zigzag 38

Vol4 No2 15p

How ZigZag's two bands continue their lurch to success

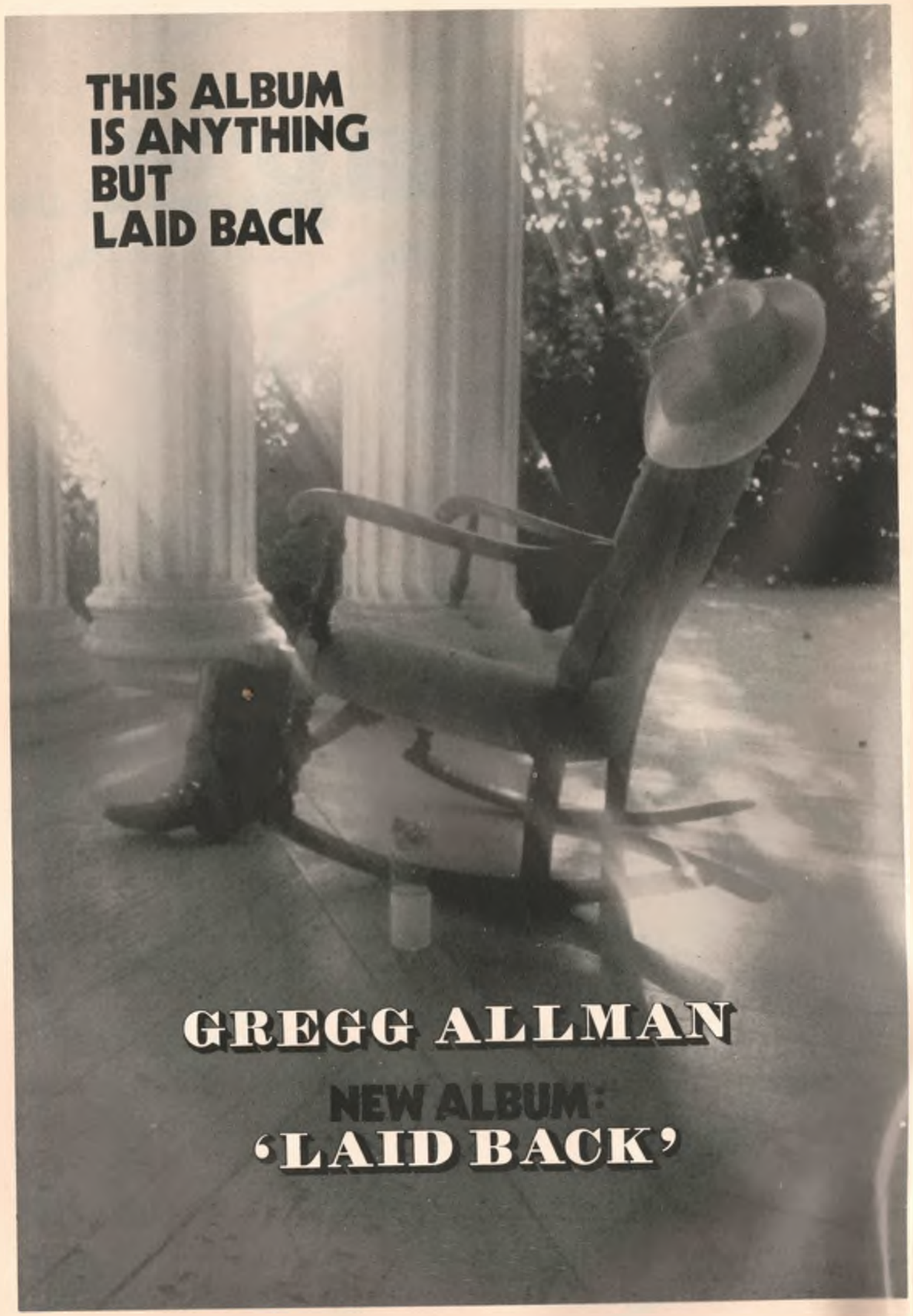
Quicksilver—we were the only band with mud on its boots

Quicksilver—we ended up burning about a third of the houseboat just to keep warm

Loggins & Messina their background revealed

Ben Sidran—Steve Miller alumnus gets into his groove

Richard Greene—Warners gave me a lot of money, I could have retired on it



I've introduced this page for a variety of reasons—some nakedly commercial, some practical, and others simply a matter of that most compelling of philosophies, suck-it-and-see. The commercial reason is to eliminate screaching phone calls from irate advertisers moaning about their ads being on adjacent pages; the practical reason is the need to present all the scrappy bits and pieces on one page and in a form that's not altogether offensive—and also to be able to include in such a page, scrappy bits of information that we might to include, such as photo credits.

And the suck-it-and-see approach has grown out of a need to ensure that ZigZag prospers—not simply to make lords of bread, but to make lords of bread that can be shovelled back into our efforts; and maybe one of the ways we can make it more enticing is to have a more conventional lead in to the features—although I fervently hope that this page never gets to look too conventional.

Having said all that, let me introduce January's features by considering the admirable **Ben Sidran**, on page 12. To many of you, I suppose, he's little more than a song writing credit on Steve Miller's albums, but for me, he has made one of my favourite albums of 1973, 'Feel Your Groove'. I say 1973 because it was only last year that I got hold of a copy. I'd gone down to Mike Haines' record shop (he of the Boz Scaggs story in ZZ 33) to swap my Uriah Heep's and Black Sabbath's for some imported goodies, and I was in the happy position of being in possession of two copies of an American Larry Corryell import, one of which I gave Mike. No sooner had he expressed his gratitude than he reached under the counter and said, 'Here I've been saving this for you,' and it was 'Feel Your Groove'. I took it home and played it, and I must confess, was rather disappointed with it. But time wore on and I played it a bit more, and then suddenly I found myself playing it out of conviction, rather than curiosity. I think the album's fabulous, even if the styles he employs aren't as instantly arresting as those of that somewhat similar persona, Dan Hicks. The interview was done by Mick Houghton, photo by courtesy of Andrew Lauder.

The admirable Frame tells us the story of **Quicksilver Messenger Service** on page 4, investigates the career of **Richard Greene** on page 18, and talks about **John Stewart** on page 32. Need I say more?

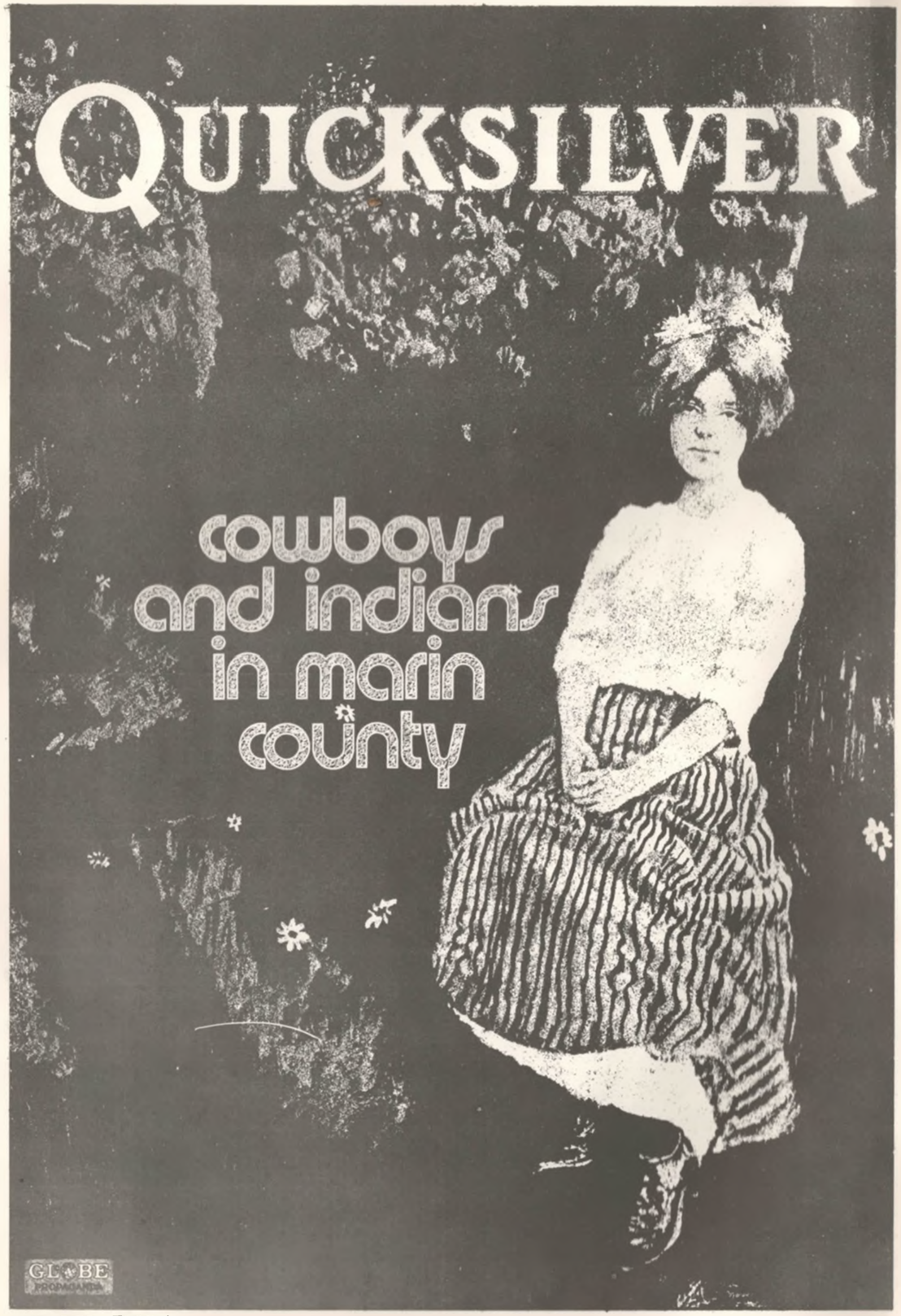
Loggins and Messina on page 20 comes from the pen of Jerry Gilbert who works for Sounds. I've always had a block about writers who work for the weeklies, because their features so rarely transcend this kind of editorial directive—'Do me half a page on John Simon, there's a gap in the special supplement on organs' (P.S. John Simon is worth an issue of Sounds). But Jerry and I spent an evening in a well known Soho hostelry swapping 'greatest album tracks of all time' stories, and I was delighted to revise my opinions, and even more delighted when he offered us this interview with the lads. It being 1974 and all that, I asked John Collis of Time Out, and John Duffy (contractual problems prevent us revealing his identity) to comment on 1973. The results appear on page 26. And I've listed my **albums of the year** on page 10.

The nucleus of ZigZag continues to be **Me, Pete Frame, John Tobler and Michael Wale (editorial), Julian Stapleton and Nick Lumsden (production), and Jim Maguire** (ads and business generally). We're still printed by **The Chesham Press, Germain Street, Chesham, Bucks**, and distributed by **New English Library, Barnard's Inn, High Holborn, EC1.**

All the best, see you in February.

Connor

P.S. After writing all this, the news came through of the three day week. It has, alas, meant cutting back from our measley forty pages to a more stringent thirty-six. I'm sorry, but with any luck, and a bit of planning we can rectify that in February.



The night breeze ripped through my stout leather jacket as I strode manfully down the Sausalito seafront to keep my appointment at the Trident, a plush restaurant/bar whose very foundations are lapped by the waters of the San Francisco Bay.

So determined was my step as I crossed the road in front of the Trident that I failed to notice the raised central reservation dividing the dual carriageways, tripped on the kerb, and sprawled headlong, inflicting cruel injuries to my knee and palms - an ungainly movement which drew savage mockery from the car park attendants. Dusting off my jeans and gathering up the notes, cassettes and other junk that lay strewn before me, I regained my composure, asked the attendants if they'd like to see what I did for an encore, and entered the lobby to meet the man who once described himself as the world's most benign carnivore (and I forgot to ask why).

As it happened, the pink carnation and carefully folded copy of the Financial Times proved to be unnecessary; I'd only seen photographs of him before, but I had no difficulty recognising the rangy craggy frame of John Cipollina, the man who moved mountains as lead guitarist with Quicksilver Messenger Service.

For the sake of clarity and in order to include as much detail as possible, I've decided to split into 3 my expansion of the interview which followed: this part will concern itself with Quicksilver's lunacy up until they began to solicit a recording contract and establish themselves internationally, the second part (to appear under the letter Q in Melody Maker's Rock Giants series - Mick Watts and God willing) will trace the ups and downs of their subsequent career, and the final part (not sure where that'll be appearing yet) will detail Cipollina's subsequent activities, including his leadership of the nebulous, fabulous Copperhead.

Waiting for Dino

Dino Valente (yes, he was there at the beginning as well as the end), having made a transcontinental hike from Greenwich Village, where he'd achieved a charismatic coffee-house reputation as a distinctive 12 string folkie song and dance man at the turn of the Sixties, arrived via a fruitless year in Los Angeles to start afresh in the folk haunts of San Francisco's gaudy North Beach district. A couple of years later, with little more than a local following, a few unissued tracks in the can at Autumn Records and an ache to investigate some of the areas the Beatles had opened up, he fell in with a couple of shady young characters who appear to have been helping to make ends meet by making certain scarce and beneficial herbs available to a wider public.... these were Jim Murray, Gemini loon er extraordinaire, and John Cipollina an ex-real estate agent who felt it was too late to go back now.

This was 1964. Inevitably, they set about forming a group. "Dino not only had a head full of ideas, he was one of the few guys on the scene who had a manager - Tom Donahue, who owned Autumn Records and a club in the city called Mothers. So we knew that if we played with Dino, we'd have a place to stay. 'We'll start our rehearsals tomorrow' Dino told us, but the next day, before we had played a note together, Dino was busted right here in Sausalito and taken to jail. Well, Jim and I sat around thinking that he'd be out real soon - we were told that he'd be out on tuesday, then we were told thursday, then the following tuesday, then maybe....you know. Well, that went on for a year and a half! Jim and I, meanwhile, were waiting for his release and sleeping on this chick's floor - no, we weren't even doing that; we were sleeping up on Mount Tamalpais in a 54 Plymouth that I had at the time.

"Not long after Dino was put inside, we met a friend of his, David Freiberg, who'd just got out of jail himself....and because he was a friend of Dino's and had just got out, we took him into the group, or what was trying to become a group. He played 12 string and was getting around as a folksinger, but he wanted to play bass, so I loaned him one that I had in the trunk of my car and he started hanging out with us, learning to play bass and singing real good.

Did you know that Skip Spence was in Quicksilver? Neither did I, but he apparently was. "The group at this time (64/5) was Jim Murray on vocals and harmonica, David Freiberg on bass and vocals, a local guy called Casey Sonoban on drums, Skip Spence on rhythm guitar and vocals, and me on lead guitar, and we were rehearsing at the Matrix, a club in San Francisco that the Jefferson Airplane had part ownership of. They were letting us use it. Well, one day Marty Balin came up to Skip, who was standing there with his acoustic guitar around his neck, and asked him if he'd ever played drums before - and Skip told him all about this marching band he was in at his high school. So he was rolled into the Airplane around the same time as Casey left....he was crazy, and far more at home with congas than behind a set of drums - in fact, he was conga player in the original line-up of Copperhead.

"The three of us that were left began to look for a new guitarist and drummer and ran across Gary Duncan and Greg Elmore who had been in a group called the Brogues, which had broken up because the service had drafted one guy and another had disappeared without trace. They were living in a basement at 52 Water Street, a crazy little alley in North Beach, and my Plymouth happened to break down out in front - the clutch went - so we had to stay the night, but we ended up staying there for 4 months. What a crazy street that was; a bunch of neighbours had got together and had painted this long fiery dragon which stretched right down the street..... this was the early days of psychedelia - right? Lots of LSD, no money, and lots of living off the street, which, coming from a good family, was very strange to me....but this is Fat City and you can always get a meal or a place to stay - and you could pick up any hitch-hiker and they'd give you some grass".

Dino was eventually released from the State Pen, so Quicksilver Messenger Service was finally ready to deliver - but for some reason, Dino was a little wary of Greg and Gary and he wasn't entirely convinced that his re-joining would be a good idea. As it happened, all this conjecture was unnecessary - he was only out for 2 days before he was busted again and returned to jail.

Assuming that fate had ruled out any participation by Dino, the quintet set about rehearsal once more, and their first gig was to play at a Christmas party organised by the Committee, a local satirical group. "These guys came down to our basement and said they'd give us something to smoke if we gave them a rock'n'roll version of 'The Star Spangled Banner' - the Charlatans were originally going to do it, but had evidently backed out. We thought 'what the hell? We've got no reputation to harm, so we'll do it'. We went and recorded it to their satisfaction and they thought we were good enough to play at their Christmas party....they offered us 200 dollars to do it. 'Wow', we all said, 'give it to us now, give it to us now!' So they did - even though it was only October.....and we took the money and moved out of our Water Street basement, into a houseboat in Larkspur, up in Marin County".

The band with mud on its boots

"We moved into the houseboats not long before the authorities condemned them, burnt them down and filled in the quay area....but we lived out that winter on the water. We didn't work much either...the first job we had was in December (1965), so we practised through October and November....and we burned everything we could get our hands on to keep warm. It was bitterly cold up there, but the boat had this old oil drum with a hole cut out of it and a stovepipe coming out of the top, and we got that thing absolutely red hot every night. In fact, we ended up burning about a third of the houseboat in an effort to keep warm. I had a really bad case of pneumonia at the time, and one wall of the room I slept in was totally useless - it had this huge hole in it and when the tide came in, it almost poured right onto the bed ....it was a really low life in some ways, but we all had a lot of fun.

"Like I say, it was pretty cold living up there on the mud and the water, and the boat would get lashed by the rain and the wind - so we burned up whatever we could find....fences, anything.....all's fair in that sort of situation. Anyway, we moved out of there pretty quick after we'd burnt down a neighbour's boat - some kind of fight had developed...and then our boat got burned too - I'm sure I can't remember all the circumstances.

"We moved back down to Mill Valley and met Ron Polte, who became our manager. This was after we'd been through about half a dozen other managers - the first of them had got busted and put in jail for three years, the next two were brothers who were health food fanatics - they kept us well fed and healthy for about three months, then the next one was a mad astrologer from Chicago.

"Anyway, we got this 3 storey house

in Mill Valley - a Victorian insane asylum or something, complete with a ghost. We had a pretty good time there but never rehearsed because it was right in the middle of town. This was 1966, when people across America were beginning to drift into the San Francisco area, and we became fairly well known as the band that lived a block and a half from the bus depot in Mill Valley.... so they'd just take a bus and come looking for us. As a result, the cops were always in and out of the house looking for the 14 year old chicks!

"All this time, we were slowly gaining a reputation in the Bay Area and by the middle of 1966 we'd become quite a legend; we were the first band on the scene in the county, and the City people looked up at us because we'd lived on the houseboats and were the only band who walked around with mud on their boots.... everybody used to make a big deal out of that for some reason".

