrew guitar solo, nice bass, nice track (but aren't they all?).

ZZ: How come you never even collaborated on the writing of a song until this album really because it was a big lad at the time to play things backwards.
ZZ: Is that a Moog on there?
RM: No, it was pre-Moog for us - they were in existence then, but we didn't have a telegraph key, and that booming bang that you hear is the sustain pedal of a piano being held down and banged with our fists.... a sort of Stockhausen idea.

As a result of his 'space rock', McGuinn has met several people involved in space research, including Dr Gene Epstein. McGuinn: "Gene was a radio astronomer for the Aerospace Company - a subsidiary of the US Airforce - but he wasn't at all military like them. He sent me a copy of The Astrophysical Journal, which is an international publication, and it contained an article he'd written about different quasars that had been discovered. Eventually he mentioned CTA 102 and said that the upturn in the red end of the spectrum was insufficient to support the comments by McGuinn, Clarke, Hillman and Crosby.... and then he said, in parentheses, "private communication". That was the end of the dissertation; he'd put a joke in a very sophisticated journal read by all sorts of crotchety old scientists. He sent it to me with an invitation to come and see him - so we did, and he took us along to this big radio telescope. I really got very elated by it all."

'Renaissance Fair'
Is this Crosby doing such delicate finger picking? The whole atmosphere of early flower-power compressed into 4 verses; all the romance of unhackneyed, non-plastic, non rip-off happiness... one of Crosby's greatest efforts and an example of the Byrds' finest work. Crosby, by the way, has now taken to sporting bizarre hats in the John Phillips tradition.
ZZ: What was Renaissance Fair - some kind of hippie festival?
Roger McGuinn: No, it was an annual event sponsored by a radio station in Los Angeles - everyone dressed up in medieval costumes and it was really great for a few years, but then it got sort of run down and decrepit.

'Time Between'
Another Hillman song, this time with the introduction of Clarence White playing lead guitar on his first Byrds track (in the left speaker). A nice bouncing song.
ZZ: Had Clarence left the Kentucky Colonels and taken up the Telecaster as a studio musician by then?
Chris Hillman: Yes. Like I said, I sort of grew up with Clarence; when I was in the Hillmen, we were always bumping into each other, but when I joined the Byrds I lost track of him for a couple of years. Then, around the end of 66, I found him again - living way out of LA and playing

and now you're suddenly turning out all this ace stuff?
Chris Hillman: I don't really know... it just happened. I did some session work with Hugh Masakela and really got off on it, then I came home and had this compulsion to write. I'd hardly say it was "ace" ... it's just one or two songs about girls and touring and things like that.

'CTA 102'
A lot of thought went into this... good old Gary Usher - best Byrd producer ever. Co-written by McGuinn and some fellow called R J Hippard ("He's an actor and a film writer... just sold his first filmscript - called 'S-T-O-N-E'!")

ZZ: 'CTA 102' is about a quasar - can you tell us about quasars?
Roger McGuinn: Yes, this song was a bit more serious than 'Mr Spaceman' until the end part where it becomes whimsical. At the time we wrote it, I thought that it might be possible to make contact with quasars, but later I found out that they were stars which are imploding at a tremendous velocity; they're diminishing in volume and haven't yet stabilised at their new volume level. They're condensing and spinning at the same time, and the nucleus is sending out tremendous amounts of radiation, some of which is audible as an electronic impulse on a computerised radio telescope. It comes out in a rhythmic pattern, but the frequency of the signal depends on the size, and originally, the radio astronomers who received these impulses thought that they came from a life-form in space which was trying to contact us on earth. Anyway, I'm interested in astronomy and the possibility of connecting with extra-terrestrial life and I thought that it might work the other way round... if we tried to contact them. I thought that the song being played on the air might be a way of getting through to them - but even if there had been anybody up there listening they wouldn't have heard because, I found out later, AM soundwaves diffuse in space too rapidly.
ZZ: You think there's life in space?
RM: I think it's inevitable that sooner or later we'll run into something intelligent in space - I don't know whether it'll happen in our lifetime though.
ZZ: How did you get on to the idea of something intelligent in space in the first place?
RM: We used earphones fed into microphones and talked into them like this (the accurately reproduces the gibberish sounds), and then we speeded it up.
ZZ: There were all these rumours that you were discussing Lenny Bruce and all sorts of things....
RM: No, it was just nonsense - but we deliberately tried to make it sound like a backwards tape so that people would try to reverse it.... we were playing a joke

in country groups in bars and things.... playing electric guitar now. So we got him in to help us on a couple of tracks... he played real good on them too.

'Everybody has been burned'
Come back Crosby, all is forgiven... stop messing around and re-assemble the old Byrds for a while. Completes one of the Byrds' best album sides.

'Thoughts and words'
As I listen to this, it occurs to me that the twelve string jangle has become very subdued on this album.
ZZ: You used two backwards tapes on this - a guitar in each side....
Chris Hillman: Yes - that was Roger's idea.
Roger McGuinn: I'm not sure about what we did exactly....nobody logged all the things we did, or kept notes of all the technical aspects of our work....someone should have done.

