

zigzag35

fifteen pence vol3 no11

THE GRATEFUL DEAD



DON NIX
COMMANDER CODY
GRAM PARSONS

UN-
RELEASED
GENESIS
TRACK FREE
INSIDE

Leon Russell Freddie King
SHELTER-SKELTER

Willis Alan Ramsey J.J. Cale

'The guv'nor, Leon Russell him of the lacerated larynx and the whorehouse pianistics has long since passed the audition. Blues man Freddie King is a menacing heavyweight whilst J. J. Cale is an international star for the time being the rest of the world hasn't found out this fact. Cale is undoubtedly the artist for which the terminology 'laid back' was conceived. Willis Alan Ramsey may well be the new boy but nevertheless he totes his own bag of tricks.

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what will undoubtedly be a trilogy of 70's golden oldies. Freddie King's intensely primal 'Going Down', J. J. Cale's totally tastefully 'After Midnight' and Leon Russell's poignant 'A Song For You', is something definitely worthy of investigation. A Best Of... collection? In many ways yes, in some ways no because the albums these tracks have been culled from contain equally absorbing performances.

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Roy Carr

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THE HISTORY OF THE GRATEFUL DEAD DEAD PARADE

—'weird, black satanic weird, white archangel weird. As weird as anything you can imagine, like some horror comic monster who, besides being green and slimy, happens also to have seven different heads, 190 IQ, countless decibels of liquid fire noise communication, and is coming right down to where you are to gobble you up. But if you can dig the monster, bammo, he's a giant puppy to play with.'—Michael Lydon (*Rolling Stone*)

I have in my possession a bootleg two-album set recorded on one of 'The Last Days At The Fillmore West', and unlike the official commemorative box set, the music is consistently good, being provided by just one band... a quality rock band that has a reputation for being one of the most accomplished in the world. The sound quality is very good, the songs have been thoughtfully chosen, and of the band themselves, the

announcer at the beginning of the record introduces them thus:

'After all that's been said and done over the years, and all the shit that's gone down, I'm very grateful to them for the joy they've brought to all of us, and I consider them friends—the Grateful Dead.'

And just so that you know where I stand, that is exactly how I feel about them too.

As you can imagine, a history of the Grateful Dead is a fairly complex and lengthy undertaking, so the whole story has been split into three parts, the first of which takes us up to the release of their fourth album, 'Live/Dead', a few months before they first set foot in England. In this section, emphasis has been placed on the Dead's 'pre-history', a period that has been largely ignored before but which I feel essential to know about in order to grasp a full understanding of

their music, and I hope that in true ZigZag tradition, no important detail has been spared, and no source of information left untapped. Compiling this first part has been especially difficult and consequently more rewarding, but in keeping it to a reasonable length I have deliberately concentrated on what I feel are the least known aspects of the Dead's history, and these I think need clarifying. Basically I have given what I'm confident is an accurate account of the facts behind the evolution of the Grateful Dead that are only part of a large scale social and political movement that took place throughout the sixties in San Francisco. It starts with the Beat Poets like Kerouac and Cassady and runs through to the very latest disciples of Ken Kesey & His Merry Pranksters, and it encompasses many people and numerous incidents too complex and inter-woven to summarise. In this respect, you may feel that addi-



The good old Grateful Dead

tional reading is necessary for a fuller picture of the sort of changes that were going on at this time. I can recommend 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test' by Tom Wolfe (although Jerry Garcia says that this book is inaccurate and misleading... still makes good reading though), 'The Dead Book: A Social History of The Grateful Dead' by Hank Harrison, which if you intend reading this article you really must get to see, and issues 40, 100, and 101 of *Rolling Stone*. 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test' is especially useful as I have tended to gloss over in scant detail the Dead's association with Kesey and the Pranksters, the Acid Tests, and the Trips Festival. Lastly, there are sources of information which I have plundered that are blatantly contradictory regarding dates, events, etc, but after a giant piece of Sherlock Holmes-type detective work I think I've just about got it right. So if you're a 'Dead-head'

read on, and if you're not, read on anyway because by the time we're finished I hope I will have changed your mind.

The story in fact starts at many different places with many different people almost simultaneously, but I suppose the easiest and most logical way to begin is with Jerry Garcia. So... In 1957 at the age of 15 he got his first guitar, and '57 being a great year for rock'n'roll he was one of many whose imagination was captured by that whole rock'n'roll explosion that occurred throughout the mid-fifties. He used to studiously listen to Chuck Berry and learn all the riffs, and while proceeding later on to assimilate other musical forms he has never lost his love for rock'n'roll. Even as early as this he had a friend named Ron McKernan whose old man was a rhythm & blues DJ, but more of him in a minute. In 1959 Garcia joined the Army but lasted only the nine

months that it took him to realise what he'd let himself in for. When he got out he met a guy named Robert Hunter who was in similar circumstances—just left the Army, nowhere in particular to go and nothing to do. They both hung around together, and attended the same college for a while (San Mateo Jnr College—the same place that provided the first formal musical education for a certain Phil Lesh, whom they met but never really had a great deal to do with until later on). At this time (1959-60) there began a great booming interest in folk music around the San Francisco Bay Area. People like Jim McGuinn and Country Joe McDonald began to emerge as important figures, and Garcia himself started taking an interest which resulted in him getting deeply involved in more traditional country music. In time he played the coffee-house circuit regularly while giving guitar lessons and repairing guitars

at a music store called Dana Morgan's. With his whole life now involved with music Garcia soon became more than proficient. His gigs at the coffee-houses used to attract a multitude of friends and admirers, two of whom were a very young, fresh-faced drop-out named Bob Weir, and Jerry's old friend Ron McKernan, from now on to be known as Pigpen.

Pigpen used to watch Garcia intently and then go home and practice. He played guitar for a while but ended up concentrating on harp and piano. His father being one of the early R&B DJs, Pigpen's introduction to music was naturally enough through the spade scene where he sat in at parties and did his impersonation of his big hero and major influence Lightnin' Hopkins which he practiced to perfection. In 1962 he went off on his own to Boston but came back home after a few months and did a series of gigs at the Off-Stage club in San Jose with Paul Foster (a Merry Prankster), and Paul Kantner (later to become one of the Jefferson Airplane). At this time Pigpen also got to know and became a great drinking partner with Janis Joplin, and both of them played together at a club called The Tanager. Later on towards the end of 1962 he got a part-time job at Swain's Music Store in Palo Alto, and it was there more than anywhere else that the Grateful Dead seed began to grow.

But first, another link in the chain of events. Around 1961-62 Jerry Garcia bought a banjo from this rock'n'roll drum-

mer who lived in Palo Alto. His name was Bill Kreutzmann and he had been playing drums since his high-school days, smashing the hell out of them in a style that was ideally suited to loud, crude rock'n'roll and R&B. In 1963 Bill got a job as a stock clerk at Stanford University Research Institute and at the same time gave drum lessons at Dana Morgan's. Consequently he got to know Garcia a lot better as they were both working there at the same time.

Now Swain's Music Store, where Pigpen was working, was run by a guy named Troy Weidenheimer who had ideas about forming his own rock'n'roll band. He of course knew Pigpen, Pigpen knew Garcia, Garcia knew Kreutzmann, so... a short-lived band called the Zodiacs were formed. Troy played lead guitar, Pigpen was on harp, they used a wide selection of drummers but most of the time it was Bill Kreutzmann, and Garcia would sometimes join in on bass guitar when he wasn't involved with his own bluegrass groups. Garcia was of course not strictly into rock'n'roll at all around this time. Through continual practice and a scholarly interest he had become a highly proficient bluegrass banjo player and something of an authority on country and folk music. He was still hanging around with Robert Hunter who was himself playing guitar and writing, as well as participating in the LSD tests that were being conducted at Stanford University. In 1962 and '63 Hunter and

Garcia organised a succession of bluegrass groups and jug bands. First there were The Wildwood Boys with Garcia, Hunter, a guitarist named David Nelson (who was a friend of Garcia's, has subsequently played on a number of Dead albums, was an original member of Big Brother & The Holding Company, and now plays guitar for The New Riders Of The Purple Sage), plus a guy called Pete Albin who also helped start Big Brother. The Wildwood Boys became The Black Mountain Boys who in turn evolved into The Thunder Mountain Tub Thumpers and then by 1963 into The Hart Valley Drifters with Garcia (banjo), Hunter (string bass), Nelson (guitar), and a guy named Ken Frankel on mandolin. They entered the 1963 Monterey Folk Festival in the amateur bluegrass category and won. The Hart Valley Drifters then spluttered to an end and in their place rose the definite but heavily-disguised beginnings of the Grateful Dead in the form of Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions (also known as the Asphalt Jungle Boys at one stage). According to legend, almost everybody who was in Palo Alto at the time played in the Jug Champions, but the basic working unit consisted of Jerry Garcia (guitar, banjo & vocals), Pigpen (harmonica, piano, vocals), John (Marmaduke) Dawson (now with the New Riders) on rhythm guitar and vocals, Bob Matthews who is now head of Alembic Studios & Electronics Corp (responsible for the Dead's recordings and

equipment) on guitar and vocals, and lastly Bob Weir (jug and kazoo) whose own early career we shall now take a look at.

Bob Weir, like the other members of the Dead, was a social and cultural misfit. He comes from Atherton, a very well-to-do district, and his background was distinctly upper-class, in marked comparison with the rest of the band. But much to his parents' dismay he took a very early interest in music and the guitar. He travelled around restlessly from one boarding school to another, getting thrown out and flunking exams until he finally 'dropped out' and started hanging around the coffee-houses. He used to frequent the music store that Garcia worked at and he'd always be at the coffee-houses whenever there was something happening, playing and learning all the time. Besides being a guitarist, Weir could play the jug really well, and what's more he was the only one around who could, so he was the natural choice for the Jug Champions. Later on he was to develop of course into a very fine rhythm guitarist under the influence and guidance of the Airplane's Jorma Kaukonen who was his 'musical leader'.

Well Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions started to look around for work, but without much luck. Nobody, it seemed, wanted a jug band anymore, and just as they were reaching the point of despair and when it looked like the end of another abortive musical venture, they made a decision that, with the aid of a stroke of good fortune, literally changed the course of their career completely. Pigpen had been going on about how they should become an electric blues band and it was his insistence that finally forced the decision, plus the fact that Dana Morgan, who you'll remember owned the music store that Garcia and Kreutzmann worked in, offered to provide them with the necessary equipment. A change of name was obviously needed so they chose the Warlocks, and they spent the next couple of months looking around for new members. John Dawson had left and so had Bob Matthews which meant they needed a bassist and a drummer. The bass spot provided no trouble, being filled by Dana Morgan himself, who although not very enthusiastic and only just about adequate, was okay to start with. As far as the drummer was concerned Bill Kreutzmann was the obvious choice. He had a lot of experience with both R&B and rock'n'roll bands, and he was fast and heavy. Incidentally he was known as Bill Sommer at the time which for reasons unknown to me complied with his fake ID card! However it wasn't all as simple as that. Because of indecision, caution, and general lack of know-how, it was nearly two years before the Warlocks played their first gig at a pizza parlor called Magoo's in July 1965. They were doing all the standard R&B and rock'n'roll stuff... things like 'King Bee', 'Red Rooster', 'Johnny B. Goode', plus an old Texas ragtime song that was to become their first single... 'Don't Ease Me In'.

Now at this point the Warlocks recruit



the services of a musician who in my opinion is second to none anywhere... an astonishing bass player with a knowledge of music and its possibilities that are staggering to comprehend. His name is Phil Lesh and I have no hesitation in stating that he is a bona fide genius. His musical history is unlike any of the other members and is worth recording because I think it covers a scope and intellect that is extremely rare among rock musicians, and will I hope go some way to explaining why I regard him so highly.

At the age of eight Lesh took up the violin and most of his early childhood musical education consisted of listening to Brahms and other classical composers. He played the violin for six years becoming gradually more involved with the technicalities of music, switching high schools from El Cerrito to Berkeley simply because Berkeley did harmony classes. By the time he was sixteen he was playing trumpet and writing jazz compositions, and he then got to San Mateo Jr College where he wrote three atonal charts (atonal music having no specific reference to any fixed scale), two of which were performed. He continued playing trumpet until he was about twenty under the guidance of a guy called Bob Hanson, developing into an extremely accomplished Kenton-style jazz trumpeter and arranger. While at San Mateo Lesh met a character named Gladstone Odduck with whom he shared an apartment and conspired with in a succession of shady activities in order that they might not starve to death. (They used to frequently rip-off the local grocery store.) Lesh also got to meet Mike Lamb who had connections with a group of crazy people who lived up at Perry Lane, one of them being Ken Kesey, but the meeting that immediately concerns us took place around this time (1960) at a party. Jerry Garcia, you'll recall, had not long left the Army and was becoming interested in folk music, playing at all the parties and coffee-houses that he could get to. Lesh, on the other hand, had taken a job as engineer and program coordinator for a late night hootenanny show called 'Midnight Special' on KPFA—a subscriber-owned radio station. Now they both happened to be at this party, and at some stage Lesh wandered out into the kitchen and found Garcia sitting there playing guitar and singing. Immediately impressed, Phil decided that it would be a good idea to make a tape and try and get it played on 'Midnight Special'. So the two of them and a friend of Phil's called Tom Constanten, travelled over to Tom's house that night to pick up his Webcor tape recorder, brought it back to Palo Alto and recorded Jerry. The next day Lesh took the tape to Gert Chiarito (or Bert Corena as some people would have him known) who ran the hootenanny show. Gert was ecstatic when he heard it and in no time at all Garcia was heard on the radio all over the Bay area. That night at the party Jerry and Phil became good friends although they didn't get together again musically until about five years later.

Right, before we go further, you heard



the name Tom Constanten? Well Phil and Tom were always good friends simply because Tom was the person who came anywhere remotely near to being Phil's intellectual and musical equivalent. Hailing from Las Vegas, Constanten had written his first symphony by the time he was about 13 and he had it performed when he was 16. He'd also mastered astronomy, supposedly has a 170 IQ!!!, and like Phil Lesh he's got perfect pitch. They ran into each other in the music department at Cal-Berkeley college when Tom overheard Phil talking about atonal music. They naturally got into long discussions and eventually became very close friends. By 1962 they were both at Mills College attending Luciano Berio's symposium, and Phil had taken up composing seriously, also working at KPFA part-time, and cruising over to Palo Alto for all the parties and get-togethers. He went to live with Tom in Las Vegas but Tom's mother couldn't stand the sight of him and kicked him out. Tom subsequently went to Europe with Berio for a summer tour and Phil went back to Palo Alto.

By spring 1963 Tom was back from Europe and he and Phil decided to get an apartment and start composing seriously again. In the meantime they both got jobs at the Post Office and became involved with the San Francisco Mime Troupe with whom they had a chance to perform their compositions. Later on Tom joined the Air Force and started taking an interest in Scientology, and Phil quit the Post Office because of increasing intimidation over the length of his Beatle-styled hair. By now Phil was composing formal electronic stuff and huge orchestral works which not surprisingly he found very difficult to get performed. For instance, he wrote an enormous orchestral piece called 'Foci' which called for four orchestras, 123 players, and 4 conductors. Unfortunately, or fortunately if like me you regard him as the true musical inspiration behind the Dead, nobody wanted to know.

Which just about brings us up in time as far as the Warlocks. Phil came down to see them play one night at Magoo's and was re-acquainted with Jerry. It so happened that Dana Morgan, the Warlocks' bassist, was proving to be unsuitable and not too keen, so as the story goes, Jerry went up to Phil and said: 'Guess what, you're gonna be our bass player!' Amazingly, although he'd never picked up a bass before in his life,

he learned to play in roughly two weeks.

So now the scene was set... the first prototype Grateful Dead was ready... Jerry Garcia (guitar/vocals), Bob Weir (rhythm guitar/vocals), Pigpen (keyboards/vocals), Bill Sommers (drums), and Phil Lesh (bass/vocals).

For about six months the Warlocks remained a very run-of-the-mill rock'n'roll band, being managed by Lesh's old friend Odduck. Odduck got them their first club gig at the Fireside Club on El Camino Real in San Mateo and later on a regular job at a Belmont club. In between time they made a demo for Autumn Records: 'Fire In The City'/'Your Sons And Daughters'. It was at the club in Belmont that their music, with a little help from the then new wonderdrug LSD, began to take on a shape and form that was, shall we say, a little weird for the time (and remember it was 1965).

Their songs started to get much longer and louder until in the end it all got a bit too much for the regular customers who would apparently run screaming from the place clutching their ears. Inevitably the Warlocks got the boot and at that point dropped completely and permanently out of the straight music scene.

They weren't without admirers though, because everybody up at Ken Kesey's place in La Honda (Pranksters, heads, drop-outs, acid-freaks, etc), really dug them. So much so that the Warlocks became their house-band and played at the Acid Tests during 1965 and the Trips Festival, San Francisco, Muir Beach, then L.A. in 1966. Around about the end of the Acid Tests they changed their name again when, as Garcia recalls in 'Rolling Stone' 40: 'we were looking for a name. We'd abandoned the Warlocks, it didn't fit anymore. One day we were all over at Phil's house smoking DMT. He had a big Oxford dictionary, opened it,

and there was Grateful Dead, those words juxtaposed. It was one of those moments, y'know, like everything else on the page went blank, diffuse, just sorta oozed away, and there was GRATEFUL DEAD, big black letters edged all around in gold, man, blasting out at me, such a stunning combination. So I said, "How about Grateful Dead?" and that was it.'

'Grateful Dead is an ethnological term; it has to do with a guy named Francis Childs who went around and catalogued a lot of folk ballads from Northern Ireland and Scotland back before the turn of the century. There was a whole section that he did on what were the Grateful Dead ballads; the Grateful Dead ballads being visitations and stuff like that, generally having to do with people that had died and come back and been kind of glad.' - Bob Weir.

'Let's see, the classic story is the one where somebody dies, but there's some dishonour connected with the death, so they can't really rest until this matter is settled, and then when it's settled that puts them in the category of being Grateful Dead. It's just what it sounds like... Grateful Dead.' - Garcia.