After a few months, the restrictions of living in a town, albeit a small one, began to make themselves felt and to escape a growing notoriety they went north once more - this time to an 88 acre ranch at Point Reyes Station, some 25 miles north-west of Frisco. "Gary Duncan and I went straight out and bought cowboy hats - if we were going to live on a ranch, we'd do it in style. Then I brought out my collection of guns and we brought out all these pretty girls who loved horses, because we had plenty of horses.... 40 to 70 head running around our property all the time. Next, I went out and got a wolf - a real Northern McKenzie timber wolf; it was the largest of the litter and its father was 224 pounds and 7½ feet long. I'd been studying wolves really intensely for a long time, about eight years, and had become some kind of an authority on them, so I thought that I'd get one now that I had a big enough place to keep it.

"This period, 'the ranch period' you could call it, saw Quicksilver Messenger Service at the height of its insanity but the record companies had begun to take an interest in us and were watching us closely - even though we hadn't the slightest intention of signing with anybody. We had developed a great mystique because we were so weird and because we'd chosen to live way out in the wilderness.

"The only bands living out there in the San Geronimo Valley were us and the Grateful Dead, who had a summer camp up there - Camp Lagunitas for Boys and Girls. They had a swimming pool there, and arts and craft things, but what they really got into was archery.... and they went into this big Red Indian trip as a result. So we were 7 or 8 miles away acting out our cowboy fantasies while the Dead were whooping it up with their bows and arrows.... and we inevitably got into this cowboys and indians riff.

"Apart from the Dead, the only other person we used to see was this guy called Jim Jensen (later to appear in the Copperhead story), who lived in a deserted bakery up there, but then Dino got out of jail again and moved in with us. He'd decided to go his own way as a solo, but sometimes he came to gigs with us and played and sang as part of the band.... in fact some of those gigs were recorded - The Quicksilver Messenger Service with Dino Valente. Anyway, our rivalry with the Grateful Dead culminated in two of Quicksilver being put in jail".

The Quicksilver/ Dead feud

"We had gone to San Francisco to get the Dead, because they had come and got us real bad. We had this roadie who wasn't too good at carrying equipment, so we turned him into a cook - and every night all of the people living on the ranch, the group and the roadies and the friends and the girls, we'd all gather together to eat. We lived in 6 different buildings spread around the ranch, but every evening we'd come together to dine and then smoke ourselves silly until we passed out! Well, the Dead knew that we did this, and they figured that the best time to catch us off guard was in our after-dinner relaxation. You see, I'd had this big argument with Jerry Garcia; we spent hours arguing the relative merits of cowboys and Indians.... it was at a Musicians Union meeting, in fact. For a laugh, a lot of us had decided to attend a Union meeting - and these old straights who ran the Union almost collapsed; they'd never seen such a bunch of longhaired musicians before.... and there were so many of us; people from the Airplane, the Charlatans, the Dead, Quicksilver, the Mystery Trend, the Great Society, Big Brother.... it was just a whole gang of us, and these guys weren't ready for us at all - it was a really funny evening.

"Anyway, Garcia was saying things like 'Cowboys are lame, Indians are much hipper, nobody loves cowboys anymore but Indians are groovy because they're into flowers and stuff .... you guys are nowhere'. He was saying it all in fun, but he was giving me a hard time, so I said 'Yeah? Well our band says that the Grateful Dead eats shit'. We got into this slanging match until all these straight musician guys were cowering in the corners... we were really digging it, but we made out that our tempers were fraying and we started to get really hot under the collar, shouting and stuff. When I got home that night, I told the other guys that we ought to go and get the Dead for saying that cowboys aren't as cool as Indians, and they said 'yeah, let's get em', but then we got stoned and forgot all about it.

"A couple of nights later, we'd just finished eating and were all swacked out as usual, when suddenly there's all this hollering and whooping..... the dogs were barking like crazy, my wolf was howling, and we didn't know what was going on. Then suddenly the door bursts open and the entire Dead family crash in on us, whooping and shouting, all in feathers and warpaint, all high on acid, all crazy. Well, they got us real bad; they were all over us before we even realised what was happening - brandishing tomahawks and firing arrows into the walls.... you never saw anything like it in your life.

"Needless to say, our egos were well and truly crushed and ground into the dirt because the Dead were going all around saying that our band eats shit. Dino was with us at the time and being part Indian, he took it rather more personally than was intended - but anyway, we made up our minds that the Dead weren't going to get away with it... no chance.

"Two weeks later, the Dead were due to play the Fillmore, sharing the bill with the Airplane, and that's where we reckoned we'd get them. The plan was for us to wear all our cowboy gear, masks and guns and take over the stage during their set... we knew it wouldn't be difficult because the Dead were always out of their heads in those days. For those two weeks, we rehearsed solidly, harder than we ever had before, until we'd perfected a 15 minute version of 'Kaw Liga was a Wooden Indian', which we intended to play at the Fillmore to humiliate them. Then we went out and bought cap guns, because we wanted to make a bit of noise as well as brandishing real guns... we were going to frighten the piss out of them; wait till they'd finished their first song and strike, knowing they'd be too speced out to resist.

"We called Bill Graham, explained what we were going to do, and he said it was cool and promised not to tell a soul, and we let Gleason in on it too... but that was it - no-one else would know who these masked men were! We were going to grab them and handcuff them to their speaker cabinets, because they had these huge things that Owsley had got for them, with big handles.... can you imagine how dramatic it was going to be??? Garcia and his gang being hancuffed and chained at gunpoint and watching us play 'Kaw Liga' on their instruments! Then they'd know that cowboys were cooler than Indians after all!

"Everything was taken care of..... everything except the X factor.

"The Fillmore was in a predominantly Black, ghetto area of San Francisco, and earlier that day some young kid had broken a jeweller's window, grabbed something and run - and this cop arrived on the scene, pulled his 357 Magnum and yelled 'halt or I fire' .... well, he fired and hit this kid right in the back of his head. The velocity of the bullet just about took his head off, and the whole neighbourhood went nuts about it.... the tension of the entire area just tightened up to breaking point. And we arrived a few hours later, knowing nothing of what had happened.... maybe you can imagine the effect of half a dozen freaks suddenly appearing outside the Fillmore with masks and guns.

"The cops were on us before we'd moved ten feet. Our protestations were useless, of course; they didn't want to believe it was a joke - they were in no mood for joking. We tried to explain that we were going into the Fillmore to play, and that this was our stage gear, but they wouldn't believe that we were anything less than hippie revolutionaries bent on capitalising on the indignation of the Black population. As soon as we realised that it was no use, we tried to disperse but they got Jim Murray

Quicksilver Messenger Service in 1966: (l to r) Greg Elmore, Gary Duncan, John Cipollina, Jim Murray, David Freiberg

and David Freiberg and threw them in the tank with all these Blacks who were feeling real hostile towards any whites because they'd heard about the shooting of the kid. Everything was explained in the end, but David and Jim weren't released for 3 days - and we never got the Dead after all..... in fact, we eventually did, but I'm not going to talk about that".

Gunfight at Pt Reyes Station

"Meanwhile, back at the ranch, we got into conflict with the neighbouring farmer over my wolf, and it finally developed into a shootout with the guy. You see, my wolf got too big to play with any of our dogs - it had grown at an astounding rate, but I still used to take him around with me everywhere I went.... I took it to the Fillmore several times and the Avalon too - it was completely domesticated and docile with me, but completely wild at the same time. He was alright off the lead as long as I was around and he never ever bit anybody.

"Anyway, this farmer got angry because the wolf would run with his horses; he was still a puppy really and loved running and playing with horses.... but the farmer was really angry about it - thought he'd harm his animals, though he never did.

"Also, he had some trouble with this friend of ours - a guitar builder called Tim, who built this amazing guitar that I designed for David Freiberg. The guy's dead now - he slit his throat; he was a mad Samurai sword expert and also one of the finest craftsmen I've seen in my life. I'd brought him up to the ranch to get him out of the city for a while - and he was able to get a good night's sleep and wake up with only the sound of the birds singing. He would get up, take his sword and go up on the hill to meditate and do his exercises - because he really was a master swordsman.

"Now, every morning one of Quicksilver's equipment men, a guy by the name of Steve Schuster, used to go for a walk, playing a sax. That might sound a little strange, but he used to assure us that it helped him to breathe properly and stuff like that - said it kept him fit. He used to walk around the ranch, followed by Dino's 200 pound Great Dane, Jose our mongrel, and my wolf, all howling like crazy at the noise of his sax. Well, one morning, Farmer Brown (that was his name) saw this insane procession tramping along on his side of our boundary fence.... so he came over to tell Steve to get off his land. It so happened that Tim, our swordsman friend, had just completed his meditation and came roaring down the hill yelling his head off and flailing this giant sword around like some kind of lunatic. It was obviously too much for this farmer to take.... seeing this crazyman come screaming down out of the trees. Anyway, he was un-nerved and split - we didn't see him for a while after that.

"He must've thought the best course of action was to befriend us rather than alienate himself, and he tried a new tack; he turned a blind eye to all the things he didn't like about us and began to come over and visit. The fact that Quicksilver always had the most voluptuous and beautiful women staying at the ranch just may have had something to do with it.... they used to fix him coffee and stuff, and he used to think that was really far out, but he still couldn't figure out exactly what was happening, just couldn't understand us at all. Like I'd dismantled this old fence and then re-erected it along one wall of my room; that old wood, over 100 years old and all covered with moss was really groovy.... I had to water my room, man! I loved it, thought it was really far out and beautiful, but it blew him up to see some longhaired freak doing things like that.

"Anyway, soon afterwards, he began to renew his antagonism.... made it clear that he didn't like us and that he wanted us to clear out, leave the area altogether. So one day, he showed up, drunk I guess, apparently with the intention of shooting my wolf and he was threatening us all too.

Dino tried to take him on in hand to hand combat, telling the guy that he'd take his gun off him and shove it right up his ass....and the chicks were all shouting encouragement - screaming abuse and profanities at this farmer who'd never in his life heard such words from a woman's mouth.

"He was carrying this loaded gun, but I was really crazed and angry -- I'd raised that wolf from a cub, bottle fed it for the first 6 weeks and really loved him - and this guy was going to shoot him. Well, he was carrying on about how he was going to tell the authorities and the law about everything and it was like the moment we'd all been anticipating. We knew the gig was up and that we'd have to move out....so we figured we'd go out in a blaze!

"This visit had been preceded by a series of events designed to get us to move out; he'd cut off our water, for instance, but it was 3 days before we even realised - so that plan kind of mis-fired. So I guess he must've thought that menacing us with a gun was the answer....but the thing was, he didn't know how much into guns we were; the only hippies he knew about were the peaceful flower people he'd been reading about in his paper.

"Well, like I said, we were in the middle of this confrontation out in the front of our house, and we knew this was it - so we all ran inside, went to the armoury, and loaded up with guns and ammo. Then, in the best Western movie tradition, we smashed the windows with our gun barrels and began blasting out into the sky....it was something we'd always wanted to do, and we did it in style - firing out of every window as though the place was surrounded by marauders!

"That farmer just freaked! Lit out of there like a rocket, hightailing it back to his own house....but we followed him, all the time firing off at the sky and the ground, followed him like he was a prize pheasant. We kept firing near him and he'd fall on his face in all the mud and horse-shit, scared to death! Then he'd get up and run like a crazyman until he made it home.

"So we just stood outside, firing at his roof, picking off lumps of it, just like eating corn. I myself put about 200 rounds into that roof, firing through a semi automatic rifle....we just poured that place full of bullets.

"Well, that was it....it was all over for Quicksilver at Point Reyes Station, and our manager moved us back to the City and began to pursue the possibilities of a record deal".

Pete Frame

Quicksilver Messenger Service in 1968 (following Murray's departure): Duncan/Cipollina/Elmore/Freiberg

QUICKSILVER Messenger Service

1973

—Records of the year

Every year someone will spend inches of newsprint lamenting the dearth of good music around; I always get the impression from their comments that what they're really lamenting is their own worn out enthusiasm for the music and I must confess to occasionally voicing similar sentiments, although it thankfully doesn't last very long. What has staggered me in compiling this list is how groundless such complaints are, for all these records have given me (a) immense pleasure, and (b) just the same sort of pleasure that 'Happy Trails' and 'Sailor' gave me, so here is my evidence for the defence when the same dreary old charges are levelled at 1973.

What I've done is to go through the records of 1973 that I own and make a list of all those which I would recommend listening to carefully, and on several occasions. There are bound to be some omissions arising from ignorance, wrong years, pig-headedness masquerading as critical fallibility, etc, etc, but if you feel strongly that I've made indefensible omissions let me know and we'll correct it in February. They're not in any particular order.

John Cale 'Paris 1919'
Poco 'Crazy Eyes'
Henry Cow 'Legend of Henry Cow'
Kevin Coyne 'Marjory Razorblade'
John Martyn 'Inside Out'
Brinsley Schwarz 'Please Don't Ever Change'
The Who 'Quadrophenia'
Byrds history on CBS
Pink Floyd 'Dark Side Of The Moon'
Elton John 'Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player'
Maria Muldaur
Bobby Charles
Jesse Winchester 'Third Down 110 To Go'
Rigor Mortis
Free 'Heartbreaker'
Family 'It's Only A Movie'
Dory Previn 'Mary C. Brown And The Hollywood Sign'
The Temptations 'Masterpieces'
Asleep At The Wheel 'Comin Right At Ya'
Ry Cooder 'Boomers Story'
Beach Boys 'Holland' (the best album track of the year is on this LP—'Sail On Sailor')
Bonnie Raitt 'Give It Up'
Speedy Keene 'Previous Convictions'
Frankie Miller 'Once In A Blue Moon'
The Doobie Brothers 'The Captain And Me'
Jerry Jeff Walker
Dan Hicks And His Hot Licks 'Last Train To Hicksville'
The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band 'Will The Circle Be Unbroken'
Stevie Wonder 'Talking Book' and 'Innervisions'
Help Yourself 'The Return Of Ken Whaley' (Goodbye and thanks)
Mike Oldfield 'Tubular Bells'
Toots And The Maytalls 'Funky Kingston'
Mike Nesmith 'Pretty Much Your Average Ranch Stash'
Average White Band 'Show Your Hand'
Linda Ronstadt 'Don't Cry Now'
Little Feat 'Dixie Chicken'
Tony Joe White 'Home Made Ice Cream'
The Staple Singers 'Use What You Got'
Peter Hammill 'Chameleon In The Shadow Of The Night'
J Geils Band 'Bloodshot'

Then there is the list of people who should have had offerings in that list but didn't, either because their output was non-existent, or below their usual high standard. They were Tim Hardin, Neil Young, John McLaughlin, Van Morrison, Zappa, George Harrison, David Ruffin, The Airplane, The Dead, The Faces, Nick Drake, Randy Newman, and finally our old mate Boz Scaggs.

And even that list is incomplete. Anyway, I'll remember 1973, because it can't have been bad if it gave us all that; think what is in store for 1974.

Connor

ben sidran—feeling his groove

Ben Sidran is best known for his work with Steve Miller. He appeared on Steve's first Capitol album 'Children of the Future', playing the beautiful harpsichord on Boz Scaggs' 'Baby's Calling Me Home'. Since then he has returned on all but two of Steve's albums co-writing such Miller classics as 'Space Cowboy', 'Seasons' and 'Steve Miller's Midnight Tango', the latter being the high point of the mixed 'No.5' album. Through his work with Steve he became associated with Glyn Johns who suggested him for a number of sessions during his stay in England at the University of Sussex. Among these were Rolling Stones sessions on which he remembers playing three chords over and over again on a track whose title he couldn't recall. Ben is also rapidly earning a reputation as an ace producer and in this role produced Steve Miller's best album since he split with Glyn Johns after 'Your Saving Grace'. Ben was back in England earlier this year to produce Glencoe in what became the 'Spirit Of Glencoe' album (which was fairly disappointing). We spoke between the sessions, mainly about Ben Sidran as the solo artist responsible for three albums, 'Feel Your Groove', 'I Lead A Life' and 'Puttin' In Time On Planet Earth' and author of 'Black Talk', a sociological study of black music. Of his three albums none have been released here, and the chances are that very few people have heard them all. I would hesitate to recommend any record, much as I might enjoy it, particularly where I can't think of any real precedent, but for anyone and especially for any Steve Miller/Boz Scaggs freak, who has yet to hear any of Ben's records, try and get a listen to 'Feel Your Groove' which is perhaps the easiest to get into—then take it from there.

EARLY DAYS WITH THE MILLER BAND

ZZ: When you first went up to the University of Wisconsin you were essentially interested in jazz, and as a pianist played jazz. What was it that turned you towards rock music?

BS: Steve Miller's band primarily. When I first heard his band in Wisconsin—the one with Boz Scaggs, the Ardells, musically that was the best band I had heard up to that time, including my own. I was leading my own band at the time earning $35 a night, and Steve offered me a job earning $50 a night. They were good and I was earning more money with him too—that cinched it.

ZZ: What was your band called?

BS: It must have had three different names at least.

ZZ: You were never in the Chordaires then?

BS: No—Tim Davis and Curley Cooke's band, I was never in that. The Chordaires were a terrible band, trying to do what the Ardells were doing, but the Ardells were a great band, a fantastic band. There wasn't that much of a scene in Madison as far as white bands were concerned apart from them. There were a couple of black bands that came on really good. Birdlegs and Chicken Feathers, Vick Pitts and the Seven Sounds, they were pretty good. But Steve's band was very good. I was never a rock'n'roll fan. I was listening to jazz as you know, I was a little cynical when I heard rock'n'roll on the radio and didn't pay much attention to it. But when I heard Steve I thought . . . that's good music.

ZZ: I didn't realise you were actually a member of the Ardells, was this during the later stages when they became the Knight Trains?

BS: I joined the Ardells towards their demise and played with them for maybe six or seven months. This was by the time Boz had gone to Sweden and the band was a drunken brawl. The Knight Trains was the name they used in the summer at the local resorts.

ZZ: This was because the band couldn't get any work?

BS: We were thrown off campuses for just general rowdiness. We'd play jobs, or they'd play jobs depending on whether I was playing with them that night, and trouble would start, and they'd blame the band which then became outlawed from that particular school or whatever it was. Fights would break out and the band got credit for it; Steve's name was mud and that was it.

ZZ: Did the band ever record?

BS: There are tapes, legendary Ardells tapes, nobody knows who's got them. They were tapes of the jobs, the band never went into the studio. Steve at that time had no idea how good his music was. This was in 1963 and the Beatles weren't readily available anywhere. The only think you're hearing is Peter. Paul and Mary and then all of a sudden along comes this rock'n'roll that Steve was playing. It was like vocal harmonies on top of Texas shuffles. You couldn't really put a name to it. They sang really beautifully in fact.