Too bloody true; how I wish that all the sleeves of their albums were crammed with information, or that someone would sit down with McGuinn and listen to and discuss every track they ever recorded.

'Mind Gardens'
Not my favourite Byrds track.
ZZ: What did you think about it?
Chris Hillman: I didn't like it at all - at least, I didn't like the words...I didn't mind the backing track. We fought Crosby on that, but he managed to get it on the album anyway...and it was lousy. What's more, Crosby later admitted that looking back, he didn't think it was very great either.

'My Back Pages'
Back to Dylan, briefly, and back to the Rickenbacker jangle formula. I wonder who's playing that organ? (The singles, which this was, usually have more body in the instrumentation).
Roger McGuinn: The audience we're getting now is a college audience; it seems our audience has grown up - they're digging it from a more intellectual view.
Q: You mean you can talk more about the setting of the songs?
RM: Yes; how they evolved, what made us write them, or what we think when, for instance, Dylan wrote the song. Like 'My back pages' was a song Dylan wrote after he'd done all his protest songs; it was something he wrote looking back.... the protest song wasn't effective as a means of psychological warfare, so he dropped it. He was saying "I was so much older then" - trying to be older - "but I'm younger than that now". That's what I say when I introduce the song...sort of like a folk singer's introduction to his songs.

'Girl with no name'
Hillman again, with Clarence White there on the left again too. (No-one had anything to say about this one).

'Why'
A cleaner, less cluttered version of the b-side of '8 Miles High'.

Altogether, a beautiful album - and what about the producer, Gary Usher?
Chris Hillman: He was just a Columbia producer assigned to us.
ZZ: Don't you reckon he was a fantastic producer?
CH: I imagine he's better now than he was then; I don't think the mix on this album was very good - but maybe that was our fault because we didn't work on it too.
ZZ: Don't you think he did a magnificent mix on 'Notorious Byrds Brothers'?
CH: Well, to be truthful, I can't really remember that album too well - I haven't heard it for a few years....I have to get down and listen to it again before I could answer that properly.

** ** ** **

Around the beginning of the year, the Byrds decide to visit Europe - not to do concerts, but just as a promotional visit cum holiday.

In London, CBS Records' press officer writes to Derek Taylor to find out the present position regarding the Byrds:

MR. DEREK TAYLOR,
9000 SUNSET BOULEVARD,
LOS ANGELES,
CALIFORNIA. FEBRUARY 10, 1967.

DEAR MR. TAYLOR,

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THAT I HAVE TAKEN OVER THE PRESS OFFICE HERE FROM ROGER EASTERBY AND SUE HORWOOD WHO HAVE LEFT THE COMPANY.

I AM WORKING AT THE MOMENT ON THE FORTHCOMING VISIT BY THE BYRDS AND I WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANY HELP YOU CA GIVE ME. YOUR FRIEND ANNE NIGHTINGALE HAS AGREED TO DO A FULL-PAGE PIECE IN THE DAILY SKETCH, AND WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO JIM AND DAVE BY TELEPHONE LINK ON TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21 - WITH MY UNDERSTANDING BY THE 'PHONE TO "INTERPRET" IF NECESSARY. CAN YOU CABLE ME CONFIRMING THIS IS POSSIBLE AND ADVISING TELEPHONE NUMBER AND TIME, SO THAT I CAN FIX A CALL FROM THIS END.

I WOULD APPRECIATE FULL DETAILS SOONEST OF ANY ARRANGEMENTS YOU HAVE MADE FOR THE BOYS WHEN THEY ARRIVE IN LONDON.

I ASSUME YOU ARE COMING WITH THEM, IN WHICH CASE I LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU.

YOURS SINCERELY,

ROONEY BURBECK
PRESS PUBLICITY MANAGER

A few days later, Taylor replied by phone, saying that a four page newsletter was on its way, that the Byrds would be bringing along some backing tracks for any TV shows that CBS could hustle up, and that they wanted to hire a hall for a fan club meeting.

The newsletter (most of it anyway) is reprinted on the next page.

During the following week, everyone goes mad to finalise all the details: rooms are booked at the White House Hotel in Regents Park, the itinery is worked out (they arrive on Feb 24, meet their fans on the next day, have the sunday off, spend monday doing interviews, go to Stockholm from Feb 28 - March 2, to Denmark from March 3 - 5, to Italy from March 5 - 9, and spend the next five days in London before flying home on March 15th), and TV and radio shows are lined up;

Top Of The Pops
The Eamonn Andrews Show
Doddy's Music Box (?!)
Pop In (radio).