It might be a good time to comment on the Dead's reputation as a bunch of drug-fiends, a reputation I may add that is founded as much on rumour and speculation as on facts. But as the facts are bizarre enough themselves, the rumours aren't really that important at all. Apart from the odd joint at school every now and then, I think Lesh was the first to dabble in chemical drugs. In February

1963 he moved from Berkeley to Fulton St to live with a girl he knew named Ruth and an insane character called Dennis Crank (that's the truth, honest!), who Hank Harrison describes in his book as a 'psychotic pseudo chemist' who tried out all his new drugs and evil concoctions on Phil and Ruth. Garcia was probably the first to experiment with acid which up until October 6th 1966 remained legal in California, but once they all got together, it didn't take them long to try out all kinds of weird stuff. Their association with Kesey, and their subsequent musical developments and life-style are almost entirely acid-based, and their involvement with this hitherto outrageous phenomenon reached some sort of peak with the arrival of a slightly crazy gentleman with the imposing name of Augustus Owsley Stanley III. Owsley (variously known as Merlin and 'The Acid King') was a friend of Ken Kesey's who arrived in Berkeley from L.A. in 1962. Amongst many other things he was a chemist, and in 1965 he started making methedrine, and then in 1966 developed the purest and most potent LSD that anybody has ever made. Owsley acid became a standard against which everything else was judged, and despite his unnerving personality and strange ways, Owsley was tolerated in Kesey's community simply because of his talent as a chemist.

As well as this, he was an electronics genius and after a while took the Dead under his wing and supervised their sound system. The equipment that he bought them was unbelievable... every new gadget on the market... tuners, amplifiers, receivers, loudspeakers, microphones, cartridges, theatre horns, booms, lights, turntables, instruments, mixers, service mesochroics etc ('Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test'). The trouble was that while the equipment was certainly dependable and consistent, Owsley was not. Most Dead gigs used to see them all arrive wiped out of their skulls, Owsley as well, so more often than not the instruments weren't balanced or synchronised and the whole thing came out as a terrible mess. But on the occasions that Owsley managed to get everything together in time, their sound system was reported to be the loudest, clearest and most complex ever heard.

But before we pass over the Dead/Kesey association which ended with the State legislation banning LSD, mention must be made of the Acid Tests held during 1965. Despite claims to the contrary by the New York avant-garde, the Acid Tests represented the first successful attempt at multimedia electronic entertainment. With a never-ending supply of acid, the Grateful Dead, a light show on every wall, and every conceivable piece of electronic equipment hooked up all over the place, there was an amazing kind of ordered chaos. As Jerry tries to explain ('Rolling Stone' 100): 'They had film and endless kind of weird tape recorder hook ups and mystery speaker trips and all... just all sorts of really strange... it always seemed as though the equipment was able to respond in its own way, I mean it...

there were always magical things happening. Voices coming out of things that weren't plugged in and, God... it was just totally mind boggling to wander around this maze of wires and stuff like that. Sometimes they were like writhing and squirming. 'Truly amazing.' The Acid Tests were essentially formless, there was no planned show, just a gathering of people doing lots of different things all at once, and the whole set-up was very unstable and unpredictable. As far as the Dead were concerned they were no exception. Sometimes they'd get up and play for two or three hours non-stop, while other times it was quite possible that they'd give up after ten minutes. But it was here that their music began to develop a unique style, a delicate, complicated fusion of a multitude of musical idioms... electronic music of all sorts, accidental music, classical music, Indian music, jazz, folk, country & western, blues, and rock... a lumbering, stoned volcano of noise and excitement.

Phil Lesh



The Acid Tests culminated in the Trips Festival in January 1966, and later that year acid was declared illegal and Kesey split to Mexico. The Pranksters dispersed out of harm's way, and the Dead went to live with Owsley on the northern edge of Watts in L.A. Life with the 'Acid King' was however a little disconcerting to say the least. Notwithstanding the benefits of a new mammoth sound system, they didn't always see eye to eye on certain matters and in June 1966, after a few months together, the Dead moved back to San Francisco and into 710 Ashbury.

Now a so far unmentioned but influential aspect of the Dead's career is their ever-precarious financial situation. While most groups were after more recognition and bigger gigs, the Dead played mostly for free. Their way of life didn't include any precautions involving money or business matters, and coupled with a succession of intelligent managers, they were nearly always in debt to the extent

A drawing by Uncle Jerry



that Pigpen once had his Hammond organ repossessed right in the middle of a set.

Financial pressures and promises of total artistic control persuaded the band to sign for Warner Brothers record company, and their first single (not counting a single they made for Scorpio Records in 1965—"Don't Ease Me In"), and LP appeared in 1967. The single, "Golden Road To Unlimited Devotion", also on the album, was a snappy little number probably designed to make them as appealing as possible to an unsuspecting public. Michael Lydon in "Rolling Stone" describes their sound at the time as: "hard rock/white R&B slightly freaked—not very different from Steppenwolf's, Creedence Clearwater's or the Sir Douglas Quintet's". Their album, simply titled "The Grateful Dead" (WS 1689) was released in March 1967 but was recorded the previous year. Having no idea of how to work in a recording studio, the band apparently just went in and played as they normally did at a gig. Not surpris-

ingly this attempt to re-create a 'live' sound on record was largely a failure, especially for those who had seen them play. Produced by Dave Hassinger, who the band had insisted on because of his work as engineer on some of the Stones records, the album was recorded in three nights and mixed in one day on a 3-track machine in L.A. To be honest it doesn't stand up too well today but the signs were quite clearly there for all to hear... immaculate rhythm changes, powerful melodic bass lines, and of course Garcia's guitar work. A good deal of the material on the record is blues-based, eg, "Good Morning Little School Girl" and "Cold Rain And Snow", but it also features what Richard Meltzer describes as "the first example of definitive instrumental acid-rock"—"Viola Lee Blues". Except for the inhabitants of San Francisco and the surrounding country, hardly anybody bought the album, and of course it wasn't made widely available over here.

Later on that year they got involved

in a project called the Great North-western Tour with Quicksilver Messenger Service and Jerry Abram's Headlights which was designed to present a series of concerts in Washington and Oregon without using middle-men, promoters, printers, or anybody like that. The groups and their management handled everything themselves, and it worked so well that the idea came to lease a permanent dance hall in San Francisco. So early in 1968 the Dead and the Airplane took over an old hall on Market Street called the Carousel, and turned it into a spacious comfortable Ballroom perfect for dances. That they finally had to hand over to Bill Graham was certainly not due to lack of support, but more likely a combination of mismanagement leading to economic difficulties, and police pressure. Anyway, crafty old Bill Graham swooped down and took over the Carousel, later re-naming it the Fillmore West.

By now though, the Grateful Dead had acquired two new members. The first to join was Mickey Hart... horse trainer, amateur hypnotist, drug fiend, drop-out and percussionist. He'd met Bill and after jamming with him a couple of times sat in on a set at the Straight Theatre. Hart says (in "Rolling Stone" 40): "We played "Alligator" for two hours, man, and my mind was blown. When we finished and the crowd went wild, Jerry came over and embraced me, and I embraced him, and it's been like that ever since." That was summer 1967. The other new member, Tom Constanten was of course associated with the band right from the beginning but he only just got out of the Air Force in time to join them in late '67.

In September 1967 they started work on their second album, and much to the annoyance of Warner Brothers they didn't finish recording it until March 1968. After that came the editing and mixing, and the LP called "Anthem Of The Sun" (WS 1749) wasn't released here until August 1968.

Altogether, the album contains excerpts from four studio recordings and eighteen 'live' performances, blended into each other so well that with the exception of a couple of shaky transitional patches, it could well be one continuous live set.

Disappointed with the results of their first recording venture, the band decided to spend more time on this one and make it sound really good. They started out by recording experimentally for a couple of months in L.A. where nothing was accomplished, and then they went to New York where they parted with producer Dave Hassinger because he found it impossible to work with them. So it was down to Jerry and Phil to assemble an album from live tapes and studio material. A lot of the work was done in San Francisco with engineer Dan Healy and when everything was put together the whole lot was mixed down on an 8-track machine which gives a slightly crowded and cluttered effect... all 8 tracks being used continually with loads of stuff going on all the time. However, having said that, I think it's the Dead album that I play the most, and is perhaps my favour-

ite of them all. It's a toss up between that and "Live/Dead". The whole of side one is bloody brilliant... it starts with a 3-part medley—"That's It For The Other One"—an attractive easy-paced song ("Cryptical Envelopment") that ends with an astounding change of rhythm and a drum solo ("Quadibet For Tenderfeet") and then "The Faster We Go The Rounder We Get" which is pure Grateful Dead magic... Garcia and Lesh soloing away, crossing over and playing off each other, Weir and Pigpen adding layer upon layer of sound, and the two drummers lashing out landslide rhythms that explode on the top of your head. It all glides perfectly into "New Potatoe Caboose" and "Born Cross-Eyed" and the whole side is just one unbelievable thing after another. Superb stuff. Side two features "Alligator", the mainstay of Dead concerts in their early days, and closes with "Caution (Do Not Stop On Tracks)" which is the only thing that sounds contrived, with an assortment of Pigpen's growling vocals and lots of electronics. The rest is nothing less than a masterpiece however, and is certainly one of the best rock albums ever to come out of San Francisco. As a matter of interest it cost between \$50-60,000 to make and was finished a good six months behind schedule. One last thing concerning "Anthem Of The Sun"; Phil Lesh has since re-mixed the album and Warner Bros are apparently sitting on it without any plans for its release. C'mon you guys in sunny Burbank, how about it?

By now they had all moved out of 710 Ashbury following a bust in the fall of 1967 and at present they all live in separate houses in San Francisco and Marin County. But despite a growing reputation as an exhilarating performing band, and a critically successful album to their credit, the Dead remained strictly an 'underground' group, as much a fault of the news media as of their own apathetic approach towards promoting themselves.

By early 1968 it became fashionable for magazines and newspapers to feature pop individuals, rather than bands, as mass media article sellers. Grace Slick became the 'star' of Jefferson Airplane and not Marty Balin who was the real leader. People like Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison also received the same treatment, and gradually the initial concept of the community band was forgotten. So bands like the Dead, with no glamorous potential superstar, suffered through lack of publicity and eventually a lack of work. The 'invasion' of English heavy blues-rock bands like Cream also did a lot to dim the spotlight on San Francisco as well as prompting a lot of West Coast bands to make an effort to keep up with the rest, and by the end of 1968, the results were evident. The famous "San Francisco Sound" had been lost, to be replaced by a more studio-oriented approach to work. Instead of playing for hours on end in the park for free, bands were now concentrating on producing technically perfect records, and found, like their neighbours in L.A. (Doors and

Mamas & Papas) had already done, that they could become famous without making many 'live' appearances.

By the time the Dead's third album, "Aoxomoxoa" (WS 1790) was released in June 1969 they had changed quite considerably in the space of two years. Garcia describes "Aoxomoxoa" as a continuation of the "Anthem Of The Sun" trip—the style of having a complex record. It started off being an 8-track job but in the middle of recording, the studio was fitted with a 16-track machine and they indulged in the temptation to try and use all 16 tracks. Everything was down on tape quite satisfactorily but it seemed that everyone in the band took part in the mixing as well as being blocked on some drug like STP, and they blew it. Garcia's re-mixed version has since been released and is a much simpler and clearer album. Songs like "Mountains Of The Moon", "China Cat Sunflower", and "Cosmic Charlie" are now more easily recognisable as very fine songs indeed, and if you're aware of an electronic free-form track called "What's Become Of The Baby" you'll know that simply by re-mixing, it takes on an almost completely new form, and is perhaps an indication of what some of the more spontaneous parts of the re-mixed "Anthem Of The Sun" could sound like. Additional pieces of information: the title "Aoxomoxoa" is a palindrome of album sleeve designer Rick Griffin's invention—the band were originally debating on whether to call it "Earthquake Country", and by the time it was made, the Dead were in debt to Warner Bros to the tune of around \$93,000. Oh, and in case it's not obvious, I think it's a lovely album, not their best by any means, but for me it has an endearing charm and warmth that no other band can manage to radiate.

Early in 1969, during the recording of "Aoxomoxoa", financial disaster loomed over them and they were forced to sign with Bill Graham's agency, a man with whom they have had a strange, often volatile relationship. But Graham was only one of many managers who tried their luck (and money) with the Dead. Others included Danny Rifkin, Rock Scully, Ron Racow, Brian Rohan, Lenny Hart (Micky's dad who burned them of something like \$70,000 and is now being sued) plus their present manager John McIntyre.

Unfortunately things weren't so harmonious within the band either. Pigpen and Bob Weir were on the verge of leaving on many occasions, and these were only a few of the many personal crises that affected the group. The problem was considerably eased later on when several members formed their own splinter groups, giving them other interests and a further outlet to burn off their manic energy. There were the New Riders Of The Purple Sage with Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, and Micky Hart (the latter two only temporarily), a one-night band formed for a Scientology benefit called Bobby Ace And The Cards Off The Bottom with Bob Weir and Phil Lesh, and Micky Hart & The Heartbeats. The whole arrange-

ment was a very loose and informal one, and it eased the tensions within the band quite considerably.

It wasn't long though before Warner Brothers were on their backs again demanding another album. After already giving the Dead something like \$120,000 they wanted three albums. They'd got two, "Anthem Of The Sun" and "Aoxomoxoa", and so work began on a 'live' double album to be called simply "Live/Dead" (WS 1830, Jan 1970). That they'd finally decided to put out a true 'live' album came as no real surprise, but what must have turned most people's heads was the astonishing maturity of it... a rock LP of subtlety, power and sheer beauty. As an attempt to capture the magic that they generate on stage it was a success beyond all expectations. The all too apparent inconsistency of Grateful Dead sets necessitated the making of miles of tape recordings and from this they selected the best tapes recorded at the Avalon and pieced the whole thing together. The first three sides are in effect one long track as the band start off with 23 magnificent minutes of "Dark Star" which is a truly colossal achievement, and they carry straight on into "Saint Stephen" and "The Eleven", with fluid ease and tremendous power. The tapes have obviously been chosen with a great deal of care as even on the best of nights the band tend to be a bit patchy, the good parts mingled with the not so good. In working from one piece of music to another they have to keep hold of all the threads, searching around for new phrases and rhythms until it all slides gently into place. On an average night they can keep all the loose ends together but never manage to tie them all up, so that the whole idea eventually falls apart and they have to give it up or start again. But on "Live/Dead" there's none of this unsureness. Everything is so superbly integrated and smooth that it's downright annoying when one side ends, the momentum of the music is broken, and you have to get up and turn the record over. Side three is Pigpen's tour de force, "Turn On Your Lovelight"... 15½ minutes of gutsy, soulful vocals and the climax of 55 minutes of truly amazing rock music. The last side is generally considered to be an anticlimax in comparison, and although it's by no means as exciting or engaging as the other tracks, it deserves a hearing. There is a very slow traditional blues number called "Death Don't Have No Mercy"... a very sad song, nearly nine minutes of nerve-grating feed-back, and to close the whole thing, a 30 second finale, "And We Bid You Goodnight". I won't say any more about the record except to quote from Lenny Kaye who wrote: "'Live/Dead' explains why the Dead are one of the best performing bands in America, why their music touches on ground that most other groups don't even know exists... if you'd like to visit a place where rock is likely to be in about 5 years, you might think of giving "Live/Dead" a listen or two."

Andy Childs
September 1973

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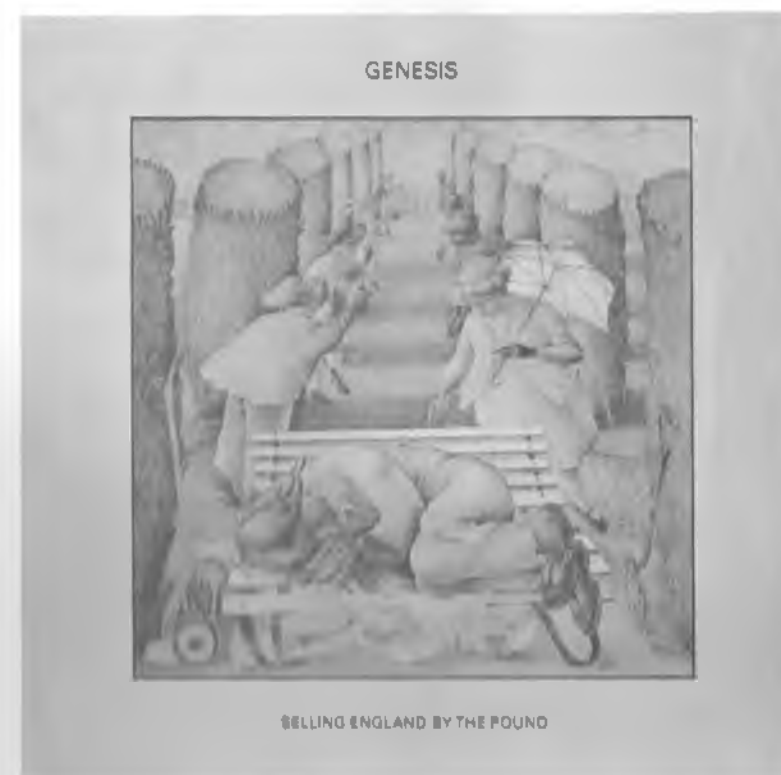