When Steve left Wisconsin, you know he travelled a lot, but by the time he got to San Francisco the band he put together was a souped up version of the Ardells. After all Boz was in it, and Tim Davis, and Curley at one time, they were part of that idiom, and Jim Peterman who knew what was going on at the time. That whole Ardells scene would have been well worth recording just like the Beatles were worth recording and worth developing. If a bright manager had come along and seen that band, who knows? . . . but there it was.

ZZ: The various individuals of that scene went separate ways—Steve followed Boz in going to Europe, Tim and Curley hung around there in Madison filling in a lot of the old Ardells gigs, but where were you at this time?

BS: When Steve and Boz were in Europe I went to San Francisco and lived there for a year with a musician named John Handy, an alto saxophone player. A real good musician. I was a roomer in his house. I used to hang around his sessions and was still listening mostly to jazz which was still what I really wanted to do. But that year was thoroughly frustrating, first of all I had a full time job, secondly I was attending San Francisco state college, and thirdly I was trying to be a musician. I just couldn't do it.

ZZ: This was long before San Francisco developed as a musical centre?

BS: Certainly, there was a little of the beatnik scene left at a coffee house called the Blue Unicorn, and Ferlinghetti's City Lights bookstore was a place where people would congregate, not just because it was a fantastic bookstore.

ZZ: Later on guitar stores like McCabes in southern California became important as places where musicians would get together I believe?

BS: Yeah . . . that was a little later and as a matter of fact record stores became hang-out centres. The second or third time I dropped out of the university, I went to work as manager of a record store and there was an enormous scene because all the musicians would drop by. Today it's not so much like it was . . . but then, anywhere that was neutral territory like that was a natural breeding ground.

ZZ: What happened to you after your year in San Francisco? There seems to have been very little written about you other than in connection with Steve, and certainly the next place I was able to trace you was at the University of Sussex which was a few years on.

BS: The reason that the history isn't written is that the record business is, of course, too concerned with musical product, and if I tell people that I was playing jazz and hanging around with John Handy that part gets ignored. That whole period I was trying to play and I was simultaneously trying to go to school. I have always had good luck that way, being able to do two or three things at once. It seems like I need it to be like that to keep from going stale. If all I had was the University of Wisconsin I'd hate the record business. The fact that I'm always slightly outside of it gives me the inch of grace that enables me to carry on.

ZZ: So when the original Steve Miller Band was put together you had long since left 'Frisco and were over here in England?

BS: Well actually I flew out to 'Frisco with Jim Peterman to see Steve, and Peterman decided to stay and join the band. When they started rolling and by the time the record companies started getting interested I was here. I wound up at the University of Sussex because a history teacher I had had told me that it was worth checking out.

ZZ: With certain reservations you can do virtually anything at Sussex if you present your ideas in the right way.

BS: That's more or less what he said, so I took him up on it.

RECORDING

ZZ: Can I ask you about your albums, and also about some of the other albums you've contributed to as either session musician or producer. How did you come to do the Gene Clark album for example?

BS: I didn't produce that one. I was working with Jesse Davis who actually produced the record and I wound up hanging round the sessions, playing on some of them and helping him out. You know I've never heard that record although I remember the sessions very well. I heard one of the tracks on the radio the other day and was reminded about it but I've never seen or heard it.

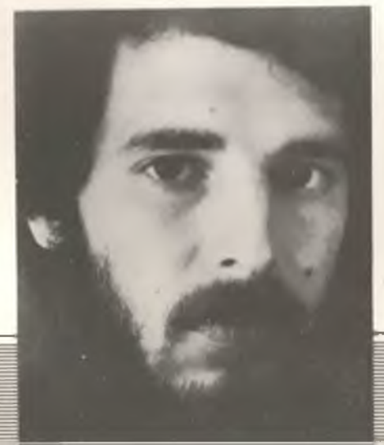
ZZ: I did wonder how much you cooperated with Jesse Davis in producing it because it has got the same sort of feel to it as albums you've worked on, in particular Steve's 'Journey From Eden'.

BS: Yeah . . . they were made around the same period of time, and they are both made by guitar player/singers. But 'Journey From Eden', I was pleased about because one of the things I always wanted to do was have some violins on Steve's records. I was really set on doing that and one way or the other I was going to get my way on that record.

ZZ: Although Steve had never used strings before on a song like 'Songs For Our Ancestors' you can imagine the fullness of an orchestrated song. I often think of that as a film score.

BS: That of course was a mellotron. I'm very into that idea in that you say it could be a film score. I'm really interested in dramatic music. I produced 'Feel Your Groove' that particular track with that concept in mind, that you're in an audience of a theatre, a legitimate theatre, and the houselights go out, and the spotlight hits the stage, the curtains go up and there's a piano and a piano player there. I visualised that first, and set out to duplicate that in sound. 'Recall The Beginning' is that kind of song for me too. Steve played me this song which begins 'I was standing in the garden . . .' so I tried to get a really dark setting, almost visual, of being in that garden. The strings were crucial to that mood.

ZZ: The guy who did the strings on that, Nick de Caro, you've worked with him a lot, on both your first two albums, how about your new album?



BS: No, there are no strings on that. I finally had to stop. All my friends told me it was time to make a record without strings.

ZZ: The first album 'Feel Your Groove' which of course isn't available here except through the import shops, and the second one which doesn't look like it's coming out here either, both make essential use of Nick de Caro's arrangements like on the track 'Feel Your Groove' or 'Try' from that album, or on 'I Lead A Life', and the interplay with the keyboards on 'Lust' or 'Eliyahu' is very effective.

BS: That particular string arranger is such a delight to work with. I get along with him so well musically as well as personally that I'm always tempted to use him rather than not to use him because of this relationship we have. I have no objection to violins but I find so many people who do that I'm a little wary of them now.

ZZ: They can be so overdone—or just arranged in such a way that they are irrelevant to the content or feel of the song. You seem to mix the strings where you do use them to the same level as all the other instruments.

BS: Yeah, I guess I just like the sound of strings but a lot of people associate their sound with something that's cheap in some kind of way and certainly not hard core rock music. But Nick writes very much to the song's requirements, he's right there following the whole thing.

ZZ: Where did you first hear him? I wondered whether you'd heard some of the things he did with Harvey Mandel on 'Cristo Redentor' which is the nearest by way of comparison to your music that I can think of.

BS: To be honest I didn't know he did that album. It's a beautiful record but I didn't realise that was him on that. I first heard Nick on Leon Russell's 'Ballad of Mad Dogs and Englishmen', a song where he just played piano and then put violins over the top. That was the first time I ever noticed a string part and said who was that. But as far as the Harvey Mandel record goes I certainly heard that a long time before I made mine. All that stuff is floating out there, and maybe it's idioms or just the presence of Nick de Caro.

ZZ: On both your albums I don't know whether you are consciously trying to achieve anything in particular in terms of what you are doing, like you do r&b type songs like 'Poor Girl', or 'Lust' which is a bit like Booker T to jazz styled things, and in your singing your phrasing is very jazz styled.

BS: I don't know if I'm trying to do anything. I think that what's happening is that I see music a certain way and because I'm given the freedom to do what I want, and because I write my own songs, I don't hold back and feel I'm doing something I shouldn't to somebody else's material. For example when I produce a band like Glencoe I want to

do the best for their songs, but when I have total freedom and I write the songs and also get to choose the musicians, which I'm quite particular about, that seems to be the direction I go in. There's certainly not the conscious rock'n'roll and jazz thing although it may turn out that way.

ZZ: It's a sort of result of your pretty wide musical experience, it seems as if you've got so much you want to do [nods in agreement] and yet it all comes over as an album in its structure.

BS: The first one is probably more of an album than the second because the second side of 'I Lead A Life' has a lot of little things thrown in, while the first side hangs together better as a side. The other is more of a collection of tracks, since each is more of an up track. 'Groove' is really meant to read like a programme, nothing conscious or superficially imposed, but it was a definite album where it might be said, here's someone working with jazz and rock, because on that there was Charlie Watts and Jim Keltner and George Rains, all definite rock drummers, whereas this one uses a light tasty drummer all the way through.

ZZ: There's only one rock track as such, 'Talkin' About Money' which is the tune of Robert Parker's 'Barefootin'' which I didn't realise till after I'd played it quite a few times.

BS: You know no one ever said that to me, but it's true isn't it? There you are, you see, it's probably a direct cop from that melody line without really realising it. All that is really, is a way of phrasing blues lyrics.

ZZ: That track too is the only one even remotely reminiscent of Steve Miller's work. 'Groove' has a few more Millerish type things, perhaps 'cause you use Boz on a few tracks, but Tim Davis' album and Curley's AB Skhy album ['Ramblin' On'] show the impact much more.

BS: And not so much with Boz either, although Steve was a strong influence on him in the way he played . . . but on Tim's, Steve's influence was mostly getting him to straighten up as a professional musician. It's mostly that all these guys were working on a similar thing for this time which is why the original Miller band with Boz and Tim in it was musically the best stuff Steve's ever done on record because they all had a common goal and they had this common feeling. So Boz contributed a lot to what people associate with Steve Miller because his is the name on it. Whereas I was actually brought into the recording end to counterbalance a lot of that stuff. Steve would like to have me around the studio because I wasn't into what he was into, and this was almost intentional on some sessions where I'd just hang around and comment on what was going on, and wind up playing and writing lyrics. One of my functions was clearly to bring in just a different element. Like 'Space Cowboy' was just a rhythm track and I added ideas to it and wrote a lot of the lyrics. We'd both taken a creative writing course in Wisconsin, I think I did better at it than Steve and often I'd finish some of the songs.

ZZ: Steve expects a lot from the musicians he works with doesn't he? He expects them to contribute something different and not just be there as back-up musicians.

BS: He has a strong idea about recording and about how he wants everything to sound. Whereas I'll go into the studio, again if it's my record, and whoever I've chosen to play on my record I've chosen because I like the way they play, and so when we actually come to record I want them to do something different to it, to contribute something which is clearly theirs. Steve is quite the reverse, he'll want somebody to play *that* and the closer you get to *that* the happier he is. It's a different approach.

ZZ: Certainly on both your albums some of the tracks give the impression of being jams especially what you called the up tracks on 'I Lead A Life'.

BS: I have yet to do properly what I should do more which is to be able to construct a piece of music which is as orderly say as 'Chances Are' [on 'I Lead A Life'] and yet be able to jam on it at the same time. I don't know why it is so difficult. I think that what happens is that when I come across a piece of music which is that orderly I tend to carry on with it and produce it and finish the product. It's almost as if you're painting a picture, you can look at it and correct things and look at it and correct things so that by the time it's all done with there are no mistakes. Recording gives you a chance to sit back and look at it in that way. Recording takes something that has no dimensions and sort of makes it like two dimensions, it's really right there in front of you.

ZZ: Do you find it more difficult to be responsible for both playing and recording? On your albums you use someone like Bruce Botnik; is it just to have someone else there?

BS: Well it is for the amount of work you put into it and if your partner is putting in as much as you are it comes out better for that,—it has to. The problem is not so much whether I'm playing good or not because I've got used to playing for tapes in the studio but I need someone to tell me to play differently when it's necessary. I need an extra opinion.

ZZ: Could you tell me a little about the people who played on 'I Lead A Life' who are far less well known figures in rock than say Charlie Watts, Peter Frampton, Boz Scaggs or Jesse Davis who played on 'Groove'. How about Phil Upchurch?

BS: Phil is a master musician. If we had a list of the hits Phil has played on it would be bigger than that menu. I first heard his name with a record called 'You Can't Sit Down' which was a bit hit in the early sixties. He played on a lot of those Chess records—a lot of instruments, guitar, bass, jazz or rock. Clyde Stubblefield who plays on that record I met around eighteen months ago. He'd just gotten off the road as James Brown's drummer for five years and he finally had enough of that and stopped. I had just got back into town in Wisconsin, and there he was, so he became part of the band. He played just like you hear him . . . real good.

ZZ: Tim Davis is on a couple of tracks.

BS: Yeah . . . he lives in Madison and was around for the sessions so he's there. He's got a band at the moment with Curley Cooke, who is also pretty heavily featured on that record. Curley is a very underrated musician. I don't know why people don't talk about him more because when he gets into the recording studios he does the thing which is absolutely invaluable. For every record there is someone, at least one guy like Curley who is coming up with fresh ideas all the time and playing beautifully. It's almost like, and I don't like to say this because it's almost demeaning, that he's a better session man than he is a live musician. He really glows when he is working on someone else's material. He also has written some great songs of his own that the world will probably never get to hear 'cause he's not the kind of guy who is readily saleable to a record company. He's a true session man. He's been leading Tim's band through this last year but even then there are thousands of bands being led by good musicians.

ZZ: He rarely seems to solo but always, as you say, seems to be cooking away in the background although there's some beautiful guitar work on A B Skhy's 'Ramblin' On'. That was a bit of a mixed album.

BS: As a matter of fact the only solos he's taken are on 'Back Down On Main Street' and on my new record he does quite a lot. On A B Skhy that's all Curley, and Dan Geyer, who was with him and Tim Davis in the Chordaires, of course.

ZZ: You also chose jazz trumpeter Blue Mitchell on both albums, and he went on not long after to join John Mayall, did you have anything to do with that?

BS: Not directly . . . I've been listening to Horace Silver all my life and Blue Mitchell played on all his records. When I got to LA I wanted a trumpet player and I knew the trumpet player I wanted was Blue Mitchell. I found him—he was living in Hawaii and I flew him out to LA to record on just two tracks of 'Feel Your Groove'. He said at the time I don't know why no one has ever asked me to play rock'n'roll because I'd enjoy to play more and yet I'm classified as mainstream jazz, and the next thing I knew he was with Mayall. So either somebody heard him or an opportunity came by that was completely unrelated but he took it. I saw him with Mayall's band and he was obviously having a real good time.

ZZ: Your new album 'Putting In Time On Planet Earth' came out in the States in May last year. How does it compare to the others, apart from having no strings?

BS: It's confusing because it's a much stronger record than I've ever done before but I tried to keep it simple. Listening to 'I Lead A Life' I realised that you couldn't hear the vocals because I didn't mix the vocals up front. The piano too tends to get lost in the track. When I started to make this record I decided to rectify those two things first, my singing and my playing, which is after all what I do.

ZZ: On 'Life' you do tend to lead the band rhythmically rather than in the usual way as an up front soloist.

BS: I wanted the band to develop the songs as songs and they came out that way, with no recognition of whose songs they were unless you could abstract the personality from them. But on this new record the piano is up front and the voice right behind. So it's strong like that and when you do something like that it really tends to project your personality.

I hope this one will be coming out in England and that it won't take six months. It's got Tony Williams on one side. I had been producing an album with him ['The Old Bums Rush']. Clyde Stubblefield is on the other side. Then there's Curley Cooke, Phil Upchurch, Steve plays on one track, and some West Coast jazz musicians like Bill Perkins and Frank Russell, and as you say, no strings.

ZZ: You are back now living in Wisconsin aren't you?

BS: Yeah . . . I bought a house in Madison. When I left England the second time I went straight to LA where I lived for a year before going to Madison.

ZZ: Do you do any live performances now?

BS: I do in Madison. People in Madison get to see me two or three nights a week in the local club when I'm in town, which is what I enjoy most; playing in a small club with familiar people who come along. Fortunately I'm not driven by money and have no desire to leave the club to go out and become famous so I can really get off from being in that club and playing.

ZZ: You've done no major touring?

ZZ: I've really been too busy to even take six weeks out to do it. I'd like to do it on one level but on another it is farthest from my mind.

ZZ: Did you actually tour with Spooky Tooth over here, which I remember reading somewhere?

BS: No, I didn't—I decided not to—I just rehearsed with them and we were going to get that together but I decided that I had to go back to school, I couldn't drop out again. I was on the road with Steve for a couple of weeks but that didn't work out, although I toured with Jesse Davis' band at length.

THE BOOK

ZZ: Could I ask you about your book 'Black Talk' which I believe was inspired by your love for and listening to black jazz musicians rather than rock musicians.

BS: Absolutely.

ZZ: Can you briefly describe what it was about?

BS: Actually I can't. I've even tried to give lectures on the book but failed miserably. It's very interesting for me to be in that position. To have come out of Sussex as an authority on this subject and then to be completely incoherent on it. In a sense it shows the legitimacy of the subject that I really don't feel I can gloss it, not even in a two-hour lecture. I can set up the precepts of it and set up the structure but when I get to the manipulation of what I really meant, there just isn't time to go into it. Sufficeth to say that it had to do with listening to a certain idiom of black music and saying that this is more than music, this is not just entertainment, this is something else.

ZZ: Are you describing a black culture which . . . ?

BS: It came from asking the question, 'Is this something that we in the west consider what music is, in its form and function in society?' It *is* clearly more than that. It always has been and in the book I set out to try and find out what it is in black culture and how much of that spilled over into our white culture. To find out to what extent one can say that one is an oral tradition and one is a literary tradition and to what extent you can use Marshall McLuhan's idea that literate society is breaking down and that young kids are more tribal, that is oral, and how much of that is related to black music and to those kids listening to it. Only the University of Sussex would have let me do it.

ZZ: Do you think there are any parallels with rock music today in terms of its influence on the kids who are listening to it?

BS: It's different in the sense that black music kept getting better and better and yet it was always street music, but it did keep getting better and better. Pop music or rock music has got better on a studio level not on a street level and people have gotten slicker through the use of hardware. Black music kept coming up from the roots and that's what is really fascinating about it. There's no rock'n'roll coming up from the roots any more at all, it's all coming out of the studios.

ZZ: How about the music of Chicago or New Orleans?

BS: I wouldn't call that rock'n'roll. Rock'n'roll as we know it is a studio form.

ZZ: Always has been, do you think?

BS: Well no . . . you could record what Chuck Berry was doing in the 50's with one microphone, you could record all those cats with a wire recorder but now it's certainly a studio form. When you play live now people judge live performances against a studio criteria. Does it stand up sound-wise? There were jazz records you would listen to that had bad distortion problems, technically bad, the asmith was out of line so the record would sound hissy. Stuff that people wouldn't listen to today for that reason. That's what I kept thinking. One of the effects of black music on the culture is that it keeps a strong street thing going on a very high spiritual level, whereas there's really no spiritual level in pot music . . . it's a lot of bullshit . . . it isn't spiritual in the sense that it influences day to day living or comes out of it, it's a new something to sell. The black jazz I was writing about was a rare example of something you don't find in the Western world. In Africa the oral tradition is a different thing but in America . . . ? People have asked me whether there are any parallels with the music I'm doing now but really there are none.

ZZ: The book came out simultaneously with the record but there was no tie-up apart from promotion?

BS: Somebody said in a review they could see similarities . . . but it was just marketing.

ZZ: What did you read for the book?