The Byrds will be bringing backing tapes for 'So you want to be a rock'n'roll star', 'Mr Tambourine Man', 'Turn Turn Turn' and (to quote the CBS memo)'Backstage' - their next single. (Red faces all round when the song in question turns out to be 'My Back Pages'). "The Byrds are not bringing their instruments" says the memo, "but should these be required for appearances on TV, they will need 1 rhythm guitar, 1 set drums, 1 bass guitar and 1 12 string guitar". (There's precision for you!)

For the fan club gathering, the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm was booked for saturday Feb 25 from 2.30 - 4.30. At this time, the Roundhouse had just started to be used as an entertainment venue by the emerging Underground, but was still in a considerably filthy condition. It was, however, the only hall they could book at such short notice.

One person I spoke to said that whilst the other Byrds were handing out drinks and food, McGuinn was bent on carving his name on one of the timbers which support the crumbling building, but for a more accurate picture of the occasion, here are some extracts from the account of another fan (who prefers to remain anonymous!):

"Michael proved himself to be a positive pig by guzzling beer and eating biscuits all the time - in fact, the biscuit

CRAWDADDY! 10

This review of the 'Younger than Yesterday' album is reprinted from the July/August 1967 issue of Crawdaddy! Magazine (number ten). Under Paul Williams' editorship, the magazine lasted for some two years (a total of nineteen issues) and contained some of rock's best writing.[6]

A girl, listening to the Byrds' version of "Mr. Tambourine Man," a girl who loved Bob Dylan, once said, "I don't like it because it sounds like church music." Meaning that she didn't like it because she didn't like church music. Now I realize that she--being a Dylan fan in the spring of '65--was probably a word freak who didn't have a notion in the world about the Byrds and their formal problem. I, on the other hand, thought the Byrds just sort of sounded generally mysterious. Anyway I really was surprised by them. And this was before I knew much about what the Byrds had to do with magic, science and religion. Or much about the Byrds' peculiar favorite form. And long before the Byrds appeared to become really self-conscious about what they were doing.

The Byrds have real formal constancy. From time immemorial they have grounded their music in what are--or what seem to be--obviously regular rhythmic patterns. It is out of this ground that all developments and variations seem to rise--as it were--to the surface. This sound is dense, but not obviously and impressively complicated. That is, it is very coherent. It works because of its unity, not out of an accumulation of contrasting effects such as volume changes or syncopations. Here the contrasts inherent in any rhythmic pattern are not at all emphasized. The changes in the basic rhythmic patterns are not necessarily gradual but rather non-dramatic. The Byrds' music is not at all progressive. In comparison to say the Jefferson Airplane, the Doors, or the Yardbirds it's awfully calm. It doesn't go anywhere. The resolutions are not dramatic. They don't obviously end anything. Instead they are cyclical. But the cycles aren't closed. It's clear that they could quite probably go on for far too long. It's really nice that the Byrds should stop only when somebody decides to do it. Not when it's necessary. The great Byrds challenge the tradition of the fade-out by making it into a mere decision rather than a matter of pleasure, logic or endurance.

The Byrds are eclectic. That's what the guy on the back of their second album said. ("This album is eclectic.") But the prominence of the form undermines our knowing anything about all that. When the Byrds got started somebody (in Hit Parader, I think) said that their first album was very nice, but it all sounded the same. Now we are up to taking that. It's become a virtue. What started out as a folk-rock style on the first album has been turned, via repetition, into a form. The formal structure of a constant rhythmic ground can overcome any material. The rhythmic ground is so dependable that once when lying on a cliff overlooking the Long Island Sound, not so far from where Walt Whitman did it, I thought I heard the earth turning beneath my head and it reminded me of--of all things--the Byrds. That is, the Byrds' music has that sort of dependable self-energizing kineticism. It doesn't go anywhere. But it never comes to rest. Turn! Turn! Turn! And that's very strange and also very sad.

The latest works of the Byrds are on this album, ironically titled Younger Than Yesterday, on which the Byrds give us magic, science, religion, psychedelic sounds, lots of electronic stuff and technological tongues, love songs, Dylan (who could have been influenced by Whitman), rock and roll, science fiction, some Southern California local lore, an African trumpet guy, a country and western guitar guy, a little bit of raga and so forth. They refer to all sorts of people including their older selves and yet after a while it winds up sounding pretty close. Even the abundant amazing sounds are far too amazing to remain that way for long. They make themselves very familiar. That's how strong the form is. Unique to rock, the Byrds are so formalistic that even when they do something new it's hard to tell.

But the Byrds are conscious not only of their peculiar form but also of their own place in the rock firmament. Everybody knows that the Byrds are an odd case. After all, only the Byrds, amongst modern rock stars, have managed to change their status from stardom to cultural heroism. That is, as one 45 after another didn't make it their quality still kept up. And this maintained the fierce loyalty of the small hard-core of several hundred thousand knowing fans. Not enough to make them traditional rock stars--a category wherein the charisma depends upon the quantity--but enough to keep their name in circulation. And so when the Byrds recorded "So You Want To Be A Rock 'n' Roll Star" there was some real irony at work. They went to the trouble of building in the screaming--but who could possibly scream at the Byrds? That's just not their thing. But recent live performances of this song have further complicated the irony. The Byrds have sounded so bad live that they might as well be in the Stones/Beatles/Herman category. In other words everybody knows that they could do it well live, if only because lots of folks have seen them do it well. But recently they haven't bothered. The performance quality has become gratuitous. It's as if you couldn't hear them. Because of which it wasn't worth trying on their part. Except that you can hear them--since nobody screams. And so when an audience refuses to cooperate by screaming they just ruin everything.