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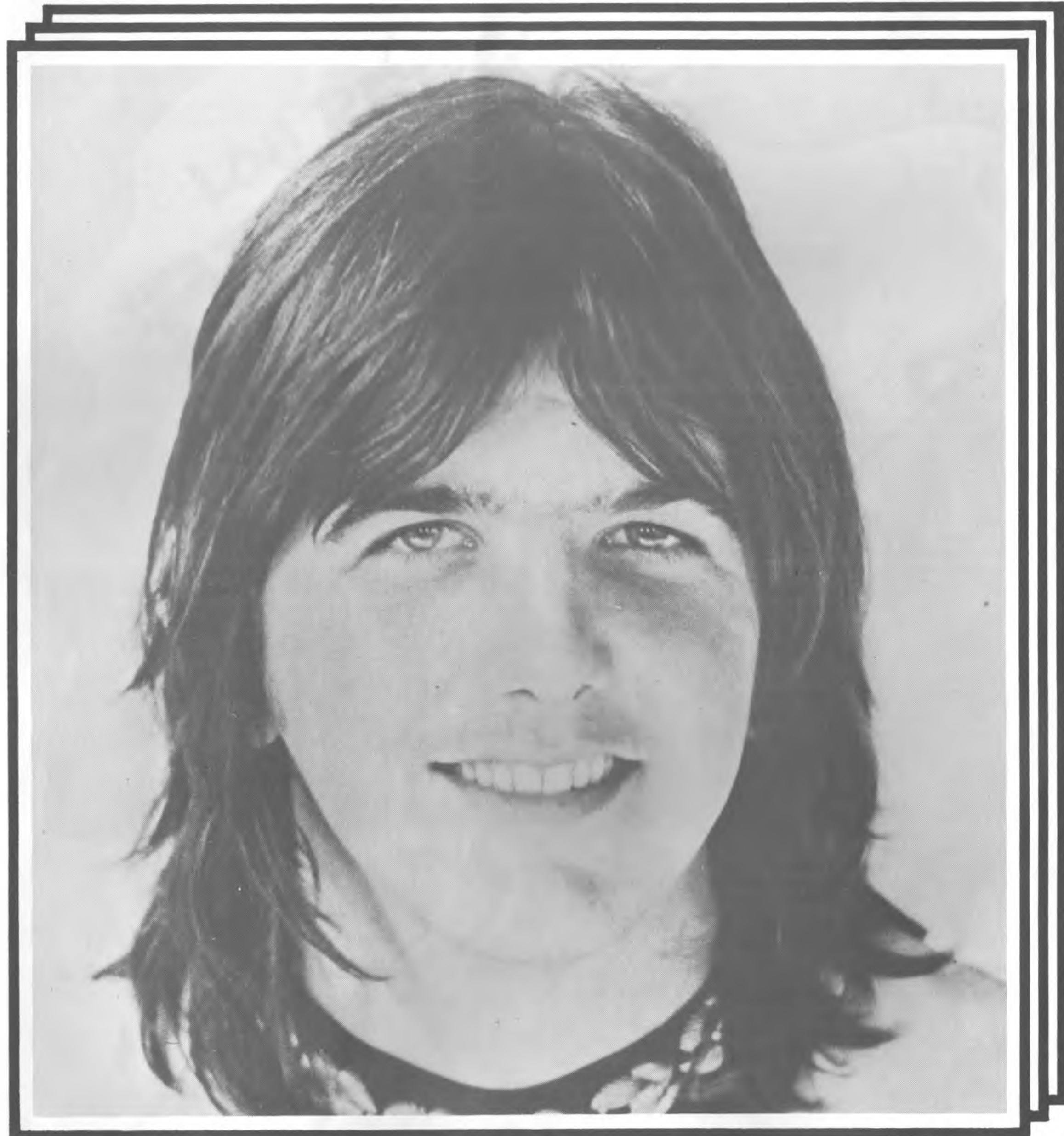
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SO LONG, IT'S BEEN GOOD TO KNOW YOU



GRAM PARSONS

On the eve of a bonanza ex-Byrds/ex-Burritos reunion scheduled to take place in Holland in late October; and involving Skip Battin, Country Gazette, Gram Parsons, Emmylou Harris, Gene Parsons, Gib Guilbeau, Chris Ethridge and Sneaky Pete, came bad news.

For the second time in two months, Martyn Smith of UA's Iron Horse Agency, who had been arranging this historic gathering, phoned with sad tidings. In July it was to tell us of Clarence's death, and yesterday, September 19th, he was relaying a message from manager Eddie Tickner. . . . "Gram Parsons died earlier today".

Frankly, Gram Parsons has always been regarded as "the nigger in the Byrds woodpile" up here in the biased backlands of Bucks County. . . . "the bloke who pulled McGuinn off the rails", and as such, his work subsequent to his Byrds spell has always tended to be examined with a jaundiced ear. Notwithstanding such petty prejudices, however, it is obvious that Parsons' role as a pioneering figure in the course of rock can not be brushed aside lightly, and I feel certain that his influence and his songs will never be forgotten.

Gram Connor became Gram Parsons when he "got new parents" at 13 and moved from Waycross in Georgia, where he was born, to New Orleans. "I was scared to death of Waycross" he said, "...my father's name was 'Coon Dog' Connor; he was a country singer and writer and I dug life with him, but he passed on early and I was adopted by relations in New Orleans". Listening to local radio stations, his youth rang with the sounds of "lots of country music mixed with rockabilly. . . . I heard and liked people like Ira and Charlie Louvin, the early Everly Brothers and Elvis Presley. Elvis was quite a hit in the Georgia/Tennessee/Florida area long before he was known nationally - his and other early Sun records didn't catch on in the Northern cities like New York and Detroit, but in the South, people were really picking up on them - the music scene there didn't follow the North and it still doesn't; even now you can find juke boxes down there with a selection as wide as James Brown, Otis Redding, Jerry Lee Lewis, Merle Haggard, Kitty Wells, James Cleveland, gospel songs, all sorts".

Like Dylan, he claims to have run away from home a lot - heading for Greenwich Village when he was 14, 15 and 16. In fact, he did sing in the Village during the early sixties; "I pictured myself as a sort of male Joan Baez when I was sixteen - I was singing protest songs and such - but by the time I graduated from high school I was into bluegrass. . . . I'd have given my left knee to have been involved in it. The Dillards were one of my favourites, because they were young, and I'd think 'God, I'm old enough to be in one of those groups'. They weren't doing the protest number. . . . they were just slapping down music".

Having passed through this somewhat hasty and episodic Greenwich Village apprenticeship, he was admitted to Harvard University,

where his musical interests quickly eclipsed any academic aspirations, and accordingly he formed the International Submarine Band, designed to play country music in a rock setting. . . . a bold and unprecedented move for those days.

"We got together in 1965, and in early 1966 we cut a couple of singles - one for Columbia and the other on this crazy label called Ascot. . . . I don't even know who they are. We had to do certain songs on the A sides, one for a film and one a Beatles type song, but on the B sides we were allowed to record what we wanted; we did a Jerry Lee Lewis tune on one and a song called 'Truck Driving Man' (as later recorded by Commander Cody?). At our gigs we were trying to play hard rock, rhythm & blues and country & western all at the same time, and nobody seemed to understand. . . . the rock audiences just didn't like the country stuff. Like in New York, the Young Rascals were the big thing; we did a couple of gigs with them and it was really insane - all the kids were chewing gum and just staring up at the stage, you know. . . . it was right in the middle of that really natty New York pop period".

"As I said, two years earlier I'd been playing in the Village, but that was by myself in small coffee houses and it was easier then because you could control the audience better by talking to them and getting your ideas across. When I was in the group, however, we started into playing bigger halls and we didn't know anything about equipment; road managers were a luxury that we only ran into once in a while and besides, they couldn't seem to do anything with our crazy mis-matched equipment".

"It was really difficult trying to get our musical ideas across to the kids, but it was easier when we decided to go to California, where I finally got an album together, even though it meant breaking up the group in the process".

The album, recorded in early 1967, finally hit the shops at the very end of that year, and sold about half a dozen copies, though it holds the distinction of being "the first country rock album". Not only that, but the sleeve bears solicited testimonials from such notable authorities as Lee Hazlewood (the owner of the label): "the first sounds of country music - unique in concept", Duane Eddy (discovered and managed by Hazlewood): "Gram Parsons should become a big country artist", Don Everly (an impartial party?): "really refreshing" and Glenn Campbell: "someone should have done this a long time ago".

Produced by one Suzi Jane Hokom (Hazlewood thinly disguised?), the album ('Safe At Home' LHI Records, LHI 12001) lasts less than 26 minutes but includes two Johnny Cash songs, one by Merle Haggard, one by Hayes/Rhodes ('Satisfied Mind'), one by Arthur Crudup ('That's Alright'), one by Jack Clement (amended by Parsons to include a reference to Waycross, Georgia), and 4 original Parsons songs, one of which was co-authored by Barry Goldberg, though heaven knows where he fits into the jigsaw. The group comprises Parsons on rhythm guitar / vocals, Bob Buchanan likewise, John Neuse on lead guitar and Jon Corneal on

drums, plus assistance from Earl Ball on piano and Jay Dee Manness on steel guitar.

It's interesting, undeniably, but I must confess that I prize the album for its rarity rather than the music.

Between the recording and the release of the International Submarine Band album, Parsons spent a lot of time investigating clubs in North Hollywood and the Valley: "I was one of the only guys who had a car and could get around to these places whereas the others could only get a certain way down Lankershim Boulevard. I got to a lot of country clubs in the area and from just watching and digging groups, I got to sit in with them and play sessions". The sleeve of 'The Last of the Red Hot Burritos' contains an informative interview in which Parsons expands on this period (though I wish it could've been put in a more concise and coherent form).

By this time the International Submarine Band had disintegrated into a loose bunch of loose musicians and by late 1967, they had evolved into a group initially known as 'The Flying Berrido Boys' and then 'The Flying Burrito Brothers', a name conjured up by Ian Dunlop, an English guy who was playing bass with them at the time. The membership was seemingly floating, and gigs appear to have been almost non-existent; rehearsal/jams, however, were frequent. At the time of writing, I am lacking the precise details of Parsons' musical activities during this period though I know he was hanging around in both Topanga and Laurel Canyons with people like Leon Russell, JJ Cale, Junior Markham, Chris Ethridge and others who seemed to pivot around early Delaney & Bonnie groups. Also jamming with Parsons were John Neuse still, an unidentified but oft-mentioned Micky, and three exiles from back East; keyboard player Billy Briggs and singer/guitarist Barry Tashian, both of whom had been in the excellent early Boston rock group Barry & The Remains (a rare album on Epic) who had toured the States with the Beatles at the height of their popularity, and Ed Freeman who had joined the same tour (Aug/Sept 66) as the Remains' road manager after an illustrious career as a coffee house folkie and journalist (and subsequently became a great producer of people like Tom Rush and Don McLean). Apparently, during their travels, the Remains split up in California and decided to take some time out for a bit of, er, psychedelic investigation up in the Canyon. . . . after all, it was almost 1967.

Permutations of the Flying Burrito Brothers would play at clubs and bars in Southern California, just to earn the necessary bread to support their pleasures, and their paths would cross those of other LA groups. Now and then, Parsons would run into the Byrds. . . . his presence, for example, at some of the sessions for 'The Notorious Byrd Brothers' has often been noted. In fact, the Byrds, looking for an album title, wanted to call 'Notorious' 'The Flying Burrito Brothers'.

As detailed in Zigzag 32 (Byrds Part 6) Parsons actually joined the Byrds a little after that, in March 1968.

"They were looking for another musician; Crosby had gone and they were down to a trio and figured they needed a keyboard player. I'd become involved with the same business manager through a song I'd written for a Peter Fonda single and they said 'hey why don't you come along and try playing some of our stuff?' So I did and they liked it. Chris and I, both being into country music, formed a sort of alliance and persuaded the others that the Byrds should start playing country".

Having visited London and Rome in May (see ZZ 32), they recorded 'Sweetheart of the Rodeo' (CBS 63353) with Gram singing lead on most of the songs he'd introduced to the group, but the majority of his contributions were subsequently mixed out when CBS realised that law suits might be initiated as a result of his LHI connections. By the time the legal formalities were untangled and finalised, only 'Hickory Wind' existed in its original state and is the only track on the album featuring Parsons up front.

"Tracks like 'Life In Prison' and 'You're Still On My Mind' were done as studio warm up numbers and could have been done so much better, but even though the album didn't come out as we'd wanted it, Chris and I were pretty happy that we got a chance to have a go at stuff like that".

In July, the Byrds returned to London to play a charity concert at the Albert Hall prior to flying off to South Africa for an extensive tour. The morning they were to leave, Parsons walked out, explaining that his departure was politically motivated - he wasn't about to play to segregated audiences in a country dominated by apartheid.

"Something a lot of people don't know about me" said Parsons (in an interview with the Seattle Helix), "is that I was brought up with a negro for a brother. Like all Southern families we had maids and servants, a whole family that took care of us, called the Dixon family. . . . Sammy Dixon was a little older than me and he lived and grew up with me, so I learned at a real close level that segregation was just not it".

Well, I can't say that I altogether follow his reasoning there - is he saying that apartheid is wrong, but condoning the persistence of quasi slavery in the Southern states? Anyway, for better or worse (better because he was an "evil influence" and worse because he left them in the lurch with commitments to fulfill and an incomplete band to play them) he left the Byrds and stayed in England where he hung out with the Stones, formulating vague ideas of a new country group which would be produced by Keith Richard.

Though in the group for less than 5 months, his influence was immense. Not only that, but it brought his name to the headlines of the world's pop press. Parsons was a star - his claim to fame, the briefest of associations with the Byrds.

Having gained this acclaim and notoriety, Gram was now eligible to form

his own supergroup, which is exactly what he did. During the Autumn of 1968, when McGuinn was unsuccessfully struggling to hold the Byrds in one piece, Parsons began to plan a brand new Flying Burrito Brothers. His old friend Chris Ethridge was the first recruit, followed in November by Chris Hillman who had also decided to quit the Byrds (and patch up any old differences with Gram). Sneaky Pete (another ex (auxiliary) Byrd) joined on pedal steel and, unable to find their ideal drummer, they used session men when they went in to cut their first album early in January 69 (without the aid of the Stones, incidentally. . . they were too busy to participate as originally planned).

The Burritos, of course, arrived on the scene with a flourish and the rock world's expectations, heightened by a few months speculation about SuperByrds and flickering rumours about Stones patronage, were rewarded when the sleeve of the first album revealed just how expensively and expansively their concept had been decked out. The elaborate style of their clothing was bizarre and unprecedented to say the least.

They had spent only a few weeks rehearsing, still with their vision focussed on England, where they imagined an eager audience was just waiting for them to spring out and entertain them. "We sat up in Topanga Canyon" said Gram, "and sang a lot of country songs, but I always had this dream about doing stuff in England - starting a country band in England, because England is so unjaded, so open minded. Maybe it's just a dream, but it seems an ideal place to start a music scene." As it turned out, their proposals were thwarted.

Gram: "We had a little money from the record company, an advance, and we had direction. . . we knew just what we wanted to do, but we had the wrong managers, who mishandled the whole thing, telling us lies, steering us the wrong way. We stumbled and tripped and fell back to LA, whereas we'd got across as far as New York as the first stage of our journey to England. We got to New York and discovered that the managers hadn't gotten the work permits, so we had to turn back and return to LA, starving and in debt. We'd burned a lot of bridges when we left, like leaving unpaid phone bills and stuff, but they got us when we went back."

Their first album, 'Gilded Palace of Sin' (A&M AMLS 931 March 1969) was about half predictable and half startling. As already mentioned, their clothing, depicted on the sleeve, was preposterous - Sneaky Pete with a pterodactyl soaring across his breast and Parsons with embroidered marijuana plants climbing up his jacket. When we first saw it we thought it must just be a huge parody of the Grand Ole Opry/Nashville C&W scene - a ludicrously excessive extension of the conventional showy style of those C&W artists who wear stetsons and have their names written up the necks of their guitars. . . . we thought the whole thing was tongue in cheek, a big put-on. As for the record itself, well let me quote from our review in Zigzag 2: "It's as if they sat down and discussed the country music scene, listing all the most typical aspects, from which they compiled

the elements of their repertoire. They sing of a microcosmic world city, the ugliness and sin of urban life, steeped in pathos, drenched in melodrama, dripping with self pity and the fear of God's wrath. . . . le, well-used Nashville themes. Even in the songs about girls walking out, the listener is left with the impression that it's not her absence from the nocturnal bed that's troubling him as much as who's going to read the family bible and play the hymns on the honky tonk piano".

With the passage of time, however, the Burritos' consistent assurances that everything was sincere, and repeated listenings, I find the album much more acceptable and enjoyable now. In fact, I've grown to love the record, especially 'Christine's Tune', 'Sin City', 'The Dark End of the Street' and 'Hot Burrito No 2', and I find that it stands the test of time much better than their next album, which sounds somewhat flat in comparison. (There again, it's nowhere near the brilliance of the third album, by which time Parsons had been replaced by Rick Roberts).

The album ('Gilded Palace') didn't sell too well, and the initial energy balloon was deflated. Gram: "It's been one setback after another. . . Chris Ethridge got busted, Clarke broke his leg one night - little things like that. I think we're finally getting on our feet now though - we've got good management (Jim Dickson) now".

A ray of optimism in a generally overcast sky. No doubt about it, they were disturbed by their failure to reach immediate superstar status - like Crosby Stills & Nash had, for instance. An obvious vent for their frustration was McGuinn, who by sheer persistence, faith and tenacity was systematically rebuilding the Byrds. . . which was more than Hillman and Parsons could take, especially as this was around the first anniversary of the South African fracas. "They should have buried it, let it die. All McGuinn's doing now is riding it out till it ends - just for the money. It's not a creative productive thing anymore - he pays all their salaries every week and he's the head Byrd. . . and everybody still writes all those comprehensive articles on him". Nobody, on the other hand, was writing much about the Burritos.

"It's very difficult to work with McGuinn, you know, on anything. . . he's the type of guy that. . . it's just a job; he goes onstage and becomes a musician, offstage he's not. He doesn't buy records, doesn't listen to the radio, doesn't really keep up with what's happening in music. He has always found a way to either gather or buy the information he needs to keep up with what's going on. . . he himself doesn't lead that life, and it brings you down. Clarence White's right for the Byrds, though, he's an old friend of Chris's - they played together years ago, and that's how he got into the Byrds. McGuinn wouldn't know Clarence White from. . . from Mighty Sam, if it wasn't for Chris. As a matter of fact, he's probably never heard of Mighty Sam". Sour grapes, I believe is the phrase. . . but let us not speak ill, or be too critical - after all, we don't know all the facts, and it was 4 years ago.



THE INTERNATIONAL SUBMARINE BAND: Bob Buchanan/John Neuse/Gram Parsons/Jon Corneal



The first press photo of THE FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS: Sneaky Pete/Chris Ethridge/Gram Parsons/Chris Hillman. Incidentally, the weird plant behind them is a Yucca (Joshua Tree).

A&M's press hype preceding their second album, 'Burrito Deluxe' (A&M AMLS 983, May 1970), quoted Parsons: "We are playing music that is happy and simple - it's a form of love music; it's simply a way of saying 'find a way to love'. We are involved in music of the spirit, or goose bump music".