BS: That was the beauty of it . . . all I had to do was read every book that was ever written on jazz, about 200 books, I read sociology and psychology books in areas where it would fit what I was talking about. Marcus Cunliffe told me 'Go out, and if you know what you are looking for, you are bound to find it.' I figured out what I was looking for and naturally I found it in psychology and sociology books. I read about it and interpreted this stuff while I kept culling from the music itself, which was ultimately the primary source

ZZ: And 'Black Talk' is the final statement of what you feel, in literature at least?

BS: Yes . . . I'm through with it. At the university I'm teaching or rather holding court in a seminar that has to do with popular culture and record production and the record business. It's a group of about 25 students and I just exercise my brain that way, I'm also trying to write a science fiction book, which I've been trying to do all my life so you may never see it. I need time to write and look at each sentence and consider what each word means, I'm that kind of person.

'Feel Your Groove'—Capitol ST 825
'I Lead A Life'—Blue Thumb BTS 40
'Puttin' In Time On Planet Earth—
Blue Thumb BTS 55

Mick Houghton

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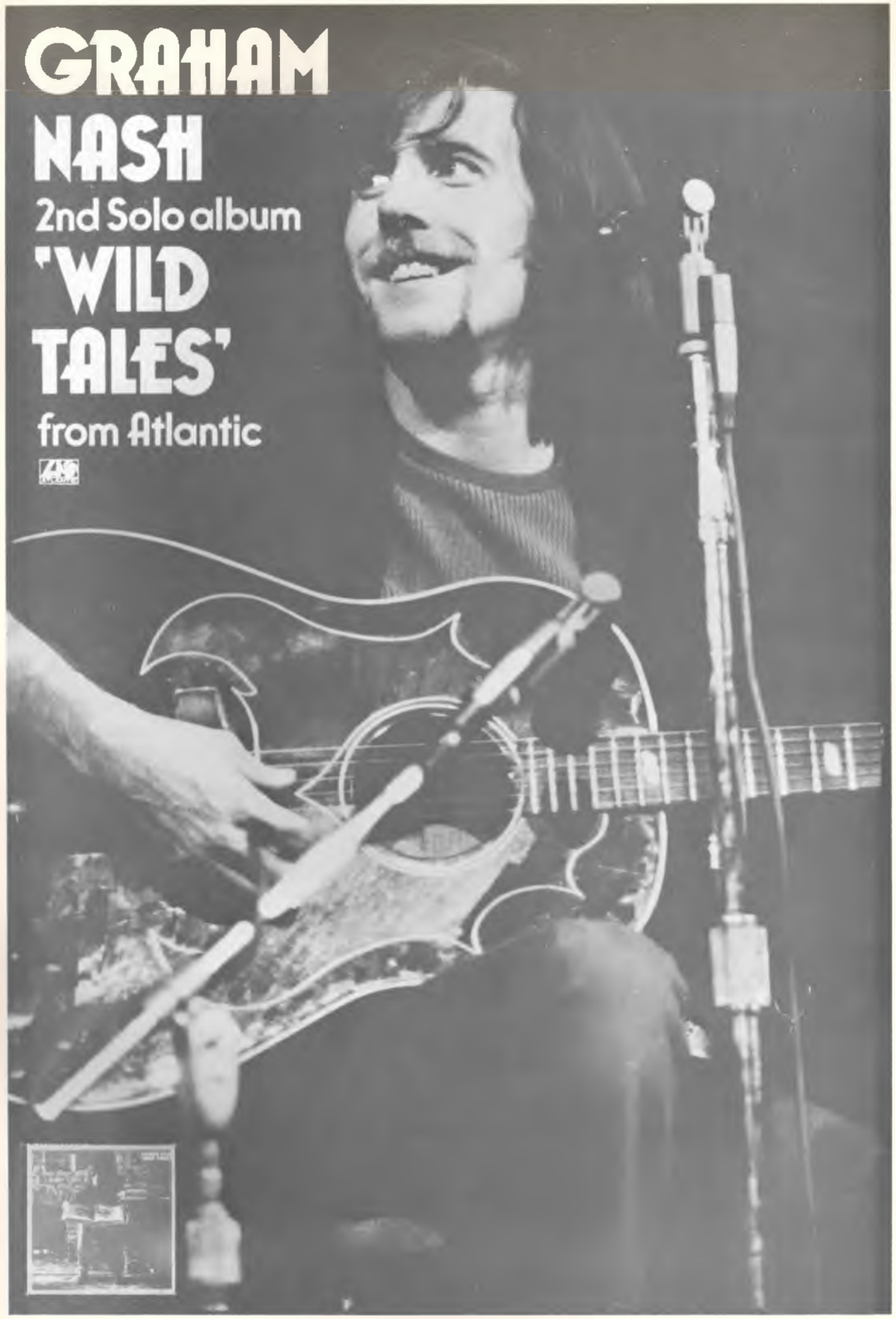

violin 1

THE CASE OF RICHARD GREENE: FIDDLER EXTRAORDINAIRE

"Scott Stoneman was my first real influence I guess I first met him in 1964 – I was a real estate salesman at the time. I managed an office just across the street from the Troubadour in LA., so every day I would see the place – never knowing just how significant it would become a little later on. I had played violin in high school, took lessons as a kid and all that, but I had absolutely no inclination to become a musician. Even so, I would hang out at the Ash Grove on Melrose because I knew a girl who worked there ..... and the Stoneman family came to play a gig. The music they made was like primitive bluegrass – mountain music – and Scott had this very unique, very weird fiddling style. Anyway, he was giving an impromptu recital to a bunch of interested people in one of the Ash Grove's front rooms – and I happened to be in that crowd [illegible] no musician and no music had ever affected me like that I was absolutely stunned."

"We became friends, Scott and me, and I hung out with him as much as I could for 8 or 9 months, – including a couple of months when he lived at my house – and I absorbed as much as I could. He kept telling me I would end up a great fiddle player, but I stressed that I was only picking up what I could as an intellectual study – a new way of playing the violin."

"Unfortunately, Scott had a terrible alcoholic problem, which is what finally killed him ... and it seemed that much of my time with him was spent driving him to the hospital. I don't know if you've ever seen an alcoholic, but attempts at withdrawal often result in the need for urgent medical attention — well, to cut a long story short, I couldn't seem to keep him together, and we drifted apart. I saw him now and then after that .... until the day he died..... but to this day he remains my all-time favourite violin player."

"Scott Stoneman can be heard on various records and was on tape that have never been released, but as far as I know, that really crazy, freaky style of his hasn't ever been captured".
(Note: I believe that Scott can be heard on the soon-to-be released live Kentucky Colonels album on John Delgatto's Rebar label.)

Richard Greene's first band, when he and his cohorts were all college sophomores was the Dry City Scat Band

The DRY CITY SCAT BAND

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"I was sitting in my office, trying to make real estate deals – and all of a sudden I said "Frank It..... I can't do this anymore!" I'd heard that a bluegrass group called THE GREENBRIAR BOYS was coming to town, so I got my fiddle out, dusted it off, did a bit of practice, and tried to get a job with them. They weren't too interested, but they did need a string bass player – so I joined as bass player – one of the easiest gigs in music – except you wear out your fingers playing it. I stayed with them a while – until I had the opportunity to join Bill Monroe".

BILL MONROE'S BLUEGRASS BOYS #84

March 1966 to March 1967. "I [illegible] when I was asked to join Bill Monroe, because he's like the inventor & king of bluegrass – I quit the Greenbriar Boys and went to Nashville." The only Monroe album on which he (& Peter Rowan) appears is "BLUEGRASS TIME" (Oct 1967) US Decca DL 74896.

ROLAND WHITE – replaced – vocals & guitar. Now in Gazette (see soon-to-be-revised Eagles chart).
PETER ROWAN – vocals & guitar, previously with the Charles River Valley Boys (for 3 weeks!)
LAMAR GRIER – banjo
BILL MONROE – mandolin & vocals
JAMES MONROE (his son) – string bass
BYRON BERLINE – replaced – fiddle
RICHARD GREENE – fiddle. Joined March 1966 & left March 1967
See Tobler's lengthy tracks in ZIGZAGS 34 & 36

"We toured around quite a bit when I was in Bill Monroe's group – even went over to England – but the work dried up and we disbanded. You see, Bill doesn't change his music at all – not a note of it has changed since 1940! He's added a few tunes since then, but basically the repertoire is the same, so it's a case of arousing successive generations to his music because one lot gets interested and then gets bored. Right now he's riding high again however."

KALEIDOSCOPE #1

Formed in September 1966 – but this is not the time and place to discuss this bizarre aggregation. One clue, however – Fenrus Epp, Maxwell Buda, Templeton Farceley and Connie Crill are one and the same chap!

DAVID LINDLEY – banjo, fiddle, mandolin, guitar, vocals, harp-guitar
CHRIS DARROW – fiddle, banjo, mandolin, clarinet, baritone harmonica, vocals
SOL FELDTHOUSE – dulcimer, fiddle, 12 string guitar, bass, vocals, plus a wide range of "exotic instruments"
JOHN VIDIKAN – drums
FENRUS EPP – violin, viola, piano, organ, harmonica, bass

Before joining the Blues Project, Steve Katz had been in the Even Dozen Jug Band (with Maria Muldaur, John Sebastian, etc), Al Kooper had been involved with all kinds of amazing ventures, Andy Kulberg had been studying music at college, Roy Blumenfeld had been a Greenwich Village bloke, Danny Kalb had been an accompanist and session man (and had played on the Elektra "Blues Project" album, July 1964, from which they took their name, and Tommy Flanders was in a Cambridge rock group, the Trolls, with Bantana, later of the Youngbloods.

"I guess that the Cambridge/Boston folk scene of the early/mid Sixties was purely magical but I only caught the tail end of it when I joined Jim Kweskin. The whole area was a hive of great musicians, much the same as Woodstock was a few years later. All these musicians in Cambridge were into the same kind of music, but there weren't enough gigs or clubs to support them all. Only Club 47 put on the big names – most of the other clubs and coffee houses were pretty small time."

"Jim Kweskin, however, was great friends with Mel Lyman, who had himself been in the early Jug Band, and his interests in Lyman's activities began to eclipse his enthusiasm for the Jug Band – until eventually Mel, an anti-materialistic believer, led him to fold it up..... he just sort of flipped out under Mel's influence, it seemed. He said the band existed as a unit to make money – which just wasn't true. There were personal conflicts and odd problems, but by and large the music really got us off and we had a lot of good times in that band."

"Anyway, Kweskin gave us all 5 months notice of his intention to quit, and during that time I left – because by this time, Spring 1968, I was really beginning to get into rock."

Apart from the reprise album mentioned above, the Kweskin band made 3 albums and Kweskin made 3 solo albums, all for Vanguard:
"JIM KWESCIN & THE JUG BAND"
(October 1963) VSD 2158
"JUG BAND MUSIC"
(March 1963) VSD 79163
"RELAX YOUR MIND"
(December 1967) VSD 79183
"SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR TITLE" (Dec 1964) VSD 79234
"JUMP FOR JOY"
(June 1967) VSD 79243
"WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THOSE GOOD OLD DAYS"
(Sept 1968) VSD 79278

The JIM KWESKIN JUG BAND

March 1967 to April 1968

"Kweskin's band was past its peak by the time I arrived; we made one album in that line-up ("A GARDEN OF JOY" (Nov 67) Reprise RS 6266, and then we broke up..... it was great fun at the time. I quit before the end, anyway..... I was really getting into rock."

GEOFF MULDAUR – married – guitar, vocals, clarinet, washboard, mandolin
MARIA D'AMATO – vocals, tambourine, kazoo
FRITZ RICHMOND – washtub bass, jug, vocals. Became studio engineer and did the odd session
JIM KWESKIN – vocals, Comb & paper guitar. Joined Mel Lyman's family
BILL KEITH – banjo (also ex Bill Monroe). Joined Jim & Sylvia's Great Speckled Bird
RICHARD GREENE – violin and viola

THE BLUES PROJECT

January 1965 to October 1967. Initially highly successful as New York's first blues band. Kooper joined fresh from triumphs as Dylan's organist. Albums: "LIVE AT CAFE AU GO GO" (May 1966) FTS 3000, "PROJECTIONS" (January 1967) FTS 3008, "LIVE AT TOWN HALL" (October 1967) FTS 3025, "BEST OF" (July 1969) FTS 3049. See Zigzag 21 and 22 for details.

ANDY KULBERG – bass, flute
ROY BLUMENFELD – drums & percussion
DANNY KALB – lead guitar, vocals
TOMMY FLANDERS – vocals, left March 1966
STEVE KATZ – rhythm guitar, vocals
AL KOOPER – organ, vocals

Al Kooper and Steve Katz formed Blood Sweat & Tears, which Kooper subsequently left in order to produce, cut supersession albums, etc. See Zigzags 21-23

Geoff and Maria MULDAUR

Two albums: "PRETTY FOOT" (May 1970) KS 4350 and "SWEET POTATOES" (February 1972) MS 2079

GEOFF MULDAUR – vocals, piano and guitar
MARIA (D'AMATO) MULDAUR – vocals. Released a Solo Album "MARIA MULDAUR" (October 1975) MS 2148

Joined Paul Butterfield's Better Days

KEITH AND ROONEY

A "supergroup" duo which played intermittently through the Sixties

JIM ROONEY – guitar. Ran the Club 47 in Cambridge for 3 years
BILL KEITH – banjo

SEATRAIN #1

April 1968 to May 1969. "The underground thing had been thriving in San Francisco and I felt I was missing out by being stuck on the East Coast. I travelled west & joined SeaTrain, then still called The Blues Project. We cut "PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE" (Dec 68) Verve FTS 3046 and "SEA TRAIN" (June 1969) A&M AMLS (SP 4171)."

RICHARD GREENE – violin and strings
ANDY KULBERG – bass and flute
JAMES T ROBERTS – lyrics
DON KRETMAR – saxophone and bass
JOHN GREGORY – guitar and vocals. Formerly with pioneer San Francisco group THE MYSTERY TREND. He left Sea Train after he became ill."
ROY BLUMENFELD – drums and percussion

Dropped out of sight for a while & then re-emerged to cut "CROISCENDENTS" with Stefan Grossman (June 1969) Atlantic/Lotrillion SD 5007

Temporarily left music to become a photographer

In a brief fling at a Solo career recorded "THE MOONSTONE" (October 1968) FTS 3075

EARTH OPERA

A very underrated Boston group – lasted from 1968 to 1969 and made 2 studio albums: "EARTH OPERA" (June 1968) ELS 74016 and "THE USUAL AMERICAN EAGLE TRAGEDY" (April 1969) ELS 74058

BILL STEVENSON – piano, organ, harpsichord (left before the second album)
PAUL DILLON – drums, percussion, vocals (joined after the first album).
JOHN NAGY – bass (previously taught guitar in Cambridge)
DAVID GRISMAN – mandolin, piano, saxophone, vocals (ex Even Dozen Jug Band)
PETER ROWAN – guitar, vocals, fiend fax

Dave Grisman is an interesting creeper. It seems that he's always been a bluegrass nut, having formed The New York Ramblers back in early 1964. Subsequently he and Peter Siegel (ex of Even Dozen Jug Band and later the producer of Earth Opera) formed a record label and toured the Southern States with a tape recorder, looking for bluegrass and traditional music. Then he wrote a book on bluegrass mandolin for Oak Publications. (I tried to track him down when I was in California..... couldn't find him. Maybe next time).

The BLUE VELVET BAND

Just crammed in under the wire on album ("A pure album, damn it!"), produced by Erik Jacobsen "SWEET MOMENTS" (October 1969) Warner Bros WS 1802

ERIC WEISSBERG – guitar, banjo (ex Greenbriar Boys & Tarriers). Now leads Deliverance
JIM ROONEY – guitar. Now manages the studio in Woodstock.
BILL KEITH – banjo. Up to his up-market Jones & session man
RICHARD GREENE – violin
ANDY KULBERG – bass & flute
JIM ROBERTS – lyrics
ELIOT RANDALL – guitar, formed Randall Island – later, Jim
TEDDY IRWIN – guitar & vocals
BOBBY MOSES – drums
RED SHEPARD – vocals (ex "Hair")
DON KRETMAR – saxophone and bass

SEATRAIN #2

May 1969 to September 1969

"Music was the boom period – every group on earth was getting vast amounts of money to cut albums – and we'd been sure not to miss the boat. But our relationship with A&M soured and the group couldn't stay together – maybe 25 different guys went through the band in this period (including these)".

SEATRAIN #3

September 1969 to August 1970

"The group stumbled with the arrival of Peter, Lloyd & Larry and we went to a stage to George Martin, who liked what he heard and agreed to produce us." Subsequently cut "SEATRAIN" (March 1971) EAST 6450 and "MARBLEHEAD MESSENGER" (Sept 1971) EA ST 889

PETER ROWAN – lead vocals, guitar. Joined Sept 1969, left May 1972
RICHARD GREENE – violin, viola, keyboard. Left August 1972
LARRY ATAMANUIK – drums, percussion. Joined June 1970 for Ronnie Hawkins Band
LLOYD BASKIN – lead vocals, keyboards (Joined May 1970 (ex All Night Workers)
ANDY KULBERG – bass, vocals, flute
JIM ROBERTS – lyrics

THE BLUES PROJECT

made an abortive attempt at a reunion comeback in 1971, when Steve (Katz/Blumenfeld & Kretmar) released "LAZARUS" (October 1971) Capitol ST 782. Subsequently expanded the line-up, but disbanded after a further album "BLUES PROJECT" (April 72) ST 11017

BILL LUSSENDEN – guitar
DANNY KALB – guitar
ROY BLUMENFELD – drums
TOMMY FLANDERS – vocals
DON KRETMAR – bass & sax
DAVID COHEN – piano (ex Country Joe and the Fish)

OLD & IN THE WAY #1

"This was more or less a part-time / fallback group. I was concentrating on getting my band on the road [illegible] & had a space week-end. I'd flu up to San Francisco and play some gigs – it was a lot of fun".

JERRY GARCIA – banjo and vocals, also connected, so I believe with some obscure band from San Francisco
DAVID GRISMAN – mandolin and vocals
JOHN KAHN – bass, (a session man [illegible] Pointer Sisters' Firebird and Grateful Dead albums etc)
PETER ROWAN – guitar and vocals
RICHARD GREENE – fiddle. Spent some time working with Jane Getz

SEATRAIN #4

September 1970 to July 1973

Very much an attempt by Andy Kulberg to pick up the pieces. A change of label didn't help keep them together. Apparently split after making "WATCH" (April 1973) K 46232

PETER WALSH – guitar, vocals (ex Pacific Gas & Electric)
LLOYD BASKIN – keyboards, vocals
JULIO CORONADO – drums on jazz gigs
BILL ELLIOT – keyboards on sessions
ANDY KULBERG – bass, flute

TO ALL ZIGZAGGERS EVERYWHERE

Best of luck to you

Richard Greene

OLD & IN THE WAY #2

"They still play, but it's a weird situation because they only gig when Jerry Garcia isn't engaged in one of his thirteen other projects..... it's hard to predict what sort of a line-up there have as a group".