"CTA-102" moves the science fiction of the S-D album out into the whole universe. It contains probably the first instance of star-noise in rock. Some people with a Platonic bent tend to regard this song as a fusion of inner and outer space. God only knows. But this is one of those songs wherein so many of the big Byrds themes are brought together: Magic, Science, Science Fiction, Flying Saucers, Technology. So self-conscious were the Byrds that "CTA-102" makes the most bizarre use of the "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" tune since Mozart's "Variations on Ah Vous Dirai-je Maman," K. 265. The pure monotony of much of it is also noteworthy. The Byrds are so self-conscious that they refute the supposed obligation to be interesting--or at least amusing--and surpass even their own "Lear Jet Song" by presenting many seconds of merely monotonous sounds: i.e. the star noise and the space freak's speech. And all this coated with technological sounds, electronically modified, produced, distorted or filtered sounds, Bizarro or real star noises, not-so-obviously melodic guitar playing--all culminating in those merely monotonous sounds which constitute a technological anti-tongue.

In terms of an essentially formal self-consciousness the album's high point is the really tired "My Back Pages." First of all "My Back Pages" immediately follows the much too freaky and overly mysterious "Mind Garden." As "Mind Garden" ends with a spectacular technological tongue which is disqualified just because it is one among too many, on comes "My Back Pages" sounding as if we had always known it. The contrast is magnificent. "Mind Garden" is the pigeon for "My Back Pages." Significantly this song is one of the Byrds' lately numerous hits-that-failed. It seems to have what De Chirico called "The Lassitude of the Infinite" about it. Some girl once said that only the guitar break betrays it as brand new. But it still sounds--with its excessively deliberate pacing--infinitely weary. They are only grinding it out. But make no mistake, this is the most purely formal thing on the album. It is all form, structure, habit. Very archetypical. Imagine the Byrds at this stage of the game, on their fourth album, called Younger Than Yesterday, doing Dylan. And Dylan off of Another Side of Bob Dylan at that. It's like déja vu. The song is so immediately over-familiar that that constant rhythmic form is very visible. Here over-familiarity insures the music and the words failing to get in the way of the form. Why you can almost hear the Earth turning.

The rest of the album continues the mastery of form over an eclectic variety of styles. It is as if the Byrds had developed a modular concept, whereby things could be "formalized" or plugged into the form. Now the country and western like "Time Between," "Girl Who Had No Name," and "Have You Seen Her Face," as well as the awfully mysterious "Renaissance Fair" and "Everybody's Been Burned," can all be subjected. "Thoughts and Words," which is equally mysterious, uses its seeming over-similarity to middle period Beatlism to lull us into a sense of comfortable familiarity--which only serves to make it more mysterious. Because of the tension between its seeming familiarity and its form. And last, but not least, there is "Why," the point at which the Byrds refused to maintain their tradition of ending at least one side with an obvious joke, such as "Oh Susannah," "We'll Meet Again" and "The Lear Jet Song." "Why" also represents the pulling in of the raga horns from the flashy/spectacular of the earlier flip-side version to the merely pleasant plausibility of the present one. At last the form has triumphed over both the urge to laugh and the urge to display.

--SANDY PEARLMAN

Rather than merely reprint Sandy Pearlman's article, I've also reproduced the original artwork and headings (though I have no idea about who or what "Andy Granatelli" is). Some of the writing may seem a little obscure, but don't forget that it was written in the height of the "acid/dope/summer of 67"

NEWS ON THE BYRDS . . . . . from Derek Taylor – With best wishes... Hollywood. 14 FEB 1967

TOPICS: A hit single.....a new album.....music for a movie.....European trip..... A TV news first.....work for charity.....plans for fans.....a fire.....a network TV special and other odds and ends.

THE BYRDS whose eighth Columbia (CBS in Europe) single "So You Want To Be a Rock 'n Roll Star" is in the top 30 in America in its fourth week of release, fly to England on Pan American, flight 120, on February 23, arriving at London airport at 0630 hours on February 24.

Based on the strength of their status (gained through sales, word of mouth, public acceptance, contemporary acclaim from the Beatles, Stones, music critics) they have secured enough respect and sufficient income from recording to enable them to concentrate on consolidating themselves as creative musicians without the inconvenience of prolonged personal appearance tours.

Their European trip will be largely promotional; there will be no concerts. They have not toured the U.S. since the summer of 1966.