Unfortunately, this theorizing didn't seem to have much practical basis; by all accounts the group was riddled with juvenility, irresponsibility and an alarming lack of discipline, and by the time the album was released Parsons had left - though his version of the incident seems to contain a few discrepancies when compared with other reports. "I got bored with the Burritos" he said, "somehow I got off the track and I needed some time to think about it". He returned to Europe to renew his association with the Stones.

The album suffered from a general absence of enthusiasm, though newcomer Bernie Leadon's lead guitar did lift several songs (notably 'Lazy Days' and 'Older Guys', both of which feature some of my favourite bendy solos) out of the rut they'd fallen in.

Other members of the group (for full details of their tumultuous history, see the Eagles chart in Zigzag 29), when interviewed, have always tried to avoid any explicit explanation of the events leading up to Parsons' departure - it's usually a variation on a hazy "he just got fed up" theme. It is apparent, however, that he lost interest in maintaining the unity of the group... you can't bake a cake if the flour isn't there, or if there isn't enough flour, or if the flour isn't of high enough quality.

"The trouble was that we were not communicating" Chris Hillman told Melody Maker, though in actual fact they were often literally fist-fighting, and one gathers that neither Gram nor Michael Clarke paid much attention to his responsibility as a member of a group. Some attributed Gram's decline to the after effects of a motor cycle accident, details of which are not too clear, but Sneaky Pete (talking to Steve Peacock of Sounds) said that in the end, they had to get rid of him: "It just turned into a big hassle and we decided he had to leave". Sneaky also mentions another contributory factor - "Gram had a personal problem".

The Burritos struggled on through good times and bad, until after several desperate personnel changes they broke up in late 1971, though a revitalised Hot Burrito Revue and 2 posthumous live albums kept the interest going a little longer.

Gram Parsons in the meantime set off in search of himself. "I was trying to find out more about everything I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it" he said, "and that's not as easy as sitting down and popping a pill and having a big light bulb light up above your head. It takes a long time - you shouldn't expect miracles or anything... but it's coming together now. All that matters is playing music the way I want to".

For a couple of years, he hung around with friends and played his music, doing the odd session (like singing on 'All the things' on the 'Untitled' Byrds album). "Making a living like

that is a hard thing to do, but I had some good friends and that kept it all going. I just ain't into the old group thing anymore; there are a couple of people I like to sing with, but I think a lot of musicians these days feel they don't want to be tied to an organisation like a record company... it's sort of like being in a penitentiary. People should understand that you can't stick together as Billy, Buzzy and Boppy for very long without losing part of your mind".

All this preparation culminated in a solo album, co-produced by his crony Ric Grech, called 'GP' (on Reprise K 44228, January 1973), which featured some of LA's finest studio men - among them James Burton, Glen D Hardin and John Guerin - as well as old friends like Barry Tashian. Without containing any tracks which made you jump out of your chair in exhilaration, it was a uniformly enjoyable and competent work, with Emmylou Harris' harmony singing providing the icing on the cake. Emmylou, since 1968 had been renowned on the East Coast as a solo folkie and apparently it was Chris Hillman who suggested that their voices would complement each other as well as they do.

Partly in an effort to promote the LP, Parsons took to the road for a two month coast to coast tour of the States last Spring, with a small group including Emmylou, a bass player called Kyle and ND Smart, sometime drummer with the Remains and Leslie West, and plans for a European tour were in the pipeline, though the gigs in Holland this October were the only ones finalised.

Parsons was undeniably a pioneer, though his many ideas only manifested themselves in infrequent works, and sadly, as already published obituaries bear out, he will principally be remembered for his association with the Byrds and the Burritos and the trail of disruptions he left in his wake. Certainly the fact that he was independently wealthy (deriving a large income from a trust fund set up by his rich family) contributed to his comparative lack of output (one usually, or often, finds that an artist's most creative period is when he is struggling to find security - and Gram never felt the need to struggle in this way) and to a degree of alienation. Whilst the other Burritos, for instance, scuffled to maintain some minimal standards of living he'd go out and buy a brand new motorbike, like a kid might buy a toy, and this kind of thing hardly helped the group's esprit de corps. Nevertheless, if Parsons made a few enemies over the years, he usually won their friendship back, and out there in LA I know he'll be sadly missed.

His songs, some of them already almost 'standards', like 'High Fashion Queen', 'My Uncle', 'Christines Tune/Devil in Disguise', 'The New Soft Shoe' and 'She', will live on to remind people of his potential, though it seems we only heard the tip of the iceberg.

A new album, completed in early September and featuring the Eagles as well as his regular sessioners, was in the early stages of the manufacturing process, though in view of his death the proposed release date may

be put back to avoid the nasty taste of cashing in.

According to Eagle Bernie Leadon, who I phoned in LA, "Gram was rehearsing in Joshua Tree and he just passed out... his heart quit beating and the guys he was with tried resuscitation, but there was nothing they could do". He was rushed to the High Desert Memorial Hospital but was dead on arrival, though the cause of death - reported as "heart attack" - was not released and an autopsy was not requested. His parents contacted his widow, Gretchen, to arrange for his body to be flown to New Orleans for a burial ceremony and it was taken to LA's International Airport for immediate transit.

1822 found the poets Shelley and Byron living in Pisa in Italy, leading a life which fused a great deal of enjoyment with their need to write. At the beginning of that year, their circle of friends was enlarged by the arrival of a larger-than-life Cornish adventurer called Edward Trelawney, and the three of them arranged to have a couple of boats built, specifically for sailing around the Bay of Spezia.

On July 11th, a distressed Trelawney burst in on Byron to tell him that Shelley and a companion called Edward Williams had apparently drowned. Having set sail from Leghorn to Lerici four days earlier, they ran into a sudden storm which obstructed the vision of those observing them from the shore, and when the weather cleared, the boat had disappeared.

Later, some wreckage was washed up on the beach near Viareggio, followed by a body identified as that of Shelley. The authorities acceded to Trelawney's request to be allowed to cremate the body on the beach and take the ashes to Rome for burial, and on 15th July he and Byron threw incense and wine into the fire as the flames consumed Shelley's remains. "In the evening, in hysterical reaction, they both got drunk".

151 years and 68 days later, on Friday 21st September, a hearse arrived at Los Angeles International Airport, where Parsons' body was waiting to be flown to New Orleans, and two men purporting to have been instructed by his parents to transfer the body to Van Nuys Airport to take advantage of a more convenient flight, drove away with the coffin.

On Saturday morning, Gram Parsons' blazing body was discovered in a remote part of the Joshua Tree National Monument, a 558 000 acre tract of Southern California about 130 or so miles east of LA. To ecologists, the area's primary feature is the desert plant life, particularly the important collections of yucca trees - named Joshua Trees, after the biblical character, by the early Mormon pioneers - but it also tended to be a favourite gathering place for "all kinds of crazy people... flying saucer clubs and things like that" according to Bernie Leadon.

The newspapers and police, who found the ashes, seemed puzzled and associated the incident with 'ritualistic behaviour', with the FBI undertaking a full investigation.

A close friend of Gram's wasn't so puzzled: "From what I can gather, some of his friends didn't think that flying his body back to New Orleans was where it's at... they felt that Gram would have preferred a cremation out at Joshua Tree where he always felt at home".

Having burned his body, they went home, got very drunk and played his music.

"When beggars die there are no comets seen; The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes".

Pete Frame/Mac Garry
Thanks to Chrissie Brewer for transcribing the interview which came from a Dutch radio broadcast and was sent to us by Gerard Davelaar. Most of the other quotes are extracted from an article which appeared in the Seattle Helix in September 1969.

As we go to press, we learn that the projected reunion in Holland has now been cancelled, and that police in Los Angeles have made an arrest in connection with the "theft of the body of rock singer Gram Parsons". The arrested man, currently being held in custody pending further investigation, is Gram's road manager Philip Kaufman and warrants are out for



(according to Reuter) "Michael Martin - a member of Parsons' group".

The photograph above shows Parsons as it appears he will be remembered most, which, in the light of his sub-

sequent achievements and the fact that he spent less than 2% of his life as a Byrd, is rather sad. The Byrds (pictured in Spring 1968): Kevin Kelley/Gram Parsons/Roger McGuinn and Chris Hillman.



A pretty crappy photograph (but it's the only one we could get) of

COMMANDER CODY & HIS LOST PLANET AIRMEN

Left to right: Billy C Farlow/Commander Cody/Andy Stein/John Tichy/Bobby Black/ Buffalo Bruce Barlow/Bill Kirchen/Lance Dickerson. (for more information, see over).

Both Commander Cody (then George Frayne) & John Tichy's musical careers stem from this motley ensemble. "It was an easy way to earn money - we played a lot of rock and roll but mostly top 40 favourites of the day.... the twist thing was happening then, but we steered clear of that and stuck to Everlys, Beach Boys, Beatles and songs like 'Sea Cruise' by Frankie Ford, which we still do on stage today."

GUY CURTIS
bass
 Other guys lost
in the haze
of memory
 GEORGE FRAYNE
keyboard
 JOHN TICHY
lead guitarist
 FRANK WINCHESTER
gtr/vocals
killed in a
car crash in
1968

1964 to 1966. Same kind of repertoire and gigs as the Ambassadors... stuff like 'Woolly Bully', Beatles songs and surf hits - even though we were thousands of miles from any surf. We had this Van with 'Kings of the Golden Colossal Surf' written on the side of it.

MAX GOLDMAN	Other forgotten blokes	GEORGE FRAYNE	JOHN TICHY	STEPHEN DAVIS
vocals		Keyboard & vocals	1st/2nd/3rd strings Saxophone COW BOY "Family Bible"	back the WEST "The West Coast" "Creston" Sax &
"a terrible singer, but he was rich and owned all the equipment. Used him on his microphone off most of the time, but he didn't care - he was only out to hustle pigs"			"I Got a Tiger by the Tail"	

One for several yes (generations) Godly went to Winton Beach to be a lifelong. It's out in long island - new Yorkers' gear out of the city in their millions to go and live on Jones Beach on Summer weekends. The band was All Lifelong! we formed up to entertain our friends and make a big splash in the water. Lots of people were out of doors than the surfing Beach. It was a lot of fun. For the Summers saved 500 lives. The band Surf would come every 3 days and that's when Summer would go to the city.

MARTY
FRIED
drums
joined the Curkle

HOWARD
HAURINGER
bass

GEROLD
MAFLOUS
lead guitar
and Al's (Graham's) brother

GEORGE
FRAYNE
keyboard

Early 1967 to September 1967. Taking its name from a poem (below), Cody's first
 Airmen was "very free form.... Some country, some pop and, in an effort to get us a few
 more people, we had... essential... The area was musically fertile with lots of groups; the scene
 never really had any focus or big-time exploitation to create a surge. All the news items in
 the local press seemed to point up the impotence and short-term policies of the Times
 Square School of Rock. The Amboy Dukes found brief periods of success, but apart from them only the Strokes
 (nietely) and the MC5 (revolution) broke out to make any real impact nationally. Things
 weren't helped by the political climate; during this time, in July 1967, half the population of
 Boston got beat up at a demonstration against the Vietnam War, and thousands fled their
 homes to the ground. The bong was fulfilling the ambitions of neither Cody or Tichy, and it
 petered out in a confusion of no gigs and no real direction.... only to rise again....

RALPH MALLORY drums	STEVE SCHWARTZ guitar ex The Who/ies	MARQUIS DE SOUL (DON BOLTON) vocals	COMMANDER (GEORGE FRAYE) CODY piano/vocals	JOHN TITCH rhythm guitar and vocals	WEST VIRGINIA GEEFER bass	other Connie and Sonja
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[illegible]

JOHN FARLOW Lead and up bass of Billy C's brother based in Austin and played Electric in the band, Diesel Smoke Dangerous Curves He has now switched fiddle and formed a down country band called Blue Blazes	JOHN OPELY drum (one snare drum) he still in Ann Arbor	COMMANDER CODY piano/vocals	JOHN TICHY rhythm guitar/ vocals	WEST VIRGINIA CRAMER pedal steel guitar	ANDY STEIN fiddle sax	BILLY C FARLOW vocals harp silent guitar
more grist on Cody		kept up his teaching job at Oshkosh College until Kirchen called up from the West Coast to assure him that San Francisco was just waiting for him like his!	went to Georgia Tech to finish up a Ph.D. in hydraulic engineering	went to Nashville to polish up his steel guitar playing, but spent most of the time vacuum cleaning cars out in a garage	Finished OK his studies and didn't rejoin until Dec 1969	kept the spirit of the band going and held trial together ready for their assault on San Francisco

Bill Kirchen: "After looking around on the Coast, I reckoned there was an opening for a new band and told Coda he ought to consider coming out and making San Francisco his working base. I had a place called Harriss Town Pump, which was a bar in the Mission District of San Francisco. It was a really rough place and seemed to be the centre of a 3 way racial conflict between the blacks and a bunch of Samoans, I think. There was quite a lot of violence, and even some gunplay. There were a lot of guitars and machine guns, and he kept a Derringer in his sock....but fights were always brief. Superfast, and someone would be down on the floor being battered with a pool cue....and once we heard gunshots, then some guy ran back in and me and Billy saw him hand a pool cue to a guy who was going to throw a cocktail, which he was going to throw at the stage until someone persuaded him to throw it explode through the doorway. We never went back after our first residency! The stage was a real hot place. It was like a hot bed of violence. Even though we make our money because we play all together too violent and depressing and we don't want to play the gig, we said fuck this! A telecaster is OK to hit people with, but we don't want to try and

COMMANDER CODY piano/vocals gave up teaching	JOHN TICHEY guitar/ vocals	LANCE DICKERSON drums ex Billy C & the Sunshine, and Charley Musselwhite	ANDY STEIN fiddle/sax	BILLY C FARLOW vocals/harp silent drum	BILL KIRCHEN lead guitar	GENE TORTORA bass to a Six River Ferry
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Today Friars Aylesbury..... Tomorrow the world! Scarily but surely, Commander Cody & his loss are building up their reputation around the globe - including taking England by storm in Aug/Sept wiping the floor with all the other acts at the Reading Festival. I must say that they knocked me out... what a killer band! I can't understand why the English pop press was so unenthusiastic... a magnificent band - so much more vibrant and exciting than anything I've seen there. Don't worry - our next album will be our line set.... it's gonna be

BOBBY BLUE BLACK stiltwalking steel wobbling dobro	COMMANDER CODY (The avianular aviator) puissant pugnat vociferous vocalist	JOHN TICHY streamlined strummer & vortical vocalist	LANCE DICKERSON dramatically despising drummer	ANDY STEIN formidable fiddler & starstrangled saxman	BILLY C FARLOW horny harpist sinuous singer	BILL KIRCHEN (The Ann Arbor Archon) Tempestuous Telecaster master
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though they had no press and an interesting image, no suitable record deals were forthcoming to begin with. Tichy: "It was partly because A&R men thought we were too ragged and didn't take dancing seriously enough. They would see us as a dancer-act, but I can't see it on tape." Cody: "Another trouble was that the Record Company's guideline was fit fitting into 'the Woodstock Image,' which is all they were interested in. They wanted us to spend more time on people like Johnny Rotten than fit into their sort of scene without too much trouble—but they thought we never be able to make the transformation... One label was called Sutra, and one of its acts went into the next 'Living Group' but I said, 'We have absolutely no desire to be the next Living Spoonful.' They wanted to have a producer come in and groom us.... We had to go back and grow up again. We could do it our own way if we think we are doing now without growing".

On page 87, he writes: "In old days, Country Codey had the bread". So far, though, we have seen nothing of the bread. It is a matter if was usually the original source of Art's thrash out the road company very well but real, though beyond their downbeat Emis but in the State of individual d and they down records into racks, through passed consent and could do with,

ward with Paramount, which is bought up by a big holding it seemed to me that it push, but nobody to push really, really get behind it. I think it's a mistake to ask the definitive book that will label; which created the rich language on nationally. Paramount is a middle of what's called film soundtrack. I don't know how to sell, rock and crying hard, but distribution Over here, it's just fine the same. I think it's a mistake they have to hire a lot of ribbons in every area.... seem to be able to get the racks. Like, Supermarket spontaneous sales, have all retail outlet sales by estimate.... and those extra sales."

around on the Coast, I reckoned there was an opening for
consider coming out and making San Francisco his western
home. I was a bar in the Mission district of San Francisco, and
it seemed to be the centre of a 3 way racial conflict between
white, black and Chinese. There was quite a lot of violence, and even some
gunplay - the killing you. There was also the gay who, having
we kept a Derfender in his sock...but fights were always
down on the floor being battered with a pool cue.....and
some come ram-bam-bam and red and Billy C saw him, he
shot someone - don't know. Another time this gun was
throw at the stage until someone persuaded him to the
We never went back after our first residency! The stage
was violent and depressing - but we carried on until the
times is OK to hit people with, but don't want to try a

ANCE CKERSON drums the the and Music and white	ANDY STEIN Fiddle/sax	BILLY C FARLOW vocals/harp Silent Strum	BILL KIRCHEN lead guitar	GEORGE TODD bass to a Six
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August 1971 (when the West Virginia Creeper left), good happy country band g base... which he did... was recruited as a place the name of the Originals... the Billies, the blacks... mean, these stories... electric... - bam bam bam... some people ran out... over to the waterfront... in the street - we saw... was so small that only 5... no... on-play started, and then... catch bullets with it."

When the band went back to Ann Arbor for a week long gig... Barlow was... Moore Stuart... now on Fantasy Records) deputised on bass.

obby Black, one of the last twenty years, has played with exuberance from the Chebese Gumbo to his own group, The Black Brothers, who are now the most popular group of the San Francisco Bay Area country scene. "The area is partly urban, sophisticated, but the midtown folk probably still flourish, and they blend in a great deal of country music. Places like Baker'sfield & Fresno are regional centers, but every little town, like the town I live in, has its own scene. There are a lot of people here who are the big band in San Jose, where the country scene was 100 times bigger than in San Francisco. It isn't as cosmopolitan, much higher percentage of boys and hillbillies, but it used to be a place where you could blow out into pop, but this has diminished, but 5 or 60 huge venues. Palace, where Jimmy Stewarts and Buckwheat used to play. Bobby Mc Gee, each holding 2-300,000 to flourish.....there is a healthy country scene

because it
....there's a
gem of cow-
sang-jose-
sang there,
partly
and the scene
here are still
the Cow
ash & Marie
and clouds
Cow Town,
ple, continue
rid & very
in California."