VASSAR CLEMENTS – fiddle
JERRY GARCIA – banjo and vocals
DAVID GRISMAN – mandolin and vocals
JOHN KAHN – bass
PETER ROWAN – guitar and vocals

RICHARD GREENE & the ZONE

"Since October 1972, I've been working on getting my own band together and into shape..... and it hasn't been all that easy". First album "RICHARD GREENE & THE ZONE" (January 1974) WB 2701

RICHARD GREENE – fiddle
LARRY TAYLOR – bass. "Larry was with Canned Heat, John Mayall, & Fire Food ... he's great – he's the show stopper... just kills the audience on every gig".
RANDY RESNICK – guitar. "He was with Fire Food & Dog Act which was Larry's last group"
RICHARD MARTIN – vocals. "He's from Philadelphia & has played around quite a bit, looking for an ideal situation".
KEN COLLIER – drums. "A great drummer – fresh and ready to go".

THE BLUES PROJECT

reformed initially to play a gig in New York Central Park in June 1973 (the original line-up except Tommy Flanders). A live triple album of the event was released October 1973: "REUNION IN CENTRAL PARK" Sounds of the South/MCA 2-8003. The group only did one subsequent gig.

ANDY KULBERG – bass
DANNY KALB – lead guitar, vocals
ROY BLUMENFELD – drums
STEVE KATZ – rhythm guitar, harmonica, vocals
AL KOOPER – organ, mellotron, vocals

concurrently working with his new record label Sounds of the South.

Zigzag Magazine No 38, January 1974

Another lastly executed chart in a series of family trees. Researched and drawn by Pete Frame and Mac Garry in the wilds of North Marston.

A photograph of SeaTrain #3, with Richard Greene looking more like Donald Duck than the dashing and handsome fellow he is in reality. Left to right: Adamanuik, Rowan, Kulberg, Greene, Rankin.

"I joined the remains of the Blues Project and we made that final album ..... just for the hread... Verve appeared to know very little about marketing rock'n'roll, so we changed our name to Sea Train and went to England and cut their first Capitol album with George Martin at Air Studios, George, of course, had a magnificent track record – a wealth of experience in so many areas, but with us his role was that of a judge. For instance, I'd be greatly influenced by which of my solos he liked the best. He had lots of ideas, but basically he just made sure that what we wanted to happen, did in fact happen..... he delivered what the artist requires & and doesn't try to become the artist. My favourite track on that album is 'Broken Morning', which was one track where George suggested some good harmony ideas."

"Both that album and its successor 'MARBLEHEAD MESSENGER' were maybe a little too perfect, a little too clinical, but that was the group's fault. The first album sold over 200,000 copies. We were pretty good on stage around that time – really dirt a number, and we got a lot of albums as a result of live appearances, rather than from ads or press coverage."

"The second Capitol/Martin album was cut in Massachusetts; we rented a little empty house and some equipment and built a temporary studio out in Marblehead. That album, however, represented a downward step as far as I was concerned — there was very little excitement. Though 'Despair Eyre' was pretty interesting."

"The group was really losing its enthusiasm at this time – too many leaders – 4 leaders – that was the root of much of the trouble. Each wanted to do his own trip, & that's how it has worked out. I learnt a lot during my stay with Sea Train."

"After I left, they re-shuffled and signed with Warners, but I think the energy had been long gone."

"And now Andy Kulberg's gone, Full Circle and I'm back with the Blues Project. It's weird; at the time, all the changes involving the people from the Blues Project seemed ridiculously complicated, but in retrospect, in the long run, it just seems as if the Blues Project broke up for a while and then reformed!"

You can find more grist on Old & In the Way in Andy Childs' article in Zigzag 37.

"All the time that I was working with Jane Getz and Old & In the Way, I was working like a madman to get my own band into shape – and finally, after a great many trials and tribulations I've arrived at the point where I have an album recorded and ready for release, and a stable group to go out on the road and do some gigs."

"Musically, the album is an extension of everything I've ever done..... people are going to categorise it, say it sounds like jazz or something, but it isn't – it's just music that I've written – music that hasn't been heard before. There aren't any hints, as far as I recall, in any of my past work, which will indicate how this album will sound – there are little glimmerings maybe, but nothing more. It's freer, much more intense and high energy than anything else I've done".

"Arriving at the happy state I now find myself in is the result of much frustration, time and expense, I might add. I've had extreme personnel difficulties – people have been coming and going like crazy ..... no sooner did I have what I thought was a good stable unit, when someone would leave, for one reason or another – so the few live gigs we did were far from satisfactory".

"I've learnt the hard way that it takes a long time to get a band together, both as a musically integrated whole and as a unit where personalities don't clash."

"We got over the problem of 'too many leaders' very simply; from the out set it has been understood that the only leader in this band is me. This is no ego trip – it's just the result of my observations of why so many good groups break up. So I'm the boss and I pay the salaries. In that area, my policy is rigid, but in the area of music and ideas, it's very free. We share ideas about arrangements and material – and if they're good we implement them ... that's how we get the best performances".

"All sorts of people came and went: Paul Lagos (now forming a band with Fenrus Epp!!!), Jay Graydon, Joe Carrero – a phenomenal drummer!, a singer called Ray Kennedy, all sorts of people."

"Warners gave me A lot of money – I could have retired on it! Now, I've all but used it up on equipment and salaries ..... I forked out thousands of dollars to guys who are now hundreds of miles away – I mean, it costs a lot of bread to support a band for a year..... especially when there's no source of income other than my pocket!"

Can this really be Richard Greene?

KENNY LOGGINS (WITH JIM MESSINA SITTIN' IN) TALKIN' 'BOUT.....

Where better to interview Kenny Loggins and Jimmy Messina that in the crowded restaurant of a good old Holiday Inn, with piped music from the wall speakers vying with the persistency of the all American waitresses to see who could cause the most aggravation.

Kenny's behaviour captured the true spirit in which the group's 'Holiday Hotel' was written; calling the waitress over and asking if she wouldn't mind running down the street to the Chinese restaurant since the Holiday Inn food was unbearable.

With the CBS tame representative I'd followed the northern trail—almost the Arctic trail—upstate towards the Niagara Falls and Buffalo, and I fully expected to find snow when we landed in Rochester, New York. That's where the band were playing that evening and it was there—on the even of Thanksgiving and the eve of their Madison Square Garden concert—that they spoke of their fortunes past and present.

..BEGINNINGS..

ZZ: At what point did you seriously start studying bass guitar?

Jimmy: There's a bass player named Joe Osborne cutting some tracks in a studio which a friend of mind and myself had built called Universal Recorders although I think it's called Sunwest Recorders now. I met them at the studio and became friends with them, and I guess Joe took a liking to me because I was so young and ambitious. We built a studio for him in his garage and while we were there Joe was teaching me the bass and showing me what basses were good so I because sort of inspired by his playing and bought a bass and started practising on it. Now when Buffalo Springfield lost their bass player it was at the same time as I was offered a job as a producer for A&M—starting in three months—so I figured it was easier for me to spend three months working with the Buffalo Springfield than nine months at the pay I was getting as an engineer before I left to go to A&M. So I told them I would temporarily work with them as their bass player.

ZZ: The 'Sittin' In' album seemed to involve a long, long time in the studios.

Kenny: Yeah it did. We rehearsed that album—counting the time from when Jim and I met—we rehearsed for about a year before we took it into the studio. That was due to the fact that most of the musicians in the group, with the exception of Merel and Larry, had never been on stage before in any kind of professional sense and it required an awful lot of time just getting everything worked out and visualising what we were going to do later.

ZZ: Merel and Larry were in the Sunshine Company and although their albums came out in Britain, I haven't much idea as to their status.

Kenny: I think they were fairly big on the west coast. We'd all met on occasions, they'd shared the bill several times with local bands I was in but I didn't really know them.

ZZ: How, in fact, did you and Jimmy get together?

Kenny: That's simple enough. It was December 1970 that we first met and we came together to do a Kenny Loggins solo album. How it happened was that we both had a mutual friend named Don Ellis, an executive of CBS and now at Epic, and Don knew me and my writing through my brother [Dan Loggins, A&R man CBS, London] because they had worked together in San Francisco and Don liked my writing.

Don knew Jimmy through Poco, so when Jimmy left Poco and decided to become a producer, and I was looking for a producer, Don thought it would be a good combination. So I went over to his house one night and sat there and played songs for him and a month or two later we were trading tunes—he would sit and sing his songs to me and I would sing my songs to him, hunting for material for the album, and we noticed that in harmonising with each other there was something worth working on so we gave it a try.

By the time we hit the studio the concept we wanted to follow through was that the people that would take it onstage, and that's one of the reasons why it took so long to actually rehearse the album because it was explained to the guys that in the event we all liked each other's presence, as well as cutting an album, we'd tour together. So the album was not the final end product.

ZZ: So the plan was fulfilled—all the session guys went on with you except for Michael O'Martian.

Jimmy: Well, Michael wanted to be a record producer and even when he was rehearsing with us he was doing other projects on the side and his main interests were not Loggins & Messina.

Kenny had worked with him prior to that on some other gigs and at first he did want to join, then he didn't, then he did, then he didn't, but I think basically all the way he wanted to be with us but I think the deciding factor was when he produced a hit single—a thing two years ago by the Free Movement which was a hit in the States for them—and that launched them onto an album and him onto a career as a record producer, so he had to make the decision whether he wanted to travel all over the country with us on a 'hopeful' situation or take what he thought was a sure thing, so he stayed at home.

ZZ: He was on those Gator Creek sessions.

Kenny: Right, that's where I met him. We did all those Gator Creek sessions and he had his back to me facing the wall from the way they'd set the piano up and I never met him during that entire thing until we did the vocal sessions. But it was Dee Barton who hired all the musicians like Larry Knechtel—he's a big band fellah who played drums and trombone for Kenton's band and there were some very heavy people on those sessions but they weren't really very interested in what they were doing. So after doing a whole album with Michael I finally met him after doing the vocal sessions and he said 'I played piano on the album' and I said 'Oh really' and turned him onto tequila and we've been friends ever since. It wasn't all that enjoyable but it was a trip. We sat down to do 'Danny's Song' and I said 'I'll just run it through once so you guys can hear it' and they said 'No, don't bother we've got the charts' and that's the way it was.

..EARLY SONGS..

ZZ: 'Danny's Song' and 'Long Tailed Cat' are two examples of songs from that period which have survived and resurfaced again more recently. 'House At Pooh Corner' is another, are there any more 'vintage' songs from that prolific period which are still reappearing?

Kenny: 'Sailing The Wind' [off the new album] goes back to then and . . . yuk, I think this French toast goes back to then . . .

ZZ: That another from the Dan Loggins/Dan Lottermoser combination, did it come about the same time as 'Vahevella'?

Kenny: I think that was after 'Vahevella'. We were in Hawaii when we first started working on 'Sailing The Wind' and we just tried to make it blossom as its own entity without any allusion to 'Vahevella'.

ZZ: Are they still doing any writing together?

Kenny: I think they wrote more together in the old days though maybe this will make them write more.

ZZ: Who is D.L. George who has co-written one of the songs on the new album, not Lowell George?

Kenny: You're the first person to ask me that, I was waiting for someone to ask me that. That's my old lady; she helped me write the lyrics to that.

..THEIR ALBUMS..

ZZ: Just to analyse the three albums, one has been an obvious studio album, another was cut almost live which seemed to be a direction reaction . . .

Jimmy: Which was which?

ZZ: I thought the first was very much a studio creation, the second was much looser and more fluid . . .

Jimmy: I felt exactly the same way . . .

ZZ: So how did you approach the third? How did you cope with the danger of over-elaborating in the studio on the one hand, and cutting a unilateral album on the other, that is to say cutting so live that where it's great for the stage it doesn't quite make it in the comforts of your own home.

Kenny: I know what you're saying, and there is a dichotomy in our music. Like Jimmy says, we make albums for the home and the attitude a listener will have at home; but when you take it onstage it becomes another thing all together. Our live show is much more energetic and powerful than our albums but you've got to entertain.

..NEW LIVE ALBUM..

ZZ: And now you've got a live album in the pipeline?

Jimmy: Yeah it'll be the next album, it's been recorded at New York's Carnegie Hall and Boston and Winterland. It's all edited together, it's just a question now of seeing what we can fit onto two albums.

ZZ: Jimmy, you've recorded live in Boston before—with Poco for the 'Deliverin'' album.

Jimmy: Yeah right; that was at the Music Hall in Boston but this was at the old Aquarius Theatre. It's funny, I wish we had recorded it at the Music Hall because the acoustics are better and you can leave the audience mikes on . . . for example one of the sets I used on Kenny at the Carnegie Hall, if you bring the audience mikes up just a touch, there's the greatest sounding echo to a voice, and it's all natural. That's really the trick. You see, we haven't really got playing live down to a point where . . . if we could record live the

way we're supposed to,—playing at the right volume at, say, Carnegie Hall—conceivably you could then turn up the audience microphones and create a whole other dimension which would really enhance the recording. But unfortunately all rock acts, including ourselves, have the tendency to play just a little too loud, so when you do bring it up what you're getting is just a bounce off in a room.

ZZ: Did you learn a lot from recording Poco live?

Jimmy: Not really. I learnt that I should have used another engineer. I was really disappointed with that recording because it took a lot of effort to make that tape sound good because, basically, the engineer turned everything up, checked the levels on the tape machine to make sure they weren't going in the red, and went out and had a beer and it was really hard working trying to get it all back together.

ZZ: Talking about live albums there's a limited edition live album with tracks by you and tracks by David Bromberg which CBS distributed. I thought it turned out pretty good but what's the story behind that one?

Jimmy: Well that was originally designed to do one thing—a thank you and a . . . something we could give the college students around the country that are involved in radio programming in the colleges. We had a little party for them—they were in New York at some Convention and while they were there we set up a thing with Columbia and asked them to take it into a kind of concert hall and then we invited them over to the place, laid on food for them and played a concert for them. It wasn't our idea to even make an album but someone decided it would be a good idea to turn on the tape machine and when it was over they said 'Let's listen to what we have'. So then we decided we'd go ahead and print 'em up and send 'em just to the colleges, but then a lot of commercial stations got insulted that they didn't have the album so they were told that it wasn't a commercial album and got even madder, so they had to get some of them to the people in the stations.

ZZ: Did you ever consider it as a live album on a mass consumer level?

Jimmy: No, it's not really a good live album, it's not representative of what we do—we didn't even use our own equipment; it was all rented and there was no preconceived attitude to make the stage good for recording and it really isn't a good recording.

But on the new album I think we're very lucky because Alex [Kazanegras] and I have spent three or four years working together and we've had a chance to make a lot of mistakes learning new miking techniques; for the most part drums have recorded really good, bass is really good, Kenny's guitar is good, the violin at times is not but I think I've found the answer to that.

By the time I get through what I want to do, I think it'll be a very fine recording. There are a couple of things that won't be quite so good, like at Winterland, Merel didn't have a good set of drums. In fact, he was using the drums George Grantham gave him, or sold him, four years ago and those were the drums that were on the first Poco album which have to be the worst drums in the world. So the sound suffered. Yet the performance was good, and I think in those cases where the performance is good you have to say to yourself 'Let's forget about the technicalities'. I know that on that promotional album there are a couple of takes that are probably some of the best takes that we'll ever do on certain songs, so even though it sounds bad it is a good take.

..POCO..

ZZ: Let's talk about your days with Poco.

Jimmy: I'm really glad that I went through it—it's a big part of me—but in those days I used to sit back more and listen, and as a result things happend that I would have done differently had I taken the initiative to do it.

ZZ: Was the band always dominated by Richie Furay?

Jimmy: I always thought Richie never really had a chance in Buffalo Springfield. I felt that Stephen and Neil were so dominating and their writings and stuff had more attention brought to them and Richie never really had an opportunity to have his tunes brought forward. When we were putting that last album together, although, obviously, Neil didn't need any help, I was always available to help him and Stephen, but Richie didn't have anyone to help him, so I would help him get musicians together and if he needed charts written or something. So basically our relationship grew out of a need for one another. Stephen asked me if I wanted to be in his new group before the Buffalo Springfield split up, and I said 'Well if you're going to do the blues, then no' and he said 'Well if you're not capable of living the blues then you shouldn't be in the band' and I said 'Er, that's what I just said,' y'know. Neil was going to work as a solo artist, and I really wasn't interested in being a bass player, so I felt that Richie and I could get done what we wanted. I basically wanted to produce and play guitar, and he just wanted to write and sing so it was an ideal situation. But unfortunately . . . . I may be wrong but it grew into a situation where he began to persecute and it got to a point where I really didn't want to argue with him about things because he could be right . . . he could be very right about certain things. But it was a good experience, and we made a lot of good music.

ZZ: So your role in Poco developed in much the same way as Richie's had in the Buffalo Springfield?

Jimmy: Yes, yes, I think that had a lot to do with it because eventually you can only put so much out and then you want something in return and I didn't feel like I was totally getting it so I became disenchanted and decided that I should really follow my instincts. Which was really just to work with other artists and not get tied down or committed to one.

But what happened again was that in trying to get a situation started with Kenny I realised that you just can't say 'I'm going to be your producer and that's it,' otherwise opportunities don't come your way. So a situation arose where I had to put my guitar back on, and get out and help promote the records; but in this situation it's different because Kenny is totally independent of me, he's got no legal reasons to have to stay with me and I've got no legal reasons to have to stay with him. We're two separate artists who have come together to work on the same project right now, and we're trying desperately to make sure that things that have happened, for instance, to me in the past, will not happen to the both of us now. I'd really hate for that to happen—I hope those things aren't inevitable but I guess the more money and the more success you get, the more the outside influences eventually start changing your mind.

..INTERACTING..

ZZ: Were you at all aware of Jimmy's earlier work?

Kenny: Yeah, I liked the first Poco album and I was definitely aware of his work with Buffalo Springfield which is what sent me over to his house in the first place because I liked what I heard.

ZZ: Just how much had you done as a musician, before this band? You had made a name as a songwriter but not much is known about your stage work and musical influences.

Kenny: I'd been a musician in performing bands for three or four years prior to meeting Jimmy. I started performing because I really just got fed up with that one way street that I was on in Pasadena, doing the same jobs over and over again and getting nowhere, and I decided I'd better enlarge my field of vision a little bit. So I first became a songwriter for ABC Wingate and decided I'd concentrate on writing, and see if I could get my tunes to other people and all it taught me was that trying to write hit records can drive you crazy. Every time I tried to write a hit record it got me nowhere, it was trying to write an artistic record that got me somewhere and even less lofty aspirations than that . . . you know, just trying to write pretty songs. Then came 'Danny's Song'. I had no ideas about writing a hit record, or doing something incredibly artistic or whatever, I was just writing the song for my brother really [*the song was about his brother's baby child—JG*].