But through their records, interviews and intelligently-conducted fan club, they have remained in touch with their supporters who are steadfast and sensitive to the special intellectual/musical qualities which have always set The Byrds apart from the less enduring elements of the recording industry.

Metro Goldwyn Mayer have asked The Byrds to compose and record the title song and background music for a feature length movie, at present, on "the secret list".

This will be The Byrds first film venture; but they plan to move further into this area and a full-length shooting script—commissioned in Hollywood by their management Tickner/Dickson—has already been prepared for a motion picture featuring them as actor-musicians.

"Younger Than Yesterday", now on general release in the U.S.—due in Europe in March—is the first album to feature ten Byrd-written songs. Previously the group has combined its own material with songs by other writers, notably Dylan.

Dylan—composer of Tambourine Man—is featured again on this new album but only once, and for a very significant reason. The selected number is "My Back Pages", the protest song which, literally and totally ends protest songs. Says the lyric: "I become my enemy in the instant that I preach." The Byrds, agreeing with this, decided to include it with their own music in "Younger Than Yesterday".

The album beatures four songs written by bass-player Chris Hillman, quietest of The Byrds, the most drily-amusing and the one who unfortunately lost all his worldly goods when a fire destroyed his home in the parched Hollywood Hills at the end of January. (Leader Jim McGuinn video-taped the fire from his home nearby and gave it to the ABC-TV network who made it the lead item on their news that night—the first time a home video machine had been used on a network.)

Electronic effects, backwards-tape, a new "Martian language" are brilliantly used in "CTA 102", a McGuinn-authored fantasy/adventure track on the album. In this song, The Byrds tell the people "out there" that they are ready to communicate.

The gentle, friendly response from the "people" and the eerie vastness of space are touchingly evoked by The Byrds. This track is one of the cleverest things since pop began, whenever that was and it is as much a reflection of contemporary life as "Yankee Doodle Dandy" was in its day.

Before leaving for England, The Byrds will join with Peter, Paul and Mary to perform at a charity concert in the Valley Music Theatre, a shining, new theatre-in-the-round near Los Angeles. The concert is sponsored by CAFF (Community Action for Fact and Freedom) an organisation which is designed to give a fair hearing, better treatment and a proper chance to the throngs of young, creative people who make the sidewalks, clubs and cafes of Sunset Strip their creative clearing house.

In England—on Saturday afternoon, February 25—The Byrds are giving a tea party for hundreds of their fans; this is a way of saying thank-you to the 1,700 young people who signed a petition begging them to return to England, a country they visited and enjoyed in the summer of 1965, and to which they paid tribute musically in "So You Want To Be a Rock 'n Roll Star" by featuring British screams recorded at a Byrd concert in Bournemouth, Hampshire on August 15.

On a personal level: Jim McGuinn is a father. His new baby was named James John McGuinn the Fourth; he and his wife call the child Patrick.

Burned-out Hillman has moved to a lonely canyon forty miles from Hollywood.

Michael Clarke, equipped with a fly-where-you-please ticket to ride, has just returned from a lone coast-to-coast promotional trip on which he wandered into radio stations, smiled and said "Hi" on behalf of the rest of the group.

David Crosby remains David Crosby, mercurial Byrd, song-writing when the whim takes him (which is often, these days), arguing occasionally, grinning from time to time and gossiping ceaselessly.

tin was never out of his hand, whilst David was walking around in a blue hat made out of a kind of felt material.

"Chris was enjoying himself signing his autograph up young ladies' arms and leaning on their backs to sign records, and Jim asked one girl 'Am I hurting you' as he signed her wrist. Jaki (my friend) was busy getting Michael's autograph on her membership card, but he dribbled beer all over it... the smell and stain are still there.

"Several of the girls kissed their favourite Byrd, which made me very jealous as I hardly had the nerve to even stand near David, but I remember that while 'Hey Joe' was playing (their records were played the whole time) I asked him if the group would ever split up. 'Not a chance' he said, and repeated it.

"When Jaki asked Jim (or Jimbo as he was called by Michael) about Gene Clark, he just looked blank – as though he had no idea who she was talking about.

"Michael, Jim and Chris were all boozing (when someone spilt some, Chris made great play of how Jim would enjoy licking it up), but David stood apart and never drank a thing – not even good old British tea. When we went upstairs, however, we saw him holding Jim's camera in one hand and a glass of something in the other.... he just smiled and said they'd have to be leaving soon!'

SUMMARY: January 67 sees the release of a single, 'So you want to be a rock'n'roll star', followed by the 'Younger than yesterday' album (Feb 6 in USA/April 7 in England). They arrive in London on Feb 24 for a 20 day European promotional tour, subsequently release 'My Back Pages' (off the album) as a single, but there is seemingly little else in the way of activity during this period. (I suppose the other three were too busy arguing with and trying to pacify Crosby!)