His Lost Planet Airmen #4

to the world! Slowly but surely, Commander Cody & his loopy unit
take - in clouds - taking England by storm in Aug/Sept for
the Reading Festival. Must be the three knock-out planet
and understand why the English pop press was so re-
late - so much more vibrant and exciting than their
next album will be our live set..... it's gonna be franti-

LANCE
PERSON
ironically
clumsy
runner

STEIN
ANDY
formidable
fiddler &
star-panged
saxman

BILLY
C
FARLOW
horny harpist
sinuous singer

KIRK
KIRCHEN
(the Ann Arbor
tempestuous
Telescaler master

BUR
BUR
fast
ba

Stoney Edwards, who has a good Country hit about once a year".

Ticky: "Out in the area where we live, there is a mixture of hippies and old rural folk - the sons of the old pioneers - and they are much more aligned socially and politically than the interlopers like the San Francisco business men who come up to their country place at the weekends".

Kirchen: "I listen to as much James Burton as I can. I love those old Ricky Nelson records... that was the Cookin' with Drums! Boy, they knock me right out! Scotty Moore is great - particularly those early Elvis

Air, (Lennon's) Seeds & was left to
 finish. have recorded 3 albums - all
 on Paramount (EMI & Sireland).
 "Lime" was the name I used. LOST THE
 "LIME" SPIRIT (27th March 1971)
 Produced by Bob Cohen & the band, mixed
 by Phil Sawyer at Pacific High Resources
 in San Francisco. Tracks: "BACK TO
 TENNESSEE/WINE DOYER STUFF"
 SEEDS & STEMS AGAIN, DADDY'S SONNA
 TREAT YOU RIGHT / FAMILY BILE / HOME
 IN MY HAND / LOST IN THE COZINE /
 MIDNIGHT SHIFT / HOT ROD POLY /
 MAMA'S MAMMITS / 20 FLATT
 ROCK / BEAT ME DADDY & TO THE END.
 "We spent all our advance recording that
 album - because none of us knew what
 the hell we were doing.... everything
 took 5 times as long as it should've...
 by then I kind of professional standards,
 it was a joke....it was a miracle
 we got a record out at all. There
 are some real good songs, but the
 performances aren't always top hot."
 This comment is nothing but over-critical
 to get this album to be a
 classic. Our favorite songs are "Home
 in my hand" (subsequently recorded by the
 magnificent Brinsleys) and "Seeds
 and Stems" - the ultimate in
 suicidal songs of woe, misery & despair!
 "It was an unsway

the two albums:
TEEL & TRUCKERS
28 SEP (72)
I was asked by Dave
Studio
TEEL: 'TRUCK STOP
MAN/ RITIP UP
I SHOULD' BEEN
I TOOK 3 BENNIES
K WONT START
TENNESSEE
WORLD THROUGH A
LYSSY LOU
LELS / TUTT! TUTT!
Considering it was
or only \$5000 dollars.
k too much to cope
ent guidance, we
to compromise, cheap
to compromise, but
too bad', the
recorded in straight
TEEL & the other two
cals and patch-up
of space, a bit
it sounds a bit
! It's great! To
le, 'Mama hated
, a killer song).



"What a fabulous band!!!"

James Burton now. Carl Perkins was
real good, and Clarence White, who I
worshiped since the Kentucky Colonels,
was just terrific. Three country guys
I really like are Don Rich, Roy Nicholls
(who played on the early Merle Haggard albums
along with Burton) and this really phenom-
enal cat called Phil Spector - plays a
Tele. You just gotta hear him - whew!!"

An every schoolboy will tell you, Commander Doby
gave the name of his group - from the poem
- "was the relevant extract:

"As lightning flashed, in stark surprise
The ancient mariner averted his eyes;
but steadfastly parted the curtains of
night
He saw the craft, suspended in flight
..... led by a man of redoubtable size,
the lost planet airmen had straddled
the skies."

This chart is dedicated to Ed Ward, who helped
turn a shambling bar band into a living
legend, and to the porter at the Clifford
Court Hotel who loved his guests and told me,
almost with tears in his eyes, how polite and
courteous they were when we introduced them
to his wife and I. I have "bought" them
from him. I have "bought" them from him.



of shoes & sticks & donald nix

Now this here's the story 'bout the Rock Island Line . . . no, that's not true at all, because it's actually a story about a legendary figure, a rock'n'roll hero, a man whose name you'll probably know, but won't perhaps be able to place very well. It's Don Nix, and after reading this, perhaps you'll have an idea of his importance, which, in its way, I think is as great as that of say Al Kooper or James Burton. I met Don at very short notice—Martin Lewis, Transatlantic's man of letters, provided me with a recorder, a cassette and so on, at about one hour's warning, and although I was a bit dubious at first, I'm very glad, in terms of benefit to my rock'n'roll education, that I went, not least because Don Nix is one of the very nicest cats it's ever been my privilege to meet. Fortunately, he seemed to reciprocate the feeling, particularly when I quoted him the catalogue number of his Elektra albums, which impressed him, so I've been subsequently told. There may be a few surprises in what you're going to read, so adjust your bum, and off we'll toddle.

beginning

Always a good place to start, so that's what we'll do. It seems that Don was born in Memphis on September 27th, 1942, which makes him one of the few people in the world older than me. His mother was a Cherokee Indian, his father presumably not. He collects items from the American Civil War, which presumably accounts for the fact that he is rarely, if ever, seen without his brown suede hat, which reminds me, I think, of General Custer or somebody of that ilk. Sure enough, when we talked he was wearing it, and I don't recall ever seeing him without his trusty headpiece in any picture. To close this rather silly subject, one must, I suppose, mention the possibility that he was born with it. If his current record company, Stax, were a bit more forthcoming perhaps I might be able to tell you more, but they don't seem terribly interested in doing too much as far as England goes, despite the efforts of my fellow 'Carats' compiler, Malcolm Jones.

While he was at school, Don sang in the church choir, and this is where I'm presumably supposed to say that his later excursions into the hot gospelling sounds typified by Leon and Delaney and Bonnie were born. Much more to the point, Don was an early member of that exclusive club of which I'm certainly a member and maybe so are many of you, which is the tranny under the bedclothes society. Apparently there was a local disc jockey called Dewey Phillips, who has since unfortunately gone to the big transmitter in the sky, who was very much into Slim Harpo and Little Walter, which gents were of course somewhat of a minority interest in the days we're talking about, the mid-fifties. Dewey did something else which seems to put him right up there with the fabulous Alan Freed,



which was to be the first DJ anywhere to play an Elvis record, Elvis being a local hopeful at the time. 'He had a show called "Red Hot and Blue", and the way he talked, he was like Memphis' answer to Lenny Bruce.'

Don went to a pretty groovy school, evidenced by the fact that other pupils included Donald 'Duck' Dunn and a useful young lad called Steve Cropper. Now, I thought, what about Booker T. (Jones), Al Jackson and Lewis Steinberg, the other members of the MGs (which stands, in case you didn't know, for Memphis Group). 'They weren't in the first Mar-Keys. Booker T. came along about a year later. The first organ player was a guy named Jerry Lee Smith. I haven't seen him since—I think he found religion, and is going around preaching.' Ah, so it was Steve Cropper, Duck Dunn, Lewis Steinberg and Jerry Lee Smith, right? 'Well, Lewis and Duck kind of split it, because they were both bass players. One would work some of the time, the other the rest, but Duck finally took over. Al Jackson and Jerry Lee Smith before Booker. Even before Al Jackson, there was a guy named Terry Johnson. See, it was a high school band to start with, and the black members came later, maybe a year later.'

It's difficult to imagine a name more incongruous than Jerry Lee Smith, coming, as it does, in the same category as Wee Willie Zerkowitz or Praise-him-alley-works-of-the-Lord Pruin, a character in a book I once read. Still, it shows my incomplete grasp of the situation vis-a-vis the Mar-Keys, because I must admit that I thought Lewis Steinberg was the drummer. Be that as it may, in 1961 the Mar-Keys made one of the all-time classic instrumentals, a quite brilliant piece called 'Last Night', as well as an only slightly less good one called 'Philly Dog', among a number of other discotheque goodies, mostly, it should be said, of a certain obscurity as far as England goes. 'I played in the Stax band in the early years, backing Sam and Dave, Eddie Floyd and so on. I was on some Otis Redding records too.' He neglects to mention many of the classics he was blowing baritone sax on, like 'In The Midnight Hour' by Wilson Pickett, but I suppose it's fair to say that all Don's work with the Mar-Keys was done quite a few years ago, and time has a way of eroding even the most well-intentioned of memories. However, there was some more to say.

'We were touring and making records, just going on the road when we could, and then we'd come back to the studio. They'd tell us that there was a Rufus Thomas session, so we'd come back to do that, then back out on the road. Just four years full time doing something, sixty-one to sixty-five. Eventually the Mar-Keys broke up, because everyone was so tired of the road. The recording Mar-Keys carried on, but it was a different personnel, and they couldn't go out on the road, because I think we'd played every town in America, so there was no point. I came on the Stax English tour, with Otis Redding, Sam and Dave and

Eddie Floyd, but after that, it fell apart, everyone getting married and their wives not wanting them to go on the road. We were away for four or five months at a time, on those Dick Clark Caravan Star buses. I've still got some of those posters, with Jerry Butler and the Drifters. Most times, we were the only white act on the bill, because our records came out in the soul vein. In fact, we were the first white act to play the Regal Theatre, Chicago. We had a very black sound, and everybody thought we were black, and then they opened the curtains, and everybody would be really surprised. The Regal's like the Apollo—you do a week there, with three shows a day, and every time the curtains opened, people would really stare—"they're white!"'

As I've said, I was fairly partial to the Mar-Keys in those days of 'Sock It To 'Em, J.B.' (Parts 1 and 2) by Rex Garvin and the Mighty Cravers on Atlantic and 'You Better Believe It Baby' by Joe Tex, so I asked for a little more detail on the personnel, apart from the hits, I knew that the rhythm section was Booker T. Jones (organ), Steve Cropper (guitar), Duck Dunn (bass) and Al Jackson (drums), and that Don himself was one of the horn players. 'The studio band stayed together, and in fact it's now reforming after I don't know how many years. The horn section now is Wayne Jackson, Andrew Love, James Mitchell, Bowlegs Miller, and sometimes an extra one as well. But Wayne and Andrew are the main ones—Wayne in fact was there with us at the beginning, and the others were Packy Axton, Charles Axton, whose mother owned part of Stax, and me. I played baritone, Wayne played trumpet, and Packy played tenor. Now it's Andrew and Wayne, and it depends how many horns they need, whether they get Bowlegs Miller on trombone. They've got another guitar player and piano player now, who are really good.'

I knew that Booker T., now happily married to Rita Coolidge's sister, Priscilla, was now making very different records from the super rhythm of the MGs, but I didn't know about Steve Cropper. 'Steve's got his own studio, but he's living in California right now, working with Feliciano in his studio.' I expressed my opinion that was somewhat wasteful as far as Cropper goes. 'I'm glad you said it first—it's crazy.'

And the new members, replacements for Cropper and Jones? 'They've still got Duck and Al, and a new guitar player, and an organ player who's better than Booker, I think. His name is Carson Witsett, from Malaco in Jackson, Mississippi, who did all those records like 'Mr Big Stuff' by Jean Knight. Bobby Manuel is the guitarist who took Steve's place, and he's very good too. He's from Memphis, and he was an engineer at the time. He's always been a guitarist, but he couldn't get work, so he started as an engineer, then did some producing, and now he's playing. They started about three months ago—they got Carson, Duck signed a new contract with Stax, and they've got him for another seven years, and they got Al back from

being with Al Green and those people. They're back in the studio now, so I think some good things are going to come out soon.'

Right, I think it's time to provide a few illustrations in the form of possible members of your record collection, or some things which might make interesting additions which are relevant to what's being discussed. Let's start with Dewey Phillips, who, as far as I know is not represented on record. However, he was obviously a disc jockey in the heroic mould demonstrated by so few today, with the notable exception of Rosko, who at least tries, if he doesn't always succeed, in being the unifying aspect of a programme devoted to the glories of rock'n'roll. My early hero in the field was the man I still consider to be the greatest, Alan Freed. There are several examples of his brilliance, but my fave rave is 'Alan Freed's Memory Lane' originally issued on End Records, no. LP314, and more recently released in the States on Roulette R42041. The music is a familiar mixture of the beautiful vocal groups of the era, like the Crests, the Rays, the Five Satins and so on, and it's all linked with that voice that seems so unreal, so unnatural, but is so perfectly in context. Unfortunately, there's little chance of it being put out over here for the very good reason that England is less good than our transatlantic counterparts in that skilful art of persuading several rival record companies to lend their artists to compilation albums. The same fate apparently is likely to befall a more recent source of pleasure to me, the 'Cruisin' series on Increase Records, where a disc jockey who made his mark in a particular year presents a show on record complete with jingles, recreating what he did on some American station. There's a 'Cruisin' for every year from 1955 to 1963, but it's a bit steep to buy them all at once due to the prices of imports which I suppose we're all suffering from, so I'd like to suggest just a couple to whet your appetites, the years belonging to Joe Niagara (1957) and Arnie 'Woo Woo' Ginsberg (1961). Rewarding listening, indeed.

Then we get to the MGs, and the many many albums they made. I've got six, and although that's by no means a comprehensive collection, I find them a very pleasant occasional change, although I know several people who think that they were the greatest instrumental soul group ever. I can particularly recommend their first album, 'Green Onions' which may or may not be available at the moment due to the highly complicated arrangement which was made when Atlantic first took over Stax, and then let them go independent again, retaining an interest in much of the material, predictably the best stuff, including Otis Redding, Eddie Floyd and Booker T. and the MGs. That's my only relic of the MGs vintage 1962, but I also have later albums like 'Doin' Our Thing', 'The Booker T. Set', 'Melting Pot', 'Greatest Hits' (which isn't, containing none of the early goodies) and perhaps best of all, 'McLemore Avenue' which is the MGs' version of the Beatles' 'Abbey Road', complete with sleeve photo in a

similar vein. The title refers to where the MGs' album was recorded. I don't think that records by Booker T. and the MGs will ever be a source of great excitement to me, but they are by no means bad records, and the sort of thing that it's quite easy to fall in love with if you're into that sort of languid laid back soul which is usually composed of smart cover versions of other people's songs. Just before we leave the subject, there was a Christmas album by the group, but I don't believe that it's been released here. A single came from it, one side of which was 'Winter Wonderland', and when I purveyed my wares as the most amateur disco operator in the world, it was always a pleasure for me to be able to play it, even if it was often the motivation behind a number of complaining fans of 'White Christmas' demanding their money back.

Steve Cropper was the first of the group to make a record on his own, although I don't believe he had left the band when 'With A Little Help From My Friends' was released in 1969 on Stax. Again, not bad, and one of the engineers was Bobby Manuel. Booker T., as we've said got married and left for California with his Gypsy Queen, Priscilla Coolidge. So far, two albums have been released to my knowledge, on Sussex, which is handled by A&M here, the first being a Priscilla album called 'Gypsy Queen' and the second a double entitled 'Booker T. and Priscilla', both additionally featuring a lot of the L.A. session stars like Keltner, Gordon, Ethridge and Jesse Davis. Fair, without being milestones or anything. Also, the Joneses played on Rita Coolidge's first album, which sure wasn't her best, and this Dylan soundtrack thing which I haven't yet heard, but which I gather isn't Bobby's best either.

Of course, the Mar-Keys were what Don was involved in at the time, but it's somewhat difficult to find out which big hits they provided the backing for. I reckon that a good many of the Atlantic soul smashes of the mid-sixties were the responsibility instrumentally of the Mar-Keys, but which? I have one solo album by the Mar-Keys, called 'The Great Memphis Sound' which has 'Philly Dog' plus mostly covers of eg 'Cleo's Back', and a compilation album called 'Solid Gold Stax' which contains, oddly enough, four Sun tracks including Jerry Lee, Carl Mann etc, as well as 'Grab This Thing' by the Mar-Keys. I don't seem to have an album with 'Last Night' on, which is a drag, as my single is beginning to wear out, and it's among the best of what I've mentioned above.

Just to finish off the section, you can hear Carson Witsett playing his organ on 'Learn How To Fall', which is on 'There Goes Rhymin' Simon' by Paul of the same clan as Carly. End of the first phase.

going to california

'I moved out to California in 1965, and lived there for two or three years, but I would come back to Memphis every few months, and keep in contact, because I still love that Memphis music scene. Stax hadn't changed at all, except that it was getting bigger, more people; but it was still like a family thing, you know.'

You probably know who Don went to stay with in California—I also get the impression that Don's a little sick of talking about his one time host. Who was it? Leon Russell. 'I met Leon in the early sixties, before he was working for Spector, in Oklahoma, before he went to California. We were touring as the Mar-Keys after 'Last Night' came out, and when we got to Tulsa, we met Carl Radle, Leon, J.J. Cale and all the Tulsa people. Cale people read on, because there's some good stuff coming in a later chapter. It's a little vague as to what Don was actually doing while living with Leon Russell, but what was said follows.

'I was learning a lot. At first, Leon was playing a lot of sessions, playing and arranging. He was playing piano on everybody's sessions, all day long sessions, and I would go along to the studio and watch. The thing at Stax had been kind of a joint production thing, where everybody would join in and do the records, because there were no producers on those early records, but I thought that I'd like to get into production work. I knew what to do, but I didn't know what not to do, so you learn by watching, saying "Well, I wouldn't do that!" That's how I learnt, although I don't really know whether I've learned yet or not. Every time I go into the studio, I learn something new, and I don't think you can ever know everything about it. The only person that knows it all is Leon—well, he told me he did.'

Just sitting around idling in the California sun, you might think. But that's not quite true, it seems. 'I was never on the Phil Spector records with Leon. I had nothing to do with them apart from

watching. I wasn't really doing anything musical at the time, except that I went back to Memphis occasionally to play on some things, and do a few small gigs. I played in L.A. in bars and at barbecues, with Carl Radle and those people. We used to play the L.A. bar circuit to make a bit of money. We were all living at Leon's house, saved up and bought a big house, and there were ten of us living there at one time, the band he's got now, plus a few others.'