ZZ: Did Kenny's songwriting skills urge you to start writing again, and in a reciprocal way was your guitar playing influential in Kenny's improvement on the instrument?

Jimmy: No. When I met Kenny I'd already written a lot of tunes; in fact, a few of the tunes on the second album, and a few of the tunes on this album, I'd written ages ago. 'Golden Ribbons' was written for Richie to sing, but Richie never liked the song.

I thought that after Richie rejected a couple of songs, the best thing was not to submit any more material. [*The only Messina song that Poco ever recorded was 'You'd Better Think Twice' as far as I can recall—JG*] Richie had more than enough songs that he'd written himself, so actually, there was really no need. Tunes like 'Peace Of Mind' I'd written then, and when I heard Kenny sing it, I knew he was the one that was supposed to do it. It's really funny to write a song and have somebody interpret the material, but that's what I felt I needed when I was working with Poco. Kenny satisfies my desires—I write a particular song and he adds his personal touch to it and that's the kind of relationship I'd hoped Richie and I would have when he first started out, but it was never there. In the end we just had different philosophies about how our business should be run.

..RITCHIE FURAY..

ZZ: So Richie became very unidirectional and at the same time very intransigent?

Jimmy: Richie really wanted to be a hard rocker and I'm not really a hard rock musician, but that's where he wanted to go. OK, so we had musical differences, because I wanted to write songs like 'Peace Of Mind' and 'Same Old Wine'—things like thaa.

Kenny: That's odd, because 'Same Old Wine' came out to be fairly hard rock and by the climax of the tune it's really strong . . . powerful.

Jimmy: Maybe I'm using the wrong definition but at that point in time Richie wanted to do tunes like John Fogerty—that kind of hard rock—and I wasn't into doing songs like John Fogerty; I didn't want to be a Creedence Clearwater.

ZZ: How's your relationship with Richie now?

Jimmy: Well we've talked and spoken, and we have a personal relationship which is pretty cordial, but we don't spend much time with each other. I've seen Richie more often than I've seen anyone else in the Buffalo Springfield. I think Richie, now that he's left Poco, and is starting something new, maybe we'll be drawn closer again because now he's going through what I had to go through in re-establishing and realising himself. I'd like to spend more time with him because he's a good human being; he really is, and regardless of how he feels about me, or my music or whatever, that's really not important, the important thing is that we can build our relationship back and that's starting to happen now.

ZZ: Did his decision to quit Poco surprise you even though it's been threatened for a long time?

Jimmy: Well he was alluding to it for a long time but I never thought he would do that simply because . . . well, Rusty is a great musician, . . . Timmy writes good songs and he's a good singer, George is a great drummer, I don't know much about Paul but from what I gather, he is a good writer and a good guitarist. I couldn't really see why Richie didn't take what he already had, and built on it. If he's missing a keyboard man then add a keyboard player; if he's missing horns then add horns or whatever—get together and think of a concept of change. But what I think has happened is that the personalitite have just grown tired of one another, they've spent almost four years trying to have hits which they didn't get, and that's obviously got to be discouraging, and maybe Richie just felt 'What I need is total change'.

ZZ: Could the same situation happen in your band?

Kenny: From what I gather—from outside,—is that Poco was a total democracy and our situation isn't really a democracy on a legal level—the guys that work with us and back us up are on salaries and they're more like *our* musicians so I have a little more artistic control over my tune and when I get an idea I have a chance to see my idea develop and see if it works; but at the same time we encourage them to come into the music themselves and bring their own ideas into the music so that they feel a part of it.

..KENNY'S OLD SONGS..

ZZ: Do you feel in retrospect that some of your best songs are also some of the earliest?

Kenny: Yeah, 'House At Pooh Corner' and 'Danny's Song' have really blossomed, but surrounding those songs I wrote some real dogs, and I think that's just the way things happen.

ZZ: You talk about pretty songs, but are you more conscious now of writing for a rock'n'roll band?

Kenny: Partly. I'm trying to concentrate right now on writing more up-tempo material and even that bit of effort can sometimes get in the way of the song. What's good now is that I know whatever I write I have the vehicle to arrange it and perform it. Some of the things like 'Your Mamma Don't Dance' is in a style that's already been done but it was a fun thing to recapture and just do a rock'n'roll song.

ZZ: The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band always featured the best songwriters that were around in California at that time—not just yourself but also Steve Noonan, Stever Gillette, Mike Nesmith and Jackson Browne. They were also a fairly loose high school band—Noonan and Browne used to play with them, but were you ever closely involved because they certainly did a lot of your material?

Kenny: No I just met the Dirt Band one time. Lottermoser was my next door neighbour and he was a friend of the Dirt Band's. One day he was going over to show them his material and he asked me if I wanted to come along, and when we got there I sat down and showed them some of my material and they liked it, so they recorded about four of my things on the 'Uncle Charlie' album. After 'Uncle Charlie' we sat down again with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and we showed them 'Your Mama Don't Dance' before we'd recorded it, and they couldn't hear it anymore, they were definitely on their own course. We showed them 'Danny's Song' before we'd recorded it and they couldn't hear it. It freaked me out, I couldn't understand why they'd record four of my songs on one album and turn around and turn their backs on me as if I hadn't written anything since those days. Like 'I'm sorry but your songs just aren't as good as they used to be'.

ZZ: So you never played with the band?

Kenny: No, never. I had dreams about being in Poco at the beginning when Jimmy was on bass, but they were young dreams.

Jimmy: I'll tell ya who was being considered and that was Jimmy Ibbotson [from the Dirt Band].

Kenny: I think I told Jimmy Ibbotson that there was a vacancy for a guitar/bass player, but he'd play anything he could get his fingers on.

Jimmy: Actually I remember *the* first time I saw Kenny. I walked into a studio called Audio Arts—it was Harmony Recorders and I was trying to find Bob Ross who I first worked for because I was being sued for 300 dollars for cutting some demos and I was going in there to try and figure out why I was being sued and Kenny was in there cutting an album with a group and that was actually the first time I ran into or saw Kenny.

ZZ: Finally Jimmy, let me ask you how you still feel about being on the road, since you left Poco ostensibly because you were tired of touring and wanted to be back in the studios?

Jimmy: I just feel very very good about the band. I'm tired—physically tired—from the travelling, but as far as being with the band, I still love it. I'm just a little weak because we've been working our asses off, there's just been no break.

Kenny: Shit man, I'm really ready to drop, I'm really ready to get some sunshine and just start to breathe again after being in Holiday Inns so long.

ZZ: I guess 'Holiday Hotel' could have been written about this place.

Kenny: 'Holiday Hotel' was written about *all* of the bastards!

Jerry Gilbert

THE ZIGZAG STONE COLD CLASSICS OFFER

Boz Scaggs

Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

JJ Cale

Naturally

If you fancy getting one of these stone cold classic albums, then send off £3.00 to Subscriptions Department, ZigZag, 70 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PA. All cheques should be made out to ZigZag. Sorry that the subscription is £3.00 but we can't get hold of the albums for less than £1.20. A normal subscription (in the UK) costs £2.00. US subs are $12 by air and $6 by surface mail. Most other countries are the equivalent of that, but if in doubt, drop us a line. I only say that because the table of rates is fearfully complex and I'll have to figure it all out after I've got your letters. Please state which album you want, and the second and third preferences.

1973

—Vinyl shortage shock horror

Now. The last year on record. First of all, I must see if I can slip into the ZigZag style. Here goes. My cat Buster has just leapt from my shoulder and is now pee ing playfully on the typewriter. The force of the jump dislodged a pottery cup of fresh-ground coffee, which has poured into my gumboots. I've just been listening to 'The Earl Scruggs Revue'. You really should try and buy this album, you know. In fact, if you haven't got it already there's not much point in continuing. It's readily available at record shops at the moment, but if you wait a few years you can start looking around in deletion bins. You really ought to have a copy, you know.

I'm now playing Big Bill Broonzy's 'Anthology du Blues'. I bought my copy from Black Wax, but you should be able to pick up a copy in a deletion bin. As long as the deletion bin is in France. You should have a copy of this one.

What with the vinyl shortage shock horror, it looks as if 1974 will be a pretty grim year. Already the record companies are pruning their lists, taking less chances on releasing American material, becoming loth to sign bright young hopefuls without a stone guarantee of sales, cancelling some intended release dates and delaying others by anything up to two months. Maybe someone's working on inventing the wooden record, without realising that we're a bit short on trees as well. 'Plant a Tree for '73' will take a little time to bear planks. Cardboard discs? No; experts predict that the cardboard mines will be exhausted by the end of the decade. Fashion them from anthracite, perhaps? Forget it. Glass? Ask your milkman . . . he'll tell you about the desperate glass shortage while refusing to take away bottles from a rival firm.

Alongside the vinyl situation, heads are beginning to roll in the upper echelons of the record companies. Chaps who should have known better have followed the example set by Nixon and Agnew. Hands have been spotted in tills. The net result is that 'the boom years are over'. The record industry, one of the biggest growth industries of recent years, is feeling the pinch from all sides.

This growth was largely based on hugely-increased sales of long-playing albums, but these sales are now well past the peak after shooting off the graph paper at the end of the sixties. The early seventies have been marked by a revival in the fortunes of the single, and this process continued throughout the past year. In England, it was Marc Bolan and Slade who led the return to singles, and the formula-writers were back in business.

One of the most successful of the sixties teams, Ken Howard and Alan Blaikley (who write for Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich . . . is that everyone?) however I managed to find the formula to capitalise on the new singles market. They have been replaced by Cook and Greenaway, and above all by Chinn and Chapman. Thump-thump-thump-thump. Another number one.

The curious craze for American juveniles has, if anything, contributed more to the singles revival than our home-grown computers. Whatever the hype involved (and it's been considerable, even to the extent of manufacturing fan hysteria by arrangement with a children's acting agency for an act that didn't have a record to go with it . . . the Williams Brothers) it nevertheless shows that the nappy brigade needed idols of their own. A legion of puppets were hastily assembled to fill this need. Whether because they were feeling their age, or because they genuinely turned back to the earlier 'golden age' of the pop single, their manipulators as often as not furnished their proteges with songs from the late fifties.

It's said that a pop single should be catchy, have a strong beat, be instantly memorable and almost-as-instantly forgettable. Without a crystal ball, it seems likely that the offerings of The Sweet, Suzi Quatro, Gary Glitter, The Osmonds and David Cassidy will prove to have the last of these qualities. Is any fourteen-year-old really going to be digging out 'Can the Can' in fifteen years time? As a greybeard of thirty (and as open-minded as the next man, damn you) the great pop singles of 1973 do not seem to me to be in the same town, let alone street, as 'That'll Be The Day', 'Be Bop a Lula', 'Tutti Frutti', 'Stay', 'Duke Of Earl'. If a single should indeed be disposable, then thousands of two-track wonders from the late fifties and early sixties fail miserably. The bulk of today's qualify. They are noisy, competent, and successful. And about as interesting after three months as a piece of Juicy Fruit. There *were* some that sound as if they'll survive. 'Stuck In The Middle With You', 'Gaye', 'Marlene' . . . er . . . ooh . . . there must be one or two more.

But, to the Reactionary Music Club of Crouch End (of which I am the only member, and therefore very boring when I'm down the doozer and the latest seven inches of rubbish is being discussed) one man stands out from the crowd when it came to singles in 1973. In a farmyard near Monmouth, something stirred. Dave Edmunds, toiling alone through the dark hours, gave us 'Baby I Love You', 'Maybe' (the single of the year, and it's a B-side), 'Born To Be With You' and 'Pick Axe Rag'. Apart from a little help from Mickey Gee and Dave Charles on the last of these, he did it himself. The locals lower their voices and speak in awe of 'up to 76 tracks being used on one song alone'. Of course, they were old songs. Great old songs. As synthetic as hell (he apparently spent a whole day getting one tiny little one-bar guitar figure on 'Pick Axe Rag' right) but brilliant. Listen to 'Maybe' again. You've got it, of course. Well, you really ought to have, you know. Deletion bins.

The 'singer/songwriter' survived in 1973, but fortunately various oldsters struck back with personal albums of their own which gave a much-needed dose of grit and humour to the genre. For too long we have been subjected to the fey whimpers of sixth-form poets. They weren't in general good enough to get a foothold in the *real* world of poetry, and wouldn't have wanted to anyway because only a handful of poets make a living from their art. But if you added some sort of melody to your burblings, and 'got it together' in a recording studio, there was a chance that thousands would be queueing at the record stores and concert halls to listen to the pretentious whining of your nineteen-year-old grieving. About the elusiveness of love, the horror of loneliness, the difficulty of remaining honest in a world of shifting values. Blah

blah blah.

But here come the real men to rescue the situation, and restore the dignity of the introverted pop song. J.J. Cale, casually but perfectly picking his way through two beautiful albums on A&M, 'Naturally' and 'Really'. Link Wray, survivor of 'Rumble' and 'Jack The Ripper', curling your toes with music from the Wray Shack Three Track. (OK, so the best results were released on Polydor a couple of years ago, and called 'Link Wray', but 1973 saw three more albums. The ambitious and misguided attempt to put him in a luxury studio among the superstars, 'Be What You Want To', which at least produced a definitive 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy' Out-takes from the shack on Virgin, titled 'Beans and Fatback'. And a collection of all his earlier stuff compiled by the late Ian Sippen of Union Pacific . . . 'There's Good Rockin' Tonite').

Bobby Charles finally got round to making his solo album, on Bearsville. Among the mates in perfect sympathy with his music were The Band, Dr John and John Simon. It's called 'Bobby Charles', and only a handful of discerning record-buyers in Britain have so far recognised its worth.

I've been surrounded by Chip Taylor lately. While still playing his enjoyable 'Gasoline' album on Buddah, which included his original version of 'Angel of the Morning', I managed to get hold of a copy of his first for Warner Brothers, 'Last Chance', which isn't planned for release here. Its warmth, its humour, the quality of the picking and the songs . . . they guarantee a masterpiece. Then a copy of a 1968 single by Chip turned up in a street market (Good God, I'm slipping back into the ZigZag style without trying . . . the effects of the nicest rock magazine in the world are all-pervasive). With some friends he called the 'Hardly Worthit Players', he did two piss-take versions of his biggest song 'Wild Thing'. Since one side purports to be by Senator Bobby Kennedy, the record wasn't around for long before matters of taste demanded its withdrawal. Finally, I had a chance to revel in the infamous Troggs tape (relevant here as it was the Troggs who gave 'Wild Thing' to the world). It's the funniest twenty minutes ever recorded. For his interest in Chip Taylor and for his help in general, thanks to David Walters of Warner Brothers.

Pub rock horror shook London in 1973. For me the best evenings of the year were spent, pint in hand, jigging about to the sound of Vox AC 30 music. My old mates Bees Make Honey got better and better, and finished the year with their first album, 'Music Every Night' on EMI. Fred re-opened the music cellar at Islington's fashionable 'Hope and Anchor' hostelry. Brinsley Schwarz produced immaculate rock'n'roll, and the best of their five albums ('Please Don't Ever Change and Nine Others', on UA). Kilburn and the Highroads got it together to an extent few could have visualised last January. It was a great year for friendly, no-nonsense, low-volume, high-intensity rock musicianship in venues more conducive to a good time than cathedral-like concert halls.

What have I missed? John Fogerty, for 'Blue Ridge Rangers' on Fantasy. Tony Joe White, who came good with 'Home Made Ice Cream' on WB. Phonogram, for a string of goodies including the first two 'Genesis' boxes (eight albums of fifties Chess blues), their 'Chess Golden Decade' series, and 'Jerry Lee Lewis Live at the International Las Vegas'. (Even his London sessions were better than most writers admitted.) For their two double retrospectives by Chuck Berry (although what the hell has happened to 'Beautiful Delilah'?). Thanks to Polydor and John Tobler for their three '14 Carats' albums . . . golden oldies from Roulette and MGM; and to all the other companies who similarly jumped on the oldie bandwagon and hence filled in a lot of gaps in my collection without me having to pay out £20 a time at auctions. It was a good year, come to think of it.

John Collis

1973

The wrong end of the stick

When Connor asked me to write this column, I was very wary, simply because I've never considered myself to be the type of journalist to appear in ZigZag. For a start, I've been around for years, working on what he insists on calling the 'joke papers' and I also have diametrically opposed views on such things as, for example, the merits of Wishbone Ash. I think they are very good. Having seen them in such diverse places as Boston and Manchester, and having seen a multitude of other bands at the same venues, I honestly feel that there is, when they get going, more than the twentieth century equivalents of Cromwell's puritans (ie ZZ staffers) would ever credit them with possessing. Be that as it may, and be it that the swine McKnight bought me six pints, I agreed to his suggestion.

Of course, the next day, hangover in hand, it seemed an even sillier idea, but I had given my word, and all that Biggles guff, so here it is. I tried to think of some kind of theme that would unify my reflections, and the only theme I could come up with was that 1973 had been the year of getting hold of the wrong end of the stick (hereinafter referred to as GHWES).

I immediately feel reservations about that, since it's difficult to decide whether the abstract quality that did the GHWESing was the press or the public, but since they echo each others' dottiness with a fine reciprocal fidelity, it doesn't really matter. We can start with the press.

It was only four weeks ago that Time Out carried a cover, and two and one half pages, devoted to the hideous Gary Glitter. Presumably, (and I so presume because there can be no other explanation), they did so in the belief that there was something revealing to be said about Gary Glitter. Yet they never said it, so I'll say it here; Gary Glitter is unmitigated crud, and to pretend otherwise, or, as in the case of Time Out, to feign to detect some kind of spurious significance in him as a phenomenon, is a grotesque betrayal of everything they stand for. The writer didn't even have the guts to put his name to it, which is probably just as well, since he could be a friend of mine. So to Time Out goes the Late Night Line-Up award for the most meretricious GHWES of the year. I quote, 'Rock is the new Hollywood. A star system and a billion dollar industry, not free of disreputableness, and the record producer taking on the role of the auteur, so much loved by the cahiers du cinema school of film criticism.' Bah!

Unfortunately, those papers, besides Time Out, from whom one may have expected better, fared worse. Let It Rock perpetrated the most consummate fraud that I've ever seen in my eight years in the business with their David Bowie cover. He is certainly one of the most extraordinary people that I've ever met, and as a musician I find him equally compelling. If you doubt me then listen to 'Hunky Dory'. One day, away from the present joke he's having with the world, his story will be told, and with any luck it will be in these pages—but rest assured that most of the features on him, especially Let It Rock's, are classic GHWES.

Not content with their efforts towards Bowie, Let It Rock then pronounced on the Stones. This time it was less deceitful, but just as GHWESsy. 'From Radicals To Reactionaries' they thundered, like some clapped-out, ill-dressed Beaverbrook. Apart from the fact that they're not reactionaries now, and never were radicals, what on earth is that meant to signify for music freaks? What's wrong with a title like, 'Nothing to do with music, but we have to make it look significant'. To Let It Rock, the H.J. Eysenck award for inability to see a stick without grabbing hold of the wrong end.