THE BYRDS of this era remain unchanged: the photograph, taken in London in late February, shows the current line-up, left to right: Jim McGuinn, bearing the usual line in American tourist photographic equipment, Chris Hillman, lounging around in faded Levis, dapper Dave Crosby, modelling a natty pair of herring-bone trousers, a suede overcoat and his black cowboy hat, and Mike Clarke, trying to look sinister in his ex-Sonny & Cher fur jacket.

CONTEMPORARY EVENTS:
1967:
January... Doors' first album, 'Da Capo' by Love, and 'Hums of Lovin Spoonful' released. "I'm a believer' by the Monkees tops US singles chart for 7 weeks.
Jan 1... US troop strength in Vietnam is now 380,000. (Over 5000 were killed in action during 1966)
Jan 10... Lester Maddox, militant segregationalist, is elected governor of Georgia.
Jan 14... Gathering of the tribes in San Francisco – see next chapter.
Jan 27... 3 astronauts die in Cape Kennedy fire as spacecraft is prepared.
Jan 29.... International Times holds an Uncommon Market spontaneous happening at the Roundhouse – the main attraction is a 56 gallon jelly for rolling naked in. (?)
February.... 'Surrealistic Pillow' by the Jefferson Airplane, and first album by tne Buffalo Springfield released.
Feb 12... Keith Richard's house raided and he and Mick Jagger arrested for dope.
Feb 18... Oppenheimer, pioneer of US atomic bomb, dies aged 62.
March... Grateful Dead's first, Velvet Underground's first, and Gene Clark's solo albums all released.
March 9... IT raided; cops remove all files and dog-ends, only to return them 3 months later.
March 18... Torrey Canyon runs aground in Channell off Cornwall and spews oil on miles of beaches.
Mar 29... 14 Hour Technicolour Dream at Alley Pally. Flower power grips England.
April... Incredible String Band's first LP released.
Apr 21... Greek government taken over in Army coup d'etat; King Constantine placed under house arrest.
Apr 24... Soviet cosmonaut dies during re-entry – first person killed in space.
Apr 27... Expo 67 opened in Canada
Apr 28... General Westmoreland assures Congress that the US will "prevail over the Communist aggressor in Vietnam".
May... Country Joe's first album, and 'San Francisco' by Scott McKenzie are released.
May 8... Muhammad Ali indicted by Federal Grand Jury after refusing induction to armed forces.
May 10... Greek military junta takes over control of Greek Orthodox Church.
May 10... Brian Jones busted for cannabis.
May 11... Britain applies to join Common Market in formal application.
May 12... H Rap Brown replaces Stokely Carmichael as chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
June... 'Sgt Pepper' by Beatles released.
Jun 5 – 11... War between Egypt and Israel.
Jun 12... Negro rioting in Florida and Ohio.
Jun 16... Monterey Pop Festival – see next chapter.
Jun 20... Muhammad Ali sentenced to 5 years imprisonment and fined ten thousand dollars. He appeals.
Jun 29... Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visit Canada.
Jun 29... Keith Richard jailed for one year + £500 costs and Mick Jagger jailed for 3 months + £100 for drug posession and use. They appeal, released on bail.
July 1... Leader in the Times rightfully condemns the savage sentence on Stones.
July 12... Severe riots break out in Newark, New Jersey – 26 die, 1500 injured.
July 23... Negro riots in Detroit; National Guardsmen called in to act out their sick perversions. After 3 days, 40 people are dead and damage exceeds 500 M dollars.
July 24... President de Gaulle starts his "free Quebec" bullshit as the advanced stages of senility grip his addled pinhead.
July 31... Stones sentences quashed.

ZIGZAG WANDERINGS

TODAY'S WEATHER
...could be practically anything, depending on where your head is at...

VOLUME III NUMBER 6 April 1973 Published as a public service HOME EDITION

Well, its with a tear in one eye and a twinkle in the other that I've decided to leave the full time employ of Zigzag, and to leave a fulltime life in rock music altogether.

Having helped to found the magazine and stuck with it through good times and bad, I'm naturally very sad to be leaving, but I feel that I really can't stay on in my present frame of mind A lot of people might think that a life of sitting around all day listening to records and interviewing big famous pop stars is great - and I'll admit that I derived an incredible amount of pleasure and satisfaction from it..... indeed, I walk talk sleep wake work drive write relax and will probably die with high volume music ringing through my head, but all the same, I'm throwing in the towel for a number of reasons:

1) As my beard grows longer and greyer, so the limits of the music I really honestly go crackers about get narrower. I was bigotted to start with, but these days there are so few (relatively) groups or albums that drive me wild I reckon that if the magazine is to thrive and grow and develop, it needs a new broom or at least, a new enthusiasm. You see, in my biassed opinion, all the best rock music (with quite a few exceptions, however) is that which developed out of folk music during the sixties, and the musicians in whose work I'm primarily interested are old folkies at heart. So how can I run a magazine if I'm only interested in about 5% of "progressive" (ho ho - there's a joke of a description) music churned out today?