You just have to be aware of the sort of records that were emerging at this time. Phil Spector was at the peak (so far) of his creative genius, and with musicians like Glen Campbell, Billy Strange, Nino Tempo and Carol Kaye on guitar, Steve Douglas leading a vast team of saxophonists, Sonny Bono and Jack Nitzsche on percussion, and the well known Mr Russell on piano, some wonderful music was purveyed. I'm unfortunately only able to boast two Spector albums from that period, or to be more precise, from a slightly earlier period, both being 1963 releases on the London label. Both are as good as any diehard Spector fan would ever swear by, and I'm really rather brought down that there has been no news of further Phillies releases on Apple. No doubt the famous Mr Klein has something to do with it, and I suppose I wouldn't be keen on leasing the sounds that changed the world to a bunch who periodically seem to forget that there is such a magazine as ZigZag positively dedicated to good music, while supporting the Record Mirror and other journalistic disasters. End of gripe, and all will be forgiven if somebody gets off their arse and does something about it. While still on Spector, there are a couple of things pre-Beatles which you can get, which are well worthwhile, and all are on budget type releases as far as I'm aware. Two are famous and one obscure, the latter being an album by Checkmates Ltd on A&M called 'Love Is All I Have To Give', which features one side of sheer dynamite as good to my mind as the other side is bad. 'Black Pearl' and 'Proud Mary' are alone worth the price. Then there's the 'River Deep, Mountain High' album, which is certainly on A&M's Mayfair label, and has about five or so Spector tracks, including 'A Love Like Yours (Don't Come Knock-, Knock-, Knocking)' which is quite droolworthy. As I'm limping through this, there's a double cheapie being organised by MCM-Polydor of the Righteous Brothers, which is equally essential. Nobody anywhere should be without 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'', which is quite simply one of the most unbelievably brilliant records ever made, beating anything ever produced by any group coming from Liverpool, San Francisco or London. Period.

Spector plug over, and the next object is the Asylum Choir, an oddly named duo consisting of Leon Russell and Marc Benno. Was Don involved at all? 'Although I wasn't in the Asylum Choir, I was there at the time they were cutting the records. It started out more as some-

thing to do than anything else, because Leon had just built his studio at his house, and we just cut anything. Even the one that has recently come out was cut in '68 or '69. The second one was just the same tapes, but released a lot later. I thought that the first Asylum Choir LP was a hit album, because it was so ahead of its time. The second one wasn't so good, just kind of out-takes from the first one.'

I just listened right through both albums, and I hope my thoughts are worth recording. . . . The first album was released in England in 1968 and re-pushed when Leon Russell became a name. I believe it was recorded for Smash, the men responsible for removing the balls from Jerry Lee Lewis, but equally who made some good records with Sir Douglas, and as a result, the label here was Mercury. In true Phonogram style, there is no information on the sleeve as to anything except the song titles, and the warning as to unauthorised public performance and a blunt stylus. Take a bow, Phono, you might have sold one or two if you'd put Leon's name on the sleeve, but one must presume that in that wonderfully British and unique way, you've decided to economise on the nice American fold out sleeve with all that boring old writing on it that nobody except mindless cretins reads, and just put a photo of the Choir on the front and back. (Hey, Charlie, I thought you said this was a choir? This picture's only got two people in it—looks like the choirmaster and his son. Or is it his mother? No, she wouldn't have a beard. But if it's some choral society from some nut-house, I suppose she should have a beard. Hey, it's not supposed to be a comedy record, is it? Like that one they have on 'Desert Island Discs' with that terrible woman who paid to have records made because she had such a terrible voice. A nutty choir that can't keep in tune! Hey, but that's not in very good taste. I must tell Mr Wallet that we shouldn't make these records that laugh at infirmity, because we get all those sincere people from ZigZag calling and complaining. Why, one guy phoned and complained when we put all the prices up by ten bob on those Sun albums after a couple of them had got into the charts. Called me a capitalist pig, he did. Said I should be replaced by a machine, a bloody speaking weighing machine.)

No, Phonogram, I'm kidding, because you're not the only ones to commit the unforgivable in my eyes. Just think about this—when some guy designed the sleeve, he knew what information needed to go on it, and he knew how much space, ie how many surfaces, could contain that information. Probably the majority of gatefold sleeves have the credits inside, so when you decide to save the money, and don't forget that there's usually no discrimination on price as regards single or double sleeves, at least put in an insert. Would you buy an iron lung without the instruction booklet, or a car without a key?

Having just wasted a fair amount of

time, paper and ribbon on an errand which was a lost cause before it started, let's get down to the Asylum Choir, or 'Look Inside . . .' as the first album is called. Well, I'd say as a first thought that it's an album made for, by, with and from extremely stoned people. Don's remarks about it being 'something to do' certainly ring true—it's perhaps the most self-indulgent record ever made, but that doesn't mean that it isn't lotsa fun at times. It's very well recorded in well balanced stereo, with some good songs and the spectre of Spector (far out, that just happened!) looking over Leon's shoulder (what about 'rustling behind Russell'? OK, forget it) with a brass section and an overdubbed choir in his pocket. Trouble was, he didn't bring a guitarist, and Leon has demonstrated more than once right here in England that the only way he can shine as a guitar man is on stage, turned up to twice the volume of the rest of the band, with a big white spotlight on his white suit and the rest of the place in darkness. It works a dream on stage, but not, I'm afraid, on record, if indeed it is Leon playing. If not, what I've just said is irrelevant, but I still think it.

On the record, there's at least one fantastic track called 'Ice Star Three' and several other really fine efforts. I can quite understand the temptations involved in making an album in limitless time in a well equipped studio with some Elektra Sound Effects Records and a desire to produce a demo which would change the face of record production, and the lads haven't missed succumbing once. But, and a very big but, I really think it's a great record, and I can't stop playing it at the moment. Sure, you can see in retrospect where they went off the rails, but it doesn't matter, because it is generally enjoyable like a home grown vegetable, fresh and untainted with the chemical manure that makes big, tasteless hulks out of potatoes, and big tasteless hulks out of enjoyable innovative musicians. Really, if you haven't heard it, it's in the same sort of class as Steve Miller's 'Sailor' and by that I don't mean 'File under Popular; Pop Groups', and you definitely ought to check it out if it's still available. If it isn't, you'll have to wait until Leon's a superstar again, because they'll certainly re-release it if anybody working there knows anything about it at all.

All right, gripes over for tonight, but it really is one you should endeavour to hear, which is maybe more than I can say for the second album Don talks about, which came out here in 1972, I think, on A&M, who license Shelter Records, Leon's company, for England. It was called 'Asylum Choir II', and at least they had the sense to note that it was in fact Leon Russell and Marc Benno. Unfortunately, it's a great deal more straightforward as a record too, and there's practically none of the effects used, although I did detect a sleigh-bell or two on 'Down On The Base'. I'm not totally convinced that the whole thing was done at the same time as the first one, because on the last

three tracks, there doesn't seem to be much Benno at all. In fact, they sound like untypical Russell songs, which maybe didn't fit the 'space captain' image. Also, they were written by Leon alone, whereas much of the rest was jointly composed by Benno. Aren't I inquisitive? Basically, it's a very average sort of record compared to the first one, although there's an interesting bit of documentary where (presumably) Leon is discussing with Rita Coolidge which of two possible introductions to 'Delta Lady' she would prefer. Hear history being made, folks! I don't feel that there's too much necessity to go into Leon's subsequent records, because you should all have at least one, probably two or three. It's fair to say that his new triple album 'Leon Live' is not so good, particularly if you saw the band live at the peak of their creative graph, when Pete and Carole, Nicky and I boogied around the Albert Hall a couple of years ago, or at least some of us did. I think I've also heard a shoehorn (nudge, nudge, know what I mean?) which puts poor old Leon's triple album in the shade. Get back on the rails, because we need you!

Just to tie up the ends, I'm not too familiar with Marc Benno's subsequent work, although I believe that he's made several albums for A&M. If you're interested, I suggest that you contact Jerry Gilbert at 'Sounds', who has led me to believe that he's somewhat of an admirer.

delaney and bonnie

I suppose it's logical that where Leon Russell has been mentioned, the Bramletts should make an appearance, but in this case, it's doubly logical, because Don Nix was involved with D&B to a great extent in their early days. I knew Delaney in Tupelo, Mississippi. He used to live in Memphis, but then he moved to L.A. I was with him on the night he met Bonnie and she was singing with a band. He said 'I'm going to marry her,' and two weeks later, he did. Leon cut some records for a guy named Phil Scaff, in-

dependence Records. He was at Liberty, and started his own label, and they put out two or three things on Delaney and Bonnie, but they didn't do anything. This was Scaff's own label, although he was the vice-president of Liberty as well.'

One must presume that the recordings referred to can be heard by the masochistic on 'Genesis', a budget album of Delaney and Bonnie released on London here in 1971. Most of it is Delaney on his own, but there's three D&B tracks, each one, to my mind, vieing with the rest for a nausea award. A couple of poor Presley imitations, and a very impressive Roy Orbison take-off on 'Tomorrow Never Comes', that's if you're a fan of the Big O's 'Crying' where he possibly wins the prize for the flattest high note ever recorded. A record, it's fair to say, for enthusiasts only, and one which I play only when I want to get rid of people fast. By the way, it says that it was licensed from GNP Crescendo, so maybe they took over Independence Records.

'Then I took them to Memphis, and I guess that's where my production thing started on my own. I took them down to Stax, and they immediately signed them, because they'd never heard white people sing like that. We cut that album, and I moved back to Memphis about that time. The Elektra album on Delaney and Bonnie came out first, but the Stax record was made earlier, although I've no idea why they kept it. I don't know why Jim Stewart did that—they released a single, it didn't do anything, so he just kinda said "Well, I don't know whether I should release the album." Then the Elektra LP came out. I wasn't on it, because, although those were the people I'd been living with in L.A., I'd gone back to Memphis by that time. I knew Delaney and Bonnie, then I lived with the people who were their band, then I left, and took them with me when I left, but they went back. They came to Memphis for about six months, and did the album, and in fact, Leon did too. On the Stax album, Leon was on some of the tracks, the rest were Booker T. and the MGs and Wayne and the Horns. The usual Stax band, in fact, but with Delaney and Bonnie in front. I think that was the last thing Booker did before he left Stax. We've still got some stuff in the can, four or five songs, and I wanted to release them some time ago. I don't know why they didn't, and I don't suppose now they ever will. There's one song on their 'Motel Shot' album, 'Long Road Ahead' and we got a great cut on that. I've been thinking about re-releasing the album, because it was kind of ahead, more primitive, than some of their other albums, more them, more alive.'

Fortified with a fresh can of Newcastle Brown, brain damage to follow, I feel almost equal to discussing the works of the Bramletts, who, if nothing else, are extremely prolific. Don Nix and 'Duck' Dunn produced the first album for Stax, 'Home' in 1968, which you've just read about. It didn't come out here until 1971, but that shouldn't deter potential purchasers, because I think that it's a

Carl Radle (isn't that a daft photo)



very fine album, as good as their more celebrated later work. You could pick up particularly on 'Piece Of My Heart', which is done very tastefully, if with a little less histrionics than in the Big Brother version, and closer to the original by Erma Franklin, Aretha's sister, which was on Bert Berns' Bang Records, also makers of the Van Morrison 'Blowing Your Mind' album. 'Piece Of My Heart' seems to be one of those songs that will transcend any version, but Bonnie's rendition isn't about to let anybody down.

Good definitely, and perhaps a strong contender for a slot on your shelf, if you can still get it. Next, of course, the famous Elektra album, which reportedly enjoyed abysmal sales in England, despite being just about the first record to be advertised on tube stations. This was also probably the first time that the names of Bobby Whitlock, Bobby Keys, Jim Price, Carl Radle, Jim Keltner, Jerry McGee and Rita Coolidge were noticed as being on a record, and there's a lovely 'togetherness' photo of Leon and Rita on the back. Also, the front cover photo of D&B with their offspring is in sharp contrast to more recent happenings in the Bramlett camp. Even so, 'Accept No Substitute' is probably the best known and best loved Delaney and Bonnie album, and it certainly has some great stuff, including 'Get Ourselves Together' which is nearly one of the great rock'n'roll exclamations, 'Someday', and 'When The Battle Is Over'. Undoubtedly, a record you should have, and one which stands up very well four years later, now.

There's a short story to tell here. Most of you are bored to tears with my endless chat about Elektra, but this time, a good story came out. Jac Holzman, friend of ZigZag and ex-President of Elektra, was visiting Europe, when he was awoken in the middle of the night by a phone call from Delaney, who told him that a relative of the Bramletts, who lived in an obscure town, was unable to get the album, and what was J.H. going to do about it? Jac, not a man to be impressed by such suggestions, immediately released them from their contract, and that's why Elektra only made one album with a potential hit act. From there, they went to Atlantic, and Jerry Wexler became the man most likely to have a big selling Delaney and Bonnie album, starting with 'Delaney and Bonnie On Tour With Eric Clapton', an interesting documentary album of their incredibly successful European tour of late '69, the record being released in early 1970. There's no Leon Russell on this one, nor Jerry McGee, who had gone to join the Ventures, but you do get Clapton and Dave Mason. At the time the humble ZigZag was of insufficient importance to be offered tickets for the tour, so I'm afraid that no first hand account is available, although every report of the concerts was totally ecstatic. The album in question is quite good, without matching up to the earlier studio albums, and was recently put out on Atlantic's budget label with a sleeve note by yours truly.

Following on were a couple of other Atlantic albums, 'To Bonnie From Delaney' (1970) and 'Motel Shot' (1971). The first is interesting not least because of the people who play on it, and they're not just your average session men. Would you believe Little Richard, Duane Allman and King Curtis? That's apart from various Memphis Horns, Dixie Flyers and so on. Again, not a record to pass by too easily. The other one, O trivia lovers, was going to come out on Elektra, and its number was going to be EKS74062, a number which was eventually used for a Tom

Rush compilation called 'Classic Rush'. Presumably because of the hassles already described, it was donated to Atlantic. The Elektra press release gives some data on the meaning of the title. 'They're hopping across country visiting (radio) stations and people and doing what they call their "motel shot"'. The motel shot originated on the road in the little cell-like rooms you have to live with between jobs. It began as a sort of jam, lots of harmonies, interchanged shouts and vocal lines, and a few acoustic instruments.'

It all sounds rather more appealing than what actually made it into the sleeve, as far as I'm concerned, and despite the all star cast, including Gram Parsons, Dave Mason, Duane Allman, Leon Russell, John Hartford and the rest, the only thing that I'm likely to remember it for is the original version of 'Never Ending Song Of Love', later immortalised, if that's the word, by the New Seekers. And that was about the lot on Atlantic, save for a couple of tracks which will be dealt with later. A footnote to the Atlantic albums—the live on tour thing originally had as its front cover a pair of feet sticking out of the window of a Rolls Royce, and those feet were at one time said to belong to Bob Dylan. Would you care to conform or deny that, Bobby, because I'm sure A.J. Weberman would be most interested?

Then for reasons which the laws of libel prevent me describing, Delaney and Bonnie were on Columbia or CBS, for Anglophiles. The first album, released in 1972, was called 'D & B Together', perhaps the most inappropriate title the world will ever know. It's a decidedly patchy collection, boasting among its clinkers two tracks made for Atlantic, but for some reason never on that company's albums, 'Comin' Home' and 'Groupie (Superstar)'. Both are quite excellent, featuring E. Clapton. 'Comin' Home' was on the 'On Tour' album, but the studio version is far superior. It's interesting to note that Delaney Bramlett has provided huge sellers for such as the New Seekers and the Carpenters, isn't it? There's another single I've just remembered, on Atlantic actually, called 'Teasin'', and it's performed on the 'History of Eric Clapton' album. Sorry, very back on course.

The next thing was a compilation album on Atlantic called, predictably enough, 'The Best Of Delaney and Bonnie', featuring bits from the three Atlantic and one Elektra albums. OK, but only if you don't have any of the others. Now, after that lengthy aside, back to Don Nix.

'There's a great thing I read. They say that Columbia got a divorce. They both cut albums, and Columbia got two albums for the price of six. Have you heard Delaney's album on Columbia? It's just not him. He's amazing, Delaney is, a really good singer.'

I suggested that perhaps the man's talent was more in the organisational line, similar to that of John Mayall, who always surrounds himself with good musicians.

'No, Mayall's a better organiser, Delaney

doesn't have much patience. You've got to be a band leader to handle these people. In the end, he got to giving bad vibes to everyone around him, and he couldn't keep a band. I don't know what got into him—he was one of the most easy-going guys I've ever met before all that happened, and we were great friends. I hate to see what's happened to him. I still love him, but it's going off a bit.'

After that, you may understand why I haven't as yet found the time to give either Delaney or Bonnie's solo albums the priority playing they could once have expected. However, I'll try and remember to give them a spin soon and let you know in some future treatise.

production

From this point on, there are less interruptions, and those of you who are more interested in Don than all these others may find it a bit more stimulating. Carry on, Don.

'When I got back to Memphis, we did the Delaney and Bonnie album, and they said "Oh, that's pretty good". Then I did some work with Charlie Musselwhite, an album on him for Paramount. He was great, and I did that, and some other things. At that time, Stax went with Governor Weston in America, which was also Paramount, then it got confused and they bought it back. We went back to joint productions. Then I produced an album by myself, which was "Lovejoy". A bit of explanation. Charlie Musselwhite is probably the only white harp player to come near Paul Butterfield at his best. I don't have his Paramount album that Don refers to, but I do have an excellent one on Vanguard called 'Stone Blues' from 1968. Charlie is now, I believe, on the Arhoolie label, a specialist blues company, whose records are sometimes hard to find, but inevitably worthwhile. 'Lovejoy' is a great 1971 album by Albert King, one of the three great kings of the blues guitar, the others being B.B. and Freddie. Seven of the nine tracks were

composed or part composed by Don Nix, and as I believe that it's Albert King's best album, that's quite an accolade. A very fine album, if you're into well played and produced blues as purveyed by a guitar hero.

Actually, that bits a little out of order. Let's retrace a bit.