If the press can GHWES, then, brother, so can the public, and nowhere was their capacity to do so more evident than in the support they gave to that vulgar episode which enclosed the year like a pair of rancid brackets—the Tommy extravaganza at the Rainbow. Rock, it seems, is no longer a matter of glimpsing intensity of emotion, or sharing a passion it's now rooted solidly in the worst kind of Showbiz fakery. A few quick phone calls, a big press release, don't bother to rehearse or try and create something, just wheel on the stars, add a few strings, and everyone'll dig it. The music business provided the perfect excuse for those few who had misgivings—'it's our Palladium show', and everyone nodded sagely. To whoever thought of the idea, and to those who didn't denounce it as the twaddle it is, the Victor Sylvester award for the most pernicious GHWES of the year.

The aforementioned instances of GHWESsing, while admirably *solid* accomplishments, definitely lack the crazed edge of dingbattery that everyone displayed as they fought like psychotic lemmings to GHWES about pub-rock. From Rolling Stone to 'The Old Gristle Test' there poured out a ceaseless stream of windy, worthless blather; a mixture of inaccurate facts, and puerile analyses. Nobody mentioned Flanagan's in Putney, The Nashville Rooms in Hammersmith or The Greyhound in Hammersmith, which were all providing free music for their drinkers when most of the experts on the subject were still doing the gardening column in the Hendon Gazette. The right end of the stick was firmly grasped by a reader who wrote in to one of the papers asking for coverage of his gigs to cease, because all the attention was ruining it for locals like him who just wanted to have a pint and hear a bit of music. Thank God, most ZigZag readers don't live in London, and can enjoy small gigs without being told why it's an important, new development. Since most journalists drink like fish anyway, the chances are that they couldn't tell a guitar from a conga drum by the time the group got on.

Sticks get got hold of by the wrong end because the majority of writers and of the public cling to a belief that music has some kind of sociological significance; that pubs aren't just cheap, relaxed places to play a few tunes, but are somehow evidence of the third law of the dialectic at work in the music business. To deny that is not to reject the notion that music is serious, or in earnest, merely that like most forms of human endeavour, it should be approached with caution when seeking to learn lessons, and humility when trying to understand imaginations at work. Maybe, in adopting those two sibling postures, such people will find no need for the glib, facile interpretations which they have been all too willing to propound. We can only hope so, because if they don't, 1974 will see even more GHWESsing by the majority, and even less good music. It's the choice, to end on an enigmatic note, between Nick Drake being showered with plaudits of gratitude, or surplus cuttings from The Melody Maker.

John Duffy

The ZigZag team at work getting the full story from a reluctant musician.

THE TEN GREATEST ALBUMS OF THE CENTURY

"CALIFORNIA BLOODLINES"
JOHN STEWART

How many great albums get lost? To be released at the wrong time by the wrong company and reviewed if at all by the wrong people is perhaps not much better than not being released at all. Belated recognition of such work may not be of much comfort to the artist, but this series intends to have a look at some of these neglected masterpieces.

And what better way to start this splurge of prejudiced rantings than to examine John Stewart's monumental 'California Bloodlines', one of the finest pieces of missed grist you're ever likely to hear.

For the complete and unabridged John Stewart story, you'll have to wait for a couple of months until I can shuffle it into shape, but to put you in the approximate picture, here is a (very) brief resumé: after leading a folk trio called The Cumberland 3, he was summoned to replace Dave Guard in the Kingston Trio, staying with them from Summer 1961 until their split 6 years later, during which time his influence on both the group and the millions of people who heard their music was incalculable. After almost forming a duo with John Denver, writing 'Daydream Believer' for the Monkees, campaigning with Robert Kennedy, and making an album with Buffy Ford, he eventually came to record his first solo album 'California Bloodlines' - first released in May 1969 but still available on order from any worthwhile record shop as an EMI import on US Capitol ST 203.

The album was cut in Nashville under the guidance of Nik Venet, a Capitol staff producer familiar to Stewart for his work with the Beach Boys and Fred Neil in particular.

I happened to bump into Venet in United Artists' Hollywood Offices and since the mere mention of 'California Bloodlines' was enough to set his pupils twinkling and his memories gurgling, it's primarily through his eyes that we'll be looking at the album, with supplementary and explanatory words from Stewart himself and the odd attempt by me to link the whole shebang into some kind of cohesive whole.

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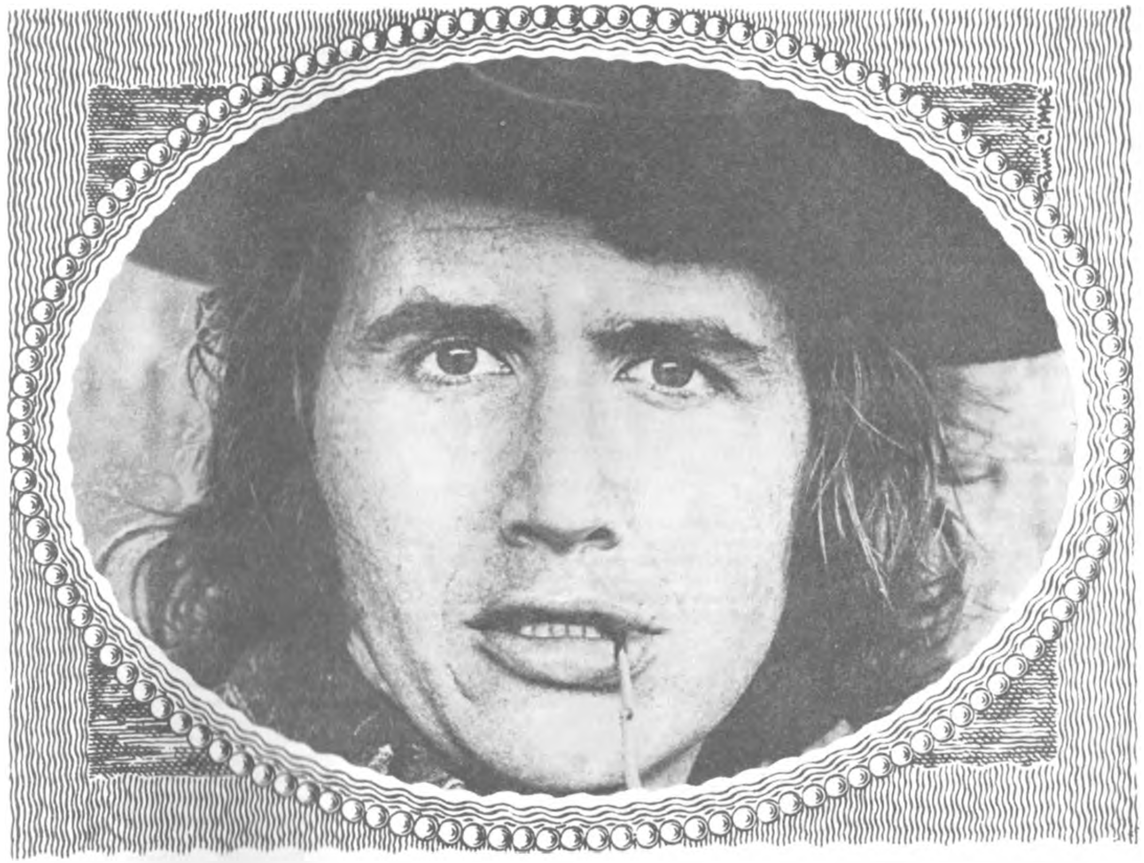
Nik Venet:"I was an 'uncontrolled' Capitol staff man at the time - they used to keep sending me money even though I wasn't under an exclusive contract or anything like that. I used to get people to finance all the terrible habits I had - terrible, terrible habits like hamburger addictions and fast cars and ladies - but I really believed in John Stewart. His songs knocked me on my arse, and I thought it was so great that he wasn't a pretty singer or a pretty person or a pretty dresser. . . . in fact he was so fxxxing ugly that he was magnificent! Well, I kept after the idea of doing an album with him even though I didn't get the one that he did with Buffy ('Signals Through The Glass', produced by Voyle Gilmore), and I remember how elated I was, so very fxxxing happy, when they offered me 'Bloodlines'".

"John had never worked in Nashville before, and to tell the truth he wasn't very enthusiastic when I suggested it. . . but I'd worked with those cats down there and I just felt that the combination of John's songs and their playing could be a winner . . . . and it was; though I say it myself, it's his best album to date".

"Those Nashville studio men have a marvellous way of sweating, but not through their shirts. You see them play, and it looks so effortless, but some of those guys have 25 years of picking behind them and so if it looks effortless, it's only because they've learned how to control their dance. Their trade and their art is right there in their fingers, where it belongs, and believe me, they are among the finest musicians in the world. . . . and in the studio they are invaluable because their musical abilities are matched by an ability to pick up on what you're doing and to move the way you're moving. They'll do their standard perfect job on most songs, but if they come across a lyric they can relate to, as I thought they would to some of John's, they'll just pull off the most amazing stuff".

"Dylan was recording 'Nashville Skyline' right across the street at Columbia's studios, and I was pulling favours with guys I'd known for 10 or 12 years, saying things like 'Forget Dylan. . . if you don't play on these dates for me, our friendship is over'. I wanted the best people for the album, people who would really understand what John had to say".

"Well, I thought about it and came to the conclusion that John should record live, standing there with the band; the way I saw it, a road folk singer shouldn't be allowed the mechanical freedom or luxury of adding his vocals to a completed track - it would destroy so much of



the spontaneity. I mean, his phrasing would become clinical, and his diction too polished, his breathing would be less natural, and besides, I felt that his magnificent horrible voice and his style of picking would fire the musicians if they were all working together. John agreed, and that's how it was done, with him standing up there like he was in a club, with the session guys playing right along behind him. . . . and it worked just the way I thought it would. After all, you don't buy John Stewart albums for the syrup in his voice, you buy them for the honesty in his songs and the depth in his singing. . . . and a performer like that can't fxxx by remote control - he's got to do it right there with the band! And he did it - with the result that 'California Bloodlines' is a raw, very natural album. . . . black and white and raw".

John Stewart:"Unfortunately, the Nashville musicians aren't like that anymore; they're overworked now and their enthusiasm seems to have dropped a great deal. On those sessions, their playing was inspired - they played with their hearts, for a number of reasons not the least being that they were so glad to be participating in something other than straight country and western music . . . . there was a magic in that studio - a magic that can't be duplicated. You see, back then in the first part of 1969, the only non-country people to record there before I did were Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, but nowadays great volumes of rock and pop music come out of Nashville. . . . . I guess Nik must take the credit for suggesting we do it there - he knew all the people".

Nik:"There's a clear path to Nashville these days - flights every half hour and so on, but when I first began to go down there the airport barely functioned and you couldn't even rent a car. I spent a number of years there with Harlan Howard and Johnnny Cash and Buck Wilkin, and at one time we were using Bradley's Barn which Columbia subsequently took over and converted. Even then, Fred Carter was a prize guitarist, and he became one of the backbones of the Nashville music scene. . . . his playing on 'Bloodlines' was just so astounding".

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Readers who are already familiar with the album will be well aware of the futility of selecting a "best track", but the first track on side 2, 'Mother Country', the second half of which details horse-enthusiast E. A. Stuart's last ride, is a cracker and certainly merits closer investigation.

Nik Venet, an incurable romantic and obviously never one to miss the chance to embellish an already colourful story, let his fancies fly: "That song was recorded first take! After hearing it once, those musicians just went out and captured the whole thing perfectly. I did a Fellini aspect in not telling anyone what to play or when to play because with 'Mother Country' I felt that any such instruction would have cut down on the natural feeling. You see, country people often have an emotional thing that is so childish it's Picasso. . . . Picasso spent 80 years trying to get back to what children do honestly - to lose all those views, ideas and inhibitions which are imposed on you as you go through life. . . . the musicians down in Nashville are primitive Picassos, if you like - and I mean that in the complimentary sense".

"John had told me about this song he had and the lyric just sounded like one that everyone in the studio could relate to. . . . this sounds terribly corny, but it happened. I told John to hold off on the song until the end, until all the other tracks were finished. . . . and I'll never forget that moment when John went out to run through the song. . . . the musicians and I were all huddled in the control booth, drinking Jack Daniels and beer and stuff, and we heard John sing 'Mother Country' for the first time".

"Well, everybody was just struck motionless, maybe partly because they're so heritage orientated, but they were just smitten. . . . there were goose pimples, some red faces and even tears - and when John had finished, they just went straight out into the studio and cut it, first take, perfectly, with absolutely no rehearsal, no arrangement - nothing except one hearing of the song and natural country juices flowing through those instruments like a river".

"I held off doing that song, took a chance and delayed it till the very end. Like I said, I'm a great fan of Fellini's and he always does things like that - leaves a section of a movie until he feels that the time is right, the energy level is right. Anyway,

the gamble worked".

Over to John for his version (and let's attribute any discrepencies to Nik's unbridled romanticism): "I wrote 'Mother Country' from a story my dad told me; before I was born, he'd worked for this man called E.A. Stuart, who used to own Carnation Milk but had a real passion for horses. His favourite was called Malenkthon, but that name didn't seem musical enough somehow and so in retelling the story I changed the name to Sweetheart On Parade, which was another horse that my father helped to train - a 5 gaited saddle horse. I thought that was an incredible name, so I used that".

The song concerns the ailing E.A. Stuart's desire to have one last fling with his favourite horse - an ambition he realises, allowing him to die a happy man a few weeks later.

"My dad was there when it happened" John continued, "and when he told me about it, it just knocked me out so much. Apart from changing the horse's name, my version tells the story exactly as it occured - and it seemed to link up with the other two themes which are contained in the song, the first part of which I got from a newsclipping from the San Francisco Chronicle, and the overall binding thread which I got from a book called 'American Heritage' which had pictures of these pioneer kids.... it seemed to me that there were a lot of heroes in America who had become heroes without telling anyone, and that's what the song is all about".

"I wasn't going to record the song but I played it to Nik to see what he thought about it and he liked it so much that he got me to go into the studio and sing it while he got all the musicians into the booth to listen. So I played it, and on that one hearing they were able to get their bearings .... when they write their charts they do it by numbers - like if it's in the key of C, they write 1 for the chord of C, 4 for F, 5 for G and so on - so they can jot it all down very quickly".

"Anyway, I finished the song and they came into the studio for the first take - and some of them had tears in their eyes! 'Jesus' I thought '...I must have really moved these guys!' .....and they just played for all they were worth, played their hearts out".

"Afterwards, I was talking to Nik about how the song had moved them and how they'd played like crazy-men in the studio - and he looked at me, lowered his voice, and said 'actually, John, I told them that you had written the song about your dad who's just died of cancer!'".

Back to Nik: "John was happy with the take - dumbfounded, in fact. He couldn't believe that a first take could capture everything like that and he started looking for a weakness - finally reckoning that he could do the vocal better - but I assured him that if he tried to cut it again, the magic would disappear.... and I was right - the first take was the one.... the photograph had been taken".

Too right, mate. Just listen to the tension and build on that track - my spine almost falls out every time I feel that horse ("easily the finest horse the good Lord ever made") coming into sight ("and he's driving her stone blind"), and those cats are just playing their balls off - but get this: that track, and the whole album in fact, was recorded in direct stereo. Two track! From the meticulous clarity you'd have thought old Venet had laboured for weeks, mixing down a 16 track monster - but trust him.....

"It was a gamble" he says, "because once recorded, you couldn't adjust the level of an individual instrument in the mix, but if you get all the balances right in the studio, and if you're certain of the competence of everybody involved, then the dangers are minimised - and if it works, you can get a beautifully clear and natural recording. I had 2 amazing engineers who had worked with Nashville's best for 20 years, so nobody had to worry about any fxxx-ups on the board. Often, when he was listening to a playback, John would say something like 'can you get that guitar up a bit?' and I'd say 'listen to it again .. the guitar is alright'.. ".

"The only overdub on the whole album is on 'The Pirates of Stone County Road', where we dubbed on those layers of voices". A fabulous track, and surprisingly not based on recollection: "I was stoned out of my brains" says Stewart, "and it just came to me".

But wait a second; if we look at each track in detail, we'll run out of our miserably inadequate page allocation. Suffice it to say that all the cuts are magnificent - as you'll agree when you hear the record - so let's confine our attention to just one other track, 'Never Goin Back', an explanation of the somewhat obscure sleevenotes, and then give full rein to Nik Venet, allowing him to expound freely

Instead of crediting the players on the sleeve in the customary way, John reels off their names towards the end of 'Never Goin Back!..."I'd like to thank.....", immortalising each of them with an appropriate nickname.

John:"'Never Goin Back' is still regarded as a legendary track in Nashville. I got the idea from a movie called 'Farenheit 451', where the credits were read out instead of appearing on the screen.... it occurred to me as I watched it that no-one had thought of doing that on a record. So I was waiting for the opportunity to implement this idea when I thought of embellishing what would just be a fairly stark list of names... so I took a piece of paper and jotted down some ideas. I took a sort of character reading of each of them and tried to think of a name that would at the same time be appropriate and add a dash of colour. 'Diamond' Kelso Herston is a record-biz kind of guy who wore this big diamond ring that always sparkled in the semi-darkness of the studio, 'Gentleman' Lloyd Green is always very polite, 'First Take' Hargus Robbins is an incredible pianist who always gets everything perfect first take - he's blind, and had always been known as 'Pig' up until then... and I just went through them all. I called Nik 'Zapata' - he loved that, as you can imagine, having met him. That came from 'Viva Zapata', which is my favourite movie (that and 'Citizen Kane'), and the fact that Nik had this sort of guerrilla thing going for him... this Mexican/Greek bandido image".

Nik (for a slight variation):"I had been down in Mexico excavating some sites there.... that's my hobby, archeology - that and the American Indian.... I take years off at a time to explore those things. Anyway, I'd been in Mexico just before the album and I guess the Zapata influence had filtered into the studio - maybe because I kept bringing Tequila to the sessions!"

"Anyway, I knew John was going to credit all the musicians just as they thought the track was coming to an end, and so I told them 'continue vamping until you see me coming out of the booth.... don't stop playing' and I waited to see what would happen".

John:"The musicians had no idea what was going to happen and were just sitting there with their head phones on, playing away, assuming it was going to be a long fade ending or something.... and when I started to reel off their names they couldn't believe it. They looked at each other and broke out smiling and the energy just grew and grew.... you can hear it on the track - as soon as they realised, they just started pouring it on".

Among the amazing qualities of that track is one of my favourite pedal steel solos of all time.... that first solo - a burner!

Nik:"That was Lloyd Green - he came up to me when we were talking about possible arrangements and said 'I've got a thing I've been wanting to get on a record for two years now, but nobody's ever given me the chance'. 'Don't say another word' I told him,'.... you just go in there and do it'. Like you say, he did it!"