2) My integrity, which I try to maintain, is always in danger of wilting due to pressures and circumstances beyond my control..... e.g. publicists and record companies who get me into the position where I "owe them an article" (no names, folks), and so we publish things which my heart tells me shouldn't be in Zigzag I see no reason why I should allow arsehole publicists and cruddy groups (who often have the musical dexterity of shovel wielders) to pester me day and night, demanding we write screeds of praise about their flash in the pan crap.

3) The pop world is, by and large, a foul sewer and I don't want to swim in it any more (though I don't mind standing at the edge and looking in). To make a healthy living, you've got to reconcile yourself to being a shark or a hustler or a con-man, and I'm none of those, nor do I want to be.

There's little dignity in the pop world and little security..... I might as well quit while the going's good, rather than wither eventually into one of the types I despise; they're usually in their thirties, wear cravats, make their living sponging on other people's talents and creativities, and don't really like the music at all. You ought to go to a press reception and see some of these people - they probably haven't listened to an album for years .....and they've certainly never been into a squalid club to see a promising new band. If an examination on rock music were set for all these hangers-on, on rock music (its history, development, main constituents and influences, album and personnel details, etc), I wonder how many of them, and how many of the musical press, and publicists and so on, would pass? I don't like the huge gap between the presenters of rock (stars/managers/record companies etc) and the audience .....it's big business, same as any product designed for consumers, and if I'm going to be a businessman, it's not going to be in the rock biz.

All this might sound pretty bitter, but I'm just pretty sick of it all - even though the people I've mainly been involved with have been those who are continually fighting for purity and integrity - and long may they thrive. I suppose the real answer lies in my own insecurity; I can't reconcile myself to total commitment to rock music, so basically the fault is mine, and I'm just trying to make excuses for my own hang-ups.....I'm a bit like a chicken with its head cut off - running around every which way without any real direction. So now I figure it's time to get back a bit and take stock of the situation from a distance..... to devote my energies to writing about the very confined, clearly defined areas of rock that I'm still crazy about.

So what's going to happen now is that I'm going to hand over the editorship to the capable hands of Connor McKnight, Australian buffoon and rock maniac, who no doubt will steer the ship with greater competency, regularity and control. Meanwhile, I have returned to my studies (having concluded that 'dropping out', while fascinating for a few years, is not "where it's at, man") but will continue to contribute to Zigzag, with all my abundant zest and dubious skills - so the character of the magazine won't alter very drastically, I shouldn't think. (Except, possibly, that there'll be no more promising part two of an article and then coming up with some lame excuse for it's failure to appear). I might also try my hand at writing a book, but basically I only want to write for Zigzaggers; you're the loyal enthusiasts and I wouldn't consider writing for any other periodicals or any other readership. So keep in touch, eh? Meanwhile, best wishes to Connor.