'I did a lot of albums, but none of them did anything. I did a group called Stillrock, which was Don Preston, Leon's guitar player.' (NB Not the same Don Preston who was with Zappa and the Turtles, in case you were in any doubt. This Don Preston is a tall blond guitar player, and the ex-Mother is probably the most dubious looking one on the sleeve of 'We're Only In It For The Money', the third reprobate from the right, between Roy Estrada and Jimmy Carl Black.) 'I also did a group called Dallas County, which was a great band. It was a group of guys from Dallas, Texas, who were from Texas State University. It was before Chicago, but it was on the same lines—kinda pop music played with a lot of brass. I produced them, and a guy named Sid Selvidge, who I thought was a good artist. Jac Holzman wanted to buy him, but Stax wouldn't sell, and they wouldn't release it either. He had a single that did quite well in America, and he's an anthropology professor at South Western in Memphis, and he's 47 years old—amazing cat. Worked his way through school, working all the folk joints in St Louis. I did him, and a lot of albums like that, for Stax, but I don't think any of them were released here. They tried to get a pop label going, and I did a group called Paris Parlour and another one called Rowlock. None of them did much outside the Memphis area, although some of them did quite well there. The next thing was Albert, when they let me have someone who was previously known.'

Just for a change, I can't amplify with too many comments. The only example, apart from Albert King, which I have in my collection, is the Stillrock album, which I recently found second-hand, with the legend inscribed on it, in ball point, 'To Stephen from Collette'. I can only say that Stephen must have been very skint or else he's a silly boy, because Collette sounds like a nice lady with good taste, because she's got a nice name, and it's really quite a fine album. I'm not sure quite what I expected, but it surely wasn't a sort of updated Everly Brothers sound crossed with the funkier moments of Bread, which added together make a record that's much to my taste. I shall ring up Malcolm Jones about it tomorrow. As for the others, I don't know. Anybody else heard them?

solo on shelter

'I did my own album in 1971 for Shelter. In fact did it with my own money. I was just doing producing, no playing, but I wasn't doing a lot of anything. I wanted to produce, but there was no one they wanted me to produce.'

So the first Don Nix solo album came about ten years after he'd started. It was called 'In God We Trust', and if you care to order the import, it's on Shelter SHE 8902. I've seen it in a very well known record shop in Cheapside in the City where I perform my daily penance, but I wouldn't recommend that you buy it there because of a rather unpleasant poovey person who works there, who said when wrapping up 'Old Soldiers Never Die' by Heads, Hands and Feet for my mate Rocky, 'No, they go to bed with each other, don't they?' accompanied by a nauseous grin. Sorry, minority groups, I can do without that.

After I explained that to get this record through the normal record company channels, ie through A&M, was akin to doing a four minute mile with one leg on a bed of nails, the good Don was kind enough to agree to send me that album, another of his on Enterprise (Stax), and the second Jim Horn album on Shelter. And he did too, within a week. The first time a man of his stature has actually kept their promise made to this humble journalist. Thanks, Don, and I really appreciate it. As a small token, here's what I think about it. First of all, it has some great backing people, generally the same ones that made Boz Scaggs' Atlantic album such a dream. That's Barry Beckett (keyboards), Roger Hawkins (drums), Eddie Hinton (Guitar), David Hood (bass), plus Larry Rasberry on rhythm guitar, J.A. Spell on fiddle and the amazing Furry Lewis on slide guitar. Don sings above these wonders, with some great backing vocals from Marlin and Jeanie Greene. It's a reasonably sized band, giving everybody enough space to stretch out, and they do. Just about every track has some-

thing very worthwhile on it, and the particular standouts for me were 'Golden Mansions', 'Long Way To Nowhere', 'Amos Burke', which someone said was dedicated to Furry Lewis, and the spiritual type things like 'Will The Circle Be Unbroken', and 'He Never Lived A Day Without Jesus'. In a lot of ways, this out-Russels Leon, because it's done in a much less frenzied manner than much of that more famous man's work, but I think it works much better when you don't have that barrage of boogieing screamers. Visually, such things are very exciting, but on record in your living room, quality is so much more essential. As a quick example, the only track I can listen to at length on the 'Mad Dogs' albums is 'Space Captain', because it's got the benefit of a bit of planning. In fact, Don's 'Golden Mansions' could be 'Space Captain's' brother.

Just before you go out and try to get to listen to some of this record, and you certainly ought to try, a few more words from Don on the problems of being with Shelter, for him at least.

'I signed with Shelter, because I went out to L.A. to sell my album. I saw that Stax hadn't got far with those other white groups, and mine was definitely a white record, so I thought I'd better sell it to someone who'd be able to do something with it. I took it to Leon and said "Who can I sell this to?" and he heard it, and said "Sell it to us." That's when I met Denny Cordell, and they took the album. Subsequently, I discovered I'd have been better off on Stax. The album wasn't released in England, and in America, it wasn't exactly released, it escaped. They didn't have a publicity guy. It got a lot of reviews and everything, but all they seemed to say was "Here's another of Leon Russell's tambourine shaking friends." You know, after Delaney, and all the rest. Every article I've got in my office has got Leon's name first, and I said "If I ever do make it, I'd rather make it on my own", and we sat and talked about me leaving for a long time. That's why I left the label—it got ridiculous. I mean, you wouldn't believe it, just everything was compared to Leon, and I felt really bad, so I left them.'

Before leaving, there was a bit of production to be done, and one which, up to that point, was probably the most acclaimed that Don had been involved in. 'We did Freddie King together, and that was great.' 'We' refers to Don and Leon, and the Freddie King album was his first for Shelter, titled 'Getting Ready' and available, I hope and believe, on A&M here. The big thing about it for Don, apart from the producing angle, was the fact that this was one of the first of the by now very many recordings of Don's famous composition 'Going Down', which is a classic, as evidenced by Martin Hayman's piece on Don in 'Sounds' where twenty-one cover versions are noted, which isn't bad by anyone's standards.

solo on elektra

'I'd only been out in L.A. for about two months, and that's when Cocker had just completed his tour, and was just sitting there getting down. I was living with Denny and Cocker at the time, and I suggested that we go to Muscle Shoals. So we all packed up, and moved down to Muscle Shoals to try and get another album out of him, which didn't happen, although we did get four sides, 'Black Eyed Blues', 'High Time We Went' and a couple more, with Jim Keltner and Chris Stainton. We had a month booked at the studio, and Cocker wouldn't cut because he got into funny moods, so I asked if they'd mind whether I used the time, so that's when we made the Chris Stainton cuts on the Elektra album, which was released a little after that time.'

When Don talks of Joe Cocker returning from his tour, I don't think we're talking about the Mad Dogs exercise, but rather a subsequent American trip, because 'Living By the Days' wasn't released until 1971. In fact, many people tell me that they're extremely fond of this album, and I was too, until I heard the Shelter album, which fairly puts the Elektra record in the shade, I'm afraid, perhaps because I found it a sort of Part Two concept. In fact, many of the tracks are very good, notably 'Olena' with its travel song theme, 'Going Back to Luka' with splendid backing vocals from Jeanie Greene, and the title track with its Barry Melton-ish guitar sound. The personnel is similar to the pervious Nix album, with Beckett, Hood and Hawkins, this time assisted and/or replaced by Chris Stainton, Duck Dunn, Wayne Perkins, Jimmy Johnson, Tippy Armstrong, and Gimmer Nicholson, the latter four all being guitarists. Backing vocals are done by Marlin and Jeanie Green and Wayne Perkins, whom you'll recall as being one third of Smith, Perkins and Smith, makers of a fine album for Island which unfortunately was lost when it was released here. 'Going Back to Luka' was previously

recorded by Albert King on the 'Lovejoy' album, and there's a famous old Hank Williams song, 'I Saw The Light', as well as a track jointly composed by Don and Lonnie Mack, 'Three Angels', which conceivably could be taken as a potential autobiography for Lonnie, of whom more in a minute. Certainly, 'Living By The Days' is not a bad album, but it becomes more of an adjunct after you've heard 'In God We Trust'. The number, for interested parties, is Elektra EKS 74101.

It was actually the first of a trio of albums on Elektra which were publicised jointly, under the heading of:

The Alabama State Troupers

The first of the remaining albums was by Lonnie Mack, and was called 'The Hills of Indiana' (EKS 74102). If you've ever heard anything by Lonnie Mack, you'll know that he's one of the great unknowns, a fast, inventive and tasteful guitar player, whose trademark is a sort of short bleeping noise on the high notes of wondrous intensity, backed up by a soulful voice and a good choice of material. There are four Lonnie Mack albums that I know of, all now on Elektra, although the first one was only bought in 1970 by Elektra from the original company, Fraternity, for whom it was made in 1963. That one's called 'For Collectors Only' and features Lonnie's instrumental version of 'Memphis', which is probably his most famous track, if in my opinion not his best. Then he was 'rediscovered' in 1969 and made 'Glad I'm In The Band', which contains 'Memphis' yet again, in a very similar (if not identical) shape to the original. There's also 'Roberta', which Animals fans might recognise as having been on 'Animal Tracks', although the original version was undoubtedly made elsewhere. I can only really recognise one name on the backing credits, and that's the bass player, Tim Drummond, who is currently, I believe, one of the Stray Gators who may or may not be backing Neil Young as we speak. There's no way I can tell you about Lonnie Mack's music—

if you haven't heard it, there's a treat in store for you, and if you have, I'm fairly sure I'm preaching to the converted. Perhaps I should bring in here the famous quote which I've heard attributed to so many people, but never yet copyrighted, and it goes something like this: 'It's not what Lonnie Mack plays, it's the bits he misses out which make him such a fine guitarist'. Yes indeed.

The third Lonnie Mack album contains my favourite example of the man's art, which is an instrumental called 'Mount Healthy Blues', referring in its title to a recording studio in Mount Healthy, Ohio, where much of 'Whatever's Right' was made. Quite exquisite, with the bleeping at an all-time satellite high. Which brings us right up to 'The Hills Of Indiana', an album of an equally high standard, with even a bit of Don Nix playing baritone sax on 'Asphalt Outlaw Hero' and singing on 'Three Angels', the same song as on his own album, although in a somewhat different treatment. You also get Mickey Newbury's 'She Even Woke Me Up To Say Good bye' and 'Lay It Down', as recently purveyed by the Everly Brothers on their final album 'Pass The Chicken And Listen'. This time the backings are by the Area Code 615 people, at least two of which have their names mis-spelt on the sleeve. Lonnie Mack is one man you should endeavour to listen to. OK?

Now it's over to Don for some more of the story.

'I had produced the Lonnie Mack album, or at least written several of the songs on it. Russ Miller of Elektra called and asked me if I'd help with the album, and I agreed, because I'd always heard a lot about him. So we went up, and wrote some songs, and Elektra decided it would be released along with my album, and one I produced with Jeanie Greene. I love her, and she sang on all my albums. She's on everybody's records—she's been on all the Elvis Presley albums recently, but without her name being credited. She's on 'Suspicious Minds', you know, the chick who sings high. She's on 'Live In Las Vegas'—they didn't pick up the Sweet Inspirations, so they took the tape to Nashville, and she went up there and overdubbed the four harmonies on it. She's an amazing chick, for a white chick.'

Jeanie Greene is credited on a number of very good albums, not least that Boz Scaggs Atlantic thing I'm always mentioning, and I was under the impression that she was married to Marlin Greene, recently a producer for Elektra, and a member of the Beckett/Hawkins/Hood crew. Her solo album, about which Don talks next, was 'Mary Called Jeanie Greene' and it's the next number on from the Lonnie Mack album and Don's album. In case the title made you wonder, there's a religious bias to the record.

'She's not got religion just recently, she's always been that way. She thinks she's Mary Magdalene reincarnated—she really believes it. She and Marlin aren't married any more, and she lives on the river by herself. It came about because, when my album was finished, I wanted to record her, because she sang better on

my record than I did. I decided I had to do an album on her, so we did, and I took Russ Miller down to Muscle Shoals where they lived on the river. It was a strange night—a big thunderstorm came up, then it got really clear, and she said 'Now I'll sing'. But it's not a phoney thing, and if you met her, you'd know that. She started singing the songs she'd written, and it made Russ Miller cry! I'd never seen that before. So he decided to sign her right then. I cut the album, and took it to Holzman, who said 'This is a perfect album'. Of course, it only sold about eight copies, and when that didn't make it, she just lost it, and didn't want to know about making her own albums any more.'

A heavy story. I've replayed the album quite a bit, as part of my research, and it certainly indicates that the lady has an extraordinary voice. Whether or not I should recommend the record, I just don't know, because it comes in a sort of indefinable class. But try and listen if you get the chance, because the story behind it is something which maybe shouldn't be ignored.

'What happened was that all three albums came out together, and the Alabama State Troupers' tour was a sort of promotional exercise. But before we could do the tour, Lonnie backed out because he got religion. I was around when that happened. I was asleep, and he woke me up about six o'clock one morning while we were in Muscle Shoals for a week rehearsing, mostly on his material. He just walked in with his bag and said 'I've got to leave,' and he left, before I could even get awake. But it turned out that we got to take Furry Lewis, so that ends happily, because if I hadn't been able to take Furry, I wouldn't have taken anybody. He completely annihilated every audience we played, and it's too bad that we recorded those particular nights, because one of them was the last night, and it wasn't that good. There's only four songs of his on the album, but some nights they lasted an hour and a half, with just Furry up there by himself, and I think he turned out better than Lonnie might have. Lonnie's heart wasn't really in it, he wasn't very enthusiastic. He was a really good guy, but he didn't want to go on the road as Elektra wanted him to, because he'd been on the road for most of his life. I'd never met him before, and I haven't seen him since he walked out of the room that morning. I called Elektra up, and said 'Look, we've got trouble here,' and they agreed to shut the whole thing down. But I'm glad I didn't let that stop me, because it was probably the best appearance of our lives on that tour. It gave us a chance to go out and play to people who normally wouldn't get a chance to see music, because the admission charge was only a dollar and a half, which doesn't normally happen—the cheapest show is five dollars. Every place was packed, because the people figured they couldn't lose at a dollar and a half. We played to two and a half, some nights three and a half thousand. We took fifteen people out, two drummers, two

keyboards, and a six voice choir and so on. We were even going to come to England with the show, but it was blown out when Lonnie left, because neither Jeanie nor myself had the kind of name that means much here. Furry is great—you just sit and watch him, and you'll never be the same. He doesn't have a penny and that's why he's still playing. He lived with me for a long time, and I guess I'm his only support, although he does gigs occasionally now, about once a month.

'The last time I played live was when the Alabama State Troupers album was cut, the last night of the tour. I'm proud of that record, because it was taken right off the console that they mixed the sound from, with no overdubbing. When I mixed it, I just threw everything in and that was it. A lot of the albums I was on, like the 'Bangla Desh' album, I heard a lot of things on the record that weren't there for the concert. But maybe in that case, there was a need, because there was no time for rehearsals, and a lot of mistakes occurred, which didn't matter at the time, because everyone was screaming and carrying on so that you wouldn't notice it until you listened to the record.'

Let's tie up a few loose ends there, starting with the fact that Don was indeed the leader of the choir in the Bangla Desh concert, and you can see a picture of him (wearing his hat of course) in the booklet that comes with the record box. Then there's the Troupers' album, which was a double, and reasonably enough features several of the tracks from the three albums which inspired the tour. The number of this one is EKS 75022, and if you've enjoyed any of the other things mentioned in this chapter, there's very little doubt that you'll like this one too. Perhaps that's enough on the subject, save to say that next time you're a bit stuck for ideas in the record line, there's a whole heap there that most of your friends won't have, or maybe have even heard of.



Lonnie Mack

Jeanie Greene

production work

'I did Beck Bogert and Apathy. I don't know how I got the job, but I'd sure have liked to get out of it. Beck asked me. I'd known him for some time, although I don't know where I met him, and I just did it on his word, in January. I went out to Chicago—we did it in Chicago and Los Angeles, and I took it to Memphis and mixed it, then gave it to him, and I haven't heard from him since.' But you're still getting your royalty cheques? 'That's the point—I haven't heard from him *any*. The thing about it is that everybody knows Jeff Beck, and not too many people know me, so they say "Well . . ."—Beck can't do anything wrong. It's his management that does it, but he lets it go by, you know. That's exactly what happened—he called and said would I produce his album, and I said sure. Steve Cropper had done the one before, and I went to some of the sessions in Memphis, and they did one of my songs, and Beck seemed like a nice guy. So I went to do the latest album and it was pretty good, except for Bogert and Appice. I didn't like the Vanilla Fudge much, and I don't like them either. Personally, they're just assholes, the only two people I know who are really assholes, and I don't think that about anybody else. I took the album to Memphis and mixed it, then took the sixteen track masters to New York, and the whole time, when I went to Chicago to meet them, I got straddled with "We have no money". So I said that I'd got a credit card, and we got a car and a hotel on my credit card. They wanted to try another studio, so we flew to L.A. on my credit card, we got a car there on my credit card, we got a hotel there on my credit card, and I've never even been paid for that yet. I get up to New York, I give them the master—"Perfect," a lot of hand slapping, that shit, you know, "Great, thank you," then their lawyer comes around, Stephen Weiss, and I asked him if I could get paid. He says, "Wait a minute, do you have a contract?" I said no, and he said "You're fxxxed," and that was it. So I came to England, and I called up Ernest Chapman, Beck's manager, the other guy being Bogert and Appice's manager, and they ain't paying me. I'd like to get at least my expense money out of

them, because it's cost me money to do this album. He said "I'll go along with whatever New York says". I said "Does that mean you're not going to pay me?" and he said "Yes".

'I don't know about here, but the album was number eight when I left the States. It cost me thirteen hundred dollars to cut a top ten album, first one I've had in a long time, and it cost me money to do it. I won't say that about anyone else, but I'll say that because I hope you'll write it. I don't care what people think of me, because those are the people that are giving music a bad name. That comes down to it, because the only thing I've got to work on is my honesty, and I'm not going to cheat anybody. If I produce somebody, I want to do it again, but if I cheat them, I'm sure not going to do it again, and I'm not really in much of a position to cheat anybody. I might pad the expense account, but that's not going to get me anywhere. So those are the guys who really make it bad in the whole music business, you know, that you hear about, those who are like that. And they'll probably send some guys after me to break my leg, but fxxx 'em, they'll have to catch me first, and I can run! Well, that's Jeff Beck.'