"That album is 4½ years old now and yet it doesn't sound at all dated. That was the peak energy time in Nashville.... those cats were all at their zenith, all masters of their craft.... how I admire the ability of those guys, they can do anything - if you'd have given them tap dancing shoes 20 years ago, they'd be the world champion tap dancers today!"

"I love casting an album; I think it's important to make it like a novel - so everybody fits into place as a character - no loose ends or unsuitable pages to spoil a chapter. I mean, someone had suggested that I put strings on certain songs... I couldn't see violins beside John Stewart! You may as well stick daffodils up his arse!"

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Some clarification of the sleeve note, which appears as blank verse:

"3000 miles, 12 towns, 3 States" refers to the distance from Los Angeles to Nashville, and the twelve towns (count 'em) and three States mentioned in the songs.

"30 Nashville souls" are the people involved on the session.

"An old campaigner" - that's Sweetheart on Parade.

"One rainbow for Ethel" is a reference to the song 'Omaha Rainbow' which was written whilst John and Buffy were campaigning for Robert Kennedy - he was the Attorney General and was running for Senator. John:"We'd get to the rally first and sing for the people, who'd been waiting for maybe 3 or 4 hours..... we'd try to get them all singing the campaign song so that there was plenty of energy flying around when Kennedy arrived to speak". Ethel is Kennedy's widow of course.

"Dylan across the street". Nik:"Dylan was literally across the street cutting 'Nashville Skyline'.... Johnny Cash was there too, and so was Kris Kristofferson, who seemed to spend a lot of time flitting from studio to studio, bringing champagne over from the Cash session. We'd drink it and send the empty bottles back for more! There was just so much electricity in that little one block area that week".

"Champagne cognac and bad machine coffee" - that was the bill of fare for the sessions.

"2 hit casualties". John:"That was a Nashville phenomenon no longer so geographically confined; we met 2 guys in the bars there - they had written two of the best country songs ever but had become alcoholics because they couldn't handle their success.... I guess that sort of thing has become much more prevalent these days".

Nik:"Sometimes having a hit record can be the end rather than the beginning. A lot of people who had hit records are silent now because they became a parody of what they were, of what they did to get there in the first place".

"5 snuff queens". Nik:"they're country groupies; they were an integral part of the country music scene long before they became voguish in rock circles. Snuff queens are just magnificent - they wear their hair about 3 feet high, all lacquered up, and very tight and lurid skirts or pants - often made of gold flecked pvc.... the sort of thing you'd see on the floor of Andy Warhol's kitchen".

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Nik:"John has gone a long way; he's had failure and success - enormous success.....remember that the Kingston Trio was bigger than even the Beatles at one time, and he's played for easily a million people in the course of a year. Then he was a successful songwriter and when I was working with him, he was starting to work himself up as a solo. He travels a lot of miles to get where he's going - it's a hard road, but he's got it all there.... after 16 years of making records and a lifetime listening to them, I contend that John Stewart is one of the 3 greatest songwriters in this country - and I'll back that statement against anyone".

"His interpretations are so honest; he doesn't dress his songs up or sell them short.... he sings them naturally - but he was worried about 'California Bloodlines' in as much as it wasn't glitter, it wasn't glamour and it wasn't slick".

"I understand his worry, because he was trying to get a hit album, and he was almost ready to sell down to have a hit on the basis that a hit would enable him to go on and do what he wanted. But I said "no, just keep doing what you want to do... who knows, you may not have a hit record until after you're dead - but in your lifetime you can't sell down and really be happy". But he was worried that the album wasn't commercial enough, whereas I thought that was its whole charm".

"If he wants to have hits and make a lot of money, maybe he should call Richard Perry; personally I can only capture the artist. I don't guarantee top tenners, though I have had big hits. I wanted to capture John

'CALIFORNIA BLOODLINES'

California Bloodlines/Razor Back Woman/She Believes In Me/Omaha Rainbow/The Pirates Of Stone County Road/Shackles and Chains/Mother Country/Some Lonesome Picker/You Can't Look Back/Missouri Birds/July, You're A Woman/Never Goin Back Capitol ST-203

Stewart and if nothing else, with 'California Bloodlines' I gave him a basis from which his solo recording career could evolve. I was rather disappointed that we couldn't do any more records together, however, because as far as I was concerned, that was only the first part of a trilogy: we put the seed in the ground with that album, but never got a chance to see the tree grow in the second album or to pick the fruit of the third.... we only got as far as the first tentative step".

"As it was, he chose to do his second album, 'Willard', with Peter Asher, and he dubbed on his vocals when all the musicians had gone off home, thereby losing all that great primitive quality he has. When he went into that studio and sat down with headphones on to sing over those almost clinically perfect back tracks, he lost all the rough edges that, to me, characterise one of his best assets .... they were seeking too much perfection...."

"Stand up and sing! Perfection is in the soul of the song, not in the cleanliness of the recording and mix. His songs are about people that aren't perfect, so how the fxxx can the recording be perfect?"

"I once had a long conversation with Picasso, and I asked him when he considered a painting finished. He looked at me in total disbelief and said 'I have never finished a painting!' Great! And that's the secret of a lot of music.... I tell you, that's one of the great things about people like Bowie - they're going for feel rather than perfection".

"John Stewart is like you, he's like me; he's the truck driver, the cowboy in 'The Misfits', the American; he's the guy who tracked Indians, he's the guy the Indians tracked, he's the kid driving the Ford in 'July, you're a woman', he's the men in his songs; he understands California, and the Coast and the mountains, the people that hitch-hike, the people that live in the country; he's the heritage and the history; whenever I drive north I think of songs that he's written.... and you can't tell me that a guy like that can fxxx by remote control. He's got to sweat - only then will he do justice to those great songs".

John:"Nik Venet is a great schucker, a great con-artist, but at the same time, he's a super guy. He was so full of vitality and enthusiasm during the whole of those 'Bloodlines' sessions - he kept the mood way up all the time.... it was the most fun I've ever had recording. He has absolutely no idea of what he's doing, except that he can really get the musicians to play, and for that, he's the best. As for myself, I can't get past my own performance on that album.... I think the songs were my best, the energy was certainly the best - but I hate my singing. But I've got to say that I remember Nik with great fondness; in his own way, he's an amazing producer and I haven't a bad word to say about him. I feel it might be something of a risk, but I'd dearly love to do another album with him".

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Nik:"Let me tell you a story - a true story: my most recent project has been recording a triple album (on United Artists UA-LA157-J3, on import only) of the reminiscences of John G Neihardt, one of America's greatest poets. He was the last living man ever to have known the great Indian chiefs and he spent his life writing about them.... and, as it happened, a couple of days after I was able to show him copies of the completed album and package, he passed away. But during the many hours I spent with him, I played him parts of 'California Bloodlines'. Now, this man was really old and almost deaf; he'd never seen a movie in his life and though he'd heard of Johnny Cash and Marlon Brando, he'd never heard of Bob Dylan. Well, he could hear quite well through headphones, and I played him 'Mother Country'..... he thought it was beautiful - "that boy sounds like he was standing beside me in the Missouri River" he said. Now, for John Neihardt to have even said John Stewart's name is tribute enough, but for a track to make that kind of impact.... phew, I can't begin to tell you how that made me feel".

"I guess John doesn't realise how many people love what he's doing but are worried about the frame he's putting his songs in nowadays. He seems to have lost some of his perspective; he labours over the least important things and when he does that, he's in danger of blurring those delicate natural colours.... that colour of mud, that shade of crushed roses - to see those get smudged into one...."

"You know, after 'Willard' was a complete turkey and the third one was also a stiff, I thought 'well, maybe no-one's heard those two -- maybe I can do the next one' and I pleaded with his manager, had meetings and wrote letters..... and that xxxxx, do you know what he did? He sent me a note saying that my application had been noted and put on file!"

"Well, speaking with you like this has sort of re-charged my enthusiasm. Since he's just changed managers, maybe I could get to do that second album after all.... I'd really love to, you know. But he'd have to work - he needs to go out further and he'd rather stay in and sit here with us, around the fire.... he's a fxxxing great person, John Stewart". Pete Frame

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

A QUICKIE CHAT

What to do? We've just received a phone call from one of the advertisers asking if they can put back the ad that they had booked until February as they wouldn't have pressing time until January because of the three day week. What can we fill the page up with at this late date? Tobler is too busy writing for the Melody Maker, Pete's writing the whole issue anyway, and there is nobody in town to get a quick interview with. Suddenly I remember a bit of tape with Beefheart left over from last year. It's not really an interview, just checking up on a few bits and pieces concerning his recent album, 'Clear Spot' and his immediate plans. Here it is.

ZZ: So who's in the new band; There was a press release here that said Mark and Bill were no longer with you.
CB: What? Who said that. It's all wrong, we have a new guitarist—Alex St Claire Snouffer.
ZZ: So it's still the same, except that Elliot has left. That's sad.
CB: I talked to him just before we came over. He's getting a group together of his own. You know I'm starting a record company—God's Golfball records—and he may just be on that with his new group. He wanted to do something on his own and that's fine with me. I wouldn't want to hold anybody. I wouldn't let go of Zoot Horn Rollo. If he left I'd follow him.
ZZ: Is Mark playing guitar or bass, on stage, because he played guitar on 'Clear Spot'?
CB: Both. [To Bill Surnow, his tour manager] Could you show Connor that thing in the papers? I don't want to say it. [At this Bill produces a copy of Disc sporting a picture of Dr John with a caption saying Captain Beefheart—Oh well, Captain, Dr, what's the difference?] It's like pop art isn't it?
ZZ: There seems to have been a lot of accusations going round that you've gone commercial with this latest record.
CB: I think it's probably due to Warner Brothers over there. Warner Brothers here I like, but over there! I must admit, they never do any of my press stuff with me.
ZZ: What happened to 'Spitball Scalped A Baby' by the way? It was a good number.
CB: I'll be doing that on my next album. It's amazing that you remember these things. Have you ever met any of the writers over there? They wouldn't know that. Why don't I move over here? I've got property in North California—that's why—near the Oregon border, with beautiful giant Redwoods.
ZZ: Bigfoot country. [I should add that Bigfoot is a kind of giant whose footprints have been discovered around the area that Beefheart inhabits, and was responsible for, in Beefheart's words, 'the only time I've seen Mark's moustache droop'].
CB: Yeah. I haven't seen him or her yet. But I want to meet *her* very much.
ZZ: It was, I think, your intention to use more of the stage introductions on the album. Like Artie's 'mascara snake, mascara for God's sake' gag. What happened to that idea?
CB: We didn't use it, I can't remember why.
ZZ: How did you come to use Ted Templeman?
CB: Well, he'd seen me a few times on stage and he admired me, and he said he'd like to do the album, so we did.
ZZ: You aren't credited with horns.
CB: No but I wrote them. Blue Mitchell was on there, the jazz player [see Ben Sidran this issue].
ZZ: That was a pity, because people over here were knocked out by the soprano sax stuff you played last year.
CB: Well I just woke up and felt more like a harmonica. I'll go back to horn but I want to play some harmonica for a while. I've finally found some harmonicas that would work. Since the Beatles came out the harmonica's haven't worked. I know it's not their fault, but they've been producing these Beatle harmonicas and they're not like the Hohner harmonicas that I used to use. They all went commercial, but I've found some now, so I'll be playing a lot of harmonica over here.
ZZ: Who are the people in the photo on the cover of 'Clear Spot'?
CB: Donn Landee, who we have dubbed the Mit, Ted Templeman, who is the one with the blonde hair. We called him the Mit because he caught everything we threw at him, and there's some other unidentified person there. Do you know the spotlight kid, our spotlight man, he's still owed £58 by Warner Brothers over there. When I heard that I nearly fainted. [At this point we discover that the waiter serving drinks is from an area in Canada, that Don visited recently to see the animals and Indian works of art.] It's funny that he should talk about Canada like that, because I wasn't even aware that I was in Canada. Maps I don't understand

at all. Did you see what happened to Ali? He won that fight, but because of the fact that he was a draught dodger and just because they made an air war, and he avoided the draught from the hot air, they gave the fight to Norton. He's great. The other fellow was an ex-Marine, that they gave the fight to.

ZZ: Have you done anything to sort out the gear problems that you had last year?

CB: Sure. We checked it out last night, and it sounded really good.

ZZ: That and the bus were the only things that marred it last year.

CB: Oh, this year we have the England football team's coach.

ZZ: I'll never forget the sight of the world's best band standing beside the Brighton road, looking a bit lost.

CB: Do you think they're the best band in the world?

ZZ: Certainly.

CB: I do too. It sound horrible but I screened them for years. I've looked for years for people who can paint, do you know what I mean? That's definitely what I want. It's the air.

ZZ: Have you been gigging much in the States?

CB: All over, and it's been good, really good. I met Roland Kirk recently, and we went out for dinner. Do you know he held a twelve minute note?

ZZ: Have you ever thought of working with those people live?

CB: I've thought of it, but you know how people have tampered with my image. And I thought it might do *them* harm. I made that decision. It's getting better now, the more I travel, people are realising that I'm not whatever they thought I was.

ZZ: It was that whole Straight/Bizarre thing of being linked with Alice Cooper and The GTO's.

CB: Do you know that when I signed the contract I was assured that I would be on the Straight label, and they put me on the Bizarre label, and they put me right in there with them, and it was obviously done on purpose. Obviously there was no friendship between Zappa and I.

ZZ: How long has Bill been playing the mandolin?

CB: That was the first day.

ZZ: Can you tell us a little about God's Golfball?

CB: I'm trying to find some distribution over here, because I want to put out some books as well, 'Singing Ink' and 'The Night My Typewriter Went Daaa', so we're looking around and as soon as it's sorted out we'll put it together.

ZZ: Have you heard Jimmy's band, Mu?

CB: No I haven't, but I heard it was horrible. Zoot Horn saw it.

ZZ: Have you got anyone else for the label?

CB: Not yet, but I have an awful lot of people I want to get.

ZZ: So how did Alex come to rejoin the band?

CB: I hadn't really kept in touch with him, but I thought of him and rang him up, and we talked and I said, 'Come on up and we'll play'. This was right after 'Clear Spot'. And he fell right in with what we were doing. He never lost his spirit.

ZZ: A lot of your songs these days are, for want of a better word, love songs.

CB: A lot of them are man. I want to say something about the way men treat women. 'How'd you get a name like crazy little thing, probably the name that drove you crazy, all along'. I don't think that men should label women like that. It's not a matter of man does this and man does that, woman does it too—that's why we're here.

ZZ: I've been told that you wrote 'Crazy Little Thing' in about an hour. Is that right?

CB: Yeah. It was in a car. I wasn't driving, Bill was—from Tuffs (?) to Yale University where we were doing a gig. That's all it took.

ZZ: Words first?

CB: Both at the same time really. Words are music to me and vice versa.

Connor

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to ZIGZAG BACK ISSUES, YEOMAN COTTAGE,
NORTH MARSTON, BUCKINGHAM MK18 3PH

ALSO WORTH GETTING ARE 'SUPERSNAZZ #2' 20p incl post from LES, 125A CHADWICK RD, PECKHAM, LONDON SW15 and 'OMAHA RAINBOW' 15p inc post from 10 LESLEY CT, HARCOURT RD, WALLINGTON, SY. PLEASE SEND BLANK UNCROSSED POSTAL ORDERS. (BOTH THESE MAGAZINES ARE EXCELLENT).

17 MAYALL CHART, RAMBLING JACK ELLIOTT, ROY HARPER, BRINSLEY SCHWARZ, STOOGES, QUINTESSENCE, WILD ANGELS

18 THE GROUNDHOGS, STEELEYE SPAN, ON THE ROAD WITH QUIVER, LOU REED, CHUCK BERRY, STEAMHAMMER

19 ROD STEWART, DUSTER BENNETT, HELP YOURSELF, THE ALLMAN BROS, ROLLING STONES, GENESIS, THE GRATEFUL DEAD

20 MOUNTAIN, JEFF BECK GROUP, the J. GEILS BAND, PHILIP GOODHAND-TAIT, WILD MAN FISHER, MELANIE, ALBAN 'SNOOPY' PFISTERER

21 MARC BOLAN, JO MAMA/DANNY KOOTCH TREE, AL KOOPER Pt 1, AMAZING BLONDEL, BUFFY SAINTE MARIE, THE INCREDIBLE KEVIN COYNE.

22 JACK BRUCE FAMILY TREE, MOTT the HOOPLE, THE ALLMAN BROTHERS, ALICE COOPER, DONOVAN TREE, TERRY RILEY, LINK WRAY.

23 JOHN SEBASTIAN, COLIN BLUNSTONE, BIG BROTHER & the HOLDING CO, RORY GALLAGHER, FAIRPORT CONVENTION & STONEGROUND TREES.

25 ELTON JOHN, LOU REED, FLAMIN GROOVIES, FRANK ZAPPA/MOTHERS, FAMILY TREE, LOVE TREE, PINK FLOYD'S EARLIEST DAYS.

26 HAWKWIND, JOE COCKER, GREENWICH VILLAGE, DAVE VAN RONK, BREWER'S DROOP, DAN HICKS, CHARLATANS, SAN FRANCISCO TREE.

27 JIMMY PAGE, BRIDGET ST JOHN, STEPHEN STILLS, PROCOL/TRAFFIC FAMILY TREE, DUCKS DELUXE, THE KINKS, The BYRDS Pt 1.

28 LED ZEPPELIN, THE NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND, KIM FOWLEY, STEALERS WHEEL, SOFT MACHINE FAM TREE, AYERS, BYRDS 2.

29 GENESIS, THE EVERLY BROS, THE EAGLES, BURRITOS FAM TREE, SILVERHEAD, THE BYRDS part 3, JOHNNY'S FREIGHT, BEEFHEART

30 PROCOL HARUM, NEIL SEDAKA, ELTON, STOCKFIELD, RY COODER, THE BYRDS part 4, FAB FAVE RAVE PIC OF PETE FRAME!

31 DON McLEAN, MICHAEL MURPHY, FAMILY/ MS MONSTER FAMILY TREE, JAC HOLZMAN, JONATHAN KELLY, THE BYRDS part 5.

32 PINK FLOYD, STEVE ELLIS, THE STORM OF SPIRIT, CLIFFORD T. WARD, JOHN CALE, ROY BUCHANAN, THE BYRDS part 6.

33 McKENDREE SPRING, ROBERT PLANT, BOZ SCAGGS, CLARENCE WHITE, STEVE MILLER/BOZ/SIR DOUGLAS FAMILY TREE

34 FAMILY, LOU REED, CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL, THE DILLARDS.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE: AT PRESENT THERE ARE NO COPIES OF Nos 1–16, 24, 35, 36, 37

BRILLIANT

ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA 'ON THE THIRD DAY'
THEIR FIRST ALBUM ON WARNER BROS

FROM WB WARNER BROS