****

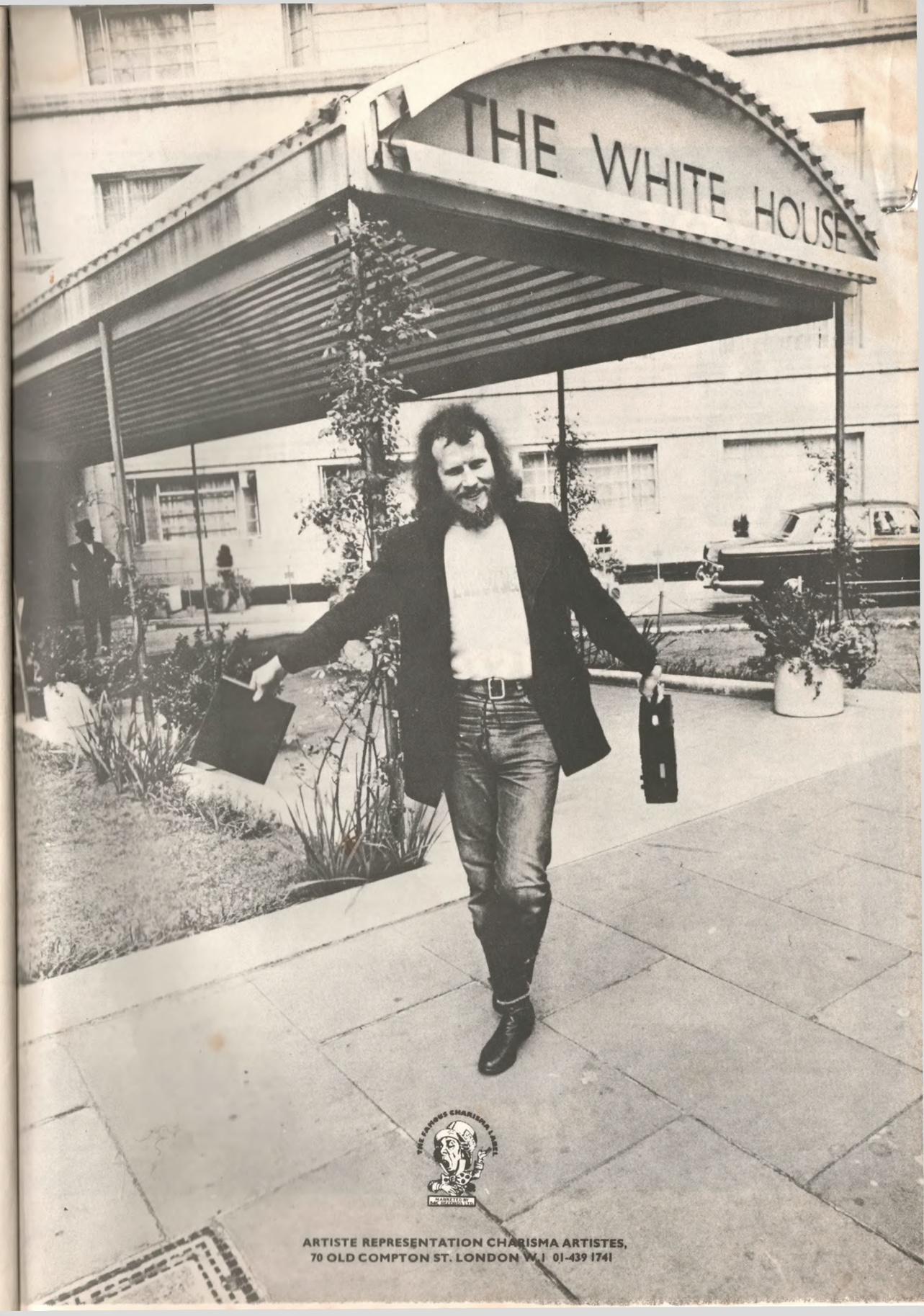
On to some chatter and waffle. No family tree this issue, due to various ineffectual excuses, but hopefully a giant one next issue. Some good records around: The Byrds on Asylum (haven't really listened to it properly yet - so I'll sit on the fence for the moment), the Byrds 'Preflyte' (if you look at their advert in this issue, you'll see that Bumble records have the incredible ability to prophesy what will be written in Zigzag eight months hence!), Gram Parsons (good in parts, but I've got a grudge against him for his evil influences on the Byrds!), Kapt Kopter (nowhere near as good as 'Dr Sardonicus' which has been re-released.... one of the best records of 1970), 'Let it Rock' (a selection of interesting grist compiled by the editors of 'Let it Rock', the poor man's Zigzag..... no, I'm only joking, fellers - you're doing a grand job.....nice to see people writing about music because they love it and care), Dion and the Belmonts (for the Brylcreem and fluorescent socks brigade), you can get the first two Steve Miller albums as a double import package for under £3 if you look around - unbeatable stuff, Procol Harum and Robin Trower both have interesting new releases and, of course, Led Zeppelin (what's the connection between Jimmy Page and Jayne Mansfield? Prizes for winning entries!), and there's an excellent new import by John Stewart called 'Cannons in the Rain' - hope RCA release it here.

And speaking of John Stewart, my next plan is to get to Los Angeles (in my Summer hols!) in order to snoop around and have a look at the place first hand. I'd like to talk to Arthur Lee (who has apparently just signed with Paul Rothchild's new Buffalo Records label), John Phillips (who's Dunhill/Stateside album released back in March 1970 is still one of my favourites), John Stewart (if you haven't got at least one of his albums, what are you....crackers?), Chris Darrow and other Kaleidoscopic remnants, Mike Nesmith, Roger McGuinn and various other Byrds old and new), etc etc.

Ed Ward, our mate on the Coast, sends me long letters about what goes on out there and recently mentioned bits and pieces about Kaleidoscope: "They were the houseband in the bar/infamous psychedelic nightclub/what-chamacallit of the same name, which was where, according to nearly everybody I know, the LA psychedelic scene began. They all lived together on this hilltop farm property which was leased to a number of nascent psychedelic people on the condition that the swine there were cared for..... the original Hog Farm, a name later appropriated by Hugh 'Wavy Gravy' Romney and his bag of mouldy vegetables. Romney was a relative newcomer, a refugee from Greenwich Village, and the original farmers included Peter Bergman of the Firesign Theatre (who will be able to regale you for hours with Kaleidoscope stories), Jack Poet (of Jack Poet's Volkswagen Agency, the franchise for which was taken away after Bergman and some others did TV ads for him.... now owner of Jack Poet's Toyota), and many other folks vital to the LA scene. One night at the Kaleidoscope, the band was playing and merriment was in full swing when some ABC agents (Alcoholic Beverage Control) decided it was time to shut the place down. Well, these 2 agents had tried it before, so when they were seen approaching, the owners just locked the doors. Ok, said the agents, we can play too. So they waited. And waited. And a couple of days later, they just went away. Nobody inside the place minded too much".

Well, that's it; the last Zigzag Wanderings ....gee, I'm really going to miss you.

Pete



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