Wow. Well, I don't feel too qualified to comment on that, except with the following factual information. On 'Jeff Beck Group', the immediate predecessor to 'Beck, Bogert and Appice', is 'Going Down', written by Don and previously mentioned in the context of Freddie King. On 'Beck, Bogert and Appice' are two tracks written by Don, and he is credited with producing those two and one other. The remix engineer is named as John Fry, who in fact shares equal billing with Don as the remix engineer on the Alabama State Troopers album, and also did the same for Don's latest album, which, inevitably, you'll be hearing about soon. Please draw your own conclusions.

'I just finished a John Mayall album before I came here. That was great, I loved him. I took that one to Memphis and mixed it, then I went to New York for the Newport Jazz Festival. Beck had put Mayall down, and I'd heard that a lot of English people put him down, but I don't know why, because he never says that he's a great player. He's an organiser, he gets good people together and puts them on stage, and entertains, because that's his job. He writes the songs, and they're all right. He said to me "I hope you don't read music, or expect me to, because I can't play, but I'm going to write these songs, and we're going to have a good time, and we'll cut it," and I said "Great," and it was exactly what he said. We stayed at his house in L.A., and he told me not to worry about the songs, because he'd write them in the studio. He said "All I want you to do is tell me if it sounds OK, because I've been producing these albums, and I don't know what they're supposed to sound like". I said that I didn't either, but he told me that I probably knew more than he did. So I just sat in the chair, and

said "That's a good one, John". He asked me to do the next one, and I'm going to, so I guess it's turned out OK. It was strange how it happened, because they just called, and I don't know to this day who told him about me, because I forgot to ask him. They called my house—I was on holiday with my folks, and I took them down to Florida, because my father had never seen the sea, and he's almost sixty years old, so I flew the whole lot, my brother, sister, sister-in-law, down to Florida just to lay up. I came back that night, and the next morning, the phone rang, and a voice said "This is John Mayall". I said "Who is this?" because he didn't have an English accent, and I hung up. Fortunately they called back.

'But I love him, that John Mayall. The Beck thing brought me down, and I did a French group called the Variations between the two, but the whole thing has been downhill this year until I did the Mayall thing, which has rejuvenated everything. I'm glad that happened. Skin Alley are great, too. I mean, I did it as a gig, Stax sent me over to do it, and I didn't want to come, because it's the tourist season, and there's all these crazy Americans about, and crowded planes, which are awful. But I love Skin Alley—they've had time to learn, and I think they've used it well. I don't know about on stage, because I've only seen them play once, but in the studio, they're great, and I really enjoyed it a lot.

'I'm going to do the soundtrack for another "Fritz The Cat" film next week, the second one that they're putting out. It's going to be an album, not full of old tracks like the first one. They just told me a few days before I left, through the lawyers at Stax, and they said "Would you like to do it?" and I said "I don't think I can," and the man said "They'll give you thirty thousand dollars," and I said "I can do it". It'll be pretty interesting to see what happens about that. Then I'm going to do another one with Albert King, and I'll be working at Stax more with artists like Rufus and those people. Klaus Voorman asked me last night if I'd help on his album, because he's going to do one finally. A lot of people have asked him, just on the name, you know, but now he's got what he wants. But how a bass player can pull an album off . . . So I'll go in the fall and do that. I'm doing another Mayall album in November, I think, so this year's been the best one so far. My own album came out on Friday, but I'm not expecting much of it, and I don't think it'll come out in England.'

Deep breath, and a bit more explanation. The Mayall album is in fact a double, and hasn't been released here at the time of writing, although it's expected by the end of the year. The 'Fritz The Cat' film referred to is not, I believe, 'Heavy Traffic', and early reports of the Skin Alley album would seem to indicate that it is a distinct improvement on the wares they have produced before, so we'll have to wait and see about that too. Of Don's solo album, there is more to come, but first, an interlude.

J.J. Cale

This man is somewhat of an enigma. While talking to Don, his name was mentioned, and as I believe that there's quite a few of you out there in ZigZag land who may be interested, I'll take a little time and space out to tell you what was said. The subject came up, and I mentioned that I had an album called 'A Trip Down Sunset Strip' by the Leather Coated Mind, a real 1965 title if ever I heard one.

'You've got that record? That was Roger Tillison and his old lady—the guy who wrote "Rock And Roll Gypsies". That was a strange album, but I know Roger wrote a lot of it. I wish I had a copy, because I did have one, but I lost it. It was a small label he did it for in California, a single guy, just a one man outfit. I have most of those records from back then, heaps that never did anything. In fact, this Roger Tillison did a lot of singles that never even got out of L.A., and didn't get too far out of the studio either, that I've got, but I don't have that one album, it's disappeared. I've got a lot of tape and record archives and photographs that I've kept from 1961 on, up until now, and I still keep them.'

Well, I don't know if Don's memory is failing, but I do have the album, and it doesn't have any mention of Roger Tillison, although John J. Cale gets four songwriting credits, and I think it's his photo on the sleeve. The record was put out here on the fab Fontana label, the American company from which it was leased being Viva, which some of you may know was a label with which Leon Russell was involved in the mid sixties. Another piece of the jigsaw . . . But wait, there's more (and better).

'It was seven months before J.J. Cale's single was a hit. One day, a DJ picked it up, and said "What's this?" put on the record, and it took off. It was the B side, they had to turn it over, because "Magnolia" was the A side. J.J. Cale asked me to go on the road as him. Karstein is playing with him, and Gary Gilmour from the Taj Mahal band, and a guy named Bill Boatman, but he wanted me to go out as him, because he don't want to go on

the road. He's that shy, he just don't want anything to do with it, he just wants to stay home in Oklahoma and just sit there. He asked me to do that, be J.J. Cale. He don't do interviews or anything, like the 'Rolling Stone' thing, where there's a whole page with his picture. The guy wrote a lot of things about him, and the interview went like this. "Do you play many nightclubs in Oklahoma?" "Sometimes." "Is there ever any trouble or fights in there?" "Sometimes." End of interview. And he tried to get his chick one night to put on his hat and coat and go out and have a guitar, and he would stand behind the curtains and sing, while she mimed it out there. That's the truth, he don't want to be no rock'n'roll star.'

There's no answer to that, is there? All I can do is impart a little more info, to the effect that the best version of 'Rock And Roll Gypsies' is by Hearts and Flowers, whose albums were on Capitol, but who also had it as part of the soundtrack to a film named 'Homer', other music in the film being by Cream, Zeppelin, Springfield, Spoonful, Steve Miller etc. A good album if you don't have much on those artists, and it's on Atlantic. Which is the same label that Roger Tillison recorded for, although I haven't heard any of his stuff. Other versions of the 'Gypsies' song that I know of are on Jesse Davis' first LP and Vinegar Joe's second. And finally, on J.J. Cale's second album, you can find his version of good old Don's 'Going Down'.

solo on stax

It's been a long journey, but I hope not an uninteresting one, and here we are at the end, with 'Hoboes, Heroes and Street Corner Clowns', the latest Don Nix album, which, despite his pessimism, should be out here before too long on Stax.

In fact, it's a very good album indeed, to my mind the best Nix product (at least in solo mode) yet. Everything seems to have levelled out, and there's a lot of variety, possibly because the record was made in France, Britain and Muscle Shoals, presumably with three different lots of backing people, although the different personnel are not separated. They include the old firm of Barry Beckett, Roger Hawkins, David Hood and

Eddie Hinton, Wayne Perkins and the two Smith brothers, Jeanie Greene and Claudia Linnear (probably not together), Furry Lewis, of course, Klaus Voorman, Larry Raspberry (spelt that way this time—who is he?), and perhaps a new name to you, Pete Carr, who is responsible for the production on two current favourite albums of mine, by Sailcat and Courtland Pickett, both, predictably, on Elektra.

It's all more evenly paced than the previous albums, starting with a 'standard' sort of song with pleasant string arrangements called 'She's A Friend Of Mine' which precedes a somewhat less remarkable track called 'The Train Don't Stop Here No More', where the old harmonica making engine noises trick is used. A quietish start to the record, but that changes from the first few notes of 'Black Cat Moan', which BBA did. Nix's version seems to have more atmosphere, and, dare I say it, soul. The same goes for the other track which BBA did, 'Sweet Sweet Surrender', where the guitarist (maybe it's Bobby Manuel) sounds more like Beck than Beck himself does on his own record. The Nix guitarist uses the same sort of technique Beck used on 'Morning Dew', with slow wah-wah pedal, and it's a dream. Jeanie Greene sings beautifully at the back, and it's all very impressive. Strange to note that more often than not, even in these superstar days, the writer's version of a song is often far more meaningful than a hit version by a far greater reputation, another example being 'Burning Love' by Dennis Linde, which makes Elvis sound like Engelbert. Nearly every track has more than somewhat to recommend it, and there's a sax player who sounds uncannily like Jim Horn, who raises the temperature whenever he puts reed to lips, on 'Rainy Night In Paris', 'Look What The Years Have Done' and especially 'Miss Eleana', which is the nicest sort of hangover music, a very pleasant sound for the fragile brain, which I had when I played it. Furry makes a brief appearance solo at the start of 'When I Lay My Burden Down', which isn't a million miles from being 'Down By The Riverside', and there's some rumbustious piano playing before they steam into a big knees-up. Not quite so good with the hangover, mind you, but again full of atmosphere. And that's about it—a good one indeed, and if you can't wait for British release, the American catalogue number is Enterprise ENS 1032, although Stax will be the label here, as Enterprise doesn't have its own British logo at the moment. One way or another, it's worth a listen, and for once, I find myself disagreeing with Andrew Lauder, who said he wasn't too keen.

So, the end of a very marathon like journey, which I hope you've enjoyed, and which I would like to think has given you a bit of food for record buying, as well as proving my original point about the importance of Don Nix. His is a name I think you'll be hearing a lot more of before any of us are very much older, and don't forget—you read it here. John Tobler

Adrenalin Rush

Bachman-Turner Overdrive

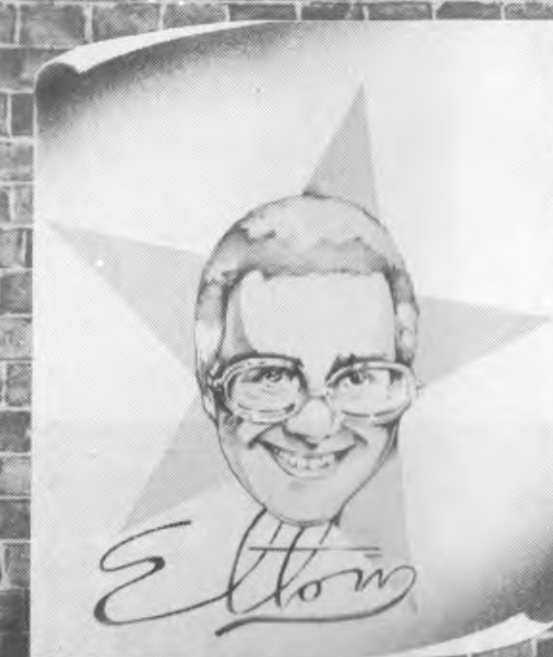
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SPOT ON



It's right that the readers of ZigZag should get a copy of 'Twilight Alehouse' because it's not the usual type of record company hype but something every Genesis follower from the beginning will want in their collection, including Pete Frame. I mention the venerable Frame because indeed it was he many many issues ago (even before he threatened to write a two part study of the group) who realised their worth. (I can report that the second long-awaited part is quickly approaching. Frame was obviously the writer for whom the word Part Work was invented.)

But enough of this frivolity. Over to Peter Gabriel's first floor flat in a dingy part of Notting Hill. His two black cats are out chewing the carefully grown plants in the pots on the balcony as Peter himself pours a liberal helping of the weightwatchers' breakfast Special K into a bowl and brews the tea. It doesn't seem a particularly good moment to talk about 'Twilight Alehouse' but he does, amazingly willingly: 'The riffs on which it was based can be heard on our first album on Decca: "From Genesis To Revelation", as a link between tracks. The think was that always when we came to choose tracks for an album we tended to ignore it because it was old. In fact I can assure you that it won't ever go on

any album. So this is an original.

'We recorded it in Island Studios in Basing Street. It was recorded in the day time with Bob Potter engineering, and mixed at 4am during the same session with John Burns who co-produced. It was a song about an alcoholic. It's a bit simpler than a lot of things we do. John Peel said it was the nicest thing he had heard from us, which is either a reflection on him or us. In the end we all got a bit bored by it, by that I mean the band as a whole got tired of playing it. To be truthful we wouldn't write anything like that these days. But I think it's got a bit of a feel and I like it.'

So anyway that is how 'Twilight Alehouse' came about and while we're still on filling in the Genesis history perhaps we should write a note about the delicately designed sleeve on the latest album. Or let Peter Gabriel himself do it because he was largely behind it: "It was drawn by Betty Swanwick, a very fine lady whose paintings we saw at an exhibition and thought "that's nice". She lived down in the country at Wadhurst at the time, although she's moved now to Greenwich. She's a lady of about 50-ish and going down to meet her at first was like entering the world of Lewis Carroll. For instance she has a parrot and when she hears her parrot laugh she will also burst into laughter even while you're talking to her. They had a chorus going between each other. It all happened in the middle of a conversation and then gradually you get into the way of things. Also she suddenly asked me to change seats while we were talking. The song "I Know What I Like" was written around her painting. At first she was not sure that she would wish to paint something for a pop group, but after she'd heard some of our music she agreed. This is the first song we've written like this, in that the subject was presented to us first, but I think it's worked out quite well.'

Michael

The article that I wrote last month has been printed as part of our programme for the Family farewell tour and I'm sorry if any readers bought ZigZag and also the programme, and were annoyed that so much had been duplicated. Selling it has meant going to all the gigs, setting up a little table, and standing there for about four hours giving people their change, and to all the people who offered their best wishes for ZigZag's future etc many thanks. I think that it was pretty good value for two bob, compared to the usual rubbish that sells for anything up to three times that and has the customary mixture of boring photos, and awful, uninformative writing. Perhaps the most heartening aspect of the endeavour was to see the look of disbelief on people's faces when they discovered the price. The amount of wariness they betrayed prior to that moment, was the most compelling comment on the efforts of the normal vendors. The other rewarding aspect of it was to encounter people who had never heard of ZigZag, and have them tell me that they thought it was a great idea to present the history of the band in the form of family trees! One man who was a little peeved was the well known practitioner of mike stand pyrotechnics, Roger Chapman. As we sipped a pint in Manchester before the gig, his eyes fell upon the figure of 180,000 sales for Bandstand, and there came forth a laugh of the utmost irony. Now Family feel very strongly that their lack of success in America has caused them more grief than any other single thing, and it was firmly explained to me that if it had sold 180,000 then we wouldn't be sitting in the pub prior to undertaking a farewell gig. What he had said in the interview was 'Bandstand did about 180' and what he meant to say was it reached position 180 in the album charts. So much for ZigZag's famous accuracy.

The gigs themselves, with a couple of exceptions, have been great, but more of that in a later issue. I've got a note pad full of notes, and one of these days I'll get down to writing about my reflections on being on the road. The shows have been opened by an old ZigZag friend

Phillip Goodhand-Tait, and one of the nicest moments during the concerts has been when Tony Ashton moved to electric piano, and Phil came on to play piano during their encore—either 'Rockin Pneumonia' or 'Oh Carol'. Driving to Bristol, Phil had explained to me that he first became a fan of the band when he was driving back from a gig in the north, and heard 'Larf And Sing' and 'Sat'dy Barfly' on Luxembourg, and the next day went out to buy the album. He discussed the possibility of singing his favourite tune—'My Friend The Sun' as a kind of tribute to the band, and it was no surprise to see him clutching a copy of 'Bandstand' as we passed him on the way to Leicester. He later explained that he had forgotten the words, and needed to copy them out to stick on the top of his piano. He had also had the bright idea of asking the lights guy to dim them while he played it. Alas, the lights were so dim, he couldn't read the words, and had to do a hum job. Talk about whatever it is being paved with good intentions. For the last few gigs he was joined by the band he is taking to America this month, and by golly it made a difference. The band gave him space to take a few liberties—in the musical sense—with his songs which have always been good, and I left Bournemouth thinking that this tour of America could well be the beginning of a real spurt in his career; I certainly hope so. It would make a refreshing change to see success going to a man who sings songs.

We have had quite a bit of mail about the defence of Led Zeppelin in the issue before last, and I'd like to offer a few comments. Firstly many thanks to Chris Kanelsky from Beckenham for the funniest reply, 'Corrected result—Gordon Fletcher 10, Led Zeppelin 0 (ZigZag sent off)' but I think the main point is still valid. The Zep are no worse, or better than they ever were (which I think is pretty good) and it is pure journalistic folly to use some spurious criteria to enable a criticism of their latest work to be made. The track 'Rain Song' is as good as anything they have done, and in ignoring that, the so-called critics are betraying exactly what their approach

has always been—an almost obscene rush to strike the oddest posture towards the music.

You will have noticed that we have added the great Andy Childs to our list of contributors. Andy has for some years now put out an excellent little paper called Fat Angel, and it has always been characterised by what I like to think is the ZigZag approach—enthusiasm, scholarship, and a refusal to get caught up in the latest aberration masquerading as music. Andy will be writing for us regularly now, as well as continuing Fat Angel, and he has already, over a few bitters, outlined some of the subjects that he wants to tackle, and I think you'll approve his choice. Part II of the Dead story will be in next month's issue.

Chilli Willi, who you may have seen recently, want to give away 4,000 copies of their record, and have asked Zig Zag readers to help them to devise a suitable scheme. Entries, both serious and humorous should be sent to me here (marked 'Competition'). Serious ones should try and ensure that the right people get the record, and also that the band get a bit of publicity. The best entries will be rewarded with a prize of—guess what?—a Chilli Willi album.

I recently bought two excellent records on import which should be out soon, and which I unreservedly recommend you to get hold of: Ian Matthews' 'Valley High' (November) and the Maria Maldaur album (probably December). Both really good buys, and it is heartening to see the latter get such a big review in Rolling Stone; it richly deserves it.

Van Morrison next month (where did I read that before?) along with the resumed Byrds, and The Dead, and Part I of the Muscle Shoals story.

Connor

ZIGZAG

Connor McKnight/John Tobler/Michael Wale/Julian Stapleton/Claire Weltman (ads)

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